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Russia's Interventions: Counterrevolutionary Power

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ABSTRACT

The key point is about Russia, old and new, being a counterrevolutionary power: Russia's post-Napoleonic War and moreover post-1848 policy was counterrevolutionary abroad and conservative, even when reformist, at home, as is Russia's current post-Soviet, post-Cold War policy. However, while the current foreign policy end is Russian, the instruments of intervention, e.g. in Syria, are Soviet. The main difference as compared to both, Tsarist Russian and Soviet, is Russia's lack of a universalistic ideological justification now, notwithstanding all the attempts to revive the ideology of the Russian cultural and civilizational exceptionalism to suppress liberal changes at home, and for that reason also abroad.

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‘История России есть история страны, которая колонизируется. Область колонизации в ней расширялась вместе с государственной её территорией.’

V. O. Klyuchevsky¹

¹ ‘The history of Russia is the history of a country which is being colonised. The area of colonisation expands together with the state’s territory.’ В. О. Ключевский, Курс русской истории I, Moscow, 1987 (1904).

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
On the outside looking in	1
Containment	3
The discovery of history	4
An aside: two ahistorical nations	4
Soviet globalism: history ends	6
Similar but different instruments	7
Spain and Poland	9
The question why	10
Exceptionalism.....	11
Nations and the European order.....	12
An aside: Načertanije.....	13
Markets and territories	14
New Russia.....	15
Industrialisation and the state	16
Power politics.....	17
The counterrevolutionary power	18
Meaningless East–West swings	19
A Siberian perspective.....	20
Conclusion	21

INTRODUCTION

How to think about the Russian intervention in Syria? The immediate interest is well understood: it is to hold on to the presence in that region of the world for clear security and economic reasons. But that is a means to an end, so what is the end? Some look to the past to detect the specifically Russian idea of its role in the world to make sense of its leadership's current actions in Ukraine and Syria and to gauge their strategic ends. The idea is something like Richard Pipes' claim that Russia is Russia is Russia,² politically and ideologically, even if it is the Soviet Union, which is not really the case. In this essay, mostly Russian foreign policy will be discussed, though the country's power politics has been mainly driven by domestic policy concerns, i.e. by concerns with internal stability and security.

ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

Tsarist Russian political thought was very much shaped by the encounter with Europe, with political and economic modernisation, in particular after the war with Napoleon and the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 – and also with the cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment and with the romanticism and nationalism of the counter-Enlightenment, in Isaiah Berlin's characterisation,³ both of which were seen as threatening to Russia, for good or for bad, the former to its civilisation, the latter to its Empire.

That is true of the liberal thought, which was mostly developed in exile, of Tolstoy's, that stands somewhat apart, of the populists and socialists, who lost out to the Leninists, and also of the conservative intellectuals, who influenced the state's official domestic and foreign policy the most. Though, it is important to note that almost every one of these diverse intellectual and ideological commitments, be they revolutionary or counterrevolutionary, but almost always radical, were critical of Russian institutions and policies, of the appalling system of serfdom and the police state, on the one hand, and of the creeping liberalisation and disruptive influence of Europe, on the other hand; which is what is so distinct about Russian *intelligentsia*, at least before Stalin's annihilating assault on it in the 1930s.

The predominant sense that came with this encounter was that of Russia's backwardness with two approaches to adaptation: the European even revolutionary one and the alternative that stressed Russia's uniqueness. Clearly, the latter was closer to the official foreign policy, though the former informed the policies of reform when those were followed. The politics of the two provide for the understanding of much of the ideological and policy dynamics in that country.

If one goes back to Danilevsky, Dostoevsky, and in particular to Berdyaev, who were more reflective, though critically, of the Russian official policy, there are, to schematise, three important points they tended to make:

- › one is about the Eurasian character of the state: in terms of geography primarily, but also as a civilisation (Danilevsky);⁴

² See e.g. R. Pipes, *Russian Revolution*, Vintage Books, 1990.

³ I. Berlin, 'The Counter-Enlightenment' in: *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays*, Random House, 1998.

⁴ Н. Я. Данилевский, *Россия и Европа*, 1895. <http://vehi.net/danilevsky/rossiya/index.html>.

- › the second is about the need to defeat the Ottoman Empire and take over or have control over Istanbul (the Tsar's City, Tsargrad; Dostoevsky and implicitly the official though cautious policy);⁵ and
- › the third is to draw the ideological, and cultural, distinction with Europe (the West; possibly best expressed or rather interpreted by Berdyaev).⁶

This distinction with Europe, primarily justified by religious differences, was aggravated by the fact that these were in fact two (or three) conflicting universalistic interpretations (comprehensive world views in Rawls' terminology) of the same fundamental set of Christian beliefs and thus were seen as irreconcilable (if the one is True, the other is a Heresy). So, the ideology was universalistic, one true belief, but not inclusive, rather it was distinctive: Europe could not be converted to Orthodoxy, which however was seen as central to the Russian identity.

All three points pertain to the political difference in the way basic public values (or goods, e.g. security, justice, welfare) are to be supplied (e.g. capitalism versus collectivism when it comes to welfare). So they addressed the legitimacy of the state and the government (the issue of justice in constitutional democracy versus absolute autocracy; the rule of law versus the benevolent despot), but it was the security, the territorial concern that was the dominant one; the differences with Europe about the care for common welfare and for the provision of justice being also fundamental, but not in the forefront of international strategy and politics.

These security concerns were highlighted by the war with Napoleon and the subsequent European territorial expansion, but were felt as constant and are clear to see as soon as the geographical, however changing, position of Russia is considered, which is where the Eurasian point comes in. Unlike most European powers then and the United States all along, or practically any other bigger power, Russia has had continental borders with or has been in the proximity of all the global and regional powers, which in the past were also primarily European, albeit colonial, powers, but also the Ottoman Empire, Iran (Persia), Japan, and of course China, and since independence India. However, it is somewhat geographically peripheral to them all – it is as if it is forever staying outside looking in.

So, it seemed to many, however they tended to justify the strategy they advocated, that the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the control, even if indirect, of Istanbul would be strategically crucial, geopolitically, in the sense of changing the geographical position to achieve political ends, and that post-Napoleonic Europe, the Concert of Europe, to which Russia was quite committed, was not entirely, or not at all, e.g. in the Crimean War, helpful to that endeavour. But, clearly, by the fact of geography, Russia gets involved, now as well as in the past, in all major security crises in practically the whole world as soon as those erupt (there are just few peripheral regions). Of course, given the plurality of the potential security concerns, in Europe and in Asia, there is a need to ensure some balance of powers at least in part by the strategy of shifting coalitions. Fighting wars in two or three theatres at the same time is clearly too risky and almost altogether infeasible.

So, security concerns were at the core of the two of the three key characteristics of Tsarist Russian foreign policy. The emphasis on the cultural or civilizational specificity of Russia also points to the crucial importance of internal security, or rather of the political stability of this vast, but autocratic, country (the point very much emphasised by Klyuchevsky in his enduringly influential *History of Russia*).

⁵ In his *Writer's Diary*. See details in A. Yarmolinsky, *Dostoevsky. A Study in his Ideology*, New York, 1921.

⁶ N. Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, Macmillan, 1984 (1946).

CONTAINMENT

It is in the first instance the geography that contains, not just the policy of containment whenever it has been relied on, or – to put it the other way around – the latter when practised relied on the former. George Kennan in his famous Long Telegram from 1947 made quite clear this connection between geography, internal stability and external security, and containment.

'At bottom of Kremlin's neurotic view of world affairs is traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity. Originally, this was insecurity of a peaceful agricultural people trying to live on vast exposed plain in neighbourhood of fierce nomadic peoples. To this was added, as Russia came into contact with economically advanced West, fear of more competent, more powerful, more highly organized societies in that area. But this latter type of insecurity was one which afflicted rather Russian rulers than Russian people; for Russian rulers have invariably sensed that their rule was relatively archaic in form, fragile and artificial in its psychological foundation, unable to stand comparison or contact with political systems of Western countries. For this reason they have always feared foreign penetration, feared direct contact between Western world and their own, feared what would happen if Russians learned truth about world without or if foreigners learned truth about world within. And they have learned to seek security only in patient but deadly struggle for total destruction of rival power, never in compacts and compromises with it.'

He then brings in the ideological justification needed for security and stability purposes. He looks at the role of Marxism, much misunderstood at the time of his writing, but connects it with the history of rationalisations, which were used to connect internal stability with external security in the context of changing power politics and shifting balances.

*'Only in this land which had never known a friendly neighbour or indeed any tolerant equilibrium of separate powers, either internal or international, could a doctrine thrive which viewed economic conflicts of society as insoluble by peaceful means ... Marxist dogma ... became a perfect vehicle for sense of insecurity with which Bolsheviks, even more than previous Russian rulers, were afflicted ... Without it they would stand before history, at best, as only the last of that long succession of cruel and wasteful Russian rulers who have relentlessly forced country on to ever new heights of military power in order to guarantee external security of their internally weak regimes ... Thus Soviet leaders... [see] outside world as evil, hostile and menacing, but as bearing within itself germs of creeping disease and destined to be wracked with growing internal convulsions until it is given final coup de grace by rising power of socialism and yields to new and better world. This thesis provides justification for that increase of military and police power of Russian state, for that isolation of Russian population from outside world, and for that fluid and constant pressure to extend limits of Russian police power which are together the natural and instinctive urges of Russian rulers. Basically this is only the steady advance of uneasy Russian nationalism, a centuries old movement in which conceptions of offense and defence are inextricably confused.'*⁷

⁷ The Long Telegram, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/6-6.pdf. Compare also The Sources of Soviet Conduct, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/authors/x-george-f-kennan>.

Much of what I say in this essay is an elaboration of these points by Kennan. Understandably, he could not make the distinction between Russian and Soviet means and ends, which has only now become quite clear, but he identifies the underlying structural characteristics of internal and external policies comprehensively and quite precisely.

THE DISCOVERY OF HISTORY

Foreign policy in Russia, as well as in any large country, is primarily an instrument of internal policy concerns, as Lenin was to point out. In that, the cultural and civilizational justifications (religious and ideological), i.e. the third key element of the overall policy set-up – e.g. Eurasian Civilisation, Slavic Community, European Heresy – were ways to make universalistic ideological pretensions – ‘Russia’s calling is to save the world (spiritually and politically)’, to be ‘the new Rome’ – consistent with security concerns, anti-modernising domestic ones as well as the proper international ones. In particular, they provided for a counterrevolutionary response to the modernising challenges emanating from Europe, especially after the French Revolution and the universalistic values it spread. It was a way to connect political ends with policy means, to justify means by the ends. In a way, Tsarist Russia needed to reconsider its ends and adjust the means in the face of the challenges of modernisation via an ideological, universalistic, but competitive justification (not one superior world encompassing ideology) with which it could understand its place in the increasingly interconnected and globalised world.

Berdyayev details this discovery of history and the search for Russia’s place in it with reference to Europe almost exclusively. There is no encounter with Asian influences of any significance, so that the idea of the Eurasian civilisation is indeed that what Klyuchevsky characterised as colonisation: the twinning of the Russian World formulated in competition with the European one with eastward and westward expansions. Berdyayev’s account is fascinating as intellectual history,⁸ but the official policy response to the European challenges was mostly hesitant as security concerns did not tend to abate, quite to the contrary. However, this search for the distinctive Russian place in history is what gave rise to the counter-revolutionary ideology of Russia’s special civilizational and cultural calling, to the apartness of its place in Europe and in the world.

AN ASIDE: TWO AHISTORICAL NATIONS

Max Weber (in 1905-1906) and Alexis de Tocqueville (in 1835) thought that Russia had a similar advantage to America’s: no history to be bound by. Weber argued thus:

‘(W)hat is truly ‘historical’ in Russia today? With the exception of the church and the system of communal land tenure among the peasants, ..., absolutely nothing, apart from the absolute power of the Tsar, a relic from the time of the Tartars which hangs in mid-air in quite unhistorical ‘freedom’, now that all those ‘organic’ institutions have crumbled away which gave Russia its characteristic stamp in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.’⁹

⁸ A complementary survey, but looking primarily at Russian liberal intellectuals, is to be found in many writings by Isaiah Berlin of which certainly the most interesting is *Russian Thinkers*, Viking Press, 1978.

⁹ M. Weber, ‘On the Situation of Constitutional Democracy in Russia’ in *Weber: Political Writings*, ed. by P. Lassman and R. Speirs, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 36.

The Tsar and the communist, communal attitude towards the ownership of land were standing in the way of the social and political advancement, while capitalist development Weber thought could be similar to the American oligarchic one. He dreaded the consequences of a successful Russia for the power politics in Europe, but that he saw as an additional motivation for Russia's speed-up of its economic development.

De Tocqueville for his part saw Russia and America eventually dominating the world, again due to the fact that they were not burdened with the historical baggage that sapped the development and the expansion of the European nations. Famously he argued that:

'Today there are two great peoples on earth who, starting from different points, seem to advance toward the same goal: these are the Russians and the Anglo-Americans'.

Both grew up in obscurity; and while the attention of men was occupied elsewhere, they suddenly took their place in the first rank of nations, and the world learned of their birth and their greatness nearly at the same time.

All other people seem to have almost reached the limits drawn by nature, and have nothing more to do except maintain themselves; but these two are growing. All the others have stopped or move ahead only with a thousand efforts; these two alone walk with an easy and rapid stride along a path whose limit cannot yet be seen.

The American struggles against obstacles that nature opposes to him; the Russian is grappling with men. The one combats the wilderness and barbarism; the other, civilization clothed in all its arms. Consequently the conquests of the American are made with the farmer's plow, those of the Russian with the soldier's sword.

To reach his goal the first relies on personal interest, and, without directing them, allows the strength and reason of individuals to operate.

The second in a way concentrates all the power of society in one man.

The one has as principal means of action liberty; the other, servitude.

Their point of departure is different, their paths are varied; nonetheless, each one of them seems called by a secret design of Providence to hold in its hands one day the destinies of half the world.¹⁰

Both failed to see the effort that the Russian public was exerting to discover its own separate historical calling (Tocqueville wrote too early and Weber too late). That, the calling, was indeed not what the American public spent much time contemplating. Weber was aware of the lack of individualism in Russia while that was the structural characteristic of the American way of life, but did not consider that as a fatal Russian deficiency because he was convinced, as was Tocqueville, that individualism was the consequence of specific American circumstances that could not be replicated in e.g. Russian

¹⁰ A. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (any edition); from the conclusions at the end of volume 1.

circumstances. He also did not see the oligarchic system as a major obstacle to development as he had put much more emphasis on the obstacles to legitimacy that the absolutist system imposed. Eventually, after visiting America, Weber did see the legitimising power of democracy, which informed his later work on the German constitution and his sharp criticisms of the socialist failure to provide not only economic efficiency but also political legitimacy.

Tocqueville for his part thought that the European, i.e. French obstacle to adopting democracy and fast development was the legacy of the *ancien régime*, the burden of history as it were, which did not weigh on either America or Russia. The latter however has been repeatedly engaged in reinventing itself after the French Revolution and again after the end of the Cold War.

SOVIET GLOBALISM: HISTORY ENDS

The ideological ways of ensuring consistency of ends and means highlight the major difference between the policies of Russia and the Soviet Union. The pre-Soviet Russian strategy was not global in the way for instance those of the other European imperialistic powers were, in part because of the poor access to the oceans and seas, and due to the problems with internal stability, but also because of the claim to civilizational uniqueness developed through the encounter with Europe.

The globalisation of values and claims to power came with the Soviet Union, which justified its aims with the adoption of a secular universalistic, revolutionary, and historically superior ideology borrowed from the West. The winning Bolsheviks radicalised the revolutionary assumption of many intellectuals that nothing can be done in Russia without a revolution and that the post-revolutionary order cannot be sustained in Russia if the revolution is not global. Reforms cannot succeed because they will either be sustaining the abhorring political system or will be abandoned by that same political system. However, the revolutionary order in Russia alone will be suffocated by the inhospitable global system which is why global revolution promising the end of e.g. history of class struggles, promising world communism is needed.

Berdyaev argued that communism (and Russian socialism) was very much in concert with the early Christian thought, and thus with Orthodoxy, and found in that at least part of the reason for its early popularity among the Russians.¹¹ But, though that may be true in some ethical sense, it confuses the communist, non-statist, ethical and political vision with the Soviet ideological commitment to the totalitarian state and world revolution. Solzhenitsyn, perhaps the key figure in the movement to revive the uniqueness of the Russian anti-Western civilisation today, of course thought that this universalistic ideology, the Leninist one in any case, was a German export, also financed by the exporter.¹²

¹¹ N. Berdyaev, *The Origin of Russian Communism*, The University of Michigan Press, 1937.

¹² A. Solzhenitsyn, *Lenin in Zürich*, Follet, 1976.

In any case, out of the three main strategic Russian points, Soviet ones emerged, primarily after World War II, but differed in the following ways:

- › one was to see the Soviet Union as a global, not just Eurasian, power;
- › another was to substitute the Mediterranean, Europe, and indeed the world for Istanbul, in part by being the dominant conventional military power in Europe and a nuclear super power; and
- › the third was to rely on a historically superior, and not just different, unique, universalistic ideology – Marxism or rather Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism – the one that ends history.

So, primarily security concerns were transformed, mostly after World War II, into an aggressive strategy justified not by a separate, i.e. Russian Orthodox, but by a superior secular universalistic, but illiberal, ideology centred on the issues of justice, the just world, and on social welfare, on equal access to opportunities, goods and services, which underpinned the interventionist security policy around the world and also provided justification for the totalitarian system, the collectivisation, and the Gulag as a way to deal with internal stability.

SIMILAR BUT DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS

The Soviet ends, especially after World War II, were to play the role of global power and to transform the world. Both were basically absent in the original Russian strategy that was essentially conservative and counterrevolutionary. Two means were crucial to implementing the Soviet strategy.

One was subversive, the reliance on what is now called coloured revolutions (red in those times), though by the staging of a *coup d'état* rather than through a democratic challenge to legitimacy (this proved to be an enduring problem for Western Communists who could not contemplate a revolutionary takeover, all the ideological commitment to revolution notwithstanding, but could also not adopt democracy wholeheartedly, at least not until very late).

From the initial stabilisation of Soviet Russia and through the unsuccessful spread of revolutions in Europe (e.g. Central Europe after World War I) and successfully in Asia, e.g. in Mongolia, to post-World War II takeovers in Eastern Europe, small groups of revolutionaries, or a minority of the population in any case, Lenin's *avant-garde* or a minority party for instance, would stage takeover bids and invite Soviet Russia and later the Union to support them (to send troops or keep them in place as the case may be). *Post factum*, there would be a people's democratic legitimisation, sometimes through openly rigged elections, and the imposition of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. That went on until Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Afghanistan in 1979, but the Soviet Union balked when challenged in Poland in 1981.

This is very much like what has been observed in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine recently. The basis for legitimacy now is somewhat different though in one sense it is similar and provides for a connection with the Russian anti-Ottoman strategy.

Tsarist Russia counted on anti-Ottoman movements among at least the Orthodox nations within the Empire, primarily though not exclusively in the Balkans. So, their nationalism was an instrument of anti-Ottoman policy. Leninists and Stalinists used the same strategy to support nationalistic movements in the process of putting together the Soviet Union and also in supporting what could be called coloured (red) armed uprisings or national liberation movements later on (e.g. green ones). The tension between the nationalist revolutions and the internationalism that was to be the outcome of those was bridged by the emphasis on improved welfare and on the promise of a just social and political order that the multinational socialist or communist system would bring.

So, these two subversive strategies are similar, but the strategy had a limited reach in the Russian as opposed to the Soviet case due to the difference in the ideological justification and to the scope of its intended target. It was not a global revolution, the world socialist system, but mostly an anti-Ottoman uprising that was aimed at. Internationalism in the sense of global ideological reach came with the Soviets.

The other instrument used was military intervention. Russia fought wars, and sought territories in the near abroad, Soviets tended to intervene globally, directly or by proxy. The distinction may seem subtle, but it is not if the main ideological and justificatory difference is considered. Taking over Ukraine (or just annexing Crimea), and parts of Georgia previously, and perhaps claiming territories in the near abroad with a Russian minority, or that are considered to belong to the Russian World, would be and indeed is acting like Russia. Intervening in Syria, that is a Soviet move (similar to the intervention in Somalia in 1978). The latter strategy is global and has to be justified differently. It is perhaps difficult to remind oneself now how truly global the world socialist system was, compared to which Tsarist Russian and the contemporary reach of Russia's power is quite limited.

Russian universalistic Orthodox ideology, supplemented with the Eurasian idea of the Russian World, is relied on to justify the current intervention in Ukraine. This ideology can be extended to justify interference with other near abroad countries with reference to security concerns, again as in the Tsarist Russian case. In addition, emerging support for coloured revolutions in the Orthodox Balkans can be seen within the same strategy. However, intervening in Syria and in the Middle East cannot be justified in the same manner. In Tsarist Russia, liberating Istanbul could have been justified by e.g. Catherine the Great's Hellenistic-Byzantine revival, though security concerns were the key. But this does not extend to Syria today. In Soviet times, intervening in Syria could have been, and the then political involvement was in fact, justified on the basis of communist or socialist internationalism, which however now is not the case.

SPAIN AND POLAND

*'To-day the deliberate increase in the chances of death,
The conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder; ...'*

W. H. Auden, *Spain*

The Spanish civil war, the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and the division of Poland (and the takeover of the Baltics) provide for key examples of the mixed Soviet-Russian interventionism. In Spain, the subversive Lenin-Stalin type of strategy was pursued, which proved disillusioning for those who had truly internationalist motivations (e.g. George Orwell¹³ and many who joined the international brigades). But popular legitimisation of revolutions was never the Soviet strategy; a red *coup d'état* followed by a plebiscite and the dictatorship was. The latter was to eliminate not only the class enemies, but also the political rivals, in this case the Trotskyites. This sectarianism was characteristic of Stalinism and the Soviet type of internationalism throughout, which in part accounts for the Yugoslav case in 1948 and thereafter.

The case of Poland's division between Stalin and Hitler, which Putin has had problems in accounting for in the context of the current intervention in Ukraine, exemplifies the enduring understanding of the role of power politics in Europe and also some of the enduring ideological problems with combining support for nationalism with internationalist interventionism. The division of Poland was eminently a Russian strategic instrument, while holding on to it after World War II had to be justified by communist internationalism. The whole Soviet and the construct of the Socialist World suffered from this nationalist-internationalist ambiguity.

In both of these cases, however, clearly ideological and security justifications were relied on, not a democratic one. Indeed, the underlying rationale can be found in Stalin's famous characterisation of the 'two right-wing alternatives' to the true left, i.e. to Stalinism. Those were liberals and social democrats (or socialists) on the one hand and the Trotskyites, or false revolutionaries, on the other. Stalin had some affinity with national-socialists, with the far right, because they were also targeting the liberals and social democrats. The campaign against the 'two right-wing alternatives' was initially intended against both Bukharin and Trotsky, i.e. against the domestic opposition, but was then implemented internationally, within and without the Socialist World, targeting Anglo-Saxon liberalism and European socialists or social democrats.

The parallel now is not with the Soviet-German accommodation, even if sometimes it is alluded to in the political public of both countries, and feared by their neighbours, because Russia now seeks a global power-sharing agreement with the USA (and in fact a bilateral one when it comes to Europe and the Mediterranean), in which the condominium over Europe as a whole is at stake, not just the extension of power over the 'near abroad' alias the Russian World or just over the East of Europe. On the ideological side, however, the two or any liberal alternative are to be opposed, which bears some resemblance to the 'two rights' policy.

¹³ G. Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, Secker & Warburg, 1938.

THE QUESTION WHY

Pierre Bezukhov: 'Napoleon is great, because he stood above the revolution, put an end to its abuses, and kept all that was good – the equality of citizens and freedom of speech and of the press – and that is the only reason why he gained power.'¹⁴

L. Tolstoy, *War and Peace*

And that, the lack of ideological justification for the Russian global power role, is the main difference with the Soviet Union and also a problem. To highlight it, it has to be seen in the light of the European strategy. In Tsarist Russian conservative, Eurasian thinking, Europe is a threat and the alien world – it is a revolutionary, subversive force. It is corrosive and corruptive; it is a security concern because it can stir the 'demons' in the Russian soul, as Dostoevsky would put it. So, it needs to be weakened by supporting internal divisions, playing mainly the nationalistic card (e.g. the Slavophil anti-Austro-Hungarian and nationalist anti-Ottoman strategy in the Balkans).

In Soviet times, the communist left was useful for the same purpose, though on the basis of an internationalist ideology, but this is not the case currently. In any case, outside of the Balkans, the Soviet strategy of supporting coloured (red social or flagged national) revolutions and then intervening is hardly realistic in contemporary Europe where revolutionary communism or Slavic identity does not mean anything. But if Europe turned nationalistic and the European Union disintegrated, it would make the European powers weaker, which is why support for the nationalists is to be pursued with no attempt at exporting the Russian universalistic ideology, because for that ideology, the difference with the West is in its basis.

To put it more concretely: the European Union is a revolutionary threat, so support for nationalist counterrevolutions is the proper counter-strategy; it is the ideological underpinning of the primarily security concern, domestic basically.

In Syria, and in the Middle East in general, but also potentially in the rest of the world, military intervention can hardly be ideologically justified. So, that is the key problem: Russia is starting to use a Soviet instrument of direct or indirect military intervention (currently limited) with the aim of globalising its power, but has no universalistic ideology to justify it.

So, this is Russia acting as Soviet Union minus the transformative ideology. With what end? Perhaps, the aims could be schematised as follows:

- › Russia is a global, not just a European or a Eurasian power (this is the legacy of the Soviet Union);
- › it needs to be present in the Mediterranean to be a global power for the same reasons for which it needed to deal with the Ottoman Empire to be a European power; and
- › it does not need a universalistic ideological justification, geopolitical reasons are enough, but the resurgence of a nationalistic idea of the Russian World and of nationalism in Europe in general is considered useful.

¹⁴ The Russian word here is *власть*, which is power with authority, and does not apply to international relations. The difference between *власть* and power is similar to *Herrschaft* and *Macht* in German.

The end is a new world order, as indeed has been made clear by Putin. What kind of order? A multipolar one based on the balance of power. An order fashioned on the Concert of Europe, which collapsed in World War I (it is as if Kissinger were the key counsellor, the inner voice of Putin; indeed, some kind of combination of Huntington's clash of civilisations and Kissinger's power politics is the basis of many official statements of Russian foreign policy).¹⁵ At that time, as Martin Wight might have said,¹⁶ Europe was the world. Now power politics is indeed global, but is not balanced, at least from the Russian point of view, because it is not in accordance with the actual distribution of power; it is potentially destabilising and threatening to Russia if not corrected by some type of Concert of the World that respects civilisational differences. This would be power politics that is disciplined by or cares for the ever changing balance of power.

The main instrument of destabilisation is now the modern Napoleon, the United States and in Europe its instrument, the EU, with their spread of the cosmopolitan universalistic ideology. The main enemy is the Atlantic collective security organisation, NATO, which is conveniently designated as the instrument of the Soviet Union's defeat in the Cold War. Their victory over the Soviet Union in the Cold War needs to be counterbalanced by Russia's resurgent global power.

EXCEPTIONALISM

In their current anti-USA propaganda, Putin and his spokespersons make a lot out of the criticism of America's claim to exceptionalism. This may sound somewhat awkward given the parallel stress of Russia's exceptionalism. This is easy to understand in the post-revolutionary context, whichever one is considered since the French Revolution. The issue is that Russian exceptionalism, though universalistic, i.e. referring to ultimate values, is seen as superior to any other for Russia, not necessarily for the world (as communist ideology was considered to be). The American exceptionalism, however, inscribed as it is in their constitution, is just one exemplification of a constitutional, i.e. legal, economic and political system that has inherited the post-Revolutionary universal values that are applicable to the world as a whole.

The European Union (EU) is one such Americanisation and is indeed advertised as advancement over the USA model because it combines the universal values of the Enlightenment with pacifism, which is based on the transcendence of nationalistic conflicts and of the instability of power politics in Europe. So, the USA and EU exceptionalism is one that claims not just universality, i.e. an extension over all the basic values, but also superiority similar to the claim previously held by the communist ideology over the liberal one.

So, these are two different types of exceptionalism, both universalistic in their claims to the ultimate values, but the Russian one being limited to its own World only, unlike the liberal-democratic one which is cosmopolitan. Thus, the exceptionalism of the USA and the EU are a threat not so much to Russia as a state, but to its internal stability which depends on its exclusive, though universalistic, comprehensive ideology.

¹⁵ S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Shyster, 1996. H. Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich and Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812-22*, Houghton Mifflin, 1957 (EPBM 2013). H. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, Simon & Schuster, 1994.

¹⁶ M. Wight, *Power Politics*, Leicester University Press, 1978.

NATIONS AND THE EUROPEAN ORDER

'If ... we wish to live in peace, then must we more than cease to take pleasure in the power of our country; we must rejoice in the weakening of that power, and help thereto. A Russian should rejoice if Poland, the Baltic Provinces, Finland, Armenia, should be separated, freed, from Russia; ... (T)he greater the state, the more wrong and cruel is its patriotism, and the greater is the sum of suffering upon which its power is founded. Therefore, ... we must not only cease our present desire for the growth of our state, but we must desire its decrease, its weakening, and help this forward with all our might. It must be understood that, so long as we praise patriotism, and cultivate it in the young, so long will there be armaments to destroy the physical and spiritual life of nations;'

L. Tolstoy (1896), *Patriotism, or Peace?*

Russia expands politically and territorially in Europe after the European order collapses and shrinks with Russia's internal instability, both depending on the successes in the accompanying wars, hot or cold ones. In that sense, there is a parallel between Russia after the Napoleonic War and the Soviet Union after World War II and between Soviet Russia and Union after World War I and Russia after the end of the Cold War.

In that, policies towards nationalism have been central. Once the post-Napoleonic order was established, European nationalism was opposed by Russian official policy, while Russian nationalism developed as a response to the European universalistic influences. This did not extend to national liberation movements in the Balkans though, which were seen as supportive of the Russian anti-Ottoman policy. Rising nationalism in Europe, however, was problematic for Russia because it also threatened the stability of the multinational Russian Empire. So, Russia played a counterrevolutionary role and intervened on its own and on behalf of e.g. the Austro-Hungarian Empire to suppress national liberation in Europe.

This changed in Soviet times. Russian Communists saw nationalism as an ally in their revolutionary plans, but also as a way in which to stabilise Russia and then the Soviet Union by offering autonomy to states and regions that were to be included in the Union. Thus, the strange constitution of the Soviet Union came about, which recognised the right to secession to its constituent republics. This was seen as a means to stabilise Russia and the Soviet Union, but proved to serve as a legal, and indeed ideological, basis for the disintegration after the end of the Cold War.

Similarly, the Russian constitution of 1993 recognises the multi-ethnic character of the Federation and is a patchwork of ethnic and other claims to autonomy.¹⁷ In the disintegrating Soviet Union, the recognition of nationalist demands was considered stabilising, but had to be changed once it proved in fact potentially destabilising for Russia itself. Indeed, it took the Chechen War to effectively put the multi-ethnic spirit of the constitution to rest.

However, nationalism is now seen as useful as an instrument of EU disintegration. During post-Cold War stabilisation, the European Union and even NATO were considered supportive of Russia's stability. Once that has been achieved, Russia's interests in the near abroad, e.g. in Ukraine, are seen as being

¹⁷ V. Gligorov (1997), 'Benjamin Constant and Carl Schmitt Go to Russia', *Constitutional Political Economy* 8: 271-282.

better served if the EU is weakened and NATO becomes less than effective; both of these developments could be consequences of rising nationalism.

So, Russia's interest in Europe is the collapse of the current European order due to rising nationalism. At home, however, and indeed in Ukraine and in the near abroad, Communist support of nationalisms is substituted with the idea of the Russian World and civilisation, which reaches back to the Eurasian and Slavophil and even Greek-Byzantine Christian Orthodox ideas of Tsarist Russia.

AN ASIDE: NAČERTANIJE

An interesting view of Tsarist Russia's policy is to be found in the influential 1844 memorandum (*Načertanije*, The Draft) by Ilija Garašanin on the Serbian foreign policy strategy. It is a slightly edited version of a Polish text, but has informed Serbia's policy ever since. In that document, the author, who was to become the interior and prime minister, saw clearly that Russian policy was counterrevolutionary except to the extent that Balkan national liberation movements could prove helpful to destroying the Ottoman Empire and strengthening the Russian standing with the big European powers.

Realising the difference in power, the document, reflecting also the Polish experience, without referring to it, states in more words and somewhat obliquely, that Russia will never serve Serbian interests, while it will always look to Serbia supporting its, Russian, interests. The author also warns Serbian leaders never to take the same attitude towards its weaker Balkan neighbours, which they tended not to heed however.

The document is interesting also in the context of the Soviet Union's policy towards the South Slav Federation, the Yugoslav state, and generally towards the Balkan integrative attempts, which was one of supporting nationalist disintegration. In Soviet times, the main reason was no longer to keep Turkey out, given that it was mostly out of the region by that time anyway, but to prevent the Western powers to increase their influence there. Before the Second World War, Yugoslavia in particular was an important target because it was strongly anti-Communist and did not even care to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union until less than a year before the invasion of Nazi Germany in 1941. In that period, the Soviet Union was primarily backing anti-Serbian secessionist movements. After 1948, the policy was practically the same, except that it backed the Serbian nationalists. This *en passant* to an extent misled the Serbian nationalists who expected strong support by the Soviet Union for their plan to strengthen the power of Serbia within the Yugoslav Federation and then were looking to Russia to help them keep the territories in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and also in Kosovo, none of which however materialised as those were not in accord with Russia's foreign interests at the time, which vindicates the insightfulness of the *Načertanije*.

Currently, Russia is basically going back to the Soviet Union's post-1948 policy of supporting further disintegration of the Balkans by supporting Serbian nationalists in Serbia and throughout the territory of former Yugoslavia, but also nationalists in Greece, Bulgaria, and even Turkey, though the latter may have already misfired.

MARKETS AND TERRITORIES

The current European order is not based on power politics and the balance of powers, unlike the one in the post-Napoleonic era. Its stability is based on the integration of markets and not on national interests, at least not directly. Indeed, in accordance with its founding document, the Treaty of Rome, European integration could extend as far as Europe extends, which in principle includes Turkey and Russia. The latter two countries are still heavily impressed by the extent of territories that they control, because security and internal stability is their preeminent concern. Indeed, in ideological terms, liberal Europe is in conflict with states like Russia and Turkey which are multi-ethnic but nationalistic and illiberal. But while Turkish territorial problems are mostly internal, except, and that is a big exception, for Cyprus, though it certainly intervenes in its near abroad, Russia's territorial reach is also external, as it entertains claims on territories of others and maintains, in the near abroad, control over frozen conflicts where Russian minorities live.

So, for the EU, e.g. Ukraine is primarily a market, while for Russia it is primarily a territory. Again, going back, the emerging market liberalisation in Europe in the nineteenth century was partly a problem for Russian official conservative as well as for the revolutionary interests of the opposition. Indeed, after the October Revolution, Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union chose increasingly protectionist strategies of development. Securing territories and competing in power politics proved preferable to market competition and integration.

The reason is again that of stability being threatened by European modernising influences, while a collapse of the current European liberal order is seen as increasing the role of Russia as a big European power.

In this context, it is important to understand how internal stability and external security interrelate. The need to modernise and for that to rely on the experiences and technologies of more developed Europe has been clearly understood since quite early in the Russian history. Indeed, in periods of external weakness, policies of internal reforms in order to catch up with European political and economic competitors have been introduced. The limitation, however, has always been the absolutist political system and the risk of internal disintegration. So, periods of reforms have been mostly followed by retreats to conservative ideologies and policies.

Gerschenkron argued that backwardness was the reason why the state had to take the lead in the country's industrialisation and in that had to rely on foreign entrepreneurs and banks because those were lacking in Tsarist Russia.¹⁸ The sustainability of that strategy, however, depended on the institutional and political transformation of the kind that liberal and socialist pro-Europeans were demanding. Those were running against the absolutist political system, in Tsarist Russia as well as in the Soviet Union. The failure of the New Economic Policy in the 1920s is perhaps the most telling case. Liberalisation and privatisation were inviting the need for democratic legitimacy, which the dictatorial and absolutist political system could not accept, which led the rulers to opt for totalitarianism.

In that preference for territorial control over market liberalisation, the control of the population has played the key role. Serfdom was abhorred not only by the pro-Europeans and the revolutionaries, but also for example by Dostoevsky. The legitimacy of the institution was never really established, but the reforms

¹⁸ A. Gerschenkron, *Europe in the Russian Mirror*, Cambridge University Press, 1978.

designed to get rid of it were hard to implement consistently and permanently, while Soviet Russia reintroduced a similar way of control over the population with the policy of collectivisation. Contemporary Russia cannot resort to the same way of controlling the population, which Klyuchevsky argued was mainly useful for military purposes and for purposes of maintaining internal stability. Protectionism is one alternative, but it is a weak substitute, given the need to export in order to finance the state, while nationalist propaganda may not catch up except when external, in effect territorial, threats can be presented as significant.

Again, this is superficially similar to the Soviet Union, but the latter feared for the sustainability of its ideological justification, while Russia currently needs to invent a territorial threat – e.g. by first arguing that Ukraine is part of the Russian World and then pointing to its drive for economic independence as the loss of territory.

NEW RUSSIA

*'As far as its interest in self-preservation is concerned, there can be no such thing as 'enlightened' despotism.'*¹⁹

Max Weber

The opposition to the European Union's neighbourhood policy, in particular to the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with Ukraine, is an example of this confusion between markets and territories. In opposition to this basically trade agreement, the territorial claim to New Russia was resurrected, which should justify Russia's territorial claims on Ukraine. How did a free trade agreement instigate a geopolitical response, one that implies at least a partition of Ukraine?

The DCFTA has three elements: one is the free trade agreement (which is to be implemented asymmetrically – the EU removes tariffs immediately, Ukraine phases in tariff reductions and satisfies non-tariff standards gradually, that is over time); the second is adjustment in the legal and regulatory system in order to comply with the EU's *acquis communautaire*; finally, there is the aim of sustainable democratisation. By implication, once the DCFTA is implemented in full, Ukraine would have transformed into a country that could join the EU, if both sides feel ready for the integration.

The part that is territorial is the last one. Once Ukraine democratises, compatibility with Russia is lost, except if Russia itself democratises. And that requires liberalisation and legal and institutional transformation which would transform Russia into a European country with no claim to exceptionalism, which is why the resurrection of the ideology of the Russian World and of its extension to New Russia. The trade and other market-related risks, costs, and threats are mostly irrelevant and often fanciful.

¹⁹ M. Weber, 'On the Situation of Constitutional Democracy in Russia' in *Weber: Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 72.

INDUSTRIALISATION AND THE STATE

Contemporary competition between the liberals and Eurasians is just one version of the division between the Westernisers and Slavophiles. The reforms and modernisation advocated by the former were usually attempted after one or the other foreign policy and military failure: e.g. after the Crimean War and then again after the fall of the Berlin Wall. This is true also of the industrialisation drive and the attitude towards capitalism, which preoccupied not only political modernisers, from populists to communists, but also the reformers in the Russian and Soviet governments from Witte and Stolypin to most recently Medvedev. With persistent political regularity, reforms have been attempted and then abandoned for domestic reasons, though justifications have often been given in ideological and foreign policy terms.

The challenge was, and still is, how to industrialise without liberalisation? Or, how to manage a state capitalist system?

Certainly the most substantial contribution to the understanding of Russia's emerging capitalism and the early history of industrialisation was that of Tugan-Baranovsky in his study of the Russian factory.²⁰ He argued that Russia had never had any other experience with development but the capitalist one. There is no history of small-scale manufacturing which responds to technological development and to market demand and then grows into a large industry supplying global markets (which was how the rise of capitalism was usually seen especially in Marxist circles). Rather, the Russian factory started big and responded to the demand of the state. Thereafter, small-scale industry developed in part to supply the large factories but also to respond to market demand. While initial industrialisation, being based on large enterprises, was going to be oligarchic, the subsequent spread of small firms should mitigate for that.

In that, Tugan-Baranovsky identifies two deficiencies: one is lack of entrepreneurship and the other is that of insufficient financial and managerial skills, which is why he advocated reliance on foreign investments. He, however, did not think that export-oriented development was needed as he believed that the Russian economy can be as diversified as necessary with its vast domestic market demand. While he did not reject the use of protectionist measures to support early industrialisation, he did not favour the strategy of development with disequilibrium prices.

The latter is what characterised the strategy advocated by Preobrazhensky, who was the principal opponent of the liberal advocates of the New Economic Policy after the collapse of the 'heroic period of communism' in 1921.²¹ The Stalinist system that emerged with the industrialisation drive in the 1930s is a drastic version of Preobrazhensky's policy proposals (he was executed in 1937 as most liberals were too, e.g. his onetime co-author and leading liberal Bukharin). Preobrazhensky proposed the use of disequilibrium prices in order to transfer resources, capital and people, from agriculture to industry. He also thought that low prices of food would earn enough in exports to import the needed capital goods. His main argument was that the manipulation of the pricing system was the proper policy instrument in order to transfer resources from agriculture to industry, but also sustain the needed efficiency of allocation, while a pure planning system of rationing and balancing quantities for investment, employment, and consumption he believed was unworkable.

²⁰ M. I. Tugan-Baranovsky, *The Russian Factory in the 19th Century*, Irwin, 1970.

²¹ E. Preobrazhensky, *The New Economics*, Clarendon Press, 1965. For one explication see R. K. Sah and J. E. Stiglitz (1984), 'The Economics of Price Scissors', *American Economic Review* 74: 125-138.

Both Tugan-Baranovsky and Preobrazhensky thought that the state had a significant role in industrialisation; the former believed that public investments would spur private, and in particular foreign ones, while the latter believed that the state's monopoly of investments did not need to lead to inefficiencies in allocation if the pricing system was used, or rather rigged, properly.

The newest understanding of the need for state-led modernisation is to be found in the strategy developed during Medvedev's presidency just a few years ago. The idea as developed by the Foreign Ministry was similar to that of Tugan-Baranovsky's, though without the stress on the development of domestic entrepreneurship that he thought was fundamental.

POWER POLITICS

'The means are European balance and the droit des gens', the Abbé [Morio] was saying. 'Let a powerful state like Russia, famous for its barbarism, stand disinterestedly at the head of a union having as its purpose the balance of Europe – and it will save the world!'

L. Tolstoy, *War and Peace*

Assuming the end is the return to power politics on the world scale this time, what do power politics and balance of power mean? There are basically two main assumptions on which the theory of the balance of power, since Thomas Hobbes, is based:

- › Power politics: Nations are self-regarding and are guided by their, mainly security, interests only – in international relations there is anarchy and thus everything goes: ends justify all means.
- › Balance of powers: The distribution of national power (the number and the size of nations, the distribution of political power) adjusts in order to balance the distribution of power in the world – war is more often than not the adjustment mechanism when the balance is disturbed, if there are no peaceful concessions, which are primarily territorial.

In the case of Tsarist Russia, the changing distribution of power within the Concert of Europe was supposed to lead to one concession by the Ottoman Empire after another – and then by other big powers as the overall balance needed to be preserved. In Soviet times, in times of the Cold War, the balance was bipolar, at least in terms of ideology. Then it changed, due to the ideological disagreements between Russia and China, and eventually the balance of power collapsed together with the decline of the transformative power of the ideology. Now, the Russian nationalist idea is making a comeback and Soviet-type interventionism is being used in Syria with the aim to claim that power has been redistributed and a new global balance needs to be established with territorial concessions in the Middle East and Europe.

THE COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY POWER

'(Lenin's) ideas led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. He had a number of different ideas: autonomy [federalisation – VG] and all that. They laid an atomic bomb under the building that is called Russia, and then it collapsed. We did not need the world revolution too. Those were his ideas.'

Vladimir Putin, 21 January 2016

What are the chances of success? It depends on how internally sustainable this attempt at Russia taking over the responsibilities of a global power is. Hobbes claimed this for power politics:

*'[I]n all times, kings, and persons of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their forts, garrisons, and guns upon the frontiers of their kingdoms; and continual spies upon their neighbours; which is a posture of war. But because they uphold thereby the industry of their subjects, there does not follow from it that misery which accompanies the liberty of particular men.'*²²

So, unlike in the case of *bellum omnium contra omnes* among individuals in natural anarchy, where 'there is no place for industry' and the life of men is 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short', nation states invest in security, spur industry and employment, and tend to live longer than men (and women). In other words, international anarchy is supportive of domestic stability.

This has proved wrong in the case of both Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union. World War I saw a near disintegration of the country and painful rebuilding, which might have had quite a different outcome if it had not been for World War II. Again, the post-World War II overreach and the prolonged Cold War ended with the disintegration of the Socialist World and of the Soviet Union. In the first case, the Russian idea was abandoned, while in the second, the communist ideology was the casualty.

So, the crucial issue is this: can Russia sustain the role of a global power? Why is that a question? For the very reason that it is a Eurasian country; it borders, directly or indirectly, on all the key world security risks. As soon as it takes over more global responsibilities, those overwhelm the power it has. So, as an instrument of internal stability, global power is of doubtful value. As a way to increase Russia's share in the balance of powers it tends to create an incentive for adverse coalitions to get formed. And now, unlike in Soviet times, there is no universalistic ideology to try to fall back on both domestically and internationally.

Kant, the distant progenitor of the European project of permanent peace based on a federal constitution, argued that this system of balance of power is not sustainable because if it globalises, the risk of a world war increases in the case of an actual or expected disequilibrium in the distribution of power.²³ This is because the disequilibria are supposed to be accommodated by territorial concessions, but in a

²² *Leviathan*, Ch. XIII. See the discussion in T. Nagel, 'The Problem of Global Justice', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 33: 133-147.

²³ V. Gligorov, 'A Kantian Idea of Sovereignty' in H. Swoboda and C. Solioz (eds), *Conflict and renewal; Europe transformed; essays in honour of Wolfgang Petritsch*, Nomos, 1997.

multipolar or world system of power politics, the demands on territorial concession may be such that it may be impossible to accommodate them through series of local or peripheral wars, so that a generalised conflict becomes a real possibility – which indeed was realised twice in the last century. Kissinger has been arguing that in the case of Russia, a tri-polar power politics (with China as the third player) is already disadvantageous, while additional competitors may be destabilising.

In that context, a country like Russia that can hardly extricate itself from any of the more important changes in the distribution of power in the world may face multiple challenges, which may test not only its overall power in international relations, but also its internal stability. This tends to lead to a push to centralisation, oversized influence of the military, to the government's control of the resources, and to a police state, that is to a counterrevolution at home.

One example is Putin's policy which included the strengthening of the central government through the war in Chechnya, which increased the role of the military, and then through the state's takeover of the key natural resources, and also through the delegation of more power to security services, to the 'deep state' as it were. That of course tends to be accompanied by nationalistic propaganda, which singles out foreign and domestic enemies and traitors, to justify the emerging political set-up, which, in turn, raises the issue of legitimacy of the government and of the system.

MEANINGLESS EAST–WEST SWINGS

'In 1789 a ferment arises in Paris; it grows, spreads, and expresses itself in a movement of peoples from west to east. Several times this movement directed to the east comes into collision with a countermovement from east to west; in the year twelve it reaches its utmost limit – Moscow; and, with remarkable symmetry, the countermovement from east to west is accomplished, drawing with itself, as the first movement had done, the peoples of the centre. The countermovement reaches the point of departure in the west – Paris – and subsides.

During this twenty-year period of time an enormous number of fields go unploughed; houses are burned; trade changes direction; millions of people become poor, become rich, migrate; and millions of Christians, who profess the law of love of their neighbour, kill each other.

What does it all mean?'

L. Tolstoy, *War and Peace*

Tolstoy made a point that is crucial for foreign policies of large countries, and not only Russia. The point is that in large countries, in European and global powers, there is a policy failure in the sense that the citizens start to evaluate the foreign policy of their country only when the costs significantly increase. External security and other territorial issues reach domestic politics only when human and economic costs start to really bite. Because of that, the Tsar may act unconstrained by Kutuzov until Napoleon reaches Moscow and then again when Paris becomes a feasible military target. This lack of effective domestic constraint on foreign and military policies can have perverse effects because Tsars or Presidents who intervene abroad in order to drum up domestic support may not achieve that, because

the benefits are too small to matter to the citizens, while the costs of overreach may be too high and even instigate revolutions and regime changes.

This indeed has been the case at the end of the First World War and once the Cold War became more costly. This, however, is not why the Tsarist and the Communist regimes ultimately fell, as they were struggling with the lack of legitimacy for quite some time before the revolutions erupted; but the attempts at substituting domestic lack of legitimacy with foreign policy successes, particularly in wars, hot or cold, proved to be inefficient. Ideological and now mass propaganda can only go so far and mostly as far as there is success and it does not cost too much. But, in Tsarist Russia as well as in the current one, not to mention the Soviet Union, the lack of legitimacy required increasingly an ever more intrusive police state, which can only to a limited extent be side-lined with external threats and even by territorial expansions.

A SIBERIAN PERSPECTIVE

'[A]ll the good things that have been in Russia since Peter the Great have come from above, from the throne, while so far, from below, nothing has been expressed but stubbornness and ignorance.'

F. M. Dostoevsky, Deposition at his trial²⁴

Weber looked at the legitimacy issue in Russia in the context of constitution making and came to the conclusion that it is an enduring one.²⁵ This is in part why there have been so many internal upheavals, from the uprising of the Decembrists to the assassination attempts at the Tsar to the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 and the instabilities in Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union throughout the interwar period and then the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, at which point the stabilisation of Russia required the military suppression of the Parliamentary uprising and the war in Chechnya.

Dostoevsky, being sentenced to death for allegedly plotting to overthrow the government in a French-like revolution, learned in Siberia, after his death sentence had been commuted to imprisonment, that popular legitimacy is hard to achieve. Many before and after him understood the problem of legitimacy of governing Russia after a stay in Siberia. One could argue that the Eurasian character of Russia is seen more clearly that way. Dostoevsky, in his *Notes from the Underground*, also made it clear that the lack of legitimacy breeds resentment among the people and incites internal violence and disintegration.

Soviet Russia, as clearly seen by Weber, did not aim at legitimacy at all.²⁶ The justification of the power was ideological and totalitarian, not democratic or communal, the latter being the alternative sought by both the Slavophiles and Dostoevsky but also by Tolstoy and the populists and most everybody really. Democratic legitimacy seemed more often than not as something difficult to square with the Eurasian character but also with the collectivist and authoritarian attitudes of the society. Basically, democracy has not looked like an instrument that can solve the security and stability problem in Russia, primarily in internal policy, but then also in foreign policy. Democracy is more a threat, like the market or the rule of

²⁴ Cited in A. Yarmolinsky, *Dostoevsky. A Study in his Ideology*, New York, 1921.

²⁵ Weber: *Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

²⁶ M. Weber, 'Socialism' in *Weber: Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

law, to the power and thus to the stability of the Russian state. With that, however, the legitimacy problem remains an enduring one.

Similarly, the current attempt to increase the role of Russia in global politics is in part an attempt at an answer to the legitimacy crisis at home. The effort put into the mobilisation of popular support to stand to foreign enemies and liberals at home is an instrument to deal with internal political instability, which however raises at home the issue of the legitimacy of Russia's foreign policy posture too.

CONCLUSION

Russia's military actions in Ukraine and Syria are a new attempt at power politics which combines Russian internal justification with Soviet international interventionism. It ultimately aims at:

The Concert of the World, which should emerge as a consequence of the interventions in Ukraine and the Middle East, and should ensure Russia's global power status; this system should allow for the exercise of power politics with changing spheres of interest, in accordance with the changing balance of power.

Within that, the current European order should collapse into a nationalistic one which enables the proper territorial accommodation to the Russian World.

That should prove stabilising domestically as it would strengthen the legitimacy of the autocratic system which is based on the universalistic, but exclusive, nationalistic ideology of the Russian Civilization.

The test of the success of this strategy is global as in Soviet times and not European as in the Tsarist Russia's times, but is to be implemented in a multilateral setting which has not proved sustainable for both Russia and the Soviet Union in the previous two cases. So, it is a new beginning for both Russia and the World. The end is clear and the means are well known, so the probable history of yet another failure to turn back the clock may have just begun.

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