ITJ | The International Tax Journal

# The issue of Ukraine in Eurasian concept

**Tengiz Pkhaladze**
PhD Student, Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA), Doctoral Program in Political Sciences
Email: tengiz.pkhalsdze@ciu.edu.ge

**Abstract---**The article aims to explore the impact of Eurasianist geopolitical concept on Russian foreign policy and its war in Ukraine. Eurasianism as a geopolitical concept emerged in the 20 century's Russia. It represents Russia as an independent civilization, "third continent" between the Europe and Asia, positioning as an alternative to the Western dominance. Revived in 90s of the XX century eurasionism has become the mainstreaming geopolitical theory in Russia. Under Putin's its ideas are frequently implemented in Russia's foreign policy and national security documents. The article analyses the role and importance of Ukraine in eurasionists geopolitical concept and describes the Russian war in Ukraine from the eurasianists' perspective.

**Keywords---**Eurasianism, neo-erasiansism, Russia, foreign policy, Ukraine, war, geopolitics.

## Introduction

Russia's military intervention in Ukraine is not only of a political and military nature, but also ideological. Its roots lay beyond simple political conjunctures and involve a fundamental competition between systems of values, a different understanding of state, world, and democracy that create civilizational antagonism. Russian political elites have different perceptions of fundamental Western world ideals such as liberty, freedom, citizen rights, society, statehood, pluralism, and polycentrism. The Russian concept of democracy, „sovereign democracy ", pretends to be independent from Western influence. Russian "conservatism" is also different from its western namesake and Russian comprehension of the "world order" correspondently encounters the liberal world order.

The war in Ukraine has highlighted these fundamental ideological differences. The Western academic community has been discussing the cause of the conflict from a perspective of dominant theories, but such an approach can only partially explain the complexity, essence and sensitivity of Ukraine in relation to Russia's political beliefs and mindset. To understand the wider picture requires reflection and analyzes of Russian political theories that influence Russia's political decisions.

**How to Cite**:
Pkhaladze, T. (2024). The issue of Ukraine in Eurasian concept. *The International Tax Journal*, *51*(2), 74-79. Retrieved from https://internationaltaxjournal.online/index.php/itj/article/view/7

The International tax journal ISSN: 0097-7314 E-ISSN: 3066-2370 © 2024
ITJ is open access and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.
Submitted: 21 Jan 2024 | Revised: 15 Feb 2024 | Accepted: 1 March 2024

Today, geopolitics are making a comeback. Classical theories of the 20th century, altered and transformed through the decades have materialized in great powers geostrategic concepts. Therefore, in the context of the war in Ukraine (considering not only its military, but informational-cognitive, psychological and other elements of hybrid warfare) and against the background of European security architecture challenges, competition of sea and continental powers, thalassocracy and tellurocracy it is essential to re-access and scrutinize Russia's geopolitical concept of Eurasianism, its approach towards Ukraine and its implementation in Russia's political practice.

Today, Eurasiansim is the dominant geopolitical concept in Russia. Eurasianists initially had demonstrated antagonism towards the independence of Ukraine. They accepted Ukrainian culture and folklore, albeit in a limited way as they considered it as part of universal Russian culture.

**War in Ukraine from the Eurasianist Perspective**

The concept of Eurasianism has extensive historical roots, but its contemporary theory requires special attention, especially regarding the interpretations of Alexandr Dugin and Valery Korovin that contemplate the realization of a long-term geopolitical strategy. This strategy envisages the formation of a so called „Fourth Geoeconomic Zone ", which along with Belarus, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, also combines other continental countries such as Serbia, Greece, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, India and others. It is remarkable that Dugin does not include Ukraine in this list. However, Eurasianists do not consider Russia's future without Ukraine. Therefore, any idea of Ukrainian statehood is considered to be separatism, which is coherent with the views of Russian nationalists.

Eurasianists believe Ukraine is an integral part of Russia with its historical, geopolitical, cultural, lingual, religious, and civilizational components. Therefore, by choosing a Western developmental vector Ukraine became an outpost of "destructive" (from the Eurasianist perspective) liberalism and inspirator of not only political and military confrontation but also civilizational confrontation. From that perspective, attention should be given to not only Russian based publications, but several Western periodicals published by Russian emigres. For instance, such an ideology is shared in the US magazine Free World: Carpatho-Russian Monthly („Свободное слово Карпатской Руси")*, where one can see opinions stating that the Ukrainian nation does not exist, and that Ukraine is just a province of Great Russia.†

From such a perspective, the war in Ukraine cannot be considered as only political. This is a conflict of civilizations that has a post-secularism character: conflict between "civilization of faith" and Western-secular or liberal civilizations. However, according to P. Tillich, liberalism could be considered as a form of religion, more precisely as a quasi- religion.‡ This is a clash of theocracy and democracy, liberalism, and conservatism. It can be considered as a type of apocalyptic conflict which has different forms and labels and appears not only in Ukraine but in other countries, continents and not only in a military context. Consequently, Ukraine has paramount, even global connotation to Eurasianism and such a notion became particularly noticeable in V. Putin's anti-liberal attitude. According to A. Dugin, liberalism has exhausted all its resources and therefore strives to war. Dugin thinks that comprehension of such a fact is enormously important regarding Ukraine, as Ukraine represents the fifth column and contributes to the realization of global warmongering plans.

Dugin highlights that the fundamental structure of liberalism inside of itself creates several axiomatic principles, in particular:

* The Emigrant's Monthly Magazine in the United States State
† Eberhardt P., Rosyjski euroazjatyzm i jego konsekwencje polityczne, „Przegląd geograficzny" № 77, 2, 2005, s. 171–192.
‡ Tillich Paul, The World Treasury of Modern Religious Thought,
Little, Brown and Co.1990, p.65

1. Anthropological individualism (an individual is a measure for everything)
2. Trust in progress (the world drives towards a better future, everything that is in the past is worse than what will come).
3. Technocracy (technical development and its realization is the most important to society)
4. Eurocentrism (criteria are established by Euro-American society)
5. Priority of market relationships (free market economy conditions are the only normal economic system)
6. Democracy – which means a domination of a minority (a minority defends itself from majority, which always inclines towards populism and autocracy)
7. Middle class (which is considered as the only real social actor and universal norm)
8. Unipolar world (the world should be united and based on world citizenship).

As Dugin mentions,§ 1991-2014 was an epoch of global domination of liberalism. Liberalism defeated its opponents but, at the same time, has lost them. Liberalism has a positive effect if society is not liberal, but if liberalism gains victory, it becomes negative.**

However, as Dugin stress, the US and NATO need a different (not liberal) Russia. The West requires present-day Russia and Putin as war is the only way for the West to avoid internal chaos. In such an ideological battle, Russia, being in the position of the enemy, takes the role of an intellectual agent fighting against the open (free) society (which does not exist in reality) and in doing so assists liberalism to strengthen and enhance its influence. Russia has been considered as a geopolitical opponent to the Anglo-Saxon system. As Dugin states, it is easy to provoke Russia, therefore war with Russia is possible. "Ideologically it is necessary as the last measure to avoid final implosion of the liberal west."††

Noteworthy Eurasianist vision on what the liberal order can gain from the war in Ukraine. In their opinion the war will:
- Stop expected global chaos; most countries will unite under the leadership of the liberal West. That will contribute to strengthening liberalism as a positive identity, while it is in fading mode due to its nihilist nature;
- contribute to strengthening the unity of NATO European members, which still consider the US role to be positive. The threat of the "Russian evil spirit" enhances loyalty towards the US;
- prevent the breakup and disintegration of the European Union;
- Will justify and cover up the malicious Maidan, because of which, a nationalistic dictatorship was established in Ukraine.‡‡

Dugin portrays Russia as unwilling to go to war, but the problems faced by ethnic Russians and the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine left no alternative for Putin but to react against the anti-Russian government of Ukraine. Dugin thinks that in international relations Putin acts as a pragmatic politician, and there exists some sort of mutual understanding and coherence between his and Henry Kissinger's judgement and vision. Dugin says that Putin has no ideology but is forced to accept an ideological framework, though this is not his deliberate choice. The rules of the game and Putin's role in the war were shaped by certain political-ideological frames.

However, B. Isaev considers Putin as one of the major geopoliticians of our time.§§ The Eurasian doctrine of Putin, which he has publicly stated in his speeches and interviews, has a lot in common with classical Eurasianism. The Russian president uncovers geostrategic details in his annual addresses and

§ Савин Л., Новые способы ведения войны: как Америка строит империю, Москва 2016, §3. 40.

** Дугин А, Украина:Моя война. Геополитический дневник, Москва 2015, §3. 82.

†† Ibidem, §3. 84.

‡‡ Ibidem, §3. 85.

§§ Исаев Б., Геополитика: учебник для вузов. Стандарт третьего поколения, Санкт-Петербург 2006, §3. 496.

public speeches and translates them into actions through his orders and decisions[***]. In 2016, Putin publicly stated that „Russia attaches great importance to the idea of building a multi-level integration model for Eurasia in the form of a Greater Eurasian Partnership".[†††]

Putin's geopolitical ambitions imply inclusion in the Eurasian Union of those Eastern and Western European countries which can resist Transatlanticism. The Eurasian Union – mentions Isaev – is an open style union dedicated to serve as „sort of center of further integrational processes. That is, it will enlarge by accepting new members ".[‡‡‡]

In 2011, at the congress of the party „Yedinnaia Rossia" (United Russia) V. Putin, at that time a presidential candidate, appeared with new ideas: The Eurasian Union with Russia as the state-civilization which unites nations and religions. That was the first official rejection of Russia's Eurocentric foreign policy. Russia itself had to become both subject and source of the geopolitical project. Neo-Eurasianism fitted ideally in realizing such an initiative. Russia as neither Europe nor Asia, but a unique civilization with its special mission regarding Eurasia and the world.

In 2015, the Treaty on the Eurasian Union came into force. Russian experts noted that for the successful implementation of the project, the Eurasian Union needed to take specific steps to expand the internal Eurasian space, increase the number of member states, and strengthen its influence on international platforms.[§§§] At the international discussion club „Valdai" 2016 meeting Putin stated: „Russia advocates the harmonization of regional economic formats based on the principles of transparency and respect for each other's interests. That is how we arrange the work of the Eurasian Economic Union and conduct negotiations with our partners, particularly on coordination with the Silk Road Economic Belt project, which China is implementing. We expect it to promote an extensive Eurasian partnership, which promises to evolve into one of the formative centers of a vast Eurasian integration area. To implement this idea, 5+1 talks have begun already for an agreement on trade and economic cooperation between all participants in the process. "[****] Thus, Eurasianism has taken a crucial place and influence on the geostrategy and foreign policy of modern Russia. Its basic principles determine the identity of the Russian Federation and the main directions of foreign policy.

At the „Valdai" discussions it was mentioned that the essence of all attempts to avoid ultimate implosion of liberalism reveals Putin's ideological portrait to be a shadow of the past.[††††] Liberalism vocalizes its viability, because there is something in the universe „from which we have to be free ". As Dugin mentioned, Russia will become an object from which Ukraine must first be released, then Europe and then the whole of humanity that is endangered by Russia. The next step will be the liberation of Russia from its non-liberal identity. In a nutshell, the West still has an enemy. Russia is the transition from a pre-liberalism past to a liberal present. This process is essential to save liberalism.

Subsequently, the assertion that Dugin's concepts affected Russia's geopolitical strategy especially towards Ukraine is not irrational. In his book "Basics of Geopolitics" (2000) Dugin dedicates a whole chapter to the "problem of sovereign Ukraine".[‡‡‡‡] He stresses, that sovereign Ukraine is not just a negative occurrence for Russian geopolitics, but a sort of anomaly, which is a result of Russia's mistaken geopolitical activities. The author highlights that without the Black Sea coast (especially the

[***] Ibidem, §§. 428.

[†††] Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly; February 1, 2016, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53379

[‡‡‡] Исаев, Геополитика: учебник для вузов, op. cit., §§. 437.

[§§§] Иванов И. , Доктрина Путина, Российский совет по международным делам, http:// russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=6643#top-content, доступ 11 XI 2022.

[****] Международный дискуссионный клуб Валдай, http://ru.valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/ zasedanie-kluba-valday-s-uchastiem-vladimira-putina/, доступ 10 XX 2022.

[††††] Ibidem, §§. 86.

[‡‡‡‡] Дугин А. , Основы геополитики, Москва 2000, §§. 928.

Northen Part), Russia's status as a reasonable and independent state is questioned. The annexation of Crimea by Russia is an example of the realization of Dugin's ideas that he expressed in the early 90s. He said that Ukraine, at the strategic level, must only be in Moscow's projection (on the North and South). Dugin also proposed to make Ukraine an administrative center of a Russian centralized state. In the special chapter - "Geopolitical decomposition of Ukraine" the author asserts that "Ukraine as a state is geopolitically insane". Further, he states that an independent Ukraine could be reasonable only if it exists as a "sanitary cordon", as influential geopolitical actors never accept Ukraine's accession either to Russia -Eurasia or to the Western European blocs. The author believes that Ukraine must be divided into several zones, considering its geopolitical and ethnocultural peculiarities.

Dugin states that Russian "democracy", after the formation period of the 90s of the XX century, got back to the model which characterizes a non-Western mindset. V. Surkov calls it an anti-Western or "sovereign" democracy. Dugin believes that the "return of Crimea" appears as a step toward the 3rd Rome (a political concept asserting Moscow as the successor to ancient Rome). Although the geopolitical mission of Putin is challenged by the US and its European allies, Dugin considers that the West applies double standards towards Russia, while Russia radically changes the course. Russia's objective is to become a completely independent civilization, with its values, ideals, interests, exceptional identity, and distinctive path.§§§§

Those Russian philosophers, who are respected by Putin, assert that Kyiv is a constant foundation of Orthodoxy. Danilevsky describes Ukrainians as "first Slavic brothers." Eurasianists consider Ukraine's separation from Russia as a nonsense. Putin echoes the same rhetoric by stating that Russian roots are in Kievan Rus and Russian-Ukrainian "brotherhood is not a legend, but historical fact".*****

Especially noteworthy is the role of Kyiv in the Eurasianist concept of N. Trubetzkoy.†††† According to him: the borders of those states or relatedly independent principalities, that were united under Kyivan Rus are not equal to the current Russian state, which Russians consider as a homeland. Kyivan Rus was a group of principalities, governed by successors of the Varangian dynasty. Those principalities situated in the basin of three rivers, that connect the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea define the true geographic nature of the country as the "path from Varangians to Greeks". Kyivan Rus territory not only mismatches even so-called European Russia but did not represent a noteworthy political-economic entity. At that time Kazarian and Bulgarian states had more importance from a political-economic perspective than Kyivan Rus.

Trubetzkoy states that Kyivan Rus was unable to develop as a strong state. The belief that the later Russian state was a continuation of Kyivan Rus is wrong. Trubetzkoy considered that it was obvious that contemporary Russia has not descended from Kyivan Rus as this is historically impossible. Kyivan Rus and contemporary Russia have only the name in common – "Russia," and their geographic and economic nature are completely different.‡‡‡‡

At the same time, contemporary Russian scientist-researchers, successors of the Soviet historiography, consider Kyivan Rus as a cradle of Slavic people. In Moscow in2016, a monument of Vladimir the Great, who converted to Christianity and Christianized Kyivan Rus, was erected. Textbooks in schools in Russia mention Kyivan Rus as the oldest Russian state (Древнерусское государство), which is different from the initial position of classical Eurasianists. By the beginning of the 20th century Eurasianism did not consider any possibility for an independent geopolitical status for Ukraine. Russia was portrayed as a qualitative (main) center of the Eurasian empire and Ukraine as a geographical,

§§§§ Ibidem, §3. 145.
***** Ibidem, §3. 144.
†††† Трубецкой, Н. «Взгляд на русскую историю не с Запада, а с Востока», Москва 2015.
‡‡‡‡ Ibidem

anthropological integral part. The Eurasianists concept implies maintaining Russian-Eurasian unity, defined by geographic destiny and its missionary idea is the expansion of the "Russian world" and an exemplary indication of this is the current situation in Ukraine.

**Conclusion**

Based on the analysis of the concept of Eurasianism, several conclusions can be made:
Russia's main geopolitical and foreign policy orientation is based on the following vision: a Eurasian union with economic integration, which leads to the broader integration of the whole CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) area. Ukraine is an essential part of the Eurasian integration project.

Analysis of the Eurasianist concept is important, not only to understand Russia's motivation for the war in Ukraine, but to better understand European security challenges and problems. The Neo-Eurasianist geopolitical concept with its contemporary modification, especially with Dugin's interpretations, is a considerable geopolitical risk factor, that already has its implications for Ukraine. Understanding of the nature of Russian foreign policy provides an opportunity to detect risks and main tendencies, to prognosticate further development, to use geopolitical trends to elaborate and develop a Western strategy.

**References**

Eberhardt P., Rosyjski euroazjatyzm i jego konsekwencje polityczne, „Przegląd geograficzny" № 77, 2, 2005.
Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly; February 1, 2016, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53379
Tillich Paul, The World Treasury of Modern Religious Thought, Little, Brown and Co.1990.
Дугин А, Украина: Моя война. Геополитический дневник, Москва 2015.
Дугин А. , Основы геополитики, Москва 2000.
Иванов И. , Доктрина Путина, Российский совет по международным делам, http:// Russian council.ru/inner/?id_4=6643#top-content, доступ 11 XI 2022.
Исаев Б., Геополитика: учебник для вузов. Стандарт третьего поколения, Санкт-Петербург 2006.
Международный дискуссионный клуб Валдай, http://ru.valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/zasedanie-kluba-valday-s-uchastiem-vladimira-putina/ , доступ 10 XX 2022.
Попов, В., Россия-Самостоятельная Евразийская Цивилизация., Российский Совет по Международным Делам (РСМД), 22 Января 2024 https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/rossiya-samostoyatelnaya-evraziyskaya-tsivilizatsiya/
Российская Академия Наук, Институт Мировой Литературы им. А.М. Горького, Российский Фонд Культуры., «Русский Узел Евразийства, Восток в Русской Мысли, Сборник Трудов Евразийцев»., Москва 1997
Савин Л., Новые способы ведения войны: как Америка строит империю, Москва 2016.
Савицкий П. В Борьбе за Евразийство. Изд.1931г.
Трубецкой Н., Взгляд на российскую историю не с Запада, а с Востока, Москва 2015
Трубецкой Н., Избранное, Москва 2023
Трубецкой Н., Сборник Работ, Москва 2015