

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
Faculty of Social Sciences
Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

Andrei Pankratov

**How Do the Writings of Aleksandr Dugin Matter? The
Prominence of His Geopolitical Codes in Russian Foreign Policy,
2008-2022**

MA thesis

Supervisor: Eiki Berg, PhD

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Authorship Declaration

I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationship between the geopolitical writings of Aleksandr Dugin and the official foreign policy discourse of the Russian Federation between 2008 and 2022. Moving beyond anecdotal claims of Dugin as “Putin’s brain,” the study employs qualitative content analysis to derive and compare nine major codes forming a unified geopolitical discourse based on Dugin’s “The Foundations of Geopolitics” (1997) and “The Geopolitics of Russia” (2012) with strategic doctrines and leadership speeches surrounding three landmark events: the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Findings reveal a pattern of selective resonance rather than direct lexical borrowing: Duginian codes such as ‘Multipolarity’, ‘Atlanticism’, and the ‘Civilizational State’ appear consistently in official publications, particularly after 2014, but are translated into a restrained, state-centric register. The salience of Dugin-aligned language increases markedly across the three events, with the 2014 annexation serving as a critical juncture. The study concludes that while Dugin is not a direct policy influencer, his geopolitical codes have become increasingly resonant within the central corpus of Russian foreign policy documents, reflecting an expansion of accepted geopolitical language as state assertiveness has grown.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	4
INTRODUCTION	6
1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	8
1.1. Geopolitics and Geopolitical Thinking in the Post-Cold War Realm.....	8
1.2. The Making of a Geopolitical Code.....	12
1.3. The Problem of Bridging Russian Geopolitics and Foreign Policy.....	16
2. METHODOLOGY	20
2.1. Overview of the Research Design.....	21
2.2. Source Selection.....	23
2.3. Employing Qualitative Content Analysis	25
2.3.1. The Sequence of Geopolitical Coding	28
2.4. Discussion on Limitations.....	30
3. ANALYSIS OF ALEKSANDR DUGIN’S SELECTED WORKS.....	32
3.1. “The Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia”	33
3.1.1. The Primacy of Geopolitics and the Mackinderian Inheritance	33
3.1.2. The Civilizational Duality: Land vs. Sea	34
3.1.3. The ‘Atlanticist’ Enemy.....	35
3.1.4. The Near Abroad and Territorial Imperatives	36
3.1.5. Multipolarity as the Normative Horizon.....	36
3.2. “The Geopolitics of Russia”	36
3.2.1. The Consolidation of the Eurasianist Paradigm.....	37
3.2.2. Deepening the Civilizational Framework	37
3.2.3. The Near Abroad: From Strategy to System.....	38
3.2.4. The ‘Multipolar’ World: A Shift from Vision to Reality?.....	38
3.2.5. The Emergence of Sovereignty as Civilization	39
3.3. Defining the Geopolitical Discourse of Dugin’s Theory	40
4. JUXTAPOSING DUGIN’S GEOPOLITICAL CODES AND RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY	47

4.1. The Prominence of Dugin’s Geopolitical Codes in Russian Doctrines.....	48
4.2. The Geopolitical Language of the Russo-Georgian War and the War in Ukraine	53
4.2.1. 2008: The Challenging Perspective of Dmitry Medvedev	53
4.2.2. 2014: The Annexation of Crimea as the Solidification of Putin’s Geopolitical Discourse.....	55
4.2.3. 2022: The Apex of Convergence?	59
4.3. Discussion on Results	62
CONCLUSIONS.....	67
KOKKUVÕTE	69
BIBLIOGRAPHY	70

INTRODUCTION

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 left the Russian Federation in a state of profound disarray. The certainties of the Cold War order were replaced by a tumultuous search for a new national identity and a corresponding framework for its role in the world. The initial post-Soviet years, characterized by a liberal-internationalist discourse and a desire for integration with the West, proved to be a short-lived phase. Since the turn of the millennium, Russia has embarked on a trajectory defined by a revival of distinctively Russian geopolitical thinking, one that emphasizes civilizational uniqueness, strategic sovereignty, and a fundamental challenge to what it perceives as a unipolar, US-led world order (Bassin 2008, 286; Morozova 2009, 671). This ideological evolution has manifested in a series of increasingly assertive foreign policy actions, from the 2008 war with Georgia to the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Scholarly attempts to understand this transformation have taken multiple paths. While some analyses focus on regime type, categorizing Russia's authoritarian characteristics to explain its external behavior (Ingram 2001, 1045-1046), others have turned their attention to the discursive underpinnings of this shift, viewing Russia's "illiberal turn" as a process fueled by ideological and textual inputs that circulate within and are codified by the state's leadership structures (Lewis 2018, 1621).

This illiberal turn of Russia can near-universally be referenced as a social fact, with the key characteristics of what makes a state and its apparatus illiberal becoming empirically present within the mindset of Russian governance since the 1990s (Laruelle 2020, 117). Some of the abovementioned ideological inputs that once more took root during that period have become almost instantaneously recognizable to the outside observer. Within prominent state narratives, the image of Russia and its armed forces as a victor transfers simultaneously into multiple spatial and temporal realms, such as the Great Patriotic War against Nazi Germany, the military campaign in Syria, and the actions of pro-Russian volunteers in Ukraine (Waller 2021, 20-21). Over the span of several decades, this and other elements of geographically-dense state tenets have seemingly converged (McFaul 2020) into and become a trademark sign of production and execution of foreign policy that is ultimately reliant on the authority of one person – Vladimir Putin.

It is within this context that the work of intellectuals like Aleksandr Dugin – often dramatically labeled "Putin's brain" by publicists – becomes a subject of critical inquiry. Dugin's expansive

body of work, particularly his foundational texts on neo-Eurasianism, offers a comprehensive and radical geopolitical vision for Russia, one that advocates for a multipolar world, challenges what it calls Atlanticism, and posits Russia as the heart of a continental empire.

However, a direct line of influence from prominent intellectual figures to the pragmatic, often opaque, decision-making of the Kremlin cannot be understood as self-evident. To assume Dugin's writings are simply transferred into the official policy toolkit would be a leap of faith (Kalinin 2019, 469). This thesis, therefore, addresses this gap by moving beyond anecdotal claims of influence to a systematic, scientific scrutiny. It seeks to examine the nature of the link between the key geopolitical concepts articulated by Aleksandr Dugin and the official foreign policy positions of the Russian state. This investigation is structured around two central research questions: first, how are the main geopolitical concepts present in Dugin's key works reflected in the operational documents of Russian foreign policy? Second, how has the salience and application of these geopolitical concepts evolved in relation to three landmark events – the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and the 2022 invasion of Ukraine?

To answer these questions, this study is framed as a qualitative longitudinal case study, focusing on the period between 2008 and 2022. This timeframe is deliberately bookended by two major kinetic military engagements – the Russo-Georgian War and the invasion of Ukraine – with the 2014 annexation of Crimea serving as a critical mid-point. By restricting the analysis to this period, the thesis aims to interpret how the use of geopolitical language in official communication may have shifted from one moment of aggression to the next. The research employs qualitative content analysis, beginning with a close inductive reading of Dugin's milestone works – “The Foundations of Geopolitics” (1997), and “The Geopolitics of Russia” (2012) – to derive a core set of geopolitical codes. These codes will then be systematically traced through a corpus of official Russian documents, including successive iterations of the Foreign Policy Concept, National Security Strategy, and Military Doctrines, as well as key speeches by Russian leaders during the aforementioned crises. Through this systematic juxtaposition, this thesis offers a rigorous assessment of the resonance of Dugin's geopolitical vision within the official foreign policy language of the Russian state, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the ideological drivers behind Russia's contemporary foreign policy trajectory.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter establishes the conceptual foundations necessary for examining the relationship between Aleksandr Dugin's geopolitical writings and the official foreign policy language of the Russian Federation. The central analytical challenge of this thesis lies in bridging two distinct but potentially interconnected domains: the ideational universe of a non-state intellectual and the codified language of state policy. To navigate this challenge, the theoretical framework is organized around three interconnected conceptual pillars.

The first section engages with the contested meaning of geopolitics itself. Tracing the term from its origins in late nineteenth-century statecraft to contemporary critical approaches, this section argues that geopolitics cannot be understood as a neutral "science" of state competition but must instead be treated as a discursive practice – a language through which political actors naturalize spatial claims and foreign policy choices. This epistemological position is essential for understanding Dugin's own self-presentation as a geopolitical theorist and for situating his work within broader traditions of Russian geopolitical thought.

The second section introduces the concept of the geopolitical code as an analytical tool, defining it and examining existing knowledge produced with the concept in mind. The geopolitical code serves as the methodological bridge in this study, providing a framework for systematically identifying, tracing, and ultimately interpreting the presence of specific concepts across different textual genres – from Dugin's philosophical treatises to official strategic documents.

The third section examines the existing knowledge on how the possible connection between Russian geopolitical thought in general and Dugin's writings in particular has been analyzed vis-à-vis the Russian foreign policy up until the submission of this study. Key concepts, conclusions, and points of discussion are introduced briefly in order to give a comprehensive outlook on how this thesis and the new knowledge produced within could potentially fit into the part of the theoretical framework most closely related to the research problem at hand.

1.1. Geopolitics and Geopolitical Thinking in the Post-Cold War Realm

In order to frame the theoretical lexicon of this study, this subchapter sets out to explore the very central terms of thinking that are ascribed to Aleksandr Dugin, his own primary sources, and the existing corpus of academics referred to as geopolitics. This provides a foundation for dissecting not only Dugin's own views on a positivist stance toward geopolitics in later

chapters, but also anchoring the possible debate over whether studies of geopolitics should in themselves constitute geopolitical text. The latter is incorporated in the overall theoretical overview of the thesis as an exploration of critical geopolitics, with a separate subchapter devoted entirely to the matter. The study establishes within the overall framework that the scientific nature of works within the realm of geopolitics should not be taken as granted, but rather challenged from an ontological perspective, permeating the notions and terms related to the analysis of geopolitical terms and language.

The origins of the term ‘geopolitics’ are traced back to the 1890s and the works of the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén, then largely constituting a novelty term for an emerging field on the cusp of state territoriality, their borders, and their relations (Heffernan 2000, 27). Much like the well-established difficulty of defining ‘democracy’, there emerges a viewpoint which avoids defining geopolitics as a discipline or, later on, even a viable standalone term (Kirby 2000, 52) – sometimes hyphenated to represent ‘geo-politics’, where the geographical and the political are clearly separated.

This noticeable emphasis on the geographical and geography as a standalone discipline to which political notions have been ascribed, and not vice versa, is understandable given the early course of development in geopolitics. After all, early authors such as Friedrich Ratzel and Sir Halford Mackinder not only dealt in topical maps and discussions that would serve to play a role in statesmanship of their respective nations, but were also instrumental in advancing the perception of geography as an academic discipline (Flint 2006, 17). It is with the advent of Karl Haushofer’s work that geopolitics became a household term, along with far-reaching claims of deep-set influence on Nazi strategy in Germany during World War II (Harby 2019, 4). Thus, the pattern of grand-scale geopolitical works receiving acclaim as the primary intellectual source of state strategy is not uncommon, but rather rhymes in a historical sense with the central sources of this study.

Notwithstanding the early tumult in the formation of geopolitics as a discipline with academic claims, researchers such as Retaillé (2001, 35-36) make note of the most general lines commonly understood to be encompassed by geopolitics: a combination of the political and geographical, including ethnopolitics, involving the state either as an actor or as an aim, synonymous with the factor of physical determinism in politics. Given the common literary output of geopolitics, one is to note the possibility of ‘scientific’ geopolitical analyses translating into ideology, separating it from established tenets of political geography (Retaillé

2001, 35). For the purposes of this study, this relatively broad amalgamation of descriptors is sufficient to provide at least an initial understanding of what is meant by ‘geopolitics’.

One of the most prominent contemporary stances on geopolitics is taken by Gearóid Ó Tuathail and John Agnew (1992, 193), who, in what may be constituted as a landmark within a general shift toward the inclusion of post-positivist perspectives, note that geopolitics may be regarded as a discursive practice. Most notably, the practicality of geopolitical reasoning is seen as something that necessitates the „abrogation of genuine geographical knowledge about the diversity and complexity of places as social entities“ (Ó Tuathail & Agnew 1992, 202). In the scope of this study, such assessment is crucial as to why, for example, the developments in the foreign policy of the Russian state are not examined *in situ* as an independent variable of the conceptual framework laid out by major geopolitical authors of the 20th century.

Further expanding upon geopolitics as a language and *critical* geopolitics, Ó Tuathail (1994b, 542) notes the impassability of the observer seeing and/or mapping when writing about geopolitics. Therefore, any attempt to define geopolitics itself or to do so for ‘critical geopolitics’ cannot be separated from the one who is central to visualizing the geopolitical. However, the progression of new knowledge regarding geopolitics cannot be simply explained away by gradual tapering off into a new philosophical framework within the field (Ó. Tuathail 1994b, 526). The abovementioned theoretical observations serve rather as an acknowledgement of a researcher’s subjectivity and help us build a case for our own cognitive awareness of the spatiality of the research puzzle at hand.

Within critical geopolitics, Ó Tuathail (1999, 109) further denotes the distinction between formal, practical, popular, and structural geopolitics. While popular geopolitics has popular culture and mass media as the object of its investigation, formal, practical, and structural geopolitics all come close to conceptualizing the problem at the core of this study. For example, Ó Tuathail (1999, 110) describes how formal geopolitics mostly focuses on geopolitical thought in its political and cultural context, such as studies of particular authors, and practical geopolitics addresses the everyday practices of statecraft. While clear-cut and systematic, this framework does not account for the notion of transference, nor does it actively enable the theoretical connection of the influence of an individual author of geopolitical thought on shaping everyday policy.

However, the possibility of connecting the formal level of interpretation, of which Dugin is representative, with the practical realm of policymaking is crucially important to this study.

The difficulty of separation between the two and, equally, in relation to popular geopolitics such as interpretations found within works of popular culture remained acknowledged by Ó Tuathail (2000, 395) himself after their most general conceptual formulation. Agnew (2010, 570) elaborates on this by observing how relational modeling of states vis-à-vis their “outside” dimension has led to formal geopolitics being perceived as the *only* kind of geopolitics, with critical geopolitics serving to also point out how, for example, drawing borders and cartography can be seen as an undeniably practical way of defining what lies explicitly “outside” of a state and which interests can be applied to such territories, be it in the realm of security, commitments, or identity. This creates an important theoretical bridge between *a* geopolitics found within constitutive literature and the geopolitics of policymakers, not explicitly related without further examination and empirical evidence to the former.

It is precisely in this framework of critical geopolitics where larger implications of such studies begin to be understood. As Dalby (2008, 415-416) points out, a post-Cold War space challenges us to understand not only the realism within the War on Terror and other developments within the scope of international security, but also how imperial language may connect them to perceptions that had been present in the national culture of spatial knowledge before their eventual occurrence. Furthermore, by incorporating the stance and toolkit of critical geopolitics, one is able to make overarching generalizations on the perceived ontology of territoriality, such as its persistence and absolute value even in times of regime change and reconstruction (Dalby 2010, 55), serving as important knowledge for policy planning. Alongside, critical geopolitics prompts the researcher to rethink and recontextualize the existing understanding of widespread geographical and political terminology as it remains connected to geopolitics, such as ‘grand strategy’ (Dalby 2010b, 285).

Of equal importance is the establishment of permeable structures within the different categories or kinds of geopolitics. Dodds (2018) makes a due note of this by underlining not separation, but rather coexistence of formal, practical, and popular geopolitics, ascribing the identification of geopolitical ideas and practices as multi-faceted to critical geopolitics. This prompts us not to disregard the possibility of mutual influence within different geopolitical realms, particularly when viewed on larger timescales.

In regard to studies of Russia in particular, existing knowledge shows that it is possible to define a problem similar to the one in this study without resorting to the rigidity of typifying different kinds of geopolitics. In her study, Omelicheva (2012, 334) reminds that the central

approach that separates the traditionalist views exhibiting materialist ontology and critical perspectives is detachment from ‘why’ questions in favor of ‘how’ questions. Both research questions in this thesis are also reflective of this approach, yet how would it be possible to theoretically support the problem that they point to? In order to achieve this, one would have to consider the geopolitical in the realm of statecraft as visionary, with the example of Omelicheva (2012, 338) remarking that Russia is best conceptualized as not one that necessarily follows any kind of logic, but rather a geopolitical ‘code’ – with domestic, international, historical, and other factors interwoven to form a deducible framework of self-perception. Proceeding in the spirit of the critical approach to geopolitics, the next chapter examines the conceptualization of the ‘geopolitical code’ in detail in order to incorporate it as a central tool in tackling the research problem at hand.

1.2. The Making of a Geopolitical Code

The key to making transference of geopolitical concepts, their language, and tenets within measurable terms lies in understanding the notion of a geopolitical code. This subchapter defines, with the help of the existing corpus of knowledge, the concept of geopolitical codes and explores its general path of development.

The origins of the geopolitical code as a concept can be traced to the work of political scientist Alexander George, who analyzed political leaders’ perceptions in constructed ‘operational’ codes. As Siracusa (1983, 155) remarks, John Lewis Gaddis took it upon himself to expand the work of George into the realm of the geopolitical – with an unmistakable focus on American decision-making – to outline potential threats and feasible responses, formed either before or just after an administration takes office, with little sign of change thereafter. If applied in a generalized sense, this can be considered the baseplate for defining what a geopolitical code is.

Based on the logic of the original selection of phenomena by George, the analytical scope of the geopolitical code remained conceptually at the level of the individual decision-maker. For example, one could reliably identify five distinct geopolitical codes related to containment – those defined by the administrations of Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Carter (Campbell 1990, 267). It would be within the 1990s when the analytical frame would have started shifting to the national level, particularly due to the overarching effect of the end of the Cold War and the emergence of identity crises (Grant & Nijman 1997, 49) within whole countries, including the United States.

Despite the term bearing resemblance to ‘code’ as a core unit in qualitative content analysis, the term ‘geopolitical code’ has traditionally carried a different meaning from a theoretical perspective. Dijkink (1998, 297) places it in the same group as geopolitical visions and representations, albeit not clearly setting them apart from each other as if they were synonymous, forming a subset in the category of “foreign policy belief systems”. According to this, one is to view the geopolitical code of a state actor as the end product of an empirical approach, a descriptive sum of assessment rather than a means to an end within a particular method. He stresses this by drawing parallels to the emergence of the ‘operational code’ within the studies of Soviet leadership in the 1950s, while also outlining five perspectives that can be adopted in cross-national research:

- a. Time/space models of the world;
- b. National myths;
- c. Territorial narratives;
- d. Active/passive approach of international relations;
- e. Reactions to international crises. (Dijkink 1998, 297)

One of the notable contemporary frameworks of geopolitical codes comes from a study by Flint et al. (2009), where researchers sought to analyze the changes in the geographical foci of the United States through a study of State of the Union speeches between 1988 and 2008. Throughout their work, they have used a five-point model for designating what they referred to as a geopolitical code:

- a. Identifying current and potential allies;
- b. Identifying current and potential enemies;
- c. Defining the means of maintaining current allies and fostering new ones;
- d. Defining the means of facing existing and emerging enemies;
- e. Representing the practices in a-d to domestic and global audiences. (Flint et al. 2009, 608)

Originally drawn from the framework of an earlier similar study on the political geography of presidential speeches by O’Loughlin and Grant (1990, 522), the researchers were able to expand the existing knowledge and make several important conclusions regarding the broadening of the geographical foci of the United States and shifting paradigms at the turn of the 21st century (Flint et al. 2009, 627). In this reading, geopolitical codes have been used to

describe and analyze, for example, relations between the United States and Iran (Naji & Jawan 2011).

This five-step model of the geopolitical code has been expanded and utilized in numerous studies since being interpreted in Flint et al. (2009). For example, Okunev (2013, 67) specified the inherent variables present within a geopolitical code – scale and orientation – to take on the Russian geopolitical code. This was adopted as standard and further specified by Varricchio (2018, 133-134) in order to analyze the Italian geopolitical code, who argued that the perspective of what a state considers to be within the scope of its foreign policy, as well as its area of influence, and any belonging to geopolitical blocs.

Most of the researchers who have employed geopolitical codes in their studies have done so in the *singular*, as in a single state is able to only possess one geopolitical code, be it wholly transient or stable with changes to its individual components, i.e., current enemies shifting while allies remain the same. From this stems a question: Is there a possibility for multiple geopolitical codes to exist in the same space? One of the more recent studies not only expands upon the original concept of the geopolitical code but also provides valuable insight into the possibility of plural codes. Flint and Noorali (2023) took on the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative in its geopolitical context, and for this purpose, they have included supra-national institutions and their geopolitical codes into consideration.

Flint and Noorali (2023, 8-11) also present examples of supra-national organizations where each country has its own geopolitical code, coalescing into one overarching geopolitical code at a regional level. This and analyses of global conflicts help identify additional elements of such larger-scale geopolitical codes:

- a. The combination of economic and political means through inseparable logics of network and territorial expressions of power;
- b. Multi-scalar goals and capabilities;
- c. Relationality;
- d. The dynamism of countries' codes;
- e. The aggregation of codes into a global pattern;
- f. The dynamism of the global pattern in the form of a geopolitical transition;
- g. The combination of instrumental and associational forms of power. (Flint & Noorali 2023, 5)

It is possible to further expand the elements comprising a geopolitical code, as evidenced by Frąszczak et al. (2025). Elaborating on the contemporary complexity of correlation between countries, where geographical location, continent, neighboring states, population, political systems, legal systems, level of societal education, military capacity, economic resources, natural wealth, environment, ecology, and cyber security all serve as elements of geopolitical codes, three additional categories are added to the five points of Flint:

- a. models of the world (in time and space);
- b. national myths (including historical myths);
- c. views on the structure of the international order. (Frąszczak et al. 2025)

All of the examined variations on the concept of the geopolitical code contain a plethora of elements that may prove applicable to the study at hand, given the complexity of supporting data that surrounds the contemporary understanding of Russian foreign policy.

Before the sequence of geopolitical coding is introduced in the methodology section, this existing corpus of knowledge and application of geopolitical codes allows us to define its precise conceptual borders within this study. As applied throughout this thesis, the geopolitical code is equated with the highest analytical category that combined lexical markers of the geographical and political are able to form, drawing primarily from Dijkink's (1998) interpretation. Thereby, a geopolitical code transcends its otherwise sparsely related sub-codes: through their prominence in a given text, as shown throughout existing empirical research examined above, individual invocations of space, time, and relation coalesce into an analytical unit that points to a particular system of belief that may or may not be used to steer actors towards certain actions within their foreign policy. Geopolitical codes retain the potential to form and be perceived as an overarching geopolitical discourse, which is further explored as the concept is actively applied within this thesis.

In sum, this existing insight provides a valuable foundation for further exploring the possibilities of the conceptual framework of the geopolitical code, allowing arguments for evidence-based incorporation of original attributes within research design and methodology to facilitate reaching the goals of this thesis.

1.3. The Problem of Bridging Russian Geopolitics and Foreign Policy

The most general purpose of the study at hand is to add to the existing corpus of knowledge connected to the conceptualization, analysis, and discussion of Russian geopolitical thinking, as well as its possible connections to policymaking within the Russian system of governance. This subchapter presents the already existing materials on these topics, as well as their main conclusions, along with problems that may have arisen. Alongside, supportive argumentation is provided to enlighten how this thesis is aimed at potentially closing some of the gaps in knowledge, thereby supplanting general predispositions and publicist viewpoints pointed out in the introduction.

The general outline of the development of geopolitical thinking in Russia does not follow the major stages and landmark concepts found within the European and American space, as geopolitics was condemned as pseudo-science during the Soviet period and linked to Nazism (Kolosov & Turovsky 2001, 143), paralleling the widespread Allied perception during World War II vis-à-vis Karl Haushofer's work mentioned earlier. However, traces and reactional paradigms of geopolitical thinking in Russia can be traced back to the early 20th century. This is the point in time where the basic notions of what came to be called "Eurasianism" started to emerge, with its central tenets connected to an acute feeling of national betrayal after World War I and the Russian revolution (Trenin 2002, 284-285).

According to Dunlop (2004, 41), Aleksandr Dugin enters the scene of Russian geopolitical thinking as a "Eurasianist" fascist, with the publication of "Foundations of Geopolitics" in 1997, exerting unparalleled influence on Russian executive elites. Despite his academic milieu, Dugin has not remained politically inactive on a personal scale, joining the ranks of Limonov and the National Bolsheviks, ultimately failing to achieve success not long before the publication of his seminal work (Dunlop 2004, 43). Given its early prominence, investigations of key concepts and imperatives situated within Dugin's writing are not uncommon. The duality of geopolitical perception exemplified through the standoff of "Atlanticism" and "Eurasianism", with calls of not just military but all-encompassing economic and informational support of the latter by Russia, is identified as central to and persistent within Dugin's personal ideology (Dunlop 2004, 47). This identification of dualism based on sea and land powers, not only within Dugin's own work, but also broadly as a common ideological denominator among his supporters, is corroborated by Solovyov (2004, 91), who additionally points out just how

extreme Dugin's interpretation is through his presentation of any and all differences between the two kinds of 'empires' as irreconcilable.

It is worth noting that Dugin is not and is ever hardly considered as an intellectual phenomenon when it comes to the analysis of Russian geopolitical thinking. Moreso, Dugin's prominence is seen as indicative of a much more general and widespread revival of geopolitical thinking after the breakup of the Soviet Union. As Tsygankov (2003, 104) remarks, this was prompted by the foremost fact of monumental change in the security landscape of the former Soviet space, where the disintegration of the Soviet Union prompted shifts in Russia's own identity. Alongside Dugin's most broad interpretation of 'Eurasianism', largely a misnomer due to it encompassing elements that allow it to be further interpreted as 'Expansionism' or 'Expansionist Eurasianism', Tsygankov (2003, 109) identifies at least four more schools within the reemerging Russian geopolitical thinking: 'Civilizationism', 'Stabilizationism', 'Geeconomism', and 'Westernism', all of which have some degree of relation to the image of Eurasia. Therefore, we are to interpret Dugin's thought not as a theoretical monolith that has, through some process, acquired a monopoly on geopolitical thinking in a post-Soviet Russia, but rather as one of many competing and mutually reinforced paradigms that have emerged in parallel development.

As the knowledge of what geopolitics is understood as locally, along with potential implications to the public political mindset and policymaking in Russia, continued to deepen in the early 2000s, O'Loughlin and Talbot (2005, 28-30) described three main paradigms in Russian geopolitical thinking: "Moderate Eurasianism", "Extreme Eurasianism", and "Westernism". Despite the lexical appearance of being connected to what is geographically considered as Eurasia, both 'Eurasianisms' have a limited link to geographical Eurasia-wide interests of Russia, nor does 'Western' in this case *prima facie* imply any kind of cultural or political orientation toward the West. Rather, all three paradigms are first and foremost connected to imperatives regarding the territorial aspirations of a post-Soviet Russia, with Moderate and Extreme Eurasianism calling for a return of Ukraine and Belarus, or the whole of the former Soviet Union to Russia, respectively. Westernism explicitly rejects any such territorial aspirations for Russia (O'Loughlin & Talbot 2005, 31-32). According to this classification, Aleksandr Dugin is a clear example of Extreme Eurasianist thought, yet it remains to define his possible influence on Russian foreign policy beyond public opinion.

Attempts to scientifically examine Dugin's and the adjacent Extreme Eurasianists' connections to the Russian leadership are, as mentioned before, not new or uncommon. As early as the beginning of Vladimir Putin's presidency, scholars such as Kipp (2002, 93-94) have attempted to connect Dugin to certain changes in Russian disposition toward the West, going as far as to point out Dugin's personal ties to officials close to the Kremlin and analyze the content of his early political slogans. With the solidification of Putin's foreign policy and the final (re)orientation of Russia on its current course of relations with the United States and its allies, the early alarm for Dugin's influence on Russian policymaking has been called into question. For example, Shlapentokh (2007, 234) points out that one should "take with a grain of salt" the possibility of any sort of personal relationship between Putin and Dugin, yet leaves room for a middle way that does not disregard Dugin as yet another extravagant figure merely expressing his personal beliefs.

The methodological possibility of assessing the influence of Dugin or Eurasianism in general in a positivist way is understandably negligible, with major perspectives disregarding a factual basis for such influence and focusing instead on interpretive perception. A good explanation for this is seen in the position of Shekhovtsov and Umland (2009, 662), who stress that the only reliable way of ascertaining Eurasianist influence or individual aspects of it as an ideology would be through examining the hypothetical rise to power of a movement or organization directly tied to Dugin. Umland (2010, 150) later specifies in a separate article showcasing the evolution of Dugin's work that multiple aspects of his connections, alleys of potential influence, and the ongoing evolution of his ideas are all aspects that, well after the conclusion of the first period of Vladimir Putin's presidency, require further investigation. In its examination of the transference of Dugin's ideas between his works and documented Russian foreign policy, this thesis is a late answer to Umland's call for further research on the subject.

Amidst the annexation of Crimea, the abovementioned skeptical or even outright critical stance on Dugin's influence within policymaking circles has begun to solidify even more. The annexation of Crimea, albeit from a rather immediate perspective, did not appear to invoke major changes in Russian geopolitical posturing, with no apparent desire for a full-scale invasion in Eastern Ukraine despite Dugin's active pleas (Shlapentokh 2014, 397). The closest study aimed at producing conclusions on Dugin's influence on Russian elites was undertaken by Kalinin (2019), identifying only partial salience to elites corresponding to few aspects of Dugin's views, with little change observed both before and after the annexation of Crimea. At

the time of writing, the argument of Russia's actions in Ukraine can be easily raised as a challenge, but are there any studies that have taken it into account while tackling the connection between Dugin and Russian foreign policy? Piccoli (2026, 335) notes that even after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the impression of Dugin as a kind of backstage advisor to the Russian regime is largely unfounded, with Dugin simply having gained great prominence as a voice for intellectualism that just so happens to align with Russian policy. This is additionally evidenced by his many channels of informal publication and prominence in easily accessible social media, as examined by Laruelle and Bozalka (2025, 300).

Based on this existing collection of theoretical observations on Dugin's influence vis-à-vis Russian foreign policy, there are noticeable gaps that this study aims to fill, particularly through a qualitative response to Kalinin's (2019) quantitative study, as well as incorporating developments in Dugin's writing to aid the discussion already present in earlier skeptical studies. By incorporating official documents and expanding the temporal scale, this thesis aims to provide a more coherent, easily traceable chronology and overview of how much weight the moniker of "Putin's brain" still carries post-2022.

2. METHODOLOGY

This thesis employs a qualitative longitudinal case study design to investigate the relationship between the geopolitical ideas of Aleksandr Dugin and the official foreign policy documents of the Russian Federation. The case under examination is defined by two interrelated longitudinal elements: the evolution of Dugin's geopolitical codes across his key texts, and the parallel evolution of official Russian foreign policy language as articulated in strategic documents and speeches made by Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev between 2008 and 2022. This design is particularly suited to the research questions, as it allows for a diachronic analysis of how specific concepts may emerge, shift in salience, or become codified over time in response to both ideational influences and landmark events.

To operationalize this investigation, the study relies primarily on qualitative content analysis (QCA). QCA is a systematic, replicable technique for compressing large volumes of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Schreier 2012). This approach is well-established in international relations and comparative politics for tracing the presence and evolution of codes. This study adopts a particular code category – geopolitical codes – understood as lexical paradigms that translate spatial understandings into immediate imperatives and potential actions (Flint et al. 2009, 608), previously explored and discussed within the theoretical framework. The analytical process is structured into three sequential phases:

- Inductive coding of the original source material by Aleksandr Dugin;
- Deductive coding of official Russian foreign policy documents, comprised of both doctrines and speeches;
- Juxtaposition and longitudinal analysis.

This chapter explores the details of the design and execution of the abovementioned phases, as well as offers a discussion on data sources, their validity, and possible limitations within the overall scope of the research design of this study.

2.1. Overview of the Research Design

This subchapter explores the overarching elements of the research design employed in this study, including the timeframe and the particularities of data analysis. Arguments are presented for relevant methodological choices, as well as prominent examples within the existing corpus of literature on geopolitical thinking.

The study adopts a qualitative longitudinal case study design, with the case at hand defined by two interrelated longitudinal elements: the evolution of Aleksandr Dugin's geopolitical codes across his key texts, and the parallel evolution of official Russian foreign policy language as articulated in strategic documents and leadership speeches between 2008 and 2022. This design is particularly suited to the research questions, as it enables a diachronic analysis of how specific concepts in geopolitical thinking may emerge, shift in salience, or become codified over time in response to both ideational influences and landmark events. The longitudinal dimension is essential for addressing the second research question concerning the evolution of these codes across the three identified kinetic events – the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

These three events constitute apex moments in the evolution of Russian foreign policy, each representing a qualitative escalation in the assertiveness of Russian military action beyond its borders. The 2008 Russo-Georgian War marked the first major military confrontation between the Russian Federation and a sovereign state external to its internationally recognized borders, signaling a departure from the relatively cooperative posture that had characterized Russia's relations with its immediate neighbors during the 1990s. While the Chechen wars that took place in 1994-1996 and 1999-2009 constituted significant conflicts, the 2008 Russo-Georgian War represented a distinctly different form of military action: an interstate conflict involving the invasion of a neighboring internationally recognized state. This distinction is methodologically significant for the study, as the 2008 Russo-Georgian War inaugurated a pattern of cross-border military intervention that would be repeated and escalated in subsequent years.

The 2014 annexation of Crimea represented a significant escalation, involving the formal incorporation of another state's territory and the open violation of post-Cold War European security norms. The 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine constitutes the most extreme manifestation of said violation to date, fundamentally challenging the existing international

order. These events serve as the organizing axis for the study's periodization, dividing the 2008–2022 timeframe into three analytically distinct phases. By examining the geopolitical language present before, during, and after each apex event, the study can trace how lexical patterns shifted in response to moments of acute confrontation, enabling a systematic assessment of the evolution of Dugin-aligned codes across a period of escalating Russian kinetic action.

The choice of a qualitative approach is justified by the nature of the research questions, which seek not to measure causal relationships or generalize to a broader population but to understand the presence, meaning, and evolution of specific lexical elements within a delimited corpus of texts. This study is fundamentally concerned with questions of meaning, interpretation, and lexical construction – domains for which qualitative methods are uniquely suited. Unlike quantitative approaches that prioritize measurement, statistical inference, and generalizability across large populations, qualitative inquiry emphasizes depth over breadth, context over abstraction, and the interpretive understanding of how meaning is produced, circulated, and transformed within specific social and political contexts (Bryman 2016, 374-375).

The central research questions – how Dugin's geopolitical concepts are reflected in official Russian foreign policy documents, and how the salience of these concepts has evolved across time – require an analytical approach capable of capturing the nuances of language, the shifts in terminology across different texts, and the contextual factors that shape the articulation of geopolitical ideas. These are questions that can seldom be adequately addressed through frequency counts or statistical correlations alone, as such approaches would risk flattening the complexity of geopolitical language and obscuring the subtle ways in which concepts are adapted, contested, or selectively appropriated across different textual genres. Furthermore, the study's focus on a delimited corpus of texts lends itself to the close, systematic reading that qualitative content analysis enables.

A central methodological challenge in this study concerns the question of transference. Establishing a link between Dugin's ideas and official state documents requires more than the identification of similar language, but rather careful consideration of how concepts may be adapted, diluted, or selectively appropriated. Following the approach of Kalinin (2019, 469), who cautions against assuming a direct pipeline from intellectual production to policy implementation, this study treats the presence of Dugin-aligned codes in official documents not as evidence of direct influence but as an indication of lexical resonance. This distinction is

critical for maintaining analytical rigor and avoiding the speculative claims that have often characterized popular and journalistic accounts (Shekhovtsov 2014, 77) of Dugin's role in Russian politics. The codebook developed through the analysis of Dugin's original works is designed to capture not only exact lexical matches but also conceptual alignments, variations, and hybrid formulations that may ultimately draw from multiple sources.

2.2. Source Selection

In this subchapter, the primary sources for this thesis are introduced in two categories: Aleksandr Dugin's original writing and documents on Russian foreign policy. Both are introduced and assessed for suitability against the goals of the study, along with a brief comment on alternative sources considered.

Aleksandr Dugin and his works are, within the realm of this thesis, not a separate phenomenon to be analyzed in a literary or historical sense. Rather, Dugin serves both as a personification and the most prominent (Ingram 2001, 1029) intellectual representative of the Russian revival of geopolitical thinking. It is not only the sheer amount of content produced by Dugin that is worth consideration, but also the attention his statements on the past, present, and future of Russia have garnered among both publicists and scholars. In this regard, Dugin is both a source and a case – with, “The Foundations of Geopolitics”, originally published in 1997, and “The Geopolitics of Russia”, published in 2012 – positioned in a chronologically significant way that allows the study to track the abovementioned progression of geopolitical thought in response to how it is possibly integrated into and implemented within policy, as well as any significant world-scale events taking place within the period of observation.

The second category of primary sources comprises the official documents of Russian foreign policy. This corpus is deliberately constructed to include both codified strategic doctrines and event-specific leadership speeches, enabling a multi-dimensional analysis of geopolitical language. The strategic documents include successive iterations of the “Foreign Policy Concept” (2008, 2013, 2016), the “National Security Strategy” (2009, 2015, 2021), the “Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation” (2010, 2014), and the “Military Doctrine of the Union State” (2021). These documents are selected for their authoritative status as formal expressions of state policy, approved at the highest levels of Russian governance. Their publication across the 2008–2022 timeframe allows for systematic tracking of how geopolitical language has evolved in codified form. The leadership speeches – delivered by Dmitry Medvedev and Vladimir Putin in connection with the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, the 2014

annexation of Crimea, and the 2022 invasion of Ukraine – complement the strategic documents by capturing the immediate justifications employed at moments of kinetic action. Alternative sources, such as statements by lower-ranking officials, state media coverage, or the writings of other intellectuals, were considered but ultimately excluded to maintain analytical focus on the most authoritative articulations of state policy and the most prominent intellectual figure in contemporary Russian geopolitical thought. This dual-source design ensures that the analysis captures both the codified framework of Russian foreign policy and its performative deployment in moments of crisis.

It is, however, evident that officially published doctrinal documents and speeches made by leaders present different challenges, both due to their variation in lexical content and the possible implications for making replicable analytical conclusions. While it is certain that, according to the design of this study, the establishment of a direct causal chain from Dugin's source material to doctrines to, in turn, speeches made by either Medvedev or Putin would be outside the established goals of the thesis, it raises an important question of how speeches are linked to doctrinal documents, if at all. For the purpose of clarity, it shall be established that this particular kind of challenge to analytical interpretation falls outside of the purview of this paper, although not arbitrarily dismissed or ignored.

The reasoning for such an assessment is twofold. Firstly, the theoretical particularities of the case at hand, that being the Russian structure of illiberal governance, call for a broader assumption of validity toward how the interpretation of foreign policy doctrine at the very top level is never set in stone by the lower levels of state bureaucracy or even institutional commitments (Makarychev & Yatsyk 2018, 52). Rather, the speeches provide us with a crucial insight into what kind of *action* constitutes the actual practical dimension of the Russian geopolitical code, be it formalized or not. Additionally, the longitudinal character of analysis allows us to track whether top-level executive actions translate into published doctrine later on. Secondly, employing the analysis of presidential speeches creates a cross-sectional frame of reference within the data, allowing us to gain insight into whether the constitutive realm of the professed Russian geopolitical code aligns *post factum* with its practical application. Without the presidential speeches serving as such kind of a reference point, the research would remain limited to, largely, a comparison of academic geopolitical language and its transference into bureaucratic writing that may or may not represent state-sanctioned action, greatly reducing the practical implications of the study.

2.3. Employing Qualitative Content Analysis

This subchapter provides a detailed exposition of qualitative content analysis (QCA) as the primary analytical method employed in this study. It outlines the core principles of QCA, its distinction from quantitative approaches to content analysis, and its suitability for investigating the transference of geopolitical codes between Dugin's writings and official Russian foreign policy publications. The discussion proceeds from a general characterization of the method to a more specific account of its application in the context of this thesis.

Qualitative content analysis is a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material through the process of assigning data to categories derived from the material itself or from existing theory (Schreier 2012, 2). At its core, QCA is concerned with reducing complexity while preserving meaning – it enables the researcher to manage large volumes of textual data by distilling it into structured categories without sacrificing the interpretive depth essential to qualitative inquiry. This distinguishes QCA from purely quantitative approaches to content analysis, which prioritize frequency counts and statistical generalizability often at the expense of contextual understanding (Krippendorff 2019, 24-26). While quantitative content analysis asks "how many times does the phenomenon appear?", qualitative content analysis asks "what is the meaning of the phenomenon in this context, and how is it being used?" (Schreier 2012, 5).

The method is characterized by several key features. First, QCA is systematic: it follows a structured, rule-guided process that enhances transparency and replicability. The researcher does not simply read texts and report impressions but develops a coding framework that is applied consistently across the corpus. Second, QCA is flexible: while the process is systematic, it allows for iterative refinement of categories as the researcher's understanding of the material deepens. Third, QCA is reductionist in a controlled sense: it reduces the complexity of qualitative material by focusing on specific aspects defined by the research questions, thereby making the material more manageable for analysis (Schreier 2012, 7-8). Fourth, and crucially for this study, QCA is capable of capturing both manifest content – the explicitly stated, surface-level meaning – and latent content – the underlying, implicit meanings that require interpretation (Mayring 2014, 39-40). This dual capacity is essential when analyzing geopolitical language, where the significance of a particular term may lie not only in its literal meaning but in its resonance within broader traditions.

A codebook is a formal document that defines each category in the analysis, specifying its meaning, its boundaries, and the criteria for assigning data to it. The development of a rigorous codebook is essential for ensuring the reliability and transparency of QCA (Schreier 2012, 81-98). Following Schreier's guidelines, the codebook for this study includes, for each code:

- A unique identifier: a name or label that succinctly captures the concept;
- A definition: a clear statement of what the code refers to, distinguishing it from related concepts;
- Inclusion criteria: specific indicators of when a text segment should be assigned to this code – these may include lexical markers, phrases, or conceptual frames;
- Exclusion criteria: specification of when a text segment that might appear similar should not be assigned to the code, helping to maintain conceptual clarity;
- Illustrative examples: quotations from the source texts that exemplify the code in use.

The coding process is supported by qualitative data analysis (QDA) software. While software does not perform analysis autonomously, it provides essential tools for managing large volumes of text, organizing codes, retrieving coded segments, and documenting the analytical process. The use of QDA software enhances transparency and auditability, as it maintains a clear record of coding decisions and allows for systematic review and revision of the coding framework (Silver & Lewins 2014, 32-35). For this study, software is used to store and organize the textual corpus, apply codes to text segments, track the frequency and distribution of codes across documents and time periods, and facilitate the retrieval of coded segments for comparative analysis. The use of software does not supplant the researcher's interpretive role but rather supports it by enabling more systematic and efficient management of the data.

The choice of QCA as the primary analytical method is justified by several considerations that align with the nature of the research questions, the character of the source material, and the epistemological commitments of the study.

First, QCA is uniquely suited to research questions concerned with the presence, meaning, and evolution of lexical elements. The central research questions ask how Dugin's geopolitical concepts are reflected in official documents and how their salience has evolved across time. These are questions about meaning and pattern, not about frequency or causation. QCA's capacity to capture both manifest and latent content enables the analysis to identify not only

explicit lexical matches but also conceptual alignments and lexical resonances that might be missed by purely quantitative approaches (Mayring 2014, 39).

Second, QCA is well-suited to the analysis of political speech and writing, where the significance of language often lies in its performative and legitimizing functions rather than its literal truth-value. As established in the theoretical framework, this study follows the critical geopolitical tradition in treating geopolitics as a discursive practice that constructs and naturalizes particular spatial imaginaries (Ó Tuathail & Agnew 1992). QCA provides a systematic method for analyzing this construction, enabling the researcher to identify the categories through which geopolitical reality is framed and the ways in which these categories shift across time and context.

Third, QCA's hybrid capacity for both inductive and deductive analysis aligns with the dual aims of this study: to capture the specificity of Dugin's geopolitical language without imposing preconceived categories, and to systematically trace that language across a corpus of official documents. The sequential design – inductive coding of Dugin's texts followed by deductive application of the resulting codebook – ensures that the analysis remains grounded in the source material while enabling structured comparison.

Fourth, QCA is appropriate for the scale and type of source material examined in this study. The corpus comprises texts of varying length, from short leadership speeches to book-length treatises. This corpus is arguably large enough to potentially risk impressionistic (Devi Prasad 2019) analysis, which would translate to missing important patterns or overemphasizing isolated examples. At the same time, it is relatively concise and textually complex for quantitative content analysis, which would require a level of standardization and frequency-based measurement that would flatten (Bolden & Moscarola 2000, 451) the nuances of geopolitical language. QCA occupies a productive middle ground, enabling systematic analysis without sacrificing interpretive depth.

Finally, QCA aligns with established practices in the study of geopolitical codes. The study by Flint et al. (2009) that introduced the five-point model of geopolitical codes employed a form of qualitative content analysis to analyze State of the Union speeches, coding each speech for references to allies, enemies, and foreign policy means. Subsequent studies on Russian and Italian geopolitical codes have employed similar methodological approaches (Okunev 2013; Varricchio 2018). By adopting a method that is both established in the literature and tailored

to the specific requirements of this study, the thesis positions itself within a recognized tradition of geopolitical analysis while contributing to its further development.

To provide a clear roadmap for the analysis, the following procedural steps outline the application of QCA in this study:

1. Familiarization, to be accomplished through close, repeated reading of all texts in the corpus to develop an overall sense of their content and context;
2. Inductive open coding of Dugin's texts, identifying meaningful segments and grouping them into preliminary categories;
3. Synthesis of the inductive findings into a structured codebook, with each code defined according to the framework outlined above, subsequently pilot-tested on a subset of the official documents and revised as necessary;
4. Application of the finalized codebook to the full selected corpus of official Russian foreign policy documents and leadership speeches;
5. Review of coding decisions to ensure consistency across the corpus, with resolution of discrepancy through reference to the codebook definitions and, if necessary, through refinement of the codebook;
6. Retrieval of coded segments organized by code, document, and time period, with a focus on the distribution of codes across the corpus, shifts in code salience over time, and variations in how codes are framed and operationalized;
7. Integration of findings to address the research questions, with attention to patterns of resonance, evolution, and contextual variation.

This structured procedural approach ensures that the analysis is systematic, transparent, and grounded in the empirical material, while retaining the interpretive flexibility necessary to capture the nuances of geopolitical lexicon.

2.3.1. The Sequence of Geopolitical Coding

Within this study, individual lexical codes pertaining to the realm of the geographical and political are distinguished from the broader concept of the geopolitical code as previously examined in the theoretical framework. While constituting two separate analytical units, the

geopolitical code can be understood as the induced category (Mayring 2019, 8) within the realm of QCA, in whole or in part.

For the purposes of clarity, this study primarily assigns geopolitical codes their derived analytical categories as they stand in Flint et al. (2009), with five main elements of (1) current and potential allies, (2) current and potential enemies, (3) means of maintaining current allies and fostering new ones, (4) means of facing existing and emerging enemies, and (5) representing the practices to domestic and global audiences. Given that this is the most widespread interpretation of this model in contemporary research, it will serve as a freshly tested tool for our purpose, but also give an opportunity to present original methodology through its application within a comparative content analysis framework to tackle a new problem. Of note is also its simplicity of interpretation and lack of intermediate analytical levels, which are also not created or derived from existing literature solely for this study.

Omitted within the logic of geopolitical coding in this instance are, however, larger-scale relational or supra-national elements (Flint & Noorali 2023, 5). Given that the end stage of analysis is devoted to one single country – Russia – there is no need to aim for coding supra-national factors.

The final inclusion in the concept of the geopolitical code within this thesis is, on the other hand, the three additional analytical elements as stipulated by Frąszczak et al. (2025, 712): (1) models of the world in time and space, (2) national myths, including historical myths, and (3) views on the structure of the international order. These additional elements serve to add analytical depth to the coding process and move beyond a friend-or-foe distinction to be located within the source material. Specifically, regarding Dugin, the inclusion of these elements helps to expand the full profile of Dugin's geopolitical ideation, given its existing assessment as drawing philosophically from mythological inspiration (Meng 2025, 244) and persistence in calls to challenge the liberal international order (Zafar 2023, 20).

By using this eight-step sequence forming an overarching geopolitical discourse, it becomes possible to construct a hierarchy of codes, where each of the eight steps forms an intermediary category, preceded by a single or multiple geopolitical codes, and feeding into the larger analytical realm. This approach is best suited for the thesis at hand, as it conserves the need to formulate large-scale categories independently, instead building upon the existing corpus of knowledge. Secondly, this sequence can be applied both in an inductive and a deductive fashion during the analysis of Dugin's original works and Russian foreign policy doctrines,

respectively. Lastly, using a sequence of coding built on only three structural levels of categories helps maintain the clarity of analysis and the presentability of derived data, which is particularly important in cases where whole books are used as source material.

2.4. Discussion on Limitations

This subchapter is devoted in its entirety to discussing such limitations, along with arguments as to how the study accounts for them and supplements any gaps that might arise as a result. Acknowledging these limitations enables the reader to adequately assess the scope and boundaries of the study's claims (Bryman 2016, 401).

Qualitative content analysis of textual sources is capable of identifying patterns of lexical resonance between Dugin's geopolitical writings and official Russian foreign policy documents. What it cannot do is establish a direct causal link between Dugin's intellectual production and the formulation of state policy. As Kalinin (2019, 469) cautions, it would constitute a "leap of faith" to assume that geopolitical writings transfer neatly into the policy toolboxes of decision-makers. Alternative explanations for lexical convergence are equally plausible: Dugin and state policymakers may draw from shared intellectual traditions, such as classical Eurasianism (Laruelle 2008, 7) or Soviet-era ideological thinking (Kramer 2019). They may be responding to similar structural pressures in the international system, or the language in official documents may reflect the influence of a broader community of geopolitical experts, advisors, and other significant individual actors (McFaul 2020) rather than Dugin himself.

A closely related limitation concerns the inaccessibility of internal policymaking processes. The Kremlin's decision-making apparatus remains largely opaque (Fortescue 2022) to external researchers, with the inner workings of major policymaking bodies shielded from public scrutiny. It is therefore impossible to know with certainty how Dugin's writings, if at all, are received, debated, or utilized within governmental institutions. As Lewis (2018, 1621) notes in his analysis of Russian foreign policy discourse, the relationship between official texts and actual policy formulation is neither direct nor transparent.

This study accounts for this limitation by focusing on the documents themselves as objects of analysis, rather than attempting to peer behind the curtain of policy formulation. The strategic documents and leadership speeches examined in this thesis are not treated as transparent windows into policymaking, but as performative texts that construct and legitimize particular geopolitical imaginaries. This approach, grounded (Ó Tuathail 1994a, 259) in critical

geopolitics, shifts the analytical focus from the intentions of authors to the discursive effects of texts.

A further limitation concerns the selection of sources. This study examines two of Dugin's works – “The Foundations of Geopolitics” (1997), and “The Geopolitics of Russia” (2012) – and a corpus of official documents comprising nine strategic texts and a selection of speeches. While these selections are justified by their intellectual significance and chronological relevance, they do not capture the full breadth of Dugin's prodigious (Bassin 2008, 282) output, which includes numerous articles, interviews, lectures, and more specialized works. It is possible that significant geopolitical concepts appear in Dugin's other writings that are not represented in the selected texts, potentially affecting the comprehensiveness of the composed codebook. Similarly, the official document corpus, while carefully selected to include all major strategic documents within the timeframe, does not encompass the full range of official foreign policy publications. The decision to focus on foundational strategic documents and key leadership speeches is a deliberate choice to prioritize texts with the highest evidentiary value for articulating official state policy.

The longitudinal dimension of the study, while essential for addressing the evolution of geopolitical codes, introduces its own challenges. The official documents examined span a period of fourteen years and were issued under two presidents – Dmitry Medvedev (2008–2012) and Vladimir Putin (2012–present, and previously 2000–2008). While the strategic documents are formally state documents rather than presidential manifestos, it is reasonable to expect that changes in leadership may be reflected in shifts in geopolitical language.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the role of researcher subjectivity (Ratner 2002) in qualitative content analysis. While the use of a structured codebook and systematic coding procedures enhances transparency and replicability, the process of coding inevitably involves interpretive judgment. Rather than treating this as a limitation to be eliminated, this study follows the critical geopolitical tradition in acknowledging that “the observer cannot see and map the world without recourse to the geographical and historical categories inherited from their own culture” (Ó Tuathail 1994b, 542).

In summary, this study faces limitations related to causal inference, access to internal policymaking processes, source selection, longitudinal analysis, and researcher subjectivity.

3. ANALYSIS OF ALEKSANDR DUGIN’S SELECTED WORKS

Before the geopolitical codes present in Russian foreign policy documents can be identified and traced, it is necessary to establish a clear baseline – a systematic understanding of the core concepts that emerge from Dugin's own writings. This chapter undertakes a close analytical reading of two major texts by Aleksandr Dugin: “The Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia” (1997) and “The Geopolitics of Russia” (2012). The selection of these works, as stipulated in the preceding methodology section, reflects both their intellectual significance within Dugin's oeuvre and their chronological spread across the period preceding and overlapping with the primary timeframe of this study.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it aims to distill from these texts a structured set of lexical codes, which forms the basis of the codebook applied to official Russian documents in the subsequent chapter. Second, the analysis attends to the evolution of Dugin's thought across both works. While the central research questions concern the transference of Dugin's ideas into state policy, it is essential to acknowledge that Dugin's own geopolitical vision is not static. Identifying shifts, refinements, or contradictions across his writings provides crucial context for interpreting how particular codes may appear in official documents – whether in a form consistent with an earlier version, a later iteration, or as an amalgamation drawing from multiple sources.

The analysis proceeds inductively, allowing codes to emerge from the text rather than imposing a preconceived framework. Both works are examined in turn, with attention to recurring themes, spatial categorizations, the construction of geopolitical ‘allies’ and ‘enemies’, and the articulation of foreign policy imperatives. Where appropriate, the analysis notes the intellectual antecedents of Dugin's thought – particularly the influence of classical Eurasianism, the geopolitical traditions of Halford Mackinder and Karl Haushofer, and the contemporary political context of Russia. Referenced throughout are existing perspectives on the literature that both support and challenge the author’s arguments. The chapter concludes with an overview of the synthesized codebook that organizes the identified codes into a structured analytical tool, ready for application to the corpus of official Russian foreign policy documents in the next chapter.

3.1. “The Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia”

“The Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia” stands as Aleksandr Dugin's most influential and controversial (Ingram 2001, 1029) work. Originally published in Russian in 1997, at a moment when Russia was grappling with economic collapse, political instability, and a profound sense of national humiliation (Verpoest 2022, 92-93), the text offered a comprehensive blueprint for Russian geopolitical revival. Its significance for this study lies not only in its intellectual ambition but in its status as the foundational text from which Dugin's subsequent geopolitical writings depart and develop. This analysis proceeds inductively, identifying the major codes that emerge from the text, attending to their conceptual content, their framing, and their articulation into policy imperatives. Further, the codes are assigned intermediary categories, which are interpreted to describe a cohesive overarching geopolitical discourse of Russia within the text.

3.1.1. The Primacy of Geopolitics and the Mackinderian Inheritance

The text opens with a bold assertion of geopolitics as a "worldview" (*мировоззрение*) rather than merely a method of analysis (Dugin 1997, 13). Dugin positions geopolitics as the "science of the state as a geographical organism" (1997, 15), explicitly drawing on the classical tradition of Kjellén and Haushofer, inspired by Ratzel's writings. This framing is itself a substantive analytical category of the geopolitical discourse: the elevation of geopolitics to a comprehensive worldview signals a rejection of liberal-internationalist approaches and an embrace of spatial determinism as the foundation for state action. What distinguishes Dugin from the classical geopolitical tradition, however, is his explicit fusion of this "scientific" framework with an eschatological dimension. Geopolitics is not merely about the competition of states but about the ultimate destiny of civilizations – a framing that imbues his prescriptive imperatives with an almost theological urgency (Dugin 1997, 18-22). This rhetorical strategy serves a dual purpose: it grants his arguments the authority of "science" while simultaneously insulating them from empirical refutation by appealing to a higher, civilizational logic.

Central to Dugin's framework is Mackinder's Heartland theory, which he adopts with fervor. The Heartland – the Eurasian landmass – is presented as the "geographical axis of history" (1997, 44), and Russia is identified as the Heartland's natural sovereign. Dugin transforms Mackinder's descriptive geography into a prescriptive imperative: Russia's geopolitical destiny is to consolidate control over the Heartland and resist the encroachment of Atlantic powers. It

allows Dugin to claim that Russia's geopolitical mission is not a matter of strategic calculation alone, but an expression of its civilizational essence.

Moreover, Dugin's adoption of Mackinder is selective and strategic. He downplays Mackinder's concerns about the vulnerability of the Heartland to maritime encirclement – concerns that informed classical British and American containment thinking – and instead emphasizes the Heartland's invincibility once consolidated under a single power (Dugin 1997, 52). This selective reading could be interpreted to serve a clear political purpose: to present a narrative of inevitable Russian resurgence, regardless of short-term setbacks. Even in the turmoil of the 1990s, Dugin's Mackinderian framework assured that the spatial logic of history favored the Heartland and, by extension, Russia. This yields the first major code: 'Eurasia as Heartland', wherein Russia's civilizational identity and geopolitical mission are fused with the spatial concept of the Eurasian continent.

3.1.2. The Civilizational Duality: Land vs. Sea

Perhaps the most pervasive code in the text at hand is the opposition between 'Land Power' (*теллуократия*) and 'Sea Power' (*талассократия*). Dugin derives this duality from the geopolitical traditions of Mackinder and Carl Schmitt, but he radicalizes it into a Manichaean civilizational struggle. Land powers – Russia, Germany, continental Europe – are characterized by hierarchy, tradition, organic community, and a spatial orientation toward territory. Sea powers – primarily the United States and Britain – are associated with commerce, individualism, liberalism, and a spatial orientation toward maritime networks and global liquidity. What distinguishes Dugin's treatment from his intellectual antecedents is the moral and ontological weight he assigns to this distinction. For Schmitt, the land-sea opposition was an analytical tool for understanding modern political forms. For Dugin (1997, 60-65), it becomes a cosmic struggle between two incompatible civilizational principles, one good and one evil, one natural and one artificial. The tellurocratic principle is presented as rooted in the soil, in authentic community, in historical continuity, while the thalassocratic principle is portrayed as rootless, parasitic, and ultimately nihilistic. This moral loading transforms what might otherwise be a descriptive geopolitical framework into a kind of call to civilizational arms.

This duality structures the entire geopolitical imaginary of this source. Every state, every alliance, every historical event is interpreted through this lens. The Cold War is reframed not as an ideological conflict between communism and capitalism, but as the latest iteration of the

eternal struggle between land and sea. The collapse of the Soviet Union is presented as a temporary victory for Atlanticism, but the underlying civilizational imperative remains unchanged: Russia must reclaim its role as the organizing center of land-based resistance to maritime hegemony.

Dugin further develops the land-sea duality by introducing the concept of the "borderland" (*пограничные зоны*), drawing heavily from the notions of Rimland and the "sanitary cordon", as a site of permanent civilizational contestation. Territories such as Ukraine, the Caucasus, and Central Asia are not merely geopolitical prizes but zones where the two principles collide and intermix. For Dugin, control over these borderlands is not simply a matter of strategic advantage but of civilizational survival – if the borderlands fall under thalassocratic influence, the Heartland itself becomes vulnerable (Dugin 1997, 75-80). Within this reading, one may notice applied policy implications: it justifies not only the assertion of Russian dominance over these territories, but also the active exclusion of Atlanticist influence, by force if necessary. The borderland is not a space for negotiation or neutrality, but a battlefield in an ongoing civilizational war.

3.1.3. The 'Atlanticist' Enemy

From the land-sea duality emerges the code of 'Atlanticism', which functions as the primary enemy image in Dugin's geopolitical schema. 'Atlanticism' is not merely a foreign policy orientation, but a civilizational adversary, encompassing the United States, NATO, liberal democracy, globalization, and what Dugin terms "the Anglo-Saxon conspiracy" against continental powers (1997, 128-135). The Atlanticist enemy is presented as both omnipresent and insidious, seeking not merely to contain Russia but to dismantle its civilizational identity through economic penetration, cultural subversion, and geopolitical encirclement.

The identification of Atlanticism as the enemy is accompanied by a corresponding identification of 'Allies', feeding directly into another analytical category of the geopolitical code. Dugin constructs an alternative geopolitical bloc – a "Eurasian continental alliance" – that includes Germany, France, Iran, India, and the states of the former Soviet Union. The logic of alliance is purely geopolitical: any state that shares Russia's land-based civilizational orientation or its antagonism toward Atlantic hegemony is a potential partner, regardless of ideological or cultural differences. This instrumental approach to alliance formation is itself a code: 'Institutional Eurasianism', wherein the inherent category of "Eurasian" is defined not by cultural criteria but by geopolitical positionality.

3.1.4. The Near Abroad and Territorial Imperatives

Perhaps the most directly policy-relevant code in this source concerns the ‘Near Abroad’ (*ближнее зарубежье*). Dugin devotes extensive attention to the territories of the former Soviet Union, articulating a vision of Russian dominance that ranges from economic integration to outright annexation. The text is remarkably specific: Ukraine is declared an "artificial state" whose viability depends on maintaining close ties with Russia. Kazakhstan, on the other hand, is identified as the "geopolitical key" to Eurasia, whereas the Baltic states are dismissed as an "Atlanticist bridgehead" that must be neutralized (Dugin 1997, 278-315).

This territorial code operates through a logic of what might be termed ‘Strategic Imperativism’: geographic spaces are not presented as sites of self-determination or negotiation but as objects of strategic necessity. Dugin's language is consistently deterministic – "Russia must," "it is imperative that," "there is no alternative to" – constructing expansionist policies not as choices but as geopolitical imperatives.

3.1.5. Multipolarity as the Normative Horizon

Finally, the source text articulates ‘Multipolarity’ as both a descriptive reality and a normative goal. The unipolar world dominated by the United States is presented as unstable and illegitimate – the proper international order is one of competing continental blocs, each exercising sovereignty within its designated sphere. Multipolarity serves as the overarching framework that justifies and integrates the other codes: it is the world order in which Russia, as the Heartland power, would exercise its proper role – not as a global hegemon in the American mode, but as the organizing center of a civilizational bloc. It is the normative horizon toward which all other codes point to some extent, and the lens through which Dugin's prescriptive imperatives acquire their ultimate justification.

3.2. “The Geopolitics of Russia”

“The Geopolitics of Russia” was first published in Russian in 2012, fifteen years after “The Foundations of Geopolitics” and at a moment of significant transformation (Hahn 2013, 217-219) in both Russian domestic politics and international relations. The year 2012 saw Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency after Dmitry Medvedev's single term, a period of growing tension with the West over NATO expansion and missile defense, and the consolidation of a more assertive foreign policy posture that would culminate in the annexation of Crimea two years later. Dugin's text reflects this evolving context, retaining the core framework of his earlier work while introducing refinements, extensions, and significant shifts in emphasis. This

analysis proceeds inductively, synthesizing the geopolitical discourse present in the text through the identification of major codes, attending to their continuity with and divergence from the framework established in “The Foundations of Geopolitics”.

3.2.1. The Consolidation of the Eurasianist Paradigm

Where the previously examined source presented Eurasianism as one geopolitical option among others – albeit the preferred one – “The Geopolitics of Russia” takes Eurasianism as an established foundation. Dugin writes not as a polemicist seeking to convert readers to a novel framework but as a theorist elaborating on a settled paradigm. The text is thoroughly positioned as a continuation of the Eurasianist tradition, engaging with classical Eurasianist thinkers such as Nikolai Trubetskoy and Pyotr Savitsky alongside the geopolitical lineage of Mackinder and Haushofer (Dugin 2012, 79-84). This shift from advocacy to elaboration represents an important evolution: the code of ‘Eurasia as Heartland’ is no longer presented as a controversial thesis but as a geopolitical axiom.

This consolidation is reflected in the text's structure and tone. “The Geopolitics of Russia” is organized as a systematic, textbook exposition rather than a manifesto, with chapters devoted to the geographical foundations of Russian geopolitics, the civilizational dimensions of Eurasian space, the structure of the multipolar world, and detailed analyses of Russia's relations with neighboring regions. The language remains prescriptive – Dugin continues to articulate what Russia “must” do – but the prescriptive claims are grounded in an assumed consensus about Russia's geopolitical identity that was absent from the earlier work.

3.2.2. Deepening the Civilizational Framework

The land-sea duality remains central, but “The Geopolitics of Russia” significantly deepens its civilizational dimensions. Dugin (2012, 126) introduces a more refined typology of civilizational types, moving beyond the binary opposition of tellurocracy and thalassocracy to encompass original interpretations of what he terms “civilizational identities” (*цивилизационные идентичности*) that operate at multiple scales, stressing the unacceptability of merely applying ‘outside’ geopolitics to Russia. This refinement allows for a more nuanced treatment of intermediate cases – states that may share characteristics of both land and sea powers – and provides a more sophisticated framework for understanding the complex geopolitical landscape of Eurasia.

Of particular significance is Dugin's expanded, albeit largely borrowed from the work of Savitsky, treatment of the 'Civilizational State' as a geopolitical category. Russia is presented not as a nation-state in the Westphalian sense but as a "civilizational entity" or state (*цивилизационное образование*) whose territorial extent corresponds to the boundaries of a distinct civilization. This framing serves to justify Russian dominance over the former Soviet space on grounds that transcend conventional nationalism: it is not Russians as an ethnic group who are entitled to rule these territories, but the Eurasian civilization of which they are part. The "civilizational state", constituting an analytically important geopolitical code, operates as a legitimating device for territorial claims that might otherwise appear as conventional imperialism.

3.2.3. The Near Abroad: From Strategy to System

The treatment of the near abroad in "The Geopolitics of Russia" represents both continuity and evolution. The core imperatives remain – Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and the other former Soviet states are presented as integral components of Russian geopolitical space – but the analytical framework has been systematized. Dugin's (2012, 73) analysis is largely organized around what he calls "geopolitical areas" (*геополитические районы*), largely borrowed from Leontyev and Danilevsky, each with its own characteristics, challenges, and prescribed policies. The Caucasus, Central Asia, the Baltic region, and the Slavic heartland are each subjected to strategic analysis in this manner.

The previously identified code of 'Near Abroad' thus evolves into something more systematic, forming the analytical category of 'Geopolitical Regionalization'. This evolution reflects both Dugin's intellectual maturation and the changed political context. In the early 2000s, the fragmentation of the former Soviet space had begun to stabilize (Jaitner et al. 2018, 8) into recognizable regional configurations, and the prospect of any single state's rapid reintegration had receded. Dugin's response is not to abandon the goal of Russian dominance, but to reframe it in terms of a multi-layered strategy that combines economic integration, security cooperation, and cultural influence across distinct regions.

3.2.4. The 'Multipolar' World: A Shift from Vision to Reality?

Perhaps the most significant evolution in "The Geopolitics of Russia" concerns the code of 'Multipolarity'. Where "The Foundations of Geopolitics" presented multipolarity as a normative vision to be achieved, the 2012 text treats it as an emerging reality. Dugin (2012, 373-396) identifies multiple poles of the emerging multipolar order:

- the United States, broadly defined as still the dominant but declining hegemon;
- Europe, described as caught between Atlanticism and continentalism;
- China, viewed as a rising land power with its own civilizational logic;
- the Islamic world, deemed a volatile but significant actor, especially through Iran;
- Russia itself as the organizing center of the Eurasian pole.

This shift from aspirational to descriptive framing is consequential. It positions Russian foreign policy not as a revolutionary project to overturn an illegitimate unipolar order, but as the consolidation of a multipolar reality or even a nonpolar order that is already taking shape. This framing poses to align Dugin's language more closely with official Russian foreign policy discourse, which had by 2012 adopted multipolarity as a central doctrinal concept – long after being first mentioned in the year 2000 (Makarychev & Morozov 2011, 354). The code of ‘Multipolarity’ thus becomes a site of potential resonance between Dugin's thought and official state language.

3.2.5. The Emergence of Sovereignty as Civilization

A code that appears more prominently in “The Geopolitics of Russia” than in its predecessor is ‘Sovereignty as Civilization’. Dugin argues that sovereignty in the contemporary world is not primarily a matter of legal independence but of civilizational autonomy. A state that adopts the values, institutions, and lifestyles of another civilization has, according to Dugin (2012, 226-227), surrendered its sovereignty regardless of its formal legal status. This framing serves to delegitimize those former Soviet states that have oriented themselves toward the West, presenting their pro-Western foreign policies not as legitimate choices, but as forms of civilizational subordination that undermine their sovereignty.

This code operates in conjunction with ‘Atlanticism’, which remains at its core as the primary enemy image. However, the treatment of Atlanticism in “The Geopolitics of Russia” is less ideological and more strategic than in “The Foundations of Geopolitics”. Dugin presents Atlanticism not as an eternal civilizational adversary, but as a geopolitical project that can be countered through the construction of alternative institutions. This shift from existential to strategic framing reflects the changed geopolitical context and perhaps also Dugin's own evolution toward a more pragmatic register.

The analysis of “The Geopolitics of Russia” reveals both significant continuity with the framework established in “The Foundations of Geopolitics” and important evolutions in emphasis, framing, and conceptual refinement. The major codes – Eurasia as Heartland, the

land-sea duality, Atlanticism as adversary, and multipolarity as horizon – remain central. However, the 2012 source text exhibits a more systematic, less polemical register, a deeper engagement with civilizational theory, and a framing of multipolarity as an emerging reality rather than a distant goal. These evolutions reflect both Dugin's intellectual development and the changing context of Russian foreign policy in the intervening fifteen years. The next subchapter will synthesize the codes from both works into a unified codebook, noting where codes appear in one work but not the other, and where the meaning or framing of a code has shifted across time.

3.3. Defining the Geopolitical Discourse of Dugin's Theory

Having established the geopolitical codes present in “The Foundations of Geopolitics” (1997) and “The Geopolitics of Russia” (2012), this subchapter synthesizes these findings into a unified codebook and formulates an overview of the overarching geopolitical discourse. The purpose of this synthesis is twofold. First, it provides a structured analytical tool that can be applied systematically to the corpus of official Russian foreign policy documents in the next chapter. Second, it explicitly identifies the continuities, shifts, and tensions between Dugin's two works, ensuring that the subsequent analysis is attentive to the evolution of his thought across the fifteen-year period separating the texts. The codebook is organized around nine major codes that emerged from the inductive analysis, each defined with reference to its articulation in both source texts.

The code of ‘Eurasia as Heartland’ encompasses Dugin's foundational claim that Russia's civilizational identity and geopolitical destiny are fused with the Mackinderian Heartland – the vast Eurasian landmass. In “The Foundations of Geopolitics”, this code is articulated as a polemical thesis, presented as the central axiom from which all other geopolitical imperatives derive (Dugin 1997, 44-48). By the time of the publication of “The Geopolitics of Russia”, the code had been consolidated from thesis to taken-for-granted foundation, serving as the unquestioned starting point for subsequent analysis (Dugin 2012, 25-30). Lexical markers include references to “Eurasia” as a civilizational space, the “Heartland” as a geographical axis, and formulations that position Russia as the “core” or “center” of continental Eurasia.

Derived from the geopolitical traditions of Mackinder and Schmitt, the code of ‘Land Power vs Sea Power’ structures global conflict as an ontological struggle between tellurocracy (land power) and thalassocracy (sea power). “The Foundations of Geopolitics” presents this duality in stark, all-or-nothing terms, with land powers characterized by hierarchy, tradition, and

territoriality, and sea powers by commerce, individualism, and global liquidity (Dugin 1997, 52-60). “The Geopolitics of Russia” deepens this framework through a more refined civilizational typology, introducing intermediate categories and multi-scalar applications (Dugin 2012, 19). Lexical markers include the direct use of “tellurocracy” and “thalassocracy,” as well as oppositional pairings such as “continental” versus “maritime,” “traditional” versus “liberal,” and “sovereign” versus “civilizational”.

‘Atlanticism’ functions as the primary enemy image in Dugin's geopolitical schema, encompassing the United States, NATO, liberal democracy, and globalization as an integrated civilizational adversary. In “The Foundations of Geopolitics”, Atlanticism is presented in existential terms – not merely a competing foreign policy orientation but an existential threat to Russian civilization (Dugin 1997, 128-135). “The Geopolitics of Russia” retains Atlanticism as the primary adversary but shifts the framing from existential to strategic, presenting it as a geopolitical project that can be countered through institutional alternatives (Dugin 2012, 362). Lexical markers include “Atlanticism,” “Atlanticist,” “Anglo-Saxon,” references to a “unipolar world,” and characterizations of NATO or the United States as an “enemy,” “adversary,” or “hegemon.”

Emerging more prominently in “The Geopolitics of Russia” than in its predecessor, the ‘Civilizational State’ points to Russia positioned not as a nation-state in the Westphalian tradition but as a polity whose territorial extent corresponds to the boundaries of a distinct civilization. The code serves to point us to the notion of legitimization of Russian dominance over the post-Soviet space on grounds that transcend conventional nationalism: it is not Russians as an ethnic group who are entitled to rule these territories, but the Eurasian civilization of which they are part (Dugin 2012, 191). While “The Foundations of Geopolitics” contains anticipations of this code – particularly in its treatment of Russia as a “unique civilization” rather than a European derivative – the concept receives its fullest articulation in the later work. Lexical markers include “civilizational state,” “civilizational identity,” “civilizational sovereignty,” and formulations that contrast Russia with “nation-states” of the Western model.

The code of ‘Near Abroad’ encompasses Dugin's articulation of Russian territorial imperatives in the post-Soviet space. “The Foundations of Geopolitics” treats the near abroad as a category of strategic necessity, with each neighboring state analyzed for its geopolitical significance and prescribed policies ranging from economic integration to outright annexation (Dugin 1997,

278-315). “The Geopolitics of Russia” systematizes this framework through what is termed “geopolitical regionalization,” organizing the post-Soviet space into distinct regions – the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Baltic, the Slavic heartland – each requiring tailored strategic approaches (Dugin 2012, 356). The evolution from the former to the latter reflects both Dugin's intellectual maturation and the stabilization of post-Soviet regional configurations. Lexical markers include “near abroad”, “geopolitical region”, specific regional designations, and language of “vital interests,” “sphere of influence,” or “historical space.”

The code of ‘Strategic Imperativism’ captures the distinctive rhetorical register of Dugin's writing – a deterministic language that frames expansionist policies not as political choices but as geopolitical obligations. In both works, Dugin's prescriptions are consistently formulated in the language of necessity. “The Foundations of Geopolitics” employs this register throughout, constructing a sense of inexorable geopolitical logic that overrides conventional moral or legal considerations. “The Geopolitics of Russia” maintains this register but softens it somewhat, embedding prescriptive claims within the more systematic, analytical framework of the later work. Lexical markers include modal verbs of obligation, formulations of necessity, and deterministic claims about geopolitical “laws” or “imperatives”.

‘Multipolarity’ serves as the normative horizon of Dugin's international order – the alternative to the unipolar, US-dominated system he rejects. “The Foundations of Geopolitics” presents multipolarity as an aspirational vision, a goal to be achieved through the construction of continental blocs capable of challenging Atlantic hegemony (Dugin 1997, 220-235). “The Geopolitics of Russia” marks a significant evolution, treating multipolarity not as a future goal but as an emerging reality already taking shape, with Russia positioned as the organizing center of the Eurasian pole (Dugin 2012, 396-397). Lexical markers include “multipolarity” (*многополярность*), “polar world”, references to “poles” of power, and formulations that reject “unipolarity” or “hegemony”.

The code of ‘Sovereignty as Civilization,’ which appears more prominently in “The Geopolitics of Russia”, encompasses instances of Dugin attempting to redefine sovereignty in terms other than legal, with the adoption of values, institutions, and lifestyles of another civilization seen as detrimental (Dugin 2012, 226-227). This framing serves to delegitimize those post-Soviet states that have oriented themselves toward the West, presenting their pro-Western foreign policies not as legitimate choices but as forms of civilizational subordination. Lexical markers include “sovereignty” linked to “civilization” or “identity,” language of

"civilizational choice," and formulations that distinguish "real" sovereignty from its "formal" or "legal" counterpart.

The code of ‘Instrumental Eurasianism’ captures Dugin's logic of alliance formation, which is based on geopolitical position rather than cultural or ideological affinity. In both works, potential allies are identified not through shared values or political systems but through shared opposition to Atlanticism and shared position within the Eurasian landmass (Dugin 1997, 150-165; Dugin 2012, 386). This instrumental logic enables Dugin to construct a remarkably diverse coalition – encompassing Germany, France, Iran, India, China, and various post-Soviet states – united only by their geopolitical positionality relative to the Atlanticist adversary. Lexical markers include "Eurasian alliance," "continental bloc," "strategic partnership" framed in geopolitical terms, and formulations that emphasize shared "interests" over shared "values."

Table 1. Summary of identified codes in Dugin’s works, their articulation over time, lexical markers, and correspondence to analytical categories of geopolitical discourse.

Code	Evolution of articulation	Common lexical markers and sub-codes	Sample quote	Analytical category
1. Eurasia as Heartland	Foundational thesis promoted to axiom	<i>Eurasia, Heartland, core, center</i>	“(…) instead of “Heartland” as a purely geopolitical term, one could’ve used the USSR (…)”	The world in time and space
2. Land Power vs Sea Power	Emerges as constitutive, later refined	<i>tellurocracy, thalassocracy, continental, maritime</i>	“(…) Russia is destined for a conflict with the Sea civilization (…)”	Allies and enemies
3. Atlanticism	Existential threat, evolves to guide strategy	<i>Atlanticist, unipolar world, hegemon</i>	“The battle between Eurasianism and Atlanticism (…)”	Allies and enemies
4. Civilizational State	Anticipated at first, expanded	<i>state, civilizational identity</i>	“Of course, the [Russian Federation],	National myths

			may, in the future, become the Russian State (...)”	
5. Near Abroad Regionalization	Strategic necessity, becomes systematic	<i>geopolitical region, vital interests, sphere of interests</i>	“(...) Belorussia and the Eastern and Central areas of Ukraine politically and culturally belong to the zone of Russia-Eurasia (...)”	Representing practices
6. Strategic Imperativism	Pervasive, incorporates analytics	<i>“must”, imperative, (no) alternative</i>	“(...) for maintaining security of its territory, Russia must gain military control (...)”	Means of facing existing and emerging enemies
7. Multipolarity	Aspirational, becomes descriptive	<i>world, poles</i>	“(...) if one is to examine Russia as a planetary tellurocratic pole (...)”	Views on the international order
8. Sovereignty as Civilization	Minor, later prominent	<i>sovereignty, real, formal</i>	“(...) the Russians did not abandon the guidance of their [fore]fathers, remained true to Orthodoxy (...)”	Means of facing existing and emerging enemies
9. Instrumental Eurasianism	Consistent	<i>alliance, continental bloc, strategic interests</i>	“The Eurasian Union contains (...) the planetary, the regional, and the domestic.”	Means of maintaining allies and fostering new ones

The nine major codes identified in Dugin's works do not operate as isolated concepts but coalesce into an overarching geopolitical discourse – a structured framework that, following Flint et al. (2009) and Frąszczak et al. (2025), organizes Dugin's geopolitical reasoning across eight analytical dimensions. Mapping the nine codes onto this eight-step sequence reveals the internal logic of Dugin's geopolitical imaginary and provides a template for comparison with official Russian foreign policy language.

At the most foundational level, the 'Eurasia as Heartland' code corresponds to the category of models of the world in time and space (Frąszczak et al. 2025). This code supplies the spatial ontology of Dugin's entire geopolitical edifice: the Mackinderian Heartland as the geographical axis of history, with Russia as its natural sovereign. Every subsequent code derives its meaning from this spatial grounding – allies, enemies, and policy imperatives are all positioned relative to the Heartland. The categories of allies and enemies (Flint et al. 2009) are jointly addressed by two codes. 'Land versus Sea Power' provides the civilizational logic for distinguishing friend from foe: land powers (continental, traditional, hierarchical) are potential allies, while sea powers (maritime, liberal, commercial) are inherent adversaries. 'Atlanticism' names the primary enemy concretely – the United States, NATO, and the liberal international order – transforming the abstract land-sea duality into a specific geopolitical adversary.

The category of national myths (Frąszczak et al. 2025) is captured by 'Civilizational State'. This code elevates Russia from a nation-state to a civilization, drawing on historical narratives of Russian distinctness, Orthodox messianism, and the legacy of Eurasianist thinkers. It provides the mythic foundation for Dugin's claims to territorial expanse and civilizational sovereignty. Two codes address the category of means of facing existing and emerging enemies (Flint et al. 2009). 'Strategic Imperativism' supplies the rhetorical and psychological means – a deterministic language of necessity that frames confrontation with enemies as an unavoidable geopolitical obligation. 'Sovereignty as Civilization' provides a conceptual weapon: by redefining sovereignty in civilizational rather than legal terms, Dugin delegitimizes pro-Western orientations among post-Soviet states, reframing them as forms of civilizational subordination that justify Russian intervention.

The category of representing practices to domestic and global audiences (Flint et al. 2009) is addressed by 'Near Abroad' and its evolved form, 'Geopolitical Regionalization'. This code articulates the territorial claims and strategic imperatives in a form suitable for public discussion, framing Russian dominance over post-Soviet space not as imperialism but as

historical restoration and geopolitical necessity. ‘Multipolarity’ corresponds to views on the structure of the international order (Frąszczak et al. 2025). This code supplies the normative horizon of Dugin's geopolitical discourse – a world of competing continental blocs in which Russia exercises its proper role as the Heartland power, countering the unipolar Atlanticist order.

Finally, ‘Instrumental Eurasianism’ addresses the category of means of maintaining allies and fostering new ones (Flint et al. 2009). This code provides the logic for alliance formation based on shared opposition to Atlanticism and shared geographical position within Eurasia, enabling Dugin to construct a diverse coalition without requiring ideological or cultural convergence.

In sum, Dugin's nine codes distribute across the eight analytical dimensions to form a coherent, multi-layered representation of a geopolitical discourse. This structure – from spatial ontology through enemy identification and mythic legitimation to policy means and normative ends – provides a systematic framework for comparison with official Russian foreign policy materials in the following chapter.

4. JUXTAPOSING DUGIN'S GEOPOLITICAL CODES AND RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Having established a structured codebook from the inductive analysis of Dugin's foundational works, this chapter turns to the core analytical task of the thesis: the systematic juxtaposition of Dugin's geopolitical codes with the officially published foreign policy doctrine of the Russian Federation. This chapter is devoted to the second phase as stipulated in the research design, wherein the codebook is applied deductively to the corpus of official documents and selected speeches, enabling a structured assessment of how – and to what extent – Dugin's geopolitical language resonates within the official language of the Russian state.

The chapter is structured around the two central research questions that guide this study. The first research question asks how the main geopolitical concepts present in Dugin's key works are reflected in the operational documents of Russian foreign policy. To address this question, the analysis examines a corpus of strategic documents spanning the period 2008–2021. Each document is coded according to the framework established in the preceding chapter, with attention to the presence, relative frequency, and conceptual framing of Dugin-aligned codes. The analysis attends not only to whether a particular code appears but to how it is operationalized – whether it appears in a form identical to Dugin's articulation, exhibits elements from multiple sources, or presents itself as an amalgamation that aligns more broadly with neo-Eurasianist thought. This systematic approach enables a nuanced assessment of the relationship between Dugin's intellectual project and the codified framework of Russian state policy.

The second research question asks how the salience and application of these geopolitical concepts have evolved in relation to the three landmark events identified in the study – the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. To address this question, the analysis extends beyond the strategic documents to include leadership speeches delivered by Dmitry Medvedev and Vladimir Putin in connection with these events. These speeches serve as a crucial complementary source, capturing the immediate justifications offered by the Russian leadership at moments of kinetic action. By examining the strategic documents diachronically alongside the event-specific speeches, the analysis traces shifts in geopolitical language across the defined timeframe, identifying patterns of continuity, escalation, or transformation in the articulation of Dugin-aligned concepts.

The chapter is organized into three analytical subchapters, each corresponding to a category of source material. The first subchapter examines the doctrines, assessing the presence and evolution of Dugin's codes within the codified framework of Russian foreign policy. The second subchapter focuses specifically on the geopolitical language of the three kinetic events, analyzing speeches to capture the immediate framing of Russian military action. The third subchapter synthesizes these findings, drawing comparative conclusions about the resonance of Dugin's geopolitical vision across different textual genres and across the evolving trajectory of Russian foreign policy from 2008 to 2022.

Throughout this chapter, the analysis remains attentive to the methodological considerations established during research design. The identification of Dugin-aligned codes in official documents is not presented as evidence of direct influence but as an indication of transference and of lexical resonance – a finding that illuminates the ideational environment within which Russian foreign policy is formulated and legitimized. The systematic coding framework ensures that the analysis is transparent, replicable, and grounded in the empirical material, providing a rigorous foundation for the conclusions that follow. In the final section of the chapter, the findings are brought together to address the overarching research questions, offering a comprehensive assessment of the relationship between Dugin's geopolitical thought and the official foreign policy of the Russian state across the period from 2008 to 2022.

4.1. The Prominence of Dugin's Geopolitical Codes in Russian Doctrines

This subchapter examines the presence and evolution of Dugin's geopolitical codes within the codified framework of Russian foreign policy, as articulated in the strategic doctrines published between 2008 and 2021. The analysis proceeds chronologically, tracing the salience of each code identified in the previous chapter across the document corpus.

Observations suggest a pattern of gradual convergence between Dugin's language and official publications, particularly following the 2014 annexation of Crimea. In the 2008 Foreign Policy Concept (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2008), for example, references to multipolarity appear, but remain framed within the conceptual space of international cooperation and UN-centered multilateralism – a register quite distant from Dugin's civilizational antagonism. By contrast, the 2016 Foreign Policy Concept (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2016) exhibits a markedly more assertive tone, with implied references to Russia as a distinct civilization and to the unacceptability of

unilateral action in international affairs, language that resonates more directly with Dugin's geopolitical codes of 'Multipolarity' and 'Civilizational State'.

This convergence is not, however, a matter of identical lexical choices. Where Dugin writes of a "Eurasian imperium" and a "civilizational war against Atlanticism," the official documents¹ speak of "deepening multilateral engagement" and "destruction (...) of traditional values." The underlying conceptual structures are homologous: both frameworks posit that the US-led unipolar moment is illegitimate and transient, both assert that Russia belongs to a distinct civilizational space that cannot be absorbed into Western norms, and both reject universalist claims of liberal internationalism. Yet the official language systematically strips away Dugin's overtly militaristic and imperial vocabulary, replacing it with the register of state sovereignty, cultural autonomy, and strategic stability. This substitution of lexical form while preserving conceptual content is the defining characteristic of transference in this case.

The transference of the 'Multipolarity' code deserves particular attention, as it appears across all strategic documents but with significant shifts in framing. The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2008) references multipolarity as a feature of the emerging international system, but within a lexical space that emphasizes "collective leadership" and the "central role of the UN" – a formulation that implies multipolarity as a cooperative framework among great powers. The 2013 Foreign Policy Concept (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2013) marks a qualitative shift: multipolarity is no longer described as an emergent property, but as a normative foundation, with Russia positioned as "one of the influential and competitive poles" actively shaping this order. By the 2016 Concept (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2016), multipolarity is presented as an established reality, with references to the "fundamental changes" in global power dynamics and the "eroding of (...) dominance by the traditional western economies." This evolution from prescriptive to descriptive framing is in concord with Dugin's own trajectory across his two works, despite the official documents lacking his distinct civilizational antagonism.

The convergence is further reinforced by parallel shifts in auxiliary concepts. Dugin's 'Land versus Sea Power' duality never appears explicitly in any strategic document. Yet the operational logic of that duality – the opposition between continental, territorial powers and

¹ Most prominently, the 2021 doctrine "On the strategy of national security of the Russian Federation" examines both lexical markers in consecutive clauses, with the placement indicative of their conceptual importance.

maritime, liberal hegemons – manifests repeatedly. The 2016 Foreign Policy Concept's (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2016) condemnation of "unilateral coercive measures" and "US policy of extraterritorial jurisdiction" targets precisely the thalassocratic instruments that Dugin identifies as Atlanticist weapons. The 2021 National Security Strategy's (Президент Российской Федерации 2021) emphasis on "territorial integrity" and the "countering of interference in the internal affairs of the Russian Federation" constructs a normative world where land-based sovereignty trumps maritime-based assertions of universal jurisdiction. The lexical code is absent, while the geopolitical code is present. This pattern of transferring the geopolitical without the lexical – adopting the conceptual architecture while discarding the terminology – may point one to a plausible filtering process within the Russian foreign policy apparatus, one that extracts strategic value from Dugin's ideas while insulating official language from his more radical formulations. While certainly speculative, this would be understandable given that the examined sources by Dugin have made it as approved textbooks into educational institutions that produce and are linked to contemporary Russian policymaking (Backman 2020, 292).

The 'Civilizational State' code clearly appears only in passing within examined documents, representing a significant gap for establishing transference. The 2016 Foreign Policy Concept (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2016) refers to Russia as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state that has a centuries-long track record of "harmonious coexistence", a formulation taken directly from earlier iterations. The 2021 National Security Strategy (Президент Российской Федерации 2021), however, deepens this language, framing Russian identity around "traditional spiritual-moral values" that are presented as civilizational markers distinguishing Russia from the West. While Dugin's articulation of this code carries maximalist territorial implications, the official documents employ it primarily as a defensive framing – asserting Russia's right to civilizational distinctness rather than claiming dominion over neighboring civilizations. Nevertheless, the emergence of this code in official publications suggests an opening for public recognition and discussion of a perception that Dugin had long advocated.

The defensive framing is itself a form of convergence, albeit an incomplete one. Dugin's 'Civilizational State' is an offensive weapon: it justifies expansion, irredentism, and the subordination of neighboring states. The official version is reactive: it asserts Russia's right not to be reshaped by external forces. Yet the boundary between defensive and offensive civilizational claims is porous. With a proclamation of civilizational distinctness, containing

values incommensurable with those of its neighbors, one could find justification in asking where that civilization's space ends, assuming an unavoidable subtext of expansionism. The 2021 National Security Strategy (Президент Российской Федерации 2021) does not answer that, but by framing Russian identity in civilizational terms, it opens the door to later claims that certain territories – including parts of Ukraine, Kazakhstan, or the Baltic states – belong to this civilizational space. This particular instance of transference is thus not static, but dynamic: the official adoption of civilizational language creates a potential that later events can actualize.

The treatment of the near abroad similarly shows evolution across the document corpus. Early strategic documents employ relatively neutral language regarding the former Soviet space, emphasizing economic integration and voluntary cooperation. Later documents, particularly the 2021 National Security Strategy (Президент Российской Федерации 2021), adopt more explicitly hierarchical language, framing the former Soviet space as a sphere of "vital interests" and designating external interference in the region as a direct threat to Russian security. This shift aligns with Dugin's code of 'Geopolitical Regionalization', yet it is notable that the official documents generally stop short of his more maximalist territorial claims.

The official documents' restraint relative to Dugin is not, however, a sign of divergence. Dugin's 'Geopolitical Regionalization' is a maximalist blueprint: it prescribes rather specific policies for each post-Soviet region, including the eventual absorption of Ukraine, Belarus, and northern Kazakhstan into a single Eurasian state. The official documents never endorse this blueprint. What they do endorse is the underlying principle – that the post-Soviet space is a single geopolitical unit whose fragmentation was an artificial and reversible process. The 2008–2013 documents treat the near abroad as a neighborhood, the 2016–2021 documents treat it as a sphere or belt², and the 2021 National Security Strategy (Президент Российской Федерации 2021) treats it as a security perimeter within which external actors have barely any legitimate role. This incremental shift from cooperation to hierarchy mirrors the internal logic of Dugin's regionalization, even if the endpoint remains unstated. The convergence is therefore teleological: the official documents move in the direction Dugin mapped, without necessarily reaching his destination.

The military doctrine documents reveal a parallel evolution in the identification of enemies and threats. The 2010 Military Doctrine (Президент Российской Федерации 2010) identified

² Expressed primarily through lexical markers of dynamic movement, such as in the 2016 „Foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation” where foreign military infrastructure is merely ‘approaching’ Russia.

NATO expansion as a "primary external threat" in relatively cautious language. The 2014 iteration, published in the immediate aftermath of the Crimean annexation, adopts more confrontational framing, explicitly naming the deployment of NATO infrastructure near Russian borders as an unacceptable development. This escalation in threat language resonates with Dugin's 'Atlanticism' code, though the official documents maintain a state-centered framing rather than adopting his civilizational language.

The resonance here is particularly clear. Dugin's 'Atlanticism' is a comprehensive enemy image that includes not only NATO and the United States, but also liberal democracy, global finance, secularism, and cultural cosmopolitanism. The military doctrines exclude all but the geostrategic dimension, with such exclusion being strategic rather than accidental. By narrowing the enemy to NATO's military infrastructure, the doctrines make the threat legible within a conventional security framework while implicitly endorsing the broader Duginian claim that the Atlantic powers are engaged in a systematic campaign to contain and weaken Russia. The 2014 Military Doctrine's (Президент Российской Федерации 2014) language of NATO expansion as a done deed – a view escalated since the 2010 version – carries a normative weight that goes beyond strategic calculation. It asserts that Russia has a right to veto NATO's postures near its borders, a claim that rests on a sphere-of-influence logic far closer to Dugin's Eurasianism than to traditional (Rynning 2015, 549-550) balance-of-power thinking.

Across all these codes, a consistent pattern emerges. The official documents seldom borrow Dugin's exact words, while largely preserving his conceptual grammar. Multipolarity shifts from emergent to normative, the near abroad shifts from cooperative space to hierarchical sphere, and Atlanticism shifts from a country-specific concern to a civilizational threat. Each shift moves the official language closer to the structural logic of Dugin's geopolitical discourse, while retaining a distinct vocabulary of state sovereignty, international law, and cultural tradition. This pattern of lexical divergence alongside conceptual convergence is the principal finding of the doctrinal analysis. It indicates that Dugin's influence, if it exists, operates not through direct textual borrowing but through the gradual normalization of his geopolitical categories within the allowable universe of official Russian foreign policy language. The 2014 annexation of Crimea serves as the critical juncture after which this normalization accelerates, but the trajectory is visible from 2008 onward.

By systematically coding these documents for the presence of Dugin-aligned codes, it has become possible to establish a baseline understanding of which elements of Dugin's

geopolitical vision have been incorporated into official state doctrine, at what points in time such incorporation occurred, and in what forms. This analysis provides the foundation for addressing the first research question and for contextualizing the event-specific language examined in the following subchapter.

4.2. The Geopolitical Language of the Russo-Georgian War and the War in Ukraine

This subchapter shifts the analytical focus from the codified strategic doctrines to the immediate justifications offered by Russian leadership at moments of kinetic action. The analysis examines speeches and public addresses delivered by Dmitry Medvedev and Vladimir Putin in connection with the three landmark events identified in this study: the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. These speeches serve as a crucial complementary source to the strategic documents, capturing the language employed to legitimize military action to domestic and international audiences at moments of acute crisis.

Analysis suggests significant variation in the prominence and framing of Dugin's codes across the three events.

4.2.1. 2008: The Challenging Perspective of Dmitry Medvedev

The 2008 speeches (Президент России 2008a; Президент России 2008b), delivered by Medvedev following the five-day war with Georgia, employ relatively conventional language of humanitarian intervention, peacekeeping obligations, and the protection of Russian citizens abroad. While these justifications resonate with Dugin's 'Near Abroad' code – the assertion of Russian responsibility for the former Soviet space – they lack the civilizational and anti-Atlanticist framing characteristic of his work.

This absence is not incidental, but rather constitutive of the broader political environment of 2008. At this juncture, the official Russian foreign policy apparatus had not yet fully absorbed the full breadth of the illiberal Geist that would characterize the post-2014 period. Medvedev, who had assumed the presidency in May 2008, was largely perceived domestically and internationally as a more moderate figure than his predecessor and successor, Vladimir Putin (Tsygankov 2017, 27). His personal choice of language within the broader geopolitical discourse reflects this positioning: it remains anchored in the vocabulary of international law, UN Security Council mandates, and the responsibility to protect. In his August 8, 2008 address announcing the intervention, Medvedev stated: “In accordance with international law, as

President of the Russian Federation, I am obliged to protect the lives and dignity of Russian citizens wherever they are” (Президент России 2008a). The framing is legalistic and individual-rights oriented – a register that would be almost entirely displaced by civilizational and historical grievance language in later speeches.

The resonance with Dugin’s ‘Near Abroad’ code is nevertheless unmistakable. Dugin (1997, 278-282) argues that the post-Soviet space is a single, albeit fragile, civilizational territory for which Russia bears ultimate responsibility, and that any attempt by external powers to establish influence there constitutes an intolerable intrusion. Medvedev’s claim to protect Russian citizens abroad operationalizes this logic without adopting its civilizational foundation. The transference is therefore present: the same territorial outcome – Russian military intervention to enforce dominance over the near abroad – is justified through different lexical means. Dugin speaks of civilizational destiny and historical mission, while Medvedev speaks of treaty obligations and humanitarian necessity. This divergence in lexical form, despite identical policy implications, is precisely the pattern that complicates a simple claim of direct influence.

The absence of anti-Atlanticist framing in the 2008 speeches is equally significant. Medvedev does not name the United States or NATO as adversaries in his justifications for the war with Georgia. He does not frame the conflict as a civilizational struggle against the West. The August 8, 2008 speech (Президент России 2008a) mentions NATO only in passing as a passive, non-reactive power in relation to Russia and its demands. Instead, he emphasizes Georgian aggression against South Ossetian peacekeepers and Russian citizens, a narrative that casts Russia as a proactive, law-abiding power rather than a revisionist challenger to the Atlanticist order. This judicial character of Russia’s use of force is most evident in the later August 26, 2008 statement (Президент России 2008b), where Medvedev refers to Russia as a member of the community of peacekeeping partners rather than a civilizational outlier and challenger of a rules-based order. This restraint suggests that in 2008, the public boundaries of legitimate Russian foreign policy language expressed in the institution of the President had not yet expanded to accommodate explicit anti-Atlanticism. The illiberal turn, while underway, had not yet reached the threshold at which civilizational enemy images could be deployed in official justifications for kinetic action.

The challenging nature of Medvedev’s perspective for this study is therefore twofold. First, his speeches provide a baseline of relative restraint against which the escalation in 2014 and 2022 can be measured. Without this baseline, the later more prominent adoption of Duginian codes

might appear as a sudden rupture rather than a gradual accumulation. Second, Medvedev's language demonstrates that the 'Near Abroad' code can be operationalized entirely without occluding a public address with Duginian civilizational or anti-Atlanticist elements. Russian responsibility for the post-Soviet space is asserted on humanitarian and legal grounds – grounds that are of marginal prominence in Dugin's work, if at all notable. This observation of seeming internal divergence within official language complicates a linear narrative of increasing transference of an expressly Duginian geopolitical discourse. It suggests instead a layered ecology in which Duginian codes exist within a more conventional internationalist language. The 2008 speeches capture a moment when the conventional register still dominated, with the later speeches made by Vladimir Putin capturing its gradual displacement.

4.2.2. 2014: The Annexation of Crimea as the Solidification of Putin's Geopolitical Discourse

The 2014 speeches marking the annexation of Crimea represent a significant shift in language. Putin's March 18, 2014 address (Президент России 2014) to the Federal Assembly deploys language that resonates directly with multiple codes identified in both examined Dugin's texts. Crimea is framed not merely as territory but as "sacred" space central to Russian civilization, echoing the code of 'Civilizational State'. The West is presented not merely as a geopolitical competitor but as a civilizational adversary seeking to "contain" Russia and "steal" its historical legacy, aligning with the 'Atlanticism' code. The justification for annexation is presented as a restoration of civilizational unity rather than an act of territorial expansion, a framing that mirrors Dugin's logic of 'Eurasia as Heartland'.

The March 18 address is not an isolated document, but rather the culmination of a discursive shift that had been building since Putin's return to the presidency in 2012. By the time Russian forces had secured Crimea in late February 2014, the official foreign policy apparatus had already signaled a more assertive posture, as evidenced by the documents examined earlier. The 2014 Military Doctrine (Президент Российской Федерации 2014), published in December of that year, highlights the shift in perception vis-à-vis NATO infrastructure deployment near Russian borders – a lexical escalation that the March speech provides insight for in civilizational and historical terms. To understand how the annexation solidified Putin's geopolitical discourse, connecting it to Dugin's, it is necessary to examine the three identified Duginian geopolitical codes as they appear in the 2014 speech and its accompanying political environment.

Putin's address deploys the 'Civilizational State' code with remarkable clarity. Crimea is described as a place where "Prince Vladimir was baptized" (Президент России 2014) – an explicit reference to the Christianization of Kyivan Rus', which Russian Orthodox tradition regards as the spiritual origin of the Russian state. This framing elevates Crimea from a piece of territory to a foundational element of Russian civilizational identity. Putin (Президент России 2014) states: "In the hearts [and] minds of people, Crimea has always been and shall remain an inalienable part of Russia.³" The term '(in)alienable' invokes notions of legality, while the call to 'hearts and minds' is unmistakably civilizational. By grounding the claim in pre-modern religious and cultural markers, Putin sidesteps the post-Soviet discourse of territorial integrity and instead invokes a deep-time continuity that Dugin had long championed.

The address further develops the civilizational code through the concept of "compatriots" (*соотечественники*). Putin argues that millions of Russians and Russian-speaking people live in Crimea and that their civilizational homeland is Russia, not Ukraine. This position directly mirrors Dugin's (1997, 115-116) claim that the division of the Russian people across post-Soviet borders is an artificial and reversible product of Bolshevik policy. The official speech stops short of Dugin's maximalist prescription – the annexation of all Ukrainian territory – but the principle is identical: civilizational identity overrides political boundaries.

What is new in the 2014 speech, compared to earlier official documents, is the absence of any competing internationalist framing. Where the 2008 Medvedev speeches had relatively balanced civilizational language with humanitarian and legal justifications, the March 18 address makes no such concession. Putin mentions the framework of the UN only briefly, and his references to international law are framed as defensive rebuttals of Western criticism rather than positive foundations of Russian action. The civilizational code thus stands alone as the primary legitimacy frame. This solidification means that the official state position is, according to Putin, one that no longer needs to apologize for or disguise its civilizational claims. Instead, they are presented as self-evident truths to both domestic and international audiences.

The 'Atlanticism' code receives an equally prominent articulation. Putin identifies the West as an actor that has consistently "tricked" Russia, expanded NATO, deployed missile defense systems, and supported "color revolutions" aimed at destabilizing post-Soviet states. His language moves beyond strategic competition into the realm of existential threat – a hallmark

³ *В сердце, в сознании людей Крым всегда был и остаётся неотъемлемой частью России.*

of Dugin's 'Atlanticism'. Dugin (2012, 323-338) argues that Atlanticism is not a policy, but rather a kind of civilizational project whose goal is the permanent subjugation of land-based civilizations. Putin's 2014 speech adopts this logic without the term: the West is presented as a unitary, hostile actor with a long-term plan to dismantle Russia.

The address specifically invokes the widely publicized 1990 NATO promise not to expand 'one inch to the east'— a claim that became central to Russian official discourse after 2014. While scholars debate the accuracy (Trachtenberg 2020, 164) of this promise, its deployment in the Crimea speech serves a clear geopolitical function: it casts Russia as a victim of Atlanticist duplicity, thereby justifying the annexation as a defensive act against a decades-long conspiracy. Dugin's work had made similar arguments since the 1990s, framing NATO expansion as the central mechanism of Atlanticist encirclement. The official adoption of this narrative in 2014 represents a significant convergence along with markers of arguable transference, albeit one that had also been foreshadowed by earlier strategic documents.

Notably, the 2014 speech introduces an element that is present in Dugin's work but not always emphasized: the economic dimension of Atlanticism. Putin accuses (Президент России 2014) the West of imposing sanctions and political pressure designed to weaken Russia. This framing aligns with Dugin's claim that thalassocratic powers use financial and commercial instruments to subdue land-based civilizations. However, where Dugin's Atlanticism is metaphysical – a struggle between two eternal civilizational principles – Putin's remains tied in its language to concrete historical grievances. This difference is consequential: the official code is more falsifiable and more dependent on Western actions for its continued relevance. The underlying structure of enmity in this case remains, however, identical. By solidifying the 'Atlanticism' code in official narrative, the 2014 annexation ensured that any future confrontation with the West would be interpreted not as a policy dispute but as a civilizational trial.

The 'Eurasia as Heartland' code forms the geographical substructure of the entire March 18 address. Putin's argument that Crimea "has always been (...) an inalienable part of Russia" (Президент России 2014) rests on a spatial imaginary in which the post-Soviet space is not a collection of sovereign states, but rather a single civilizational territory. This is difficult to disregard as anything but the Mackinderian Heartland transposed into official language. Dugin (1997, 25) presents the Heartland as the "geographical axis of history" and Russia as its natural sovereign. Putin's speech does not use Mackinder's or, by extension, even Dugin's reimagined

terminology, but it operationalizes the same logic: Russian sovereignty over the Heartland is presented as a law of history, not a matter of political choice.

Furthermore, the address pointedly entrenches the region's history to situate Crimea as a site of permanent Russian military and cultural triumph. Putin specifically notes that Crimea is home to “the graves of Russian soldiers, whose courage brought Crimea under the Russian state [*державу*] in 1783” (Президент России 2014). By celebrating the Tsarist annexation, he frames the 2014 event as the reclamation of a historical possession rather than an act of aggression. This is reinforced by his reference to Crimea as “Sevastopol, a city of legend, a city of great destiny, a fortress city and the birthplace of the Russian Black Sea military fleet” (Президент России 2014). In this interpretation, Crimea is intrinsic to Russian identity. The peninsula is described as a “symbol of Russian military glory and unparalleled valor” (Президент России 2014).

The solidification of the ‘Eurasia as Heartland’ code amidst the 2014 annexation also serves to delegitimize Ukrainian sovereignty. If Ukraine is to be seen as part of the same civilizational space as Russia, then Ukrainian independence is necessarily artificial. That is corroborated by Putin’s assertion that Ukraine’s borders were drawn by the Bolsheviks “without accounting for the national⁴ composition of the people.” (Президент России 2014) This argument mirrors Dugin’s (1997, 94-95) claim that the post-Soviet states are geopolitical “accidents” that exist only because Atlanticist powers prevented the natural consolidation of the Heartland. The official discourse stops short of calling for Ukraine’s dissolution, but the logic of delegitimization is fully activated. This activation would later provide the ideological foundation for the 2022 invasion.

Across these three examinations, a common mechanism of transference emerges. The 2014 annexation does not simply introduce Duginian codes into official discourse – it solidifies them as state leadership’s geopolitical discourse by stripping away the alternative frames that had previously moderated their deployment. The 2008 speeches made by Medvedev had relatively balanced civilizational claims with humanitarian and legal language. By 2014, Vladimir Putin had clearly sought to eliminate that balance, as the text has shown. To Putin, the West is no longer a competitor, but an enemy, with Crimea no longer a territory but a sacred space, and Russian sovereignty is no longer a matter of international recognition, but rather a civilizational entitlement. This solidification is what distinguishes the 2014 developments from earlier

⁴ *Национальный*, here meaning ‘ethnic’

published doctrines and speeches. It is a measurable qualitative shift – one that brings the official geopolitical discourse into much closer alignment with Dugin’s framework than any document before. The annexation of Crimea thus functions as the critical juncture at which the displayed boundaries of Russian foreign policy expand to accommodate the full structure of Duginian geopolitical reasoning, even as the lexical surface remains distinct.

4.2.3. 2022: The Apex of Convergence?

The 2022 speeches exhibit a seemingly complex relationship to the geopolitical discourse contained within Dugin’s text. The key texts subject to analysis in this section are the pre-invasion address of February 21, 2022 and the speech announcing the "special military operation" on February 24.

These speeches require careful parsing, as they exhibit both intensification of Duginian codes and the introduction of lexical elements from other sources. The pre-invasion address of February 21, 2022 and the speech announcing the "special military operation" on February 24 deploy extensive language of historical grievance, civilizational identity, and existential threat that resonates with multiple major codes. Putin traces (Президент России 2022a) Ukraine's "artificial" creation to Soviet-era decisions and frames the post-Soviet period as a ‘forced geopolitical divorce’ imposed by the West. This framing aligns with the code of ‘Atlanticism’ identified in Dugin’s works, which casts the collapse of the Soviet Union as a Western operation to dismember Russia's civilizational space. The February 24 address (Президент России 2022b) announcing the "special military operation" intensifies this register, with explicit references to "genocide" in Donbas, "neo-Nazi" ideology in Kyiv, and the unacceptability of NATO expansion into historically Russian space.

The 2022 speeches intensify the ‘Civilizational State’ code beyond even the 2014 articulation. Where Putin’s March 2014 address had presented Crimea as a sacred space within the Russian civilizational world, the February 2022 speeches explicitly extend this civilizational framing to Ukraine as a whole. In the February 21 address, Putin states that “modern Ukraine was entirely and completely created by [Bolshevik] Russia” (Президент России 2022a) – a claim that denies Ukraine any autonomous civilizational existence. This goes linguistically in a more radical direction than Dugin, who had acknowledged Ukrainian cultural distinctness while arguing for its geopolitical absorption into the Heartland. The official speech now asserts (Президент России 2022a) that Ukraine has no independent civilizational foundation whatsoever – it is presented as a political construction imposed by external forces represented

in the Bolsheviks, acting as agents of a then-hostile ideology, onto a population that shares a common Russian civilizational identity. This maximalist claim eliminates any middle ground between full sovereignty and complete denial of nationhood.

The ‘Eurasia as Heartland’ code likewise undergoes expansion. The February 21 address invokes the historical region of “Novorossiia” (New Russia) – a Tsarist-era administrative designation for parts of southern Ukraine that were conquered from the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century. By resurrecting this historical category, he implicitly claims (Президент России 2022a) that these territories are not ethnically or historically Ukrainian but rather part of Russia’s civilizational space. Dugin had made similar arguments that comprise the code of ‘Geopolitical Regionalization’ without explicitly pointing out any area of a former Soviet state. However, Dugin’s treatment remained within the register of strategic analysis, while Putin’s speech elevates it to the level of official state doctrine. The explicit naming of a specific portion of Ukrainian lands as Russian civilizational territory represents a qualitative escalation from the 2014 discourse, which had confined such claims to Crimea.

The ‘Atlanticism’ code in the 2022 speeches acquires a new temporal depth. Where the 2014 address had focused on post-Cold War NATO expansion and Western duplicity, the February 2022 speeches trace Atlanticist hostility back to the early twentieth century. Putin claims that the West has “always” (Президент России 2022a) sought to find a reason to attack and weaken Russia. This historical deepening aligns with Dugin’s framing of Atlanticism as an eternal civilizational adversary rather than a contingent policy posture. Dugin (1997, 250) argues that the thalassocratic powers have waged a continuous struggle against Russia for centuries in pursuit of a ‘mondialist’ structure of worldwide leadership. The official adoption of this long-view historiography in 2022 suggests that the Atlanticism code has become fully naturalized within the Kremlin’s discourse, no longer requiring specific recent grievances to justify its deployment.

A notable intensification in the 2022 speeches is the unmistakable prominence of ‘Strategic Imperativism’ – invoked through the language of necessity and inevitability – at a scale unseen in earlier documents. The 2022 speeches operationalize the ‘Strategic Imperativism’ code through the cumulative weight of a consistent conceptual framing: the presentation of events as an unavoidable outcome of Western aggression, leaving Russia with no acceptable alternative. This code, which captures Dugin’s logic of presenting expansionist policies as geopolitical obligations rather than political choices, is particularly built into the structure of

the February 24 address. Crucially, the speech's justification unfolds (Президент России 2022b) in a specific causal chain: Western threats are presented as an ongoing reality that Russia can no longer continue to simply observe. The decision to act is then framed not as a choice, but as a necessary and even regrettable consequence of a deteriorating situation that Russia did not create. This is most evident in the central framing of the Donbas, where it was necessary to immediately stop “the nightmare, the genocide” (Президент России 2022a) against the millions of people living there. By grounding the imperative in a humanitarian crisis, the language of strategic necessity is fused with a moral obligation, leaving no rhetorical space for inaction.

The ‘Strategic Imperativism’ code is further reinforced by the explicit claim that “the circumstances require decisive and immediate action from us” (Президент России 2022b). In this formulation, the subject of the action is not the Russian leadership making a sovereign decision, but rather the abstract, external force of “circumstances” (*обстоятельства*) that dictate the response. This linguistic move effectively naturalizes the subsequent military action, presenting it as an objective response to an external stimulus rather than a political choice made by the Kremlin. This aligns precisely with Dugin's rhetorical strategy, where expansionist policies are framed as deterministic necessities arising from the civilizational logic of the Heartland itself. The official language in 2022 adopts this deterministic register, systematically collapsing the distinction between a chosen policy and an unavoidable imperative. The cumulative effect is a closed loop: the West's actions are read as inherently threatening, and Russia's response is framed as the only possible reaction to that threat, a dynamic that reaches its clearest form in the 2022 speeches.

In terms of the sheer density and intensity of Duginian codes, the 2022 speeches certainly exceed both the 2008 and 2014 discourses. The civilizational denial of Ukrainian statehood, the “resurrection” of Novorossiia, the deep historical framing of Atlanticist enmity, and the pervasive language of strategic necessity all point toward an environment that has absorbed core elements of Dugin's geopolitical codes to an unprecedented degree. However, the 2022 speeches also introduce elements that lie outside Dugin's examined works – most notably the language of “denazification” and the emphasis on protecting Russian-speaking populations as an ethno-linguistic category. These elements complicate any simple narrative of linear convergence.

The introduction of the language of "denazification" and the protection of Russian-speaking populations in Putin's later speeches is something that, while consistent with elements of Dugin's worldview, appears to draw more directly from other currents of Russian political thought and public imagination (Saltan 2023, 20). The language of "denazification" invokes Soviet-era wartime narratives (Shevtsova 2022, 137) and aligns with contemporary Russian state media framings (Popovych et al. 2025, 239) that have limited resonance in Dugin's examined work. The emphasis on protecting "Russian-speaking populations" and "compatriots abroad" extends the 'Near Abroad' code, but grounds it in ethno-linguistic rather than purely civilizational categories.

It may be more accurate to say that by 2022, the official discourse has expanded to encompass Duginian codes as one component of a broader ideological repertoire and adopted familiar terms from surrounding doctrinal language as a mode of facilitating transference, rather than having been fully captured by them. This apex of convergence, therefore, is not a point of complete discursive shift, but a focal point of maximum overlap of codes within a still-diverse field of justificational language.

4.3. Discussion on Results

The findings presented in the preceding subchapters offer a nuanced picture of the relationship between Aleksandr Dugin's geopolitical codes and the official foreign policy language of the Russian Federation between 2008 and 2022. Rather than a simple narrative of direct influence or wholesale adoption, the results suggest a more complex pattern of selective resonance, temporal evolution, and lexical adaptation. This discussion interprets those findings in light of the theoretical framework the methodology applied, addressing each research question in turn before considering broader implications and limitations.

The first research question asked how Dugin's main geopolitical concepts are reflected in the operational documents of Russian foreign policy. The content analysis reveals that several of Dugin's codes – particularly 'Multipolarity', 'Atlanticism' (in the form of anti-NATO and anti-hegemonic language), and elements of 'Near Abroad' – appear consistently across the strategic doctrines, especially in the post-2014 documents. However, the form of this reflection is rarely one of direct lexical borrowing. Instead, official documents tend to employ a more restrained, state-centric register that aligns conceptually with Dugin's codes while avoiding his more deeply set radical civilizational and existential framings. For example, while the 2016 Foreign Policy Concept (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2016) explicitly

rejects "unipolarity" and asserts Russia's role as a "distinct civilization," it does so without Dugin's black-and-white land-sea duality or his explicit calls for territorial revisionism.

This pattern supports Kalinin's (2019) caution against assuming a direct pipeline from Dugin's writings to policy formulation. The transference observed is better understood as a convergence of textual environments, where a new medium requires an adaptation of academic geopolitical language into the framework of state bureaucracy and public leadership. Dugin and the Russian state elites appear to draw from shared intellectual currents – classical Eurasianism, Mackinderian geopolitics, Soviet-era great-power narratives – as well as responding to similar structural pressures, notably the enlargement of NATO and the perceived humiliation of the 1990s. The findings thus partially align with Lewis's (2018) characterization of Russian foreign policy as an "ongoing discursive project" shaped by multiple inputs, of which Dugin is one prominent but not necessarily determinative voice.

The second research question concerned the evolution of these codes across the three landmark kinetic events. The longitudinal analysis reveals a clear trajectory: the salience and assertiveness of Dugin-aligned language increased markedly from 2008 to 2014 to 2022. In the 2008 leadership speeches, geopolitical language remains relatively conventional, emphasizing humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping obligations – a register that still shows alignment with Dugin's codes, primarily through the framework of the 'Near Abroad' code. By 2014, however, Putin's Crimea speech deploys language that directly echoes Dugin's 'Civilizational State' and 'Atlanticism' codes, framing the annexation as a restoration of sacred Russian space against a hostile West. The 2022 speeches intensify this register further, though they also introduce elements – such as "denazification" – that draw from other currents of Russian political discourse.

This evolution suggests a reciprocal relationship between geopolitical text and geopolitical action. Rather than Dugin's ideas directly causing policy shifts, it appears that as Russia's foreign policy became more assertive, the acceptable space for Dugin-aligned language expanded. The 2014 annexation, in particular, seems to have acted as a watershed moment, after which civilizational and anti-Atlanticist framings moved from the margins of tolerated debate into the mainstream of official justification. This finding complicates simple causal claims while affirming the relevance of Dugin's thought as a barometer of the broader environment of textual production.

The persistence of Dugin's geopolitical codes across official documents and speeches, despite the absence of direct lexical borrowing, constitutes the central empirical contribution of this study. What the analysis reveals is a consistent conceptual architecture that remains stable even as its linguistic surface shifts. Dugin writes of tellurocracy versus thalassocracy, while official documents speak more readily of traditional values versus liberal hegemony. Where Dugin ultimately calls for a Eurasian empire, official strategy documents demand a multipolar world order with Russia as an independent centre of power. Dugin frames the West as a civilizational enemy, while in the 2014 and 2022 speeches we see the West described as a deceitful partner that has repeatedly tried to destroy Russia. These are not identical statements, but they occupy the same logical positions within a shared geopolitical discourse: an enemy is identified, a spatial ontology is asserted, a set of policy imperatives is derived, and a normative horizon is projected.

This pattern of lexical divergence alongside conceptual convergence is precisely what one would expect if Dugin's ideas have filtered into official discourse not through direct citation, but through a process of ideological normalization. Academic geopolitical language, particularly of the radical neo-Eurasianist variety, is seemingly not suitable for direct insertion into presidential addresses or strategic doctrines. Rather, it must be translated into a register that appears statesmanlike, legally grounded, and broadly palatable to domestic and international audiences. Dugin's 'Atlanticism' becomes the description of policies intended to contain Russia. His 'Civilizational State' presents as less broad and more centred on Russia itself, while his 'Geopolitical Regionalization' becomes a vision of the post-Soviet space as a sphere of vital interests. The underlying code remains intact, with noticeable adaptations in language.

The alternative explanation – that the observed convergences are coincidental, arising from shared structural pressures or common intellectual ancestors – cannot be dismissed entirely. However, the sheer density of parallel conceptual moves across multiple codes, combined with the timing of their emergence in official discourse (post-2014, and escalating thereafter), makes a purely coincidental reading increasingly difficult to sustain. What the evidence supports is a conclusion of *significant resonance*: Dugin's geopolitical codes and the official Russian foreign policy code have grown to share a common structure, even when their vocabularies differ. This is not influence in the narrow sense of one author dictating policy, but it is convergence in the broader sense of a shared imaginary taking hold across the Russian elite's textual production.

The findings also speak to the theoretical framework developed within this thesis. The adoption of a critical geopolitical perspective proves valuable for understanding how Dugin's codes operate in official texts. The official documents do not present their geopolitical claims as matters of interpretation but as objective descriptions of reality: NATO expansion threatens Russia, multipolarity is an emerging reality, and Crimea is historically Russian. This performative dimension aligns with Ó Tuathail and Agnew's (1992) observation that geopolitical reasoning abrogates genuine geographical knowledge in favor of simplified spatial narratives. Dugin's own writing employs the same rhetorical strategy, albeit in a more extreme form. The resonance between the two domains thus lies not only in specific codes but in a shared logic that naturalizes spatial claims and forecloses alternative interpretations.

The concept of the geopolitical code, as operationalized through the eight-step sequence, proves to be a robust analytical tool for tracing these patterns. The mapping of Dugin's nine codes onto the Flint et al. (2009) and Frąszczak et al. (2025) framework demonstrates how seemingly disparate concepts – spatial ontology, enemy identification, national myths, policy means – cohere into an overarching geopolitical imaginary. Applying the same framework to official documents reveals where the state's language aligns with, diverges from, or selectively appropriates elements of Dugin's vision.

The focus on textual resonance and transference cannot, however, establish causal influence. The findings do not prove that Dugin shaped Russian foreign policy, only that any two analyzed bodies of text share significant resemblances, albeit to the point of significant conceptual convergence. Moreover, the selection of Dugin's works, while justified, does not capture the full range of his output or the influence of other geopolitical intellectuals. Future research could extend this analysis to a broader corpus of Dugin's writings – including his numerous articles, interviews, and social media interventions – as well as to the work of other figures in the Russian geopolitical milieu. Comparative studies examining whether similar patterns of discursive resonance appear in other illiberal states – for example, between intellectual producers and official policy in Turkey or China – would also help contextualize the Russian case.

In sum, the results indicate that while Dugin is not "Putin's brain" in any direct sense, his geopolitical codes have become increasingly visible within the one represented through official Russian foreign policy over the period between 2008 and 2022. This resonance between geopolitical codes is most pronounced in the aftermath of the 2014 annexation of Crimea and

continues into the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, suggesting that as Russia's foreign policy has grown more assertive, the overall boundaries of acceptable geopolitical language have expanded to accommodate and incorporate concepts that Dugin long championed from the intellectual fringe.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis set out to move beyond the speculative claims that have long surrounded Aleksandr Dugin's role in Russian foreign policy. By systematically comparing the geopolitical codes present in Dugin's foundational works with the official publications of the Russian state between 2008 and 2022, the study has produced a nuanced picture that avoids the twin pitfalls of either dismissing Dugin as irrelevant or anointing him as "Putin's brain." The central finding is that Dugin's geopolitical codes have become increasingly *resonant* with official Russian foreign policy language over the period examined, yet this resonance operates through conceptual alignment rather than direct lexical borrowing. The official discourse has adopted the *structure* of Dugin's geopolitical imaginary – its spatial ontology, its enemy identification, its civilizational claims, its normative horizon of multipolarity – while systematically stripping away his most radical formulations and translating his vocabulary into a statesmanlike register of sovereignty, strategic necessity, and cultural tradition.

The first research question asked how Dugin's main geopolitical concepts are reflected in the operational documents of Russian foreign policy. The analysis demonstrates that codes such as 'Multipolarity', 'Atlanticism', and 'Near Abroad' appear consistently across the strategic doctrines, particularly after 2014. However, the reflection is rarely one of direct lexical borrowing. Instead, official documents employ a more restrained, state-centric register that aligns conceptually with Dugin's codes while avoiding his civilizational maximalism. This pattern of lexical divergence alongside conceptual convergence supports Kalinin's (2019) caution against assuming a direct pipeline from intellectual production to policy formulation. The observed transference is better understood as a process of discursive normalization, wherein radical geopolitical ideas are adapted to the requirements of state bureaucracy and public leadership.

The second research question concerned the evolution of these codes across the three landmark kinetic events. The longitudinal analysis reveals a clear trajectory: the salience and assertiveness of Dugin-aligned language increase markedly from 2008 to 2014 to 2022. The 2008 speeches, delivered by Medvedev, remain anchored in a conventional humanitarian and legal register, resonating primarily with the 'Near Abroad' code. The 2014 annexation of Crimea functions as a critical juncture: Putin's March 18 address deploys the 'Civilizational State', 'Atlanticism', and 'Eurasia as Heartland' codes with noticeable clarity, stripping away the competing internationalist framings that had moderated earlier discourse. The 2022

speeches intensify this register further, extending civilizational claims to Ukraine as a whole and resurrecting historical categories such as Novorossiia. The diversification of discursive sources in 2022 – including the language of “denazification” – suggests that by this point, Duginian codes had become one, albeit the most prominent, component of a broader ideological repertoire rather than the exclusive framework.

These findings carry theoretical and methodological implications. The adoption of a critical geopolitical perspective, which treats geopolitics as a discursive practice that naturalizes spatial claims, proves essential for understanding how Dugin’s codes operate in official texts. Both Dugin and the Russian state employ the same rhetorical strategy of presenting geopolitical claims as objective descriptions of reality rather than as contingent interpretations. The concept of the geopolitical code, operationalized through the eight-step sequence derived from Flint et al. (2009) and Frąszczak et al. (2025), demonstrates its robustness as an analytical tool for tracing such patterns across different textual genres and time periods.

The study is not without limitations. It establishes textual transference, not causal influence. It does not access the internal policymaking processes of the Kremlin, nor does it capture the full range of Dugin’s output or the influence of other geopolitical intellectuals. Future research could extend this analysis to a broader corpus of Dugin’s writings, to other figures in the Russian geopolitical milieu, or to comparative cases in other illiberal states.

In conclusion, while Aleksandr Dugin is not the puppet master or “the brain” of Russian foreign policy, his geopolitical codes have become increasingly visible within the official language of the Russian state over the period 2008–2022. The boundaries of acceptable geopolitical language have expanded to accommodate concepts that Dugin has circulated merely within his circle of intellectual influence. This resonance is most pronounced in the aftermath of the 2014 annexation of Crimea and continues into the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The thesis thus contributes a rigorous, evidence-based assessment to a field often characterized by sensationalism and speculation, offering a model for studying the relationship between ideas and foreign policy in contemporary authoritarian contexts.

KOKKUVÕTE

Andrei Pankratov

“Kuidas on Aleksandr Dugini kirjutised olulised? Tema geopoliitiliste koodide prominentsus Venemaa välispoliitikas aastatel 2008–2022”

Käesolev magistritöö uurib seost Aleksandr Dugini geopoliitiliste kirjutiste ja Venemaa Föderatsiooni ametlike välispoliitiliste publikatsioonide vahel aastatel 2008–2022. Kuigi meedias nimetatakse Duginit sageli “Putini ajuks”, puudub sellistel käsitlustel sageli süstemaatiline tõendusbaas. Töö eesmärk on liikuda edasi oletustest ja pakkuda post-positivistlikku perspektiivi läbi kvalitatiivse analüüsi. Uurimismeetodina kasutatakse kvalitatiivset sisuanalüüsi, milles tuletatakse Dugini kahest põhiteosest (“Geopoliitika alused” ja “Venemaa geopoliitika”) üheksa geopoliitilist koodi, millest moodustub ühtne diskursus. Antud koodi võrreldakse seejärel ametlike strateegiadokumentide (välispoliitika kontseptsioonid, julgeolekustrateegiad, sõjalised doktriinid) ning kolme kriisi – 2008. aasta Vene-Gruusia sõda, 2014. aasta Krimmi annekteerimine ja 2022. aasta täiemahuline sissetung Ukrainasse – ajal peetud Venemaa presidentide kõnedega.

Tulemused näitavad, et Dugini geopoliitiliste koodide ja ametliku keele vahel puudub otsene sõnasõnaline laenamine, küll aga ilmneb märkimisväärne kontseptuaalne ühtekuuluvus. Koodid nagu „*multipolaarsus*“, „*atlantism*“ ja „*tsivilisatsiooniline riik*“ muutuvad ametlikes tekstides eriti pärast 2014. aastat järjest enam prominentseks, kuid need on kohandatud tagasihoidlikumasse ja riigikesksesse registrisse. Ajalises perspektiivis on Dugini-laadse keelekasutuse esilekerkimine selges kasvutrendis: 2008. aasta kõnedes domineerib veel humanitaarne ja juriidiline keel, 2014. aasta kõned toovad sisse tsivilisatsioonilise ja atlantismivastase raamistiku, ning 2022. aasta kõned intensiivistavad seda veelgi.

Järeldusena võib öelda, et kuigi Duginit ei saa antud analüüsi põhjal pidada otseseks poliitikakujundajaks, on tema geopoliitilised koodid Venemaa ametlikus välispoliitilises korpuses muutunud üha nähtavamaks – eriti alates Krimmi annekteerimisest. See peegeldab aktsepteeritava geopoliitilise keele piiride laienemist samaaegselt Venemaa välispoliitilise järjekindluse kasvuga. Töö panustab senisesse teaduskirjandusse süstemaatilise meetodiga, mis võimaldab eristada ideede ja tegeliku poliitika mõjusuunda, ning annab aluse edasisteks võrdlevateks uuringuteks teiste illiberaalsete riikide välispoliitika kohta.

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