

From Pan-Slavic Solidarity to Democratic Statehood: Masaryk's Progressive Pan-Slavism and Czechoslovak Nation- Building

Rui Yang

Shanghai International Studies University, School of Russian and Eurasian Studies, Shanghai,
China

ABSTRACT

This article examines the evolution of Pan-Slavist thought in the Czech lands and its implications for Czechoslovak nation-building from the nineteenth century to the end of the First World War. It argues that Pan-Slavism should not be understood as a unitary ideological tradition, but rather as a contested intellectual field that generated competing political narratives regarding Czech national development. The article identifies two principal strands of traditional Pan-Slavism: Russophile Pan-Slavism, which envisioned Slavic unity under Russian leadership, and Austro-Slavism, which advocated Slavic autonomy through federal reform within the Habsburg imperial framework. Although these two traditions differed in their geopolitical orientation and institutional prescriptions, both emphasized political order, social stability, and gradual reform. The article further argues that Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk developed a distinctive form of progressive Pan-Slavism that departed from both Russophile and Austro-Slavist projects. Rejecting political dependence on Russia and increasingly abandoning the prospect of federal reform within Austria-Hungary, Masaryk linked Czech national self-determination to liberal democracy, humanitarianism, and moral renewal. His critique of revolutionary violence, informed by concerns comparable to Burkean reflections on radical political rupture, positioned non-violent reform, rational political action, and ethical transformation as the legitimate foundations of nation-building. By reframing the Czech question as part of a broader international struggle for democracy and humanitarian values, Masaryk provided an intellectual justification for the establishment of Czechoslovakia as an independent democratic state in 1918. The article thus demonstrates that Masaryk's progressive Pan-Slavism represented a critical transformation of Slavic solidarity from an ethnocultural or imperial framework into a democratic project of national self-determination.

KEYWORDS

Pan-Slavism; Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk; Czechoslovak Nation-building; National Self-determination; Humanitarianism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, Czech society and politics confronted a complex constellation of external pressures and internal challenges. As part of the Habsburg Monarchy, and later the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Czechs occupied a relatively disadvantaged position within a multi-ethnic imperial structure. During this period, the Czech National Revival emerged as a crucial marker of the awakening of Czech national consciousness. Pan-Slavism, as an intellectual current advocating solidarity among Slavic peoples, gradually acquired an important place in Czech political culture.

As both a cultural ideal and a political doctrine, Pan-Slavism not only contributed to shaping Czech perceptions of national belonging, but also influenced, to a certain extent, the relationship between the Czechs and other Slavic peoples within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Its emergence and development, particularly its entanglement with liberal and illiberal political currents, formed an essential part of the complex political and cultural context of modern Czech history.

In debates over the political future of the Czech lands and, subsequently, the post-war Czech state, Czech proponents of Pan-Slavism articulated three distinct political projects and national narratives. The first was a traditional Russophile Pan-Slavism grounded in the notion of common Slavic ethnic origins. The second was Austro-Slavism, which envisaged a federal restructuring of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a means of securing the political rights and autonomy of its Slavic peoples. Distinct from both of these traditions was the progressive version of Pan-Slavism associated with Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. Masaryk sought to combine Slavic cultural identity with democratic and liberal principles, arguing that Slavic peoples should pursue freedom and national self-determination. He advocated the establishment of an independent Czechoslovak nation-state through peaceful, rational, and gradual reform, while also promoting diplomatic and cultural cooperation between Czechoslovakia and other Slavic states.

2. THE ORIGINS AND CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS OF PAN-SLAVISM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

As an intellectual tradition that profoundly influenced the cultural and political development of Slavic peoples in Europe, Pan-Slavism can be traced in part to the cultural transmission of German Romantic nationalism in the nineteenth century. It was particularly inspired by Johann Gottfried Herder's discussion of the distinctive character and historical destiny of the Slavic peoples in the fourth volume of *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity (Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit)*.^[1] Herder portrayed the Slavs as mild, peaceful, and historically oppressed, while predicting their eventual emancipation from subordination. This form of cultural relativism provided Slavic cultures with a broader framework of historical destiny and circulated widely among Slavic intellectual communities within the Habsburg Monarchy.

In the early nineteenth century, intellectuals such as Josef Dobrovský further contributed to the cultural foundations of Pan-Slavism through their studies of Old Church Slavonic and the Cyrillic script. These scholarly efforts revived interest in the medieval polity of Great Moravia, often regarded in Czech historical narratives as an important source of early statehood, and encouraged theoretical reflections on the revival of Slavic history, language, and culture. Pan-Slavism consequently assumed a dual function within the Czech National Revival. On the one hand, it became a central component of cultural identification, enabling Czech intellectuals to distinguish the Czechs from the German-speaking population inhabiting the same territory.^[2] On the other hand, Pan-Slavism gradually became intertwined with Czech political aspirations. The First Slavic Congress, convened in Prague in 1848, marked an important transition from Pan-Slavism as a predominantly cultural doctrine to a more concrete form of political engagement. Leading figures of the Czech National Revival, including František Palacký and Karel Havlíček Borovský, actively participated in the congress and used it as a platform to advocate the shared interests and political freedoms of the Slavic peoples. During and toward the end of the First World War, Czech political leaders such as Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk further combined Pan-Slavic ideas with progressive liberal principles, thereby contributing to the democratic state-building process of Czechoslovakia.^[2]

Pan-Slavism promoted cultural solidarity and political links among Slavic peoples, emphasizing collective unity, autonomy, and national independence. It therefore received considerable support among Czech cultural and political elites. Within this historical context, the Czech political spectrum gradually became divided between pro-Western, often pro-Austrian, orientations and pro-Russian positions, generating significant internal tensions. This divide was not merely a matter of foreign-

policy preference; it also deeply shaped the formation of Czech national identity and political positioning.

More specifically, Czech proponents of Pan-Slavism advanced three distinct political projects and national narratives concerning the future organization of the Czech nation and, subsequently, the Czechoslovak state. These competing visions reflected the plurality of perspectives within Czech national and political development. They also reveal how Czech political actors, confronted with both external pressure and domestic disagreement, sought to articulate alternative paths for national development within a broader Slavic framework.

3. STATE-BUILDING NARRATIVES IN TRADITIONAL PAN-SLAVISM

During the final decades of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, two principal strands of traditional Pan-Slavist thought emerged in the Czech lands: a Russophile form of Pan-Slavism and a pro-Austrian variant commonly referred to as Austro-Slavism. Although the two differed substantially in their preferred routes toward national development, both were influenced by a Burkean understanding of liberalism, particularly in their emphasis on social order and stability, their opposition to violent revolution, and their preference for gradual reform.

3.1. Traditional Russophile Pan-Slavism

The ideas advanced by Russophile Czech Pan-Slavists originated in the nineteenth-century revival movements among Slavic peoples. Their central objective was to promote the cultural and political unification of the Slavs, particularly under Russian leadership, as a means of achieving Slavic solidarity and independence. They regarded linguistic, cultural, and historical affinities among Slavic peoples as the foundation of collective unity. Through the cultivation of shared language and culture, they believed that divisions among individual Slavic nations could be overcome, ultimately creating the conditions for political unification.

This intellectual orientation gained broad support among Czech political and cultural elites and exerted a particularly strong influence on Slavic thinkers such as Ján Kollár and Pavel Jozef Šafárik. Both sought to transcend existing national and ethnic boundaries in order to promote the formation of a unified Slavic cultural community. In *The Daughter of Sláva* (*Slávy dcera*), published in 1824, Kollár articulated an emotional and normative appeal for Slavic unity and expressed an emerging Pan-Slavic consciousness. Through the words of the female protagonist, the work emphasizes the multiple national identities of the Slavs—Russian, Serbian, Czech, and Polish—while simultaneously urging them to recognize a more encompassing Slavic identity. Kollár's message was clear: Slavic peoples should not define themselves solely through particular national labels, but should also identify themselves as members of a broader Slavic community. He further argued that, after the voices of other nations had been heard, the time had come for the Slavs to articulate their own historical and political aspirations. For Kollár, Slavic unity was not merely an expression of cultural identity; it was also a prerequisite for political independence and freedom.[3]

Within this framework, Russophile Czech Pan-Slavists regarded Russia as the leading force of the Slavic world. They argued that Slavic peoples should unite under Russian guidance in order to resist Western domination and external intervention. Russia was therefore idealized as a decisive source of support for Slavic independence and liberation. This political orientation also entailed a critical assessment of the West, which was portrayed as having constrained the autonomy and cultural self-awareness of Slavic peoples. From this perspective, close cooperation with Russia offered a means through which Slavic nations could resist Western interference and pursue national freedom and equality.

3.2. Austro-Slavism

Austro-Slavism constituted an important branch of nineteenth-century Czech Pan-Slavist thought. It advocated the political and cultural cooperation of Slavic peoples within the institutional framework of the Austrian Empire.[3] Unlike more traditional forms of Pan-Slavism, which emphasized the complete political independence of Slavic nations, Austro-Slavism adopted a more pragmatic approach. It maintained that Slavic peoples should seek autonomy and political rights within the existing imperial order rather than pursue immediate separation from it.

This position was associated primarily with Czech thinkers such as František Palacký and Karel Havlíček Borovský. They argued that, under the international conditions of the time, the establishment and survival of small, independent Slavic states would be difficult to achieve. Slavic peoples should therefore seek freedom and national development within a larger and more stable political entity.

Federalism formed the core of Austro-Slavist thought and was regarded as an effective institutional mechanism for securing Slavic self-identification and cultural revival.[3] Palacký and Havlíček acknowledged the limitations of the Austrian Empire, yet they also considered it a relatively secure political framework for Slavic peoples, particularly the Czechs and Slovaks. Through an Austro-Slavist arrangement, Slavic communities could defend their political position within the empire while avoiding excessive interference from external great powers, especially Russia and Germany.

In contrast to more radical Pan-Slavist projects, Austro-Slavism did not regard the Austrian Empire as an inherent enemy of the Slavs. Rather, it envisioned the empire as a potential platform for Slavic unity, political participation, and cultural development. Although Austro-Slavism advocated Slavic solidarity, it did not seek to establish a fully independent Slavic state. Instead, it held that the growing influence of great-power politics rendered the survival of small sovereign states increasingly difficult. Slavic peoples should therefore pursue cultural and political autonomy through federal restructuring within an Austro-Slavist framework. In this respect, Austro-Slavism combined liberal and federalist principles, proposing that the Slavs could secure meaningful space for national development within the Austrian imperial order.

Nevertheless, Austro-Slavism faced considerable challenges. Political and cultural differences among Slavic peoples—including Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, and Ukrainians—created substantial obstacles to the formation of a unified political project. Moreover, Austro-Slavism failed to resolve the tensions between Slavic peoples and German-speaking political forces within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which further constrained its practical implementation. Despite these limitations, Austro-Slavism occupied an important position in Czech political thought as a pragmatic political doctrine and influenced, to some extent, the development of Czech and other Slavic national movements.

Overall, Austro-Slavism advocated Slavic unity and autonomy within the Austrian imperial framework. By combining federalism with liberal political principles, it sought to promote the political and cultural development of Slavic peoples under existing institutional conditions. Unlike the more idealistic strands of Pan-Slavism, Austro-Slavism emphasized the pursuit of national development through federal reform in the context of practical politics. Although confronted with significant internal and external constraints, it nevertheless offered Czech nationalism a comparatively moderate political alternative.

4. STATE-BUILDING NARRATIVES IN MASARYK'S PROGRESSIVE PAN-SLAVISM

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk was deeply influenced by Slavic thought, an influence that is evident in his critical interpretation of the Czech question. Although he inherited certain core ideas from the broader Slavic intellectual tradition, Masaryk's position differed substantially from traditional conservatism

and revealed a more active, progressive, and nationally oriented political disposition. In the course of his intellectual development, Slavic ideas were reconfigured within his political thought, giving rise to a distinctive interpretation of Czech nationalism and national development.

Unlike traditional Pan-Slavists, Masaryk's progressive Pan-Slavism introduced a new perspective on nation-building. While retaining the ideal of solidarity among Slavic peoples, he placed particular emphasis on the critique of violent revolution and demonstrated a profound caution toward radical political transformation. This position reflected a Burkean concern with the destructive consequences of French-style radical liberalism. Masaryk's political philosophy, especially his reflections on violence and revolutionary radicalism, thus closely echoed Burke's distinction between the gradualist and institutionally grounded liberal tradition associated with Britain and the more radical revolutionary liberalism associated with France.

4.1. Masaryk as the “Father of the Nation” in Czechoslovakia

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937) was one of the most influential philosophers, sociologists, and statesmen in modern Czech history, occupying a central place in the cultural and political development of Czechoslovakia. Widely regarded as the “Father of the Nation,” Masaryk was not only a symbolic figure of the Czech national movement but also a decisive actor in the establishment and early consolidation of the Czechoslovak Republic. Through his critical engagement with the nationalities question in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he argued that the Czech nation should free itself from imperial constraints and pursue political independence. In this sense, his thought provided an important intellectual foundation for the creation of Czechoslovakia.

During the First World War, Masaryk worked closely with Eduard Beneš and Milan Rastislav Štefánik to secure international support for the Czechoslovak cause and to obtain recognition for the Czechoslovak National Council abroad. These efforts helped lay the diplomatic and political groundwork for the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. As its first president, Masaryk guided the new state toward diplomatic independence while also shaping its political foundations through his commitment to democracy, parliamentarism, and humanitarian values. He envisaged Czechoslovakia as a democratic state grounded in civic freedom and moral responsibility, rather than one defined by authoritarian or revolutionary alternatives.

Following Masaryk's death in 1937, his intellectual and political legacy continued to exert a profound influence in Czechoslovakia and, later, in the Czech Republic. In the post-war period, and particularly during the Prague Spring of 1968 and the Velvet Revolution of 1989, Masaryk's ideas of democracy, liberty, and civic responsibility provided an important symbolic and intellectual resource for efforts to restore political pluralism and democratic governance.

In contrast to traditional Russophile Pan-Slavism and Austro-Slavism, Masaryk's political philosophy offered a distinct pathway toward Czech and Czechoslovak state-building. Rather than locating national development primarily in dependence on Russia or in federal reform within the Habsburg framework, he articulated an independent democratic vision of nationhood that linked political sovereignty with liberal and humanitarian principles.

4.2. Masaryk's Attitude toward Violence and Radical Revolution

Masaryk maintained that violent revolution was incapable of realizing the freedom and equality it purported to advance. Rather than producing genuine emancipation, it intensified social disorder and injustice and ultimately undermined humanitarian ideals. This position bears a clear affinity with Edmund Burke's critique of the French Revolution in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Burke argued that revolutionary violence destroyed the organic order of society and eroded inherited institutions, customs, and moral values. For him, revolution involved not merely the overthrow of a political regime, but the disruption of the broader social structure and cultural tradition on which

political life depended. The use of violence produced social rupture, weakened the implicit social contract, and endangered fundamental human rights. Burke therefore advocated gradual and cautious reform rather than the violent destruction of the existing order. He warned that revolutionary violence was likely to generate further violence and could culminate in despotism and disorder rather than liberty and democracy.

Masaryk's position on violence and radical revolution was similarly rooted in his sustained critique of revolutionary violence and in his concern with the tension between violence and humanitarianism. He did not regard revolution as a process that could be justified merely by the use of force to achieve social or political change. Rather, he argued that any transformative political project should be directed toward higher humanitarian purposes. In Masaryk's view, the fundamental problem of violent revolution lay in the damage it inflicted upon human beings at the physical, spiritual, and moral levels. Revolutionary violence represented an assault on human integrity: it not only harmed the body but also generated enduring psychological and ethical consequences. Violence, therefore, should not be understood as the defining feature of revolution. The deeper meaning of revolution lay instead in intellectual and moral transformation.[4]

Masaryk's critique of violent revolution was grounded in his firm commitment to humanitarian ends. He argued that movements pursuing goals such as national self-determination, social justice, and democracy should avoid excessive reliance on coercion. Violent revolution, in his view, was unlikely to promote sustainable social progress; on the contrary, it risked deepening oppression and suffering, while generating further cycles of violence and injustice. Political change had to remain consistent with the principles of humanity and social justice rather than treating violence as an instrument for achieving political objectives. Masaryk accepted the use of force only under the limited condition of self-defence, regarding it as a last resort that could be justified solely in exceptional circumstances.

More broadly, Masaryk emphasized that the real force of revolution resided in changes in thought and moral consciousness rather than in the destruction of existing social structures. He considered gradual reform and rational political action more desirable than radical and violent methods. Violence, in his view, constituted a departure from humanitarian ideals. The ultimate purpose of political transformation should be the realization of freedom, equality, and justice-objectives that could be achieved only through intellectual awakening and moral renewal, rather than through violence or extreme forms of political action.

4.3. Masaryk's Critique of Russophile Pan-Slavism

Although modern Pan-Slavism emerged largely within Czech and Slovak intellectual circles, with Prague serving as one of its principal centres of development, Masaryk's political position differed fundamentally from the Russophile current of Pan-Slavism. While he was initially attracted by the romantic appeal of pro-Russian Slavic solidarity, his growing familiarity with Russian political realities led him to conclude that Russophile Pan-Slavism could not secure Czech autonomy. On the contrary, he increasingly regarded it as a potential obstacle to Czech national independence.

In 1914, Masaryk observed that pro-Russian sentiment was widespread in Czech society and that many Czechs hoped that reliance on Russia might contribute to national liberation. Yet he treated such expectations with deep scepticism. In his view, Russian autocracy and Russia's limited understanding of Czech political and cultural conditions would quickly undermine the pro-Russian sympathies prevalent among the Czechs. He warned that the arrival of a Russian prince or governor in the Czech lands would not bring the anticipated freedom and independence; instead, Russian intervention would likely produce political and cultural regression.

Masaryk therefore rejected the idealized image of Russia held by certain Czech political groups, which expected that an alliance with Russia could advance Czech freedom and democracy. He argued that Russia was unable to deliver genuine emancipation either to the Czechs or to other Slavic peoples.

The future of the Czech nation, in his view, had to rest on an independent and self-reliant political course rather than on dependence upon external patronage.[5]

Masaryk also criticized the underlying contradictions between Russia and the Czechs, as well as other West Slavic peoples. He maintained that Russia's model of rule was incompatible with Czech political ideals and that Russian concern for other Slavic nations often lacked both sincerity and practical commitment. Rather than relying on Russia, Masaryk advocated the cultivation of close ties with Western democratic states as a means of advancing Czech independence and national self-determination. He believed that the Czech political future should be linked to the democratic West—especially the United States—rather than entrusted to a Russia characterized, in his assessment, by political autocracy and limited cultural understanding of the Czech nation.[5]

4.4. Masaryk's Changing Attitude toward Austro-Slavism

Unlike his consistently critical attitude toward Russophile Pan-Slavism, Masaryk's relationship with Austro-Slavism underwent a significant transformation. Prior to the outbreak of the First World War, he could broadly be regarded as sympathetic to Austro-Slavist ideas. He advocated a degree of political loyalty to Austria and envisaged the possibility of securing Bohemian autonomy within a reformed Austrian framework. However, the outbreak of the war prompted a fundamental reassessment of the relationship between Austria and the Czech lands, as well as of the political strategies available to the Czech national movement.

As the war progressed, Masaryk became increasingly critical of Austria-Hungary and gradually committed himself to the cause of Czech independence. He came to support the establishment of an independent Czechoslovak nation-state. His divergence from Austro-Slavism centred on the future political framework of the Czech nation. Whereas Austro-Slavists sought to secure Slavic autonomy through federal reform within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Masaryk concluded that the Czech nation had to free itself from imperial constraints and pursue full political independence.[5]

Masaryk argued that Austro-Slavism underestimated the internal contradictions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the political instability inherent in its multi-ethnic structure. Although Austro-Slavists regarded the Austrian imperial framework as a relatively stable setting for Slavic development, Masaryk believed that intensifying national tensions and the empire's increasingly fragile institutional foundations rendered such an arrangement unsustainable. In his view, Austro-Slavism failed adequately to address the conflict between Slavic and German political forces, as well as the broader structural contradictions within the empire. These conditions made the realization of meaningful political and cultural autonomy through federal reform increasingly unrealistic.

Moreover, Masaryk maintained that the changing European political environment—particularly the decline of Austria-Hungary and the outbreak of the First World War—required the Czech and other Slavic peoples to emancipate themselves from the imperial framework. Only an independent nation-state, he argued, could provide an effective guarantee of Czech freedom, cultural identity, and political self-determination. Federalization within Austria-Hungary could no longer achieve these objectives. Masaryk therefore insisted that the Czech nation should not continue to rely on a weakening empire, but should pursue independence and establish a Czechoslovak state centred on Czech political leadership.

4.5. Masaryk's Narrative of Nation-Building

Masaryk's account of the construction of an independent Czechoslovak nation-state constituted an important intellectual foundation of modern Czech history. He was not only a committed advocate of Czech national self-determination, but also an active proponent of democratic and humanitarian values on a broader international scale. In Masaryk's view, the Czech question extended far beyond the narrow issue of national independence. It was inseparable from the realization of universal

humanitarianism and democratic principles. He therefore elevated the Czech question into a wider international problem, the resolution of which was closely linked to the global advance of democratic transformation.[6]

At the core of Masaryk's theory of nation-building was his emphasis on the internal foundations of Czech national identity. He rejected the notion that national independence could be secured primarily through external military power, economic strength, or demographic scale.[6] Instead, he maintained that Czech self-identification and freedom had to be rooted in culture, history, and moral values rather than in national myth-making or historical fabrication. Czech independence, in this sense, should rest on a commitment to humanitarian principles, particularly at a time when democratic ideas were gaining increasing influence internationally.

Masaryk's critique of the multi-ethnic imperial system was especially pronounced. He regarded multinational empires such as Austria-Hungary as political structures belonging to an outdated historical order. Within such systems, material interests and hierarchical power relations were privileged, while the principle of national autonomy remained insufficiently recognized.[7] Masaryk therefore argued that the Czechs and other subject peoples could not achieve genuine political independence or self-determination within the imperial framework. The Czech future, in his view, should no longer depend on a declining empire; it should instead be linked to the diffusion of democratic ideas and to the fundamental transformation of political institutions.

Masaryk further understood the early twentieth century as a period of historical rupture, in which the emergence of democratic ideals created new opportunities for nations to free themselves from imperial domination.[7] He believed that only when democracy became the central driving force of political change on a global scale could nations such as the Czechs attain genuine freedom and autonomy. Guided by this conviction, Masaryk conceptualized Czech independence as part of a broader international process of democratic and humanitarian progress. He consequently advocated the realization of Czech national self-determination through democratization and non-violent political means.

Masaryk not only criticized violent revolution but also reflected deeply on the tension between revolutionary violence and humanitarian ends. He maintained that political transformation should be achieved through gradual social reform, rational reflection, and moral renewal rather than through the violent overthrow of existing political structures.[6] For Masaryk, the true meaning of revolution lay in an intellectual and ethical transformation, not in the instrumental use of violence to attain political objectives. Only non-violent methods, combined with humanitarian ideals, could provide a sustainable basis for the realization of freedom, equality, and justice.

Masaryk's theory of Czechoslovak nation-state formation represented a practical articulation of national self-determination. By reframing the Czech question as a matter of broader international significance, he advanced a political vision in which Czech independence was to be achieved through democratization and adherence to humanitarian principles. This vision, in turn, contributed to the intellectual and political foundations for the establishment of Czechoslovakia as an independent state.

5. CONCLUSION

Pan-Slavism constituted an important intellectual resource for the development of modern Czech national consciousness and political thought. Emerging from the cultural revival of Slavic languages, history, and collective identity in the nineteenth century, it provided Czech intellectuals with a framework through which to distinguish the Czech nation from the dominant German-speaking political and cultural environment of the Habsburg Monarchy. At the same time, Pan-Slavism was never a politically homogeneous doctrine. Its evolution in the Czech lands generated competing understandings of national identity, political autonomy, and the appropriate institutional path toward national development.

Traditional Russophile Pan-Slavism and Austro-Slavism represented two major responses to the Czech national question within the late Habsburg and Austro-Hungarian context. Russophile Pan-Slavism placed its hopes in the cultural and political unity of Slavic peoples under Russian leadership, presenting Russia as a potential protector against German political dominance and Western intervention. Austro-Slavism, by contrast, sought to secure Slavic autonomy through federal reform within the Austrian imperial framework. Although the two traditions differed in their external orientation and institutional preferences, both shared a concern for social order, political stability, and gradual reform. Each sought to address the national aspirations of the Czech people without fully embracing radical revolutionary transformation.

Masaryk's progressive Pan-Slavism marked a significant departure from both traditions. While he retained the ideal of Slavic cultural solidarity, he rejected the political dependence implied by Russophile Pan-Slavism and gradually abandoned the federalist expectations of Austro-Slavism. His critique of Russian autocracy and of the structural contradictions of Austria-Hungary led him to conclude that neither Russian patronage nor imperial federalization could guarantee Czech political freedom. Instead, he developed an alternative vision in which Czech national self-determination was inseparable from democracy, humanitarianism, moral responsibility, and political independence.

A central feature of Masaryk's nation-building narrative was his rejection of revolutionary violence as a legitimate foundation for political transformation. In this respect, his thought displayed affinities with Burkean concerns regarding social order, gradual reform, and the destructive consequences of radical revolution. Masaryk maintained that lasting political change required intellectual awakening, moral renewal, and democratic institutional development rather than coercion and violent rupture. For him, national liberation could not be separated from humanitarian values: a nation-state could be politically legitimate only when its formation and development were linked to freedom, equality, justice, and civic responsibility.

Masaryk thus transformed the Czech question from a narrowly defined issue of national emancipation into a broader question of democratic political order. By situating Czechoslovak independence within the international expansion of democratic and humanitarian ideals, he provided an intellectual justification for the establishment of Czechoslovakia as an independent state in 1918. His progressive Pan-Slavism therefore represented not merely a reinterpretation of Slavic solidarity, but a distinctive model of nation-building that combined national self-determination with liberal democracy and humanitarian universalism. This model became one of the most enduring foundations of Czechoslovak political identity and continued to influence later Czech democratic discourse.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This article is a phased research outcome of the project "Research on Russia's Foreign Aid Pathways: Cases of Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, and Central Asia" (2025KFKT005), funded by the Russian Studies Center at Shanghai International Studies University; "'Normative Conflict and Institutional Competition': A Comparative Study of Governance Model Export by the European Union and Russia to Eurasian Peripheral States" (2025ktq010), funded by Shanghai Academy of Global Governance & Area Studies, Shanghai International Studies University.

REFERENCES

- [1] Leerssen, J. (n.d.). Pan-Slavism. In *Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe*. <https://ernie.uva.nl/viewer.p/21/56/object/122-159682>.
<https://doi.org/10.5117/9789462981188/ngQX8o26cRnM7BdpJQZMcXpa>
- [2] Suslov, M., Čejka, M., & Đorđević, V. (Eds.). (2023). *Pan-Slavism and Slavophilia in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe: Origins, manifestations and functions*. Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-3-031-17874-0.

- [3] Kallab, V. (1959, May 13). Kallab discusses “Czechs and Pan-Slavism”. *Vassar Miscellany News*, XXXXIII(27). <https://newspaperarchives.vassar.edu/?a=d&d=miscellany19590513-01.2.20&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->
- [4] van den Beld, A. (1975). *Humanity: The political and social philosophy of Thomas G. Masaryk*. Mouton. ISBN 90-279-7981-2.
- [5] Kohn, H. (1961). The impact of Pan-Slavism on Central Europe. *The Review of Politics*, 23(3), 323–333. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1405438>. Accessed February 5, 2025.
- [6] Nový, L., Gabriel, J., & Hroch, J. (Eds.). (1994). *Czech philosophy in the XXth century* (Vol. 2). Paideia, Council for Research in Values & Philosophy. ISBN 1-56518-029-1.
- [7] Dalle Mulle, E., Rodogno, D., & Bieling, M. (Eds.). (2023). *Sovereignty, nationalism, and the quest for homogeneity in interwar Europe*. Bloomsbury Academic. ISBN 978-1-350-26338-3.