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Russian Neo-Eurasian Geopolitics as a Total Ideology on the Example of Aleksandr Dugin’s Concept

Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union (December 1991), finding and defining its place and role in the international system became a serious identity-related challenge for Russia – the largest state formed from the Soviet Union’s ruins. After the bankruptcy of the Soviet model of communism, geopolitics had a special status in the Russian discourse regarding these categories. According to some ideological trends in Russia, including neo-Eurasianism¹, it became

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¹ Eurasianism (the term attributed to the Russian geographer Veniamin Semyonov-Tjan-Shansky) as a political ideology arose in Russia during World War I and was developed in the environment of the Russian “white émigré”. Theoreticians of the Eurasian movement (Petr Savitski, Nikolai Trubetzkoy, Nikolai Alekseev, and later Lev Gumilyov, Aleksandr Dugin) believed that Russian civilisation is not part of European civilisation. The Eurasianists re-conceptualised Russia’s historiosophy, taking the cultural (civilisational) foundation as

a new universal ideology, comprehensively explaining the world to the Russian mind². While in other parts of the world, geopolitics aspired to be a science, being a research paradigm or a special method of analysing the international situation, in Russia it was additionally transformed into an ideology, giving it a Russian-centric character and equipping it with numerous messianic and Promethean aspects. Russian geopolitics became a postmodern method of neutralising the post-imperial trauma, establishing political and geographical connectivity between successive imperial incarnations of Russia and giving Russian history continuity, which was often questioned in times of significant breakthroughs³. Geopolitics eliminated from the minds of the Russians a traumatic sense of identity exhaustion and political deprivation, which were the result of the collapse of the Soviet empire. It was an attempt or a method of Russia's explication and rationalisation under post-imperial conditions, equipping Russian destiny with new myths and historical missions.

Some intellectual environments with political aspirations – such as the Eurasian faction of artists led by Aleksandr Dugin – tried to

a starting point. They strongly rejected the arguments about Russia's conflicting coexistence with other civilisations and nations of the East, believing in Russian-Asian symbiosis and coherence. Conditionally (in some respects), they supported the Bolshevik revolution, which they considered a Eurasian correction of Russian modernisation, hoping, however, that Bolshevism would abandon its internationalism and extreme atheism and transform into a new non-European, nationalist, Orthodox Russian state system. See: R. Bäcker, *Międzywojenny eurazjatyzm. Od intelektualnej kontrakulturacji do totalitaryzmu?*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Ibidem, 2000; R. Paradowski, *Eurazjatyckie imperium Rosji. Studium idei*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2001; I. Massaka, *Eurazjatyzm. Z dziejów rosyjskiego misjonizmu*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Funna, 2001. If the historical continuity of Eurasianism were recognised as an idea, taking account of the changes and additions made by subsequent generations of Eurasianists, Dugin's ideological canon could be described as neo-Eurasianism. Petr Savitski was the main ideologist of Russian Eurasianism and his student Lev Gumilyov the main ideologist of neo-Eurasianism.

² The first foreign minister of the Russian Federation, Andrei Kozyrev, stated in an interview for the newspaper *Rossijskaja gazeta* of 12 January 1992 (so, shortly after the collapse of the USSR): "In abandoning messianism we set course for pragmatism. [...] we rapidly came to understand that geopolitics [...] is replacing ideology"; as quoted in: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, New York: Basic Books 1997, p. 87.

³ See: J. Afanasjew, *Groźna Rosja*, transl. M. Kotowska, Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2005, pp. 86–87.

create geopolitics as a new Russian total worldview, determining all spheres of life not only of the general public but also of individuals (the fallen and compromised communist totalitarianism was to be replaced by geopolitical totalism). At the conceptual level, that is at the level of discursive practice, it was an attempt to create and even impose geosophy (“sacred geography”) as both a fundamental interpretation of the laws governing Russian history and the most appropriate interpretation of Russian historical identity (consciousness). Russian geopolitics in its neo-imperial or messianic variants captures Russia as a civilisational phenomenon, imposing a special political and cultural mission on this country, which goes beyond its borders and is a moral legitimisation of international actions undertaken by the Russian authorities. In fact, contemporary Russian geopolitical determinism – just like the universalist-imperial doctrines (including communism) in the past – is Russia’s attempt to overcome not only its geographical, but also its civilisational peripherality⁴. The impact of geopolitics on the

⁴ The peripherality of Russia is mainly determined by its historical development, which was different to the development of most countries of the Old Continent. Initially, the Kievan Rus (the Old Russian State), from which Russia (along with Ukraine and Belarus) genetically originates, took a civilisation-generating and culture-forming impulse from the eastern part of the Roman Empire – the Byzantine Empire. It continued Greek culture when, in turn, most of geographical Europe internalised the legacy of the fallen Western Roman Empire to varying degrees. Another factor that determined the difference between the European and Russian historical processes was the Mongol rule in Russia and the functioning of its eastern areas, where Moscow began to develop, in the political system of the Mongol-Tatar Empire (Golden Horde, and then the Big Horde) and the implementation of Ordianian culture political in the Grand Duchy of Moscow. Until 1480, the Grand Duchy of Moscow was a district (*ulus*) and a periphery of the Ordianian Empire. In the era of big European geographical discoveries and the Renaissance, Europe became a global centre, while other continents were transforming into peripheral areas, subject to the dynamically developing European expansion in the following centuries. At that time, the Moscow State, recovering from its political dependence on the Horde, sought its Christian universalist (imperial) idea, “importing” it from the Byzantine Empire conquered by the Ottoman Turks. The peculiar synthesis or hybrid of political and cultural Ordianian and Byzantine patterns defined the multidimensional specificity of Russia (compared to European countries). Russian tsarism began to seek access to the global centre of Europe which was becoming a source of world ideas and technological progress, which would allow Russia to overcome the status of its peripheral geographical location and allow its modernization at the state-organisational and infrastructural level. This is why since the eighteenth century (since the reforms of Peter the Great), Russia (the Russian Empire) has been in a permanent stage of catching up with European modernisation. It was also at the same stage in the Soviet era. In practice, the

Russian political class can be considered significant, but the factors directly creating the state policy (the Kremlin administration) show a pragmatic attitude towards geopolitics, treating it as a fragment of symbolic culture being an instrument of political and patriotic mobilisation of society. In Russia, since the collapse of the USSR, geopolitics has gone through three main phases: conceptualisation, ideologisation and doctrinalisation. However, this last phase was instrumental and selective because, officially, the Kremlin avoids overly close associations with big ideas, striving to be an entity that shapes and controls ideas rather than is subordinated to them – as was the case in the Soviet period when the ideological corset deprived the state power of flexibility and often made it a hostage to the doctrine.

In Russia, Eurasianism is the ideological trend that privileges geopolitics over other forms of perception of international relations. It is a very capacious trend, which does not allow it to be fully identified with any classical ideology and occurs in many varieties – democratic and liberal (Sergey Stankevich, Vladimir Lukin), Slavophilic (Elgiz Pozdnyakov, Nataliya Narotchnitskaya), conservative (Aleksandr Dugin, Valery Petrov) and (neo)communist

USSR created a competitive, though not necessarily alternative, semi-peripheral communist ideological and economic model in relation to democratic-capitalist world centres (the US and Western Europe). However, the multifaceted inefficiency of Soviet communism ultimately led to its collapse, the collapse of the USSR and the degradation (deepening of the peripherality) of the post-Soviet area, including Russia, in the global system. The result of these processes was a deep ideological and identity crisis in the Russian Federation. Geopolitics, defined in the concepts of some Russian thinkers, such as Aleksandr Dugin, was to constitute a panacea for this problem. In its classic approach, this field eliminates Russia's peripherality, showing this country as the geographical centre of the world – Heartland (in the concepts of Halford J. Mackinder – although this classic of geopolitical thought used the term “Heartland” to refer to the geographical area occupied by Russia, not to Russia itself). Dugin wanted to expand the central position of Russia from a geographical level to other levels – political, cultural, social, philosophical, or ethical and moral... On the issue of the peripheral problem of Russia, see B. Kagarlicki, *Imperium peryferii. Rosja i system światowy*, transl. Ł. Leonkiewicz and B. Szulęcka, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2012; Б. Кагарлицкий, *От империи – к империализму: Государство и возникновение буржуазной цивилизации*, Москва: URSS, 2014; P. Kennedy, *Mocarstwa świata: narodziny, rozkwit, upadek. Przemiany gospodarcze i konflikty zbrojne w latach 1500–2000*, transl. M. Kluźniak, Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1994; H. Kissinger, *System światowy*, transl. M. Antosiewicz, Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2016, pp. 55–57.

(Gennady Zyuganov)⁵. The first most significant publications in post-Soviet Russia that widely dealt with geopolitics were Gennady Zyuganov's manifesto *The Geography of Victory* published in 1997 and, above all, Aleksandr Dugin's *The Foundations of Geopolitics*⁶.

Aleksandr Dugin and his definitions of geopolitics

Aleksandr Gelyevich Dugin (born in 1962) is an intellectual with broad horizons (one would say – like Russia), dealing with philosophy, metaphysics, occultism, esoteric and religious studies, history, literature and – of course – geopolitics. Moreover, in some circles (primarily of his supporters), he is considered an outstanding representative of integral traditionalism⁷. The extensive research spectrum that is the domain of the first modern Russian Eurasianist

⁵ See: S. Bielań, *Tożsamość międzynarodowa Federacji Rosyjskiej*, Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR, 2006, pp. 71–78; А. Ионин, *Социология культуры: Путь в новое тысячелетие*, Москва: Логос, 2000, Chapter 5: *Геополитика и глобализм*, http://www.gumer.info/bibliotek_Buks/Sociolog/Ionin_05_1.php (access: January 2009).

⁶ Г. Зюганов, *География победы. Основы российской геополитики*, Москва 1997. When writing this article, I used the extended edition of Dugin's book (from 2000), supplemented with another book published by this author: А. Дугин, *Основы геополитики. Геополитическое будущее России*, Москва: Арктогея, 2000. I can also mention the chronologically earlier (1993) geopolitical visions of the nationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovski (which are a copy of the concepts of the German geopolitics classic Karl Haushofer), assuming the division of the world – in particular the south – into several zones of influence controlled by the strongest powers, under which Russia would gain access to the Indian Ocean. Zhirinovski's geopolitical thought implies racist content, does not pose a serious intellectual challenge and is often seen as primitive or even vulgar. В. Жириновский, *О судьбах России* (part 1: *Уроки истории*; part 2: *Последний бросок на юг*; part 3: *С моей точки зрения*), Москва 1993.

⁷ The French thinker René Guénon and the Italian philosopher Julius Evola were the creators of integral traditionalism – a counterrevolutionary philosophical trend created in the 1920s and 1930s, combining elements of revolutionary and traditionalist ideas, whose aim is to restore, by revolutionary methods, the fundamental principles and values of the pre-revolutionary world (rebellion against the dominance of materialistic and economic factors in world), but free from the negative aspects of the revolution. See Z. Mikolejko, *Mity tradycjonalizmu integralnego. Julius Evola i kultura religijno-filozoficzna prawicy*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1998. Aleksandr Dugin has included his reflections on traditionalism in the book *The Philosophy of Traditionalism*. А. Дугин, *Философия традиционализма*, Москва: Арктогея, 2002.

and geopolitician has been aptly characterised by Iwona Massaka. She has depicted this figure and his Manichean-eschatological (postmodern variant) worldview very accurately:

As an ideologist of the Russian Conservative (“Planetary”, “National”, “Socialist”, “Slavic”, “Orthodox”, “Eschatological”, “Last”, “Only”, “Right and Left”, “External and Internal”) Revolution (“Battle”, “Disaster”, “Transformation”, “Second Coming”, “Third Way”), he predicts the imminent end of the world⁸.

Aleksandr Dugin’s biography is also non-standard; the origins of Dugin’s ideological inspirations, at least in relation to geopolitics, should be sought in his contacts – from the early 1980s – with the Western European New Right referring to fascism (the main inspiration for the views of the future geopolitician were the Belgian national Bolshevik Jean-François Thiriart, who dreamt of an Euro-Soviet empire from Dublin to Vladivostok, and Austrian general and geopolitician Heinrich Jordis von Lohausen, who considered political power in continental and long-term categories). These relations required a concession from the Committee for State Security (KGB), which was not a problem for him as his father was a general in USSR military intelligence⁹. Later, during perestroika, Aleksandr Dugin was an active leader of the National Patriotic Front “Pamięć” and then a member of the National Bolshevik Party of Eduard Limonov. In spring 2001, he founded the socio-political movement “Eurasia”. He was also among the closest advisers to Gennady Seleznyov – the chairman of the State Duma (the lower house of the Russian Parliament) between 1996 and 2003 on behalf of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, and then the head of the Centre for Geopolitical Expertise of the National Security

⁸ I. Massaka, *Eurazjatyzm...*, p. 175.

⁹ For topics from Aleksandr Dugin’s biography, see *ibidem*, pp. 175–176; B. Gołabek, *Lew Gumilow i Aleksander Dugin. O dwóch obliczach eurazjatyizmu w Rosji po 1991 roku*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2012, pp. 111–119; A. Nowak, *Pokusy geopolityki rosyjskiej (po 1991 roku)*, in: *idem, Od imperium do imperium. Spojrzenia na historię Europy Wschodniej*, Kraków: Arcana, 2004, p. 250; R. Paradowski, *Eurazjatyckie imperium Rosji...*, pp. 227–229.

Council of the State Duma of the Russian Federation. He also heads the Centre for Eurasian Strategic Initiatives, the Institute of Special Metastrategic Research, the Expert Council of the Association “Arktogeya” and the Analytical Group “Ares”. Since 2008, he has been an unofficial ideologist of the ruling party United Russia (the Kremlin party of power)¹⁰. Aleksandr Dugin also maintains close contacts with General Staff officers and publishers belonging to the Ministry of Defence, which supports his active publishing activity with the company Russian Gold (Russkoe Zoloto); Dugin publishes the magazine *Elementy. Evrazijskoe obozrene* and the newspaper *Evrazijskoe vtorzhene*. He is a member of the prestigious informal think tank, the Izborsk Club, which is an ideological antithesis for the Valdai Discussion Club (it brings together pro-Western experts on Russia). He lectures on various subjects (geopolitics, philosophy of politics) at several Russian universities. He is the main editor of the Cargrad TV channel. Since 2014 – in connection with his active support for Moscow’s policy towards Ukraine – he has been on the list of Russian citizens subject to international sanctions with a ban on entering the European Union, the United States (US) and Canada as one of the ideological promoters of Russian neo-imperialism.

Geopolitics is the main field that reveals Aleksandr Dugin’s intellectual horizons. The Russian geopolitician defines the subject of his inquiries in a peculiar way. In his opinion geopolitics is not a dogma, it is not a collection of truths confirmed once and for all, scientifically proven and thoroughly developed. Rather, it is a bunch of historical intuitions connected with each other by the pre-taste of knowing some new and extraordinary aspect of reality. One can say that this discipline is so attractive precisely because it is open and undergoes creative development in all aspects because

¹⁰ This kind of information is sometimes provided by Ukrainian, Western and some Russian online media, but Aleksandr Dugin’s official short biography posted on the internet, <http://dugin.ru/biography> (access: December 2019) only mentions that he was twice an advisor to the Chairmen of the State Duma of the Russian Federation (between 1998 and 2003 and since 2012).

it is in the embryonic stage and attracts fresh, passionate souls and minds seeking replacement for old, dying methodologies¹¹. Later in his considerations on the essence of geopolitics, Dugin states that geopolitics is a worldview of power, the science of power and for power¹². Finishing his pseudo-methodological reflection on the subject of his studies, the Russian geopolitician concludes that geopolitics is the rule of science¹³.

As can be deduced from the above, Aleksandr Dugin's definitional arguments have little to do with scientific precision, and the author himself feels relieved of methodological accuracy. His methodological "input" is full of general, almost preachy phrases, attempting to make intuition a scientific method. Dugin's conceptual macrocosm, suggesting the inability to embrace the matter of the geopolitical universe with the human mind, may be a procedure that constructs geopolitics as a total science, although it rather transforms it into pathetic geopoetics¹⁴. For comparison, the Polish doyen of geopolitics, Leszek Moczulski, defines geopolitics as a field of knowledge dealing with the study of variable power systems in an unchanging space¹⁵. In the author's opinion, encyclopaedic definitions (English and French) are the most specific – geopolitics is the science of applying the principles of geography to international politics; geopolitics deals with the study of mutual relations between natural elements of geography and the policies of states¹⁶.

¹¹ А. Дугин, *Основы геополитики...*, p. 4.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 13.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

¹⁴ Włodzimierz Marciniak, who is critical of geopolitics, said: "In my view, geopolitics in Russia is much more than a scientific theory or a political doctrine, it is a worldview, or at least a fairly universal concept with which you can build a global picture of the world and shape your own attitude to it. An expression of the growing self-awareness of the carriers of this ideology can be, for example, the proposal to speak not about geopolitics, but about geopoetics as a form of expressing political emotions". W. Marciniak, "Mapa i pamięć o imperium. Kartograficzne symbole nostalgii postsowieckiej", in: *Inne wymiary polityki*, ed. by W. Marciniak, Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2013, p. 140.

¹⁵ See: L. Moczulski, *Geopolityka. Potęga w czasie i przestrzeni*, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Bellona, 2000, p. 72.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

Aleksandr Dugin's geopolitical and philosophical concepts

After the disintegration of the USSR, geopolitical theorising developed strongly in Russia, including a wide spectrum of reflection on geopolitics. There is a strong tendency to build holistic explanations and interpretations in geopolitics, trying to integrate metaphysical aspects (the mysticism of space, the cult of the earth, the apotheosis of the infinities as a natural environment of the nation's spirit) with pragmatic aspects (possibly quick and tangible benefits in international relations) into a peculiar Russian geopolitical meta-paradigm. A popular geopolitical paradigm in Russia is the geo-civilisation approach, positioning the country as both a geopolitical and a civilisational centre (Russia as the centre of Orthodox civilisation). The precursors of this paradigm were Nikolai Danilevsky (recognised as the creator of the science of civilisations), Oswald Spengler, Arnold J. Toynbee, Feliks Koneczny, Philip Bagby and, the best-known today, Samuel Huntington. This approach turned out to be extremely functional and useful in the analysis of the international reality of the post-Cold War world, creating a set of concepts enabling an accessible description and understanding of the dynamic political changes taking place in the international space, as well as pointing to potential threats and sources of conflict. This paradigm was popularised in modern political science primarily by the American political scientist Samuel Huntington who created the theory of "the clash of civilisations". Despite some of its own limitations (a simplified presentation of the problems), the theory has become an effective and common research tool in the analysis of international relations¹⁷. The geo-civilisation approach, regardless of its flaws and shortcomings, is one of the methodological instruments most often used by geopoliticians in the analysis of

¹⁷ See: S.P. Huntington, *Zderzenie cywilizacji i nowy kształt ładu światowego*, transl. H. Jankowska, Warszawa: Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Literackie Muza, 2001.

the international environment. This paradigm clearly dominates in the geopolitics of Russian Eurasianists, including Aleksandr Dugin, who extremely absolutises geopolitics, transforming it into a kind of ideological meta-system and meta-ideology, and subordinating it to all spheres of political and social life.

However, the Russian geopolitician densely “enriches” this discourse with (pseudo)mystical themes. According to Aleksandr Dugin, the world is black and white, but in the Manichean sense – more black (dominated by evil) than white (understood as good)¹⁸. Appealing to the absolute categories of good and evil, projecting them on the geopolitical grid of the planet and referring to the Gospel, *Pistis Sophia* (gnostic gospel), *Bhagavadgītā* and even Marx’s *Capital* (which may be perceived as mocking ecumenism) is to give Dugin’s concept not so much a metaphysical value as the status of a meta-idea¹⁹. The dualistic concept of the Russian geopolitician reveals to humanity the existence of two big clashing archetypal forces in the world: oceanic civilisations (*Sea Power*) and civilisations of the Big Land, which are subject to moral and ethical evaluation. Dugin uses the concepts of the creators of classical geopolitics Halford J. Mackinder and Karl Haushofer, and also Carl Schmitt, the jurist of the Third Reich who dealt with geopolitics in the post-war period, and native thinkers (including Petr Savitski, Lev Gumilyov, Mikhail Agurski) to construct a geopolitical model of the world in which Russia plays a leading, Promethean role. Its mission is to mobilise the main centres of political power of the Big Land to create a Continental

¹⁸ For Aleksandr Dugin’s ideas see: K. Świder, *Rosyjska świadomość geopolityczna wobec Ukrainy i Białorusi (po rozpadzie Związku Radzieckiego)*, Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2015, pp. 98–107.

¹⁹ A review of Aleksandr Dugin’s concepts presented in this article is a summary of this author’s thoughts contained in his main program books: *Основы геополитики...*, and *Проект «Евразия»*, Москва: Яуза, 2004; *Тамплеры пролетариата. (Национал-Большевизм и инициация)*, Москва: Арктогея, 1997; *Философия войны*, Москва: Яуза, 2004. An interesting summary of Dugin’s worldview was undertaken by Iwona Massaka and Ryszard Paradowski. See: I. Massaka, *Eurazjyzm...*, pp. 174–195; R. Paradowski, *Eurazjatyckie imperium Rosji...*, pp. 230–249; B. Gołabek, *Lew Gumilow i Aleksander Dugin...*, pp. 121–164. The concepts of the Russian geopolitician are also published in *Frona* 2001, No. 23/24, in the article: E. Lobkowicz, “Rasputin Putina”, pp. 140–157 and in Grzegorz Górný’s interview with Aleksandr Dugin, “Czy Putin jest awatarem”, *ibidem*, pp. 158–169.

Empire that would oppose the expansion of Atlanticism (with the US at the forefront) in the Eurasian zone, obtaining the status of a super-empire. It would be organised hierarchically and consist of sub-empires, that is the major regional powers of the Big Land until now, namely Russia, China, India and Iran. Ultimately, the Eurasian super-empire would be joined by a Europe dominated by Germany and France, geographically belonging to Eurasia and freed from American influence. Dugin would also like to win Japan for his project – allied with the US but fiercely competing with it in the field of economics. Former states and nations, which are lower than sub-empires in the vertical hierarchy, would receive a broad autonomy, not structurally colliding with the structure of the empire. Sub-empires would have their separate legal systems respecting the value systems adopted in these areas. Russia would be the major centre of the New Eurasian Empire, which would be the “Confederation of Big Spaces” – composed of the aforementioned “secondary empires” – and Novosibirsk would be its capital (as the geographical centre of Eurasia).

Russia is Mackinder’s *Heartland* (the inner area of the Eurasian supercontinent), and this, according to Mackinder’s thesis, is the pivot area of the world. Dugin draws a pathetic and dramatic conclusion from this statement saying that Russia is the “geographical pivot of history” and “the heart of the world”. Empire and geography are Russia’s fate, destiny. Without these core values and signposts, Russia loses its unique identity (it will die as a civilisation phenomenon), unable to exist without them. Russia wants to save the world from the big danger of Mondialism, which is globalism calling for the establishment of a planetary state with an explicit or secret world government, forced more aggressively by the Atlantic (primarily the English-speaking) establishment. Dugin rejects all Pan-ideologies – Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism and Pan-Turkism; Pan-isms sabotage the big project of the new continental empire. However, the Russian geopolitician tries to be a “realist” and assumes possible opposition of, for example, China to his monistic,

Russian-centric vision of the world. Then it would be necessary to weaken China by destabilising the internal situation in that country (which will be discussed in further considerations).

Dugin has an idea for the mental and moral sanction of the Russians. He wants to carry out this process, based on the main element of Russian identity – Orthodoxy. On the ideological level, the new Eurasian Empire is to constitute a unique synthesis of the Third Rome, the Third International and the Third Reich – a combination of Orthodox, communist and fascist ideas in a dialectical triad, taking the formula of Lenin’s “democratic centralism” in the structural and organisational sphere. The integration of Heartland and Rimland (the coastal strip of the Big Land, surrounding Heartland in the form of the crescent) into one continental super-empire would be the quintessence of all imperial projects implemented throughout history in the Eurasian area. Dugin’s geopolitical project, however, is not limited to the classic “imperial gathering” or restoration of the bipolar world – in the Atlantic-Continental variant. The ultimate goal is a multi-polar world model in which the sovereignty of individual “poles” will be controlled and supervised by Heartland, which in turn will eliminate any conflict in the world.

Although the Russian geopolitician takes up racial issues, he tries to avoid negative racist discourse, indicating that he respects the world in all its diversity and even creates himself as its advocate. Being a Muslim, however, he uses “satanic” rhetoric towards the Atlanticists (Americans and their allies). The Russian geopolitician predicts the breaking of global US domination, the displacement of the destructive Atlantic value system (the cult of technology and economics, individualism, liberal democracy and plutocracy) from Eurasia (Heartland + Rimland) and its replacement by positive Eurasian values (social traditions, ethical principles, conservatism, collectivism, hierarchy and ideocracy). The “New Carthage” (Atlantic world) or “commercial civilisation” will be destroyed and give way to the Eurasian “civilisation of heroes”. Power in the New Empire will be exercised by the “Knight Templars of the Proletariat”.

Aleksandr Dugin's geopolitical concepts can be considered fantasy or even phantasmagoria. The author calls them a "Big Dream". There is no funding in Russia or abroad for the implementation of Dugin's superproject. Dugin's narrative is sometimes hardly consistent. The Russian geopolitician cannot be logically consistent; the borders of his Eurasia are liquid – he includes and then excludes various countries or regions. This lack of logical consistency, or perhaps transparency, results from the fact that the Russian geopolitician uses multi-level and subversive reflection (initially, he formulates understandable critical theses and hypotheses in the description and assessment of the subject, such as countries and regions, and then constructs many contexts, conditions and scenarios, in which the status – also axiological – of the subject changes depending on the criteria and conditions of subject analysis he adopts). This "loops" the narrative, reduces the transparency of the reasons used and creates the impression of the author's logical inconsistency when the recipient of the message has to deal with the puzzle or mosaic effect and the necessity to make an (auto)exegesis of the content. For example, according to Dugin, China is geographically part of Eurasia, but being the East Asian Rimland, it is geopolitically closer to the interests of the Sea Power than to Russia-continental interests (Heartland). It is a controversial and highly subjective thesis considering the configuration of (for example, US-Chinese) alliances and rivalry in today's international system. Dugin's solution (encompassed by various situational contexts) to the Chinese problem is summarised as follows: China is unlikely to recognise Russia's dominance in Eurasia, although it can be invited to join the Eurasian continental project; stimulated as part of the liberal economic model by the English-speaking Sea Power, China expands towards the Russian sphere of influence: Mongolia, Central Asia and Siberia – the last one is not only Russia's resource reservoir but, above all, its spiritual treasury; Chinese expansionism in the service of the continental super-empire should be directed south – towards Indochina (bypassing Vietnam because it is befriended

with Russia) and towards the Philippines geopolitically dominated by the US, Indonesia and Australia; if China sabotaged the super-imperial project, it would be necessary to tear the northern territories away from it (Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, Sinciang and Tibet), transforming them into a Eurasian buffer – controlled by Russia and Japan, which, together with India, Dugin treats as an ally of the Russians under the planned Moscow-Tokyo axis, which will eliminate the Chinese geopolitical, racial and demographic threats and finally perform the fall-of-China scenario²⁰. The Israeli problem is also peculiar in Dugin's geopolitical constructions. The Russian thinker is not anti-Semitic. He would like Israel to join the Eurasian family which, he believes, is the country's natural place, but he is aware of its alliance with the US. The Russian geopolitician makes a distinction between Jews (the nation) and Israel (the state), noting that many of them have been engaged in the sea-continental battle on the side of anti-capitalism and anti-liberalism throughout history²¹. Dugin creates equally complex multi-variant mosaic geopolitical constructions in relation to Russia's geopolitical relations with Western and Central Europe (Moscow-Berlin axis) as well as the Middle East (Moscow-Tehran axis). The Russian thinker densely weaves mystical threads and metaphors in his narrative.

²⁰ See A. Дугин, *Основы геополитики...*, pp. 359–364; *idem*, *Проект «Евразия»...*, pp. 383–394. Aleksandr Dugin tries to win Japan by offering it access to the Siberian resource base (in exchange for Japanese technological and financial know-how), Russian support for Japanese domination in the Pacific East Asian coastal region (here Dugin may be accused of promising these areas to China if they cooperate with Russia during the construction of the Eurasian empire), and even the return of the Kuril Islands taken over by the USSR in 1945. The Russian geopolitician believes that Japan – one of the three pillars of Mondialism, in addition to Western Europe and the US (controlled by the English-speaking Sea Power in the liberal global order) – can be won with these concessions to the side of the continental empire (where it would constitute, next to Russia and Germany, its third centre). Currently, in his speeches, available on YouTube, Dugin maintains his initial assumptions about China (being in an a priori conflict of interest with the Eurasian Heartland), but he is delighted with the fact (after his recent frequent visits and lectures in China) that in a process of liberal globalisation controlled by Atlanticists and Mondialists, China is – in his opinion – the only significant country in the world that has managed to fully preserve its cultural identity, while other geopolitically significant countries, including Russia, have failed to do so.

²¹ See A. Дугин, *Основы геополитики...*, pp. 739–751. The Russian geopolitician hopes that migrants from the former USSR, constituting one third of Israel's population, will correct Israel's false policy.

He has filled his geopolitical and philosophical (geosophical) supersystem with metaphysical elements to such an extent that one can even accept the existence of Dugin's metaphysical determinism in geopolitics. Dugin, who often uses spectacular rhetorical figures, is inclined to combine geopolitics with even the metaphysics of sex²².

He considers geopolitics dealing solely with global issues to be fully legitimate, which is why he criticises, for example, the French geopolitical school – focused on regional issues – calling it “geopolitics of small spaces”, and even depriving it of the rank of geopolitics (French researchers call Dugin's geopolitical concepts the “geopolitics of dreams”). On the other hand, Aleksandr Dugin highly values Zbigniew Brzezinski and sees himself as his Eurasian adversary. In March 2001, the Russian geopolitician, using the metaphors of his American counterpart, stated:

It can be said that me and Brzezinski play one game of chess. Clinton or Bush is his king and Putin is mine²³.

Dugin's point of view assumes that Russia is still a global player with an interest in “everything and for everyone”. This view seems to dominate among the Russian political class, whose representatives – although not all of them go as far as Dugin in their geopolitical visions – opt for a multi-polar model of globalisation alternative to the American model, opening up a much wider room for Russia to manoeuvre than the unipolar world dominated by the US. According to Dugin, geopolitics is a science and also an ideology that remains at the service of political elites and expresses their expectations towards the international environment. It is a field of political elites and a kind of textbook on governance, offering the knowledge necessary to make political decisions. Referring to Haushofer's German tradition of *Geopolitik*, Dugin regards geopolitics as the science of governing a state. The concepts of the Russian thinker enjoy recognition in some European conservative circles,

²² See A. Дугин, *Консервативная Революция*, Москва: Арктогея, 1994, p. 219.

²³ *Czy Putin jest awatarem?...*, p. 167.

which leads to the conclusion that, just as communist Bolshevism was once attractive to a considerable part of the European left, so now national Bolshevism (or Eurasian neo-Bolshevism) is an inspiration for European conservative warriors under the banners of the New Right.

The ideological sources of Dugin's binary paradigm Sea–Land (Talassocracy vs. Tellurocracy) can be found in the division into continental and sea powers proposed by classical geopolitics. Aleksandr Dugin is also, or perhaps above all, inspired by the views and concepts of the anti-democratic and anti-liberal German thinker Carl Schmitt²⁴. The influence of Schmitt on Dugin is discernible in the Russian geopolitician's views on the international system and the world in general. Dugin holds Schmitt in high esteem, just like many German thinkers. From the concepts formulated by the German, he derives “five lessons for Russia”, which he gives thematic names and then develops the problems contained in these enigmatic phrases. These momentous Schmittian lessons for Russia revealed by Dugin are: (1) Politics above all; (2) Let there always be enemies, let there always be friends; (3) Politics of “exceptional circumstances” and decision-making; (4) The imperative of “big spaces”; and (5) “World of war” and theology of partisans. The “contemporary Machiavelli” – as Schmitt defines or titles Dugin – considers politics to be a universal area of life in which the will of a nation is expressed most strongly as a collective and organic phenomenon. A nation recognises itself best in opposition to other nations; by opposing them, it saves and strengthens its identity, which is particularly important in the era of Atlantic (American) globalisation, cynically appealing to extremist (totalitarian) humanism. Sometimes the category of so-called exceptional (extraordinary) circumstances – *Ernstfall* – occurs in

²⁴ А. Дугин, „Карл Шмитт: Пять уроков для России”, *Наш современник*, 1992, No. 8, pp. 129–135, also in: А. Дугин, *Карл Шмитт: Пять уроков для России*, in: *idem, Философия войны...*, pp. 80–101. For Carl Schmitt's state, political and legal concepts, see: P. Kaczorowski, *My i oni. Państwo jako jedność polityczna. Filozofia polityczna Carla Schmitta w okresie republiki weimarskiej*, Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Szkoły Głównej Handlowej, 1998.

the history of a nation when legal and social norms collide. In such circumstances, the nation is absolutely required to make political decisions – *Entscheidung* – referring to its historical essence and hidden nature. Then the nation spontaneously expresses its deep will in response to existential and historical global challenges. Dugin considers the issue of a nation’s political decision-making, which the French law school referred to as decisionism, to be an important lesson for Russia. The considerations of the German jurist also have their territorial dimension or aspect – projected on large human groups, strongly diverse in their mass. Schmitt considers a flexible structure of the imperial-federal type to be the most optimal form of territorial and political organisation of human communities, which is confirmed by the logic of “big spaces” – *Grossraum*. Through the broad internal autonomy of individual peoples and nations, “big spaces” would compensate for national, ethnic and state diversity, and the purpose of their establishment would be to eliminate all conflictogenicity and create a conservative variant of integrating the world, which is opposed or alternative to the American neoliberal globalisation model. Over the past few decades of his long life, Carl Schmitt (died in 1985) witnessed the political triumph of the US, which he believed was a threat to traditional conservative values; the US has imposed a hegemonic (total) political war on the traditional world, using propaganda based on dehumanised humanism – an instrument used by Washington to gain global influence. The traditional world can oppose this by using the “strategy of partisans” – laid out in Schmitt’s penultimate book *Theorie des Partisanen* [Theory of Partisans]²⁵. According to the German author, “a partisan” is a determined defender of traditional values, principles, history, people and nation, and uses all methods of fighting in the “total war” against the powerful “total enemy”. Although the current era is not yet a “total war”, it heralds it. Dugin argues that the “phenomenon of partisans” is the

²⁵ C. Schmitt, *Theorie des Partisanen. Zwischenbemerkung zum Begriff des Politischen*, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1963.

driving force and corrector of the history of Russia in situations where the state authorities oppose the spirit of the Russian people too much.

Putting himself in the position of spokesman and defender of political conservatism, Aleksandr Dugin formulates the so-called fourth political theory²⁶. The first three theories were liberalism (right-wing and left-wing), communism (Marxism, socialism and social democracy) and fascism (in various forms – national socialism [nazism], syndicalism, Francoism, Salazarism, Peronism and so on)²⁷. In the course of the rivalry between these trends, liberalism has managed to defeat the other two and then “sits” triumphantly on the global ideological throne as the only host of the globalising world, proclaiming “the end of history”²⁸. This is a difficult situation for Russia which must turn to the so-called fourth political theory, identified with anti-globalist postmodern conservatism, to save itself²⁹. Dugin, therefore, calls on the Russians to work in formulating a new political theory, facing fundamental categories and ontological questions (including Hamlet’s “to be or not to be”), answers to which are to contribute to the creation of the “fourth political theory”. The Russian thinker divides human history into three basic periods: Pre-modernity (the world of traditional values), Modernity (the age of being closed to metaphysics which has survived thanks to the activity of various secret esoteric associations) and Postmodernity (the current age in which man turns to the demonic and animal realms, crossing the technological border of humanity [transhumanisation] and losing its human element). Each of these

²⁶ A. Дугин, *Четвертая политическая теория*, Москва: Амфора, 2009.

²⁷ For more on this subject see L. Sykuliski, “Koncepcja Radykalnego Podmiotu i «czwarta teoria polityczna» Aleksandra Dugina w kontekście bezpieczeństwa Polski i Unii Europejskiej”, *Przegląd Geopolityczny*, 2014, vol. 8, pp. 229–242.

²⁸ See F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: The Free Press, 1992. Francis Fukuyama’s concepts are heavily criticised in Russia because they situate the country as the former core of the lost communist empire on the ideological and systemic peripheries of the modern world.

²⁹ For more on this subject see: J. Doroszcyk, “Aleksandra Dugina Czwarta Teoria Polityczna jako antyzachodnia alternatywa wobec polityki liberalno-demokratycznej Zachodu”, *Chorzowskie Studia Polityczne*, 2016, No. 11, pp. 65–78.

eras (or periods) implies a permanent, unshakeable element, which Dugin calls the Radical Subject, which refers to the classics of integral traditionalism. Intuitively, this kind of construction can be associated with such categories as *genius saeculi* or *Zeigeist*. In this way, the Russian geopolitician enters the philosophy of being.

In Russia, quasi-Hegelian philosophical systems have always been very popular. However, Aleksandr Dugin's worldview seems to refer to Johann Herder, a slightly earlier German thinker than Georg Hegel, who perceived nations as mystical beings (God's thoughts) and therefore endowed with a specific mission. The Russian geopolitician has also revealed himself as a big enthusiast of the outstanding twentieth-century German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who had an episode of flirtation with National Socialism in his life. The Russian geopolitician devoted three of his last books to this philosopher³⁰. Heidegger focused his considerations on the issue of Being, however, he put Being (*das Sein*) and specifically Being there (*Dasein*), not a (static) Being, in the centre of his studies. By referring to the German philosopher, Dugin has equipped his system with a kind of philosophical completeness because earlier, at the philosophical level, his considerations were limited to gnoseology and axiology. Now his concepts have also gained an ontological dimension and are based on all three pillars of philosophy: epistemology, axiology and ontology. As mentioned above, Dugin is a fanatic of conceptual triads and related metaphorical puns³¹. This allows his geopolitics – in the author's opinion – to become a metaphilosophy (a total philosophy) or a metasytem (a total system) or holistic self-knowledge. However, the discourse constructed by Dugin's pompous

³⁰ Aleksandr Dugin's Heidegger trilogy consists of volumes: А. Дугин, *Мартин Хайдеггер. Философия другого начала*, Москва: Академический проект, 2010; *idem*, *Мартин Хайдеггер. Возможность русской философии*, Москва: Академический проект, 2011; *idem*, *Мартин Хайдеггер. Метаполитика. Эсхатология бытия*, Москва: Академический проект, 2016.

³¹ The Russian geopolitician, like many earlier thinkers, including native thinkers, also adheres to the most classic of the modern philosophical triads, the Hegelian triptych: thesis-antithesis-synthesis. According to Dugin, conservatism is the thesis, revolution is the antithesis, and conservative revolution (national Bolshevism) is the synthesis. See E. Lobkowicz, "O metafizyce nacjonal-bolszewizmu", *Fronda*, 1998, No. 11/12, pp. 120-129.

aspirations turns out to be little coherent and even incoherent in many places and dominated by a pathetic dominance of form over content. The geopolitical narrative imposed by this author seems to be obsessive and compulsive because of its claims to penetrate and determine every aspect of life. It largely influences the shape of Russian geopolitics but – importantly – it does not monopolise it because in Russia there is also geopolitics within the academic canon – respecting the standards of scientific discourse³².

In the above context, it remains an open question whether Aleksandr Dugin's output is more than a manifestation of a geopolitical pop culture or a geopolitical new age in the sense of real scientific contribution to the development of geopolitics. Rather, it seems to be a manifestation of some new utopia, another one in the history of Russia and the world, whose ideological layer cannot withstand confrontation with the actual human nature, human egoism and the mere desire for power and domination. Dugin often criticises postmodernism but rhetorically enchants his imaginary continental meta-empire (New Empire or the Big Empire), calling it geopolitical magic and claiming that the process of big imperial integration will be supervised by supernatural forces, making it possible to overcome existing objective differences between beings uniting in the big project³³. This act will be part of the final divine plan, under which the "Prime Mover", "Absolute" or "God" seeks to reunite the cosmos.

³² There are authors in Russia, such as Kamaludin Gajiyev, Nikolai Nartov, Yuriy Tikhonravov, Konstantin Sorokin, Vladimir Kolosov, Nikolai Mironenko, Igor Kefeli, Vladimir Bakunin, Boris Isaev and Irina Vasilenko (they are certainly less impressive than Aleksandr Dugin whose writings are characterised by graphomania) who interpret geopolitics in the traditional canon of academic science. Despite the popularity of Dugin's geopolitics in Russia and the admiration of geopolitics as such among numerous Russian intellectual circles, there are also critical observers of the phenomena, behaviours and reactions caused by geopolitics in this country. Among those who criticise it from the sociological (sociocultural) position and explain the ideologisation of geopolitics are researchers such as Nikolai Kosolapov, Andrei Zorin, Hasan Hussejnov and Dmitry Zamyatin, sometimes classified (particularly the last of these authors) as a critical geopolitics school, using the term "ideology of geopolitics" in the description of this phenomenon.

³³ See A. Дугин, *Основы геополитики...*, pp. 250–262.

Conclusions

The Eurasian imperial project for Russia – propagated by Aleksandr Dugin – envisages the establishment of a neoconservative, post-liberal ideological power fighting global liberalism under the conditions of postmodernism. It is difficult to determine exactly how big the impact of Dugin’s geopolitics is on the ideas and imaginations of Russian ruling elites (it does not need to be exclusively interpreted in terms of Dugin’s geopolitical transcendentalism). However, due to its crypto-universal nature, it certainly remains significant³⁴. Attention is generally paid to the ideological aspect of Eurasianism (Russia as a separate, special civilisation), however, the more pragmatic foundation (starting point) of this ideology, namely the concept of an even allocation of resources across the vast spaces of Russia and the acquisition of natural wealth from the Asian part of the country as a condition of Russia’s superpower, is often forgotten³⁵. Aleksandr Dugin, exaggeratedly called “Putin’s Rasputin” or “Kremlin shaman” by intellectuals critical of his concepts, is kept at the margin by the Kremlin because Russia, as mentioned above, cannot afford to implement Dugin’s meta-imperial visions on the material ideological and spiritual levels. Russia is part of a globalising world, it is not a source of attractive universal ideas and does not set trends; it simply follows them. Of course, in many

³⁴ In some sense, Aleksandr Dugin can function as the Kremlin’s instrument (as he gained its favour for his support for the Kremlin administration during opposition protests (the “white ribbons” movement) against Vladimir Putin’s third presidential election between 2011 and 2012). Dugin was part of the administration of the influential Izborsk Club in the past – an elitist conservative and nationalist-think-tank. The Izborsk Club contributed to a great ideological mobilisation of pro-Kremlin circles before the presidential election in 2012. In the late 1990s, Dugin boasted that he had extensive contacts and influence in academic, political, military and business circles (*Czy Putin jest awatarem...*, p. 163). It was also believed that Vladimir Putin was very impressed by Dugin’s ideas in the first years of his presidency. However, there were also conflicts between Dugin and the Kremlin, when the geopolitician strongly criticised the Russian authorities for stopping the military intervention in Georgia in August 2008, or for the insufficient – in his opinion – Russian involvement on the side of pro-Russian separatists during the conflict in the Ukrainian Donbass since Spring 2014.

³⁵ This problem was signalled in the interwar period by Peter Savitski. See: П. Савицкий, *Месторазвитие русской промышленности*, Берлин: Издание Евразийцев, 1932.

fields – because of its difference from the West – it contests the western concept of the world but its power elite favours rationalised and pragmatic thinking, sometimes posing an alarming geopolitical challenge to Western global dominance referring to liberal and democratic values. From the Kremlin’s perspective, the concepts created by thinkers such as Dugin have an added value that can be used for the purposes of patriotic mobilisation of the masses to maintain high social support for the (geo)political line of the government. In the end – as Aleksandr Dugin writes – “geopolitics is a worldview of power, the science of power and for power”³⁶.

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³⁶ А. Дугин, *Основы геополитики...*, р. 4.

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**Russian Neo-Eurasian Geopolitics as a Total Ideology
on the Example of Aleksandr Dugin's Concept**

The purpose of this article is to outline the geopolitical concepts of Aleksandr Dugin, the *guru* of Russian Eurasian geopolitics as a total ideology. After the collapse of the USSR, there was a rapid renaissance of geopolitics in Russia, which was an ideological attempt to rationalise the role and place of the post-Soviet Russian state in the post-Cold War international system. The dynamic development of geopolitics in Russia was also a way for the Russians to overcome the post-imperial trauma and the post-Soviet identity crisis. Geopolitics was to define the global aspirations and goals of the Russian Federation, being the quintessence of postmodern Russian messianism and setting a new historical mission for this state. One of several geopolitical trends in Russia was neo-Eurasianism, whose main ideologist was Aleksandr Dugin. The Russian geopolitician has proceeded to formulate a total ideology based on geopolitics for Russia, which is to constitute an intellectually and conceptually attractive synthesis of all the universalist ideologies practised in this country throughout history. Dugin tries to integrate geopolitics with the metaphysics and philosophy of being, transforming it into a kind of ideocratic *sacrum* and ideological signpost for the contemporary Russian state.

Keywords: Russia, geopolitics, eurasianism, ideology, Aleksandr Dugin.