

## PREFACE

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This collection is based on the papers presented at the International Symposium coupled with the International Workshop by Junior Scholars “Emerging Meso-Areas in the Former Socialist Countries: Histories Revived or Improvised?” (Hokkaido University, 28-31 January 2004). This was the first international event of the Twenty-First Century COE Program “Making a Discipline of Slavic Eurasian Studies: Meso-Areas and Globalization” (2003-2008), financed by the Japan Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The purpose of this program is to reconstruct the framework of area studies of the former socialist territories (named Slavic Eurasia in this collection). For this purpose we proposed a new concept of meso-areas. The collapse of the socialist regimes in 1989-1991 seemed to imply the demise of the most distinguishing common particularities of Slavic Eurasia. Since then the area study framework that had been applied to this region diversified ceaselessly into Central European, Baltic, Caucasian, Ukrainian, Central Asian and other studies. As a matter of fact, it appears difficult to categorize the Czech Republic, Turkmenistan and the Far North of Russia as the same “area.” During the 1990s a quasi-discipline, that is, transition studies, covered these territories, but the transition of these territories to one or another type of capitalism has largely finished.

Undoubtedly, the self-assertion of Baltic, Ukrainian, Central Asian, Caucasian and other studies has a number of merits. For example, by this territorial specialization it will become easier to provide graduate students with language education and to find financial support from the private sector which, as a rule, is interested in one or another relatively narrow, concrete region rather than in abstract mega-regions such as Slavic Eurasia. However, if the dismal situation whereby the specialists of the Baltic countries have quite poor knowledge of the Visegrad countries (and vice versa) or the specialists of Russia know very little about Ukraine and Belarus (and vice versa) continues, these narrowly defined area studies will soon run out of their innovative potential. Comparison and deconstruction of spatial perception are the vital tools of any area study.

There are several reasons for the excessive territorial specialization of the former socialist studies during the last fifteen years. First of all, many scholars continue to believe that only Soviet socialism coercively and artificially integrated Slavic Eurasia. Therefore, once Soviet socialism fell, they argue, the studies of the former socialist countries should diversify according to their actual (unfortunately disrupted by Soviet socialism) peculiarities. Another reason is the fact that Russia and Russian scholars have not played their legitimate role in the study of the former socialist countries. As a rule, former suzerains play an important role in the study of their former colonies for a long time (consider the role of France and Japan in the studies of Vietnam and Taiwan respectively). In contrast, Russian scholars have very limited influence in Baltic or Ukrainian studies. I even heard that the Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg (BAN) ceased to compile Ukrainian and Belarusian literature. This tragic situation does not stop Russian historians from criticizing "Ukrainian ethnocentric historiography." Even the fact that they, as a rule, do not read Ukrainian and Belarusian cannot be the reason to make them hesitant. In addition to Russian ethnic prejudice, this situation was caused by the academic structure inherited from the Soviet Union, which imposed the studies of union republics on themselves, in other words, "regionalized" these studies.<sup>1</sup>

The previous area studies supposed a significant homogeneity and one-tier structure of areas. Globalization has damaged the persuasiveness of this strategy for understanding these areas. Europe, Asia and many other areas of the world share the "identity crisis" which Slavic Eurasia has suffered during the last fifteen years. Today we do not know where Europe begins and ends. Our program argues that the territories which were traditionally named "areas" proved to be conglomerates of meso-areas and therefore have at least two tiers (a mega-area composed of meso-areas). The peculiarities of meso-areas remain latent in times of stability but become self-assertive when they face external impact, such as globalization and the collapse of socialist regimes.

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<sup>1</sup> Some Russian academic institutions try to overcome this structural problem. For example, the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences introduced the Division of Eastern Slavs under the leadership of Leonid Gorizontov to cover Ukraine and Belarus.

It is obvious that the self-assertion of meso-areas has been motivated by their interaction with their neighboring outer worlds. For example, the emergence of the Baltic/Visegrad, Central Eurasian, and Russian Far Eastern meso-areas has been affected by the EU expansion, Islamic revival, and economic growth of the East Asian “tigers” respectively. Unsurprisingly, these interactions have various forms and intensities. On the other hand, centripetal factors, such as Eurasian mentalities (relatively undeveloped national consciousness because of constant migration of the population, fatalism, populism and yearning for heroes, to name but a few) and painful experiences of socialism and capitalist transition, continue to integrate the Slavic Eurasian mega-area.

Meso-areas can be multinational (the Baltic/Visegrad meso-area), transnational (the Central Eurasian meso-area composed of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Russian Volga-Ural region), or subnational (the Russian Far East). With the passage of time, a meso-area may (1) become a new independent mega-area, (2) become incorporated into the neighboring mega-area or the former outer world, (3) continue to be dependent on the host mega-area despite its self-assertion (in other words, the host mega-area will preserve a certain wholeness as a loose conglomerate of meso-areas) for a significant time, or (4) become reunited into the former host mega-area, weakening its self-assertion. In my view, the most probable scenario for meso-areas of Slavic Eurasia is the third option. This is why we believe in the analytical potential of our program’s main concepts.

The self-assertion of meso-areas is simultaneously a result of and a resistance to globalization. A meso-area emerges even despite its collective “rejection symptoms” against the norms imposed by outer actors. The EU expansion to the Baltic/Visegrad meso-area was a result of globalization and, at the same time, the resistance to globalization under American hegemony. However, this cannot but produce euro-skepticism in the “New Europe” (see below). By the same token, the resurgence of Salafism (fundamentalism) in the Islamic world is a resistance to the globalization under American hegemony and this resistance has penetrated into the Central Eurasian meso-area. However, Central Eurasian Islam has its own peculiarities (for example, the predominance of the Shafii school of law and the strong Sufist tradition in Dagestan) distinguished from Arab or Turkish Islam. Encounters with

Arab or Turkish Islam often make Central Eurasian Muslims more conscious of their own “traditional Islam” and induce them to build an independent Muslim world.

Overall, the concept of meso-areas enables us to recognize the dynamism of “areas” (mega-areas) as an arena of competition between centrifugal and centripetal forces. Exploiting this concept, we may understand the peculiarities of regions clearer through macro-regional comparison. This concept is interdisciplinary by nature since it pays attention to the interaction between international influence on a region as well as its historical background, the significance of its location, and its natural and cultural surroundings. This concept facilitates empirical analyses of international relations beyond the narrow scope of interstate relations. This concept is in particular useful for the analyses of newly independent states which have been vulnerable to the international environment and still have amorphous state identities.

This collection is composed of five parts and eighteen chapters. Since these parts and chapters are structured clearly, I do not think it necessary to provide a detailed explanation of each of them here. Instead, I will discuss the explicit and latent polemics revealed in the symposium. The first issue concerns the extent to which meso-areas are analytic (constructive) or, on the contrary, ontological (really existing) categories. In other words, should meso-areas be constructed for one or another research purpose or should they be considered representative of certain geo-cultural homogeneities and the collective consciousness of the population. There seems little room for doubt that Central Eurasia, covering the vast and remotely located territories of Central Asia, Caucasus, and the Volga-Ural region of Russia can only be analytical. However, some authors of this collection argue that even the Visegrad/Baltic meso-area, which seemed homogeneous and definitely had collective consciousness in its way with regard to the EU accession, is dissolving quickly. This question is combined with another problem, namely, to what extent the location of a country or territory matters in the era of globalization.

Once accepted into the EU, the Baltic/Visegrad countries immediately realized that they were not equal with “Old Europe.” This might strengthen the identity of this “New Europe,” which often results in its alliance with the United States against “Old Europe,” as was shown

by the diplomatic game around the Iraq War. On the other hand, Vello Pettai (Chapter 3) challenges Ieda's structure-oriented arguments presented in Chapter 1 by adding the factor of agents (actors) to the theoretical framework of meso-areas. Because of their successful accession to the EU the Visegrad/Baltic countries have lost their common purpose. Pettai argues that policy preferences of the government often matter more than the country's historical background. For example, market-oriented Estonia prefers to ally with Britain, the US, and the Nordic countries rather than with the social democratic "Old Europe," let alone its neighbor Latvia, with which Estonia has a shared history. An interesting remark is that the dichotomy of Northern and Southern Europe, characteristic of the Renaissance period, replaced the Western and Eastern European dichotomy, which became prevalent after the Enlightenment, at least in Estonians' minds.<sup>2</sup> There is an argument that the Nordic identity of Latvia (as well as Estonia) has deeper historical roots than the policy preferences of these countries.<sup>3</sup> Vitaly Merkushev's discussion in Chapter 17 also demonstrates that policy choices (in the case of visa-regimes, Merkushev bears in mind policies made by not only sovereign states but also international entities) affect the meso- and mega-area formation drastically.

One thing seems clear: the geographic identity of the three Baltic states was a consequence, at most, of the events in the twentieth century, such as the fragile independence during the interwar period, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and the Soviet occupation. This identity culminated in the "human chain" in 1990, which combined the three capitals of these republics, but split into three separate identities after their independence. Nevertheless, I dare say that if Estonia and Latvia have actually become Nordic countries, specialists of Finland or Denmark should be able to analyze the problems that these countries are facing better than specialists of Slavic Eurasia (or post-communism). Like it or not, such an academic situation will not emerge in the coming few decades.

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<sup>2</sup> The empirical data on which Pettai's argument relies are provided in his "Narratives and Political Development in the Baltic States: History Revised and Improvised," *Ab Imperio* 1 (2004), pp. 405-432.

<sup>3</sup> Valters Ščerbinskis, "Looking for Neighbors: Origins and Development of Latvian Rhetoric on Nordic 'Closeness'," Marco Lehti and David J. Smith, *Post-Cold War Identity Politics. Northern and Baltic Experiences* (London, Portland, 2003), pp. 157-172.

As already mentioned, another dismantling factor of the Visegrad/Baltic identity would seem to be the “reemergence of Rzeczpospolita [the Polish-Lithuanian state],” which lies beyond the boundaries between the EU and CIS, as is indirectly argued by Yaroslav Hrytsak, Andrzej Nowak and Darius Staliūnas. Despite the vast difference of their political choices in the post-communist era, the former Rzeczpospolita, i.e. Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Belarus, have common political characteristics, such as semipresidentialism (in contrast to parliamentarism in the former “German,” including Ostzei/Estonia and Latvia, territories) and the protesting/volatile voting behavior of the population. During the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine (2004) such leaders as Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Valdas Adamkus, and even Lech Wałęsa expressed their will to mediate the conflicting parties. Without a sense of common fate shared by the countries deriving from the former Polish-Lithuanian state this kind of intervention would not have taken place. Recent events, the victory of this “Orange Revolution” and the vigorous resurgence of Catholicism in Right Bank Ukraine and Western Belarus might possibly strengthen the homogeneity of the former Polish-Lithuanian territories.

Another issue raised in the symposium was to what extent location matters. It is true that the events in the Visegrad/Baltic countries, Central Eurasia, and the Russian Far East cannot be understood without considering their proximities to “Old Europe,” the Middle East and the East Asia/Pacific Rims. As was shown by the example of the quick demise of the Baltic identity, however, neighboring location does not always matter. From the historical point of view, Marina Mogilner (Chapter 13) and Norihisa Yamashita (Chapter 15) argue that if we focus on the relations between mega-areas (empires), what matters is common values and ethics, not geographic proximity.

The discussion at the symposium confirmed a widely recognized fact that we cannot reconstruct spatial perceptions in the post-communist territories without rejecting nation-based interpretations of histories and contemporary situations of these territories. Yaroslav Hrytsak (Chapter 2) explains the formation of the Ukrainian nation and identity as a result of multi-layered, complex interactions of the Steppe, Rus', Polish, Habsburg, Russian imperial, and Soviet

traditions.<sup>4</sup> Dmitry Gorenburg (Chapter 4) proposes a concept of mesonations, an example of which is the Tatars. Their relations with the meganation (meaning Russians in the case of the Tatars) change according to political conjuncture, exactly as meso-areas begin to assert themselves when the mega-area they belong to faces crisis. Chapter 12 by Andrzej Nowak describes the centuries of vacillation which the Poles experienced between imperial and purely ethnic identities. Nowak finds a crucial factor in this process in ethnic Poland's relations with the former territories of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (the present Lithuania, Belarus and Right Bank Ukraine), thus confirming the argument presented in Chapter 14 by Darius Staliūnas. The chapters by Hrytsak, Nowak and Staliūnas make us understand why ethnocentric historiographies could not have become dominant in these countries, which seemed quite nationalistic in their struggle against Moscow, in the post-communist era. The experience of an empire or mega-area (the Polish-Lithuanian state) in the medieval and early modern periods left the concept of "political nation," which counterbalanced the ethnocentric historiographies and political actions in times, for example, of Romantic nationalism from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries and of Perestroika.

Another issue of the symposium was the strength of the centrifugal and centripetal forces affecting Slavic Eurasia: whether this mega-area will remain as such or be torn apart in the twenty-first century. Chapters 10 and 11 by Dmitry Makarov and by Magomed-Rasul Ibragimov and Kimitaka Matsuzato provide case studies of interaction of external temptation and internal cohesion affecting a peculiar Slavic Eurasian region, namely Dagestan. Both chapters argue against the overestimated understanding of the danger of "Wahhabism" in the North Caucasus. Makarov analyses the inherent limitations of the Salafite movement in Dagestan and Chechnia. Ibragimov and Matsuzato describe the unexpected stability of Dagestan's socio-political structure, focusing on territorial communities (jamaats) and the Sufi tradition. Generally, in contrast to Visegrad/ Baltic countries' approach to the European mega-

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<sup>4</sup> This approach is timely also because the turmoil caused by the presidential elections in 2004 again provoked the banal bipolar understanding of Ukraine: the pro-Russian Eastern and the pro-European Western Ukraine.

area, which has actually been accompanied by structural changes of their societies, Central Eurasia's approach to the Islamic world has only declarative characteristics or is just a journalistic exaggeration. This is also confirmed by Chapter 18, by Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, who analyzes Tatarstan's paradiplomacy.

The analytical flexibility of the concept of meso-areas was proved by Part II, devoted to collective case studies of an Orthodox and reform-slacking meso-area composed of Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova. Based on wide-ranging public opinion surveys, Chapter 5 by Stephen White and Ian McAllister concludes that Moldova looks too exceptional to be categorized into any of the meso-areas in Slavic Eurasia. Citizens of this country have tangibly preserved Soviet values but are salient in their pro-Western (pro-EU and pro-NATO) orientation. However, I am obliged to add that a similar "contradiction" is also observed in Ukraine, as Yaroslav Hrytsak demonstrates. Chapters 6 and 7 by Shinkichi Fujimori and Oleksandr Syniokkyi focus on two determining factors of Ukrainian politics, patrimonial clientalism and strong presidentialism. These chapters were written before the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine, but they explain not only the background of this "revolution" but also the objective limitations of Ukrainian politics, which will prevent us from idealizing this "revolution."<sup>5</sup> Chapters 8 and 9 by Andrei Lobatch and Go Koshino propose new approaches to Belarusian politics. Lobatch explains the mechanism of "verbal Eurasianization" (the phraseology of the unification with Russia) exploited by A. Lukashenka to make his regime more legitimate, which is comparable to the function of "verbal Europeanization" in Ukrainian and Moldavian politics. Koshino's chapter revises the widespread stereotype of the weakness of Belarusians' national identity and argues that mixed language use and the artificial creation of a Belarusian pornographic lexicon, both of which are byproducts of the "weak national identity," might enrich the possibilities of Belarusian literature.

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<sup>5</sup> Recently, Henry Hale proposed a concept of "patronal presidentialism" to explain why these apparently invincible regimes based on clientalism and strong presidency can be defeated in elections. See his paper "Institutions and Transitions: The Russian Federation and Ukraine," presented at the International Symposium "Reconstruction and Interaction of Slavic Eurasia and Its Neighboring Worlds" (Hokkaido University, 8-10 December 2004).



Chapter 16 focused on an unrecognized state in the post-communist territories, Abkhazia, was included in this collection not because of the assumption that a “clash of civilizations” (between mega- or meso-areas) caused the military conflicts around this issue. On the contrary, I believe that these conflicts have deeply subjective characteristics. Unrecognized states attract our attention because this issue reveals the multiple layered characteristics of the conflicts in the post-communist territories. At the global level we face a lack of rules to recognize the territories requesting independence and the geopolitical rivalry between the US, Russia and “Old Europe,” for example, around the Trans-Caspian pipelines. At the regional level (composed of the meso-area and the neighboring outer countries) we find the unexpected influence of regional powers, such as Turkey, Iran, Ukraine, and Romania, on the problem of unrecognized states. At the host state level we should pay attention to the “role” of the Transnistrian, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Abkhazian problems in the domestic politics of Moldova, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. At the territorial level we will be surprised to recognize that we know almost nothing about the political regimes and societies of these unrecognized states.

The last thing to remark upon in this introduction is the rules for transcription. In principle, this collection transcribes Cyrillic into Latin letters. However, for Chapter 9, devoted to Belarusian literature, transcription would create unnecessary difficulties for readers (in particular, specialists of the issue) and, therefore, we did not transcribe Cyrillic letters. We rely upon the standard Library of Congress system, so we, in principle, use “ia,” “iu,” and “e” (not “ya,” “yu,” and “ye”) for Russian я, ю, and е. However, proper nouns widely accepted in English-speaking countries (such as Yeltsin, Yushchenko, Yanukovych, and Yuliia Tymoshenko) and the names of the participants in this collection with a preference for other rules (such as Yaroslav, not Iaroslav, and Dmitry, not Dmitrii) are exceptions to this rule. We relied upon contemporary English place names (Warsaw, not Warszawa; St. Petersburg, not Sankt-Peterburg; Moscow, not Moskva), but when the place names *per se* are political issues (Kiev or Kyiv; Minsk or Mensk), we relied upon the preference of the quoted authors.