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Russia's Ukraine Revanchism: Dugin, Neo-Eurasianism, and the Emerging World Order

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ABSTRACT

The Ukrainian conflict has paved the way to re-examine the geopolitical implications of Russian Neo-Eurasianism, which has challenged the Liberal International Order. The implications of such a development will have global implications for Russia. Indications of Putin's renewed mission, infused by re-strategising the Russian position in Eurasia coupled with cultural exceptionalism based on messianic identity, are observable in recognition of Donbas and Luhansk as separate territories and the invasion of Ukraine. The conflict has allowed the US to lead as an Atlanticist player and regain its slipping position in the international system. Therefore, following exploratory research methodology, the paper examines Dugin's geopolitical model based on neo-Eurasianism. The paper concludes that the model will observe major setbacks in the post-Ukrainian conflict order as the proposed alliances by Dugin's model with Moscow, Tokyo, and Tehran face several challenges. Consequently, the invasion has pushed Atlanticist pre-eminence back on track across Eurasia.

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Introduction

After the start of the Russian invasion, Anatoly Antonov, Russian Ambassador to the US, stated, "We are talking about changing the world order that was created by the United States and by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries after the dissolution of the Soviet Union" (Colarossi, 2022). Such assertions are not new; they find their relevance with philosopher Alexander Dugin's belief in the rise of multiple poles of modernity. Therefore, paving the way to link the practical relevance of the Eurasianist agenda and Russia's geopolitical gamble.

The Russian special operations in Ukraine have raised the ante for the re-imagining of Alexander Dugin's work, who said that war between Russia and Ukraine "is inevitable" (Ikenberry, 2018). He further exhorts that "*Russian-Western Relations Are Just Beginning; the West Must Take Us Seriously Now, Engage in Real Dialogue*" (Memri TV, 2022). His conceptualisation of Russian geopolitics has observed practical relevance in the shape of Vladimir Putin's recent actions to recognise the Donbas and Luhansk regions. The action has been inspired by the Russian understanding of Russian history, cultural exceptionalism, and the Eurasian perspective (Euro News, 2022). It highlights what Dugin believes: that there should be an end to political modernity

for which Eurasian powers must challenge the Liberal International Order, turning towards no one's order or a multipolar world.

The crisis resulted in multiple repercussions for its overall geopolitical ambitions, especially when a shift was observed in US's European allies, France, Germany, and the UK, who were looking to follow an independent foreign policy amid the conflict, thereby favouring US security-centric interests in Europe (Ikenberry, 2018). At first, NATO seemed somewhat obsolete in its recognition as a security alliance. However, the recent actions of Putin's pragmatic Eurasianist agenda have posed questions about the future of Russian geopolitics and the re-emergence of NATO's importance for Europe.

It is believed that Alexander Dugin's neo-Eurasian ideology is not the official policy of the Kremlin, but Putin's actions up till the Ukraine crisis provided evidence of Dugin's neo-Eurasianism in play in Europe and elsewhere. Nonetheless, political gestures and speech acts were already prevalent, and as Brickey LeQuire (2014) argues in his paper, *Putin and the West: The Politics of Eurasianism*, how Dugin's geopolitical theory "reportedly became the political creed of high officials in the current government."

Broadly speaking, the Russo-Ukrainian crisis has raised geopolitical challenges for Russia, which is why Dugin's geopolitical model, inspired by Mackinder's Heartland theory and Haushofer's Lebensraum, required a holistic reassessment of how Russia's actions are in line with Neo-Eurasianism and Dugin's geopolitics. To analyse this, there exist questions such as: what is Neo-Eurasianism, and what is the relevance of Ukraine in Neo-Eurasianism? How have Atlanticist powers, the US and its allies, responded to the recent invasion? How will Dugin's overstretched geopolitical model observe real geopolitical shocks amid the Ukrainian conflict?

Following the exploratory research methodology, the paper aims to argue how Russia's invasion of Ukraine is in line with neo-Eurasianism ideology and how the Russian geopolitical gamble will further strain the prospects of Russia's global treatment as a global power. Such actions will allow the US to further restrict Russia's regional assertions by reconfirming its position in the aforementioned regions. To simplify this, the paper is divided into three parts. The first part will conceptualise the concept of Neo-Eurasianism and its relevance to cultural exceptionalism, geopolitics, regional Eurasianist platforms, and Ukraine. The second part will analyse Dugin's geopolitical model to see the proposed alliance with Tehran, Berlin, and Tokyo. Also, this part will discuss how the Russo-Ukraine war was long coming. The third part will analyse the response from the west and the future of the proposed alliance by Dugin before concluding the paper.

Neo-Eurasianism: Cultural Exceptionalism, Geopolitics and Ukraine

Embracing its civilisational exceptionalism, Russia's vision has robust geopolitical ambitions following the Neo-Eurasianism ideology. The concept of Eurasianism gained its prominence in the 1920s with the work of P. Savitsky, N. Trubetzky, and G. Vernadsky to conceptualise the westernisation that caused Tsarist Russia's collapse. Later in the 1960s, Lev Gumilev rejected western-oriented Russian history (Clover, 2016), but his work remained focused till the Soviet era, after which Alexander Dugin, Alexander Panarin, and Alexander Prokhanov, with neo-Eurasianism ideology, contextualised the post-cold war period as 'Russia should not imitate the west'. They believe in an organised multi-ethnic Russian society based on the principles of civilisational coexistence and reject liberal universalism (Arbatova, 2019: 8). Such views find acclaim in the words of Putin for the support of his nationalist historical obsessions.

Neo-Eurasianism and Russia's Cultural Exceptionalism

Neo-Eurasianists view Russia as a unique civilisation with its own values and political system. Even Putin regards Russia as a "*civilisational state*" (Putin, 2013), which, as per Dugin, has an "*intrinsic right to evolve according to its own logic*" because there is no fixed pattern for human progress and development (Dugin, 2015: 18). This view challenges Fukuyama's lack of an alternative approach and Huntington's "conflict-laden" understanding of the bifurcation between western and non-western civilisations (Mouzakitis, 2017).

The cultural exceptionalism view views Russia as the messianic 'third way' (Klump, 2009). This is a sheer rejection of forked explanations proposed by the west by presenting a blurred explanation of Russia's European and Asian history. However, Dugin argues that Russian civilisation was established by several factors, which included Slavic-Aryan culture, orthodox traditions, and Turkic nomadism (Mouzakitis, 2017). By this, the aim is to allow Russia to hold onto an "inner cultural core" that has shaped its broader geopolitical imperatives (Shlapentokh, 2017).

Moreover, it is the civilisation that acts as the major political driver on an international scale. This classification, as per Dugin, is based on civilisational geopolitics, which has been shaped by the geopolitical rivalry between major land and sea powers with distinct hostile ambitions and cultural obsessions. In Russia, a land power is regarded as a Tellurocracy, whereas sea powers, the United States and the United Kingdom, are classified as "Atlanticist" Thalassocracies. (Melin, 2017).

The recent developments in Ukraine and Russia's geopolitical revivalism under Putin's presidency are aimed at the rejuvenation of Russian civilisation and the resurgence of Russian culture. This is where neo-Eurasianism provides context to understand Russian resurgence and the Ukraine crisis under a cultural perspective that has influenced nationalistically inspired foreign policy—disregarding Ukraine's sovereignty.

Neo-Eurasianism and Geopolitics

The all-present hostility between land and sea power, as described by Mackinder, has inspired Russian foreign policy and Dugin's geopolitics. Dugin's geopolitical design for a 'Eurasian Empire' is clearly influenced by Karl Haushofer's "New Eurasian Order," which proposed that Russian and German civilisations must collaborate to equalise sea power's influence from the world islands (Dugin, 1997: 30). Haushofer's theorisation was based on genocidal politics grounded on racial lines called as Lebensraum. It did inspire Dugin's Raumsinn, the Russian version of Lebensraum. However, Dugin's geopolitical determinism, based on Raumsinn, is established on geographical principles rather than racial lines. Dugin argues that it was indeed the Lebensraum that failed Germany because Hitler tried to make Europe German rather than European. This is where Dugin proposes that Russia must refrain from building a Russian empire but rather establish a Eurasian empire. This view is observable in the Russian civilisational discourse, as hurled by Putin in an article on the historical unity between Russians and Ukrainians (Putin, 2021).

Neo-Eurasianism and Ukraine

The Neo-Eurasian perspective on Ukraine is fused with their historical view of Ukraine's non-existence as a state (Dugin, 1997: 228), for which they fuelled ethnic and social tensions in Eastern Ukraine by supporting pro-Russian separatist movements. Traces of such disenfranchisement from within Ukraine against pro-western governments were observable even before the Crimean annexation. The actual preparatory period for the invasion started from 2005 onwards with the rise of the National Bolshevik Party, an extreme right party co-led by Dugin himself (Mathyl, 2002). The manifestation of the party is clear; they do not accept the existing borders of Russia.

Following this, Dugin, in his book *The Foundations of Geopolitics*, asserts that Ukraine as a state "has no geopolitical meaning" and "poses a huge danger to the whole of Eurasia" (Dugin, 1997: 254-228). For him, the solution to the Ukrainian problem is simply the division of the state into several zones based on geopolitical and ethnocultural realities. The four ethnocultural zones include Western Ukraine, Little Russia, the right bank of the Dnieper River (Central Ukraine), and Crimea (Dugin, 1997: 255).

The first region, Western Ukraine, includes Transcarpathia, Volhynia, and Galicia; it is aloof to Russian culture, so it is not included in the Eurasian heartland and must be kept alien to the other ethnocultural regions of Ukraine. Western Ukraine is part of Middle Europe (Mitteleuropa), which includes Germany, Italy, and most of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire's territories (Dugin, 2002: 256). The second region, "Little Russia," includes the territories to the east of the Dnieper River. This region is dominated by the orthodox Russian population, which is closely aligned with Russian history, culture, ethnography, and religion. As Dugin proposed, it is not important that the Eurasian empire must incorporate all the proposed areas into its dominance, but at least even if, for instance, Little Russia remains autonomous, it must remain "in an unconditional and solid union with Moscow". The third region, "Central Ukraine," is ethnically dominated by ethnic Russians from "Little Russia." Therefore, similar to Little Russia, Central Ukraine belongs to the Eurasian Heartland. Crimea must remain under "Moscow's direct strategic control." However, it should be granted maximum autonomy, keeping its socio-economic interests with Ukraine under consideration (Dugin, 1997: 256).

Eurasianism and restructuring of regional institutions for Eurasian integration

Several important institutions were formulated as part of Russian *Ostpolitik* to build economic and security alliances against Atlanticist powers and their allies. The first major institution formulated to keep the lost Russian states under Moscow's leadership was the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Through this institution, Moscow aims to keep its near-abroad states away from the influence of NATO or the EU. In securing Moscow's interests, it supports Dugin's claim that the post-soviet territories need to remain under Moscow's influence based on their shared cultural and historical relevance with Russia. Through this, Russia will be able to emerge as Eurasian Pole in the proposed multipolar world.

The second major institution is the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), which is aimed at building a supra-national union that includes the CIS states. The EEU is to compete with the EU over economic trade with Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, which is in line with the Eurasian agenda. Russia intends to use the EEU to foster interdependence among Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, and Armenia, thereby limiting Atlanticist influence in Eurasia. Following this, Putin aims to add China, India, Pakistan, Iran and other CIS members into the EEU, thus forging a greater emergent integration platform for the Eurasianist project (Mahjar and Ripa, 2016).

The third major institution is the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO); it is a hard-security-focused organisation that aims to be Russia's counterpart to NATO, especially in Central Asia, by promoting strategic understanding. This is traceable to their joint defence cooperation through military drills and the development of "Rapid Reaction Forces" in 2009.

Lastly, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which acts as a political-security-centred organisation, provides a joint working platform for Central and South Asian states. However, rising Chinese investment has posed new challenges for Russia in determining how to counter it while keeping it a Russian-centric regional institution. The future of these institutions is dependent not only on how Moscow responds to China's growing role in the SCO.

Dugin's Geopolitical Model

Alexander Dugin's geopolitical model presents the world as a multipolar geopolitical setup in which Russia is the leading Eurasian power in the multipolar world (Ingram, 2021). His assertion for a pluralistic version aims to represent the diverse civilisational coexistence of multiple pillars of modernity against the monopoly of western civilisation's monotonic liberal order (Melin, 2017: 18). This setup nullifies the traditional idea of a nation-state and replaces it with an "integrated civilisational structure" representing great spaces (Dugin, 2014: 19-20). And it is the "geo-economic belts" that keep unity within the "Great Spaces".

Figure 1: Map of Multipolar World



Figure 1 represents the division of the world into four geographical zones. The Euro-African zone, for example, is subdivided into European, Arab-Islamic, and Trans-Saharan Great Spaces. The Pacific-Far East zone includes the Chinese, Japanese, and New Pacific Large Spaces. Finally, the focus of the research in the Pan-Eurasian zone embodies Russian-Eurasian, Islamic Continental, and Hindu Large Spaces. The Anglo-American Zone includes three great spaces, i.e., North, Central, and South American Large Spaces. Within this setting, Russia will make a few geopolitical settlements by forming three major alliances against Atlanticist Sea Powers from the Anglo-American Zone. The alliance formation will be based on a commonality of interest, which is hostility toward Atlanticist powers; Dugin's proposed alliances for Moscow are with Berlin, Tokyo, and Tehran.

Moscow-Berlin Alliance

The overly ambitious model proposed returning the Kaliningrad Oblast (Easter Prussia) to Germany, along with the majority of protestant and catholic states, with the exception of 'unstable' Finland (Dugin, 1997: 155). On the other hand, as part of the Russian south, the Russian-Eurasia sphere must rule Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia, which are "north of the Balkan Peninsula from Serbia to Bulgaria" (Dugin, 1997: 224). Furthermore, with the exception of Estonia and Ukraine (except its western parts), all former Soviet Union states in Europe must enter into the Russian-Eurasian sphere, like Belarus.

The Moscow-Berlin alliance has been shaped by Russia's interest in German technology for Russian resources. Both sides have observed a convergence of broader socio-economic interests, a reduction in Berlin's defence spending in NATO, and their shared political views on

Georgia and Ukraine that have been shaped by German nationalism. Both sides have a history of settlements in the shape of the Treaty of Rapallo (1922), the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939 and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939) that introduced a mutual understanding of spheres of influence between the two sides. At the same time, there are concerns about the Alternative for Germany (AfD), a far-right nationalist party which is gaining prominence in Germany and is viewed as a pro-Russian party. If such factors are capitalised on in the long run by Russia, it can use German support to reject Atlanticist influence in the region.

Additionally, there exists an increasing irritant between Washington and Berlin based on Berlin's lack of attention towards an increase in defence spending under NATO's charter, the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, and Washington's withdrawal of 1/3rd of its troops (Hjelmgaard, 2020). Also, rising Chinese and Russian investment was pushing transcontinental relations with the Atlanticist powers to the point of 'no return' before the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict (Ellyatt, 2020).

Moscow-Tokyo Alliance

To form an intimidating arrangement against the US in East Asia, Moscow should offer the disputed Kuril Islands to Japan as per the model (Dugin, 1997: 163). The Kuril Islands were of increasing significance to the Japanese imperial power in the 1930s. If the Kremlin gives back Kurils Island, taken from Japan during WW2, it could restore the Japanese "new order" in the Pacific region. Nonetheless, Russia was in talks to negotiate with Japan over its claim on four islands in the Kuril chain, but after Japan's recent action to support US-backed sanctions, the Kremlin has abandoned peace talks with Tokyo.

Japan is aiming towards an independent security policy by increasing its defence spending by 15% since 2012 (Foster, 2020). The idea is that Japan must transform into a normal country by relocating Article 9 of the constitution. Such a security policy orientation has raised the ante in Washington vis-à-vis Tokyo's desire to move towards nuclear capability over the rising Chinese threat; this has been hinted at by former US diplomat Brzezinski. He believes that the uncertainty surrounding US security assurances to Japan may compel Japan to seek a geopolitical settlement with Russia (Seligman and Gramer, 2019) while developing a nuclear capability to deter Chinese threats (Brzezinski, 2012: 159).

Moscow-Tehran Alliance

The alliance with Tehran is central in the Russian-Eurasian sphere against Atlanticist powers as both share a principle of "common enemy" towards the US (Dugin, 1997: 164). Other than the access to warm water in Russia, Dugin argues that both sides have mutual recognition of traditional coexistence in a civilisational context (Dugin, 1997: 158). The presence of an anti-Atlanticist strategy infused with anti-American resentment in the Muslim world is capitalised on by Dugin (Dugin, 1997: 164). He recognises the general view of America towards Islamic associations in Eurasia as a favourable scenario for the Moscow-Tehran alliance. Such an alliance will allow Russia to break the hostile NATO-led 'Anaconda Ring', for which the US must be driven out of the Persian Gulf (Dugin, 1997: 60-166).

The US maximum pressure policy against Tehran has allowed Putin's Russia to bolster its ties with Iran. Mutual dependence and shared resentment of the US provided a foundation for the two sides to expand their cooperation against the Atlanticists. Despite the irritant over Syria, Tehran has other reasons to forge long-term ties with Moscow, especially the need to find an alternative to western sanctions and isolation from the international sphere. Iran's recent 400-billion-dollar deal with China and the death of IRGC General Suleimani have convinced Tehran

that they have to accommodate Russia and China by forging strategic partnerships in Eurasian countries, particularly the Middle East.

As per Dugin, Russia needs to build stronger ties with Iran to break the hostile NATO-led 'Anaconda Ring', for which the US must be driven out of the Persian Gulf, which is perceptible from the impediments between the US and Saudi Arabia. In his most recent remark, the Saudi crown prince said, "Simply, I do not care," when asked about Biden's misunderstandings of him (Chmaytelli, 2022). Their concern over Khashoggi's murder has increased Riyadh's resentment towards the US; such questioning helps in warming Saudi-Russia ties (Gardner, 2019). Therefore, irrespective of the Saudi-Iran rivalry, the two sides have been acting in favour of Russia.

A Long War Was Coming for Ukraine

Scholars argue that since the annexation of Crimea, the possibility of war between Russia and Ukraine has been observable. However, such assertions represent a submissive understanding of the history of Ukraine with Russia. There was a pattern in how the neo-Eurasianist agenda was in play that set the arrangement for each event that led to Putin's decision to start "special operations" in 2022. There are four explanations for the rise of the event from a historical point of view. First, as has been discussed in the previous section on how Russia views Ukraine as an unnatural state, it should be under the Kremlin's sphere of influence.

The second explanation is NATO's recalcitrant posture towards the threat faced by Ukraine. It is observable from the 2008 Georgian crisis when Germany's chancellor Angela Merkel, France's President Nicolas Sarkozy and the United Kingdom's Prime Minister Gordon Brown refused to offer NATO membership to Georgia and Ukraine at the 20th NATO summit held in Bucharest. Even now, when NATO members meet, they don't want any hasty decision to accept Ukraine's membership, thus highlighting Europe's attitude towards Ukraine's security. Although the Ukraine crisis is not new yet, the French President believes that they can't afford to accept Ukraine's acceptance into NATO at such short notice. For these realities, Tim Marshall (2015), in his book, *The Prisoner of Geography*, states that "*Thank goodness Ukraine isn't in NATO, or we would have to act.*" However, the time was running out for Russia "to disrupt the annexation of Ukraine by the Atlanticist Empire". Therefore, it had to take a shot before Ukraine's urge to join NATO would be accepted by the West (Dugin, 2012: 234). The word "annexation" here meant the entrance of Ukraine into NATO.

The invasion of Ukraine shows that Russia has waited a long time for Germany and France to give her time, what Dugin calls a "grace period" by disallowing Ukraine's membership into NATO; nevertheless, time was running out for Dugin, as he asserts in his book, *The Fourth Political Theory*, "the battle for Crimea and Eastern Ukraine awaits us" (Dugin, 2012: 236-37). Therefore, the recent invasion was a long time coming, which is divisible from Dugin's neo-Eurasianist network inside Ukraine, Putin's hawking actions against Crimea in 2014, and his feisty speeches against Ukraine's membership in NATO. All of these proclamations show that the dismantling of Ukraine and the entrance of at least Eastern Ukraine under Moscow's direct control remains the immediate goal.

The third explanation is based on Russia's efforts to galvanise support from factions inside Ukraine. The Orange Revolution against Viktor Yanukovich, pro-Russian prime minister, in 2004 (Wilson, 2005) allowed Russia to take actions against Ukraine's pro-western leadership and the need to keep its home in order based on its increased fear of a western-sponsored colour revolution inside Russia. They sanctioned several pro-regime youth movements, such as "Rossiia molodaia"

(Young Russia), "Molodaia gvardiia" (Young Guard), "Nashi" (Ours), and some others. This underlined the involvement of the Neo-Eurasianist agenda within Ukraine since 2005.

The youth movements that were banned included *Evraziiskii soiuz molodezhi* (ESM, Eurasian Youth Union). The ESM was headed by Pavel Zarifullin and Valerii Korovin, who was the national Bolshevik youth wing of Dugin's international Eurasian movement. There is still unclear evidence over who formed ESM, but scholars such as Anton Shekhovtsov (2014), a political scientist, argue that the movement received presidential grants from Russia after the Orange Revolution, which shows the involvement of Moscow's leadership (Shekhovtsov, 2016).

Moreover, the ESM collaborated with far-right parties in Ukraine, such as the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (PSPU) and the Russian bloc. The progressive socialist party was at that time headed by Natalya Vitrenko and Dmytro Korchyns'kyi, who were members of the highest council of Dugin's MED. The presence of ESM in Ukraine made it clear that they do not accept Ukraine's entrance into the EU's sphere of influence. Based on this, the major political goal at first was to break Crimea away from Ukraine and then break Ukraine into regions so as to allow Moscow to occupy the niches.

The Neo-Eurasianist movement, which was almost dead in 2007-8 because of the measures taken by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) against ESM, re-emerged with the 2014 Russian-Ukrainian war (Podrobnosti, 2008). But irrespective of the fact that some of the ESM members flew to Russia and some remained as minorities in the movement, the covert support continued for pro-Russian organisations. For instance, the movement collaborated with PSPU's Vitrenko, whom Dugin called "a charismatic politician" (Trusevich, 2008). She is the same leader who wanted to build a political union between Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus and was against reconciliation with the EU in general.

Other organisations, including the Donetsk Republic (DR), worked with ESM on the Eurasianist project. They, in 2006, made a move to hold a referendum for the independence of the Donetsk republic. However, the referendum never took place. Later, DR went underground when criminal cases were raised in Ukraine, yet it declared Donetsk's independence in 2009 (Ostrov, 2009). Later, after the rise of Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, DR again resumed its activities in 2012 and continued with its opposition to Yanukovich, who had pro-western rhetoric. These developments were followed by a period in 2012 when Ukraine was debating whether to sign an Association Agreement with the EU or to forge relations with the Russian-based Eurasian Customs Unions (ECU). For this, DR and ECU collaborated; they even took part in a meeting called "The Future of Donbas" in Luhansk (Bredikhin, 2012). The meeting chose interstate integration as the next step toward the Eurasian union.

The establishment of the embassy of the Donetsk Republic in Russia (2012) and the hosting of several conferences for the Eurasian project are some of the pertaining elements that were prevalent as part of subversive tactics before the actual invasion of Crimea in 2014. Thereby pushing separatists in the South East of Ukraine to start extensive violent mobilisations against anti-Russian authorities in Ukraine.

The recent development where Russia claims that they want to de-Nazify Ukraine is not different from Dugin's view that Atlanticist powers are the ones that brought Nazis to power in Ukraine. For a long time, Putin waited to start the invasion of Ukraine when the West kept pushing Moscow's redlines on Ukrainian issues. Thus, Putin, to gain political legitimacy at home and to support Russia's strategic culture of expansion, had to take this decision against what Dugin terms as the "Nazi Junta" of Ukraine.

Altogether, Dugin's ideological assumptions were converted into practice by the annexation of Crimea and then the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. So, the signs of war were observable for a long time, considering the role of ESM and pro-Russian separatist organisations in Ukraine. The ethnic plates were targeted by these factions, leading towards a strategic success for Russia by using the *Gibridnaya Voyna*, a Russian hybrid war strategy, to "erode the socio-cultural cohesion of the adversary's population" (Schadlow, 2015).

Atlanticist response

To encircle Russia, the US, along with other European powers, has praised a strategy that includes an inclusive approach majorly comprised of economic sanctions and the supply of arms to Ukraine. The strategy based on economic coercion and arms support aims to coerce Russia into accepting western diktat and demonstrating US leadership to withhold the Liberal International Order.

Economic sanctions

The economic sanctions that the West has imposed on Russia have been unprecedented in their speed, scale, and scope. The US, UK, EU members, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Taiwan, have increased their bets against Russian aggression by imposing various embargoes against Russia (Keay, 2022).

Based on the economy's future outlook, Western-backed sanctions will halt new investments in Russia for a long time. Therefore, \$630bn (£470bn) worth of Russian foreign currency reserves is also frozen, therefore plummeting the Russian ruble, consequently increasing inflation in Russia (Liang, 2022). Several state-owned enterprises, Alfa Bank, Sberbank, government officials, and dual-use goods for military and civilian purposes are also sanctioned by the UK, US, and EU (Gov.UK, 2019). But the need was to introduce further strict sanctions that would be more effective than those imposed on Iran, North Korea, and Russia after 2014.

The major setback was the removal of Russian banks from the international financial messaging system SWIFT. This requires Moscow to find alternatives, which in her case are possible through the Russian-developed System for Transfer of Financial Messages (SPFS) and China's Cross-Border Interbank Payment System as an (imperfect) alternative to SWIFT. Nevertheless, the alternatives might work in the long run, but for now, 70% of the Russian banking market is in trouble because of its removal from the SWIFT system.

Capitalising on the global sanctions against Russia, the numbers are in a daunting position (Financial Times, 2022). On 24 February, Equinor, the Norwegian energy group, started the process of divesting away from its ventures in Russia. That will cost \$25 billion in Russia. On 28 February, HSBC decided to relax its ties with Russian banks, including VTB, Russia's second-largest bank. RWE has also favoured not re-entering into contracts with Russian counterparties for non-energy supplies (Reuters, 2022). Baker Hughes (Reuters, 2022) and Weatherford (PR Newswire, 2022), which provide oilfield services, have halted any new investment in their ongoing operations in the Russian oil market (Funakoshi, Lawson and Deka, 2022).

Moreover, AB Volvo, Nokia, Apple, Daimler Truck, General Motors, BMW, Ford Motor Co, Canada Goose, Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen, Airbus, Toyota, etc. (Klayman, 2022). have all suspended their businesses in and with Russia. These might not be viewed as affecting the Russian economy in the long run. However, as per the public choice theory, the impact on people's daily lives matters a lot when calculating the impact of sanctions. To this, Reid Whitten says, "No way of shielding Russian people from the effects of sanctions" (Keay, 2022). The outpouring of automobiles, electronics, and related foreign investment in Russia will undoubtedly spark public outrage and

galvanise support in favour of liberal, anti-Putin, and anti-autocratic factions against the government's actions, especially when the situation implies a possible Iron Curtain 2.0 for Russian citizens.

Therefore, the impact of these sanctions on the Russian market, the Russian oil and gas sector, and the Russian retail sector will have exuberant ramifications. The crippling position of rubble cannot support a Russian invasion for long, considering the Atlanticist economic response. As Napoleon said, "armies march on their bellies", and if the economy is in peril, the armies cannot be offered much in the long run to continue their belligerent actions against an adversary that is economically, diplomatically, and militarily supported by the world's strongest economies.

The nature of sanctions this time is strict *vis a vis* the one imposed in 2014. The smart and targeted nature of the 2014 sanctions was predominantly symbolic; Park and Choi (2020) and Biersteker and Hudáková (2021) argue that the failure rate of those sanctions was high for several reasons. In recent cases, the EU has capitalised on the need to place stronger embargos against transport equipment, intermediate products, capital goods, etc. These sanctions have raised the ante for the Central Bank of Russia to utilise its \$127 billion in gold reserves left in Russian and renminbi reserves worth \$70 billion. This is why Putin has asked the EU and the US to return their payments in rubles in order to support the economy. The central bank, within just 8 days, from 24 February to 02 March, loaned 4.4 trillion rubles to banks so that the financial system would be able to maintain its stability (Aleksashenko, 2022).

The US has banned all Russian oil and gas imports, and its Atlanticist ally, the UK, remains committed to decreasing its dependence on Russian oil, eventually phasing out its dependence by the end of 2022 (Aljazeera, 2022). The major challenge for the US remains how it will provide alternative energy supplies to the EU, which is already dependent on Russian oil. As a result, Russia has been monitoring the impact of price fluctuations on the EU since December to see if the EU will be able to withstand the shocks of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. Farid Zakariya (2022), a political commentator, believes that the EU is not far away from entering into a period of recession if oil prices are not controlled, which remains to be the case as Russia is stopping oil exports to Poland and Bulgaria and has asked EU members to pay their dues to Russia in rubles.

Overall, the US has requested Gulf states to increase their oil production to counter the increased challenges faced by the EU, which gets a quarter of its oil and 40% of its gas from Russia. Irrespective of the exhortation from the EU that they will switch to alternative energy supplies "before 2030", the source of alternatives is the Gulf States. This means that the Biden administration must reclaim the Saudi crown prince, Mohammad Bin Salman (MBS) because relations between Washington and Riyadh have been strained since the Jamal Khashoggi incident. Trump's departure not only strained relations but also allowed Riyadh and its Gulf allies to look for other options, such as Beijing. The same Beijing that bought a major chunk of the Gulf's oil during the COVID-19 crisis when the US was fighting at home with COVID-19. Therefore, Saudi Arabia and Qatar's oil remain the crucial factors for Washington based on mounting pressure from the EU for alternative options because the US cannot support the EU's energy needs for long. Thus, if the US is able to win over its Middle Eastern counterparts, then there exists a strong opportunity for the Atlanticist powers to offset Russia's oil monopoly over the EU.

Military

To support such an ambitious geopolitical adventure, Dugin might just have oversimplified the military potential of the West against Russia. The fault in the Russian military's stars was observable from the time when several pictures of Russian military hardware baring open on Ukrainian soil were coming out of the war zone. Marck Cancia, a retired Marine Corps colonel who

has studied Russia's military buildup since the cold war, claims that "Russian strategy and tactics are failing in Ukraine" (Insider News, 2022). Hundreds of Russian tanks, SPCs, fighter aircraft, and airborne troops are all in play on Ukrainian soil. However, the images of abandoned vehicles, surrounding Russian troops, and shots down of Russian choppers by portable AA systems represent a miscalculated strategy from Putin's end.

In contrast, Ukraine has emerged as the one with the West's sympathy. Secretaries Blinken and Austin said to Zelenskyy that they vowed to "help them win" (Lee, 2022). The billion-dollar military hardware that has been reaching Ukraine represents a staunch response against Tellurocracy power by the Atlanticists. The states that have provided military hardware to Ukraine include Belgium, the Czech Republic, Canada, the US, the UK, Estonia, Germany, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, the Netherlands, and the United States (Curtis and Mills, 2022).

The military support by the West was as expected. Therefore, the real question is: in the post-Ukrainian conflict, what will be the position of Eurasia? Will the grand chessboard see a shift in the positions of states such as Germany, which has been steadfast in its refusal to increase defence spending? What about the alliance that, Dugin proposed with Germany, Iran, and Japan? The answers to these will highlight that irrespective of the ambitious Eurasianist agenda, Dugin's geopolitical model will experience major setbacks.

Post-Ukrainian conflict geopolitics: Implications for Dugin's proposed alliances and Emerging World Order

German U-turn

For a long time, the Kremlin has been forging stronger ties with Berlin, which has attracted criticism from the US. Nevertheless, Germany has been a vital player in building the bridge between Russia and Europe. Even after the change in leadership with the departure of Angela Merkel, Berlin was unassured about changing its position against Russia, which means it was in line with the historical ties that Dugin proposed between Russia and Germany. Even at the very start of the conflict, Chancellor Olaf Scholz was reluctant to clarify Germany's position, highlighting Berlin's lack of concern to take the leadership position in addressing the crisis against Russian bellicosity (Aljazeera, 2022). It showed the inadequacy of Russian and Eastern European policies by Germany amid the Ukrainian crisis.

For years, Germany was not willing to stop the construction of Nord Stream 2, decrease its dependence on Russian oil or increase its defence spending as per NATO's charter, but it was all until the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis. Germany's guilt over the Nazi regime and the 20 million deaths in the USSR prevented them from increasing their defence spending, but with the heightened debate over the future of Europe's security and the improved standing of France vis a vis Germany in NATO, Berlin had to forge some policy changes.

Before the conflict, the stats show that 55% of Germany's need for gas was fulfilled by Russia raising questions about how Berlin's dependence on Russia (O'Donnell, 2022). To this, Scholz, in a session of the Bundestag, exhorted that the time has come for Germany to reduce its import dependency on Russia (France 24, 2022). The tables have turned. Many politicians, including German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, have publicly admitted that "it was a mistake to use trade and energy to build a bridge with Moscow" and that the time has come for Germany to enter into a "new era for European security" where relations will be more about "containment and deterrence". Such exhortations have been supported by the new chancellor, Olaf Scholz, who, while arguing in the German parliament, used the term "Zeitenwende"—literally meaning a turning

point—to mark the rise of a new era for Germany (Abend and Bajekal, 2022). This means decreasing its dependence on Russian energy, increasing its defence spending and maintaining a stronger position via France in NATO to take the leadership seat in European security.

The ambitious Eurasianist agenda, as proposed by Dugin, finds one out of three proposed alliances, as per the model, in a dangled position. The Kremlin might be able to continue Nord Stream 2 in the future, but the tilt towards increased military spending, diplomatic re-positioning against Russia in favour of European security interests, and searching for alternative energy options—gulf states—has allowed Berlin to move further away from Russia (Bollfrass, 2022).

Japan

Japan is an important partner of the US, especially after the recently announced Indo-Pacific strategy. The shift in Japan's policy orientation since WWII has allowed her to move closer to the US sphere of influence, forming an essential East Asian alliance. Still, Japan has been aiming towards an independent foreign policy for the past few decades, which has been infused by its need to curtail the Chinese threat, for which it has shown its desire to build nuclear arsenals. On this, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, on Fuji Television, said that Japan should move forward towards a possible "nuclear sharing program" (Johnson, 2022). Such incitements of Tokyo to offset China were capitalised on by Russia when they entered into dialogue over the Chishima Islands, which Russia calls the Kuril Islands, but then Japan announced it would follow US-backed sanctions against Russia, and the talks ended.

Following western diktat, Japan has revoked the "most favoured nation" status of Russia (Bloomberg, 2022). The assets of several Russians were frozen, along with the prohibition of trade with several organisations. Tokyo has targeted Russian banks, banned imports of Russian coal, and banned exports of Russian-bound oil refinery equipment (Reuters, 2022). At the same time, it has tripled its loans to Ukraine, reaching \$300 million (Reuters, 2022). But there is a concern that since Japan depends on Russian coal for 13% of its power generation, this will lead to a rise in inflation in Japan. The fluctuation in the Japanese currency did raise eyebrows in the financial sector, but irrespective of these concerns, the public remained steadfast in its support for sanctions against Russia. The polls in April by Asahi Shimbun showed that 88% of the Japanese population supported sanctions against Russia (The Asahi Shimbun, 2022). This demonstrates that irrespective of certain domestic concerns, and the people remain supportive towards their government's foreign policy position in favour of the US-backed sanctions against Russia.

Dugin's proposed Moscow-Tokyo alliance was observing some hope when both were close to finalising the joint construction of the Kuril/ Chishima Islands before Russia's pugnacious actions in Ukraine. Other than this, Japan has had a more clear vision with the US over China, based on which the Ukrainian conflict has further unsettled Japan's deal with Russia over the disputed territories. Consequently, the global dynamics shaped by the Ukrainian conflict take away 2/3 of the proposed alliance as acclaimed by Dugin's geopolitical model.

Iran

The shared animosity between Russia and Iran against the US allows both sides to strengthen the natural strategic bonhomie (Shlapentokh, 2020). Irrespective of the US-backed sanctions against Russia, Iran has remained resistant to accepting any shared behaviour against Russia. This also supports her own offensive posture in the region, referred to as "forward defence" against US expansionism in its near abroad.

In Iran's case, Dugin's proposed alliance with Tehran remains nascent. Russia has been keen to invest in Iran and provide military hardware. Both recently concluded a deal in 2021 to mark their joint efforts in supporting Iran's interests with the JCPOA and at the UNSC. With this, Russia will provide advanced military hardware such as Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets and the S-400 missile defence system. In contrast, Iran provided Russia with a 20-year agreement in the same year, which makes Russian companies the largest shareholders in the Chalous gas field in Iran's Caspian Sea territory, but what good would such an alliance be considering the economic situation of Tehran and Moscow? (Watkins, 2021). On the geostrategic level, cooperation can lead to a joint response against Atlanticist powers, but considering the crippling position of Iran's economy, any overambitious roadmap will remain less productive against Washington, which has had a "maximum pressure" approach against Iran in the past.

So, despite the western response against Russia, Iran remains closer to the Russian ambit due to its hostility toward Washington as a result of its shaky position on P5+1, the assassination of IRGC General Qasem Suleimani, and the lynching of economic sanctions. This is why the US needs to shape its policy towards Iran to prevent it from fully entering into the Russian or Chinese circle, which is observable from its "look East" policy in the post-Rouhani period, as discussed by Ali Fathollah Nejad in his book, "Iran in an Emerging New World Order" (Nejad, 2021).

Even US allies like Germany, France, and the UK have been reluctant to support further sanctions on Iran. Moreover, they have been developing an alternative economic transition system as well to avoid US sanctions (Peel, 2019). Therefore, the US needs to finalise the P5+1 deal and integrate Iran's economy into the global market so that it can be driven away from the isolation that could be capitalised on by Russia. As Negar Mortazavi, an Iranian-American journalist and analyst, said, *"The president just has to make the decision, spend the political capital, take some public heat – which is what Obama did – and just do it"* (Harb, 2022). This will lead to the normalisation of relations with Iran, thus curtailing Eurasian influence, which will be a bigger threat to Russia than a "nuclear Iran". Nonetheless, this remains a possibility in the future, as the chances are currently scanty.

Conclusion

Despite the radical nature of Dugin's geopolitical model, which beliefs in dismantling parts of China and giving Turkey geopolitical shocks, it is an oversimplification of the existing realities. However, keeping geopolitical shortcomings aside, the prospects of an alliance with Germany, Japan, and Iran remain a possibility, and so will it be in the future. The nationalistically inspired foreign policy did show similarities to the Neo-Eurasianist vision for Ukraine, but in the end, the current Russian revanchism has raised multiple challenges for the Russian Eurasianist project.

The paper has capitalised on the concepts of cultural exceptionalism, neo-Eurasianism, and Russian geopolitical actions. The paper has analysed the real motive behind Russian actions in Ukraine and how the Neo-Eurasianist agenda has been in play in Ukraine since 2005, leading all the way to Putin's decision in 2022 to announce "special operations" in Ukraine. At the same time, the paper has analysed the Atlanticist response to the conflict and how the conflict has allowed the US to regain its influence in Europe, which was questioned by France and Germany based on their diminishing role in NATO. But the conflict allowed European states to recalibrate their security policies as well as heighten the discourse on what it means to be part of NATO vs non-NATO European states. Based on this, Sweden, Finland, and Ukraine have raised their voice for NATO membership. Therefore, despite multiple challenges for the EU on how to find alternatives to Russian energy supplies in Europe, they have been nudged by Russian aggression, which is one of its kind since the end of the II World War.

America's slipping grip, especially in Eastern Europe, never meant the rise of the Eurasian pole under Russian leadership or the emergence of China as the global hegemon: rather, it showed what it means for Europe to be part of the Liberal International Order and what it means to have the US's security, diplomatic, and economic support against a resurgent Russia.

Further, in the Persian Gulf, there are some irritants based on the animosity between the Biden administration and Saudi Arabia and Iran. To prevent further damage, the US needs to finalise Iran's nuclear deal because there will be several challenges for it in the future. Also, Trump's Abraham Accord efforts need not go down in veins. Therefore, the US needs to reset its relations with Saudi Arabia, a major oil swinger in the global oil market, to prevent Russia's oil monopoly and provide an alternative to the EU's oil demands. Based on this, Washington needs to open a new chapter with MBS, which is to remain the most relevant after Israel in American foreign policy in the Middle East.

In Southeast Asia, America has been forging stronger ties with regional partners, for which Japan has been acting as a close ally based on their shared animosity towards China. For the future, the US needs to ensure that regional partners need to be supported in such a manner as not to allow Russia and China to come closer, as that would pose stronger challenges for the Liberal International Order.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has jolted the Eurasian landmass. The actions have been infused with a historical understanding of Russian civilisation's exceptionalism that resonates with Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism, aimed to build a Eurasian empire. Irrespective of the view that Neo-Eurasianism is not the official ideology of Russia or that Dugin's view is not directly linked to Putin, for the past 25 years, his assertions have been what Russia has been doing. Dugin has been acting as Putin's ear and has had an important role in anti-Western discourse. Along with this, Dugin has had an integral part in the military studies of Russian officers. The idea of Neo-Eurasianism cannot be sidelined by the West because of the massive threat it poses to stability in Europe. In 2014, the Czech Security Information Service (2014) released a report stating that Russian actions in Europe aim to establish a structure "ideologically based on Dugin's expansionist Neo-Eurasianism." Therefore, neo-Eurasianism, with its anti-Atlanticist vision, cannot be dismissed.

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