

---

 Book Review
 

---

## Alexander Dugin The Great Awakening vs The Great Reset

Arktos, London, 2021, 86 pp.

There are books and authors worth discussing. However, in the case of Dugin's recent book this can hardly be the case if a reader expects a coherent set of ideas. The book is basically a political pamphlet. It is an anti-modernist and anti-liberal manifesto that advocates for the war on Western globalism and capitalism, or "Atlantism", while promoting various types of political and cultural sovereigntisms via the idea of "Eurasianism", as a doctrinal pillar of a multipolar antidote to what the author attacks, namely, an imposed unipolar and quasi-universalist Western modernity and political ideas attached to it. In fact, what is lurking beneath Dugin's philosophical and theoretical mish-mash advocacy for "the great awakening" is actually a creeping Russian awakening, or what the author describes as an imperial Russian renaissance.

But before further discussing Dugin's book, let me contextualise the author himself. Dugin has been known as an obscure philosopher, political analyst, politician and Russian nationalist that paved the way for the political project of Eurasianism, namely, for a new post-Soviet Russian empire. With his eschatologically projected *The Foundations of Geopolitics – The Geo-*

*political Future of Russia* (1997), Dugin set himself as an ideologue of what has been recently known as the political project of the "Russian world" where Russia's dramatic manifest destiny is either to be at the centre of a new Eurasian empire, or to disappear from world history in a sort of biblical (and Hobbesian) clash of the land-oriented Russian Behemoth and the sea-oriented American Leviathan. This book became extremely popular among the Russian political and intellectual elite. Later, in 2004, Dugin obtained his PhD in philosophy from the Rostov University. Apparently, he also has a PhD in political science and another in sociology. From 2008 he was teaching sociology at the Moscow State University, but after one of his controversial interviews, he was petitioned to leave his post in 2014. After that he worked at Tsargrad TV, and now is mostly engaged in the international Eurasian movement. From the early 1980s he labels himself as a hater of both liberalism and communism.

During the last 25 years Dugin wrote many books ranging from those reflecting his ideological flirting with philosophy from Plato to Heidegger, those articulating his geopolitical views, to the development of so-called Fourth Political Theory beyond failed and existing theoretical-ideological projects of Western modernity – communism, fascism, and liberalism. In fact, Dugin is probably the best in recycling his own ideas. Namely, all of his books orbit around the same set of questions/problems: what should be the Russian mission in the new world order?, how this mission should be understood in the grand (anti-modern and anti-postmodern) narrative of political ideas that have been shaping man and history?; and, what should be the epis-

temological, philosophical, and ideological anchor of the new “global revolution against Western political modernity” (p. 76)? These articulations are set in the way to shape and harness Russian *ressentiment* toward the West, hence unofficially labeling Dugin as “Putin’s brain”.

As said at the beginning, Dugin’s latest book *The Great Awakening vs The Great Reset* is a political manifesto pretending to anchor its imperialist agenda in the wannabe pluralist, but basically anti-Enlightenment philosophical tradition – pre-modern, conservative, romanticised, and nationalist. The book consists of four parts plus appendixes. The first part, *The Great Reset*, plays on the populist and conspiratorial fears. According to Dugin, this reset starts “with Biden’s victory” (p. 3). The main actors of this short introductory chapter are “the globalist elites” – world leaders and major corporations (“Big Tech, Big Data, Big Finance, etc.”) who all “came together and mobilised to defeat their opponents – Trump, Putin, Xi Jinping, Erdogan, Ayatollah Khamenei and others” (p. 3). Perhaps Orbán would like to be mentioned here within this group of conservative and illiberal leaders, but Dugin for some reason forgot about him. The nodal point of this “Great Reset” narrative is the 2020 World Economic Forum in Davos in which, according to Dugin, its main points were set. Dugin sees them as a global attempt to establish, first, “control over public consciousness on a global scale” via the so-called “cancel culture” and “censorship on networks controlled by the globalists”, second, “transition to an ecological economy and rejection of modern industrial structures”, and third, the employment of “advanced artificial intel-

ligence on a global scale” (p. 2). Of course, according to Dugin, this globalist agenda of the great reset has its own geopolitics – “democracy promotion”, demonisation, and confrontation with “Trump, Russia, China, Iran and some other Islamic countries” (p. 5).

The second part of the book, *A Brief History of Liberal Ideology: Globalism as a Culmination*, is the most philosophical of all. Dugin attempts to provide a history of liberal ideology. Its origin lies, according to Dugin, in the “nominalist” view of the world, opposed to what he identifies as the “realists” tenet. This last one goes all the way back to Plato and Aristotle who advocated for the “reality of universalia”, as opposed to the “nominalists” – those advocating “that only individual things and beings are real” (p. 8). Dugin sees the development of liberalism via three phases of nominalism, dragging history toward “liberation of the individual from all forms of collective identity” (p. 11). In the first, nominalism was introduced in the sphere of religion, i.e. when Protestants knocked down the authority of the Church and tradition with its individualistic interpretation of Scripture “based on their reasoning alone” (p. 9). For Dugin, such an approach has been established via the philosophical projects of Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and Kant, while Adam Smith built on their views to promote “liberalism as an economic ideology” (p. 10). The second phase started with the juxtaposition of liberalism (authors like Popper) and nationalism, including all collectivism like communism and fascism as the “enemies of the open society” (p. 11). This phase culminated with liberal declaration of the “end of history” (Fukuyama) and with the invocation of the

“unipolar moment” (Krauthammer) – in other words, with the new stage of capitalism and globalism. Finally, Dugin sets the last phase of nominalism in what he calls “the ideology of human rights”, particularly in the domain of gender politics and posthumanism that are, according to him, aiming at destruction of “something objective, essential, and irreplaceable” (p. 12), with a “person... devoid of any meaning”, replaceable by artificial intelligence. The chapter concludes (again) with showing that “Putin’s Russia” has been supporting resistance to this sort of liberal “globalist ideology” and its “forces of darkness” (p. 16).

Part 3, *The Schism in the U.S.: Trumpism and its Enemies* (again, another allusion to Popper’s *Open Society and its Enemies*), basically represents a defence of Trumpism, populism, conservatism as anti-globalist and anti-liberal havens that support movements like QAnon and other similar populist agendas all over the world in a sort of hybrid warfare against Western modernity. Later in the book, in the appendix section, Dugin writes another short manifesto entitled *The Great Awakening: The Future Starts Now* (January 2021), where he openly glorifies the January 6th attack on the US Capitol, claiming that the “American presidency was hijacked”, that “our name is Ashley Babbitt” who “gave her life for real freedom and real justice”, that technology (big-tech) should be understood as “ideological weapons and machines of surveillance and censorship” (pp. 61-62), and that “Trumpism is much more important than Trump himself” (p. 64) as he sowed the seed of the process that aims at liberating America from liberalism and globalism.

Part 4, *The Great Awakening*, follows Dugin’s previously set assumptions. First of all, Dugin explains the very title of the chapter, something that should work as a slogan whose author is Alex Jones, the main figure of the anti-globalist movement in the US. Aside from claiming that the US is in the state of civil war, Dugin here promotes European populist movements, both from the anti-capitalist Left and, especially, those from the Right, since populism is actually another name for the Great Awakening on the European soil (p. 34). But the major topic of the chapter is the Russian mission. Dugin describes this mission as the part of Russian identity that “has always prioritised... a collective identity opposed to bourgeois individualism” whose principles are alien to Russian society, and thus it is obvious, according to Dugin, that these values determine “the general support for Putin’s conservative and sovereign course” (p. 39). Thus, although reactionary, the heart of the Great Awakening is Russian revival – “the imperial mission laid down in our historical destiny” (p. 41), where Dugin leans on Schmitt’s late work and its vocabulary. The chapter (and the main body of the book) ends with a sinister thought according to which the Great Awakening goes hand in hand with a revengeful and revolutionary “just judgment” that should be passed upon “the globalist liberal elites” (p. 43).

The Appendixes section consists of several smaller additions to the book, one of which is Dugin’s interview where he restates the basic views from the book, bashing further on “the true demonic nature of the globalists” (p. 50). The last part within this section is another compilation of Dugin’s politico-philosophical points

from his previous works, particularly on what he calls the Fourth Political Theory, basically the alternative to Western modern political projects. Accordingly, liberalism is the first political theory, while historically defeated theories of communism and fascism / national socialism are second and third political theories. Liberalism is the arch-enemy, as it still exists, hence the “Fourth Political Theory is an invitation to critique and fight the first political theory” (p. 67). But in order to fight liberalism, what should be challenged is “all Western political modernity. That is the enemy” (p. 69). It is interesting that Dugin shares this line of thought with the conservative and pluralist assault on the so-called Enlightenment project. Similarly to this critique, but in a propagandistic way, Dugin claims that this modern era is evil, playing on the legitimate criticism of the modern Western tradition, yet wrapping it carefully into so-called historical fight against colonisation, slavery, and all other deviations of the modern world, so that his manifesto would be able to attract the popular discontent in the West and to shake the Western world from within. With the discourse of restoring the dignity of the pre-modern societies and pre-modern ideas of Plato, Aristotle, Christian thought, cultural values, metaphysics, Dugin points out as well that one trait of Western philosophical modernity is not to be rebuked – “German classical

philosophy starting with Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, or Nietzsche, Heidegger, the Conservative Revolution, traditionalism...” (p. 81).

Aside from his attempt to provide a story about the rise of liberalism and individualism, Dugin’s book is mostly an incoherent stream of thoughts, conceptually confusing and weak, as the author often mixes concepts, or equates them with one another without any sophisticated nuances characteristic of someone attempting to provide theoretical argument. But the book has its own purpose. It’s an ideological project of dissolution of Western political modernity, beginning and ending with the assault on liberalism, or globalism, whose integral part is the political project of Russian imperial renaissance. Thus, when toward the end of the book written in 2021, Dugin says “We need to liberate the West” from itself, “We need to liberate Europe and United States from liberalism” (p. 76), these proclamations possess a sinister aura, and can be easily compared to similar rhetoric of “liberation” that has been used as an excuse for Russia’s aggression on Ukraine. In conclusion, this book is not a politico-philosophical gem, quite the opposite, but an attempt to be an “awakening” manifesto crafted for a particular Western audience. As such, it is an important reading for understanding our own external and internal Western predicaments.

*Hrvoje Cvijanović*  
*Faculty of Political Sciences,*  
*University of Zagreb*