

## THE CONSERVATIVE VECTOR OF RUSSIA'S GEOPOLITICS AT THE START OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM

DARIE CRISTEA\*  
LUCIAN-ȘTEFAN DUMITRESCU\*\*

**Abstract.** *The paper investigates security doctrines articulated in post-Cold War Russia and aims to see whether the principles of radical conservatism influenced the strategic identity used by Vladimir Putin. In our attempt to fulfill this objective, we have investigated both the values of radical conservatism and the characteristics of eurasianism. We have obtained two typologies which we then compared in order to see the differences but also the common points. The purpose of our study is to highlight the modern and post-modern content of mystical elements employed by eurasianism and to pin down the narrative directions engendered by radical conservatism once it has entered the geopolitical realm. In addition to the fact that eurasianism proves to be just a pastiche of the radical conservatism specific to the interwar period, neo-eurasianism proposes a rather unconvincing social alternative, something related to early modernity, to the ultramodernism disseminated by the U.S., whilst by employing the model that Samuel Huntington made famous neo-eurasianism depicts civilizations as monolithic units, overlooking one civilization's inherent conflicts.*

**Keywords:** *strategic identity, social constructivism, eurasianisms, radical conservatism.*

### *Strategic Identity*

According to Irina Isakova<sup>1</sup>, the strategic identity employed by Vladimir Putin starting with the year 2002 was predominantly neo-eurasian. The major difference to the Eurasian model rests mainly in the absence of fixed ideas about Russia's strategic partners. While classic eurasianists were skeptic especially towards contact with Western countries, Vladimir Putin was open to collaborating

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\* Scientific Researcher and Lecturer, Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations, Romanian Academy, Bucharest; Faculty of Sociology, University of Bucharest; darie.c.cristea@gmail.com.

\*\* Scientific Researcher, Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations, Romanian Academy, dulust@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup>Irina Isakova, *Russian Governance in the Twenty-First Century: Geo-strategy, Geopolitics and Governance*, London&New York, Frank Cass, 2005, p. 17.

with the U.K, France and Germany – which became Russia's strategic partners – along with China. The strategic identity affirmed by president Putin is an aggressive one, and such objectives as enhancing economic efficiency, exploring the resources inherited by Russia from the Soviet Union, the foundation of military bases abroad and the thesis of using nuclear weapons if needed are clear indications of that. But first of all, a deeper look is needed into the concept of strategic identity, created by social constructivism.

*Social constructivism* is based on the assumption that the *Weltanschauung* of the political elites weighs the most in the formula that defines national interest. According to this theoretical orientation, the national interest is thus dynamic and modeled according to the governing minority's ethos. This is the main difference to liberalism and realism, the two consecrated theories in international relations, according to which national interest has a stable nature and a relatively constant content. In contrast, according to social constructivism, a country's national interest cannot be a priori known, but is more of a dependent variable, highly influenced by the ruling elites' mental map. The notion of mental map is specific to emic approaches within anthropology, which try to decode the social reality of a community with the help of the locals' system of categories; in contrast to, say, the etic approach, that deciphers the life of the community with the help of academic concepts and categories, in spite of what the locals might believe about the event described. Making good use of the indigenous reference system, the emic approach seeks to describe the community as the locals within it see it. The social constructivism mentioned above attempts a similar result. Once the mental map of the governing minority is decoded, the attention then moves to the systemic culture, the power dynamic between the various ideas within the system, as well as between the political actors that assert them. The mental map of the elite, as the most important factor of national interest as defined by social constructivism, is concentrated by Stanislav Secrieru in the concept of *strategic identity*. "Prin «identitate strategică» înțeleg viziunea asumată de elite (populația o percepe ulterior ca idee națională) cu privire la forma pe care trebuie să o ia sistemul politic și economic, precum și principalele amenințări la adresa securității, potențialii rivali și aliați și marea strategie de urmat (great strategy) pe arena internațională, în vederea asigurării locului și rolului țării în sistemul internațional ("Through "strategic identity" I understand the vision assumed by elites in regard to the form which the political and economical system must assume, as well as regarding the main threats to security, the potential rivals and allies and the great strategy to follow in the international arena, to ensure the country's place and role in the international system)<sup>2</sup>". Interested in the various forms that the national interest assumes in post-Cold War Russia, Stanislav Secrieru observes the strategic identities enounced during this period in the ex-Soviet space, and analyses these identities in *Rusia după Imperiu. Între putere regională și custode global*.

<sup>2</sup> Stanislav Secrieru, *Rusia după imperiu: între putere regională și custode global (Russia after empire: between regional power and global custodian)*, Jassy, Institutul European Publishing House, 2008, p. 41.

At Belovejia, in 1991, the presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus were agreeing to dissolve the Soviet Union, a space which was used to reforms since as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Belovejia moment was the start of a reform only apparently new, because its target of molding Russia on the Western-style institutional frames had been the same for four hundred years. And still, something about it was indeed new. For the first time since Peter the Great, Russia was renouncing its claims of being an imperial power. A megacycle of being an empire was thus ending after half a millennium, a cycle that started in 1480 with the long wait on the Ugra river, when Ivan the 3<sup>rd</sup> won against the Khazak chan and thus the Russian *Mittelpunkt* was birthed. Its military echoes could still be heard to the time of Ivan the 4<sup>th</sup>, also called the Terrible, all the way to Siberia. Thus, at Belovejia one could witness the end of an imperial megacycle that was similar to the Columbian one. According to Halford Mackinder, the geographical discoveries of Cristopher Columbus and the papal edict *Nostra Caetera* that divided the dewly discovered world between Spain and Portugal were announcing the four century hegemony of the thalassocratic powers. But at the debut of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new power was asserting itself on the stage of international politics. Because the resources of the enourmous Eurasian space could be distributed to its periphery through railroads, the Soviet Union, already a telurocracy, was able to quickly transform into a thalassocracy as well. The post-columbian geopolitical cycle was thus starting: a period in which the continental powers were to dominate the field of international relations. But the way in which modernity was inserted in the Eurasian zone partially infirmed Mackinder's prognosis.

During Putin's administration, the state was recast as the main lead in social reform, a role that was until then reserved for the market and international financial institutions, the public monopols over natural resources were reinstited, financial discipline was reestablished, and treaties with the IMF (International Monetary Fund) were denounced.

### *Radical Conservatism*

Traditional conservatism values the sacred, authority and the connection to the past as a fundamental benchmark of individual action and of the social order. Radical conservatism values the same principles, more or less. But the major difference lies in the fact that while traditional conservatism is resistant to change and seeks to reinforce the authority of preexistent institutions, the radical version of conservatism, and an adept of change, seeks to found a new institutional establishment to replace the old one, which is considered to be lacking in legitimacy. *Radical conservatism proposes a revolution against the current institutions, in the name of authority* (Muller, 1987). How is such an impulse to be explained? The explanation is that the direction of radical conservatism considers the present institutional edifice as having a weak and narrow grip over the individual and over society. For enhancing the authority, the articulation of a new institutional frame is thus needed. To this end, the attention of radical conservatism is focused on the state, the nation, the people and the community

in general. The revolution it seeks is justified by the presence of two types of threats. An internal threat, posed by the market and the institutions of the state (especially by the parliament), and an external threat, posed by the great states from the area of international relation, which diffuse foreign values and practices perceived as corrosive by the *Weltanschauung* projected by the radical conservatism.

We can remark upon two types of conservatism. A conservatism structured around the imperative of saving the status quo, no matter what that means, and a value-oriented conservatism, that means to defend values such as stability, tradition, religion, authority and nation. Actually, the value-oriented conservatism is the premise or the starting point for radical conservatism as well. The supporters of radical conservatism are most of all recruited from the ranks of socialists who dislike capitalism a great deal, but without extending that dislike over modernity in general, a contradiction visible in the appetite for technology displayed by the radical conservatists<sup>3</sup>.

Radical conservatism is a radicalization of classic conservatism. In the face of the individualistic and cosmopolite individual values promoted by liberalism, the counterpart values proposed by radical conservatism are the socio-cultural expression of particularism in history, or, simpler said, the people. From this point stem the organicist theories, employed by ethnic nationalism, according to which being born in a certain community marks the individual irreversibly with the spirit of that community. Which means that the individual is perpetually encroached to a community of destiny shared by a social group? The individual particularism sustained by liberalism is opposed by the radical conservatism through the collective particularism of the people, and through the relatively homogenous culture fashioned by the *Volksgeist*, defined by Hans Freyer as a prerational spirit, unformulated and unconscious. This popular spirit is one of radical conservatism's favorite concepts and phrases, along with collective unconscious, economic cycles and so on, all these being the type of concepts very hard to define and to measure by the social sciences.

Are there any adherence points between fascism and radical conservatism? According to Göran Dahl, fascism is actually anti-conservatist, since it seeks a completely new order, anti-traditional but employing traditional symbols to gain legitimacy, winning all-through this process even sympathizers from the conservative camp. Therefore, to Dahl, radical conservatism is too conservative to agree with an institutional renewal. Jerry Muller, on the other hand, believes otherwise on this matter<sup>4</sup>. A distinctive trait of radical conservatism is the very intention to radically change the current institutional build, in order to allow the new order to gift the authority with access to a more efficient social control. The second difference between radical conservatism and fascism regards religion: Göran Dahl thinks that fascism makes an instrument out of religion, while to radical conservatism religion is the central institution of social life. As to the resemblances between the two doctrines, radical conservatism is akin to fascism mostly in economic

<sup>3</sup> See Göran Dahl, *Radical Conservatism and the Future of Politics*, London, SAGE Publications, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> See Jerry Z. Muller, *The Other God That Failed. Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1987.

matters. The two ideologies converge in their preference for a state-controlled economy, with corporations also controlled by the state and so on. Another common point would be the belief in a national community which is to be the recipient of the material and cultural progress. It is interesting to note that in Hans Freyer's writings, the state is the sole source of positive liberty, since it connects the individual will to the collective will, while the market, as long as it severs the organic tie between the individual and the community, is only a source of negative freedom.

According to Jeffrey Herf, the conservative revolution of interbellum Germany had the following value orientation<sup>5</sup>. It was sustained by intellectuals who believed in a German exceptionalism, and in the fact that the Volk's complex values were threatened by the materialism of the capitalistic world, with its internationalistic and cosmopolite echoes. Although anti-modern, the perspective of radical conservatism had still a modern foundation, since the only place where the spiritually dehydrated individual could find solace and comfort was the cultural nation-state (*Kulturnation*), a fundamentally modern construction. The doctrine of radical conservatism started from the premise that German superiority was based on cultural traditions and from ideas, and this was also the starting point of a strongly anti-semitic dimension. For radical conservatives, the moral and cultural degradation of the Weimar period was not a mere happening, but the result of an international conspiracy authored by the Jewish community in order to destroy the authentic German culture. Radical conservatism idealized the *Gemeinschaft* ideal-type and devalued, accordingly, the ideological misfits advanced by the liberal (individualistic) or communist (class-related) ideologies. Finally, radical conservatism also supported the prime of the political over the economical. The salvation promised by radical conservatism came not from prosperity or from the social class, but from the state that dominated the society. For example, in Hans Freyer's vision, the empire (Reich), as a structure created by the immersion of the state (Staat) in the values of the main ethnic group (Volk), was the only place in which one could stay safe from the alienation and fragmentation brought on by modernity<sup>6</sup>. The only mystery was how exactly to get an individual already brainwashed by modernity and focused mainly on himself to become loyal to the collective consciousness of the Reich. The answer identified by Freyer was the path of the charismatic leader, capable of using the state as an instrument of manufacturing virtuous citizens, dedicated first and foremost to the interests of the Reich and only secondary to their private matters. What Freyer understood only when it was too late is that such loyalty is created through violence and, once created, continues to feed and engender violence.

### *Eurasianism*

The opinions vary greatly when it comes to localizing the origins of the Eurasian current. There are some voices who consider the monk Filofei of Pskov

<sup>5</sup> See Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> See Jerry Z. Muller, *The Other God That Failed. Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1987.

as its founder, because after a great victory of Mehmet the 2<sup>nd</sup> over the byzantine center, the monk announced the great Moscow ruler Vasili the 3<sup>rd</sup> that he was the inheritor of Rome's legacy. A legacy of the first two Romes, to be more precise, that already fell under the attacks of "barbarians". Thus, Vasili the 3<sup>rd</sup> was notified not only that Moscow had become the Third Rome after the byzantine collapse, but also that its spiritual (and therefore political) authority had been approved and recognised by all Christian countries. Surely the leaders under the spiritual guidance of the Pope did not approve of such representation, just as it wasn't approved by the rulers still under the protection of Constantinople's Patriarchy. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the cultural and civilizational contrasts between the various areas of Europe were no longer sustained through the distinction civilized vs. barbarian, but mainly through the distinction of Christian vs. pagan, that automatically made the Third Rome into a center for cultural and civilizational initiative for the whole Eurasian area. But after the British economy took flight at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, an event that replaced spiritual markers with economic ones in evaluating the cultural and civilizational differences between the world's spaces, the Third Rome ceased to be, therefore, a civilizational benchmark. The only field in which the Tzar's empire continued to excel in was the cultural one. Or at least that was the idea promoted by the panslavists from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who enjoyed stressing the cultural preeminence of the Russian space over the Western one. A few eloquent examples are Nikolai Danilevski and Constantin Leontiev, who, in their writings, place a lot of importance on the contrast between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. Danilevski not only stresses out the unsurmountable differences between the cultural and historic pattern of Russia and that of Western Europe, the first being based on the Slavic spirit and the second being upheld by the Roman-Germanic one, but also claims that the cultural model of Western Europe is hostile to the Russian one. Therefore, the only modality of preserving the Slavic values was to construct a pan-Slavic union with Constantinople as its capital, as a political edifice meant to be followed by the whole of Eastern Europe.

Danilevski's pan-Slavism was continued by Constantin Leontiev following the same *Kultur/Zivilisation* axis. The first imperative launched by Danilevski was the strong differentiation between the Slavic and European civilizations, while the second one targeted the reinforcement of the Slavic cultural matrix through irrigating it solely with Slavic traditions and removing and Western "impurities" from it. To this end, Danilevski recommended to attract into the Empire all the Turkish peoples of North-East Eurasia, who had been exposed little to nothing to illuminist influences, as well as all the Slavic peoples of Eastern Europe. The eurasianists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century exploited the pan-Slavic axiology heavily. To Piotr Saviťki, Nikolai Trubeťkoi and Gheorghii Vernadski, Russia was a world completely apart from the Western one, as well as from the Asian one. The orthodox traditions, the Slavic and Turkish cultures combined perfectly in the vision of eurasianists, from this cultural mix resulting a monolithic ethos, perfectly finished and without any cracks, that protected the whole Eurasia like a thick veil. But beyond the isomorphism of the distinct traditions

that entered into the Eurasian cultural mix, another idea to note is that the eurasianist fundamentally believed that *Russia is a spiritual and civilizational monade between Europe and Asia. Russia is Eurasia.*

The “ideocratic” principle present in the writings of Piotr Savițki is interestingly explained by Aleksandr Dughin. Ideocracy is a term that unites all forms of non-democratic and non-liberal leadership, based on non-materialistic and neutral motivations<sup>7</sup>. The ideocratic principle vehiculated by Savițki was to generate a Eurasian state constructed from the bottom to the top, hence a state that would employ the “organic” traditions of Eurasia, ruled by spiritual leaders. What other institutional manifestation could serve the Russian people soteriological inclinations better than a state with a theocratic allure? We don’t know. What we do know is that this theocracy transformed often into a autocracy, which produced a very specific “organicity”, as well as plenty of “spiritual leaders” devoted to that organicity through an imposition from the top to the bottom. Actually, even when he speaks of the anti-Western dimension of the Orient’s civilization, Dughin mentions also the political forms through which this dimension manifested itself: “URSS, China comunistă, Japonia de până la 1945 sau Iranul lui Khomeyni” (“The Soviet Union, Communist China, pre-1945 Japan or Khomeyni’s Iran”)<sup>8</sup>. What Dughin doesn’t say is that these anti-Western oriental resorts are as Western as they get. Eurasianism took over the whole agnostic perspective over history. Saint Augustine proposed a clear distinction between the mundane history, in which the imperial structures are born and grow and dissipate, and the transcendental history, of the kingdom of God, the only one that could lead to a spiritual destination.

The profane history was devoid of this element, since this version of history awaited an end pre-established beyond its frame of understanding. A nuance was introduced by Joachim da Fiore, the representative of Renaissance humanism, who considered salvation as possible also in the profane history, but not as a result of any action of a mundane institution, but of the manifestation of the transcendental spirit in history. Da Fiore thus kept the divine origins of salvation, though this was to take place within the world, and not in the kingdom of God<sup>9</sup>. Illuminist philosophers have employed da Fiore’s ideas by equating the fulfillment of humanity to progress, in time and space, independent of any transcendental influence. The progress of humanity seems to depend in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of the dissemination of Eurasian values on a global scale. Therefore, the ideological principles of Eurasianism are enounced, and this doctrine claims that the impulse of history resides in the irreducible geopolitical tension between the sea powers and the continental powers. If thalassocracies are defined as democratic, commercial and pragmatic, tellurocracies are ideocratic, with a hierarchical organization and guided by a religious ideal. It’s thus clear that any different social realities cannot be anything other than deviant and divergent. Here lies the main fault of eurasianism, in its drive to force social reality to fit a very narrow ideal.

<sup>7</sup> Aleksandr Dughin, *Bazele geopoliticii și viitorul geopolitic al Rusiei*, Bucharest, Eurasiatica Publishing House, 2011, p. 66.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem.*, p. 313.

<sup>9</sup> According to Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1987.

The pan-Slavic direction and the Eurasian one were reclaimed in the 90s by the neo-urasianist movement which considered the fall of the Soviet Union as history's greatest catastrophe. The reason was this: once the imperial structure that coincided with Eurasia fell, who was now left to protect this space and its culture by the vicious civilization imposed by a too strong West, with the United States as its spear tip?

The main thing to be noted in the case of neo-urasianism is its ideological hang-over. A more post-modern combination of nationalism, communism and a series of values ripped from the orthodox tradition is hard to imagine. Second of all, just like in the case of urasianism, ideal-typical mistifications are very visible. The West as *Gessellschaft*, Eurasia as *Gemeinschaft*, the United States as *Zivilization*, Eurasia as *Kultur*, the West as *The New World*, the Orient as *The Old World* and so on. "The geopolitical Orient represents the antipode of the geopolitical West. Instead of economical modernization, here traditional and archaic forces are dominant, forces of corporate and guild-like production of the (*sic*) developing country. In the place of economic pressure, the state uses a moral or physical coercion (The Law of Idea and the Law of Force). Instead of "democracy" and (*sic*) "human rights", the Orient always tends towards totalitarianism, socialism and authoritarianism."<sup>10</sup>

There are net differences between the United States of America and the Russian Federation in terms of technological level, productivity of work, institutional efficiency, and quality of life and so on. But the vision is which America is homogenous, completely secularized and crushed by the chrono-spacial standards of modernity, while Russia is organic, pastoral and placed in an idyllic *illo tempore* is obviously exaggerated. The areas of the Russian Federation that still defy modernity (by this we're referring to the Siberian zone) were subjected to an intense and violent, yet still ineffective modernization. It's not quite clear what type of archaism is envisioned by Dughin when he speaks of the "developing country". Is he referring to the traditional one, of a society not in contact with modernity, still inhabited by people not accustomed to agriculture or domestic animals, or the archaism produced by modernity, which means an economic archaism induced by the development of sub-development? Following the *Kultur-Zivilization* distinction, Dughin is likely referring to an archaism specific to pre-modern societies, present especially in the Siberian area, and with values very poorly influenced by the utilitarian ideas of modernity. But the social realities of contemporary Russia, especially the rural Russia, display an archaism specific to the development of sub-development, a sub-type of modernity that generates a cultural, political and economical universe in which the idyllic of pre-modern worlds is not only present, but also employed conceptually, which transforms any discourse into a vulgar demagogy. Therefore, Eurasia as the Old World, situated in a completely different dimension from modernity, is an ideological projection which is contradicted by reality all-through Russia's social realities.

<sup>10</sup> Aleksandr Dughin, *Bazele geopoliticii și viitorul geopolitic al Rusiei*, Bucharest, Eurasiatica Publishing House, 2011, p. 312.

Thirdly, the purpose of eurasianists is to not allow the 21<sup>st</sup> century to become an American one. Their view on the United States is actually not that different from the view of famous personalities of the interbellum in the West, who portrayed America as technologically advanced, but devoid of culture. Rich with *Zivilization*, which means reason, technology, materialism and financial capitalism, America was lacking in *Kultur*, which was manifest in the plan to set the individual free from the “iron cage of capitalism” and to help him regain his dignity within the a community of shared ethnos, will and destiny, under the protection of a totalitarian state. The same *Amerikanismus* – the mass culture, Fordism and Taylorism – that once threatened the German “soul” is now besieging, according to eurasianists, the Russian soul at the debut of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The answer of the eurasianist to counteract against the atlantist (American) impulse is the people and the eurasianist doctrine. It is to be noted that while the object of classical geopolitics is the nation-state, the geopolitical vision of eurasianists rejects the main manifestation of modernity and focuses on the people. The geopolitical strategy that gravitates around the people, the most extended form of the traditional community, instead of around the nation-state, is the fourth distinctive trait of eurasianism.

### *Too Much Vision, Too Little Pragmatism*

Since we arrived at this point, and before drawing a conclusion of the paper, some further clarifications are needed. The quoting of Aleksandr Dughin was not arbitrary. *The Bases of Geopolitics* (quoted above in its 2011 Romanian version), are not mere analysis material about Russian geopolitics for the Romanian specialists. In other words, it is not the first book you can find in a library if you want to see what’s up lately in Russian geopolitics, but it is, from many points of view, the only one.

With certain institutional and propagandistic merits in sealing the marriage of neo-eurasianism and radical conservatism in the Russian intellectual world after the fall of the Soviet Union, Dughin has been for a while the only public face of Russian geopolitics in the Western space. A discussion with a few colleagues of Russian and Ukrainian origin at a common conference revealed to us that Aleksandr Dughin is better known, and way more read among the researchers in Romania, Germany or France – considering that said researchers are interested in Russian geopolitics or the Eurasian doctrine – than he is in Russia. A good joke would be that the story of this Russian geopolitician is similar to the export salami from the socialist period: it was produced in the country but only consumed here if it was part of certain lots refused in the West.

On the other hand, the myths regarding Dughin’s political influence at the top of the power in post 2000s Russia to this day aren’t really relevant, no matter how true they might be. It’s not even relevant how much of an impact the author’s neo-eurasianism has in the configuration of the security strategy of Putin’s Russia, or the mentorship which *Der Spiegel* attributed to him over the presidential party of Russia, when the publication was presenting his books to the German public.

The geopolitics of Aleksandr Dugin, quite didactic here and there, and quite a great deal mystic and spiritualistic, portray a greatly theoretical author, in the purest fashion of classical geopolitics, and employing fully the echoes of Saviťki and Gumiliov (and therefore managing to be the interface between classic eurasianist thought and the specialists outside Russia and, probably, the Russian public of today as well). As any great theoretical author, he holds the empirical in contempt, he does not halt his line of thought at facts which might infirm him and he dreads any verifiable things. The grand theory in geopolitics follows the logic of great spaces: it either becomes a simple act of culture, identifiable in a historical context, or manages to create its own content and fulfill its prophecies, if it finds a proper political vehicle and good timing. According to some, Dugin's moment has passed, Russia already promoting geopoliticians, diplomats and specialists in international relations that approach the external agenda with much more sophistication and concern for technical detail. Neo- Eurasianism and radical conservatism like Dugin's nevertheless represent a mood: it doesn't matter what is innovative or exotic in his works, but the fact that he managed to formulate the association of the two doctrines in Russia's new plan of international relations. Perhaps he's not the man to be appointed foreign minister, but what if the foreign minister reads his works (or the works of others like him?) Neo- Eurasianism has too much vision and too little pragmatism. Still, it has the potential to provide the underlying doctrine, and the "institutions" of the security strategy of this Russia which is, according to Dugin's book (*The Basis of Geopolitics*), an intermediary phase between the Soviet Union and what is meant to be a geopolitically ideal Russia.

### *Instead of Conclusion*

Göran Dahl has noticed the favorite directions of radical conservatism when it manages to penetrate the field of geopolitics<sup>11</sup>. Almost completely, these directions coincide with the discursive lines of Eurasianism. These are:

- Anti-americanism (a dislike towards the great transnational companies of the United States).
- Contempt to the American mass culture (popular culture)
- A rejection of multiculturalism
- Disagreeing with unipolarity (America as the sole super-power).

Our paper, in regards to the main pillars of neo- Eurasianism, was mainly elaborated based on Aleksandr Dugin's version, a rather marginal presence in the Russian Federation both in general, within the typical academic debate of formal geopolitics, as well as in particular, in the field of neo- Eurasianist discourse. In spite of all these, the main benchmarks enounced by Dugin don't break out of the typical Eurasianist pattern built by Piotr Saviťki. Dugin's radical conservatism draws attention through the anti-reflexive character of its Eurasianist discourse. Dugin is more of an adept of reflex than one of reflexivity. Therefore, when the state and nation call upon him, the individual must obey without question. That means that since the state and nationhood are both sacred, subjective identities

<sup>11</sup> See Göran Dahl, *Radical Conservatism and the Future of Politics*, London, SAGE Publications, 1999.

and rational thought are suspended. According to Dughin, the Western civilization is the enemy, and the Russian culture is the protective dam. He takes on from interbellum German conservatism the idea of large space (*Grossraum*) as the only kind of space capable of ensuring sovereignty. When he says that only superstates can be sovereign, Dughin reveals the imperial vocation of radical conservatism inserted into the area of geopolitics. In any case, Dughin affirms quite openly that Russia will either be an empire again or be nothing at all. The tension between the *nomos* of the sea and the *nomos* of land, the Russian people as a soteriological organism, which employs the empire as an instrument for universal salvation and the people as a nucleus of geopolitical concern, are other ideas typical to the radical conservatism of Dughin.

There are a few elements specific to radical conservatism that found their way into George W. Bush's strategic identity as well. Those are visible in the American exceptionalism (the American people as the only moral force at an international level) and the unilaterality manifested by the United States in foreign politics, through its preventative doctrine and its ignoring of international security institutions. At a first glance, the main difference between the doctrine of Bush and that of Putin is the faded presence of mystical elements in the first one. But actually, the metaphysical accents of American exceptionalism are quite striking. At the same time, the radical conservatism behind the Bush doctrine isn't aimed against a certain state, a trait easily explained as long as the main enemy of the U.S. at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the militant version of Islam.

Generally speaking, radical conservatism promoted closed identities. As an adept of historical particularism, a radical conservative will find it relatively hard to interact efficiently with another radical conservative, since he may interpret the historical particularism represented by the latter as a threat to the culture and the people he stands for. Such an attitude will perpetuate in the field of international relations the essence of the political – the distinction foe/friend – identified as such by another representative of radical conservatism, Carl Schmitt<sup>12</sup>, which will in turn have not very favorable consequences for the stability of the world's politics.

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<sup>12</sup> Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2007.