



Invitation

Colloquium on Postsecular Conflicts

Mikhail Suslov "Katechon and/or Kenosis: Locating Russian Geopolitical Visions within the Orthodox Intellectual Tradition"

Datum: Wednesday, 22nd June 2016

Zeit: 18:00 Uhr

Ort: Russlandzentrum der Universität Innsbruck, Herzog-Friedrich-Straße 3, 6020 Innsbruck

Speaking about religious roots of Russia's geopolitical visions, one would immediately identify the Messianic tradition of thinking about Russia as the 'Third Rome' meaning the last and the only legitimate Christian state in the world. I will argue, however, that the relationship between the Orthodox intellectual context and Russian geopolitical culture is more complex and paradoxical. Following Axel Honneth's theorization of the problem of recognition, this study claims that Russia's geopolitical identity was historically shaped by the experience of unrecognition (or imaginary lack of recognition) by geographically external constitutive "Other" – be it the Byzantine Empire or the "West". This experience of unrecognition produces Messianic visions of Russia as Katechon – a political body capable to postpone the coming of Antichrist, and thereby giving the humankind the second chance to redeem its sins before the end of the world. An alternative and equally powerful religious frame for geopolitical identity-making was derived from the hesychast concept of kenosis (self-belittling, self-emptying) - seeking of the union with God through humiliation. Drawing on critical geopolitics and conceptual history, this study uncovers and analyzes episodes of Russian intellectual history when the idea of self-belittling informed geopolitical culture. Importantly, the vision of Russia's childlike simplicity and humbleness, characteristic for example for Aleksei Khomiakov's version of Slavophilism, could well be interpreted as the pledge for its Messianic role in the world as God's principality. This paradoxical pulsation of the geopolitical image between humbleness and self-aggrandizement reverberates in today's debates about and around such concepts as "Holy Russia" and the "Russian World".

Mikhail Suslov is a Marie Curie researcher at the Uppsala Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University. He obtained his PhD in history from the European University Institute in Florence in 2009. His research interests include Russian, and post-Soviet intellectual history, conservative and right-wing political ideology, critical geopolitics, conceptual history of the Russian Orthodox Church. His current study deals with the post-Soviet geopolitical ideas and new media.

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