

Marlene Laruelle (ed.), *Eurasianism and the European Far Right: Reshaping the Europe-Russia Relationship*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015. 276 pp.

In recent years, political parties on the European Far Right as well as on the Far Left have benefited from political, economic, and social uncertainty bedeviling Europe. At the same time, from the east, Eurasianism—the belief that Russia is a distinct civilization—has offered an alternative Europe to those dissatisfied with the status quo. In that context, this book offers to show the influence of Eurasianism in a Europe ranging from France to Turkey—an admirable ambition.

Yet this study tries to pursue three lines of inquiry in ways that are not always compatible. First, the development of European Far Right movements—a development often described here in minute detail, for example, in Giovanni Savino’s chapter on Italy. Second, the involvement of Russian individual actors with these movements. Here, the focus is mostly on Alexander Dugin, who merits a chapter of his own by Anton Shekhovtsov. Third, the involvement of Russian state actors with European Far Right movements. This line of inquiry is mainly present in the concluding chapter by Shekhovtsov on Far Right election monitors in Europe.

These three directions could all have provided an interesting focus for an academic study, yet in this book the impact of Eurasianism, in particular, is sometimes relegated to the sidelines. Witness for instance the chapter by Nicolas Lebourg on Spain, in which the author very reasonably concludes from the outset that “As a movement, neo-Eurasianism is far removed from the nationalist traditions of Spanish politics” (125). That still allows for a fascinating study of Far Right ideology in Spain, but for a reader interested in the Russian Eurasianist topic this chapter (and several others in the book) is a bit disappointing.

Still, the topics of Eurasianism and the Russian connection to European Far Right movements are at least touched on in most chapters. Possibly, introductory and concluding chapters framing an overall argument tying together the three lines on inquiry mentioned above would have mitigated the problem. Yet a conclusion is wholly missing. Marlene Laruelle does provide an

opening chapter on the “dangerous liaisons” between Vladimir Putin’s Russia and Far Right movements in Europe. While this chapter is useful in itself it does not tie in smoothly with the rest of the book. For instance, in her chapter Laruelle designates “France as Russia’s main outpost” in the West (19) and supports this by the connections between the contemporary Russian regime and Marine Le Pen, leader of the French political party National Front. A relevant and laudable focus, but then—when we later come to the chapter by Jean-Yves Camus on the French Radical Right—the connection between the National Front and Russia is mainly lacking or at most tied to a few individuals with an interest in Dugin’s theories (79–80). It seems counter-intuitive that a book focusing on Russia and the European Far Right would provide so little discussion of what is arguably the most influential alliance today between Russia and a European Far Right movement.

Such an observation begs the question whether the book would have been better off focusing less on the impact (or lack thereof) of Dugin and his theories. As mentioned above, in countries such as Spain, Dugin has not been a crucial influence. In others, France and Hungary among them, Russian state-driven connections to political parties such as the National Front or dominant political figures such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, have done considerably more to influence national and international events—a point noted by some contributors to this book (for Hungary, see for example 184–86). Conversely, while Vadim Rossman writes a detailed and in itself interesting chapter on the place of Dugin and his theories within Moscow State University, the book never really connects that case study to developments in Russia as a whole, or to other chapters for that matter. So what we are left with is a collection of chapters, each seeking to explore at times obscure Far Right movements in Europe and, when possible, their connections to a Russian individual, who, while prominent in parts of public Russian debate, is just one of many domestic actors influencing Russian political identity-making.

Such criticism does not mean that the book is without merit. Many of its chapters provide a good overview of Far Right developments in European countries. As a case in point, Vügar İmanbeyli’s analysis of Turkish debates—while eventually

demonstrating Dugin's lack of contemporary significance here—is excellent in showing the facets of Turkish “Eurasianism” as this ideology has appeared in recent decades (146 onwards). Similarly, Sofie Tipaldou provides a helpful, thorough presentation of how the Greek Golden Dawn has built on its neo-Nazi roots to acquire increased public presence. However, some relevant viewpoints are lacking. While it would have been unlikely (and probably unhelpful) to have a chapter for this book written by representatives of Far Right movements in Europe, it would have been useful to read the observations of Russian Eurasianists—their take on European politics and its Far Right movements. Crucially, this would not necessarily have required a chapter by Dugin. Political figures connected to the state, such as Vladislav Surkov; to the political opposition, such as Gennadii Zyuganov; or to academia, such as Dmitrii Trenin or Fyodor Lukianov, could have provided valuable insights into the question of Russian relations with Europe, about which they have written and spoken before.

Laruelle claims from the outset that “Ideologically, Eurasianism is the Russian version of the European far right” (xi). In the context of the far right movements presented in this book Laruelle's definition would imply that Eurasianism is close to neo-Nazi movements and the like. While that is certainly true for aspects of Eurasianism (and for increasingly significant movements in the Russian polity as a whole), Eurasianism has such a widespread following in Russia that it must be defined more broadly than this book allows. And while individuals such as Trenin and Lukianov by all appearances do not seek close contacts to Far Right movements in Europe, they have presented written and oral accounts of Eurasia in ways which sometimes could as easily be labeled “Eurasianism” as could the theories from Dugin. Including a Russian agency beyond Dugin would have allowed for a more nuanced analysis, which might well have touched on more political significant developments in Russian–European relations than was the case in this interesting, but ultimately not quite satisfying volume.

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