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On So-Called Russian Euroasianism: In Reply to Dmitry Shlapentokh

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Dmitry Shlapentokh's article on Russian Eurasianism [*Comparative Civilizations Review*: No. 81. 9-29, 2019] contains a number of questionable statements without any attempt at documentation in support of his thesis. For example, in explaining why his version of "Eurasianism" was marginalized in the "West," he states Western observers approached Russia from the perspective that "the triumph of American-type capitalism ...shall be the *omega point* of all humanity, including Russia." [emphasis in the original]. Moreover, "Gorbachev and Yeltsin were *deeply hated by the majority.*" [My emphasis.] No references are cited in support of these extraordinary statements, which would indeed require some impossible poll of the perspective of such observers. Ironically, according to the web site of his own institution, although born in the Ukraine, Shlapentokh has been in the West at least since the 1980s, [<https://clas.iusb.edu/history/faculty-and-staff/shlapentokh.html>, accessed October 21, 2019], so he is a "Western observer" himself.

He also provides in the guise of his academic approach an egregious defense of Putin's expansionism: Putin, Shlapentokh informs us,

- 1) "engaged in conflict with Ukraine *only* because the majority of Russian-speaking East Ukrainians indeed wanted to be closer to Russia than to Kiev"[my emphasis], that
- 2) "losing the Black Sea fleet Crimean ports would have been a strategic blow against Russia's geopolitical position" and
- 3) "...there was no desire [by Putin] to expand to territories with non-Russian-speaking people hostile to Moscow."

These are extraordinary examples of what may be termed Putinophilia, or in analogy to the USSR, Putinism.

Shlapentokh misstates Putin's "desires," which are clearly to reestablish for Russia the role of the former USSR. A former KGB officer, he is simply shrewd enough to calculate the cost-benefit equation in how far he can push Russia's position, either by small wars or military adventures as in Georgia or the Crimea, or indirectly by aiding tyrants elsewhere as in Syria, without provoking a hot war. Shlapentokh can't possibly know that Putin has no desire to expand into the other former USSR republics. If there is anything to learn from history, it is that we can no more believe Putin than any other dictator.