

## **World Order Transformation – Is the Future in Eurasia’s Hands?\***

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*Bruno Maçães:*

*The Dawn of Eurasia – On the Trail of the New World Order*

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In his book, Portuguese politician and political scientist Bruno Maçães expresses his view that the coming decade will not be ruled by a specific continent, but will instead see the advent of Eurasia. He draws attention to the fact that Eurasia is in itself a complex world where very different political regimes coexist. He argues that this super-continent may play the role of a balancing power in the near future. After the Second World War, European countries had to face the fact that they had lost their leading role in the world and the United States rose to become the major power. In his view, a similar transfer of power is in progress today, resulting in the rise of China. A possible consequence of this shift is that Eurasia’s role will increase since China sees the envisaged global order in the Eurasian concept. An important evidence of this idea is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This emerging “Chinese” worldview proves that China (and according to the author, also Russia) already live in the Eurasian era. And so the book points out that it would make sense to consider Europe and Asia as one continent and think from now on in terms of a uniform Eurasia.

In the first part of his book, Maçães examines the roots of separation between Europe and Asia. He also explores the possibilities that could end this fragmentation and expresses his view about the possible role of the new super-continent which is being built on the ruins of the past world order. The border between Europe and Asia was always uncertain and illusory. The author makes use of Voltaire’s ideas to point out that it is difficult to tell where Europe ends and Asia begins when arriving at the Sea of Azov. Continuing this line of thought, the author argues that the separation between the two regions is not so much spatial but rather temporal owing to the fact that Europe had quite a head start during the era of

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\* The papers in this issue contain the views of the authors which are not necessarily the same as the official views of the Magyar Nemzeti Bank.

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the Industrial Revolution in terms of modernisation and development. But today it seems that it is not impossible to make up for this disadvantage. What is even more interesting is that these developing societies seem to be choosing their own way of modernisation. The real difference between Europe and Asia is that Europe followed the road of modernisation while Asia kept itself to the traditional ways. Nowadays, however, these differences seem to be fading away thanks to the rapid spreading of modernisation outside of Europe. In agreement with Francis Fukuyama, the author points out that nowadays countries around the world are following different paths towards the development of modern society and even their vision about such a modern society is quite different.

The author argues that when Russia and China developed their joint megaproject – the One Belt One Road initiative – one of their main intentions was to prove to the European Union that the European integration ambition is not sufficient. Namely, while Europe follows an exercise of power based on the ecclesial model, Russia and China more or less believe in universality. The Eurasian supercontinent jointly envisaged by Russia and China would have three determining players: one in the West, one in the East and one in the centre. But the three central players cannot be construed without one another and their position relative to one another is also continuously changing. In the current case, for example, Moscow is politically closer to Beijing than to Berlin. These developments clearly benefit China as China may gain access to Russian raw materials and is able to represent a greater political power in Central Asia and even in Russia. According to the author the turning point for China to become a leading power is the ultimate resolution of the Russian issue. But he argues that the Eurasian integration means something different for China, Russia and the European Union. From the perspective of the European Union, the author considers the Eurasian concept as a possible solution because small European states which are currently unable to cooperate will have an incentive to reinforce their integration as they acknowledge that they will not be able to compete with countries such as China or India on their own.

In the second part of the book, the author paints a geopolitical picture of Eurasia through his own overland journey. During his trip he visited several less known countries and cities and talked to locals. With the help of this accumulated knowledge, through the eyes of the locals the author attempts to present the given regions and underpin the view that in the future the emergence of the Eurasian supercontinent may override the current positions of power. The author devoted separate chapters to China and Russia, which according to Maçães may provide the political and economic foundation of the supercontinent.

The first stop of the author was Azerbaijan where, according to the insight of a local architect, Baku is the only true Eurasian city on the world map, not only geopolitically but also in terms of architecture. European and Asian architectural

styles are mixed which influenced and still influences the city's culture and social life. In his view Europe and Asia represent a real paradox: two separate worlds on one joint continent. But East and West have to meet somewhere; the only question is where to find this connection point. The next stop was a Western province of China, the autonomous region of Xinjiang inhabited by the Uighur people. Despite all of its internal political problems, this province plays a huge role in the implementation of the One Belt One Road project. The next chapter takes us to China where we can read about the realisation of the Chinese dream. The author sees the key to Chinese success mainly in that the country has already reached such a developed level of Internet usage where the digital and the physical worlds are almost completely connected. This, however, also raises the question whether China will be able to catch up with the Western world and if the answer is yes, whether it will stop there when it reaches the Western level, or whether it will surpass it through new developments and exert strong influence on the Chinese society, on China's politics and practically even on all of humanity.

Maçães then guides us to the Big Ussuri Island presenting the island's current situation and then takes us to Russia where he discusses the issue of Russian identity. After visiting various parts and cities of the country, he reaches the conclusion in the light of historical and cultural differences that Russia cannot be considered as a European country. He argues that because Russia was always positioned between Europe and Asia, it is no wonder that it is so interested in the Eurasian concept. Next, he presents the "Eurasian tunnel", that is, Turkey. First, he describes some historical aspects and then covers the country's current situation. The foreign policy of Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan is covered extensively as well as Turkey's relationship with NATO and Russia. He closes this chapter with the description of the Syrian and Afghan situation.

He then takes us to Europe. The author considers Europe's prospects within the Eurasian concept as critical. In his view, Europe still considers itself as one of the most developed continents of modern times. But when comparing it with the rest of the world (mainly with Asia) all he sees is underdevelopment. Maçães believes that we are witnessing great transformation in today's Europe which he mainly attributes to external changes. In his opinion, EU countries must certainly also be aware of these changes. Over the past decades, the European Union did not really care about the underdeveloped world outside of Europe. But today the winds of change come as a huge shock for Europe and for the time being the current European system is unable to give an appropriate response to these recent developments. This system – that has worked automatically and smoothly so far – has been suddenly overturned and Europe is desperately trying to find a solution. Not so much a political one, but rather one of an "engineering" aspect to make it functional once again. But the question is will this be the appropriate solution in the long run?

In the opinion of the author, the solution lies in that Europe should also bear in mind the Eurasian concept. His first argument is the two superpowers, Russia and China. Maçães lists some foreign policy facts as an additional argument, such as the issues surrounding Ukraine, energy and trade and the refugee crisis. In his view, the refugee crisis cannot be handled successfully without the coordinated efforts of Europe and Asia. His third argument consists of the significant security threats that should be construed and managed within a Eurasian context. The author believes that Europe, as one of the Eurasian powers, should put its complex of superiority aside and learn how to pursue its interests towards the East. He argues that to be Eurasian as a European means that when choosing the common European strategy and direction, not only Europe but eastern regions should also be considered. His last compelling argument as to why Europe would be better off with a Eurasian union is that this would enable Europe to overcome the centrifugal forces currently observable within Europe and to preserve European unity.

The author starts the epilogue with the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States and the impact thereof on international relations. He then analyses the current situation of the Muslim world and China and the difficulties they may face in the future. According to the author, these difficulties mainly reside in that these societies chose a new direction of civilisation on the road leading to modernisation. He finally analyses some future challenges facing America and Europe deriving firstly from their democratic systems. In his view, changes within the international balance of power have a much faster and deeper spill-over effect into these countries. The author identifies the second main challenge to be the emerging new global order. In his view there will be no specific centres in the new global order, instead the balance will be created among the poles. Brexit is yet another proof in the eyes of the author that our current global order is going through momentous shifts. Maçães concludes that a new superpower is emerging and the global power is unstoppably shifting towards Asia. The question is how Europe reacts to these developments.