Simply put, *Eurasian* equates with neocolonial, thus negating the *postcolonial* in the above title.

Larissa Onyshkevych
Shevchenko Scientific Society

Reply:

From her letter, I have a feeling that Larissa Onyshkevych thinks that *Eurasia* means the forced integration of Ukraine into a Russian-led empire. My use of the expression was simply to acknowledge that the post-Soviet areas are not simply "Europe." I hope this will satisfy her. As a longstanding worker in the field of postcoloniality, I have no interest in endorsing new imperialisms.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak
Columbia University

Reply:

I appreciate Larissa Onyshkevych's contribution to the conference debate "Are We Postcolonial? Post-Soviet Space," in which she suggests that *postcolonial* and *Eurasia* are mutually canceling concepts. "*Eurasian*," she suggests unequivocally, "equates with neocolonial." In one sense, we are in agreement: my passing use of the term (830) invoked Eurasia and the Soviet space as more or less coterminous.

Here is where we differ: it makes urgent sense to distinguish among three spheres of meaning for *Eurasia*. As Onyshkevych knows, the early or classical Eurasia belongs to the Russian émigré community in Europe from the 1920s to the interwar period, whose leaders included the structural linguist Nikolai Trubetskoi (1890–1938), Petr Savitskii (1895–1968), and others. Their central concerns were less the continuity and preservation of the empire (the dynastic empire, after all, had fallen, and they were hardly supporters of the Soviet version) than its differentiation from (and resistance to) a doomed and waning Europe in favor of the contributions of Russia's "Asian" expanses, not only Turkic-Mongol influences but also Finno-Ugric. The appeal and influence of classical Eurasianism can be discerned to this day in both elite and popularized forms, such as the state-sponsored Russian television serial *Death of the Empire*, which enjoys a similar Spenglerian and Nietzschean incandescence.

A second cluster of meaning around *Eurasia*—through such transitional, warring figures as the "ethnogeneticist" Lev Gumilev (1912–92) and the ethnographer Iuliian Bromlei—pertains more directly to Onyshkevych's concerns. Arguing in favor of a cultural affinity between Russia and Central Asia, the political activist Aleksandr Dugin, founder in 2002 of the Eurasia Party, has advocated an "imperial conglomeration of the oriental nations, united round Russia" as its "heartland" (http://utenti.lycos.it/EurasianWebSite/dugin_mnb_eng.html). Attention paid to this concept by such political figures as Kyrgyzstan's first president, Askar Akaev, and the current Kazakhstan president, Nursultan Nazarbaev, suggests that there is indeed much in this conservative—and, in some respects, racist—movement worthy of caution. Of course, it would be as much a mistake to ignore the differences between the classical and contemporary Eurasianists as it would be to conflate Dugin's national-Bolshevik politics with Vladimir Putin's rather consistent neoimperial tactics, yet a certain historical overlay and continuity of interests exists. It is to this potential vested interest in neocontainment that Onyshkevych presumably refers.

A third cluster, which I describe without advocacy, is the search within the academic community for ways to preserve shared research interests, data, and funding. In this context, the comparatist spirit signaled by *Eurasia* no more endorses neocontainment than the profession's earlier study of communism endorsed Marxism-Leninism or the study of empire today endorses neoimperialism. Were we philosophers, I suppose we might describe this as the fact-value distinction.

If indeed (as the letter suggests) "*Eurasian* equates with neocolonial," then by this logic neocolonialism has odd bedfellows. The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs (State Department), the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies (Harvard), the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, and the Eurasia Program (Social Science Research Council), as well as the profession's major journals, such as *Slavic Review* ("American quarterly of Russian, Eurasian, and East European Studies") and *Kritika* ("Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History"), would be advocates of neocolonialism—that is to say, a

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