

**REINTERPRETATION  
OF RUSSIA IN THE  
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY:  
*Challenges and Perspectives***

*Edited by*

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REINTERPRETATION OF RUSSIA IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY:  
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## Editor's Foreword

Indisputably, the twenty-first century is emerging as *transition of epochs* (Koljević Griffith 2021) in which structural turbulences are taking place on practically all levels of human existence. The age of *neoliberalism* has, theoretically and politically, most relevantly manifested as *post-truth*, *post-history* and *post-ethics*. As such, it has been realized in various paradigms of globalism and postmodernity. More precisely, the common signifier for different discourses and practices of the West in recent decades has been *biopolitics* notably presented as US hegemony and *exceptionalism*.

The birth of *multipolarity*, therefore, signifies not primarily a shift in balance of powers and the rise of “*the Rest*“ vs. “*the West*“ but first and foremost represents a *potentiality for potentialities* – a grand opening of the horizons of thinking and action *per se* in the human search for “the exit“ from *neototalitarianism* in *new subjective and intersubjective spaces*. Unfortunately, with the US proxy war in Ukraine, it is already clear that these fundamental political, economic, social and cultural transformations will not be entirely peaceful, as the stakes are too high. Meanwhile, the key question for the majority of the world's population is of the end of *neocolonialism* and *neoimperialism*.

This framework exemplifies the basis for the extremely complex contemporary context in which the striking issue of *reinterpretation of Russia* comes forth. Certainly, an objective analysis of this question *per definitionem* requires an *interdisciplinary approach* – particularly concerning its politological, sociological, philosophical, historical and economic aspects. Simultaneously, an objective analysis requires an *international approach* to the theme, one of *multitude*, of *divergent subjects* and their articulated standpoints in order to gain a full perspective of the matter at hand. In that regard, this collection of essays marks the second attempt to bring together researchers in different fields from both Western and non-Western countries in an ongoing academic dialogue, and is relevantly derived from the editor's irrevocable conviction that *dia-logos* is always the proper path to proceed, especially in a time of large-scale world crisis.

The chapters in this book can be perceived as a sequel to the first attempt, a special issue in 2023 of *Sociological Review*, vol. 57 no. 2. This collection is the result of an inspiring conference, “Reinterpretation of Russia in the Twenty-First Century – Challenges and Perspectives,” held at the Institute for Political Studies in Belgrade between 1-2 April 2023.

It goes without saying that these activities have not exhausted the subject and the third international collaboration was another fruitful conference, titled “Seconds to Midnight: Capitalism, Connectivity and Permanent Global Crisis,” held at the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the University of Catania on 8 September 2023. This series of events is an open platform for discussion and further engagements and attempts to be intrinsically democratic. It is based on the belief that all voices should be heard – precisely because, in the era of opinions, it is argumentation that should prevail. Of course, this does not mean that the editor of this volume and one of coordinators of these activities is a disinterested observer, but that they will always theoretically and practically defend pluralism, all the more so when any type of uniformity is forced upon humankind.

Last but not least, none of this would have been realized had it not been for my dear colleagues, Douglas Mark Ponton and Peter Mantello, and their honest shock with the practically infinite dimensions of Western Russiophobia in the contemporary media spectacle and propaganda, as well as their sincere desire to problematize such a stance within the intellectual community. I am grateful to them and to all participants of our various activities as we all look forward to expanding this *agora* in future debates.

Bogdana Koljević Griffith  
Belgrade, 26.09.2023.

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## **RUSSIA AND THE MEGALOPOLIS**

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### **Abstract**

*The text deals with the relationship between Russia and the Megalopolis. Megalopolis is a concept used to emphasize the transformation of Western civilization, which during the Cold War was defined by values such as national identity, democracy, Christianity, and humanism. Megalopolis is a supranational entity defined by post-democracy, post-Christianity, post-humanism, and the breakdown of national identity into transnational and subnational identities. This paper argues that Russia, in reinterpreting its role and purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, must start from the transformation of the West into the Megalopolis and with the fact that Megalopolis positions Russia as a civilizational rival. This is because Russia has not abandoned its humanistic and Christian foundations. In other words, Russia practically inherits the traditions of European humanism and Christianity, considering these traditions as a combination of the Eastern and Western canons (rooted in the Eastern and Western Roman Empires). Furthermore, the text emphasizes that the epochal intention of the Megalopolis is the transformation of humans into bioparticles, thus replacing sovereign authority with biopower. In this context, media controlled by corporations and transnational oligarchies play a dominant role in shaping human consciousness. The key question raised at the end of the text for contemplation is whether and how Russia and other countries that value*

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*sovereignty can counter the transformation of humans into bioparticles imposed by the Megalopolis.*

**Key Words:** *Megalopolis, West, Russia, humanism, bioparticle*

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## CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS, POWER, AND IDENTITY

In one part of the book *The Demise of Russian Communism*, Alexander Zinoviev writes: “The West became an inseparable factor of the internal life [of the USSR], greatly contributing to the weakening of the defense mechanisms of Soviet society as a communist society” (Zinoviev 2003, 46). The status of being a factor in Russia’s internal life was not acquired by the West with the Soviet Union, nor was this status changed when the USSR collapsed.

The narrative of the struggle against communism, which was prevalent during the Cold War, was replaced during the 1990s by the influential narrative of the clash of civilizations, based on Samuel Huntington’s book of the same name. The nature of this book, in addition to its title, is brilliantly illustrated by a subtle yet no less cynical anecdote with which the author opens his thoughts on the clash of civilizations:

“On January 3, 1992, a meeting of Russian and American scholars took place in the auditorium of a government building in Moscow. Two weeks earlier the Soviet Union had ceased to exist, and the Russian Federation had become an independent country. As a result, the statue of Lenin which previously graced the stage of the auditorium had disappeared and instead the flag of the Russian Federation was now displayed on the front wall. The only problem, one American observed, was that the flag had been hung upside down. After this was pointed out to the Russian hosts, they quickly and quietly corrected the error during the first intermission.” (Huntington 1996, 19).

The moral of this anecdote is clear: the Western civilization is superior because it knows what it is, but it also knows what other civilizations are, including the Orthodox one. In contrast, the Orthodox civilization, represented by Russia, still does not know itself.

History, however, ridiculed this triumphant, unipolar anecdote. This happened in the mid-first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century when Huntington published a book titled *Who are we?* Although its theme is not the identity



of Western civilization but only the American identity, it is clear that it reflects the author's deep confusion about the fate of that identity and the extent of different types of identities replacing it. Therefore, what seemed unquestionable in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is no longer so. Like his Russian counterparts in the 1990s, Huntington now asks himself the same question: who are we?

What happened to the American national identity? In short, it erodes and dissipates into transnational and subnational identities of minority groups. This is what concerns Huntington, and sometimes, through the seemingly impersonal and academic style of his writing, one can sense not only concern but even fear: "There is no Americano dream. There is only the American dream created by an Anglo-Protestant society. Mexican Americans will share in that dream and in that society only if they dream in English." (Huntington 2005, 256).

Huntington tacitly assumes that the American national identity was the generator of the USA's power, which is why his book revolves around two questions that are not explicitly stated but permeate the entire work, giving it meaning. These questions can be formulated as follows: How can that power be preserved if the identity that generated it disappears? And can a completely new identity inherit the power that was generated by a previously entirely different-conceived identity?

The American scholar describes this new identity as a blend of transnational and subnational identities (Huntington 2005, 16). The emergence of this new identity is a result of systematic social engineering, at times highly repressive, which *erases* the former West defined by national identities, Christianity, democracy, and humanism. Instead, a new post-national, post-Christian, post-democratic, and post-humanistic social construct is being created.

## WAR OF MEGALOPOLIS AGAINST RUSSIA

To emphasize this difference, I named it Megalopolis. With this term, I intend to highlight the discontinuity with the former West on one hand and to indicate that the foundations of Megalopolis lie in the interconnectedness of global cities rather than in the interconnectedness of nation-states. The transition from the West to the Megalopolis is, therefore, a shift from national to urban identity, which is trans/subnational.

In my opinion, Megalopolis is a concept necessary for understanding not only the events in Ukraine but also much broader tectonic shifts that the world is currently facing.

If we say that there is a war between Russia and NATO, we have narrowed that war down to its military and economic dimensions. If we say that there is a war between Russia and the “collective West,” then the term “collective West” conceals the essence of that war, as it excludes the change in the West itself, as noted by Huntington’s question, “who are we?” which leads to the meaning of Megalopolis.

Therefore, the most accurate way to put it is that there is a war between the Megalopolis and Russia, or countries like Russia, which still perceive their foundation as a national identity and sovereign authority.

To briefly describe the Megalopolis, let us focus on one of the many terms with the prefix post- that are used today, both descriptively and normatively. That term is post-truth.

What does post-truth tell us about the Megalopolis?

American sociologist David Riesman, in his well-known book *The Lonely Crowd*, distinguishes three types of characters: the tradition-directed character, the inner-directed character, and the other-directed character (Riesman, Glaser, and Denney 2001, 3–30). In the mid-20th century, when Riesman conducted his research, the inner-directed character still dominated, which was characteristic of a production-oriented society and a psychology of scarcity. However, the book also foreshadows the time of the other-directed character’s dominance, which characterizes a consumer-oriented society and a psychology of abundance.

To explain the connection between post-truth and the Megalopolis, it is necessary to pay attention to the difference between the inner-directed character and the other-directed character.

The individual who is inner-directed adopts a set of values from their parents and authorities during their youth and strives to maintain it throughout their life, harmonizing the modernity they participate in with the set of inherited values. In stark contrast, the individual who is other-directed does not possess any permanent set of values but instead adopts the values that are current in the present; therefore, instead of a continuity of values, the other-directed individual only knows their constant *change*. The inner-directed individual seeks continuity of values; the other-directed individual accepts the discontinuity of values.

As a result, truth holds some significance only for the inner-directed individuals who strive to *discover* the truth of the contemporary world

to *compare* it with their inherited set of values. In this way, they attempt to determine their own stance towards modernity: they may accept it if the truth of the contemporary aligns with their inherited values, or they may reject it if it contradicts them.

For the other-directed individuals, truth holds no importance because this type of character *automatically* adopts the values of their contemporaries without questioning whether those values are based on truth or not. Thus, truth no longer influences the actions of individuals whose character is directed towards others.

Riesman's observation that the other-directed character develops in large cities on the east and west coasts of the USA, among the youth and the elite, is interesting. This gives this type of character the form of an *urban identity*. The expansion of an urban identity, devoid of the need for continuity, leads to the erosion of national identity and the adoption of contemporary transnational and subnational identities that are no longer rooted in historical memory. The dominance of urban identity leads to the emergence of the Megalopolis, which is determined, among other factors, by post-truth, because truth, as well as history, are no longer necessary for urban identity.

A whole series of post-prefixed concepts – post-democracy, post-Christianity, post-humanism – which theory in Megalopolis abundantly uses today – testify to the discontinuity in the very essence of the West. Megalopolis erases the humanistic canon of the West – the collection of the most significant philosophical, artistic, and literary works – claiming that the nature of that canon is allegedly racist and misogynistic, and that canonical works cause traumas. In place of the humanistic canon, cultural industry products now step in, representing subnational and transnational identities and values. They do not build a new canon, as the idea of the permanence of human achievements in the post-anti-humanistic Megalopolis is no longer considered valuable – instead, they appear and disappear, making way for new products of the same provenance.

What are the effects of social engineering used to build the Megalopolis? Firstly, it involves the de-homogenization of society. A society that was once divided into classes but united by identity is now fragmented into minority groups based on sexual orientation, gender, and racial identity, among which a silent civil war persists. National identity and class affiliation are thus suppressed.

The mentioned low-intensity civil war is intended to serve as a buffer zone that conceals the increasing economic disparities within

the Megalopolis. Currently, these differences manifest as disparities in wealth. However, they can easily transform into unequal access to future biotechnologies, which will not be available on the open market, effectively turning them into privileges.

From this, one can conclude that the Megalopolis annuls the *intellectual* achievements of both great revolutions: the French bourgeois revolution, which promises the legal dignity of man embodied in the values of equality, brotherhood, and freedom, and the October Bolshevik revolution, which adds to the legal dignity the demand for the economic dignity of man.

The outcome of the Megalopolis is, therefore, a regression into a neo-feudal society, divided between a minority biopolitical authority and a majority biomass, with no mediation between them: neither political, in terms of democracy and a common national idea, nor philosophical, in terms of an all-encompassing Truth and a humanistic foundation that unites both groups.

To truly achieve such an outcome, it is evident that *every* civilization alternative to the Metropolis based on the humanistic and Christian heritage of Europe must be erased. By the term “European heritage,” I refer to Europe as a synthesis of Western and Eastern canons, although *such* a Europe, unfortunately, never had a chance to exist as a specific historical and political entity.

My main thesis is as follows: for the Megalopolis, Russia is not primarily a geopolitical challenge like China, but above all, a civilizational rival. Such a status arises due to Russia’s paradoxical relationship with Europe. If we equate the concept of Europe with the Western canon, which stems from the foundations of the Western Roman Empire, then Russia is not truly Europe. However, if we include the Eastern, Byzantine canon as an integral part of the concept of Europe, then things change. In that case, Russia becomes a full-fledged member of this East-West, or West-East Europe. Russia’s national humanistic canon, on the other hand, becomes the place where this common Europe emerges.

To illustrate this, we will provide examples from the realm of literature, as it holds a special significance and reputation in Russia. We will mention just two key names: Pushkin and Dostoevsky. The renowned novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*, is, in fact, Pushkin’s conversation with Richardson (whom Tatyana Larina reads), then Byron (whom Onegin comments on), and German Romanticism (which Lensky is obsessed with). On the other hand, Dostoevsky writes his novels as concealed polemics with Balzac and Stendhal.

The direction of ideas is not only from the West to the East, but also the other way around: as it is well-known, Nietzsche reads Dostoevsky, as does Freud, while Spengler has Danilevsky in his library, though he forgets to mention him in *The Decline of the West* where he talks about the organic nature of cultures (or rather, cultural-historical types, as Danilevsky would put it).

These are just some of the points where the movement of ideas from the East to the West, and *vice versa*, is recognized, thereby outlining the contours of a politically never fully achieved Europe of the Eastern and Western canons.

The Megalopolis has destroyed the European humanistic heritage of the Western canon, but as we can see, that heritage has been preserved in the form of the *backlight* of Russian culture, which represents a component of the Eastern canon of European culture. Thus, even unintentionally, Russia has become the only sovereign state where the European humanistic heritage of the Western canon feels secure. Figuratively speaking, Shakespeare is an emigrant who feels safer in Moscow than in London.

From this, the following position arises as long as Russia exists, the realization can emerge that Megalopolis is not any “Europe” or “West,” but an entity that has destroyed the European heritage. That is why, contrary to geopolitical logic that turns it towards the Pacific, Megalopolis cannot turn away from Russia.

If the Megalopolis recognizes in Russia the potential embryo of a new European renaissance, how can Russia envision itself in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

The answer to this question must reconcile two different vectors: the first is the economic-geopolitical one that turns Russia towards Asia; the second is the cultural-identity vector that keeps it in Europe. To reconcile these two vectors, it is not enough for Russia to define itself merely as a Eurasian country because such a designation says nothing about the *meaning* of Eurasian identity. The redefinition of Russia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would likely have to begin with a systematic redefinition of the “West,” with a clear awareness that the West, as it existed until 1989, no longer exists. There is only Megalopolis, and that is crucial. If Russia does not systematically recognize this discontinuity, Megalopolis will radiate within it as the (liberal) “West,” condemning Russia to ideological defensiveness and entrenching the exhausting pattern of dividing between liberals and sovereigntists. In short, in that case, Russia will remain trapped in a time that has long passed.

If in the place of the former West now stands the Megalopolis, as a negation of the tradition and identity of the West, including Western liberalism, then Russia has the right to define itself as a country that simultaneously defends Russian Orthodox Christianity and the *common* European humanistic canon. The Asian component of Russia would involve the need to connect that European experience in a new way with the Asian one, thereby strengthening the conflict against the Megalopolis. Eurasia would thus become a working project for Russia, capable of fostering Russian national mobilization and bolstering Russia's positions.

This geo-philosophical positioning of Russia between Europe and Asia, or for Europe and Asia, must, however, be accompanied by an understanding of the depth and direction of Megalopolis's influence on Russia. For the redefinition of Russia as a country that guarantees the shared (Eastern and Western) heritage of Europe to be politically sustainable, it will be necessary for Russia to prevent the crucial influence of the Megalopolis on its population. To achieve this, it is essential to answer the question of the various ways in which the Megalopolis impacts the populations of those countries that are politically and economically opposed to it.

The significance of pointing out the transformation of the West into the Megalopolis should be understood, first and foremost, as a change in the way individual consciousness is shaped. This paper, of course, does not claim to present a history of how a community shapes the worldview of its members but aims to highlight the key transformation that the Megalopolis brings in this context. We have seen that Riesman's investigations point to a shift in the dominant type of character in America: an inward-directed character replaces an other-directed character. This is not just a change that determines the transformation from a "production society," where an inward-directed character dominates, to a "consumer society," where an other-directed character prevails, but it also indicates a shift in the entity shaping an individual's consciousness. In the case of the inward-directed character, it is parents and the (national) educational system or the church. In the case of the other-directed character, it is peers, namely, the media controlled by corporations led by the transnational oligarchy that governs the Megalopolis.

The change in the dominant type of character signifies, therefore, a change in the dominant entity shaping an individual's consciousness, but it also signifies a change in the concept of the individual. The transformation of the "West" into the Megalopolis does not simply

mean that the individual adopts a different set of knowledge instead of another; it means that the very concept of humanity is changing: Megalopolis' post-humanistic (and actually anti-humanistic) paradigm seeks to replace sovereign authority with biopolitics and transform humans into bio-particles, reducing them to the level of shallowness and superficiality that Hannah Arendt hinted at in her essay "Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the World?"

Although Hannah Arendt, of course, does not mention the Megalopolis or biopolitics, her anticipation of technical uniformity and the elimination of national cultural or identity differences makes her anticipation a very valid description of today's transformation of sovereign nations into biomass, which takes place within the territory of Megalopolis:

"From a philosophical viewpoint, the danger inherent in the new reality of mankind seems to be that this unity, based on the technical means of communication and violence, destroys all national traditions, and buries the authentic origins of all human existence. This destructive process can even be considered a prerequisite for ultimate understanding between men of all cultures, civilizations, races, and nations. Its result would be a shallowness that would transform man, as we have known him in five thousand years of recorded history, beyond recognition. It would be more than mere superficiality; it would be as though the whole dimension of depth, without which human thought, even on the mere level of technical invention, could not exist, would simply disappear. This leveling down would be much more radical than the leveling to the lowest common denominator; it would ultimately arrive at a denominator of which we have hardly any notion today" (Arendt 1968, 87).

So, Megalopolis today does exactly what Hannah Arendt feared in the quoted passage: it does not simply transform a person's knowledge or strictly speaking, their (national) identity, but the very concept of humanity and the concept of authority over humans. Sovereign authority is replaced by biopower. As a result, the earlier entities that shaped humans, such as the educational system, families, or religious authorities, in Megalopolis either become subservient (educational system) or lose their authority (religious authorities), or their direction is changed. Thus, the relationship between parents and children takes on a reversible character. In other words, it is no longer parents who raise their children, but children who educate their parents. Accepting children as authorities becomes the only

way for most parents to maintain any connection with their children after the Megalopolis, through the change in character type, effectively takes away their right to raise children themselves.

Russia and all those countries that wish to resist the Megalopolis must be aware of the depth of Megalopolis's influence on their population. During the Cold War, the West offered citizens of the USSR the possibility of a different everyday life, one that would be defined by an abundance of attractively packaged goods, images, and stories, with the condition of demobilizing and "liberating" themselves from communism. As we know, it turned out that the "liberation" from communism did not lead to a consumer paradise but rather to a phenomenon that Sergey Kara-Murza described as the dismantling of the nation (Kara-Murza 2015, 15).

Today, the Megalopolis no longer offers an abundance of goods, images, and stories, as Russia, along with China and other countries that exist in opposition to Megalopolis, can provide those to its citizens on its own. Instead, the Megalopolis now offers something else to the citizens of the resisting states: a seductive concept of reducing humans to "free" bio-particles. Becoming a bio-particle means "liberating oneself" from religious and national identity, as well as from humanism, so that one descends to the level of a bio-particle from which the Megalopolis, allegedly, will never demand anything but will supposedly allow it to indulge in unrestricted freedom to fulfill its bodily instincts and psychological variations. This takes the place of the idea and practice of humanistic self-improvement or the idea and practice of Christian (Orthodox) communion with God. Of course, when a person becomes a bio-particle, they thereby accept liberation from anything that could enhance their personal power and connect them with others. As a result, they willingly subject themselves to absolute powerlessness in relation to the Megalopolis, which creates opportunities for biopolitical practices that regulate the population density of the planet.

## EPOCHAL INTENTION AND LIBERATION

In short, it is not enough to merely define a different geophilosophical concept that opposes the Megalopolis; it is essential to provide techniques and resources for the state to confront Megalopolis' *epochal intention* of transforming people into bio-particles. To counter the Megalopolis effectively, the state, including Russia, cannot isolate itself from the Megalopolis, as that would acknowledge the defensive



nature of the concept of human in relation to the concept of a bio-particle. Instead, it is necessary to create an everyday collaboration between family (parents' authority), state (educational system), and media or (national) cultural industry to close off any channels through which the Megalopolis can operate. The case of the USSR showed that military parity alone is not enough to ensure the durability of a state entity, and ideological parity can be undermined in the practices of daily life. This means that Russia, like any other state, must base its defence against the Megalopolis, among other things, on the creative superiority of its daily life, in which the concept of human will triumph over the concept of a bio-particle. To achieve this, in addition to the authority of the family and the national educational system, it will be necessary to create a modern, skilled, and artistically talented cultural industry that can fill everyday life with images and stories that celebrate the concept of human over the concept of a bio-particle.

In conclusion, the future of Russia will depend on whether a critical mass of its citizens will choose to remain humans or succumb to becoming bio-particles. The answer to this question will largely depend on Russia's ability to transform its relationship with the Megalopolis into an internal energy generator that convinces people that life is more than just fulfilling base natural instincts anywhere and with anyone.

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## РУСИЈА И МЕГАЛОПОЛИС

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### Апстракт

*У тексту се бавимо односом Русије и Мегалополиса. Мегалополис је појам који смо употребили како бисмо нагласили промену природе западне цивилизације, која је у доба Хладног рата, била дефинисана вредностима као што су национални идентитет, демократија, хришћанство и хуманизам. Мегалополис је наднационална творевина која је одређена пост-демократијом, пост-хришћанством, пост-хуманизмом, те распадом националног идентитета на транс-националне и суб-националне идентитете. У раду се заступа мишљење да Русија, у реинтерпретацији своје улоге и свог смисла у XXI. веку, мора да пође од преображаја Запада у Мегалополис, и чињенице да Мегалополис Русију позиционира као цивилизацијског ривала, будући да се Русија није одрекла својих хуманистичких и хришћанских темеља. То значи да Русија практично баштини традиције европског хуманизма и хришћанства, ако се те традиције схвате као спој источног и западног канона (утемељених на Источном и Западном римском царству). У тексту се даље наглашава да је епохална интенција Мегалополиса преображај човека у биочестицу, а самим тим, и замена суверене власти биовлашћу. У том контексту, доминантну улогу у обликовању свести човека добијају медији у власти корпорација и транснационалне олигархије. Кључно питање које се поставља као тема за размишљање на крају текста јесте да ли и на који начин Русија и све друге земље којима је стало до суверенитета,*

*могу да парирају преображају човека у биочестицу  
на коме институира Мегалополис.*

**Кључне речи:** *Мегалополис, Запад, Русија, хуманизам,  
биочестица.*

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## **THE NEW GLOBAL SPATIAL AND GEOPOLITICAL ORDER TRIGGERED BY RUSSIA AFTER THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE: WHAT PERSPECTIVES FOR EUROPE?**

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### **Abstract**

*With the start of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, the world is moving towards a multicentric geopolitical configuration that calls into question the old balances, with no possibility of returning to the pre-conflict situation. In retrospect, the wars in the Balkans at the time of the dissolution of Yugoslavia can be seen as a manoeuvring ground for the unipolar spatial order imposed on Europe by the United States, and is now called into question by the conflict in Ukraine. Against this backdrop of the emergence of a new geopolitical configuration, what are the options and prospects for EU Member States, but also for the European Balkan states that are not members of the EU but are engaged in a rapprochement with the EU, such as Serbia? Having analysed the international situation from a geopolitical perspective, we can consider which scenario would most likely stem the escalation of this conflict. The promotion of a more stable Europe with a reduced risk of conflict necessarily requires an agreement*

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*between the different States to negotiate a new European geopolitical architecture, a prerequisite for more room for manoeuvre and independence for European nations in the context of great power rivalry. In this analysis, geopolitical cartography will be used to illustrate the issues but also to emphasise the spatial angle as an analytical tool.*

**Key Words:** *Geopolitics, Russia, Ukraine, Europe, EU, Serbia, Republic of Srpska, USA, China, NATO.*

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## **THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW SPATIAL AND GEOPOLITICAL ORDER: THE GEOPOLITICAL TRIAD OF THE USA, RUSSIA, AND CHINA – AND THE EU AS A PERIPHERY**

The conflict in Ukraine reinforces the thesis that the new geopolitical configuration on a global scale is characterised by a struggle for the distribution of geopolitical spaces between major powers. On a global scale, this conflict is part of the clarification, by means of military but also geo-economic tools, of the global geopolitical balance and its new configuration in the twenty-first century dominated by three main poles, the United States, China, and Russia, and in Europe the geopolitical rivalry between the United States and Russia. Following the transformation of the spatial order resulting from the crisis in Ukraine, a new balance of power is emerging in the world, characterised by the re-emergence of Russia and the rise of China, causing the fragmentation of the old unipolar spatial order.

The United States and its NATO allies, who make up the West, have exercised supremacy in the depths of the European continent since the demise of the USSR, with successive enlargements of NATO. The Russian army's special military operation is above all the consequence of NATO and its military bases moving closer to Russia's borders with the aim of encirclement. This development has of course been perceived as a threat by Russia, which is seeking to rebalance geopolitical forces. Russia's strategic stance is also an extension of the long European tradition of the balance of power and as "the balance of power in the world has been upset" (Putin 2022), Moscow felt that it had to be re-established. This crisis is also the consequence, linked to the previous one,

of Washington's refusal (Arms Control Association 2022) to negotiate a new European security architecture proposed by Moscow in 2021 (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2021), with the main demand being a halt to NATO enlargement.

There are many other recent factors at the root of the conflict. First of all, there has been the failure to implement the Minsk agreements, which were supposed to overcome the crisis in Ukraine since 2014, both because of the refusal of successive Ukrainian governments following the change of regime in 2014 to implement them, in particular the federalisation of Ukraine to grant autonomy to the Donbass republics, and because of the inaction of the French and German diplomats, who were the guarantors of the process, to put pressure on Ukraine. It is now clear that the aim of the new regime in Kiev was not to find a lasting way out of the fighting, but to gain time and strengthen its military position with a view to a confrontation with Russia, as the new Ukrainian President, Petro Poroshenko, has admitted. (Porochenko 2021). It was confirmed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel (*Die Zeit* 2022) and French president François Hollande (*The Kyiev Independent* 2022.) interviews.

It is a geopolitical error of judgement to believe that Moscow would not at some point react to the expansion of the United States and NATO over the long term, especially as the Russia-Georgia war demonstrated that NATO enlargement was a red line for Moscow (Thomann, 2008). In 1997, the man who designed the policy of containing the USSR during the Cold War, George Kennan (Kennan, 1997), like many other experts (Los Angeles Times. 1997)<sup>1</sup>, warned that "NATO enlargement would be the most fatal mistake in American policy in the entire post-Cold War era" (Map 1: Ukraine conflict: a consequence of NATO expansion).

The decisive battle for world order that is taking place in Ukraine has largely been provoked by Washington, which is pursuing its geopolitical strategy of fragmenting the Russian world (with a fratricidal war between Moscow and Kiev) but also Europe, in order to torpedo any potential European or Eurasian agreement on a Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis extended towards Beijing, and to pursue its grand strategy of encircling Eurasia against Russia and China. By waging a proxy war in support of the Kiev regime against Moscow (*Washington Post*, 2023), the aim is to preserve Washington's supremacy in Europe and the world, since

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<sup>1</sup> Many American strategists have warned of the risk of conflict if NATO were to be enlarged at Russia's expense: George Kennan, Henry Kissinger, Jack F. Matlock, Bill Burns, Thomas L. Friedman, Stephen Cohen, William Perry, John Mearsheimer...

an alliance between Germany, France and Russia would be able to counterbalance the United States and its loyal second-in-command the United Kingdom. With remarkable continuity, the United States seeks to prevent the emergence of a power that could challenge its status as a world power on the Eurasian continent. This geopolitical constant, the Wolfowitz Doctrine, was re-emphasised at the end of the Cold War in 1992 (Tyler 1992). The vision of “Euramerica from Vancouver to Kiev” has been imposed as opposed to the “Europe from Brest to Vladivostok” that General de Gaulle had anticipated as he spoke of “Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals”).

It would be difficult for the United States to wage a conflict on two fronts against Russia and China, which have been designated as its adversaries (The White House 2022). It is therefore in their interest to prolong the conflict and make Russia the enemy of the European member states of NATO and the EU, so as not to overextend their manoeuvre to encircle Eurasia. Hence the torpedoing of negotiations between Kiev and Moscow in March 2022 according to President Vladimir Putin (*Tass* 2023)

In view of the massive financial and military aid provided by Washington to Kiev, which far exceeds that of other contributors (Masters J, Merrow W. 2023), everything seems to indicate that Washington considers Russia (even if opinions differ) the most serious threat because Moscow challenges American hegemony in Europe, its last remaining exclusive zone of influence in the world. Moscow is proposing a European and Eurasian civilisational model as an alternative to the Americanised West, in phase with the multipolar world (Putin 2022). However, China cannot allow Russia to lose this conflict, nor can it allow Washington to accelerate its geopolitical encirclement, as it would end up caught between an expanding Euro-Atlantic front in Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific front.

On a global scale, however, since the launch of its military intervention in Ukraine in February 2022, Russia has made the most significant geopolitical gain by accelerating a shift in alliances towards a more multicentric world, definitively calling into question the unipolar vision of Washington and its close allies. Indeed, most Eurasian, African and Latin American states are refusing to align themselves with the “collective West” in a geo-economic war against Russia (map 2: Sanctions against Russia after its military operation in Ukraine, Rise of Eurasian globalization). This has also led to the weakening of multilateral institutions, which are incapable of applying international law because it is subject to contradictory and unilateral interpretations. To sum up, since 1991, when



the USSR came to an end, we have moved from a bipolar to a unipolar and finally a multipolar configuration.

The distribution of power within the Euro-Atlantic geopolitical order, on the other hand, is increasingly hierarchical in favour of the United States. If we look at a world map, only the EU is aligned with the United States when it comes to sanctions against Russia. By deciding to deliver arms to Ukraine in synergy with NATO and in co-belligerence with Ukraine, without a clear strategy and without identifying common geopolitical interests independently among Europeans, this means a geopolitical subjugation of the EU Member States to the United States, the opposite of strategic independence. If the EU sees itself as complementary to NATO, it reinforces its marginalisation and its status as a periphery of the Euro-Atlantic area. Following in the footsteps of Washington and NATO, with its support for Kiev against Moscow, the EU is being transformed into a second front line under NATO leadership, with the United States manoeuvring behind Ukraine against Russia.

The President of the European Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen (Von der Leyen 2019) stressed in 2019 that Europe needed a geopolitical commission. The European Union is merely positioning itself as an instrument of Washington's geopolitical strategy. From the geopolitical angle, the EU does not object to being a Rimland, the theatre of operations for Washington's great manoeuvre to encircle Eurasia (Brzezinski, 1997, Florian L. 2014, Mitchell, 2018)<sup>2</sup>. Since the EU rejects the model of a multicentric world (European Parliament 2019)<sup>3</sup>, *de facto*, under the guise

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<sup>2</sup> This geopolitical vision focusing on the Rimland finds its source in the doctrine of Nicolas Spykman. The Rimland, according to the geopolitical theory of Nicholas John Spykman (1893-1943), professor of international relations at Yale University in the United States, is the heavily populated coastal strip to the west, south and east of the Eurasian continent. This area is decisive for the control of the Eurasian continent to prevent a rival power of the United States from controlling the entire space. According to him, the state that controls the Rimland can control the Heartland (the area of central Eurasian lands previously identified by Sir Halford Mackinder as decisive) and therefore the world. The containment policy of the USSR during the Cold War was inspired by this theory, but also the dominant geopolitical representations in the United States until today. The Rimland is thus the main theatre of the geopolitical strategy of the United States and its close allies which consists in enveloping this Eurasian continent by the East European and Indo-Pacific fronts. The Brzezinski doctrine then aimed to detach Ukraine from Russia to reduce Russia to the status of a regional power. Finally, Wess Mitchell under the presidency of Donald Trump, stressed that the United States has always sought to protect the European Rimland against Russia

<sup>3</sup> In the European Parliament's resolution of 12 March 2019 on the state of political relations between the European Union and Russia, it is stated that "Considering that Russia's polycentric vision of the concert of powers contradicts the Union's belief in multilateralism and a rules-based international order; that Russia's adherence to and support for a rules-based multilateral order would create the conditions for a strengthening of relations with the Union."

of promoting multilateralism, it is in favour of a unipolar order dominated by the West. The West is a geopolitical representation that stems from the Cold War and the unipolar period that followed the demise of the USSR and refers to the states that make up the Atlantic alliance with the United States as its leader. The EU is aligning itself *de facto* with Washington's geopolitical priorities, seeing Russia as a strategic challenge and China as a systemic challenge (European Council, 2022). The apparent unity within the European Union is merely a sign of its subservience to the United States and NATO, the ultimate stage in the Americanisation of Europe through its lack of an independent geopolitical strategy. The European Union's new strategic compass (European Council, 2022) is merely a subset of the strategy of the United States and NATO in Europe. The Europeans of the EU thus become the adjustment variable of world geopolitics, because EU Member States do not identify their own common geopolitical priorities separate from Washington's geopolitical priorities, particularly regarding Russia. The EU, driven by growing internal divisions - between southern and northern Europe on economic issues, between eastern and western Europe on values and migration, Brexit - has found a convenient enemy in Russia to mask its growing internal geopolitical fragmentation and its marginalisation in the great power rivalry. The objectives to be achieved by supporting Ukraine, whether to contain or, for the most ambitious, to break up Russia into several states (European Conservatives and Reformist Group 2023), are the subject of disagreement between the Member States.

According to this scenario, the European nations will be placed under the guardianship of a Euro-Atlanticist bloc exclusively dependent on flows to the United States and cut off from links with Russia, perhaps soon even China. Washington is putting increasing pressure on the EU to impose sanctions against China. This situation is distracting the EU from the real jihadist threat in the South and from the challenges posed by migratory pressures. However, this drift did not start with the crisis in Ukraine, but with the Balkan wars in the 1990s.

## **THE BALKAN WARS, A FIELD OF MANOEUVRE FOR THE UNIPOLAR SPATIAL ORDER CHALLENGED BY THE WAR IN UKRAINE**

The process of "*NATO-issation*" of the EU, i.e., the European project under the cross-control of Washington by virtue of its complementarity

with NATO, began with the wars in Yugoslavia and NATO's military operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1995) and Kosovo (1999). These first military operations in NATO's history constituted a geopolitical laboratory for the unipolar order project of Washington and its allies, Berlin in particular. This unipolar spatial order has today reached its limit with the crisis in Ukraine.

In Yugoslavia, the capitals of the external powers responsible for aggravating the crisis and escalating the conflict in accordance with their geopolitical interests were Berlin and Washington. Paris, because of the geopolitical priority given to the Franco-German couple in the negotiation of the Maastricht Treaty, did not reactivate its historic alliance with Serbia as in the First World War, and aligned itself with German American priorities (Gallois 2011), while the United Kingdom did the same because of its special relationship with the United States. Russia, weakened following the dissolution of the USSR, was unable to oppose the priorities of Berlin and Washington and their instrument NATO.

Ideologies change but geopolitical tropisms remain. As far as the Balkans are concerned, the Germans' objective, following their plans to dominate the Balkans during the First and Second World Wars (Korinman, 1990), was in fact to dismantle Yugoslavia as early as the 1960s (Schmidt-Eenboom, 1995), with persistent support for separatist factions in Yugoslavia. During the Yugoslav crisis, Berlin unilaterally recognised Slovenia and Croatia in 1991, prompting other previously reluctant EEC members, particularly France (Stark 1992), to follow suit after this *fait accompli*. Berlin's objective was to continue the dismantling of the spatial and geopolitical order resulting from the Treaty of Versailles, but under cover of the EEC and NATO. Indeed, the creation of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia after the First World War had been promoted and supported by the United States, France, and the United Kingdom, to contain Germany in Central Europe and the Balkans. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Washington, after supporting Yugoslav unity, changed its position and contributed to the torpedoing of the negotiations under the aegis of the Europeans. On 18 March 1992, the Bosnian Muslim leader Alija Izetbegović, encouraged by Washington, rejected the Carrington-Cutileiro plan (the Republic of Srpska, 2020) to continue the war against the Serbs in Bosnia. Washington then supported a Muslim-Croat federation (Washington agreements in March 1994) against the Serbs of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, which aggravated the conflict and led to the Dayton agreements (1995). In Kosovo, the United States

and NATO intervened to force Yugoslav troops to withdraw (1999). These successive interventions inaugurated a process of enlargement of NATO and the EU and thus an expansion of the Euro-Atlantic area into the former Yugoslavia under Washington's direction. Croatia, Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, and Slovenia are now members of NATO. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo aspire to membership, only Serbia has not applied to join NATO.

As far as Ukraine is concerned, the major factor in the conflict is also the attempt to extend the Euro-Atlantic space into the former USSR, particularly into Ukraine. From the point of view of geopolitical tropisms, for Germany, the objective of the Nazi regime was already to seize Ukraine (Franc 2018), as an extension of the Pan-Germanist plans to extend Germany's *Lebensraum* (living space). Today, the dominant view in Germany is that Ukraine should be westernised, i.e., oriented towards the Euro-Atlantic area according to German American priorities. For the United States, the objective is to detach Ukraine from Russia in accordance with the Brzezinski doctrine (Brzezinski 1995).

However, unlike the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, Russia has once again become the central power in Eurasia and will no longer tolerate the unlimited expansion of the Euro-Atlantic area into its immediate neighbourhood (Finland and Sweden are already *de facto* part of the Euro-Atlantic area and were never part of the USSR).

Since NATO's interventions in the Balkans and their consequences, the *ex-nihilo* creation of states such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, played a fundamental role in the implementation of the unipolar spatial order, it is not surprising that they are taken as a reference in controversies about the war in Ukraine in relation to international law. Moscow's reference to the NATO operation in Kosovo in 1999 serves as a mirror for the special military operation in Ukraine (Putin 2022). This argumentation accompanies the transition to a multipolar spatial and geopolitical order, superimposed on the unipolar spatial order that favoured the supremacy of the United States.

From a legal point of view, the crisis in Ukraine echoes the crisis in Kosovo, where a unilateral interpretation of international law was imposed by NATO member states. Today, as there is no agreement on the spatial and geopolitical order between the major powers, there can be no agreement on the interpretation of the international normative regime, according to the key idea of Carl Schmitt in his book *The Nomos of the Earth* (Schmitt 2012). In the absence of a multilateral consensus, there are only unilateral interpretations of the law. This legal *no man's*

land is above all the consequence of the unilateral interpretation, or non-compliance, with international law by the United States and its NATO allies during its previous crises: the NATO operation in Kosovo in 1999, but also the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The principles of the United Nations Charter, the right of peoples to self-determination and the territorial integrity of states, have been instrumentalised to suit the geopolitical interests of the United States and its NATO allies during their period of world domination (the unipolar moment) following the demise of the USSR. Following NATO's military operation against Yugoslavia, the United States made it clear that the principle of the territorial integrity of States did not prevent the secession of a territory in the case of Kosovo (International Court of Justice, 2009). Today, this argument logically reinforces Russia's case for legitimising the border changes in Ukraine.

From the point of view of the war of communication, we can observe the same phenomenon of bias in the media of NATO member states, against the Russians in the case of the current conflict in Ukraine, and against the Serbs during the conflicts in former Yugoslavia (Republic of Srpska 2020). The history of the wars in former Yugoslavia needs to be rewritten, and this will also be the case for the conflict in Ukraine, because the non-explicit geopolitical issues are being glossed over and the media are producing biased narratives that do not reflect reality. The disinformation that has prevailed to this day, and which justified NATO's intervention in former Yugoslavia, has not been called into question and is still the subject of an omerta of geopolitical realities in the Western media and academic world, apart from a few exceptions (Halimi, Rimbart 2019). More recent expert reports highlight the biased view of events in former Yugoslavia, which led to only one side, the Serbs, being blamed in a strategy of demonisation and ostracization that continues to this day (Republic of Srpska. 2020).

## **A NEW, UNSTABLE, CONFIGURATION FOR EUROPE**

The new emerging geopolitical configuration is characterised by uncertainty but will in any case be highly complex and fluid. Behind the term multipolar world lies a far more complex configuration than this geopolitical representation suggests. It is not a multipolarity resembling the concert of nations in nineteenth-century Europe, but a global fragmentation with different geopolitical orders competing not

only in terms of geostrategy, but also in terms of values, the cement of the regional geopolitical order (Orford 2021). These spatial and geopolitical orders will compete and clash on the territory because their ideal territorial envelopes will overlap. With a fluid geopolitical situation on the horizon, there will be no respite from the fixed borders of the Cold War. The new confrontation between the powers in Europe could reawaken all the historical conflicts and disputes around Europe's geographical perimeter. After the Black Sea and Ukraine, the Caucasus, the Balkans, North Africa, the Near and Middle East and the Arctic are likely to be destabilised in a highly dynamic process. At the same time, the multilateral system based on the geopolitical balances of 1945 (UN, OSCE, Council of Europe) and controlled by the Atlanticist West, because of disagreements between States, is increasingly inoperative, because it is based on an old spatial order that no longer exists (there is no acceptable international legal system between major powers without a spatial and geopolitical order).

Against this backdrop, and opting for a headlong rush, Ukraine was granted EU candidate country status at the European summit on 23 June 2022, to anchor Ukraine to the Euro-Atlantic area in accordance with the vision of the spatial order of the unipolar period of US domination after the demise of the USSR. Yet Ukraine's potential accession to the EU is a poisoned chalice<sup>4</sup>. In the current balance of power, overcoming the Ukrainian question will require a partition of its territory and will constitute a major obstacle in the accession negotiations if the new borders and the attachment of the new territories to Russia are not recognised by the EU. What's more, the EU as it operates today will not be able to absorb Ukraine because of the financial burden that it would entail. A far-reaching reform of the EU accompanying this enlargement would be dangerous because of the profound disagreements between states. Moreover, Kiev would seek to take advantage of its status as a Member State to torpedo any relations with Russia<sup>5</sup>, further fracturing the EU

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<sup>4</sup> Giving in a hurry to political promises such as the enlargement of the EU to include Ukraine and Moldova, or even Georgia and all the countries of the Eastern Partnership later, will aggravate tensions and disappoint the people. Continuing the headlong rush towards enlargement will strengthen the geopolitical rivalry between France and Germany, further fragment the EU into rival sub-groups that risk being exploited by external powers, reinforce the division in favour of Washington's hegemony and aggravate the systemic conflict with Russia. These enlargements are conceived as a manoeuvre to encircle Russia and China, not as a reinforcement of the European project, based on greater strategic independence and a reunification of European civilisation.

<sup>5</sup> NATO's enlargement to include the former USSR states is now a *casus belli*. Pushing Ukraine and Georgia into a bloc policy has turned these countries into frontline states rather than bridges

between Poland and the Baltic States, which are the closest to the United States, and France, Germany, and Italy, which are keen to maintain links with Russia in the post-conflict period, as well as Hungary, which rejects sanctions. This possible enlargement would reinforce the Franco-German geopolitical rivalry (Thomann 2022) because it would also accelerate a shift in the EU's centre of gravity towards Germany and the east of the continent, absorbing funding to the detriment of Latin and Mediterranean Europe. The result would be to lock EU's external relations into a systemic rivalry with Russia, in alignment with the interests of Washington and London and therefore to the detriment of the long-term priorities of Germany and France. The European political community initiated by Paris (Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, France, 2022) undoubtedly has the implicit aim of slowing down the enlargement process or torpedoing it. Is the accession process stillborn and will it get bogged down as in the case of Turkey?

The main trend scenario is therefore for the situation to continue to worsen, with the future European and global space order at stake, hence the growing co-belligerence in support of Ukraine against Russia and under pressure from the military-industrial complex. The current conflict is taking on the dimensions of a systemic geopolitical conflict on a global scale between the promoters of the multipolar world (Russia, China, and the BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation members) and those who are seeking to slow down this development by clinging to the unipolar illusion (Washington/London/Brussels...), with a whole range of intermediate positions for the middle powers. This development goes against the interests of the peoples and nations of Europe in achieving greater stability, by leading the EU and NATO Member States towards Atlanticist priorities against Russia and China. This development means that the EU, rather than drifting towards a continental European area of cooperation, gradually extended to Eurasia, is instead drifting towards the status of a periphery of the Euro-Atlantic area dominated by the United States. How then can we limit the rise to extremes for Europeans who are located on one of the theatres of confrontation (the European Rimland)?

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for stabilising the continent. As a result, the buffer zones that are crucial to continental stability are the focus of destabilisation attempts that will affect the whole of Eurasia: the European Balkans, the Caucasian Balkans, Central Asia and Afghanistan, as well as the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Arctic, the rivalries between the major powers in these areas affect the security of the whole region

## DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

If we think in terms of scenarios, we can identify two different trends for simplicity's sake. The trend scenario is the continuation of a rise to extremes and the widening of the geopolitical conflict, with increasing co-belligerence (geostrategic and geo-economic) on the part of the States of the collective West, which are refusing the emergence of a multipolar world to weaken Russia. This process is leading to a deepening rift between the Atlanticist Western states and Russia and China, while the Global South and the Eurasian countries are coming closer together to build an alternative form of globalisation to the Americanised liberal West. These irreconcilable geopolitical rivalries are leading to a situation of permanent global conflict, affecting all areas of confrontation, and causing fractures in Europe as the stakes increase. This scenario is the most dangerous, because the situation could slide into other high-intensity conflicts between major powers. A ceasefire or a temporary agreement on the Ukrainian question (partition of Ukraine as in Korea, a frozen conflict) could also freeze the military situation precariously, but the war could reignite in the short to medium term because the pause would be used to rearm Ukraine (scenario 1).

If the NATO/Ukraine war against Russia were to escalate into a permanent systemic conflict, there would be a risk of spill-over into areas of confrontation in the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East, North Africa, and the Sahel. Now in overdrive, the Washington/NATO/EU continuum in confrontation with Russia is putting pressure on European states such as Hungary and Serbia, but also on countries in Eurasia, Africa and South America that refuse to align with its geopolitical priorities. The result of this process is to fracture and destabilise Europe and its margins through the persistence of Washington/NATO/EU in seeking to impose a unipolar spatial and geopolitical order.

Washington/Brussels could seek to speed up the enlargement of the EU and NATO, with the aim of redirecting the candidate countries away from Russia and China, since the EU is positioning itself as Rimland, as part of the US strategy of encircling Eurasia. The EU's priority in the Western Balkans is to act in synergy with Washington and NATO to counter Russia, not to integrate Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo into a geopolitical strategy designed to make the EU an independent geopolitical power or to promote the strengthening/national renaissance of the candidate countries. However, the EU is likely to become increasingly



divided on the question of enlargement to include Ukraine/Moldova, because the EU, as mentioned before, does not have the absorption capacity for the integration of Ukraine as it operates today. Because of the size of Ukraine's territory (a territory larger than France) and its large (albeit shrinking) population, Ukraine would absorb a huge proportion of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy and regional policy, and this would make negotiations between the Member States very difficult. However, before thinking about enlargement, given the current state of the conflict and the seemingly inevitable territorial partition of Ukraine, the recognition of new borders will have to be considered *de facto* or *de jure*, i.e., the acceptance of the attachment of Crimea, Donbass, and the oblasts of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson to Russia. The example of Cyprus is a reminder that importing unresolved issues before joining the EU leads to blockages later. Such a development could provoke a major diplomatic crisis with Turkey and the Western Balkan states, if Ukraine/Moldova were given priority for funding and the speed of enlargement negotiations, resulting in a blatant case of double standards. NATO, for its part, is very divided over the possible enlargement of NATO to include Ukraine (which territories? aggravating the *casus belli* with Russia).

## **WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS?**

In this geopolitical context, do the Western Balkan states have a geopolitical interest in joining the EU, or even NATO? For countries such as Serbia and the Republic of Srpska, (entity of Serbs in Bosnia) which are neither in the EU nor NATO and are seeking to preserve their autonomy, the situation will inevitably become tense as considerable pressure will be put on them to choose sides. If Serbia seeks to join the EU, or even NATO, Belgrade would *de facto* be placed at the service of Euro-Atlantic priorities against Russia and China, while Turkey continues its entryism in the Balkans because it is a member of NATO and remains useful for destabilising Russia in the theatres where it is present (Balkans, Caucasus, Central Asia, etc.). There is a risk that the Balkans will once again become a theatre of hybrid wars between Russia and the United States and its allies. In the context of the current systemic geopolitical rivalries, Serbia risks losing its room for manoeuvre, and for the Republic of Srpska within Bosnia-Herzegovina, the pressure would be even greater.

The current geopolitical situation in the Balkans is characterised by interlocking configurations, with a strategy of triple encirclement of Eurasia, the Western Balkans, and the Serbian world by NATO. As part of Washington's grand strategy of encircling Eurasia and turning Europe into a Rimland against Russia, the geopolitical strategy of encircling the Western Balkans and Serbia by the Washington/Berlin/NATO/EU continuum continues at regional level. The aim of maintaining a united Bosnia-Herzegovina is simultaneously to detach the Republic of Srpska from Serbia and, combined with Kosovo's independence, to prevent the unification of the Serbian nation. This is in line with the German and American strategy of encircling Serbia to prevent Russia's return to the Balkans. According to the scenario of increasing pressure and dominance from Washington/Berlin/NATO/EU, the ultimate objective is then to absorb the various states of the Western Balkans into the EU and NATO, once the policy of balkanising Yugoslavia has succeeded, after separating Montenegro from Serbia to cut off Serbia's access to the sea. (Map 4, NATO concentric and multi-scalar geopolitical encirclement strategy).

Brussels, supported by France and Germany (*Euractiv* 2022), is pushing for the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, which would lead to the *de facto* recognition of Kosovo. The EU is also demanding that Belgrade apply sanctions against Russia, to cut off its historical links with Russia. The aim is also to distance the Republic of Srpska from Serbia and Russia to torpedo any counterweight to the supremacy of Washington and its NATO allies. Serbia, which does over 60% of its trade with the EU, is being blackmailed into changing its alliances<sup>6</sup>. This growing pressure could eventually lead to destabilisation and attempts at regime change.

Because of the priority given to Ukraine and Moldova for the so-called pre-accession funding programmes, but also for reconstruction in favour of Kiev, there is little interest for Serbia and the Republic of Srpska for joining the EU. In the EU as it functions today, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina would only obtain the status of second-class member states (less funding but economic predation and societal colonisation by the EU (open society, no borders, immigration), very little political weight (no European commissioner, little weight in the Council and European

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<sup>6</sup> Investment from the EU risks being monopolised by an oligarchy and benefiting only a minority, and would accelerate the destruction of the national economy in a process of economic colonisation that would see the country suffer a brain drain of graduates to the West (as in the central European states of the EU). Societal reforms (open society), as in the West, will dissolve Serbian identity in a process of westernisation that will lead to increasing cultural alienation.

Parliament, no important posts in the EU and transition periods to reduce funding and imports manufactured in Serbia).

If Serbia wants to preserve its independence, it would be wiser to stay out of Euro-Atlantic alliances and pursue a policy of geopolitical balance and multi-faceted diplomacy. As an alternative, Serbia could promote multiple coalitions, bilateral or broader, with closer ties to certain countries, such as France, Germany, Italy, Austria, or Hungary, depending on the objective to be achieved.

A different scenario is one in which Russia emerges even stronger from the conflict against Kiev, supported by NATO, in the context of a rise in power of non-NATO states that wish to do away with the old order. Faced with a growing inability to prevent the inevitable emergence of a multicentric world, Washington, and its NATO/EU allies, instead of taking increasingly destabilising action, would be *de facto* forced to accept the multipolarisation of the world and stop raising the stakes, particularly because of the nuclear risk (scenario 2). This scenario would be favoured, for example, by the possible reduction in Washington's aid to Ukraine with the return of the Republicans in the American elections. This is the only scenario, although unlikely today, that could lead to relative stability, albeit precarious and temporary. According to this scenario, Serbia, and the Republic of Srpska have no interest in joining the EU either, which would also be weakened, unless there is a drastic reform of the way it works as well as its paradigms, which is today unlikely. Outside EU Serbia and Republic of Srpska would then take advantage of a better European and global geopolitical balance to preserve a multi-faceted diplomacy, especially by preserving their links with Russia, but also with China.

To favour the scenario most favourable to Europeans who wish to avoid a situation of permanent conflict accelerating the EU's drift towards peripheral status, we need to avoid a New Cold War and promote a new European geopolitical architecture, including Russia, which would be judicious for the European nations.

## **A NEW EUROPEAN GEOPOLITICAL ARCHITECTURE BASED ON THE NEW SPATIAL ORDER**

Let us remember that the international system today is a struggle to distribute geopolitical spaces. As Raymond Aron has pointed out (Aron 1962), any international order is necessarily a spatial (and therefore

geopolitical) order. A new spatial order is emerging, reminiscent of the *Grossraum* described by Carl Schmitt, which structures international space (Schmitt 2012). The whole of Europe and its geographical proximity risk being the theatre of permanent confrontation and all the frozen conflicts could escalate. It is an illusion to think that every regional conflict in Europe and Eurasia can be resolved on a case-by-case basis, because they are all interlinked, and their resolution depends on the acceptance of a new spatial and geopolitical order. The condition for a shared interpretation of international law by the major powers is to reach at least a temporary and precarious agreement on the spatial and geopolitical order between them. It is therefore a systemic approach on a continental scale that would be judicious, opening the way to a new Eurasian geopolitical architecture that would be the key and the condition for the stability of the whole.

The European project faces some drastic choices in the longer term: can the EU confine itself as it does today to playing the role of Rimland in the strategy of the United States and rearm against Russia without any independent geopolitical strategy, as proposed by Josep Borell, head of the EU's external service (Borell 2023)? This suits some NATO member states, but it will lead to an arms race and a lasting European fracture with the emergence of the Washington-London-Brussels-Warsaw-Kiev axis and a loss of influence of the Franco-German axis and the strengthening of Franco-German geopolitical rivalry (Thomann 2022). Russia, for its part, will pursue its project for a greater Eurasia, and its pivot towards Asia will accelerate. Russia's geo-economic reorientation and changing alliances on a global scale are in its favour, with the EU being the big loser.

According to an alternative scenario, it is up to the Europeans to try to re-engage with Russia in the post-conflict period, as Russia will remain a geographical neighbour of the EU. Russia and Western Europe are inseparable, both geographically and in terms of civilisation. A geopolitical Europe can only reach a minimum threshold of power with Russia. A Europe cut off from its eastern flank will remain no more than a periphery of the Euro-Atlantic area under Washington's domination.

The Greater Eurasia project has never excluded the Europeans (Glaser (Kukartseva. Thomann. 2021), and Vladimir Putin's speech underlined that the Russians remain open to cooperation with the traditional West (Putin 2022), but on condition that Russia's security interests are considered in accordance with the principle of the indivisibility

of security. A better geopolitical balance in Europe is needed to avoid the hegemony of Washington, which is dragging Europeans into conflicts with Russia and China, to the detriment of the national interests of many states and to the sole benefit of the supremacist vision of the neo-conservatives in Washington and the NATO/EU-aligned bureaucracies. Balance does not mean neutrality but counterbalancing an overly dominant pole with another pole of balance. The central challenge for the future is therefore to find a way of containing conflicts in the areas of friction between these hierarchical regional alliances, characterised by a centre and a periphery. The main challenge will be to set limits to the continued expansion of the West under Washington's leadership, which is seeking to impose an exclusive Euro-Atlantic order in Europe, right up to Russia's borders and in the Balkans.

If Europeans try to re-engage with Russia in the post-conflict period, it will be difficult if not impossible to do so through NATO, but also through the EU if it is not reformed, because the member states are very divided on the issue. The Euro-Atlantic geopolitical order, which is exclusive, is obsolete for promoting continental security. The outcome of the conflict in Ukraine is uncertain, but it is clear there will be no turning back, as the global geopolitical shift towards a multicentric world has accelerated once and for all. Enlargement of NATO and the EU is probably impossible in Russia's near abroad, and the EU and NATO will no longer be able to structure the spatial and geopolitical order of the Eurasian continent. The idea of a new European geopolitical architecture with Russia could be based on more solid foundations with the model of a Europe of sovereign nations and the principle of geopolitical balance. The concept of a more balanced security for all the nations of the European and Eurasian continent could replace NATO's doctrine of expansion as a central and priority condition for stabilising Europe. Ultimately, it is also a question of rediscovering the classic negotiations on European, Eurasian, and global balances (map 3: New European geopolitical architecture: for a better European, Eurasian, and global balance).

This new spatial order, as the basis for a new European geopolitical architecture, would ideally include the following elements: a clearer delineation of reciprocal red lines, the neutralisation of buffer states, the negotiation of the geographical limits of alliances, and the avoidance of the installation of offensive military infrastructures on border territories. In the longer term, assuming a return to mutual trust, this new order would go as far as identifying common geopolitical interests such as

stabilising the crisis arc south of the Mediterranean as far as Afghanistan, the fight against jihadism, the energy issue, social inequalities and a new development model, migration, the environment, and the challenge of artificial intelligence.

A new geopolitical architecture would not necessarily take the form of new formal treaties on European security since the major powers do not currently have the same vision of the new spatial and geopolitical order. Failing this ideal option, which could nevertheless be promoted in the longer term, this new space order could emerge in a non-explicit manner, without legal formalisation. It would therefore imply a *de facto* halt to the expansion of both NATO and the EU, a “neutralisation” (neither NATO nor the EU) of Ukraine and the states of the former USSR, the identification of states’ red lines and the negotiation of zones of influence. The disagreements between Turkey and the EU over Cyprus are an example where these incompatibilities do not prevent cooperation on other issues. A way out of the crisis could therefore be facilitated first and foremost by the sending of signals by European states wishing to stabilise the situation and promising to engage in long-term negotiations with Russia. Of course, this objective is extremely difficult in the current configuration, but it is the process of gradually reducing tensions and regaining mutual trust that is most important, even without immediately arriving at a new arrangement. In a geopolitical Europe, like the world and Europe’s long history, treaties are in any case only precarious and temporary, and have never fixed geopolitical configurations that inevitably evolve.

The promotion of a Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis, to balance the Washington-London-Brussels-Warsaw-Kiev axis, would also have to coexist with the Washington-Paris-Berlin axis and the Moscow-Beijing axis. Superimposed on the emerging new spatial order is the multilateral framework, i.e., the international organisations that accompany and stabilise the geopolitical order. Acceptance of the new multipolarity is inevitable. As we have said, once the crisis is over, the necessary stabilisation of the European continent does not necessarily involve the EU and NATO, organisations that reflect and are based on a spatial order linked to the exclusive Euro-Atlanticism that emerged from the Cold War and the unipolar world that led us to the current crisis. The most effective solution would lie in a new arrangement outside the NATO/EU institutions, with smaller and more variable coalitions of states, and why not the creation of new, more appropriate structures. It

would also be essential to restructure the European project and reform the EU accordingly, as its current form is obsolete: maintain the EU as an international organisation on the single market but abandon its supranational and federal drift and question its complementarity with NATO.

If the scenario of a *de facto* acceptance of multipolarity by the Washington/Brussels continuum materialises, like France according to Gaullist vision, the Serbian world would also benefit from the prospect of a new European geopolitical architecture, based on the vision of a Europe of nations, as an alternative to integration into the Euro-Atlantic system in crisis. In this configuration, the various fragmented entities of the Serbian world - Serbia, the Republic of Srpska and the Serbs of Kosovo - would have more room for manoeuvre to draw closer together, or even reunite, in the same way as other major European nations such as Germany and Russia. This stabilisation is the alternative to a situation of permanent conflict in all areas of confrontation, which is particularly unfavourable to Europeans, but less so to Americans on the other side of the Atlantic. The central issue for Europeans, motivated by greater independence, is to become independent from Washington. This halt to the spiral of conflict could ideally lead to a new long-term security treaty, once a new generation of politicians have come to power, because the current leaders are too committed to irreconcilable positions. The worsening of the crisis in the foundations of the current space order may well be the spur needed for innovative geopolitical solutions.

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## **НОВИ СВЕТСКИ ПРОСТОРНИ И ГЕОПОЛИТИЧКИ ПОРЕДАК КОЈИ ЈЕ ПОКРЕНУЛА РУСИЈА ПОСЛЕ УКРАЈИНСКОГ КОНФЛИКТА: КАКВЕ СУ ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ ЗА ЕВРОПУ?**

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### **Апстракт**

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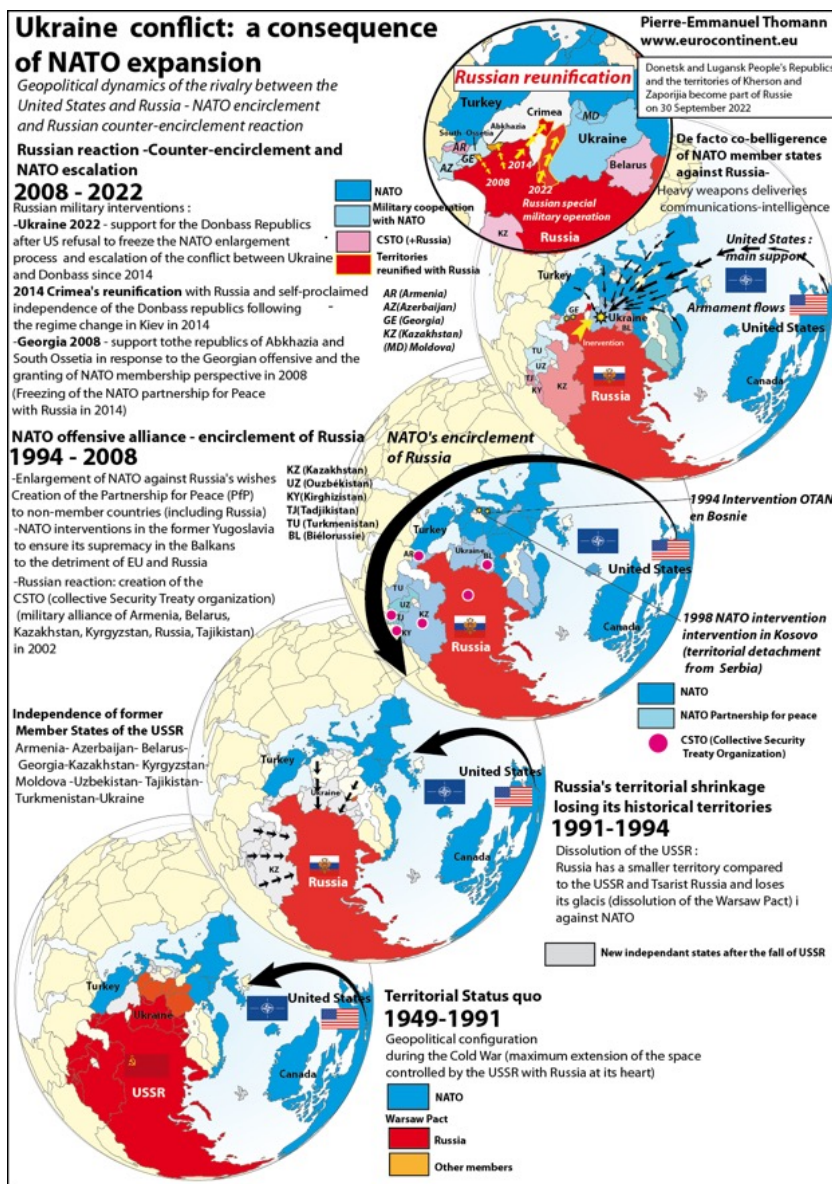
*Са почетком руске специјалне војне операције у Украјини (СВО) у фебруару 2022 свет се покренуо према мултицентричној геополитичкој конфигурацији која доводи у питање старе равнотеже снага, без могућности повратка на пре-конфликтну ситуацију. У ретроспективи, ратови на Балкану у време распада СФРЈ могу се разумети као маневарско поље за униполарни просторни поредак који су САД наметнуле Европи и који се сада доводи у питање са конфликтном у Украјини. У позадини ове појаве нове геополитичке конфигурације, шта су опције и перспективе за државе чланице ЕУ али исто тако и за европске балканске државе које нису чланице ЕУ али су ангажоване у приступним преговорима, као што је то Србија? Анализирајући међународну ситуацију из геополитичке перспективе можемо да размотримо који би сценарио највероватније довео до ескалације конфликта. Промовисање стабилније Европе са смањеним ризиком за конфликт нужно захтева споразум између различитих држава како би се постигао договор о новој европској геополитичкој*

*архитектури, што је услов за већи маневарски простор и аутономију европских народа у контексту ривалства великих сила. У овој анализи, геополитичка картографија ће се користити да илуструје ова питања али исто тако са циљем да се истакне просторни угао као аналитичко средство.*

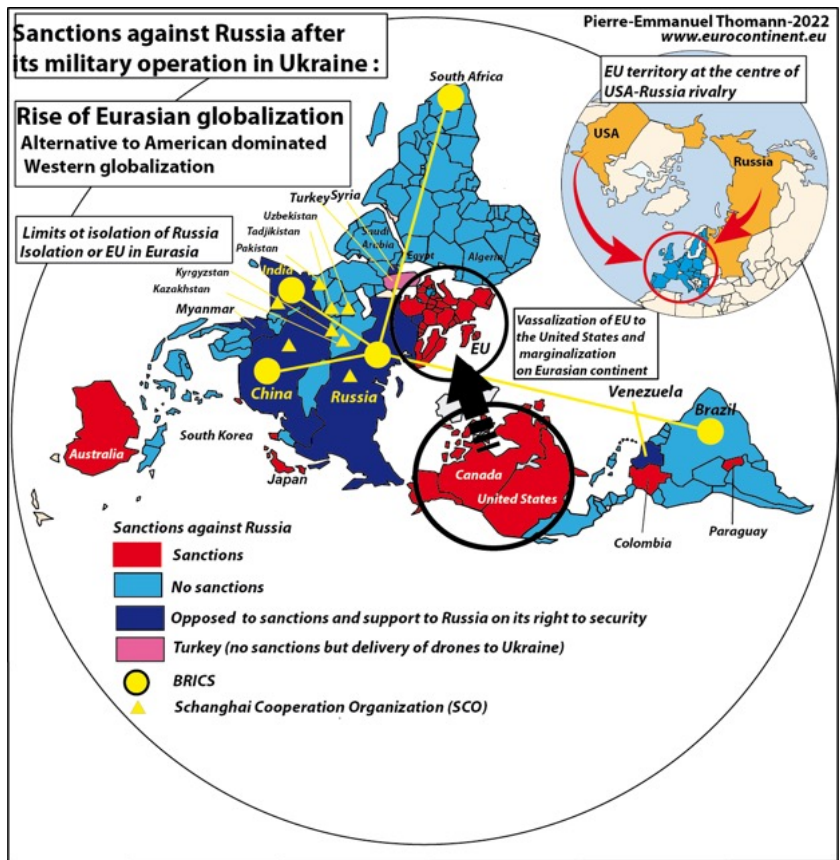
**Кључне речи:** *геополитика, Русија, Украјина, Европа, ЕУ, Србија, Република Српска, САД, Кина, НАТО.*

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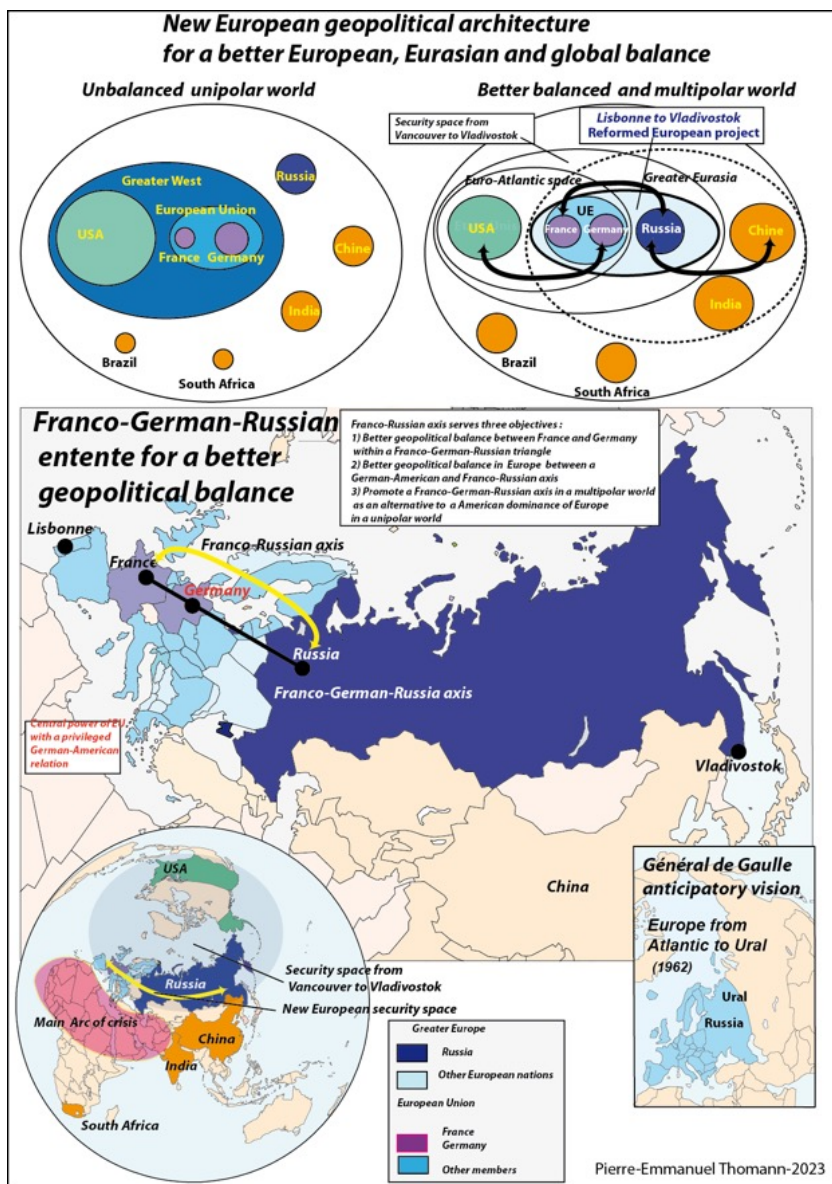
Map 1



### Map 2

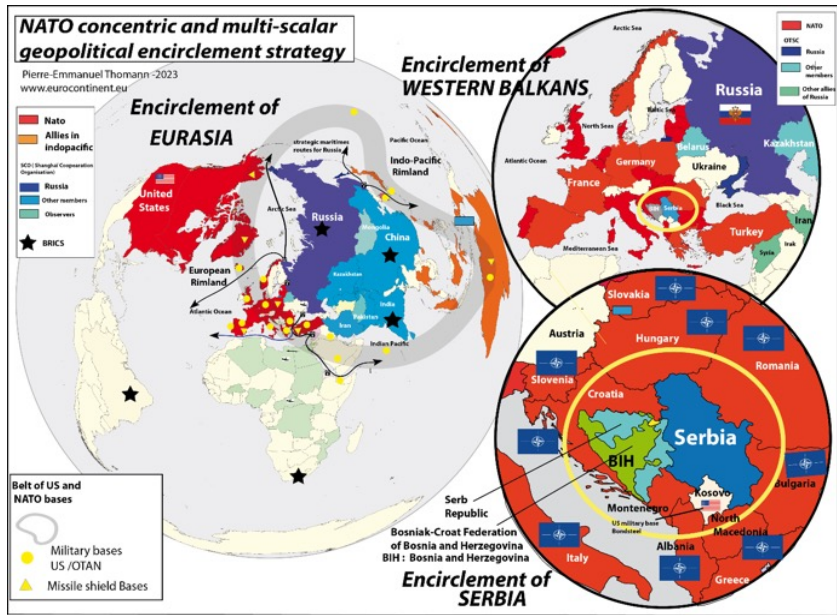


Map 3





# Map 4





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## **PARTNERSHIP OR CONFRONTATION BETWEEN EUROPE AND RUSSIA?**

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### **Abstract**

*The war in Ukraine is anything but an unexpected war. The state of war and the bellicose situation between Europe and Russia were by no means inevitable. They are the consequence of political choices made since the demolition of the Berlin Wall. Understanding the past, its ideological and political battles is the key to facing the present and building a better future for the Eurasian continent. Edgar Morin's "complex thinking" is a good framework for reading the situation, and his understanding of the war in Ukraine has partly borne this out. Drawing also on the concept of "peoplenation" developed by Gabriel Galice, the article examines the respective roles of peoples, elites, and sovereignty in the implementation of foreign policies. It shows how propaganda, by distorting information and communication, creates a reality leading to war. The paper first recounts certain events, actions and reactions that led to the war, then describes the underlying vision of Euro-American supporters of confrontation with Russia, and finally studies the alternative positions in Germany, France, and Switzerland of those who promote a partnership with Russia. To conclude, the*

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*article embeds the Euro-Russian partnership in a balanced global architecture, replacing US-led “effective multilateralism” with genuine polycentric, multipolar multilateralism.*

**Key Words:** *peoples, nations, sovereignty, Eurasia, powers.*

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*“On America’s side, Europe must always keep its eyes open and provide no pretext for retaliation. America is growing every day. It will become a colossal power, and a time must come when, placed in easier communication with Europe by the means of new discoveries, it will wish to have its say in our affairs and to put its hand in them. Political prudence, therefore, imposes on the governments of the old continent the duty of taking scrupulous care that no pretext should arise for such an intervention. The day America sets foot in Europe, peace and security will be banished for a long time”<sup>1</sup>*

Talleyrand, *Mémoires, lettres inédites et papiers secrets*, Paris, Albert Savine, 1891

In Europe - EU and associates - two opposing points of view clash, ordering the choices made by political leaders: a Europe subordinate to the interests and choices of the United States of America on one side, or an independent Europe of sovereign nations building its alliances according to its interests, with a commitment to peace and complementarity with Russia on the other side. If the choice between the two visions was uncertain in the aftermath of the demolition of the Berlin Wall, the supporters of “Euramerica” against Russia have permanently strengthened their positions. Ukraine was the fulcrum against Russia, the European Union the lever (BBC News 2013), the United States the architect on the Eurasian “chessboard”, as explained by Brzezinski (Brzezinski 2016). The Euro-American stakeholders have played their part, accelerating from the Maidan coup in 2014 to the Russian intervention in 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> «Du côté de l’Amérique, l’Europe doit toujours avoir les yeux ouverts et ne fournir aucun prétexte de représailles. L’Amérique s’accroît chaque jour. Elle deviendra un pouvoir colossal et un moment doit arriver où, placée vis-à-vis de l’Europe en communication plus facile par les moyens de découvertes nouvelles, elle désirera dire son mot dans nos affaires et y mettre la main. La prudence politique impose donc aux gouvernements de l’ancien continent le soin de veiller scrupuleusement à ce qu’aucun prétexte ne s’offre pour une telle intervention. Le jour où l’Amérique posera son pied en Europe, la paix et la sécurité en seront bannies pour longtemps.», Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles-Maurice de (1754-1838), 1891. *Mémoires, lettres inédites et papiers secrets*. (Memoirs, unpublished letters and secret papers). Paris: A. Savine.

## A CHAIN OF EVENTS LEADING TO EMPIRE'S WAR

The demolition of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989, then the absorption of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) by the German Federal Republic (GFR) marked the entry into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The implosion of the USSR and the dislocation of the European communist bloc, ending the Cold War, opened a path to peace. Unfortunately, the Western hawks or owls<sup>2</sup> rejected Russia's offers - from Gorbachev to Putin *via* Medvedev - of a collective security, preferring supremacy to balance and peace. The subtitle of Brzezinski's book *The Grand Chessboard* is blindingly clear: "American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives" (Galice 2022). The roadmap was followed to the letter. The EU and NATO have jointly expanded eastwards. When the crisis in Ukraine became severe in 2014, Brzezinski<sup>3</sup> changed his mind, considering then that Ukraine joining NATO was a bad idea. Before that, the war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in 1999 (after sabotage of the Rambouillet negotiations, Kissinger considered the conditions imposed to the FRY as a provocation<sup>4</sup>) (La Gorce 1999), the first NATO war, the same year as the first NATO extension, then the two wars against Iraq separated by the deadly Oil-for-Food Programme, the joint declaration on UN/NATO secretariat cooperation 23 September 2008 (International Peace Institute 2010), the war to Libya 2011 turning from a R2P (responsibility to protect, Russia and China did not veto, for the last time) into a regime change (House of Commons – FAC 2016-17) with assassination of several leaders, including Ghaddafi, and about 30 000 killed, were the main steps toward a harsh confrontation. The Russian authorities reacted in words at the Munich Security Conference 2007, in act in Syria in 2014.

On December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the Russian authorities made a last diplomatic attempt towards the USA and NATO when they met the

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<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Barber poses the difference between subtle owls and brutal hawks, both raptors. Barber, Benjamin, 2004, *Fear's Empire – War, Terrorism and Democracy*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. Bush was a typical hawk, Obama more of an owl, promoting the "Leadership from behind" and supporting the Franco-British attack on Libya.

<sup>3</sup> Brzezinski died in 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Kissinger, Henry. "The Rambouillet text, which called on Serbia to admit NATO troops throughout Yugoslavia, was a provocation, an excuse to start bombing. Rambouillet is not a document that an angelic Serb could have accepted. It was a terrible diplomatic document that should never have been presented in that form", *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 June 1999. The historian Christopher Clark supports this view, asserting that the terms of the 1914 Austro-Hungarian ultimatum to Serbia appear lenient compared to the NATO demands."

US-ambassador (Russian MFA 2021). The western answer was:” The United States and NATO are committed to supporting NATO’s open-door policy” (Arms Control Association 2022). This “open-door policy” contravenes section 1 of the Charter of the United Nations:” To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace...” By denying the obvious, the west pretends: “NATO poses no threat to Russia. NATO believes that tensions and disagreements must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy rather than the threat or the use of force.” After the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact (1 July 1991) the deepening (ceasing to be defensive and limited to the North Atlantic) and the enlargement of NATO were a *fait accompli* without any “dialogue and diplomacy”, contrary to the commitments made.

The Brezinski family embodies the dominant vision of the US elites: while the father, Zbigniew, conceived of the “primacy”, the son Mark strives to implement it as US Ambassador to Warsaw.

Indeed, such a hostile attitude towards Russia and the Russians is not the expression of the will of Europe’s peoples. The populations were either avoided (Germany), duly manipulated (France 1992) (Chevènement 1997) or spurned (Ireland 2011 and 2008, France 2005).<sup>5</sup> The peoples have been deprived of their power, starting with the German people, the initiators of this historic process. Demonstrators in the GDR chanted “We are the people”, then “We are one people”. The West German ruling class opted for the rapid economic absorption of the eastern territories by big western companies and, in legal terms, preferred the “small door” of Article 23 of the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) of integrating “the five new *Länder*” to the “big door” of Article 146, which would have involved a wide-ranging national debate (Zielinski 2011).

The alleged “democrats” mistrust the people on the pretext of “the fight against populism”. The same dislike the nation, as historical form of the people. They prefer large companies that operate under the aegis of the holy ‘market’, preferably capitalist. The conservative Henry Kissinger cautioned against the “perils of globalism” (Kissinger 1998) while the new European social democrats supported the “market economy” enshrined alongside NATO in the Maastricht Treaty. It is to the extent that the left has abandoned the people that working-class voters have turned to far-right parties or taken refuge in abstention (Fourquet 2017). Citizens and

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<sup>5</sup> The referendum on the Constitutional Treaty was rejected by 54,67 % of the French voters. The parliament then decided to adopt the Lisbon Treaty.

Nation support each other. "Today, the nation's political strength lies precisely in its ability to stretch and tighten the bond between the people and the state" writes Gabriel Galice (Galice 2002). The involvement of a people in the nation's foreign policy is also an indication of democracy. The debates in France prior to the 2005 referendum on the Constitutional Treaty were a good example of democratic vitality. In 1992, only massive manipulation of public opinion through outrageous propaganda enabled the "Yes" side to win the French referendum on the Maastricht Treaty by a narrow margin (51.04%). Thirteen years later, thanks to the mobilization of social networks presenting alternative opinions, the citizens massively rejected (54.67%) the draft European Constitutional Treaty. Despite this result, the Parliament approved the text with only a few word changes.

Peoples are victims and hostages of a new global configuration of oligarchic "elites", transnational bourgeoisie. Edgar Morin and Sami Naïr explain the link between conflicting nations and clashing social classes: "But this empire of the liberalized market is not just (...) an abstract, socially disembodied monster. It is in fact identified with the dominant nations - the United States, Germany, Japan - and within them with social classes that have never been in such a favorable situation. This empire is in fact a system of elite alliances on a global scale" (Morin and Nair 1997). Christopher Lasch's observation about "the revolt of the elites" remains relevant, but the people are in turn revolting (Lasch 1996).

## **AN ATLANTIST OLIGARCHIC EUROPE AGAINST RUSSIA**

For thirty years, the USA meticulously moved its pieces on the European chessboard according to Zbigniew Brzezinski's script. The demolition of the Berlin Wall also triggered a leadership change in Europe. By the weight of its population, the strength of its economy, its central place with privileged relations to *Mittleuropa*, unified Germany became the major power, instead of France. The USA therefore played the German card on the continent rather than the British one, much to the disappointment of Mrs. Thatcher (Thatcher 2012). In 1991, the two opposing visions of Europe - Atlantic or continental - broke down for the first time when French President Mitterrand failed to launch a European Confederation close to Russia in Prague (Dumas 2001; Musitelli 2011). The unconditional allies of the USA suggested to include the USA, Canada, and Japan. The Atlantic Europe won a first round against the continental Europe.

A second break occurred in 2003 with the second Gulf War, between the France-Germany-Russia axis resisting American leadership on the one hand and the 'New Europe' (Donald Rumsfeld) shaped by the Eastern European states nurtured by old conflicts with Russia on the other. It is worth noting that the 2003 Azores summit, which paved the way for the war with Bush, Blair, Barroso, and Aznar, was hosted by Prime Minister Manuel Barroso, who was to become President of the European Commission, against the French and German candidate, Guy Verhofstadt (Galice 2015). As the best advocate of the US cause, the UK opposed Verhofstadt, France and Germany resigned themselves and Barroso promoted the Euro-American vision for ten years long before he joined Goldman Sachs bank. Apparently, the new West European elites ignore the past, the interest of their people, the fundamental principles of international law and global challenges. President Sarkozy acted as a frankly pro-American activist when he led France's reintegration into NATO: "France also knows who its allies and friends are our friends and allies are first the Western family. The conditions for independence are first to know where one's family is" (Sarkozy 2009).<sup>6</sup> At the time, François Hollande, leader of the opposition, gave a Gaullist speech in the National Assembly criticizing NATO membership. After his election in 2012, President Hollande endorsed and even reinforced with tax breaks Sarkozy's decision.

It should be noted that 2014 is an essential step in the Atlantic fight against Russia. The overthrow of President Viktor Yanukovych and his replacement by Petro Poroshenko was the culmination of the "Maidan Revolution", described by George Friedman as "the most blatant coup in history." Friedman's interview with *Kommersant* is an outspoken confession of the USA's objectives and methods against Russia (Friedman 2014). The German sociologist Ulrich Beck (1944-2015), a professor at the London School of Economics, theorised about the European empire, whose 'cosmopolitanism' goes hand in hand with the USA. "The mistake is to equate Europe with the contractual form of the "European Union",

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<sup>6</sup> The word « family » sounds here inappropriate. Nevertheless, the private background Sarkozy's family makes sense, as Eric Branca explains in his book *L'ami américain. (The American Friend)* Frank George Wisner is the central person. He married Nicolas Sarkozy's mother-in-law, Christine de Ganay, the third wife of his father, Pal Sarkozy. F.G. Wisner is the son of Frank Gardiner Wisner (1909-1965), one of the founding officers of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and played a major role in CIA operations throughout the 1950s. Frank George was officially a diplomat in strategic embassies or in major missions, he worked for or with the CIA, some assert. Later a businessman. Every summer, the young Nicolas was on holiday with the Wisner Family, with his half-brother and half-sister



when it was precisely the overlap, to some extent the fusion, of America and Europe, the transatlantic alliance, with its shared values (...) that enabled the creation of Europe. (...) Wasn't the United States an informal founding member of the European Union?" (Beck et al. 2007, 42-43 in Chevènement 2016, 181).

At the request of the journal *Recherches Internationales*, Gabriel Galice published the article *Complexes guerres "hybrides" en Ukraine* (Complex "hybrid" wars in Ukraine) in 2019. He concluded: "To understand what is at stake, the strengths and weaknesses of the protagonists on the Ukrainian scene involves considering the visions of the world, the strategic, tactical and operational levels, as well as the political, military and informational dimensions, linked together by the available technologies" (Galice 2019).

One year before the launch of Russia's "special military operation", senior French officers published an open letter to NATO Secretary General Jan Stoltenberg protesting the "NATO 2030" document (NATO 2021). Among other things, they make three criticisms: the designation of China and Russia as "threats", the relegation of consensus and the concentration of power in the hands of the US commander (Capital 2021). Nevertheless, the NATO leaders approved the document in June 2021 (NATO 2030 website).

The war in Ukraine is a test field for the new concepts "war amongst the people" (IRRC 2006), "political warfare" (hunting Russian artists or athletes, banning holders of bank accounts bearing a Russian consonant surname) and "cognitive warfare". The Chinese strategists Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui called this "Unrestricted Warfare" (Qiao and Wang 2015). For Edgar Morin, "There are three wars in one: the continuation of the internal war between the Ukrainian government and the separatist province, the Russian-Ukrainian war, and an internationalised anti-Russian political and economic war waged by the West and led by the United States" (Morin 2023, 75). The fourth war is the one against Europe and its partnership with Russia. Commenting on media disinformation, Morin notes: "Although we are not involved in the war in Ukraine and want to remain so, the French media only report Ukrainian news and thus banish any contextualisation of the conflict. We are exposed to war propaganda that makes us hate Russia, unconditionally admire everything Ukrainian, and obscures any context, including that of the uninterrupted war since 2014 between Ukraine and the irredentist Russian-speaking provinces, as well as the role of the United States, which we will one day

have to examine as historians” (Ibid. 29-30). In doing so, the European Union and its member states flout the “values” they proclaim loud and clear, first and foremost the freedom of expression. The ban on Russian media violates Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” In addition to that, the western media select the NATO oriented opinions of analysts, as many of us experience constantly who are no longer invited in the radio or TV shows. The social medias are also censored. The researchers and academics are obliged to self-censorship, especially the younger ones. The West mistrusts its own values and principles (De Gliniasty 2017). The slogans replace the arguments, the “manufactured emotions” substitute for reason (Redeker 2022).

## A CONTINENTAL DEMOCRATIC EUROPE WITH RUSSIA

### 1. German Views on Continental Europe

Leading politicians, scholars and observers have predicted and warned of the risks of misguided policies, particularly in Germany, France, and Switzerland, highlighting national interests in relation to the future of Europe and Eurasia. Leading German statesmen spoke out against the long-standing control of Europe by the United States. They expressed their desire to break free. State Secretary and Federal Minister for Special Tasks in the Federal Chancellery beside Chancellor Willy Brandt 1969 to 1974, during the *Ostpolitik* (Eastern policy), later Director of the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, Egon Bahr (1922-2015) published a stimulating small book in 1998 entitled: *Deutsche Interessen* (German Interests). Bahr notes: “It is not foolish anti-Americanism that is at issue, but un-American sentiments of non-American humanity, not machinations against America, but assertion of one’s own ideas *vis-à-vis* America” (Bahr 1998, 99).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> „Nicht törichter Antiamerikanismus steht zur Rede, sondern unamerikanische Empfindungen der nichtamerikanischen Menschheit, nicht Umtriebe gegen Amerika, sondern Behauptung eigener Vorstellungen gegenüber Amerika.“ Bahr, Egon. 1998. *Deutsche Interessen - Streitschrift zu macht, Sicherheit und Außenpolitik* (German Interests - Argument on Power, Security and Foreign Policy). München: Karl Blessing Verlag. 99.

Bahr rightly points out the basic “sovereignty of thought”: “With the act of 15 March 1991, Germany retained its sovereignty under international law, but not the sovereignty of thought. We must manage that ourselves. And that is obviously difficult. Just one example. When America imperiously ended the discussion about the number of new NATO members with the declaration: “Three. More is not negotiable”, and France advocated five, German sovereignty exhausted itself in the Foreign Minister’s debunking answer: “You can find good arguments for three or four or five.” Now, cowardice can come in the guise of wisdom and decisiveness can be foolish, but it was not sovereign. Sovereignty can also make mistakes. But those who do not want to do so out of fear are not sovereign” (Ibid. 156).

In 1999, during the Kosovo crisis, former Chancellor (1974-1982) Helmut Schmidt (1918-2015) made his voice heard. Schmidt’s article: *NATO gehört nicht Amerika* (NATO does not belong to America) was published on 22 April 1999, the day before the bombing of the FRY state radio and television building. Schmidt supported NATO organization but favored political solutions, drew attention to the facts that “Russia remains a world power, simply because of its military strength” and that “The West must show consideration for the nuclear power China”. Helmut Schmidt promoted a NATO’s “European pillar” following in President Robert Kennedy’s footsteps (Schmidt 1999b). His interview with the Swiss magazine *L’Hebdo* proved prescient: “Most probably, as far as Slovenia and Croatia are concerned, the German government would have adopted a rather reserved stance under my presidency. (...) After the demise of the Soviet Union, the Americans believed themselves to be the world’s only superpower, a profound error that the next two decades will confirm. I say this because it is unimaginable that Russia, politically and economically, should continue to be in the same weak position” (Schmidt 2009a)

As for Willy Wimmer (born in 1943), he was a CDU (Christian Democratic Union) *Bundestag* MP for 33 years, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Defense (1988-1992) under Chancellor Helmut Kohl, later Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (1994-2000). Wimmer was deeply involved in defense issues and oversaw integrating the National People’s Army (GDR army) into the *Bundeswehr* (Federal Armed Forces). He worked closely with his British, American, French, and Russian counterparts as well as with high-ranking military officers. He spoke out against the illegal wars in Yugoslavia and Iraq. In 2016, he issued the 320-page book *Die Akte Moskau* (*The Moscow File*), with

documents and photos, to shed light on the debate and contribute to peace with Russia. Wimmer writes: “Russia has not only been denied a home in the “common house of Europe”, but it is also to be separated from its Western European neighbors in the American interest by a group of states stretching across the continent from the Baltic to the Black Sea. That was the clear message at a conference organized by the US State Department in the Slovakian capital Bratislava at the beginning of May 2000, which was attended by heads of government and foreign and defense ministers from Eastern and Central European countries, including myself. The message seemed clear: in future, there should be an American-dominated “backyard” against the Russian Federation on the European continent” (Wimmer 2016, 127-128).<sup>8</sup>

Another significant German witness is Klaus von Dohnányi (born 1928), who trained as a lawyer in Germany and the United States, then became Secretary of State in the Federal Ministry of Economics, Federal Minister of Science, Minister of State in the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mayor of Hamburg. Dohnanyi published *Nationale Interessen*, sharing many thoughts with Bahr and Wimmer (Dohnanyi 2022). He writes: “Germany and Europe today are not sovereign in matters of security and foreign policy. It is the USA that sets the direction here in Europe”. (...) I also wrote this book as a close friend and admirer of the United States of America, to which I owe much for 70 years of our acquaintance and friendship. But precisely because of this, this book contains a concerned and critical attitude” (Ibid. 10). Dohnanyi rightly comments on the “watering down of the 1962-63 (Franco-German) treaty by introducing a (US-inspired) preamble. (...) The debate divided the parties in the Federal Republic between “Gaullists” and “Atlanticists”. (...) An opportunity for a strong and sovereign Europe was blocked with the help of the USA and Great Britain. They thus blew up the intended

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<sup>8</sup> „(...) wurde Russland nicht nur eine Wohnung im „gemeinsamen Haus Europa“ verwehrt, es soll gleichsam durch eine sich von der Ostsee bis zum Schwarzen Meer quer über den Kontinent erstreckende Staatengruppe von seinen westeuropäischen Nachbarn im amerikanischen Interesse getrennt werden. Das war jedenfalls die klare Botschaft bei einer vom amerikanischen Außenministerium Anfang Mai 2000 in der slowakischen Hauptstadt Bratislava organisierten Konferenz, an der Regierungschefs sowie Außen- und Verteidigungsminister, an den Staaten Ost- und Mitteleuropas teilnahmen, auch ich war dabei. Die Botschaft schien klar: In Zukunft sollte es auf dem europäischen Kontinent ein amerikanisch dominiertes „Vorfeld“ gegen die Russische Föderation geben.“ Wimmer, Willy. 2016. *Die Akte Moskau* (The Moscow File). Hör-Grenzhäuser: Verlag zeitgeist Print & Online. 127-128.

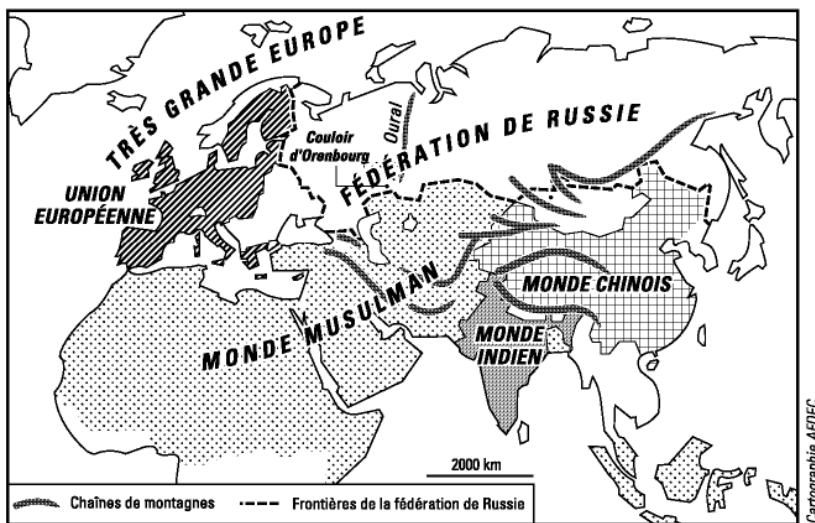
Franco-German cooperation to the great bitterness of de Gaulle. Helmut Schmidt regretted his approval of the preamble in 1986” (Ibid. 115-116).<sup>9</sup>

## 2. French views on continental Europe

The historian and geographer Yves Lacoste, author of *Vive la nation* in 1998, offered a visionary perspective in his 2005 article: *Dans l'avenir, une très grande Europe de l'Atlantique au Pacifique ? (In the future, a very large Europe from the Atlantic to the Pacific?)* (Lacoste 1998; Lacoste 2005, 202-212)

### THE VERY LARGE EUROPE

LA TRÈS GRANDE EUROPE



Jean-Pierre Chevènement (born 1939) is a French Statesman, several times minister under François Mitterrand’s and Jacques Chirac’s Presidencies, former left-wing socialist and admirer of Charles de Gaulle’s foreign policy. The interest of France is his guideline, he resigned as

<sup>9</sup> „Die Debatte spaltete in der Bundesrepublik die Parteien zwischen „Gaullisten“ und „Atlantikern“. (...) Eine Chance für ein führungsstarkes und souveränes Europa wurde unter Mithilfe der USA und Großbritanniens blockiert. Sie sprengten damit die beabsichtigte deutsch-französische Zusammenarbeit zur Großen Erbitterung de Gaulles. Helmut Schmidt bedauerte 1986 seine Zustimmung zu der Präambel.“ Dohnany 2022. 115-116

Minister of Defense in 1991 to protest the Iraq war. In 2012 he was appointed Special Representative for Russia. Chevènement founded the think-tank “Res Publica”, which devoted a conference in 2015 to “Russia in Europe” (Fondation Res Publica 2015a). He has consistently written university-quality political books rooted in history. “By keeping the Ukrainian crisis simmering, they (the USA) are playing Europe and Russia off against each other. In fact, they are using their closest allies, such as the United Kingdom and Russia’s neighbouring countries, which have a long-standing historical dispute with Russia, to prevent or limit any political or even commercial rapprochement between Moscow and the countries of Western Europe, particularly Germany, France, and Italy. The policy of sanctions is a cheap substitute for war” (Chevènement 2016, 207). Commenting Ulrich Beck quoted above, Chevènement notes: “This will in fact be Euramerica” (Ibid. 180). In the conclusion of a 2005 conference on Russia, Chevènement said: “Russia is a nation indispensable for peace on our continent and for world balance. (...) Russia needs Europe (...) If Russia needs Europe, Europe needs Russia, for the quality of its people, its culture, and its contribution to civilisation. (...) Europe also needs Russia for economic reasons” (Chevènement 2019, 1463-1468; Fondation Res publica 2015b).

Geopolitologist Caroline Galacteros founded the think-tank GEOPRAGMA in 2018. Her book *Vers un nouveau Yalta (Towards a New Yalta)* brings together articles published between 2014 and 2019. Galactéros describes the new emerging world where nations, peoples, sovereignties, and the partnership with Russia are all playing their cards. In the same year as George Kennan’s famous article *A Fateful Error*, former French Prime Minister (1988 – 1991) during François Mitterrand’s presidency, Michel Rocard, then European deputy (1994 – 2009), also tried and failed to draw attention to the risk of extending NATO. His ominous article was entitled: *OTAN: danger (NATO: Danger)*. Rocard wrote: “A serious and binding security treaty between the Atlantic Alliance and Russia must be a prerequisite for any enlargement of NATO. Not to understand this is to put peace at risk” (Rocard 1997).

Due to the “Cognitive Warfare” most of European citizens never heard from Brzezinski before and still do not know anything about George Friedman, who clearly explains the main strategic purpose of the USA for centuries, which is to avoid any emerging competitor in Europe and thereby any alliance between Germany and Russia (Mettan 2023). *Divide and conquer (divide et impera)* is a major political statement. Friedman and Brzezinski draw on Halford Mackinder: should Germany and Russia

ally, “the empire of the world would be in sight” (Blouet 2020). The US-manufactured coup in Ukraine in 2014 was a masterpiece on the Eurasian chessboard. The word “Ukraine” means precisely “march” (*Welsh marches*), border. It could have remained a bridge between East and West, instead of a bloody divide. In line with the American agenda, Barroso forced the Ukrainian government to choose the West against the East<sup>10</sup>

In pushing the EU and even other neutral countries like Switzerland to take unilateral coercive measures (UCM) called “sanctions” against Russia, then receiving “countersanctions”, the USA reached their goal, namely, to weaken the European economy and currency, to separate Europe from Russia. They will strengthen NATO with the new members Finland and Sweden. The counterattack is to strengthen the partnership between Russia and China, bringing together the BRICS and the SCO. Like his grandfather Charles de Gaulle (Carrère d’Encausse 2017), Pierre de Gaulle actively advocates friendly relations with Russia. (Dialogue Franco-Russe 2022).

### 3. Swiss Views for Peace and Neutrality

Federal Councillor and head of Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Didier Burkhalter was chairman of the OSCE during the Ukraine crisis in 2014. He reached an agreement with President Putin that was initially supported by the EU, then rejected by the United States and Ukraine (Segal 2014, 105-106). His action was in keeping with Switzerland’s tradition of neutrality and mediation. Eight years later, the Swiss authorities are aligning themselves with US and EU, as Professor de Zayas explains (De Zayas 2014; De Zayas 2021). In 2023, the creativity of the Federal Councillor for Foreign Affairs, Ignazio Cassis, is confined to bringing together the promoters of Ukraine recovery: business first. However, independent voices are being heard in Switzerland still now. Swiss essayist, journalist and Geneva MP Guy Mettan provides valuable insights into Europe and Russia. His book *Russia - Occident - A Thousand-year War* - first published in 2015, updated in 2023 - anticipates the fanatic debates and censorship that have blinded western public opinion since the “special military operation” (Mettan, 2023). As a disappointed European, Mettan puts forward proposals “for a democratic and sovereign Europe”

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<sup>10</sup> Dusan Sidjanski strongly disagrees with Barroso on Russia and Ukraine in the TV interview on RTS. 02.11.2014. <https://www.rts.ch/play/tv/pardonnez-moi/video/jose-manuel-barroso--dusan-sidjanski?urn=urn:rts:video:6270785>

in his 2019 book: *Le continent perdu (The Lost Continent)* (Mettan 2019). Chapter 5 deals with “la dictature de la norme et la peur du peuple” (*the dictatorship of the norm or the fear of the people*), and Chapter 6 with “Tutelle américaine, exclusion russe, hégémonie allemande” (*American tutelage, Russian exclusion, and German hegemony*). Guy Mettan agrees with Chevènement: “Allied with Russia, Europe would quickly become the world’s greatest power once again” (Mettan 2019, 163).

Former Swiss intelligence analyst Jacques Baud has been slandered as a “Putin supporter” and “conspiracist” for exposing the western Fake News of the last 30 years. The retired staff colonel has worked for NATO in Brussels, for the UN in New York, in the field in Sudan and elsewhere. Even though he provides verifiable information, evidence and strong arguments Baud is banned in his country by the mainstream media. Through the publication of numerous books and interviews to a wide audience, the officer has done nothing but disrupt the official foreign narrative.

## **CONCLUSION: WORLD LEADERSHIP OR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS?**

Why do reasonable European voices go unheard? Why do narrow-minded warmongers dominate European politics? Why have peace movements fallen silent? The US-American “smart power”, combination of “soft” and “hard power” does its job, with seduction (Lynch 2023), blackmail,<sup>11</sup> sanctions, spying, support of new technologies (Snowden 2019). The *Zeitgeist* and prevailing conformism give it all an air of normality. Pierre Conesa, a former senior civil servant in the French Ministry of Defence, describes the workings of the “military-intellectual complex” in his book *Vendre la guerre (Selling the War)* (Conesa 2022). This complex does not replace the “military-industrial complex” denounced by President Dwight D. Eisenhower but combines with it to the extent that the sectors under the direction of digitalised finance merge to form a “financial-technological-political-military-intellectual complex”.

A worrying aspect of the climate of war is the enlistment of intellectuals, academics, and journalists. Most of them are siding with the government against the people. The Brzezinski/Huntington roadmap set out in the 1975 Trilateral Commission report *The Crisis of Democracy: on the*

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<sup>11</sup> Just one example with Pierucci, Frédéric. 2019. *The American Trap: My battle to expose America's secret economic war against the rest of the world*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.



*Governability of Democracies* has been implemented.<sup>12</sup> Critical thinking is not permissible. Television censorship and internet brainwashing are now taking place in the home. From our sofas we are urged to wage war against the Russian authorities and people. That is called ‘political warfare’, while we wait for ‘cognitive warfare’ to be refined. Internet becomes a wild battlefield and a space of freedom. On the diplomatic front, the United States of America clings to its *exceptionalism* (Mirkovic 2021)<sup>13</sup> and its “effective multilateralism” (Rademaker 2003) under its leadership. In Asia, South America, Africa, and elsewhere, many states and peoples want a just world order based on genuine, balanced multilateralism. The obedient European elites submit to US belligerent pressures more than to the interests and peace will of their peoples. How long?

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## ПАРТНЕРСТВО ИЛИ КОНФРОНТАЦИЈА ИЗМЕЂУ ЕВРОПЕ И РУСИЈЕ?

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### Резиме

*Рат у Украјини је све само не неочекивани рат. Ратно стање и напета ситуација између Европе и Русије уопште нису били неизбежни. Они су последица политичких избора који су настали са падом Берлинског зида. Разумевање прошлости, идеолошких и политичких битки је кључ за суочавање са садашњошћу и за изградњу боље будућности за евро-азијски континент. „Сложено мишљење“ Едгара Морина је добар оквир за читање ситуације, и његово разумевање рата у Украјини је делимично произашл о из таквог оквира. Полазећи исто тако и од појма „народа-нације“ који је развио Габријел Галис у чланку се разматрају улоге народа, елита, и суверенитета у имплементацији спољних политика. Показује се како пропаганда, мењајући смисао информација и комуникације, ствара реалност која води до рата. У чланку се најпре анализирају извесни догађаји, акције и реакције које су довеле до рата, а затим се описује визија оних који у Европи и Америци подржавају конфронтацију са Русијом, и најзад, разматрају се алтернативне позиције у Немачкој, Француској и Швајцарској, са стране оних који се залажу за партнерство са Русијом. У закључку, чланак евро-руско партнерство*

*смешта у балансирану светску архитектуру, замењујући „ефективни мултилатерализам“ САД са аутентичним, полицентричним, мултиполарним мултилатерализмом.*

**Кључне речи:** *народи, нације, суверенитет, Евроазија, силе.*

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## FRANCE AND RUSSIA: BETWEEN DEEP DISAGREEMENT AND MUTUAL INTEREST

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### Abstract

*Against the backdrop of the renewed Cold War, relations between France and Russia are an object of study that is both rich in paradigms and highly fluctuating over time. Since the first contacts between the Tsars and the Kings of France, the history of relations between the two countries has been marked by very prosperous and productive periods, followed by periods of real confrontation. This has continued until recently in a relative sense of mutual understanding. But at a time when, through the Ukrainian crisis, we are witnessing a consequent estrangement between the two powers, allies during the great world conflicts, it is time to reconsider these relations under the prism of new paradigms. Social relations, economic ties and political positioning are the new challenges facing France and Russia.*

**Key Words:** *France, Russia, history of relations, mutual understanding, challenges.*

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We thought we'd reached the end of the “*droits de l'homme*” ideal with the French government's suppression of Russian broadcaster RT France on the pretext of “supporting a terrorist state”. But when hatred of everything to do with Russian culture led a museum director in Montpellier to *a posteriori* rename a painting by Auguste Renoir (“*Demoiselles russes*” becoming “*Demoiselles ukrainiennes*”), the

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question arises as to the roots of this hatred, but also how we came to such a deep division between two great European nations which until recently collaborated in many fields and managed to live side by side in relative harmony.

The deep-rooted and long-standing relationship between the two countries has always been confused and uneven, swinging from “golden times” (Alexander III, Stalin, De Gaulle) to hatred (Napoleon, Ukraine). But these relations have always been marked by patience and efforts at mutual understanding (De Gaulle and Brezhnev). During the Cold War, a certain level of understanding was reached between France and the USSR, thanks to technology transfers and a certain conception of the world based on an idea ahead of its time: a multipolar world.

But since Putin’s “special operation”, a wave of hatred has swept through all spheres of French society (politics, media, culture, sports). At a time when Russian athletes and artists are banned from practicing their passion in France, we must ask ourselves:

- Is Samuel Huntington’s prophecy coming true, and are we not witnessing a war of civilization between the Catholic and Orthodox worlds?
- Is the Latin mentality marked by an atavistic contempt for the quintessential Russian soul: age-old spirituality and perfectionism in the arts?
- Can we say that the Cold War is still going on and has never really stopped?

## **HISTORICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN FRANCE AND RUSSIA ON A ROLLERCOASTER RIDE**

It is forgotten today that King Henry I of France married Anne of Kiev in 1051. Yet it was with this marriage that the history of relations between France and Russia began. The paradox is that this history began with “a long period of mutual ignorance”. Indeed, it was only with the advent of the Romanovs in 1613 that the first real contacts between what was then Muscovy and France “began to exist”. *The Petite Histoire des relations franco-russes* begins by recalling how the French “gradually became aware of the emergence of a great power in Eastern Europe”.

Compiled by Jean de Gliniasty, French ambassador to Russia from 2009 to 2013 and currently research director at the Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques (IRIS), it deserves our full attention as

a history of the political forces, strategies, games, and stakes that drive the diplomatic balances between the two countries. In short, it's a story that provides the keys without sacrificing any of the narrative, apart from the fact that, since its publication, following the adoption of a constitutional amendment by the Duma, the head of the Kremlin, Putin, can now remain in power until 2036.

Once Ivan the Terrible had definitively rid the city of Mongol domination in 1552, Moscow soon began to concentrate intense commercial and human exchanges with the English, Dutch, Swedes and even a few French, but above all with the Germans, to the point of having a "German quarter" as early as the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It wasn't until 1717, however, that the first such rapprochement took place. This was thanks to Peter the Great's trip to France, during which he met the Regent and the young King Louis XV. France had perhaps never been so close. Its influence was evident both in the construction of St. Petersburg, of which Le Blond became one of the main architects, and in the cultural sphere, thanks to Voltaire, who in 1759 published a *History of Russia under Peter the Great* and corresponded with Empress Catherine II, who was German by birth but educated by French books. In this way, France's cultural prestige asserted itself in the face of competition from German culture.

While French culture and language were making headway in Russian society (Tolstoy wrote the first pages of *War and Peace* in French), ideological paths continued to diverge, except for a brief honeymoon between Charles X and Nicholas I. Jean de Gliniasty's main point is that "ideological, religious and political oppositions between the two countries have been constant throughout their history". However, the balance of ideological power shifted when, after the black hole of the Bolshevik period, it was Soviet Russia's turn to gain influence in France through the Communist Party. The poets Aragon, Breton and Éluard were Communists, while many intellectuals and philosophers were Marxists.

The collapse of the USSR should have put an end to this ideological and political opposition. But it didn't - quite the contrary. For, explains Jean de Gliniasty, "mainly from 2012 onwards, the Russian regime has positioned itself as the defender of conservative traditions and societal values in the face of the neoliberalism and individualism of Western societies." Worse, "Russia's integration into globalization and the opening of the Russian market to "cultural products", play to the advantage of Anglo-Saxon culture". Long gone, then, are the days when De Gaulle, "overcoming ideological differences and basing himself on a reasoned

analysis of the country's interests", launched "détente" in 1966 on the occasion of his trip to the USSR, followed by "understanding" and "cooperation", opening up a number of avenues in cutting-edge sectors such as science, technology or aeronautics with "the Agreement on Cooperation in the Peaceful Use of Space, which will have an exceptional posterity". But the USSR disappointed De Gaulle by invading Czechoslovakia in 1968, "thus freezing the process of rapprochement", just as it deceived Giscard by "raising hopes, in Warsaw, of a result on Afghanistan in 1980". And Mitterrand disappointed Gorbachev just as Sarkozy disappointed Medvedev.

Jean de Gliniasty continues his chronological account to the present day, in which four regional crises are interwoven, first in Georgia from 2008, then in Syria from 2011, and in Ukraine, not forgetting Africa. All crises in which "the positions of France and Russia are opposed". Recalling in this regard that, according to the Russians, "every time France had been opposed to Russia, it had gained nothing and sometimes lost everything, and that every time it had been on Russia's side, it had gained in terms of security, international prestige and, indirectly, economic benefits", the book concludes with a series of pertinent questions at the heart of relations not just between the two states but within Europe. The dolly, according to the dictionary, is a staging device that consists of filming a shot with a moving camera. It can be combined with panning. Jean de Gliniasty's *Petite Histoire des relations franco-russes (A short history of Franco-Russian relations)* is a remarkable tracking shot that will hold no secrets for readers.

If we now consider the quality of diplomatic relations between France and Russia, we cannot speak of reciprocal hostility, but rather of strong tensions. Numerous attempts at rapprochement have been made, all of them without success, but they show that the desire for rapprochement remains.

In the days of De Gaulle, Pompidou, Giscard and Chirac, the Russians saw their relationship with France as specific and sometimes difficult. This was due to several factors: shared historical references, such as the First World War or the Normandie-Niemen Regiment in 1944; knowledge of each other's language and culture among a segment of the educated population; the special position of French diplomacy within the Atlantic Alliance; the existence in France of a still-powerful Communist Party... Most of these factors have disappeared or weakened over time. Since the fall of the USSR, Russia's mentalities have undergone rapid

change, strongly marked by American influence, and France, like the rest of the world, has also become Americanized. Cultural ties have become commonplace. French foreign policy has made it a priority to build a “powerful Europe”, at the cost of numerous concessions to the spirit of the Atlantic Alliance, to the point of joining its integrated organization in 2009 in order to advance European defense.

But the European Union was now enlarged to include member states that had reason to be wary of Russia and relied more on Washington than Brussels or Paris for their security. Paris was unable, and unwilling, to influence the course of diplomacy in a Europe where the weight of American influence in the new members was increasingly felt. Conversely, after the collapse of the 1990s, Russia was determined to regain its status as a great power, if necessary, through increased interventionism, as soon as it felt, rightly or wrongly, that peaceful, non-confrontational avenues had been blocked. This was the thrust of Putin’s speech in Munich in 2007. This reaffirmation of Russia’s status as a great power will not go down well with a Western bloc in which France is increasingly integrated.

Over the past six years, President Macron has taken a number of initiatives that have been appreciated by Russia: the invitation of his Russian counterpart to Versailles as soon as he was inaugurated, the creation of the Trianon Dialogue between civil societies, the invitation to Brégançon, the call for a reorientation of NATO in which Russia should no longer be the systemic enemy, the desire to build a “new security architecture” in Europe that would make it possible to settle frozen conflicts and put an end to tension... Each time these overtures were strongly criticized by our European allies, Germany in particular. In addition to France’s determination not to put too much strain on European solidarity, the Russian authorities’ internal political hardening, described by France as an “authoritarian drift” (laws restricting civil liberties, Skripal’s neurotoxic poisoning in the UK, Navalny’s in Russia, etc.), led to the adoption of new sanctions in addition to the restrictions imposed on Moscow following the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbass. The COVID crisis, which blocked visits to the Summit, did not help matters. On the Russian side, the priority is to establish a dialogue, however difficult, with the new American president,

In Russian opinion, there is a residual affection for France, inherited from Tsarist Russia and, paradoxically, from the Soviet period. But the state media now treat France more like one of Russia’s adversaries. The trivialization of the relationship is obvious. The rapid decline in French

language teaching in Russia and Russian language teaching in France over the last ten years is a sign of this. Russia is often tempted to make the United States the main interlocutor for the Western bloc, and Germany a key partner for the European Union. This tendency will be accentuated if the Nordstream 2 pipeline, which will bring Russian natural gas directly to Germany and is still supported by Mrs Merkel, is completed, a project which Moscow is keen to see through while Paris is opposed.

## **THE LOVE/HATE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FRANCE AND RUSSIA**

France has a passionate relationship with Russia: the French love Russia...but they also love to hate Russia. This has been the case at least since the Napoleonic Wars, the Berezina trauma, and the unexpected alliance of 1892 between the young French Republic and tsarist Russia. Today, those contradictory passions are very much alive: in French political debate, Russia has acquired an importance that goes far beyond foreign policy.

As relations between Russia and Ukraine sow discord around the world, and Emmanuel Macron travels to Moscow on Monday for talks with Vladimir Putin, we take a look back at Franco-Russian relations, from the dictator's rise to power to the present day. December 31, 1999. While champagne all over the world has an aftertaste of Y2K anxiety, for the Russians, the hangover has lasted for several years. The cause? The presidency - since December 25, 1991 - of Boris Yeltsin, the first president of the Russian Federation. It must be said that, over time, the boss has grown tired of alcohol, and his speeches, with their pasty mouths and glassy eyes, no longer make an impression. The economic crisis is raging, the population is struggling to feed itself, and some are even calling for the return of Joseph Stalin. But, in a corridor of the Kremlin, a Jewish man stands out: Vladimir Putin, forty-six years old, KGB veteran and Vice-President of the Federation. Ta-tiana Diatchenko, Yeltsin's daughter, has just told him: this is his time; from now on, the country will be run by his watch, and he doesn't care what the countdown is.

French President Jacques Chirac immediately rejoiced at the appointment. A Russophile and Russian speaker, the man who declaimed Mikhail Lermontov's *Berceuse Cosaque* (1840) during the second-round debate with Lionel Jospin on May 2, 1995, and who, according to his own legend, translated Alexander Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* (1833) in

his youth, was delighted to have a politician who reminded him of the Russia of yesteryear.

The two Presidents became fast friends. France placed its trust in the Kremlin, which reciprocated in kind, and the Franco-Russian honeymoon began in 2003. The United States and the United Kingdom decided to invade Saddam Hussein's Iraq based on a lie, but not so for the Chirac-Putin couple! France was against interference and distrusted American justifications, while Russia, with its superpower status, acted as a buffer to protect France from a potential backlash from the United States. For the next twenty-three years, France and Russia will be bound by a shared vision of international relations: realism. The rules are simple: the international structure is anarchic, countries are enemies by essence - but can be "friends" according to their own, never common, interests - and what is commonly known as the "balance of power", i.e., the strength with which one country can dominate another, must be balanced to avoid armed conflict. In short, the more a country arms itself, the more the other must increase its military power to avoid being dominated, which, according to the manual, sets up a "balance of power" and therefore, *de facto*, a *status quo*. Both Putin and Chirac have anticipated and understood this and are doing their utmost to maintain this pseudo-distance, which in reality is nothing more than a frantic race to consolidate their power on the international stage in the case of Putin, and to catch up with the United States in the case of Chirac, despite being almost sixty years behind.

In the meantime, however, their interests were becoming more closely aligned: Russia had become embroiled in the Chechen war (1999, which Chirac denounced under the Yeltsin regime, creating a diplomatic incident at the time) and was tirelessly fighting Islamist terrorism; France supported the Americans after September 11, 2001, although in the meantime, as a result of the war in Yugoslavia, Islamism was gaining a foothold in France, following the example of the Roubaix gang, which ran rampant from 1993 to 1997. A little later, in 2003, as the European Union began to worry about an external peril in the light of successive attacks against the West, it decided to enlarge - with the Treaty of Athens - its "club of ten" into a "club of twenty-five", and at the same time organized a zone combining defense and economy. Jacques Chirac, remembering the Gaullist principles of geopolitics, sensed a good opportunity and tried to open the door to Vladimir Putin, faithful to his conception of a partnership between different sovereign nations. His aim: to bring

Moscow back into the Euro-European fold to create partnerships that would benefit France first, and then take away a little of its power. But Russia has its own agenda, with vassal states in the East that it wants to continue dominating, and in the face of the reluctance of certain member countries (apart from Germany, which is also encouraging this rapprochement through Gerard Schroeder), this pact will never see the light of day. Far from ratifying the good relations between France and Russia - Putin was nonetheless seduced by Chirac's efforts to integrate him - the French president went further in 2006, offering the Legion of Honor to the now Russian dictator, who returned the favor in June 2008 - then under the puppet presidency of Dimitri Medvedev - by decorating the Correzian with the State of Russia Award. When Jacques Chirac dies in 2019, Vladimir Putin will speak of him as "a wise and visionary leader who always defended his country's interests [...] a true intellectual, a true teacher".

But that was without counting on the new French president Nicolas Sarkozy, elected on May 16, 2007, who, for his very first international airing - the G8, June 7, 2007 - decided to talk to his Russian counterpart before a press conference in front of an audience of journalists, pens sharpened, ready to "ask the tough questions". Whereas the former mayor of Neuilly had arrived confident, here he was, after this very brief exchange with Putin, nervous and stunned, so much so that the press was amused that evening by rumors of a vodka-fueled binge between the two men. Nothing of the sort. Nicolas Sarkozy has only just been rebuffed by the dictator. His fault? Asking for clarification on Chechnya and the murder of the journalist...

On March 2, 2008, Dimitri Medvedev, Vladimir Putin's closest colleague, was elected head of Russia. The outgoing president did not want to undo the constitution - with its bad memories of the USSR - which does not allow more than two consecutive terms and sent his double to the front of the stage, although he remained "head of government", of course. Nicolas Sarkozy quickly saw an opportunity to make his mark on the international stage, taking on complex geopolitical issues and adopting an interventionist strategy, as in the conflict between Russia and Georgia. At the time, South Ossetia, a small territory to the north of Georgia that had been independent since 1992, was disputed by Tbilisi, and only Russia recognized its autonomy, much to the dismay of the international community. Tensions ran high, and in August 2008, Georgia sent in its army to regain control of the territory. Russia in turn sent in



its men. The result? Mikheil Saakashvili's troops were quickly repulsed, and Moscow declared South Ossetia independent, despite threats from the international community.

At the instigation of the European Union, Nicolas Sarkozy flew to Moscow and met with Dmitri Medvedev in the hope of convincing him to sign the ceasefire, a document already signed by Mikheil Saakashvili. But while the world watched cynically as the French president was too much of this, not enough of that, a peace agreement was finally signed between Georgia and Russia, even though the latter continues to declare the territory independent to this day. On August 29, Georgia broke off diplomatic relations with Russia. This episode sealed the friendship between Nicolas Sarkozy and Dmitri Medvedev: from then on, France was perceived as a courageous and strategic power by Russia, which did not hesitate to declare this during visits abroad. The two presidents also invite each other on numerous occasions to discuss human rights, democracy, and potential closer ties. Russia pampers Paris, as it enables it to improve its image in the West, and France, not to be outdone, caresses Mos-cou to lay down a few conditions in case the Euro-pean Union leans too much towards Germany and therefore the United States.

The Syrian crisis had already been raging for almost a year when François Hollande was appointed head of state on May 15, 2012. Eight days earlier, Vladimir Putin had been re-elected President of the Russian Federation. A meeting was quickly set up in Paris on February 27, 2013, but unlike Jacques Chirac, the current did not run smoothly between the two political leaders: François Hollande, who wanted to remain true to his progressive pro-gram, saw Vladimir Putin as a violent, unscrupulous dictator, and for the Russian, François Hol-lande represented everything he despised.

November 21, 2013. In the streets of Kiev, many ha-bitants are revolting against the government of Viktor Ia-noukovyitch, which has refused an "association" agreement with the European Union in favor of Russia. Known as "Euromaidan", the demonstration was violently repressed by the ruling powers, leading to riots in the Ukrainian capital from February 18 to 23, 2014. As a result, Viktor Yanukovich was deposed and replaced by Oleksandr Turchynov. In the Kre-mlin, however, this announcement upset Vladimir Putin, and on February 26 he decided to invade Crimea, a peninsula in the south of Ukraine that had become autonomous in 1991 following the collapse of the USSR. The international community was outraged, and France joined in condemning the Russian head of state's actions.

Since 2014 Russia has become a topic of debate for French domestic policy. The annexation of Crimea, the role of Russian television channels abroad, sanctions, the nature of the Putin regime, etc. – all these issues divide the French political elite. The question “Should we let Russia be Russia?” has become a domestic political marker. For many French political movements, improving bilateral relations with Russia is a diplomatic, military and political priority. According to them, French economic interests on the continent are at stake. In several sectors such as the pharmaceutical industry, luxury goods, energy, and banking, the sanctions are to be quickly dismantled. Sanctioning Russia, they argue, undermines French growth. This is the line of argument of some parliamentarians who regularly propose resolutions in the National Assembly and Senate.

The political inspiration of those movements is very heterogeneous. Marine Le Pen’s far right, to be sure, shares with contemporary Russia a cult of authority, a vertical notion of power, a distrust of Islam and a fascination with the Russian president. The authoritarian, nationalist and French traditionalists believe that Vladimir Putin is the international leader of their national branch. But the sovereigntist left of Jean-Luc Mélenchon or right of Florian Phillipot also finds today’s Russia attractive.

That deeply rooted French political tradition finds a source of inspiration in Russia. Even some classical conservatives plead for a rapprochement between France and Russia. They share with Russia the goal to protect Christianity in the Middle East. For them, Putin has the same goal in Syria as King Francis I and Napoleon III. For all these political leaders, restoring bilateral relations with Russia is a way to challenge the “political correctness” they loathe in France. For all these very heterogeneous currents, France should let Russia be Russia. Moreover, France should be inspired by Russia...

Among the French elite, an opposite current enjoys great influence. Atlanticists and liberals are the main opponents of Putin’s Russia. They have long been active in the ministry of foreign affairs; the establishment press and in think tanks. They see Putin’s Russia as a direct and immediate threat to the security and stability of Europe, as we can see in Georgia, Ukraine, Crimea, the intervention in Syria, and Putin’s close relations with Viktor Orbán in Hungary. Russia, in their view, is dangerous for the very identity of Europe. They criticise the centrality of the Orthodox Church in Russia, and the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. The religious soar in Russia undermines secularism and modernity. They see

Russia as a land of persecution for feminists and human rights activists. Russian domestic politics, with its vertical power, is a synthesis between post-Soviet and tsarist authoritarianism. Europe must not allow Russia to conquer it, territorially and politically. Letting Russia be Russia, they claim, would be naïve and even suicidal. The goal of today's Russia is nothing less than the destruction of Europe – its values and its democracy. For Europe's sake, Russia should be prevented from being Russia.

These two positions are deeply rooted in French political tradition. The pro-Russian authoritarian far right, the sovereigntist leftists and the Christian conservatives use the term “Russian question” to reinforce their statesmanship. Russophobia is also very well established among the French elite: the moral high ground always belongs to those who criticize Russia absolutely. Last August, President Emmanuel Macron seemed to renew pro-Russian trends in the French diplomatic line. And in October he bluntly branded NATO as “brain dead”.

A few days before the G7 summit, from which Russia has been excluded since 2014, Macron staged a relaxed and friendly moment with the Russian leader on the Riviera. I would contend his rapprochement with Putin's Russia is much more modest. On a few issues, France and Russia have the same goals. On nuclear proliferation, for instance, both states want to preserve the 2015 agreement on Iran's nuclear programme. Yet they explicitly diverge on the implementation of Intermediate Nuclear Forces. On international terrorism in the Middle East, they share the fear or the “returnees”. Yet even after the 2015 Paris attacks, they never managed to co-operate on the ground.

A common French-Russian front against terrorism remains a slogan. Regarding Ukraine, France has promoted the Normandy format for the resolution of the conflict in Donbas. Yet it never ceased to promote the renewal of sanctions against Russia. In other words, the French President does not seem to be interested in destiny, or even the future of a post-Putin Russia. To him, Russia is a power of the past, a legacy of the 20th century. Yet it cannot be the useful partner the Soviet Union was to de Gaulle's Great Vision for France.

## **DISTANT ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL RELATION SINCE FEBRUARY 2022**

The Russian head of state delivered his usual indictment of NATO and Ukraine, accusing them of threatening his country and peace on the

European continent by refusing to put an end to their, in his view, anti-Russian policies. He said nothing about his plans for the tens of thousands of Russian troops still camped on Ukraine's borders, raising fears of an invasion. Without revealing the content of the proposals discussed, Vladimir Putin nevertheless said that "some of the ideas" of his French counterpart could "lay the foundations for joint progress", after more than five hours of discussions. "President Putin has assured me of his readiness to commit to this logic and of his desire to maintain the stability and territorial integrity of Ukraine", said Emmanuel Macron, who wants to "build concrete security guarantees" for all the states involved in the crisis. During their joint press conference, Vladimir Putin said he would speak to the French president after his meeting with his counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky in Kiev on Tuesday. "We will do everything we can to find compromises that will satisfy everyone", said the Kremlin leader, because a Russia-NATO war "would have no winners".

According to the French presidency, Emmanuel Macron's proposals include a commitment not to take any new military initiatives on either side, the launch of a dialogue on Russia's military posture, peace negotiations on the conflict in Ukraine and the start of a strategic dialogue. The French president is the first major Western leader to have met Vladimir Putin since tensions escalated in December. The trip is part of a series of European diplomatic efforts this week and next. Putin, on the other hand, once again denounced the West's refusal to give in on ending NATO's enlargement policy and withdrawing its military resources from Eastern Europe, while denying any threat to Ukraine. "To say that Russia is behaving aggressively is illogical", he said, "we are not the ones moving towards NATO's borders". Once again, he accused Ukraine of being solely responsible for the impasse in peace talks between Kiev and pro-Russian separatists, sponsored by Moscow despite the Kremlin's denials. He allowed himself a quip aimed at the Ukrainian president, who has been critical of elements of the peace plan negotiated in 2015 between Kiev and Moscow via Franco-German mediation. "Whether you like it or not, my pretty, you'll have to put up with it", Vladimir Putin blurted out. Macron came to the rescue of his Ukrainian counterpart, praising "his composure", and noting that the presence of the Russian army on his doorstep was enough to make him "nervous". Russia already annexed part of Ukraine in 2014, the Crimean Peninsula, and is seen as the instigator of the conflict in the east of the country.

On June 27, French President Emmanuel Macron announced he would visit Russia to discuss regional security, regional conflicts, climate change and other issues with President Vladimir Putin. Just one day before, Macron and Putin held a video call to discuss a number of bilateral and international issues, including crises in Ukraine, Libya and Syria. If Macron's Russia visit goes smoothly, it will be the seventh meeting between the two leaders since Macron took office in May 2017. Given that relations between Russia and some major Western countries have been at a low point for a long time after the Ukraine crisis, it is not easy to have such frequent interactions between top leaders of Russia and France.

Anyone familiar with the history of international relations during the Cold War knows that even during that icy period, when relations between the West and the Soviet Union were strained, former French president Charles de Gaulle attempted to establish a «special partnership» with the Soviet Union. The coexistence of the close Franco-Soviet relationship and the bipolar structure was in line with the purpose of the Soviet Union to drive a wedge in the Western camp and the purpose of France to maintain its great power status. It formed a win-win situation between France and the Soviet Union. The special relationship between the two sides during the Cold War laid a foundation for their later relationship. Macron has attached great importance to France's relationship with Russia. For instance, he hosted Putin at the Versailles Palace at the beginning of his tenure, led a business delegation to the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, and stressed the importance of Russia in solving the Syrian crisis and the Iran nuclear crisis on many occasions. More importantly, Macron would like to visit Russia even during the ongoing pandemic. It can be said that the special partnership between France and Russia remains strong.

France's policy toward Russia reflects what European countries have gradually realized: The West has failed to encircle and suppress Russia after the Ukraine crisis, and the degree of interdependence between Europe and Russia is higher than that between the US and Russia. In this context, Berlin and Paris are both adjusting their policies toward Moscow. This suits Moscow well. On July 1, Russia completed a referendum on a constitutional amendment. This marks a new period of rapid adjustment of power structuring and personnel in Russia. Naturally, Russia does not want to put too much energy on external affairs during this period. In fact, Russia has always had high hopes for France since the onset of

the Ukraine crisis. Although France canceled the sale of amphibious assault ships to Russia, Russia's countermeasures against France were different from those advanced against the US and the UK. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought new changes to the international situation and Russia is reacting accordingly with measured diplomacy. Russia's foreign policy has strengthened its emphasis on multilateralism.

However, Russia and other European powers face obstacles with this new detente of sorts. The Ukraine issue presents the biggest hurdle. If the Ukraine issue can move forward in a positive direction under the mediation of France and Russia, it will undoubtedly be of great benefit to the consolidation of Franco-Russian relations. Although Paris intends to mediate between Moscow and Kiev, there is limited room for negotiation. After all, neither Russia nor Ukraine is likely to make concessions.

France, as a European leader, also needs to take care of the feelings of its followers in Europe. Undoubtedly diplomats from Paris and Moscow will further bask in each other's glow amid the backdrop of growing US isolationism. Then again, both will have to keep in mind that substantial progress of their special partnership will be hard to achieve. Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine on Thursday morning, with explosions heard in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv. French President Emmanuel Macron condemned the invasion and called for an immediate halt to military operations. In the build up to the invasion, France and the EU slapped economic sanctions on Russia, cutting some trade relations with the country.

The French government has insisted that this will not hurt the French economy, with Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire telling the Senate that the French economy is only a «little exposed» to events in Ukraine. «Russia is not a major nation for France. The impact on the French economy will be limited,» he said. The GDP of Russia is smaller than that of Italy and France does not have a significant trading relationship with the country. «France exports less than €7 billion worth of goods per year [about 1 percent of all exports] to Russia,» said Le Maire, adding, «we import less than €10 billion euros per year from Russia - that is less than 2 percent of French imports.»»I want to be very clear - we have a battery of sanctions that are much more penalising if Vladimir Putin persists in violating the law.» While the stock market is based largely on informed speculation and not always a reliable indicator of things to come, it is worth noting that the CAC 40, the Paris-base stock index, had plunged by close to 5 percent by on Thursday in response to the invasion.

The main concern however stems from a potential rise in energy costs, with France importing about 20 percent of its gas from Russia. On the global market, gas prices shot up by about 10 percent on Tuesday, over concern about supply problems linked to the invasion of Ukraine. Speaking to BFMTV on Wednesday, Le Maire said that France could maintain its current freeze on gas and electricity prices if necessary. «The freeze on gas prices is set to run until the Summer of 2022. If we need to prolong it because we see an explosion in prices, it seems to me indispensable to do so.» The economy minister said that the invasion provided further proof that France needs to diversify its energy supply. As far as petrol is concerned, Le Maire cautioned, «we don't know what Vladimir Putin's decision will be and how high the barrel price will go.» The signs suggest that car drivers in France will likely suffer because of the conflict, with petrol prices already topping €1.70 per litre. Ukraine has traditionally been referred to as the breadbasket of Europe, due to its status as a major wheat producer.

Fears over a Russian invasion, which have proved well-founded, have led the price of wheat to soar - this inflation will likely trickle down to supermarket store prices soon. The price of wheat smashed its previous record high in European trading on Thursday, reaching €344 per tonne, far above its previous record of 313.5 euros recorded late last year. Farmers in France are also particularly worried about retaliatory sanctions from Russia which would see French exports banned. In 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea, Putin responded to western sanctions by banning the import of EU agricultural products, which hurt the French dairy sector in particular. The head FNSEA, a French agricultural union, said that French agricultural exports to Russia have never fully recovered.

French media report that there are some 160 French businesses operating in Ukraine. It is unlikely that these will continue to function if the country descends into all-out war. The French government has asked for French foreign residents of Ukraine to leave the country. Meanwhile in Russia, the presence of French businesses means that France is the second biggest source of foreign direct investment in the country. 35 out of France's 40 biggest businesses have branches in Russia, employing around 160,000 people. Renault and Leroy Merlin are both market leaders in the country. In previous periods of tension between the West and Russia, French businesses have continued to thrive in Russia.

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## ФРАНУЦСКА И РУСИЈА: ИЗМЕЂУ ДУБОКОГ НЕСЛАГАЊА И ЗАЈЕДНИЧКОГ ИНТЕРЕСА

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### Резиме

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*У контексту обновљеног Хладног рата, односи између Француске и Русије су предмет проучавања који је богат парадигмама и који се мења са времена на време. Од првих контаката између цара Русије и краљева Француске, историја односа између две земље обележена је веома просперитетним и продуктивним периодима праћеним периодима стварне конфронтације. То се до недавно наставило у смислу релативног разумевања. Али у време када смо, кроз украјинску кризу, сведоци последичног дистанцирања две силе које су биле савезници током великих светских сукоба, време је да се приспитају те релације кроз призму нових парадигми. Друштвени односи, економске везе и политичке позиције представљају нове изазове са којима се суочавају Француска и Русија.*

**Кључне речи:** Француска, Русија, историја релација, међусобно разумевање, изазови.

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## ***RUSSIA AND THE WEST AS A CONCEPTUAL OPPOSITION AND IDEOLOGICAL RELEVANCE***

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### **Abstract**

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*What makes the current active confrontation of Russia and “the collective West” unique, is that it takes place on the territory of Europe. Although one may ask, if this fact substantiates such a confrontation as inevitable, I hold that the question to be asked is: What is Russia that opposes the West? On the one hand, current political issues are mainly a reaction of both the West and Russia to the rough ideological atmosphere the world lives in. On the other hand, Russia has always been an unalienated part of the Western as well as global ideological, cultural, political discourse, and the reinterpretation of Russia immediately concerns the reinterpretation of the very concept of the West. The paper scrutinizes, what the concepts Russia and the West mean in the current European political discourse. The paper introduces two levels of research: first and foremost, the analysis of an opposition Russia—the collective West concerns an ideological framework in terms of current world order; secondly, such a view is going to be substantiated with the reflection of Russia in respect of the West in perspective of Russian culture. The paper holds, that Russia has always been a dynamic concept of unequal extension for the Western and Russian intellectuals. The West has*

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*represented the reference point for the construction and consideration of Russia in the perspective of inner self-definition and relevance: the more ideologically stable the West is, the more ideologically dynamic Russia is, and vice versa.*

**Key Words:** *Russia, the (collective) West, Russian mentality, twain cosmology, conceptual analysis, traditional values, Modern conservatism.*

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## INTRODUCTION

What makes the current active confrontation of Russia and the collective West unique, is that it takes place on the territory of Europe. Although there is a certain number of local conflicts on the existential borders of the developed and developing countries, the military actions in the heart of European continent is widely regarded as a symbol of reconsideration of the balance of powers in global politics. Several sources written by the Western and Russian analysts in latest 30 years foresaw such a conflict, and explicitly figured out the objective reasons for it, see: (Freidman 2009, 101—119; Tsymbursky 2013a). If one tried to conclude the arguments of investigators, politicians, intellectuals etc., one could say that the expansion of NATO westwards has always been considered as an existential threat by the governments of both the USSR and Russia. Although one may ask, if this fact substantiates such a confrontation as inevitable, I hold that the question to be asked is: What is *Russia* that opposes *the West*? On the one hand, current political issues are mainly a reaction of both the West and Russia to the rough ideological atmosphere the world lives in. On the other hand, Russia has always been an unalienated part of the Western as well as global ideological, cultural, political discourse, and the reinterpretation of Russia immediately concerns the reinterpretation of the very concept of *the West*.

The proper task for philosophers — if only they do not act as ideologists or experts in current political stances — is to clarify concepts. The present paper deals with this task and gives reasons for consideration and comprehension of conceptual basis for such an opposition as *the collective West* and *Russia*. In current perspective, one sees that the process of reconsideration of *Russia* is being provided by both sides of the conflict: the Western countries and Russia itself, not only as

political and economic powers, by also as civilizations with their own foundations and views of the future. It is necessary to claim in the very beginning that I step aside from any discussions of any political or economic aspects of the current events, and focus exceptionally on the conceptual part, which consists of realization of *Russia* as a conceptual opposition to *the collective West*. Please, note, that from now on when *the (collective) West, the East, Europe or Russia* are given in italics, I mean them as **concepts** as they are represented in modern public, political and intellectual discourse, **not as** geographic places, states or political or any other kind of actors.

The purpose of my paper is to distinguish the sources of historical-cultural foundations of *Russia* as a conceptual opposition to *the collective West*. To do it, I will focus on two major aspects: on “twain cosmology” as one of the pillars of Russian mentality, and the process of how the values turn to means and instruments in the current field of real politics (or *Realpolitik*). As these aspects intervene one another, I will study them in close connection showing the reasons for *Russia* to consider itself as true heir of the most important achievements of European civilization. It should not be understood, however, as if Russia were a European country involved in current European agenda. The thing is much more complex, for *Russia* tends to be a proponent of the basic and universal value system specifically elaborated by the European thinkers but adopted to and reconsidered in respect with Russian cultural and historical background.

## **INSTRUMENTAL AND TRANSCEDENT STATUS OF VALUES IN TERMS OF REALPOLITIK**

The ideologeme of *the collective West* has deep roots in the history of Russia’s cultural self-consciousness and dramatical relationships with Europe. Nowadays one can see that the concept of *the collective West* is an important source for realization and manifestation of Russia’s mental and spiritual independence from the Western moral stances and social practices, which has in turn to provide and substantiate political and economic sovereignty and the unity of the nation. Hence, *the collective West* and *Russia* taken in their conceptual aspect could be considered as correlating concepts with the common denominator of European civilization. By the latter I mean the highest achievements of culture, philosophy, economics, political institutions, and legal consciousness, that the Western counties had developed during the Renaissance and Modern Age.

By the period of the Cold war, the West became an objective political and later existential threat to the countries of the Warsaw tract, and eventually made the ground for ideological and political collapse of the USSR possible. However, it is important to consider that European achievements cannot be imagined or represented without the influence of Russian culture, science and thought, which became a significant part of a European's (and certainly *not only* European's) background. Another important dividing line between *the West* and *Russia* is certainly the idea of social constructions that embraces the notions of race, nation, gender, modern religious movements, etc., unacceptable in traditional Russian discourse because of the manifested strife for unity and return to traditions on each level of social and political sphere of the latter.

Interestingly, such a distinguishing of *the West* and *Europe* became an important element of current political discourse. For instance, in 2014, Russian political scientist S. Karaganov claimed that Europe “is also worried by Moscow’s readiness to defend the old European values such as Christianity, the family, the state, nationalism, and sovereignty, which are still supported by most Europeans, while their elites are rejecting them or trying to leave them behind. The overwhelming majority of other nations share these traditional values as well” (Karaganov 2014, 13). Such a statement is even more intriguing because of a classical alternative of *Europe* and *Russia*, known due to the writings of the Slavophiles and especially those of N. Danilevsky. Thus, *the West* appears to be an inglorious heir or even traitor of its spiritual and mental roots, which were formulated as universal values in 14<sup>th</sup>—18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Consequently, such an expansion of the term to *the collective West* instead of previous *Europe* seems to be conceptually novel. Current Russia, although politically and economically definitely oriented to the East rather than to the West, still considers as a part and parcel of *European* world and becomes the true heir of Europe’s highest achievements.

Does it mean that *Russia* and *the collective West* do not differ principally, being the products of “old good Europe”? Although one now sees that the economic development of the Russian Federation has many features of capitalist market system, it still has its own historical and cultural background, which appears to be instrumental in distinguishing Russian society from any concrete Western society. As R. Inglehart and W. E. Baker put it, “[e]conomic development tends to push societies in a common direction, but rather than converging, they seem to move on parallel trajectories shaped by their cultural heritages” (Inglehart

and Baker 2000, 49). S. Huntington developed a similar discussion of whether the traditional cultural values could be decisive for democratic changes in Confucian and Islamic cultures (Huntington 1991, 298—311). Hence, one sees that the values formulated by the European thinkers of the Modern Age as universal cannot be simply adopted as moral or worldview consequence of capitalist economic principles but should rather be reconsidered in the perspective of historical and cultural path of certain countries.

Russian mentality could be described as messianic because of many factors. Scholars figure out three principal doctrines that substantiate Russian messianic mentality: chiliasm; twain cosmology; social, political, and economic monism and/or collectivism (Murvar 1971, 283). For my topic, the second, namely, twain cosmology, deserves a comprehensive commentary. It means a recognition of the principal difference between two orders of things, which could be named the “order of history” and “the order of truth”. The former represents the way of everyday life, the level of efficient decisions, the immanent humane world. The latter refers to a transcendental level of real and perennial values, which could not be corrupted or reconsidered — it is the higher order of things, given as constants of being. Such an understanding of reality could be traced back to Plato; however, many Russian philosophers see the Orthodox religion and the doctrines of the Eastern Church Fathers as its breeding ground, see: (Vysheslavtsev 1929, 25ff.). It is important to mention that such a cosmology establishes the hierarchy between two orders of things: what is on Earth should be subdued to what is on Heaven, i.e., the decisions and acts we produce in everyday life should correspond with the perennial values as their vindication and endorsement.

Such an attitude of doubling the reality is by no means special within the Russian Orthodox discourse, but a commonplace for the traditional Christian worldview. One could find its illustrious examples in the writings of St. Augustine (especially his idea of *civitas Dei*), and several Medieval intellectuals, patristic and scholastic thinkers. However, the process of secularization and the development of historical consciousness started in late Renaissance disproved the idea of transcendent reality as a model and reference for people’s actions in the course of history. After G. Vico’s writings and those of his followers within the tradition of German philosophy (Berlin 2000, 48ff.; Collingwood 1994, 63ff.), it became a commonplace that the human beings live their real life in history and are indeed responsible for everything that happens to them,

because they belong to this immanent reality. Although Vico tried to form the opposite view to the Cartesian quantifying method in the field of the Humanities, such an idea of history as studying *res gestae* became very influential during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially after the works of the positivists. As for the Russian history, there has never been developed such an idea, that the historical and, consequently, political reality is the only one or at least our prime reality. What unites many Russian thinkers from different parties, is the demand for the spiritual or philosophical foundation of supported doctrines or movements. Without such a foundation no doctrine could be considered as solid — either political, or scientific. Interestingly, many scientific doctrines were heavily criticized from the worldview positions (in the works of N. Danilevsky, P. Kropotkin or V. Vernadsky): even the supporters of such ideological movements as socialism or anarchism should have done their best to bring their ideas to the conceptual ground relevant to the Russian classic literature and culture.

B. P. Vysheslavtsev coined in a comprehensive distinguishing of these two orders, naming them as an initial and ideal order of essence (οὐσία), and real and empirical order of history (Vysheslavtsev 1929, 55—56).<sup>1</sup> It brings my analysis to a crucial position of the difference between of the means that now are used by *the collective West* in its political practice, and the values, which *Russia* appeals to. As mentioned above, Russian mentality stands for the relevance of the means and the values, or putting it in other way, for the adequate denotative relationship between a signifier and its signified. Such a viewpoint supposes, that when one claims for democracy, freedom or whatever, they should not be considered as the instruments to achieve the inconcrete or momentary political goal, but to use the adequate means to bring the current situation to the formal relevance to the concepts of “democracy”, “freedom”, or whatever. To use religious terms, the most appropriate would be “incarnation” — the same as for the traditional Christian thinkers Christ is the incarnation of God, or the heart is the incarnation of the “inner man”, or consciousness in Christian mysticism. Without such a relevance with its signified, any signifier loses any use. For the secular West it is on the contrary: J. Baudrillard demonstrated it illustriously in his collection of essays *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* and *Simulacra and Simulation*.

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<sup>1</sup> Although Vysheslavtsev spoke about the nature and meaning of human heart in Christianity and Indian spiritual tradition, it is also correct to apply his approach to the discerning of the values, which are perennial and self-sufficient and the means, which could be instrumental in terms of the practice of *Realpolitik*.



The current reality, including the space of political opportunities, is the one in which simulacra, i.e., pure signifiers without any signified, can exist and influence decisions. Simulacra, thus, plays a crucial part in *Realpolitik*, by which I understand the space of opportunities to effectively reach the desired political goals by any possible means. In turn, the difference between values and means demolishes, and one can obviously see that the classic European values formulated during Modern Age are now widely used by *the collective West* to achieve the goals in their instrumental, not axiological function.

On the other hand, Russian culture represents a unique amalgam of the elements of western and eastern origin. This determines the self-understanding of *Russia's* spiritual mission, produced by Russian intellectuals and intelligentsia, in “all-human” perspective (Levitt 1989, 127—128). In the course of its history, Russia had always turned to the most civilized, culturally developed, and powerful states to adopt and accumulate their achievements. Moreover, Russia had reconsidered and developed some crucial patterns, which described and considered it by the means of the advanced cultures, — from its very name (“Россия”, which is of Byzantine origin — “Ρωσία”) to the Orthodox religion, literary tradition, cultural and juridical concepts, and the elements of everyday life. It does not mean at all that there is nothing original in Russian culture; the history of any culture is the history of adoptions. On the contrary, Russian culture showed a great power to accumulate and develop the achievements of the world spiritual heritage, starting from translations of the classics and finishing with national schools and movements in science and art. H. Kissinger eloquently grasps such a political, ideological and cultural amalgam of Russian mentality in his description of the concept of *Russian soul*: “A conviction lingered in the expansive, brooding ‘Russian soul’ (as Russian thinkers would come to call it) that someday all of Russia’s vast exertions and contradictions would come to fruition: its journey would be vindicated; its achievements would be lauded, and the disdain of the West would transform into awe and admiration; Russia would combine the power and vastness of the East with the refinements of the West and the moral force of true religion; and Moscow, the ‘Third Rome’ inheriting fallen Byzantium’s mantle, with its Czar ‘the successor of the Caesars of Eastern Rome, of the organizers of the church and of its councils which established the very creed of the Christian faith,’ would play the decisive role in ushering in a new era of global justice and fraternity” (Kissinger 2014, 68).

One of the most common emphases the social scientists and politicians make when speaking about the traditional values in Russia, that they are immaterial and transcendent. For many, it is one more point of distinguishing between idealistic *Russia* and *the* empirical or even materialistic *West*. When taking and adopting the crucial ideas and ideological patterns from the Western cultures, Russian intellectuals have never taken into consideration the “terrestrial”, “material” circumstances of their existence. Those ideals were taken and acknowledged through the prism of the orientation to universality of truth, and it is easy to notice that the most important intellectual achievements of the Western culture became specific and original on the Russian mental soil. It means that the Russian way of understanding *the West* as ideological and artistic is of extreme importance. There certainly are the elements of *Realpolitik* in making decisions and understanding of political benefits in relations between the Russian Federation and the Western countries. However, Russian mentality is not pragmatic, but it tends to be broad-minded and spiritually founded. N. Zernov demonstrated this as a burden of the Russian nation: “Universalism, interdependence, humility and believe in resurrection are the four corner-stones of Russian culture, and the view of life presented thereby explains how it is that the Russians seem to hold aloof from the rest of Christendom, and why they themselves describe their distinct contribution under the curious name of ‘Moscow, the Third and Last Rome’” (Zernov 1945, 179). This is the source of the proverbial universality of reception and cultural adaptation of Russian soul, as it was claimed by F. Dostoyevsky in his Pushkin speech, and V. Tsymbursky was right, when he tended to compare the understanding of *Realpolitik* of the Russian political elite with the European idea of political theology (Tsymbursky 2013b, 374—375).

However, besides the geopolitical or ideological stances, Russian intellectuals have always tried to substantiate their predictions and projects metaphysically. This is in a way a manifestation of twain cosmology as an objective mental paradigm for those who do not agree with reduction of historical processes to mere economic or political (“innate”) reasons. According to V. Bibikhin, Russian history shows the perennial strife of Russia to reach the ultimate goals of the world history, to fulfill the destiny of the great empire. That is why Europe as well as the whole world dramatically recognize themselves in Russian historical developments like in a mirror. Such a manifestation leaves no compromises: either Russia is a great empire, or the whole world cannot

exist. Metaphorically speaking, in the course of Russian history, one hears the coda of any European historical motives, and Russia, being a European antipode and periphery, turns to demonstrate the dramatic fate of European tendencies. Bibikhin calls it “the law of lightening”, for any Russia’s shifts towards this goal throws light to the universal state of things. Any historical project, thus, finds its ideal justification or rejection and hence redemption in the movements of Russian history (Bibikhin 2003, 8—70).

The President of Russia’s Edict №809 “On Approval of the Fundamentals of State Policy for Preserving and Strengthening Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values”, published on the 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2022, illustrates the same strife for deriving the essential values from the number of any political means or instruments. These values are listed out in article 5: life, dignity, civil rights and liberties, patriotism, civil consciousness, service to Motherland and responsibility for its future, high moral ideals, strong family, creative work, priority of spiritual over material, humanism, mercy, justice, collectivism, mutual respect and helpfulness, historical memory and succession of generations, unity of the peoples on Russia, see: (Kropachev, Shmonin 2023, 212ff.). For me it is important to emphasize that the given list of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values is not occasional — on the contrary, it shows deep intellectual connection between Russian legislative thinking and the European legacy of humanism and people’s rights. One cannot help noticing that in the quoted above paper by S. Karaganov, some of the listed values had already been mentioned. Although the social scientists debate some positions in the list or clarify the categories of the given values (Kudryavtsev 2023), I think I will not be mistaken if say, that the given list expresses the universal character of the given values as they are understood in terms of Russian culture. The same is correct for the discussion of the Strategy of National Security, adopted in 2015 (Rudakov 2021). In general, it manifests a very congenial idea for Russian mentality that *Russia* is a stronghold of the real spiritual and intellectual achievements of European civilization, which *the West* has discredited and rejected because of the inner inconsistency. Noteworthy that the mentioned Strategy and the Edict became the basis for reconsideration of many processes in various spheres, from foreign policy to education and economy, see: (Chervenчук 2017; Gorina and Saulina 2022; Trukhan 2022).

Consequently, one could hold that Russia has recognized itself as a successor and stronghold of powerful and profound *Europe*; Bibikhin formulated it as the common task of the Renaissance that Russia and Europe share in the historical and metaphysical perspective (Bibikhin 2007, 363). At the same time, it has always born what would be called a messianic worldview, one of the pillars of which is twain cosmology. European civilization was a conceptual model for Russian intellectuals and politicians during the 18<sup>th</sup>—20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but not in terms of “promised land” or a better place for living, but a fruitful “thinktank”. It produced the image of ideal dimension of what we could call universal values, articulated in ecclesiastic and secular writings, art, and culture. The latter, however, still demand revision in accordance with the principles of Russian Orthodox worldview and self-representation. What is dangerous nowadays is the following: what used to be considered as values, is now being treated to reach definite political or economic purposes by the proponents of *the collective West*. The domain of values has become the domain of *Realpolitik*. The discussions have been turned into decisions by order. But is it the real order of things? For the Russian mentality, the answer is negative; and the rejection from the current world order or cancelling Russia and Russian culture simply justifies the idea of *the corrupted and imperialistic West*, to which a certain conceptual and — further — ideological alternative should be produced.

Russia’s current turn eastwards to find its allies mainly among the number of Eastern countries can be regarded as sharpening the conceptual opposition to *the collective West*. But the character of such a sharpening is not historically unique: since late 19<sup>th</sup> century, many thinkers turned to *the East* to find true tradition there, and their search was an ideological manifestation of the rejection of *the West* as modern and liberal (i.e., the civilization that had lost its spiritual roots and established egalitarianism). For example, K. Leontiev was such a prophet of anti-egalitarianism and reprover of the current mechanistic way of life typical for European bourgeoisie, who stood for ideals of “Byzantism” (Leontiev 2007, 127—237); M. Scheler supported the First world war as the struggle against British-American liberal power in order to defend real European values and the very spirit of German nation (Scheler 1917); J. Evola was among the other traditionalists, who studied the Eastern spiritual doctrines and practices to formulate an opposition to *the West* and claimed the “revolt against modern world” (Evola 1995). The studies of *the East* had a romantic character of finding the ways

and means to wake the national spirit of their own countries up. At the same time, it manifested the disagreement with the liberal principles that were considered as mere instruments to establish the domination of imperialistic states and find the sources for national autarky based on transcendent values. Nowadays one sees the rising interest of Russian intellectuals to both the legacy of the traditionalists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the search for the national, or better to say, spiritual sovereignty as well as the rise of academic studies of Russian conservatism (Dugin 2023; Kamnev and Osipov 2023).

Thus, it is obvious that the opposition of *the West* and *Russia* continues the spiritual search for true foundations of culture and national self-understanding that took place in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It means that Russia “is coming back to history” (as G. Shchedrovitsky put it) after the period of the USSR. The Marxist project had an aim to overcome the historical phase of capitalist society and create another type of relations between people in the entire world. However, being again a part of modern history, *Russia* should have considered its conceptual basis in modern terms; that is why the opposition to *the West* has been formulated very closely to the ideas of the traditionalist thinkers. It is important to emphasize that traditionalist views are various, and their proponents can be found in different spheres, from academic research to politics. One has many reasons now to label such an opposition as the alternative of the idea of *Ex oriente lux* (V. Solovyov’s concept) to the idea of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (O. Spengler’s concept). Only time can show, if this project is successful or not — but it bears an existential character for both *the West* and *Russia*.

## CONCLUSIONS

Each catastrophic event makes the contemporaries think about the worldview problems. On the level of the state powers, it manifests in the demand for ideology. The current situation is certainly a catastrophic (in Greek meaning of *καταστροφή*) situation: the balance of powers and relations in global politics as they were even 10 years before is no more possible, the same way as *Ancien Régime* was not possible after the French revolution happened in 1789. There could be no way back to the previous world order. However, there is a question about a possible conceptual framework for Russian ideology.

Russian history provides us with many examples, or a set of possibilities of such an ideological orientation. Can *Russia* now simply choose one of the possible ways to formulate its ideology? Or should such an ideology be a combination of “the best” or “the most suitable” ideas, picked up from the writings of Russian philosophers, authors and intellectuals? The problem is that any efficient ideology should fit the historical and cultural experience of the culture, and it is not possible just to pick anything up without considering the previous history and mutation of the ideas. It means that one cannot simply return, for instance, to the Orthodox doctrine as it was given in the texts by the Church Fathers and manifested in practices in the period of Moscow state, because it was seriously reconsidered during the period of Imperial Russia, the Soviet period, and the original explanation of Christian principles in Russian philosophy and literature. In terms of dramatic paths of Russian history, an ideological amalgam is obviously not enough.

I avoid producing any conclusion or providing any recommendation on how the ideology should be formulated. My goal is to notice the conceptual foundation for the positive project of the future. One of the mandatory aspects of an original ideological program should be a variant of a big project, which was a cornerstone of any projects of that kind. The examples of such a project are given in the course of Russian history. I will mention just three of the most obvious. The first is “Moscow — the Third Rome”: the core statement is that Byzantium gave Russia Christianity, and Russia must stay the only and ultimate Christian, i.e., Orthodox state. The idea of *translatio imperii* (thoroughly discussed in historical and legal perspective by C. Schmitt — see: Schmitt 2006, 59ff.) became possible due to idealistic and mythological interpretation of Byzantium as the second Rome, which Russia heired Orthodoxy from, combined with a Trinitarian principle. The second example is Peter the Great’s project of Russian Empire: the first Russian Emperor did his best to make the country, its nobility as well as all types of institutions more Western than the Westerners themselves were and had. The imperial project later led to the idea of “a special path”, and count S. Uvarov’s triad “Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality” formed the foundation of imperial ideology, representing the image of the Russian Emperor as the defender of true faith and the gatherer of all the Slavs. Thirdly, the USSR brought the idea of a universal opposition of Communism to unfree and exploitative capitalistic *West*. An important consequence of the Communist project was the Soviet space program, curiously enrooted

in the doctrine of Russian cosmism — one of the most outstanding interpretations of Christian tenets. Russia of nowadays is in demand for a great project; the first, reactive step has been made in formulating the opposition to *the West*. But what will be the other, positive step? In my opinion, it is too early to introduce any solid forecasts.

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## **РУСИЈА И ЗАПАД КАО ПОЈМОВНА ОПОЗИЦИЈА И ИДЕОЛОШКА РЕЛЕВАНТНОСТ**

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### **Апстракт**

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*Оно по чему је садашња активна конфронтација Русије и „колективног Запада“ јединствена је то што се одвија на територији Европе. Иако се може поставити питање да ли ова чињеница потврђује такву конфронтацију као неизбежну, сматрам да је питање које треба поставити следеће: шта је то Русија која се супротставља Западу? С једне стране, актуелна политичка питања су углавном реакција и Запада и Русије на грубу идеолошку атмосферу у којој живи свет. Са друге стране, Русија је увек била неotuђени део Запада, баш као и светског идеолошког, културног и политичког дискурса, а реинтерпретација Русије се одмах тиче реинтерпретације самог појма Запада. У раду се испитује шта појмови Русија и Запад значе у актуелном европском политичком дискурсу. Раd уводи два нивоа истраживања: пре свега, анализа опозиције „Русија – колективни Запад“ тиче се идеолошког оквира у смислу актуелног светског поретка; друго, такав став ће бити поткрепљен рефлексijом Русије у односу на Запад у перспективи руске културе. У раду се истиче како је Русија увек била динамичан концепт неравноправног проширења за западне и руске интелектуалце. Запад је представљао референтну тачку за конструкцију и разматрање Русије у перспективи унутрашњег самодефинисања и*

*релевантности: што је Запад идеолошки стабилнији, то је Русија идеолошки динамичнија, и обрнуто.*

**Кључне речи:** Русија, (колективни) Запад, руски менталитет, двојна космологија, појмовна анализа, традиционалне вредности, савремени конзервативизам.

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## WHO NEEDS A RETHINKING OF RUSSIA?

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### Abstract

*Usually an incorrect territorial understanding of the term “West”, say as the west of Europe and North America (sometimes along with Australia, New Zealand, and many seas), i.e., the one that does not know that the “West” is west of Jerusalem, and the “East” is east of it, has its meaning and momentum despite its formal-historical invalidity. Along with the countries of Eastern Europe that have entered the crematorium of nations under the abbreviation EU - but without Belarus, Russia and what in the Balkans represents the “Serbian world” - this pseudo-union gets its meaning in the words of the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, who designates the area as a “collective West”. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the “West” has determined itself this way at this moment (if we don’t count the attempts to establish an “Asian NATO”), since in the last iteration almost all European countries were stripped of their integrity. Just in this way, the misunderstood “West” tried to “paint over” the racist nature of its history by its own identification with ancient Greece, of course by tendentially taking its cultural significance as, at the same time, its identical political and military aspect and almost*

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*literally “gluing” it onto the sense of its characteristic essence. Thus, a general falsification of the total history of the “West” was committed and its true ethical and narrative essence was established, and all in the name of absolute domination and self-justification.*

**Key Words:** *the West, racism, Russia, takeover, ethics.*

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When we ask the question about a renewed attempt to rethink the concept of Russia, we must at the same time ask ourselves who needs such a rethinking in the first place. Is it necessary for the Russians themselves? Certainly, for them it is, so to speak, an intimate question, which is asked again and again, one could even say for hygienic reasons. There is no doubt that this rethinking in current affairs has its own reason, which points to numerous other reasons, but at the same time to the reason of all reasons, which is the question of changing the real order of the world, that is, changing the power relations in the world. This is where the question of Russia's role lies, i.e., in the new movements of the inner world reality, and not in the empty desire to understand Russia better.

Is a new rethinking of Russia necessary for us, the Balkan Serbs, and for other peoples of this region? There can be no doubt about that either. Here we are firmly buried in various levels of our anterooms, blinded, and guided by the manipulation of truths about our interests, which is why, if we still want to survive as a subjectivity in the world, we ultimately need a sharp insight into the possibilities of world development. The question of the perception of Russia among Serbs repeatedly confronts us with the disparity of feelings about it, and they were formed in different periods of recent Serbian history in different ways, but always in accordance with the leadership interest of the current authorities and the general trends of international relations. For example, until seventy-five years ago, Serbs had a brotherly relationship with Russians, and not only with Russia as Russia, but also when it comes to the USSR (for example, in the case of ideological communists and leftists in general). This relationship was mutual, but not the same, since even ordinary Russian consciousness contains something of the so-called imperial posture. Such a mutual attitude was supported not only by feelings, but feelings were the result of both common origin and specific historical events, even if they were individual. We see some of that mutual love even today, aware that our people go, even against the current law, to help their brothers on the

Ukrainian battlefield; and *vice versa*, the Serbian side had a significant number of Russian volunteers on the battlefields of the former SFRY (especially while the Russian state was still on its knees due to the consequences of losing the “Cold War”).

However, in the meantime, the resolution of the Informbiro took place in Serbian-Russian relations in 1948, which brought a great rift into our fraternal friendship. The Serbian leadership at the time, and even the entire nation, put themselves in the alleged defense of freedom, which was a deception, against the USSR; this led to new suffering of the Serbian people, mainly in the form of physical suffering in the concentration camps of the Croatian island due to the crime of opinion, which clearly distinguished *friend from enemy*<sup>1</sup>.

However, the great untruth that those pointed out wanted to threaten our people’s freedom again, was used as a real post-truth back in those days. In addition, the campaign against Russia itself was designed to lay a coward’s egg on the entire block of countries then labeled with the phrase “real socialism”, and that transition “to the other side”, or rather that betrayal of the socialist movement, represented the other side of the common interest on the way to lifelong survival in power for the future Yugoslav “pharaoh”.<sup>2</sup> From that time until the beginning of the conflict in SFRY (which, like the kingdom, was actually created by the Serbs through their struggle for freedom), the state, despite some features of socialist development, functioned as a pro-Western collaborationist in relation to the countries of the Warsaw Pact, especially the USSR. This deception has its global effect, which culminates in the establishment and practice of the “non-aligned movement”, with the aim of blunting the class and anti-colonial struggle throughout the world. Even the famous Korčula school of philosophy served as a platform for allegedly considering alternative possibilities of socialist development (wherein the main alternative was supposed to be simulated “self-governing socialism”. Let’s also add that the overall media situation in practically all its broadcasts permanently suggested what was later (after the “Cold War”) sung globally as “Go West” (Pet Shop Boys, 1991). In this sense, perhaps the last such act of domestic media represented a direct

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<sup>1</sup> The biggest concrete crime against the Serbs in the SFRY happened, therefore, when the communists killed the communists.

<sup>2</sup> Sometime after the death of the “pharaoh”, K. Nikolić, S. Cvetković and Đ. Tripković called the era of his rule “anti-Stalinist Stalinism” (Nikolić, Cvetković, Tripković, 2010, p. 64), which describes that period much better than E. Kardelj’s current phrase “self-governing socialism” (Kardelj, 1975, p. 65).

transmission of “preventive counter-revolution” in Romania in 1989. Herbert Marcuse, dealing with the idea of this kind of counter-revolution, believes that “fear of revolution connects different stages and forms of counter-revolution ... Capitalism is reorganized in order to (ready) welcome the revolution” (Marcuse, 1972, p. 2). In the name of what the domestic “communists” stand against Romania? Eleven years later, we were “transmitted” in the same way.

In everything, the twentieth century seems to have passed in an induced “self-inflicted immaturity”, or, as with Kant, “immaturity for which they themselves are to blame” (Kant, 2004, p. 263). In Serbia’s relations with Russia became the subject of other historical subjectivities. In a way, one could speak of the regularity in the breakdown of our relationships as a kind of constant movement in the opposite direction. Let us recall that when the Russians began to create socialism in 1917, testing what Badiou would call the “political inventiveness” (Badiou, 2001, p. 15) of the collectivity, the king received a mass of defeated White Russians and prepared them for the fight against the new form of the Russian state.

Then, let’s repeat once again, in 1948, we renounced the international labor movement in the name of the anti-Serb government of one man (whose Alter Ego, it is likely to be assumed, was Louis XIV with the sayings “*L’Etat, cest moi*” and “*Après moi, le deluge*”) and his camarilla, a man who almost destroyed the fraternal relations of Serbs and Russians, and had personal hatred for Stalin and the Serbs. His robust campaign against the USSR - with an emphasis on the Russians - over the course of forty years created a real disturbance in the feelings towards the Russians. Even today, the “historical” lies about the Russians that were uttered at that time still work, in addition to the media practice that is still used today - at a minimum based on Freud’s “repetition compulsion” (Freud, 1984, p. 274) which on the subliminal level, in general, appears as relatively effective.

Finally, when the Russians in 1991, after the “collapse” of the USSR, set out on the path of establishing a new capitalist civil society, the authorities of that time supported the forces of the previous *status quo* and, so to speak, denied themselves any help during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. As it is known, during the pro-Western rule, the SFRY disintegrated, and the people of Serbia were put under the most severe sanctions unseen in history, and in the end, Serbia was bombed to seize territory. Therefore, if the Serbs would still see the Russians and



the states as allies in the fight for freedom, important social movements would have to be subjectively synchronized in the future. If not, then not only the historic friendship falls, but also the joint struggle for the freedom of sovereignty. Therefore, the Serbs and the state are extremely in need of a mature “rethinking of Russia”.

Do the Russians themselves need a suggested self-reflection? Of course, this happens permanently in the post-modern era, and otherwise such a practice is a permanent reflexive act of this *culture-civilization*. The ultimate balance analysis of the acute state of global relations and Russia’s position within them certainly appears as an element of *self-reflexivity*, just as necessary in practice. Although such analyses can lead to Hegel’s “bad infinity” - because the analysis of the state itself is practically infinite - they are nevertheless carried out in detail. Thus, for example, the old and well-known discussion between the Russian so-called Westerners and Slavophiles is reduced to the utilitarian moments of both positions when it comes to the current situation, because both have Russia’s welfare at their core. Nevertheless, we must not deny the existence of a pro-Western financial elite, as in other parts of the former USSR, created on its ruins, which to a certain extent - and that is at the cost of Russia’s existence - only look out for their personal interests.

Their attitude represents only the degenerate attitude of the previous “pro-Westerners”, post-modernly rearranged in the spirit of absolute egoism. Such structures exist in all countries of the world, in addition to the ones we know in Western Europe and the US, and in Serbia. No matter how they are organized, they do not reflect the interests of the people of the “global south” and, as in Russia, they must be disbanded for the purpose of preserving the identity of the people and/or use their political potential for the benefit of the respective countries. One of the last condensations of historical experience finally happened in 2022 with the realization of Russians that Western nations sincerely hate them, so not only their governments and elites, but to a dominant extent also the ordinary population, poisoned by anti-Russian propaganda. Therefore, we can also say here that the Russians themselves do not need advice on the “new thinking” of Russia, since it is a permanent function in this culture, but of the realized level of awareness and reflexivity, which it seems some other cultural areas no longer or do not yet possess.

Who, therefore, needs a new rethinking of Russia at all? Indisputably, not Africa or Latin America - with the Caribbean - nor India and China; their population certainly needs more knowledge about Russian history

and culture, or their science and technology, and even philosophy, but not existential reflection about who among the nations of the world is in the background of their aspirations that is a fixed variable, or, rather, a constant.

In this context, all of them are dangerous to someone specifically because of their awareness of the previous time. These days, by the way, former US administration official Fiona Hill noted, as reported by Daniel Kovalik, “that the conflict in Ukraine has caused a global “*proxy rebellion*” led by Russia” (Kovalik, 2023) *against the West, especially American hegemony*. The one who worries like this announces trouble, problems. And the problem lies in Lenin’s question: “*What is to be done?*” (Lenin, 1949, p. 3). When such a question is asked today, a kind of impasse usually appears on the horizon, which warns us not only that we have gone down the wrong path, but that by our actions we have placed ourselves in front of *the near certainty of the apocalypse*. That’s why we get the answer to the question posed by Aquinas’s *via negativa*: namely, when those who consider Russia by themselves are rejected, as well as those who possess prior certainty about “past times”. All that remains is that the new true reflection of Russia, especially in the context of its *historical subjectivity*, is needed *only by the contemporary Western spirit*. Moreover, we consider this reflection to be *a transcendental condition for the survival of this culture*.

Why do we say *cultures and not civilizations*? Because the concept of culture indicates *a cult*, and civilization refers to *a city and a citizen*. But that’s not all. Even if we are talking about civilization, Occidental culture contains an element that other civilizations do not possess. There were civilizations that destroyed one another; for example, the still completely wild Greeks of the fifteenth century AD destroyed the more advanced in everything, but already weakened due to a natural disaster, Cretan civilization. It happened in other places as well. The Hungarians thus destroyed almost the entire Slavic male population of Pannonia, when they came to the area they still occupy today. But, let’s say, those who held the largest land territory in history until now, the Mongols Genghis Khan, Kublai Khan and Tamerlane did not exterminate anyone, fulfilling Tungra’s mandate of conquering the world. *Western culture*, however, has *a peculiar nature that everything it touches dies*.<sup>3</sup> For such

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<sup>3</sup> At the time, Tacitus (Publius Cornelius Tacitus) wrote: “Where they make a desert, they call it peace” (Tacitus, 2013, p. 30). We believe that this characterization is not insignificant even in the ultimate reality.

a conclusion, the well-known historical facts about the extermination of the population of North America and Australia are sufficient. They undoubtedly prove *the exterminating, obliterating practice of this culture that applies to everyone - including Russians*. Colloquially speaking, it is obviously a “genocide” culture, which attributes this feature to the Other through the mechanism of projection. Therefore, perhaps it would be more correct to call it *anti-civilization*.

For someone, this would be enough to conclude that it is *an exceptional culture*, with the characteristic of annihilating all others it meets. It would be an ordinary lie to say that “mistakes”<sup>4</sup> happened to this culture, as well as others; it is certainly about the acquired character of culture. Among Russian scientists, such as Narochnickaya, the so-called Russophobia exists from the sixteenth century onwards, but it can also be found in earlier phases of history. In any case, it is about enough time for the action to become a habit, i.e., the character of a certain spirit. Indeed, already from the first “Germanic grammars” and their records about the Slavs, for example from Jordanes, from the sixth century, who from the point of view of “warriors” speaks badly of “non-warriors”, we see an underestimating attitude towards the latter as if they were not people; and we can follow that literally until the contemporary condition.

There are similar statements by other medieval chroniclers of the same origin. In the seventeenth century, a book about Russia was printed by the Marquis de Custine, and that book is perhaps a benchmark for the attitude of people of Scandinavian origin towards the Slavs. There is no stereotype or racist slur that doesn't exist; since he found himself insulted by the ridicule of the Russians due to his artificial courtly behavior. Among his other conclusions, it is said that the Russians as servants “fight under the principle of submission” (de Custine, 2016: 78), or that “all in all, the Russians are four centuries behind the world”. (de Custine, 2016: 103). Skipping the mass of anti-Slavic writings and the time in which it happened - a practice that has not stopped even in contemporary times - we should not leave out, for example, the historian Francis Conte, a true intelligentsia of the EU, who in his two-volume book *Slavs*, is permanently attempting to prove their innate totalitarian

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<sup>4</sup> To consider such historical actions as mistakes is hypocritical or stupid. Often, for example, we had the opportunity to read and hear how the monstrous horrors of Nazism were just one historical mistake of the German people. One simply forgets how many such mistakes there are, which the German people are still ready for today (as well as the American, English, and other peoples of Western Europe and North America), as well as the fact that it is precisely the acquired character of the people, i.e., about always the same action and intention in very specific situations.

nature. Moreover, Conte attributes to Slavs the myth of the Amazons, to strengthen his thesis.

It is known in philosophy that Leibniz's father had to change his surname to Lubinich in order to keep his position as professor of "moral philosophy" in Leipzig; even Leibniz himself i.e., the man who founded practically all German academies and was "intimate" with Louis XIV and Queen Elizabeth I, as well as with Isaac Newton, had problems, because about half of his signatures contained one "t". Because of this, the Germans called him "Slavic t", which clearly testifies to the racist pressure of the Germans on the Slavs. This attitude is also found in Montesquieu, as well as in the champion of American "democracy" Alexis de Tocqueville, who both see that the world will develop in opposition of the US to Russia. Comparing these two states, de Tocqueville believes that "The first has freedom for the principle of action; the other has servility" (de Tocqueville, 2000: 390). Montesquieu believes that "all subjects of the empire are slaves" for Russia of his time (Montesquieu, 2001: 424).<sup>5</sup> Also, in John Locke, we find the justification of slavery in *Two Discourses on Government*, when he says that "by his own guilt he wasted his own life, he to whom he gave it may hesitate to take it, and use it for his own purposes, thereby causing him no harm" (Locke, 1978: 22), probably because he does not kill him. It is even more difficult to accept the same, even radicalized, attitude of perhaps the greatest thinkers of Western European culture, such as Hegel and Marx. Even earlier, Fichte, in his *Speeches to the German Nation*, observes a moment that he calls *Deutschtung* - an integral part of every humanity - which is at the base of every nation; hence, for those who do not possess it significantly, we can only speak of subordination in terms of originality.

This is perhaps an introduction to Hegel's opinion about all Slavs, including Russians. Namely, Hegel considers not only the Russians, but also the Balkan peoples, almost without distinguishing them, as "*Asian hordes*", even though he is aware that they, like Russia, appeared as states as early as in the Middle Ages. And while he christens the latter with "*broken barbarian remains*" (Hegel, 1966, p. 368), he sees Russia as a *pseudo-creation* - not a state, which for him is the criterion of historical presence - arising from an alleged spirit, but also for and for himself, of the long-gone Mongolian era. Despite his refinement of modern dialectics

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<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this topic, it may not be necessary to develop the idea of Locke as the "doyenne" of racism, for whom Theresa Rickardson notes that he "represents colonialism and early forms of entrepreneurial capitalism, including the formation of colonies based on slave labour" (Rickardson, 2011, p. 101).

and all his philosophical contributions, like many others before and especially after him, he remains a national chauvinist. After all, the very construction of the *Philosophy of History*, which places all historical movement in the triad “Greeks-Latins-Germans”, is exclusive and is such in its essence that it negates its Other: Indians, Chinese, Africans, all others, and especially the Slavs, who for the Germans represent the *arch-enemy*.

In addition, this is where “*the end of history*” is justified for the first time - a fallacy that today in Fukuyama’s version experiences its historical defeat for the second time, this time in pure empiricism.<sup>6</sup> If for Hegel the Russians are “*unhistorical*” people, it is no different in Marx. Firstly, Marx shares Hegel’s position on the origin of the Russian state, which is a historical falsehood derived from German historiography. This is not surprising, given the depth of his belonging to the German identity. Communism, which dreamed, only dreamed of the “civilized” countries of “old Europe” (≈EU?), while for the rest - including the Russians - it intended the fate of all “unhistorical” peoples, calling them “*barbaric and semi-barbaric*” peoples (Marx, 1976, p. 7). It is obvious that the noble idea of the equality of all people in Marx remains tied to the traditionally racist idea of who is human, which itself originates from Greek racism. Moreover, this concept has been equally present in Plato and Aristotle and can, perhaps, be best illustrated by Plato’s idea of “*golden children*” (Plato, 2002: 100) as well as Aristotle’s idea of “*the living property*” (Aristotle, 1973: 8). Many similar ideas appeared in the line of classical Marxism, and this attitude towards the Russians also prevailed later in the so-called communist parties of Western Europe.

Heidegger - practically like all relevant philosophers of the West - of course does not give way to the tradition of the Germanic-German perception of Others. Moreover, in his work it is incorporated as racial superiority within *the very idea of Being*. Heidegger, therefore, not only openly turns his students to the study and practice of the life of the ancient German-Deutschers (*Introduction to Metaphysics*), but, examining the etymological origin of the word “Being”, among the typically Indo-European roots of this word - expressed by signs such as “*es*” and “*bhu*” - he adds the root “*wes*”, which he claims will be called invocation supposedly only within the corpus of Germanic languages

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<sup>6</sup> A detailed analyses of Hegel’s attitude towards the Slavs can be found in the text “Hegel on the Slavs” (Bratina, 2015, pp. 63-73).

- which has been relatively easy to disprove.<sup>7</sup> As in mentioned cases, the racial attitude is very pronounced in Heidegger. Here we must stop in citing contemporary applications of this position in philosophy, because although the series of authors who advocate it is not endless, it would be too long to list, since it is clearly not just one among other features of the Occidental character that can be found in the works of great contemporary philosophers like Foucault or Derrida.

What else can be said about a culture that during almost its entire historical duration uses the name of an entire race as a name for a slave, made two continents its slaves, and practically exterminated two? Let's start - even though it is obvious to everyone - it is not about the Latin *servus*, which already perhaps hides the root trace of the sacred name of a people, but about a word “*invented*” precisely in the area of Western languages, e.g., deutsch. *sklave*, Eng. *slave*, fr. *esclave*, sp. *esclavo*, Swtch. *slav*, nor. and dan., *slave*, ita. *schiaivo* or por. *Escravo*. If we add to that the English “slavic” - an adjective meaning “dirty” or “sloppy” - it is clear to what extent the relationship between the Slavs and their Germanic neighbors is fixed even in the language, of course, when viewed from the perspective of the latter.<sup>8</sup>

It is, therefore, about a culture whose morality since ancient times was such that robbery - and robbery of every kind - was a matter of pride. Obviously, even nowadays, it is the “safe background” that provided a means for war. As practice inevitably dictates both individual and collective character, it is not surprising that in the final version pragmatism appears as the dominant “wisdom of the West” (Bertrand Russell); *this would not have been possible if this culture had not dominated the world*. Subsumed by the logic of global, world power, it is not philosophy in the strict sense, but as Heidegger himself would say - only *conceptual “logistics”* (Heidegger, 1982, p. 12). Even today, the Greek ideal theory of the desire for “*knowledge for its own sake*” does not exist nor has it ever existed as an active agent (Aristotle, 1985, p. 6).

We see that in the ultimate reality of “postmodern times”, once separated areas of culture have become inclined to merge, losing their heuristic moment at the expense of the applicative, i.e., technical aspect of

<sup>7</sup> More about Heidegger's attitude towards Others - as well as criticism of Heidegger's etymology of the word “Being” in Bratina (2017), p. 109-151.

<sup>8</sup> It should be added here that not even the name of those Nordics is German, because “German” only comes from the Latin “germ”, which in ancient Greek corresponds to the spelling “σποροί”, both meaning seed, spore, but also those who are scattered, relatives. The real name for all of them is Deutsch, supposedly from Old German “Diot”, meaning “child”.

knowledge. The age in which for Lyotard (Jean Francois Lyotard) every “great story has lost credibility” (Lyotard, 1988: 62), *is only the result of a long-term practice*, and this state of mind follows the fluidity of consciousness, organization, and knowledge. This weakness, especially in the light of recent events in Eastern Europe, which stems from the total exhaustion of the spirit of Western culture, prompts us once again to ask a question: *who needs a new rethinking of Russia today, if not its western part?* Perhaps that hateful Russia is still the straw for the salvation of a culture? We do not believe in such a salvation, namely because the estranged group of powerful people has exhausted their life and spiritual potentials, but we believe that if this “rethinking” were to be carried out to the end and if one experiences *catharsis* which is always offered to others, i.e. *self-critical reflection*, it could lead to the salvation of individuals or groups who reach this level of self-awareness. Whether this will happen, respecting the human subject despite the ubiquity of de-subjectivization by various means, we cannot predict. What we can do is to anticipate with a “spiritual eye” the movement in Western culture which - provided that the collectivity there does not reach this level of self-reflection - leads to *the destruction of human subjectivity*. At the same time, it has the sense of disaster for all Others, both cultures and civilizations; otherwise, it would no longer have a constitutive meaning for anyone. The only thing that keeps the world tied to relations with this culture is the very possibility of general destruction. Paradoxically, despite every material benefit that has always inspired this culture, “*the death drive*” (Freud, 1984, p. 288), a concept that we do not accept as a “natural phenomenon” but as a cultural creation derived from historical practice, i.e., from the “*compulsion to repeat*”, turns out to be its truth. But even without its cultural origin, it is hard to believe that the almost certain direction of the future course of this culture will change, because it, like Baron Munchausen, tries to pull itself out of a situation that is more than dubious by dragging its tail, which pushes it ever deeper with the consequences for its own collective character.

To conclude, the entire Western culture thought and presented to the world *the idea of law* which it subverted from the beginning, so that today *there is no law either in international relations or in domestic relations*. Today, the idea of *superiority* and “*exceptionalism*” of the *Occidental spirit* can no longer be asserted with any plausibility - nor can it be referred to in the future as a connection with Greek philosophy. It is only a pretext for future domination, and *the true philosophy of*

*the West begins only in the Middle Ages. In that history, the concept of difference was born, which in philosophy has gained precedence over the concept of being for more than 250 years.*

*The concept of difference, over time, does not follow the timelessness of the mind, but despite its essence, the concept takes on the face of the historical flow. The difference as a difference is accepted as an exceptional difference not only in the procedural sense of contemporary dialectics, but as a difference not of exceptionality but of exceptionality from the validity of the law. Thus, the concept of difference was misused - with the aim of approving the destruction of difference, in the name of difference. In this way, the difference itself as a concept lost its strength in favor of a “racist difference”, which weakened its philosophical status as a fundamental philosophical concept in the name of the ideology of the material and spiritual possession of the Other<sup>9</sup>. This can be recognized in the philosophical key of Derrida (*l' difference*, Derrida, 1982, p. 3), as that which is lost in its own “letter” on the other side of all existence, or, in a certain simplification, as another name for the racism of the concept. That is why it is not at all strange that, even before the advent of postmodernism, the difference is produced as explicit exceptionalism, i.e., as cultural racism per se. Let us recall that this exception is valid as an exception to the validity of the law e.g., international law. This term - as a euphemism for open racism - could often be heard in recent years both at the UN (Barack Obama) and in the statements of high officials of the FBI and NSA (James Clapper or James Comey), and other exponents of collective racism. It has its own prehistory, but for modern usage it is not relevant since today it is just another modern guise of the same thing.*

*In conclusion, it can be said that the history of all kinds of Germans presents us with a delicate task: it is by its very nature non-philosophical in the technical sense and puts us in a dilemma about how it is possible to avoid the destruction not only of subjectivity but of rational life in general. The struggle between anti-civilization and civilization continues. It is a battle of mind and mindless rational power, and the stake is nothingness or intelligence.*

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<sup>9</sup> On this aspect of the concept of difference, see Bratina (2021), p. 102-158.



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## **КОМЕ ЈЕ ПОТРЕБНО ПОНОВНО ПРОМИШЉАЊЕ РУСИЈЕ?**

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### **Апстракт**

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*Обично нетачно територијално схватање термина “Запад”, рецимо као запада Европе и Северне Америке (некад уз Аустралију, Нови Зеланд и бројна мора), тј. оно које не зна да је “Запад” западно од Јерусалима, а “Исток” источно од њега, има свој смисао и моментум упркос формално-историјској неваљаности промене значења овог појма. Уз земље Источне Европе које су ушле у крематоријум народа под скраћеницом ЕУ, али без Белорусије, Русије и онога што на Балкану предстаља “српски свет”, овај псудо-савез добија свој смисао у речима председника Русије Владимира Путина који то подручје означава као “колективни Запад”. Са друге стране, нема сумње да је “Запад” сам себе у овом тренутку тако одредио (уколико ту не бисмо рачунали покушаје заснивања “азијског НАТО-а”), будући да је у последњој итерацији одузет сваки интегритет скоро свим земљама Европе. Управо тако погрешно схваћени “Запад” покушао је да расистичку природу своје историје “прекречи” сопственим поистовећењем са старом Грчком, наравно тако што је њен културни значај тенденциозно узимао као, у исто време, њен истоветан политички и војни аспект и*

*готово дословно те садржаје “лепио” на смисао своје карактеристичне суштине. Тако је почињен општи фалсификат тоталне историје “Запада” и успостављена његова права етичка и наративна суштина, и све то у име апсолутне доминације и самооправдања.*

**Кључне речи:** Запад, расизам, Русија, преузимање, етика.

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## **THE THIRD WAVE DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN RUSSIA**

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### **Abstract**

*The main research objective of the article entitled: "The Third wave democratization of the Political System in Russia" was to assess the nature of the democratization of Russia's political system in the period 1985-2000. The authors analyze the selected period of the transformation in Russia based on the concept of S. Huntington, which is considered as the most adequate theory of democratization. Authors attempted to answer following questions: What changes occurred during the "Perestroika" process initiated by M. Gorbachev - unsuccessful liberalization for Soviet Russia and "started" the Third wave of democratization of the Russian Federation. Secondly, what was the specificity of the democratization of the political system during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin. And lastly when the retreat from democratization began in Russia. Those analysis seems quite sensible since it can explain the reasons for the retreat from democracy during the presidency of V. Putin and the construction of an authoritarian state in Russia in the 21st century. To verify the hypotheses and answer the research questions the classic method for the*

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*social sciences has been chosen (the decision-making, systemic, and case study methods).*

**Key Words:** *Russia, democratization, Samuel Huntington, Third wave of democratization.*

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## **INTRODUCTION - “THIRD WAVE OF DEMOCRATIZATION” – THEORETICAL OVERVIEW**

One of the most recent theories explaining the democratization process belongs to Samuel Huntington’s conception. His theory of “waves of democratization” presented in 1991 suggests that democracy spreads in waves that affect different countries at different times in history. Therefore it can be compared to ocean waves that are unstable, changeable as the processes of spread of democracy. Exploring the series of crossings and transitions from non-democratic regimes to democracies, he suggests that a “wave” of democratization is “a series of transitions from non-democratic to democratic regimes occurring during a certain historical period and when the number of such transitions far exceeds the number of crossings in the opposite direction during the same period.” (Huntington 1995, p.26.). Huntington argues that the establishment of democracy does not necessarily lead to its consolidation and that after every wave of democratization, there is a wave of retreat from democracy. This theory is more reasonable compared to other democratization theories.

The study’s research problem is to determine the character of democratization in the Russian Federation at the end of the 20th century within the framework of Huntington’s conception. The authors analyze political transformations and achievements in Russian democratization in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and attempt to answer research questions about the changes that occurred during the “perestroika” liberalization, the specificity of democratization during Boris Yeltsin’s presidency, and when the retreat from democratization began in Russia. Classic social science methods, including decision-making, systems, and case studies, were used to validate hypotheses and answer research questions. The subject of the study has many scientific works, studies, and articles by prominent politology, sociology, and international relations scientists.

## THE LIBERALIZATION OF MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

The process of democratization of the Russian Federation began while the USSR was still in its final period of existence, known as Perestroika (from Russian -Перестройка.) After the death of Konstantin Chernenko on March 10, 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev was elected as General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. After being elected as the Gorbachev introduced broad economic and political reforms to revive the country's economy, including glasnost (Russian - Гласность) „without which political democracy and creativity of the masses are not possible” (Gorbachev 1987, p.30), or openness in 1986. This policy gave citizens the right to speak the truth without fear of consequences and access trusted information about the country's present and past. The media played a significant role in this policy, with hundreds of new newspapers and magazines appearing, and censorship reduced. In 1986, the management of most of the creative unions that had been functioning so far (the Filmmakers' Union, the Writers' Union, etc.) was changed. On September 4, 1986, censorship was reduced, and on September 25, 1986, a special resolution of the CPSU Central Committee decided to stop jamming the broadcasts of many foreign radio stations, among them „The Voice of America”, „BBC”. In many editorial offices, the chief editors changed. In 1986, previously banned literary works began to be published in print. During this time, alternative writing and literary associations were formed. The magazines „Novy Mir”, „Ogonyok”, „Znamia”, „Oktyabr” the newspapers „Moskovskie Novosti”, „Argumenty i Fakty” became the arena of heated discussions in society, writing about 214 perestroika processes, exposing corruption schemes or supporting the reform course (Witenko 2013, c.213). Similar messages were transmitted by state television channels, mainly at night: „Vzglyad”, „Do i posle polunoczi” „600 sekund” etc.). In 1987, the first non-state television associations appeared, such as: “NIKA-TV” i ATV. (Witenko 2013, c.214). In 1988 Gorbachev also initiated the process of rehabilitating victims of the Stalinist regime and dissidents, including Andrei Sakharov, scientist, who joined active social activities after being restored from exile. As a result of the work of a special commission, 844,740 people were rehabilitated (Bojko 2011, p.549). Not only the borders of the USSR are slowly being opened, but gates of prisons, special camps, and psychiatric hospitals. Over time, glasnost (read: transformation efforts) has transformed into freedom of speech, which

is one of the fundamental freedoms guaranteed to man by a democratic state. In June 1990, the law "On the press and other mass media", has been established on the prohibition of censorship and freedom of the media (Law of the USSR of 12.06.1990, No. 1552-I).

The processes of democratization became irreversible after the 19th Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held in June and July 1988, where for the first time the people's deputies freely expressed their views and criticized the leadership party. On Gorbachev's initiative, the delegates approved political reform and introduced constitutional amendments to the USSR Constitution (1977). It was decided to conduct alternative elections of deputies to councils (in Russian -Советы) at all levels. Each citizen could be a candidate. The Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR has been formed. Deputies were elected freely in a secret voting for a 5-year period. From its members, the Supreme Council of the USSR has been elected (in Russian -Верховный Совет СССР/i.e., the permanent parliament). Similar state structures were created in republics (Law of the USSR of December 1, 1988, No. 9853-XI). However, one-third of all mandates were guaranteed to Communist Party members, and Communists reserved the right to hold other positions. Boris Yeltsin, Andrei Sakharov, Yuri Afanasiev other supporters of radical reforms were elected to the parliament, forming a democratic opposition formation in June 1989 - the Interregional Group of Deputies (in Russian- МДГ - Межрегиональная депутатская группа). They demanded the conclusion of a new union agreement, the democratization of the electoral system, the adoption of a new property law, economic reforms, and the elimination of Article 6 of the USSR Constitution. On February 7, the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union voted to remove the words about the leading role of the party from the article (Law of the USSR of March 14, 1990, No. 1360-I).

In fact, from that moment on, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union lost its monopoly, and a multi-party system was legalized in the USSR. As part of the political reform at the initiative of M. Gorbachev, the post of President of the Soviet Union was created in March 1990 to maintain its leadership position in the society. As Russian scholars Igor Kliamkin and Lilia Shevtsova have rightly pointed out, the introduction of the office of president into the USSR's political system was not only completely innovative, but revolutionary. However, it is Russian nature, for which power is completely embodied in one person. The president,



according to the new law, was the head of state (Art. 127), elected for a 5-year term, but could serve only two terms in office (127.1). With a relatively large spectrum of competences, the president had to be elected by the citizens of the USSR by direct and secret voting, but as an exception, the first election of the president of the USSR was held in an indirect form, elected by the Congress of People's Deputies. Michail Gorbachev was elected. The presidential system was introduced into the political system of the USSR, so the political forms of the state did not change (Kliamkin, Szewcowa 2009, p.199-200). It is significant to note that at this time were formed opposition parties, such as: „Democratic Union”, „Democratic Party of Russia”, „Liberal-Democratic Party of USSR”. In 1988-1989, the country had about 50 political parties (Zhukov 2006, p.37).

At their extremes turned out the pro-communist „The United Front of Workers” and bloc „Democratic Russia”. A huge number of political parties and social organizations took anti-communist and anti-socialist positions, reflecting people's dissatisfaction, pointing out government's inability to stop economic decline and plummeting living (Ladychenko, Zablocki 2011, p.164-165). „Difficult” economic situation and the failure of the M. Gorbachev administration to reform the economic system only increased tensions. In March 1990, elections were held to the First Congress of People's Deputies of the RFSSR. 148 of the 1,068 seats won the opposition bloc „Democratic Russia”. A significant number of deputies who did not belong to this formation were ready to cooperate with the bloc. At the same time, elections were held to local councils and to the Republican Supreme Councils. In the Baltic Republics, in Georgia, Armenia and Moldova, representatives of the national Movements gained a permanent majority. In April, Gavriil Popov was elected chairman of the Moscow City Council, and Anatoly Sobchak was elected chairman of the Leningrad City Council. On May 29, 1990, the First Congress of People's Deputies of the RFSSR elected Boris Yeltsin as chairman of Parliament of the RFSSR. Success in the election meant that democrats came to power in the RFSRR, Lithuania, Moscow, and Leningrad. On June 12, 1990, with 907 votes in favor and only 13 votes against, the 1st Congress of People's Deputies of the RFSSR adopted the „Declaration on State Sovereignty of the RFSSR” (Declaration on the State Sovereignty of the RSFSR of 12.06.1990). In the spring and summer of 1990, other Soviet republics also adopted declarations of state sovereignty, which M. Gorbachev called the “parade of sovereignty” because the center, as well as himself, did not want to cede power.

The socio-economic crisis, the “parade of sovereignty” and ethnic conflicts in the republics clearly indicated the need to develop and conclude a new Union treaty on the redistribution of powers between the republics and the center. On March 17, 1991, a referendum on the further fate of the USSR was held in 9 republics, including the RSFSR. 3/4 of the voters voted in favor of preserving a renewed union, and the referendum was followed by the so-called “Novo-Gariev process” - negotiations between the leaders of the 9 republics, including Russia, and USSR President M. Gorbachev about a new union treaty. The treaty was tentatively scheduled to be signed on August 20, 1991. This was Gorbachev’s last attempt at a compromise in reaching an agreement between the union republics and the center. On June 12, 1991, Boris Yeltsin was elected as the first president of the RSFSR, receiving 57% of the vote in the first round (Zhukov 2006, p.52). Intentions to reform the USSR forced opponents of the new federation to act and they attempted a coup on August 19, 1991. After blocking and depriving M. Gorbachev of telephone communications at his Crimean residence in Foros, a group of top officials announced the formation of the State Emergency Committee (in Russian-Государственный комитет по чрезвычайному положению - ГКЧП), consisting of 8 people, including Vice President of USSR Grigory Yanayev, Prime Minister Viktor Pavlov, Chairman of KGB Vladimir Kryukhkov, Defense Minister Dmitry Yazov, Interior Minister Boris Pugo and others. The committee declared its intention to restore order in the state and prevent the collapse of the USSR. Accordingly, political parties, social organizations and mass movements were suspended, and rallies, demonstrations and strikes were banned.

The rebels’ determination was by no means supported by action. The troops brought to the streets had no clear task, besides that they did not want to fight against their own people. The rebels immediately met with opposition from the leadership of the RFSR led by President Boris Yeltsin. In defense of democracy, tens of thousands of Moscow residents stepped forward, and in some other cities of the USSR, residents also took to the streets. The putsch was defeated (Zhukov 2006, p.58-59). From August 23 to September 1, 1991, Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan declared independence. It became clear that a new union treaty would not be signed. An important step toward democratization became the decision on decommunization in Russia. On November 6, 1991, RSFSR President Boris Yeltsin issued a decree banning the Communist Party and the Communist Party of

the RSFSR from the republic's territory (Decree of the President of the RSFSR No. 169 of November 6, 1991). It was openly admitted that „*the ruling structures of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union exercised their own dictatorship, creating at the expense of the state a wealth base for unlimited power.*” On December 8, 1991, in Belovezhskaya Pushcha, representatives of Ukraine (L. Kravchuk), Belarus (S. Shushkevich) and Russia (B. Yeltsin) adopted a declaration that „the USSR as a subject of international law and geopolitical reality ceases to exist”.

At the same time, they signed the Agreement on the Establishment of the Union of Independent States. And on December 25, 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev resigned from his post as president of the USSR, which marked the end of the history of the Soviet empire. The attempt at liberalization ended in failure. The collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the USSR, according to Samuel Huntington, was one of the most important events of the Third Wave of democratization. He defined the type of transition that took place in Soviet Russia as *Transformation*. In the process of regime change, the primary role was played by the power elite (the entire Politburo), among which a group of reformers (M Gorbachev and his closest supporters) gained leadership. After the failed attempt at liberalization of the system, the reformers in power appealed to the legitimacy of the past. On the other hand, it is significant to note the co-optation to power of representatives of the opposition. The process of transition to a democratic regime was peaceful (except for local conflicts with ethno-national background but not political) and evolutionary. The effects of Perestroika brought disappointment not only to the initiators, but also to the addressees of the corrective measures in the face of the extremely ideologized and unstable situation of the time (Olędzka 2014, p.131-143).

## **BORIS YELTSIN - THE MOST IMPORTANT PERIOD OF THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF RUSSIA**

After Russia became a sovereign state, various institutions were democratized, and the 1978 Constitution of Russia introduced the presidency, a bicameral parliament, and a Constitutional Tribunal. The electoral system took on the characteristics of a democratic system, the range of powers of the local government bodies was expanded (Zhukov 2006, p.94). After the resignation of USSR President M. Gorbachev in December 1991, B. Yeltsin, the first president of the Russian Federation,

officially took power. He, however, decided not to hold elections to councils at all levels and thus prevented the immediate democratization of the entire society. In many regions, former Communist Party functionaries still had real power. After establishing a consensus with the elites, Yeltsin initiated economic reforms, including shock therapy, which led to the closure of non-competitive factories, unemployment, and growing social tensions. Russia in this regard was not an exception, a similar situation was in all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that began the transition in 1989-1991. The formation of Russian statehood was significantly hampered by the conflict of legislative and executive powers, strengthened by the lack of a constitution. B. Yeltsin preferred the presidential form of government, while opposition representatives and deputies of other parties supported the parliamentary form.

The struggle for power between the parliamentary and presidential forms of government continued until the spring 1993. The parliament of the Russian Federation, headed by Ruslan Hasbulatov, increasingly interfered in executive affairs, demanding the resignation of B. Yeltsin. In April of that year, a referendum was held in which Yeltsin was supported by 58.7% of voters (The results of the referendum held on April 25, 1993). However, the confrontation continued. The opposition organized mass rallies and demonstrations. On May 1, 1993, armed clashes took place in Moscow between the opposition and the militia. Heavy fighting continued throughout the summer. On September 21, 1993, B. Yeltsin issued Decree "About Staged Constitutional Reform" (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 1400 of September 21, 1993), with which he announced the dissolution of parliament and the referendum on a new constitution on December 12, 1993, as well as elections to a new bicameral parliament - the Federal Assembly (State Duma and Federation Council, in Russian- Федеральное Собрание из двух палат: Государственная Дума и Совет Федерации). Since the president's decree was contrary to the current Constitution, deputies rejected the legal way of carrying out reforms. On the night of September 23, 1993, the Special Congress of People's Deputies declared Yeltsin's actions a coup and appointed Vice President Aleksandr Ruckoj (who would temporarily act as president).

The creation of paramilitary formations began immediately, and ammunition began to be brought to the parliament building. Attempts to resolve the situation peacefully failed. As a result, about 150 people were killed (Hołubko 2020, s. 19-36). However, in the end, supporters of B. Yeltsin's policies achieved victory. This showed that in the Russian

Federation there was further a clear personalization of political power or more precisely, state power (Olędzka 2014, p.136-137). In accordance with the president's decisions, elections to the Russian parliament and a referendum on a new constitution were held. On December 12, 1993, a nationwide referendum adopted the New Constitution, which set the democratic direction of the state and approved a democratic system, but with extensive presidential powers. Therefore, this system is often referred to as a „super-presidential“ system. The adoption of the Constitution was of great importance for the democratization of the Russian Federation and was an important event for the further fate of the state, finally eliminated the ideologization of state power, abolished the entire system of the Soviet totalitarian regime. Also, the Supreme Council and lower-level councils were abolished. Thus, 1993 became the year of the final institutional de-sovietization of Russia (Zhukov 2006, p.94-95).

In the years 1991-1993 significant controversies grew between the regional and federal authorities. The threat of Russia's breakup intensified throughout 1992. At that time such regions as: Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Yakutia, Udmurtia, Novosibirsk, and the Tumen stopped paying taxes to the state. Individual regional leaders proposed to turn Russia into a confederation. Under the circumstances, in September 1991, armed formations headed by General Dzhokhar Dudayevy dissolved the Parliament of the Chechen-Ingush Republic and announced its separation from Russia. The Russian government didn't take immediate action. Only in late 1992, when the conflict escalated, The Russian president began to deliberately protect the integrity of the state. As a result, on May 31, 1992, most of the Federation's subjects (except for Tatarstan and Chechnya) signed a new federation treaty that strengthened the rights and powers of the Republics, which stemmed decentralization tendencies (Federal Treaty of March 31, 1992).

The weakness of the federation authorities forced it to sign special bilateral treaties with federation subjects. Bilateral treaties were concluded in 1994-95 between the center and Tatarstan (Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tatarstan of February 15, 1994), Yakutia (Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) of 29.06.1995) on special economic rights within the Federation. Also, during this period, more than 20 treaties were concluded with national autonomies. Such a long process of creating the national-state structure of Russia was because the legislative bodies of the republics and regions differed in legal status, level of competence, responsibility

to the population. The process was limited to the redistribution of powers and revenues between the center and the regions.

The exception was the republic of Chechnya, which declared its independence from Russia in 1991. There, a regime headed by General Dzhokhar Dudaev, who was elected president of the republic, was solidified, which was not accepted by the Kremlin authorities, which did not recognize this and supported the pro-Russian anti-Dudaev opposition. From March to November 1994, Dzhohar Dudayev succeeded in effectively dismantling the opposition Chechen Republic Temporary Assembly and eventually establishing his regime in the entire „Independent Republic of Ichkeria”. In response, on December 11, 1994, Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed a decree to conduct a military operation in the Chechen Republic (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 2137 of November 30, 1994). On the night of December 31 of the same year, the troops launched an invasion of Chechnya’s capital, Grozny. Thousands of civilians were killed after a week-long series of massive air raids and missile and artillery fire. D. Dudayev skillfully manipulated the national feelings of Chechens, portrayed Russia as the enemy of the entire Chechen nation. He managed to win the support of the previously neutral population and became a national hero.

A special operation by federal troops turned into a bloody prolonged war. The hostilities caused numerous casualties among the Russian military and the civilian population of Chechnya. The war lasted until 1996-the new leadership of the self-proclaimed republic (D. Dudayev was killed in April 1996) agreed to a peace agreement (Khasavyurt Agreements of August 31, 1996), which provided for a cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of Russian troops from the republic’s territory and the holding of elections for a Chechen president. However, peace has not been established in this republic and armed clashes continue. Despite of determined efforts, Russia has not succeeded in incorporating Chechnya into the Russian Federation. The issue of Chechnya’s status, according to the agreement, was to be resolved by concluding an agreement on mutual relations no later than December 31, 2001. In January 1997, Aslan Maskhadov was elected the new president of the republics, but de facto real power belonged to field commanders. Chechnya’s economy was criminalized, and the region destroyed by the war were not rebuilt. Wahhabism (a branch of Sunni Islam) was spreading rapidly in the republic. It is worth to mention that Chechnya’s independence created the conditions for further conflicts in the Caucasus (Witenko 2013, p.223).

One of the effects of the transformation, which distinguished Russia from other Central and Eastern European countries, was the emergence of a new social class - "oligarchs." "Oligarch" is a representative of financial or financial-industrial groups playing a significant political and economic role, often having mass media or their own political party/formation. (Zhukov 2006, p.92). The impulse for the emergence of a new social caste in Russia was the privatization of large state-owned enterprises, carried out in undisclosed circumstances. The most lucrative companies of the country became the objects of this privatization: Mikhail Khodorkovsky acquired Yukos, Boris Berezovsky acquired Sibneft, Vladimir Potanin and Mikhail Prokhorov acquired Norilsk Nickel. President B. Yeltsin, on the other hand, built his position as the supreme arbiter cleverly manipulating the interests of individual „clans” and „oligarchic groups”. Close ties with the central government ensured the stability of these groups’ survival and development. The role of patron in this arrangement fell to state structures, which in various ways supported and stimulated the formation of financial and industrial groups (Bartnicki 2016, p.286-87).

On December 17, 1995, elections to the State Duma were held, resulting in the Communist Party taking the first place. The Communists expertly used the difficult political and economic situation to discredit the policies of the president and his team. The strongest criticism was of the economic failures of the reformers and the significant decline in living standards. In the presidential election, the main opponent for Boris Yeltsin was Gennady Zyuganov, a candidate from the Communist Party. Seeking support ahead of the upcoming elections, Boris Yeltsin began behind-the-scenes games with various political forces and the opposition, but also with oligarchs. In exchange for their help, representatives of regional and financial elites obtained extensive political and economic concessions from the president. Moreover, at this point the elites felt that they could be independent of the authorities and the president personally (Bartnicki 2016, p.287). The election, which was held in two rounds, ended with the victory of Boris Yeltsin (Resolution of the CEC of the RF, June 20, 1996, No 105/825-II). Thus began a process of gradual transformation of the distribution of power, during which the political and economic autonomy of various interest groups, and financial oligarchs was strengthened (Bartnicki 2016, p.288). Financial groups had ceased to be obedient clients of the state administration and began to dictate their own terms. „Mixed” interest groups also appeared at this time, uniting influential representatives of state structures and „sharks” of Russian business.

In August 1999, several groups of Chechen fighters and foreign mercenaries invaded the territory of the Republic of Dagestan and declared their intention to create an Islamic State to unite Dagestan and Chechnya, resulting in fighting with the Russian army. For the new Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, the Chechen issue came to the front. In September of that year, several civilian buildings were blown up in Buynaysk, Moscow and Volgodonsk. Hundreds of civilians - children, women, the elderly were victims. The Russian government, having accused Chechen militants of terrorist attacks, decided to conduct an anti-terrorist operation in the North Caucasus and sent regular troops and Interior Ministry units to Chechnya, where in late 1999, federal troops took control of most of the republic's territory. The anti-terrorist operation led to a radical change in the political situation in Russia. For the first time after the collapse of the USSR, a national consensus began to form based on protecting the integrity and security of the country (Lewandowski 2013, p.339).

In December 1999 parliamentary elections, based on a new federal law "On the Election of Deputies to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation" (June 24, 1999), the Communist Party won the most votes. Once again, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation won the most votes, with 24.29% of the vote, (followed by the pro-government bloc "Jedinstvo" - 23.32%, the movement "Otechestvo – Vsia Rosiya" - 13.33%, which represented regional elites. Such parties as the Soyuz Right Sil (SPS), the Zhirinovskogo Bloc, and the "Yabloko" Association gained less than 9% for each) (Results of the elections to the State Duma on December 19, 1999).

The third term of the State Duma was more right-wing than the previous one, reflecting a shift toward stability and civil consensus (Zhukov 2006 p.127-128). Radicalism, extremism, opposition, and revolutionary sentiments were dismissed by most voters. For the first time in all the years of reform, there were favorable conditions for constructive interaction between the executive and legislative branches. In the Duma, the number of deputies in opposition to the president has decreased significantly (Lewandowski 2013, p.341), and the rating of public confidence in the Prime Minister has risen to an unprecedented level - more than 60%. On December 31, 1999, B. Yeltsin announced his voluntary early resignation from the presidential post and entrusted the performance of presidential duties to Prime Minister V. Putin.

Today, in retrospect, Boris Yeltsin's presidency is assessed ambiguously, although positive assessments can be observed, negative



opinions still prevail, averse to the policies he implemented. In 2000, Russia had a real chance to enter the next stage - the stage of strengthening democracy and overcoming the age-old problem of "tsar and slave." However, the gradual socio-political reform initiated by the new president V. Putin (who was elected head of state in democratic elections in 2000) showed the opposite movement - a gradual shift away from democracy began. Even when D. Medvedev was president, V. Putin remained a key and central figure in the state, serving as prime minister. The current political system of the Russian Federation is classified as authoritarianism, based on super-presidential power and the cult of Putin's personality. The chances of initiating a democratic transition soon are assessed as slim, and the scenario of such events is unimaginable.

## CONCLUSION

The analyzed political changes taking place in Russia, imposed by the elites on the Russian people sufficiently prove Samuel Huntington's thesis about the changeability and short-lived nature of democracy and democratization. The liberalization initiated by M. Gorbachev's Perestroika program ended in failure for undemocratic Soviet Russia and "started" the Third Wave of democratization of the largest country in the world, the Russian Federation. During the presidency of B. Yeltsin much was done to establish a viable democratic regime, despite serious obstacles. The greatest achievement of this period was the adoption of a new democratic Constitution as well as the relative stabilization of the political situation at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This period should be considered as the most important and successful period on the way to democracy in Russia. It is also important because in the excrescences of this period are hidden the key reasons for the failure of democracy. In 2000 Russian elites and societies showed the opposite movement: a gradually shifting away from democracy.

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## ТРЕЋИ ТАЛАС ДЕМОКРАТИЗАЦИЈЕ ПОЛИТИЧКОГ СИСТЕМА У РУСИЈИ

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### Апстракт

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*Главни истраживачки циљ чланка под насловом: „Трећи талас демократизације политичког система у Русији“ био је да се процени природа демократизације руског политичког система у периоду 1985-2000. Аутори анализирају одабрани период трансформације у Русији на основу концепта С. Хантингтона, који се сматра најадекватнијом теоријом демократизације. Аутори су покушали да одговоре на следећа питања: Какве су се промене десиле током процеса „Перестројке“ који је покренуо М. Горбачов – неуспешна либерализација за Совјетску Русију и како је „започет“ Трећи талас демократизације Руске Федерације. Друго, у чему је била специфичност демократизације политичког система за време председниковања Бориса Јељцина. И на крају, када је у Русији почело повлачење од демократизације. Ова анализа делује сасвим разумно јер може објаснити разлоге повлачења од демократије за време председниковања В. Путина и изградње ауторитарне државе у Русији у 21. веку. У циљу провере хипотеза и одговора на истраживачка питања изабрана је класична метода за друштвене науке (методе одлучивања, системске методе и методе студије случаја).*

**Кључне речи:** Русија, демократизација, Семјуел Хантингтон, трећи талас демократизације.

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## **RETHINKING RUSSIAN ECONOMY: NEW DEVELOPMENTS, NEW FRAMEWORK, NEW CHALLENGES**

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### **Abstract**

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*The good governance means during complicate times to keep in mind that danger can appear not only from the external forces, but also from the domestic ones. Both directions request a careful approach and some prognosis, to find the main menaces and to adopt a strategy to solve them. The 2022 year brought a difficult situation for Eastern Europe, both for EU member and non-member states. A central place in this equation is reserved for Russian Federation – the biggest country in the region, but also the political actor who face one of the most peculiar transitions in economic and administrative areas. The next decade will offer to Russian state many challenges in the economic sphere, able to force Moscow government to rethink the national economic framework and to also rethink a new way for industrial, technological, and agricultural development. The key purpose of this analysis is to briefly present the general context of the Russian economy, its development prospects, vulnerabilities, and strengths that will determine its development options in the coming decades. In view of the size of the possible analysis, which would require a volume, mainly statistical and historical methods will be used, without forgetting, however, that understanding the*

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*degree of complexity of an economy lies in a multitude of factors, from geography to demography, from finance to currency and from political analysis to university education.*

**Key Words:** *Russian economy, developments, vulnerabilities, framework.*

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1. The geopolitical knowledge of states in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires a rich documentation of several spheres of activity, among which the economic aspect is one of the most important. In practice, even if we do not always consider this broad area of human activity, the need to understand the geopolitical choices of leaders and governments necessarily also involves analysing certain economic data.

But it would be a mistake to believe that it is only the economic criterion that makes the difference in terms of political actions and especially in the sphere of geopolitics. There can be no perfectly mathematical relationship between economics and politics, no matter how hard the various ideologues of the left try to prove it<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, to believe that the behaviour of politicians is perfectly rational, textbook-like is equally wrong<sup>2</sup> – because antipathies or different political coalitions are not always the result of strictly political/economic/voting competition.

However, one fact must be kept in mind: economics has both its laws and its long-lasting results. A poorly managed economy will have its effects for decades to come, and not only in this area, but also in others, such as the life expectancy of citizens, their height, migration to certain urban areas, wage policies, sports results, etc. The situation of the two Koreas, where the poor side has substantially lower life expectancy and average height, should be an example to any government that believes that today's misguided economic policies will not have long-term consequences, and in this respect one part of Eastern Europe has its own lessons to teach the world<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Dow, Sheila C. 2003. "Understanding the relationship between mathematics and economics", *Journal of Post Keynesian Economics*, 25:4, 547 – 560, DOI: 10.1080/01603477.2003.11051379.

<sup>2</sup> Lodge, Martin and Wegrich, Kai. 2014. *Rational tools of government in a world of bounded rationality*. Discussion Paper no: 75, London: London School of Economics and Political Science. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/accounting/assets/CARR/documents/D-P/Disspaper75.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> For more explanations see Landes, David. 1998. *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some are So Rich and Some So Poor*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.



This is a very important thing to bear in mind: until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, economics was more about what people's skills and nature did together. Thus, droughts and locust invasions created problems; the absence of a good irrigation infrastructure could lead to famine and major population losses; the absence of certain technologies meant that certain natural resources were consumed unnecessarily or with less effect than new technologies could, etc. But the former century brings with it a major diversification of economic branches, increased productivity in agriculture – which will more than quadruple the planet's population in less than 100 years (from 2 to 8 billion)<sup>4</sup>, so that many countries of the world have the capacity to produce goods on their own that a hundred years ago were (or could only be) produced in one place (country).

If in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Great Britain was presented as “the world factory”, in the last decades the same phrase has returned to China, without neglecting the contribution of India, Japan, Germany and – especially the US. Industrial capacities installed – or possibly built from scratch in a few months or years – in country X or Y are no longer always a technological (manufacturing) secret, unless the quality of the product is superior, and in this respect, we have the series of negotiations between the USA and the Netherlands on the microchips production<sup>5</sup>. Otherwise, any country can set up a factory to produce reasonably high-quality mobile phones, or high-quality textiles, cars, ships, planes, etc. The level of education that is available today in the technical universities of any country surpasses any 18<sup>th</sup> century' dream, and the number of young people who can learn the knowledge needed to produce different categories of goods is in the order of millions every year.

The consequences of these unique realities in world history are many, but two of them are of more interest in this text.

First, almost all countries have come to be in particularly stiff competition over investment in technology as well as exports of goods. At the same time, there is also a corollary: people today have needs or wants that did not exist before – or were possible in such small quantities that they did not affect the trade balance of countries at all. Thus, the wardrobe of a woman with average financial power was until the 20<sup>th</sup> century of a small size, but today it gives rise to jokes; people in northern Europe (for example) did not know about bananas, mangoes,

<sup>4</sup> Statista. 2023. “Estimated global population from 10,000BCE to 2100”. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1006502/global-population-ten-thousand-bc-to-2050/>.

<sup>5</sup> Haeck, Pieter. 2023. “EU sidelined in US – Dutch deal to block chips exports to China”. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-sidelined-in-us-dutch-deal-to-block-chips-exports-to-china/>.

kiwis, let alone have eaten them; the possibility of having used means of transport of various kinds (planes, cars, bicycles, mopeds, etc.) was 0. These needs, however, lead to brutal competition to attract investment and the development of foreign markets, and trends in one sphere of the economy will be followed by the emergence of factories that will produce the required goods.

The second aspect of particular importance is the quality of leaders and their competence in economics – and implicitly in geopolitics. From the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, natural disasters could hardly be blamed for the population standard of living: the increase in agricultural production made famine in many cases just a memory, which our ancestors could not have imagined. But this has led people to demand more social rights, a higher standard of living, and good medical care – which would extend the average life span beyond 80 years. All these things put pressure on national budgets – but they are not impossible, if the leadership of countries and the public administration implementing policy decisions are of good quality. Moreover, today’s global information space leads to a mirror view of the performance of the world’s countries, so that even less developed countries can see the good practices and results that developed countries have achieved. In practice, political leaders today must compare themselves not only with potential competitors at home, but also with those abroad, who are seen as the yardstick of economic and political-administrative success.

2. In all aspects of geopolitics, economics is involved, to varying degrees.

At the same time, there is a question called “the great powers of continental and global geopolitics”, which are capable of influencing the fate of several countries by themselves, either through their classical economic capabilities or through other characteristics that count in the various rankings and competitions (size of population, geographical location, presence of an important natural resource in huge quantities, which places it among the top producers in the world, etc.)<sup>6</sup>. Global rankings seem to be a 21<sup>st</sup> century trademark; however, they are a necessity in geopolitical planning, and any government wishing to develop certain sectors of economic and/or geopolitical activity must follow them closely.

Although it is perhaps no longer fashionable to talk in terms of the great powers, the reality is more prosaic and at the same time

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<sup>6</sup> A simple search on the most popular search engine for “geopolitical rankings” yields approximately 9.95 million results.

impossible to avoid. If at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century one could talk about the great powers' activities intensity reduction because a unique context made the world think more about peace and prosperity, the situation is different in this decade. More than ever, it is necessary to address the issue of great powers in this decade because this is a decisive time for two issues that affect the whole planet, and solutions will not be able to come – with all due respect to the people there – from Benin, Togo, or Western Samoa, for example.

The first problem we will have to “solve” in this decade is the implementation of Artificial Intelligence algorithms on a large scale in the global economy. This time, the almost theoretical discussions of previous decades are replaced by practical realities, where different professions – including Hollywood actors, as we can see these weeks – must face the increasingly active and consistent presence of products of this kind of “intelligence”. Although we are not yet in front of the sci-fi movies imagined after the 1960s, it is still a reality that in front of the huge electronic machinery the human being is vulnerable, and good jobs are also starting to be affected by standard procedures created/weakened by machines, which simplify the work of operators, but at the same time give employers more power over their employees. Without detailing all the transformations that Artificial Intelligence will bring to the economic sphere, it is worth noting that in the direction of geopolitical competition these new forms of activity will be intensely used by states against capitals considered rivals<sup>7</sup>.

Either way, the millions of jobs that will be affected will force governments to find new ways to support and change national economies<sup>8</sup>. It is obvious that countries with economic and political potential (not necessarily in that order) are forced to find solutions that will have to be replicated or adapted in countries of low geopolitical and economic size. At the same time, the increase since 1990 in the number of cross-border travel makes migration to rich countries increasingly strong, meaning a transfer of wealth to poor countries, but – above all – a real brain drains. Basically, the major powers in this decade will provide the main lines of economic recovery and development at continental and global level but

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<sup>7</sup> Indermit, Gill. 2020. “Whoever leads in artificial intelligence in 2030 will rule the world until 2100”. *Brookings Institute*. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/whoever-leads-in-artificial-intelligence-in-2030-will-rule-the-world-until-2100/>.

<sup>8</sup> Ilizetzki, Ethan and Jain, Suryaansh. 2023. “The impact of artificial intelligence on growth and employment”. *Center for Economic Policy Research*. <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/impact-artificial-intelligence-growth-and-employment>.

will at the same time benefit (based on the wages they can still offer) from a huge recruitment of intellectual elites from poorer countries. In relation to the present text, we must bear in mind that between the Pacific and the Mediterranean, the Russian Federation has the greatest chances of recruiting intellectual elites from other countries, and not China, Iran, Turkey, or Israel, because the political-administrative typology of the latter does not easily allow the migration of foreigners and implicitly the modification of ethnic relations on the labour market.

The second issue that will decisively alter our lives this decade is global climate change. It is the human factor that has achieved a spectacular 8-fold increase in population over the last 150 years, which means that in 2023 the population of the planet is over 8 billion people. However, these billions of inhabitants have a standard of living that 200 years ago not even the most powerful autocrat on earth could have had – and in this regard let's consider just two characteristics: the quality of medical care and the ability to store culture on devices that can be used repeatedly without damage. Most of these increases in the quality of life are the product of the human mind, but at the same time they consume the planet's natural resources, from water to various metals, which has led to a decrease in biodiversity and at the same time a decrease in forest areas. In relation to the figures that give human consumption of natural resources, we therefore have countries that are in great ecological distress, while others are more capable of preventing the problems of this aggressive behaviour towards nature.

As all forecasts show, population growth will not stop this decade, at least globally – because Europe will see the first reversal of this trend. In this sense, it is obvious that the trends of consumption of the planet's resources will not stop, especially as the psychology of the last decades has been that of “the man who has everything in his own home, usually as a landlord”. All this will increase the pressure on ecosystems, and global warming will become even more pronounced<sup>9</sup>. In this situation, droughts and desertification will advance, and more millions of people will be threatened in cities on the edge of seas and oceans. A migration of people to more protected inland locations is inevitable, but this does not mean that the entire urban and industrial infrastructure can be relocated, and especially not at affordable cost. Equally inevitable is a migration of people from poor countries threatened by rising seas

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<sup>9</sup> Weber, Hannes, Sciubba, Jennifer D. 2018. The Effect of Population Growth on the Environment: Evidence from European Regions. *Eur J Popul.* 35(2):379-402. Doi: 10.1007/s10680-018-9486-0.

to countries that have sufficient space (first) and reasonable economic prospects for development.

The desertification of hundreds of thousands of square kilometres – mostly in Africa and Asia – will have disastrous effects on the entire planet, relative to the fact that these two continents are also the most populated. At the same time, the cooler parts of the continents – either in latitude or altitude – will become more habitable, with an increase in their own agricultural potential. This enormous transformation – unique in the history of conscious humanity – has no way of being stopped, and as an effect we will witness in the coming decades a different process of weakening or deterioration of the economic, demographic, and geopolitical positions of several countries.

It is more than obvious that it is necessary to combat the various phenomena that shape and accentuate climate change. However, this is where the two discussions arise: at what cost (first), and who will bear them (second)? Countries with a low standard of living will demand a greater contribution from the major powers, because the latter have more financial resources *per se*. At the same time, the major powers will become targets of migration from all over the planet, because poverty – which will be accentuated in the coming years by the implementation of Artificial Intelligence – will force people to leave their own countries even more. Hence, a complicated discussion, because it is hard to believe that the major powers will accept a substantial increase in their financial contributions to climate change, but above all they will consider large migrations as a threat to their national character. The political changes that such migrations may bring – and rather they are becoming inevitable – in the domestic politics of destination states will probably work against them, but climate and economic conditions will not offer many options to those within striking distance of the seas and oceans.

3. Among all the countries of the world, the Russian Federation has a unique place in the economy<sup>10</sup>. The size of its territory and its northern latitudes give it a unique perspective – although partly Canada will enjoy roughly the same advantage. Basically, the northern economic space will be staked out from this decade onwards by these two countries, which are the major beneficiaries of global warming. Both have large areas and so global agriculture will rely heavily on the performance of

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<sup>10</sup> The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2013. “Russia. Modernizing the economy”. <https://www.oecd.org/about/publishing/Russia-Modernising-the-Economy-EN.pdf>.

the new Russian Canadian lands; among these the Russian Federation will be by far the biggest winner of this transformation.

Having already become a global force in agriculture in recent decades, the Russian Federation now has the chance to become the number one power in this sphere of human activity. Providing food – long a problem for the inhabitants of the Soviet Union – will become easier for the inhabitants of the great northern power, and in the medium- and long-term domestic prices for grains, vegetables and animal products will fall, which will have a major effect on the direction of migration from Asia.

Russia's density is not spectacular, being in fact the lowest among the major geopolitical powers (less than 10 inhabitants per sq.km.). There will undoubtedly be a problem here, as the transformations that the climate will bring in these years will be visible from anywhere in the world – the internet being, among other things, the global television that broadcasts continuously. From this perspective, it will be interesting to see what the Moscow government's policy will be regarding the acceptance of various migrants on the Russian Federation territory, in relation to the language issue (migrants will have to know the official language of the state) and the age structure of the Russian population.

It is equally obvious that the transformation of the territory of the Russian Federation will be accompanied by the need to increase the housing infrastructure in the northern area, which is still underdeveloped. However, federal budget funds will have to be directed to the northern provinces of the country, as they will start to take over part of the population – either as seasonal migrants or as residents who will change their residence to the north. New road networks will have to be developed, both for the export of agricultural products, but also for the development of infrastructure for housing, especially as the northern part of Russia is an area with large, fast-flowing rivers that will require the construction of large bridges capable of supporting substantial vehicle traffic to transport goods to the borders of the country<sup>11</sup>.

Being able to secure your own food is the first step towards autarchy. In any situation, the need to eat cannot be eliminated by the various gadgets, and in a time when food quality has declined (a global phenomenon, unfortunately), countries that will have enough space to grow food will quickly have to solve a problem: creating varieties that

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<sup>11</sup> United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). 2012. "Policy Implications of Warming Permafrost". <https://epic.awi.de/id/eprint/33086/1/permafrost.pdf>.

correspond to the new climatic conditions. Genetics will be called upon to solve this problem, and the quality of agricultural education in the Russian Federation is one of the highest, so it is foreseeable that this issue will be resolved within a reasonable timeframe. However, it should be added that biological processes are not completely mechanical, and it will not happen that a square kilometre of desert in Africa or Asia is instantly replaced by a square kilometre of new agricultural land from Russian or Canadian permafrost. It will be a long-term operation, probably stretching over three decades, and this does not mean that efforts cannot be made to halt or reduce desertification in areas where irrigation systems can do it. It is clear, however, that budgetary priorities in the coming years in several countries in the wider Mediterranean basin and the “Fertile Crescent” will have to change, and that forest planting and land improvement issues will take precedence.

The same global warming will play an important role for freight transport in trade relations between Europe and Asia. Population growth is accompanied by increasing demand for goods, from food to products that satisfy everyone’s hedonism. If the Russian Federation’s economic relations with the world will be more easily satisfied in terms of food by sea transport across the Black Sea, there is another aspect in which Moscow’s interests will be involved. Specifically, a good number of East Asian countries produce and export electronic goods to Europe, the global market being dominated by Eastern firms. In the current geographical and temperature configuration, most shipments are made through the Malacca Straits, which has a huge trade traffic. But in recent years the northern route – which involves moving goods between the two major international trading points via the Arctic Ocean – is beginning to take hold, as the ice no longer lasts as long, and the size of the areas not covered by it grows. Over time, this area will be particularly important for the Russian Federation, which will also be able to benefit from different transit fees for goods using the northern route, because the distance is shorter, and the speed of delivery increases by a few days with each shipment.

4. Another peculiarity of the Russian economy is the preponderance of natural resources – more precisely, their extraction and sale on international markets – in impressive quantities, which will make it one of the most important countries in this sphere of activity<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Joint Research Centre, European Commission. 2022. “Russian trade in non-food raw materials”. [https://rmis.jrc.ec.europa.eu/uploads/Russia\\_trade\\_fiche\\_JRC.D3\\_FINAL.pdf](https://rmis.jrc.ec.europa.eu/uploads/Russia_trade_fiche_JRC.D3_FINAL.pdf).

In view of this important feature of the Russian economy, the question arises whether it is possible to change this export model.

The answer is more difficult to give, and for this we should not blame the situation of Moscow – Kiev relations in recent years. The first element of the answer is strictly related to the capacities of the Russian subsoil, which contains certain elements in larger quantities than other countries. Here a remark is also necessary: as a rule, good governance manuals consider a state that has no problems at all with the supply of goods and no demographic problems, and therefore issues of legislation, public administration, and justice (mainly) are considered. As the diversity of states is great, and two states do not have the same geo-morphological structure, it follows that their development prospects are also different.

Throughout history Russia has had an important commercial dimension in the exploitation of its own resources because it was able to take advantage of a rich subsoil, but especially of neighbours who did not have the same quantities of metals and hydrocarbons, which made exports have a natural path, from Moscow to the West (more), and in recent decades also to the East. Throughout history Russia has had an important commercial dimension in the exploitation of its own resources because it was able to take advantage of a rich subsoil, but especially of neighbours who did not have the same quantities of metals and hydrocarbons, which made exports have a natural path, from Moscow to the West (more), and in recent decades also to the East. This dimension will be just as strong in the future because the planet's population is not shrinking, the need for goods of all kinds is still growing – even if the price issue is still dampening this buying frenzy – and other large quantities of resources can only be discovered on our planet with difficulty, making their extraction and introduction into consumption expensive.

An important clarification is necessary in the context of the problems that the Russian economy has had in recent years. As a result of the sanctions imposed by the major Western powers, the price at which Russian oil is traded at low levels, and there is a sanctioning of transport companies that take this hydrocarbon from the ports of the Russian Federation (mainly, maritime insurers do not offer this guarantee to transport contracts). Without discussing now how long this sanctioning may last, it should be borne in mind that the need for oil consumption is still growing, globally, even if interesting – perhaps even important – steps have been taken in recent years to add other forms of energy to the national mix. However, even if there are major improvements in



various new technologies, oil cannot be dethroned in this decade, and hydrocarbon consumption is not one that can be easily replaced in terms of the configuration of each country's energy and industrial systems (the petrochemical industry is not limited to the production of petrol, diesel, and kerosene). At the same time, the discovery of new oil fields is not easy, and neither is their extraction in a profitable way in all countries of the world. Therefore, it is impossible to replace the Russian Federation's power in the sphere of oil and gas production, and this is something any government should consider. As it always happens, new technologies will be available to rich countries first, and cars that used to consume mostly outdated fuels will be sold to poor countries. For the inhabitants of those countries, driving a car is progress, but they will still consume oil and even more, relative to the age of the cars they buy. That is why the dream of some to eliminate Russia from the big oil scene is naive and not at all productive<sup>13</sup>.

But oil price volatility is affecting many producers, who are trying to keep control of the amounts they can collect from large customers. In this respect, the Russian Federation could try to play a more pronounced role with OPEC countries to benefit from additional revenues<sup>14</sup>. However, the fact that many oil-producing countries do not have sufficiently diversified economies is a major obstacle to development, which makes it difficult for them to comply with a global agreement, and this is also damaging Moscow's budget. Global warming may give solar energy an extra chance on the global stage, which will increase pressure in part on the big hydrocarbon suppliers, but for now this moment is biding its time.

5. The Russian Federation has a similar problem with other raw materials, of which Russian soil is full. Industrial needs are still growing, and even the new 3D printers are not capable of operating on the same huge scale. So, any desire to eliminate Russia from international markets is equally naive and unproductive. "Finding viable alternatives" to what Russian companies are extracting from the rich subsoil would involve both prospecting operations in many countries around the world, with no guarantee of either positive results or of getting them in a short timeframe. But there is one thing the government in Moscow must bear in mind,

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<sup>13</sup> International Energy Agency (IEA). 2023. Oil Market Report – July 2023. <https://www.iea.org/reports/oil-market-report-july-2023>.

<sup>14</sup> About Russian relations with the OPEC see Krutikhin, Mikhail and Overland, Indra. 2020. "OPEC and Russia A happy pro forma marriage". <https://nupi.brage.unit.no/nupi-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2683374/2020+-+OPEC+and+Russia,+a+happy+pro+forma+marriage.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=2>.

and that is the volatility of prices, which can be politically influenced, which can make the supply of goods to North America and the EU – the richest regions of the planet – financially bearable for them, but expensive for the rest of the continents. Obviously in this hypothesis all producers will want to sell to the two areas mentioned above, because they also have the capacity to pay their invoices on time, which would make the Russian Federation sell mainly to countries on other continents, which do not have the same solvency. In any case, the relationship between politics, economics and physical realities will not be an easy one, but in time it will settle into normal parameters, as no other country can replace Russia's unique raw material capabilities.

However, the discussion of the revenues that feed the budget of the Russian Federation is more complex, including in relation to what we were saying in another section of the text, namely that of global labour market transformations<sup>15</sup>.

The fact that a country has high-capacity natural resources is not a problem and – also – it is not a mistake that it wants to sell part of them. However, we are no longer in the era before the steam engine, when mass production was less available, but we are now in a dimension of history in which it is precisely the repeated production of goods that gives a country its strength. It is not at all accidental that the big companies producing consumer goods that are in great demand by the people of any country (if they can afford to buy them) become very rich. The production of electronic goods, cars, clothing and footwear, fine beverages, chocolate, etc. has made certain companies have huge turnover figures and a universal spread, in relation to different types of branding (companies that commoditise natural resources operate in a different type of market, controlled by governments, which makes them have higher revenues, but also less contractual freedom).

In this sphere, however, the Russian economy is not a performing one, most of the companies that are present in this area are either from the North America – EU group or from the Far East – the Greater Chinese Sea area (China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan). There cannot be sufficient international performance if there is not a large group of products that impose a certain type of 'country brand'. Here it is necessary to reorient the performance of Russian technical universities – some of the best in the world – towards the creation of consumer goods at a higher quality level,

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<sup>15</sup> Kudrin, Alexey. Knobel, Alexander. 2018. Russian budget structure efficiency: Empirical study. *Russian Journal of Economics* 4(3): 197-214. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3897/j.ruje.4.30163>.

able to compete with products from China and the EU. It should be borne in mind that after 1991 the market of the former constituent republics of the USSR was dominated by European and Chinese products, so that after 2022, because of Western sanctions, a good part of the products of European economies will no longer be sold in large quantities on the Russian market. However, after 30 years of buying these products, many Russian citizens are now faced with a problem: who will repair and maintain in the future the technologically superior Soviet goods purchased? Unless Russian companies intervene quickly and develop new, high-quality products, either the products purchased before 2022 will not work, or Chinese companies will completely dominate. Either way, the Soviet technological model has proven its limitations, and now the only option for the Russian economy is to create its own consumer goods, because seeing a dominance of Chinese products is not a medium and long-term solution for the workforce in Russian cities either.

6. The Soviet economic and technological model did not prove to be competitive in the long run, and the end was a sad one, based on which a good part of the factories had to be closed, because better products came from Western Europe and especially less energy and raw material consuming. After all, the replication of this model caused big problems in other countries, which did not have enough natural resources, which made them end up after 1990 in a closed path of prosperity, being forced to turn to the other model.

It is obvious that the Russian Federation's universities of merit will find ways to create new elites, more adapted to the economic and political context of the coming decades. It is equally certain that the new changes brought about by the climatic, demographic and Artificial Intelligence context – on a global level – will offer new prospects for development, as well as the creation of a coherent and far-reaching strategy for a country that is capable of great achievements. The large quantities of natural resources, the patriotism of citizens and the quality of education will continue to be a foundation of the Russian state's power, and it remains only for political leaders to organize these assets in functional terms, thus bringing positive results in the economic sphere and in the development of the standard of living of everyone.

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## **ПРОМИШЉАЊЕ РУСКЕ ЕКОНОМИЈЕ – НОВИ РАЗВОЈ, НОВИ ОКВИР, НОВИ ИЗАЗОВИ**

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### **Апстракт**

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*Добра власт означава разумевање како у сложеним временима опасност може да се појави не само од стране спољашњих сила већ и унутрашњих. Оба приступа траже пажљиво разматрање и одређену прогнозу, како би се детектовале кључне претње и како би се усвојила стратегија за њихово решење. 2022 донела је тешку ситуацију за Источну Европу, и за чланице ЕУ као и за оне које то нису. Средишње место у овом изједначењу припада Руској Федерацији – највећој земљи у региону, али исто тако политичком актеру који се суочава са једном од најнеобичнијих транзиција на економском и административном плану. Следећа деценија донеће руској држави много изазова у економској сфери, који ће приморати власт у Москви да поново промисли национални економски оквир, као и нове облике индустријског, технолошког и пољопривредног развоја. Основна сврха ове анализе је да се укратко представи општи контекст руске економије, перспективе њеног развоја, рањивости и предности које ће одлучити њене развојне опције у следећим деценијама. Обзиром на величину могуће анализе, која би захтевала целу књигу, користиће се већински статистичка и историјска методологија, али без заборављања како разумевање нивоа сложености економије лежи у различитим факторима, од географије до*

*демографије, од финансија до валуте, од политичке анализе до универзитетског образовања.*

**Кључне речи:** руска економија, развој, рањивости, оквир.

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## **CONTEMPORARY MASS HIGHER EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC EXPERT ROLE AS THE POSSIBLE CAUSES OF THE CRISIS**

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### **Abstract**

*Analyzing the contemporary situation, it is possible to raise the following question: what is the potential cause(s) of the ongoing crisis? We should start from the insufficiency of forecasting: having all the available information, we can predict in a narrow spatial and temporal range. Simultaneously, it is possible to imagine an interview with an educated adult from the nineties, who is unable to predict current events. These limits provide both chaotic information absorption and anxiety. In turn, these factors prevent consistent logical and philosophical analysis and provide inconsistency in behavior decision making. Observed conflicts between close relatives and friends show the effectiveness of media reports and the lack of the ability to negotiate. We can also observe the inability to negotiate among professional diplomats, who broke their professional ethos by jargon. Moreover, if political solutions lead to effects that are opposite to declared ones, we can expect a lack of expertise, which is based on the lack of information available to philosophers, researchers, and the other experts as well as their lack of involvement in the decision-making process. In turn, this raises the question of the existence of an academic society that can*

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*protect academic values and professional interests. As a result, 21<sup>st</sup> century society remains a mass society with all its opportunities and limits. Thus, if 'Mythologies' by R. Barthes (1957) and schizoanalysis by J. Deleuze & F. Guattari (1972, 1980) are sufficient to understand the way of thinking of the contemporary person involved in the modern crisis, we need new ideas to develop ourselves and our society.*

**Key Words:** *phenomenology, philosophical anthropology, Roland Barthes' Mythologies, schizoanalysis, mass society, academic society.*

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## CONTEMPORARY CRISIS AND ITS PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

Last year dramatically changed everything: COVID-19 pandemic and the later events upset the world's balance and broken ties between people. It is obvious that the effects of the occurred events would have several long-lasting consequences and effects. It is impossible to predict and understand all of them before the final stage or the end of the most critical period. Before the end, there are too many possibilities to make justified predictions about the near future. It turns out that there are so many parameters which role cannot be fully measured. These poor opportunities to make predictions could possibly turn our attention from the unclear consequences to the situation itself and the possible causes of this situation. In other words, this stage of the occurring crisis could not provide any available predictions, but we could try to understand the occurring situation and its possible causes better.

All of these remind us of the history of psychiatry. In the early 17-19 centuries, there were only a few psychiatric disorders and the number of their observable manifestations. Without distinction between key symptoms and additional manifestations of the disorders, there could not be any systematization of the disorders and their symptoms as well as the understanding of the possible natural causes of such disorders (Kannabich 1928). Inventing the first classification of psychiatric disorders was a great philosophical and scientific event, because the inventors were able to go beyond specific situations (their professional and living contexts) and highlight key factors. In other words, it is very

difficult to separate the key factors from the additional ones being the part of existing events.

Let us try to highlight the possible key factors. In my opinion, the most part of the dramatic events of this crisis could be interpreted as the additional manifestations of the most general state of modern society. Thus, to find the possible causes, we must analyze these manifestations to find some so-called “key symptoms” of the contemporary situation. One of the most important is the inability of everyone to get and analyze information to take part in global decisions. At first glance, we have a huge number of heterogeneous flows of information that may contradict each other. In this case, the question of the truth and falsehood of each information flow becomes more and more important. In addition, each choice of concrete information would influence our communication with the surrounding people.

In turn, the large amount of contradictory information (as well as the lack of available information) prevents people from making successful predictions. Moreover, many people were dramatically surprised when the analyzing events started. A bit later, there were several memes and jokes on the internet, which highlighted this unexpectedness.

During the unfolding events, the abundance of information and the lack of necessary data provoked people to conflicts. In addition, these conflicts highlighted the inability of people to negotiate among themselves. We can observe such an inability in both families and international relationships: from close relatives to well-qualified diplomats and politicians. Instead of the expected search for opportunities for mutual understanding and cooperation, it is possible to hear mutual accusations and obscene language.

Surrounded by mutually exclusive information flows without the opportunity to cooperate and negotiate, people meet the situation of the lack of expertise. This lack of expertise manifested itself through the significant underestimation of the expert community and their professional opinions. This ignorance of professional opinion led to the following situation: without expertise, activity aimed at a certain result led to the opposite effect.

In other words, the existing dramatic events are surrounded by the lack of necessary information, the lack of communication between people, and the lack of professional expertise. Moreover, these three deficits could be observed as the manifestations of the analyzed crisis. Using the analogy of the development of psychiatry, these manifestations could

possibly be the main symptoms of crisis. After the choice of the main symptoms, we can try to find their possible causes. In other words, if we keep the conflict and the crisis as symptoms, these surroundings could be the main content of the contemporary situations. Thus, to understand it, we need to answer the following question: what factors cause the lack of information, the lack of communication, and the lack of expertise?

To find the causes of the detected deficits, we need a suitable approach. In my view, the most suitable approach here is anthropological one, which is the combination of philosophical and psychological ways of thinking.

### **ANTHROPOLOGICAL (PHILOSOPHICAL + PSYCHOLOGICAL) VIEWPOINT**

In this text, I would like to follow this type of anthropological perspective, which is a mixture of psychological and philosophical viewpoints. The psychological perspective means the attentiveness to concrete people, their values, outlook, needs, and desires. This corresponds to the famous quote by J. Swift: “But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth.” (Swift 1801). For example, if we appeal to humans and humanity in general, we will lose the needs of everyone. In this case, usage of such abstract concept as nation, country, philosophy in general, science in general, and so on would prevent us from such a viewpoint, when nation in general consist of different individuals and philosophy in general consist of the number of ideas and authors, who created them in different period and socio-cultural context. In other words, I would like to start my reasoning from individuals as the carriers of subjective experience interacting with each other to pay attention to each value and needs.

In contrast, philosophical viewpoint means both problematization (as an ability to raise the problems contrary to common sense) and conceptualization (as the creation of new concepts). This type of reasoning seems to be more general and abstract thinking. However, the history of philosophy provides several examples of the combination of such ways.

One of the possible examples here is Descartes’ *Meditations* (Manley, Taylor 1996), in which philosopher tried to call everything into question in his own subjective experience. In other words, he started from his own experience and tried to find in it the effects of more general laws. The project of empirical psychology by F. Brentano (Brentano 1874)

could be the later example of such way of thinking: in contrast to Wundt physiological psychology, in which psychological laws came from the controlled measurement from different people in different conditions, Brentano tried to study and compare subjective experience of different individuals. Over time, these ideas transformed into phenomenology, philosophical anthropology, and existential philosophy, in which one could find this combination of paying attention to individual with problematization and conceptualization.

Later continental philosophy of 20<sup>th</sup> century (e.g., R. Barthes, J. Baudrillard, M. Foucault, J. Deleuze & F. Guattari) tried to find concreteness in both contextual studies in history and system studies in anthropology mixed with the data of psychoanalytic sessions. Without paying attention to the concrete details and connections between them, one could not differentiate madness from psychiatric disorder, propaganda stamps from the concrete peoples' experience, and late medieval scholars from cotemporary scientists.

In other words, this way of reasoning uses the first-person experience or the concrete data of the individual thoughts as the starting point and foundation and tries to use such an experience to reveal or test some obvious things or fundamental laws.

In other words, by the method of this research I mean the balance between appeal to a concrete individual and problematic intuitions of fundamental laws. In addition, I would like to maintain that balance in the following meditations. Let us try to apply this approach to the studied question about the possible causes of the lack of information, the lack of communication, and the lack of expertise that we could observe during the contemporary crisis.

## POSSIBLE CAUSES

I would like to start with the *lack of information*. There is a contradiction between the available variety of information and the lack of trustful and useful information. In contemporary situations, this problem appears when someone tries to compare information from different sources that hold a certain point of view. The other example is an attempt to find all the necessary data that underlies each decision. This problem seems to first appear in Lyotard (Lyotard 1979), and it has remained unsolved... in popular opinion.

In contrast to this view, every epoch has its way to systematize different information and to help people find the necessary one. In the so-called “analog epoch” there was a variety of library catalogs and codes, and in the “digital epoch” there was a variety of search machines and neural networks, which helps individuals to find information they need. In addition, if we are unable to use such instruments (or if we cannot produce any reliable criteria for information choice and later analysis), it is a question of both our qualification and skills. In other words, there are several different analog and digital instruments, which helps to find the necessary information and compare it. Thus, if we are unable to use such an instrument, this could be the lack of necessary skills.

As for *the lack of communication* (by which I mean the inability to negotiate and interact during the cotemporary crisis), I should start from the communication process itself. Communication is not an easy activity, and high communication skills (as well as diplomacy) are not default human beings’ settings. These skills need both education and intuition to use them appropriately. Each communication situation has its own *ethos* or standards: you possibly can be rude with your close friends, but you cannot behave in such a way with a dean of your faculty or department. Moreover, in communication it is necessary to be attentive to your interlocutor’s social role and status, to his/her attitudes, feelings, emotions, and values. This needs both empathy and self-reflection (in a psychological sense), which could be achieved via training. In other words, if someone (especially a high-level diplomat or politician) is unable to maintain communication that is the question of his /her education. In other words, during the history of humanity many people developed and improved communication techniques and skills. Therefore, our inability to use such a legacy is our own problem.

*The lack of expertise* raises the question of the role of well-qualified or expert opinions and suggestions in contemporary politics, economy, education, and so on. In addition, this problem raises the question of the causes of the underestimation of the professionals’ opinions. In other words, I would like to discuss whether expert opinions play a significant role in the decision-making process during the modern crisis or not. If the role of expert opinions were great, we would observe both the accessibility of the necessary and state-of-the-art information about the current situation to the experts, as well as the great involvement of the different well-qualified and well-educated experts into the discussion around the situation. Moreover, in this case we would observe the work

by specific institutes, whose researchers try to analyze the available information to make forecasts and try to make their research, opinions, and predictions public. If the presented situation is quite different from such a description, it can be assumed that experts are far away from state-of-the-art information and their expertise is far away from people, who make significant decisions in this crisis.

Thus, I can assume that the main causes of the contemporary crisis and its manifestations are the lack of education and underestimation of the expert opinions. In other words, lack of information, lack of communication, and lack of expertise as the key symptoms of the actual situation could be caused by the lack of necessary skills, which can be acquired through education, and ignorance of the professionals, who can help to train these skills or can provide a justified opinion about the actual problems. All of these provide the situation, in which decision-making processes are mostly based on emotions instead of rationality in both common and official contexts. In the situation of decision-making, rhetoric and populism by orators and politics instead of expertise and prognostics by philosophers and researchers could drive these emotions and, in turn, these decisions. In other words, if emotions are the main basis for decision-making, this process could be agitated by propaganda. One of the possible mechanisms of propaganda could be interpreted as semiotic myths. In turn, if the main reasons for decision making during the contemporary crisis are people's emotions agitated by the flood of semiotic myths, it is possible to conclude that contemporary society remains the mass society with all its opportunities and limits.

This characteristic of contemporary society is also an opportunity for researchers, because there are several philosophical approaches created to study mass society. So, if contemporary society is a mass society, we could apply Barthes mythologies (Barthes 1957), Foucault subjectivity studies (Foucault 2017), and Deleuze & Guattari schizoanalysis (Deleuze & Guattari 1972; Deleuze & Guattari 1980) to better understand its main characteristics.

Firstly, I would like to use the concept of mythologies in philosophy and semiotics developed by R. Barthes (1957), when second order semiological systems create new meanings, which govern people in their activities and choices. I would like to recall Barthes' own example from the chapter "Myth today". On the magazine or newspaper cover, we can see a boy in a uniform as a symbol of successful imperialism, but there is a concrete boy, who has chosen military education. If we tried to

reveal the individual history of this boy to understand his motives and feelings, we would refer to the first order semiological system, with its concreteness and uniqueness. If we would follow the image of a patriotic youth, who has found his place in the army of the metropolis, we would ignore the concrete man in concrete context and would follow the empty signifier. In other words, if the opinion of the contemporary situation were based on the second order semiological system, we would follow a myth instead of the concrete experience. Moreover, we could find such semiotic myths in contemporary pamphlets, web sites, and TV-shows. After the detection of such second-order semiological systems, it could be possible to describe them and try to return to the used word or image its original content or its personal history.

The return of the original content of words and multimedia used in semiotic myths could be done *via* Foucault subjectivity studies (Foucault 2017). His combination of philosophizing, studying history and language to reveal the specific context and practices could be applied for contemporary crisis. In this case, every dialog, interview, or text could be interpreted through the individual history of its author, his or her language, culture, values, individual and group identity, education, and social status. Studying such amount of heterogeneous data about concrete people played role in contemporary crisis could help better understand their motives and the degree of disagreement among themselves. One possible limitation is the ignorance of the concept of the author's death. However, our attitude towards paying attention to both individuals and fundamental laws (so-called anthropological point of view that I mentioned early) could prevent us from reducing everything to the texts.

Paying attention to subjectivity, to each personal history and context also allows some philosophical generalization. Schizoanalysis by Deleuze and Guattary (Deleuze & Guattari 1972; Deleuze & Guattari 1980) could be the possible instrument for such summary. Their idea of the combination of Marx and Freud, the governmental control over desires described using the concepts of body without organs and desiring-production could explain the role of everyone in contemporary mass society as well as interpret an individual activity through this desiring-production. For example, both dramatic changes of political system and the values of the concrete individual could be described using the concept of de-territorialization, when individuals' desires transform in their content to remain the flow of desires itself.



It is possible to conclude, that in contrast to the number of higher educated people and thousands of papers on the decision-making process and critical thinking, 21<sup>st</sup> century society (at least in some regions and countries) remains a mass society with all its opportunities and limits. Moreover, we can use theories and conceptions which describe such a society. For example, we can detect and describe semiotic myths used by propaganda; we can return original content and personal history of the data used in such myths; we can interpret both original and mythological content *via* Deleuzian concept of desire to understand behavior and decisions of concrete people. In addition, it is necessary to find the reasons why contemporary society remains the mass society.

## MASS HIGHER EDUCATION

I would like to assume that mass society is based at least partially on mass education. Mass education involves many young people in relatively long school, which gives a variety of fundamental and applied skills, and relatively short higher education, which results in narrow focused specialists, involved in design, research, or business.

The variety of disciplines in mass higher education provides disciplinary boundaries, which prevent successful communication between different researchers. A possible example here is actual terminology: different sciences and humanities provide quite different meanings to the same terms: one of my colleagues always reminds me of the different meanings of the term “potential” in physics and psychology.

There is also one more limit: if more students pass through the limited number of academics, grades also become more formal. In other words, mass higher education involves more students each year (as the number of people on Earth grows) and usually uses the constant or the smaller number of professors. In this situation, the quality of higher education would fall dramatically. There are too many specialists who can use the existing knowledge to solve practical or engineering problems, but there are only a few people who can try to acquire new knowledge. For example, contemporary educational system prepares hundreds or thousands of cognitive psychologists, who use such a paradigm, but only a few researchers can develop the useful research paradigm itself.

As a result, contemporary higher education (mass higher education) seems to prepare specialists, unable to solve complex problems and develop new approaches. Interdisciplinary paradigm is trying to overcome

such restrictions, but it is also resulting in communicational problems between researchers from different fields.

In contrast to mass education, there was an earlier educational model – Humboldt Educational Ideal. This model is oriented on lengthy training of individuals, which began as a drill in a gymnasium and later transformed into freedom to learn (as well as freedom to teach) (Nietzsche 1954; van Bommel 2015). The result of such education is an all-round researcher, who understands and implements his scientific interests. However, this model seems to be unsuitable for the educational standards, which significantly reduces the number of teachers and enormously increases the number of students. In other words, in both structure and aims Humboldt Educational Ideal is opposite to mass higher educations. Therefore, it can be one of possible alternatives or we can use opportunities of such model to provide better education to our academicians.

## **ACADEMIC SOCIETY EXPERT ROLE**

What else can be opposed to mass society and mass (higher) education as possible causes of the current crisis? As stated before, Humboldt Educational Ideal is opposite to mass higher education, like customization or individual approach are opposite to an assembly line. The result of Humboldt Education Ideal is a researcher, who can seek new knowledge inventing new instruments. Simultaneously, the result of mass higher education is a narrow-focused specialist, who can use the variety of the existing instruments to solve the already stated problems. In this case, old-fashioned academicians as a result of Humboldt Education Ideal is opposite to such specialists as a representation of contemporary mass society.

In this case, such a well-prepared academician could be the answer to mass society and the lack of information, the lack of communication, and the lack of expertise as the key symptoms of the crisis caused by such a society. However, during the argument between contemporary politicians and the Humboldtian-styled academician, one opinion of the well-educated specialist would stay the voice in the wilderness. Therefore, the expert opinion should be represented, shared, and protected to play a role in social and political processes.

In other words, each individual expert's opinion should be supported *via* the professional community, and the expert who speaks should be

protected from possible slanders and attacks. In addition, an expert's opinion should also be shared with many people to get enough attention. Moreover, this expert opinion should be shared with people who take part in political decision-making, and this opinion must be significant for them. In this case, such experts and academicians must form a professional community that would help to represent an expert opinion correctly, understandable, and consistent and to protect this view and its authors.

Thus, there should be an independent professional community that can protect and support their members, interests, values, and opinions as well as make these opinions public. In the context of academic experts, I mean academic society. In my opinion, this society should be closer to the medieval guild or early modern period academy of science, in which every monarch was only an honorary member. This could help this society to be independent and to have a connection with other people.

However, there are several objections that could be given to the idea of such an academic society. The first objection is the utopian nature of such an academic society. However, the idea of the society of independent and well-prepared academicians as a political force is a more of a theoretical generalization like Plato's ideal city or a simple sketch that can be developed later through a discussion. This idea mostly represented the value of an alternative educational model and the necessity of professional society that would have a bigger role in political processes in the context of the existing crisis.

The second objection may raise the question that all the proposed innovations pykyare rather related to the past, and therefore cannot lead to development. Every historical process in both life and science could be described *via* complex models, including different interrelated stages of progress and regress like Thomas Kuhn concept of scientific revolution (Kuhn 1962). Like Lacatos' research programs, different ideas, technologies, and practices of each epoch could not be finally evaluated as progressive or regressive.

To put it in a nutshell, my idea of using the old-fashioned Humboldt Educational Ideal as a bunch of useful educational instruments and the being of old-fashioned academic society as a political subject is only a simple sketch of resolving the existing crisis. Their usefulness depends on the correctness of my choice of the key symptoms of crisis and their possible causes.

## CONCLUSION

As a concluding remark, I would like to remind you of the sequence of my reasoning. The study of the ongoing event is very hard because of the large number of its different manifestations. In this diversity, it is impossible to find causes and make predictions. Thus, to analyze this event, it is important to find key symptoms and later try to find their possible causes. I suppose that the brightest signs of the contemporary crisis are only symptoms of the lack of information, the lack of communication, and the lack of expertise, which, in turn, are the effects of the lack of education and the underestimation of the expert opinions.

A deeper look into the society that is not educated enough and prefers emotional arousal to justified professional opinion leads to a conclusion that contemporary society remains a mass society. This working hypothesis allows using the concepts and methods from 20<sup>th</sup> century continental philosophy to find and overcome propaganda clichés. Moreover, I tried to highlight the relationships between mass society and mass (higher) education.

This educational model could be the possible target for preventing future crises that could have a lot in common with the studied one. From my view, to resolve the contemporary crisis, we need people, who could be qualified enough to look ahead. In other words, we need philosophers and researchers, who would have enough education to state and investigate complex problems, which, in turn, could be the opportunities to develop humanity and overcome the existing problems.

Moreover, these people must be part of such an academic society, which could be independent and self-sufficient enough to develop, share, and protect their own views, values, interests, and ideals. In addition, this society must be heterogeneous and diverse enough to cover a broader scope of the studied topics.

Therefore, consistent philosophical study of the current crisis allows identification of its possible causes. In addition, such a philosophical reflection could suggest possible ways of dealing with the studied crisis.

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## **САВРЕМЕНО МАСОВНО ВИСОКО ОБРАЗОВАЊЕ И АКАДЕМСКА УЛОГА ЕКСПЕРТА КАО МОГУЋИ УЗРОК КРИЗЕ**

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### Апстракт

*Анализирајући савремену ситуацију може се поставити следеће питање: шта су потенцијални узроци текуће кризе? Треба да почнемо од непотпуности сваке прогнозе јер обзиром на информације које имамо можемо предвиђати у прилично уском просторном и временском оквиру. Истовремено, могуће је замислити интервју са образованом одраслом особом из деведесетих која не може да предвиди текуће догађаје. Ова ограничења узрокују и хаотичну апсорпцију информација и анксиозност. Последишно, ови фактори онемогућавају конзистентну логичку и филозофску анализу као и неконзистентност приликом доношења одлука. Сукоби између чланова породице и пријатеља показују ефектност медијских извештаја и мањак способности да се преговара. Можемо уочити и неспособност преговарања и међу професионалним дипломатама који крше професионални етос употребом жаргона. Штавише, ако политичка решења производе последице које су супротне декларисаним циљевима можемо говорити о недостатку стручности која произилази из недостатка информација али и о недостатку учешћа филозофа, истраживача и других стручњака у процесу доношења одлука. Последишно, ово се поставља и као питање егзистенције академске*

*заједнице која може да брани академске вредности и професионалне интересе. Следствено томе, друштво XXI века остаје масовно друштво са свим могућностима и ограничењима. Ако су Митологије Ролана Барта (1957) и шизоанализа Делеза и Гатарија (1972, 1980) довољне да се разуме начин мишљења савремених особа које су инволвиране у модерну кризу, потребне су нам нове идеје како бисмо развили и нас и наша друштва.*

**Кључне речи:** феноменологија, филозофска антропологија, *Митологије* Роланда Барта, шизоанализа, масовно друштво, академска заједница.

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## **INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM: AN INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN COVID POETRY\*\*\***

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### **Abstract**

*The United Kingdom and Russia have been viewed as representing divergent national characteristics in terms of indicators of an individualistic vs. a collective approach to life, and our study considers cross-cultural factors involved in the way the two groups have conceptualised, and lived through, the recent experience of lockdown. The COVID-19 crisis, in fact, was accompanied in most nations worldwide by social measures curtailing what have long been seen as fundamental liberties, and this has stimulated the re-emergence of old controversies about the nature of personal freedom, democracy versus state control, the right to healthcare, the distribution of wealth, and so on. We explore poems produced in the two social contexts during lockdown, as people responded to the dramatic circumstances, turning to poetry to communicate their private feelings. The poems are not analysed according to criteria of literary merit; rather, they are explored from the perspective of the linguistic theory of proximation, viewed from an intercultural*

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*standpoint. We ponder the question of whether Russia's supposedly 'collective' mindset may be observed at work in these texts, contrasting with an 'individualistic' response in the Anglo context; whether such generalised, even stereotypical notions have any meaning in a crisis such as that provoked by COVID.*

**Key Words:** *COVID 19, Russia, poetry, proximation, intercultural, individualism, collectivism.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on global social structures, economies, and behavior patterns) are yet to be fully understood (Lone and Ahmad, 2020). In the first period, restrictive measures were so stringent that what used to be normal social activity became a distant memory. People everywhere adapted to concepts like 'lockdown', which normalized a state of house arrest; or 'social distancing', which required them to communicate with friends and family at a safe distance, while social events such as church services, sporting fixtures, theatre, etc., were suspended indefinitely. Our paper highlights lingua-cultural nuances in response to the crisis from the populations of two nations, the UK and Russia. It explores cross-cultural implications that may be involved in how the pandemic has been represented in each national group. The repressive social measures that accompanied the crisis brought to the fore old controversies about individualism vs. collectivism, the nature of personal freedom, democracy versus state control, the right to healthcare, the distribution of wealth, and so on.

As the work of Sapir/Whorf testifies (Konrad Koerner 1992), linguistic practices may reflect deep-seated habits of being that characterize different countries, and thus our research may shed light on long-standing questions of national stereotypes. We look at British and Russian poetical texts that illustrate responses to the COVID-19 outbreak assuming that, by comparing these microlinguistic practices, it is possible to learn something concerning the cultural realities of the countries in question, along the general lines proposed in the comparative cultural works of Hofstede (2001, 2010), Wierzbicka (1991, 2002) and Larina (2015).

The next sections discuss Russian and British national stereotypes from a historical-cultural perspective, focusing especially on the dimension of individualism/collectivism.

## **NATIONAL STEREOTYPES: RUSSIA AND THE UK**

Research by Hofstede attempts to deal scientifically with the abstraction ‘national character’. As Hofstede (2001) notes, this concept, which relates to the ‘relatively enduring personality characteristics and patterns that are modal among the adult members of the society’ (Inkeles & Levinson, 1997: 17), was widely studied in Anthropology in the early 20th century. Though some research seems to indicate that different national groups do indeed differ from one another in interesting ways (Peabody, 1985), the differences also feature in stereotypes that color thinking about other national groups. Stereotypes suggest that the American is talkative and easy-going, Brits are sporting and home-loving, the French romantic, Germans methodical, and so on (Mace, 1943). Russians are usually considered hospitable and highly cultured.

Stereotypes develop over time in the popular imagination and are often seen as factors that may hinder cross-cultural communication, create problems for the assimilation of migrants, and generally interfere with a true perception of the other (Schneider, 2004). It is not Hofstede’s intention to probe the accuracy of national stereotypes, however. He identifies several contrasting general parameters and situates national groups at various points between the two poles, thus enabling a range of large-scale comparisons that may, or may not, conform to stereotypical expectations.

### **Individualism vs. Collectivism**

One of these parameters is a conceptualization of people as driven by an individualistic or a collective logic, and this index is applied in our study. As Hofstede explains:

Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him- or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede et al., 2010; 92).

It is widely believed that Britons tend to illustrate the former term (Tower et al 1997), and as Wierzbicka says, it is possible to find linguistic evidence in support of this. She notes, for example, that Russian has no

expression corresponding to the English ‘self-assertion’ (Wierzbicka 1991: 71). English proverbs and sayings with an individualistic flavor are numerous: ‘every man for himself’, ‘the Devil take the hindmost’, ‘to each his own’, ‘an Englishman’s home is his castle’, ‘I’m alright Jack’, ‘look after number one’, ‘self-made man’, ‘just be yourself’, etc.<sup>1</sup> In Russian, by contrast, people tend to focus on a sense of togetherness: “With the whole family together, one feels at ease” (“*Vsya semya vmeste, tak i dusha na meste*”), “A Russian can’t live without his relatives” (“*Russkiy bez rodney ne zhivoyot*”).

In Wierzbicka’s words, the English respond to a characteristically Anglo-Saxon cultural tradition: a tradition which places special emphasis on the rights and on the autonomy of every individual, which abhors interference in other people’s affairs (*It’s none of my business*), which is tolerant of individual idiosyncrasies and peculiarities, which respects everyone’s privacy, which approves of compromises and disapproves of dogmatism of any kind (Wierzbicka 1991: 30)<sup>2</sup>

Other socio-historical factors suggestive of an individualistic streak in the British national character may be identified, such as the embrace of neoliberalism in the post-Thatcher era (Mullen et al., 2013), the country’s historical lack of a Communist party comparable in strength to European counterparts (Callaghan & Harker, 2011), the self-reliant ethos of its public schools (Nicholls, 1989), and so on. Finally, cultural developments like reality television and social media have seen confirmation in Anglo circles of what has been called the ‘Me generation’ (Twenge, 2014).

Britain also has collective credentials, as one of the oldest European democracies, one of the earliest to experiment, however briefly, with republicanism, and the first European country to introduce free health care for all. However, according to Hofstede’s analysis Britain, together with the USA, is a prime example of an individualistic culture.

The Russian case is different. Wierzbicka (1991: 106), for example, notes that Anglo grammar, with its undifferentiated second- and third-person pronoun ‘you’, does not encourage intimacy, and highlights the greater propensity, in Russian society, for behavior that suggests interpersonal closeness:

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<sup>1</sup> Naturally there are also linguistic traces of this contrary position, for example in sayings like ‘there’s no ‘I’ in team’. ‘Two heads are better than one’, ‘a problem shared is a problem halved’, etc.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting when these words were written; Wierzbicka is clearly describing a version of Anglo culture free from the intrusive demands of social media, which have largely re-written social scripts in personal privacy, especially for the young.

Anglo-Saxon culture does not encourage unrestrained display of emotions. In adult English speech diminutives (even those few diminutives which English does have) feel out of place, just as non-erotic kissing and hugging feels often out of place [...] American students of Russia and things Russian are amazed by the amount of touching, kissing, and hugging which visibly takes place among the Russians (Wierzbicka 1991: 53)

In their 1997 cross-cultural study of Anglo-Russian social attitudes, Tower et al found that:

the single most important aspect which distinguishes Russian collectivism from British individualism is the conflict between the pursuit of personal and group goals, where Russian participants stressed the importance of preserving in-group harmony and following group goals whilst the British stressed the pursuit of personal goals (Tower et al. 1997: 338)

In contrast to the largely competitive ethos in Anglo societies, a study of young Russian's life expectations (Karpukhin & Kutsenko 1983, cited in Tower et al, op. cit: 334) showed that they placed the creation of friendship networks above job satisfaction, family life and self-fulfillment. A well-known saying in Russian holds that 'I' is the last letter in the alphabet, further evidence of a collective mindset. Supporting the view that Russians respond to a collective logic are narratives gleaned from those who live there: people on the street are quick to point out a by-passer's untied shoelaces or torn plastic grocery bag, flash their headlights in the traffic to warn about nearby police, and suchlike.

As we have seen with Anglo individualism, these elements of a collective mindset have left traces in the language. Mutual readiness to help (*vzaimovyruchka*), for example, implies not just keeping another company (*za kompaniyu*), but also a deep-rooted belief that your friend won't help you tomorrow unless you help him today. Some Russian proverbs illustrate the value of true friendship: *Ne imey sto rubley, a imey sto druzey* (Better a hundred friends than a hundred rubles). Russia is thus considered, by Hofstede and other authorities, as a collective culture *par excellence*.

## Russia in the Soviet period

In the context of a discussion of collectivism, it is impossible not to refer briefly to Russia's experiences with Communism, which lasted for most of the last century. Writer Mikhail Shiskin recently claimed

that the Russian revolution, with its rejection of the Tsars' authoritarian social control, represented 'the transition from the supremacy of the collective consciousness to the priority of the individual'. The habits of collectivism, however, have not disappeared; he says, 'a small number of my compatriots are ready for life in a democratic society, but the overwhelming majority still bow before power and accept this patrimonial way of life'.<sup>3</sup>

Though many commentators have defined it as a failed experiment (Scribner, 2003), for much of the twentieth century, global communism constituted a natural pole around which gathered opposition to the individualistic model of free market capitalism prevalent in the west. In his review of Scribner's *Requiem for Communism* (2003), Kubik discusses the possibility that 'under state socialism workers experienced factory labor in a 'collective' fashion that has been rare and perhaps impossible under capitalism' (Kubik 2007: 131), though Scribner herself admits that collective memory, on many points regarding Soviet times, has been crucially affected by nostalgia:

No worker can afford a nostalgia trip back to the industrial utopia. Today labor must look back to the second world, but not return there. What is needed is the solidarity that flourished in the factory, not the planned economies or environmental destruction, not the disregard for individual livelihood (Scribner, *ibid*: 68)

During Soviet times, there was a well-developed system of community work, and in every group (classes at school, departments at work, etc.) there was a person responsible for sports, education, political information, etc. People performing these tasks were given benefits (free or discounted travel, ability to buy rare goods, a better apartment, etc.).

Something of this community spirit survives today: the power of an isolated individual in Russia is much less than in the west, and most deals are achieved through family, friends and acquaintances. A famous Russian saying is, "One soldier does not make an army". In Russia, it is necessary to know people in power to make things work, another reason why Russians maintain more friendships than an average westerner.

The next section presents the methodology used in the study.

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<sup>3</sup> Mikhail Shishkin 'Neither NATO nor Ukraine can de-Putinise Russia. We Russians must do it ourselves. Guardian 28 March 2022. Online at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/28/nato-ukraine-vladimir-putin-russia-democratic-national-guilt>, last access 01/04/2022.

## Methodology

The poems were selected from public sources, from a British poetry competition with a section for COVID poetry, and from Russian contributions to the poetry collection of a joint Russian American publishing house, “Krik”.<sup>4</sup> We selected the first 25 examples from each corpus for the purposes of a quantitative comparison. Analysis of the use of pronouns (*I, me, mine, our, ours*) allows us to draw some conclusions concerning the individual/collective orientation of the authors. Following Gardner et al. (1999), we use prevalence of one pronoun group or another as an index of underlying social attitudes. Twenge et al (2013: 408) claim that:

first person plural pronouns (e.g., we, us) are linked to collectivistic cultural stances, whereas first person singular (e.g., I, me) and second person singular (e.g., you, yourself) are linked to individualistic cultural stances.

From these groups we then selected three poems for closer examination, guided by their value in terms of comparing pragmatic, situated meanings in cross-cultural terms: short poems that have some relevance to the individual / collective dimension were selected.

Though linguistics and literary studies are separate disciplines with distinct analytical approaches, tools of strictly linguistic analysis have occasionally been applied to literary topics, with varying results (Carter and Stockwell, 2008). Some convergence may be possible, but while a poem’s aesthetic qualities interest literary criticism, this is not a factor here. The Anglo poems are not by professional poets but by members of the public; the Russian ones are more polished, but both are used as linguistic data, as words on the page that tell us something about how the writers - and, by extension, how *ordinary people* - are feeling during the pandemic.

It has been suggested that national character is best appreciated through poetry:

To bind and interrogate this Proteus, which is usually called national character and which shows itself certainly not less in the writings than in the usages and actions of a nation – that is a high and beautiful philosophy. It is practiced most surely in poetry; for *in the works of imagination and feeling the entire soul of the nation*

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<sup>4</sup> <https://coronaviruspoetry.com/authors/>, last visit 26.06.2022.

*reveals itself most freely* (Herder, in Berlin and Hardy 2013: 268; our emphasis)

The hypothesis, therefore, is that by analyzing poems produced during lockdown and engaging in cross-cultural comparisons, the traits of national identity that we have outlined so far may be observed.

Our paper explores the data with the linguistic tool of proximisation, developed within Critical Discourse Analysis mainly to highlight instances where media represent threatening situations as closer to the reader, in temporal or spatial terms, than they are. Such threats are linguistically construed mainly through lexico-grammatical choices, as Cap, (2014: 44) explains:

‘traditional’ deictic markers combine with (many) other lexico-grammatical choices to make up coherent structures indexing (rather than ‘deictically’ ‘pointing to’) context in the sense of, at the same time coding and making a response to it.

Even in normal times the ‘other’, especially if they are a stranger or have features that identify them as belonging to an outgroup, may be seen as threatening. In the COVID pandemic, this was greatly exacerbated, especially in 2020, during the first months of uncertainty, when mortality rates soared across the world, and a state of anxiety bordering on panic became a familiar response to situations of social contact.

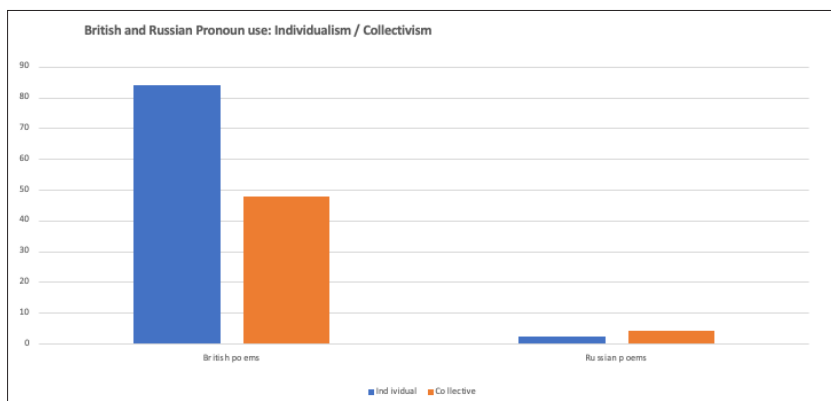
Cap’s notions of proximisation in mediated representations are applied to effects in the interpersonal discourse spaces that occur in the everyday lives of individuals. The choice of proximisation (Cap 2009, 2014) as a linguistic tool appears appropriate to the climate that prevailed during the pandemic, where perceptions of possible danger, unseen threats and fear of physical contact all skewed the normal sense of the acceptable distance that should be observed between people. It also fits well with the cross-cultural perspective of our study, since its categories map onto the individualistic/collective dimension, in the sense that a preference for greater interpersonal distance is arguably a feature of the former type of country, while lesser distance characterizes the latter group.

The next section presents the results of the quantitative analysis.



## PRONOUN USE IN BRITISH AND RUSSIAN COVID POEMS

Table 1 (below) shows results for our survey of 25 poems from the corpora.



*Table One: British and Russian pronoun use*

From this it will be seen that the British group returned nearly twice as many individual pronouns (*I, me, my, mine*) as collective (*We, us, our, ours*). Tables with the results for the single poems may be viewed in Appendix A (British data) and B (Russian).

### Data (i) Anglo Covid poetry

The poems in this section come from the annual Ledbury festival, which in 2020 proposed a category for Covid-themed poems.<sup>5</sup> Our interest, both in this group and the Russian poems, was for texts that described thoughts, emotions, experiences engendered by lockdown, especially those connected to the notion of social distance. In figure one (below) and in all the poems, the first column contains the text of the poem, the second notes linguistic effects in the semantic area of fear. These are construed either through lexis from this semantic field (*fear, terror, frightening, shocking, shiver, tremble*, etc.) or via references to factors that might provoke these feelings (*war, contagion, challenge, infection, loss, death*, etc.). It also notes proximation effects, construed through explicit lexical references to distance/closeness (*two meters away, nearby, in the same room, on the other side of the world*) or via implicit means. In the second UK poem, for example, we read of a girl who ‘asked for

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.poetry-festival.co.uk/lockdown-poems/>, last visit 29.12.2021

his hand’, an indication of a desire for physical proximity. In response, the man ‘blew her a kiss’, which is ambivalent – on the one hand, it indicates a willingness to engage in a relationship, but also recognizes limitations – because of the prevailing social climate, he does not ‘fold her in his arms’, for example.

	Text	Fear, threat / Proximation
1	Because I could not challenge lockdown;	Lockdown / challenge Shivering
2	It did kindly challenge me.	
3	Does the lockdown make you shiver?	
4	Does it?	
5	I saw the security of my generation destroyed,	Loss of security Mourning Shivering
6	How I mourn the freedom.	
7	Does the loss of freedom make you shiver?	
8	Does it?	
9	Politician’s communicating virtually	Shivering
10	Above all others is the robotism	
11	Does this robotic nature make you shiver?	
12	Does it?	
13	The legal instrument that’s really important	Threat to life Shivering
14	Above everything is the isolating lockdown.	
15	Safety now is essential, safety is lifesaving	
16	Does this make you shiver?	
17	Does it?	

Figure One: *Mentality of lockdown by Edward Parish*

Fear is conveyed through repetition of the lexeme ‘shiver’, in the rhetorical question which occurs in the penultimate line of each quatrain. To shiver is an index of the emotional state of anxiety, fear, panic, even terror. Unlike the explicitly emotional ‘I felt frightened/scared/worried’, it is a bodily sensation, and by this means the writer conveys the intimacy of the feelings, underlining the closeness of the threats described. There are moments where a shift in perspective occurs: in 5), the writer is a detached observer, who ‘sees’ the security of his generation destroyed – something bad is happening to other people and he is watching it from a distance. In 6) this now involves him directly, and he mourns his own ‘loss of freedom’. Again, in lines 9-12, the notion of politicians behaving ‘robotically’ construes a kind of distance; their communication is only

‘virtual’, it reaches us from a great distance through media. However, their actions and decisions have the capacity to directly affect our lives, so the threat associated with their robotic behavior comes suddenly close and becomes another factor that potentially makes the writer and his reader’s ‘shiver’.

	<b>Text</b>	<b>Fear, threat / Proximitisation</b>
1	On a one walk day	
2	she knelt two meters away	Two meters away
3	and asked for his hand.	Asked for his hand
4	He buried his head	
5	in the crook of his elbow	
6	and blew her a kiss.	Blew a kiss
7	She coughed up champagne,	Coughed up
8	which cooled his brow, while choosing	His (hot) brow
9	their favorite songs.	
10	The iPod broke down	
11	at a service attended	
12	by virtual friends.	Virtual friends

*Figure two: On a one walk day by Simon Tindale*

In the poem ‘On a one walk day’ (figure 2, above) ordinary pre-pandemic social conventions are subverted, and the notion of social distance accounts for what has changed. A couple are walking together but must stay ‘two meters away’ from each other (2). Their intimate relations are clear from the fact that she asks him to marry her (3). The man replies by blowing a kiss (6) but protects the girl from contagion by covering his mouth as he does so (4-5). The temporal and spatial horizons of this poem, then, are fraught with danger: it is a ‘one walk day’ because the government has rationed outdoor activity to combat the virus. The fact that two lovers take such precautions on an occasion which would normally occur in much greater physical proximity underlines their awareness of the risks. The threat of the virus makes a covert appearance in the descriptions of the wedding, where the bride ‘coughs up’ champagne

(7), a lexical choice that recalls hospital patients with infected lungs, and the groom has a fevered brow in need of cooling (8), again language reminiscent of the semantic domain of illness. The potential for fatality of the unspecified threat is hinted at by a lexical choice descriptive of the man's covering his mouth: 'he buried his head' (4). The sense of distance between the protagonists, construed in the first two quatrains, is underlined in the final line, where the guests are shown following from their homes via an internet connection at a great, and 'safe', distance. The poem's overall vision is thus of a world where physical contact is off limits, where situations in which a certain amount of physical intimacy would normally occur (a proposal, a wedding) become fraught with an imminent threat that redraws social expectations in this area.

	<b>Text</b>	<b>Fear, threat / Proximation</b>
1	Suddenly the world is on hold	
2	Is it rearranging or disintegrating?	Alteration / disintegration
3	I have shut out the world	The world shut out
4	Cannot see my family	Family are far away
5	Touch them or be with them.	
6	This new world is strange	
7	This new life is something I cannot	
8	understand or get used to	
9	Suddenly it's a new way of life	
10	Only to go out to the shop	Two meters apart
11	Two meter apart	
12	Oh what have we come to	Virus with us
13	Is this virus with us for a while	
14	Hope it goes soon I don't like rules	
15	My mental state is not right	Fear
16	I now fear I cannot think clear	Being hit; surviving
17	Will this virus hit me or will I survive?	Touch..loss of control
18	Everything I touch I feel out of control	
19	Is nature trying to tell us something?	
20	To leave well alone	Change / disintegration
20	Earth is rearranging to stop it disintegrating.	

*Figure three: Lockdown by Jennifer Boit*

The threat in 'Lockdown' (figure 3, above) is originally framed as associated with a macro, supra-social dimension, construed throughout the text via lexis suggestive of large, impersonal phenomena: *the world* (1-3), *this new world* (6), *nature* (18), *Earth* (20). The rather unfocused, possibly distant threat associated with a 'disintegrating' world (1) rapidly comes closer as the writer describes her reclusive state of existence:

I have shut out the world

Cannot see my family

Touch them or be with them (3-5)

That normal social distances have been disrupted is plain from the writer's complaint about the need to observe a 'two meters' distance while shopping (10). The writer gives a name to the threat ('this virus' 12) and specifies its potential for fatal harm: the virus is represented in a metaphor comparing its action to that of a missile, or an aggressor ('will this virus hit me?' 16) invading personal space. Meanwhile the writer's sense of touch has been affected by the state of fear she now lives in, and she laments her loss of control over nearby objects (17). In a final return to a macro perspective, the writer suggests that the crisis itself has been provoked by too much closeness; man is being warned by nature to 'leave well alone' (19), i.e., to observe safe distances both when dealing with ecological factors and with other people.

## Data (ii) Russian Covid poetry

The poems come from the virtual anthology of international and Russian Covid poetry compiled by Gennady and Rika Katsov, in response to the pandemic. The original Russian texts can be viewed in Appendix C.

1	I hunker down at home as in a trench ,	
2	The fate is relentless and capricious.	
3	Coronavirus is roaming Europe,	Fear of Covid
4	Elusive as a specter of communism.	roaming Europe
5	Comforting words are in vain.	
6	It's impossible to break the vicious circle.	
7	People dash aside at seeing each other in deserted streets.	vicious circle
8	The quarantine, having closed borders,	
9	Brought the communication between people to an end.	dash aside – avoidance
10	And everyone is dying by himself,	closed borders
11	Being left alone to confront the scourge.	
12	Don't nourish false hopes for friendly bonds with neighbors.	the scourge
13	Russia as well as China are helping Italy – an EU member.	Bonds with neighbors
14	And snobby capitals don't understand	
15	That death hangs over everyone	death hangs over everyone
16	And they'd better unite in the face of the beginning World War III	World War III

*Figure four. Poem 1, Alexander Gorodnitsky*

Poem 1 (figure 4, above) subverts Russia's supposedly collective, other-oriented traditions, as the writer repeatedly emphasizes an individual dimension to the experience. To begin with he 'hunkers down at home' (1), people 'dash aside' on seeing each other (7), streets are 'deserted' (7), and everyone dies 'by himself' (10), 'left alone' (11). We are warned against hoping for 'friendly bonds' with neighbors (12). The threat, 'coronavirus' (3) is represented as 'roaming Europe', which might be thought of as distant - it is not roaming Russia - but the threat is elusive (4) and it is clearly affecting daily life in Russia itself, as the details already noted make clear. Moreover, the virus is conflated with the 'specter of Communism', itself a source of fear in some quarters. In this poem, however, what is truly elusive is the upside of communism, its capacity for providing a collective ideology that might unite people in the face of such a deadly threat. What remains are scattered images that show people breaking

apart in fear of one another (7), being left to die alone (10), to confront their personal terror (11), in a world of closed borders (8) where even communication between people, let alone solidarity with them, is at an end (9). An imminent threat of death ‘hangs over everyone’ (15), and the writer ends with a sudden warning that an even worse threat than Coronavirus is in wait, World War III (16). International unity, solidarity, a sense of collectivism at a macro level, are therefore desperately called for – without a great deal of optimism – at the close of the poem.

	<b>Text</b>	<b>Fear, threat / Proximation</b>
1	The war is on but in a strange way.	War  Death enters Poison  The devil
2	Everything is deceptively silent.	
3	Should you hear a waltz by Khachaturian, you are sure to get sad.	
4	Having put on ridiculous masks, the whole world is unhappy with its destiny.	
5	It is by someone’s devilish command drawn in a sad masquerade.	
6	Science is unable to help us.	
7	Just sit and wait in your corner until death, like in a ball,	
8	Entering without knocking extends poison.	
9	It’s painful for me to hear this news, sad and mourning.	
10	I don’t know if there is a God, but the devil is sure to exist.	

*Figure five: Poem 2, Masquerade by Alexander Gorodnitsky*

The Covid measures, especially the wearing of face masks, feature in the extended metaphor developed in Masquerade (figure 5, above), which compares life under the new social measures to a sort of fancy dress ball where sadness, not joy, is produced by the music (3-4). The threat is conveyed from the outset – ‘the war is on’ (1), and in this context the ‘ridiculous’ masks evoke the idea not of carnival costumes but rather gas masks. Thus, what should be a convivial social occasion becomes a ‘sad masquerade’ (6), where instead of dancing you sit and wait ‘in your corner’ (8) until ‘death’, personified as a waiter, enters without knocking and hands you, instead of alcohol, a cup of ‘poison’ (9).

	<b>Text</b>	<b>Fear, threat / Proximation</b>
1	At first coronavirus has roamed here like a heffalump,	Coronavirus..a heffalump On his trail
2	Then I got out to the pharmacy literally on his trail.	Garlic
3	Since we are all humans, we are a bit nervous.	
4	I went to the pharmacy with a bunch of garlic on my chest.	Ambush everywhere.. doom and gloom
5	I am non-athletic and kept to my bed all my childhood	
6	Although I chewed nasty ginger and rubbed my hands with hand sanitizer.	
7	Wherever I see, there is ambush everywhere, all doom and gloom.	
8	The pharmacist will ask me: "What do you want?"	
9	But I don't need anything.	
10	There is no hope, love or faith, no vaccines, medicines or potions.	
11	Streets and squares are deserted,	
12	Police officers carry the guard of honor at the stalls	

*Figure six, Poem 3, Vadim Yampolsky*

There is an ironic tone throughout Poem 3 (figure 6, above): the author jokes about going to the pharmacy 'with a bunch of garlic on my chest' as if the unseen threat, Covid, was a vampire (4), and appears to mock his own sanitary practices - chewing 'nasty ginger' and rubbing hands with hand sanitizer are seen as equally ineffective (6-7). The opening line presents coronavirus as a 'heffalump', an imaginary animal that figures in A.A. Milne's stories of Winnie the Pooh. In the episode in question, Pooh and Piglet set out to catch the heffalump by building a pit but fall into it and cannot get out. To wile away the time they tell each other stories about the terrible beast and build its threat up to tremendous proportions. The author suggests that we have done something similar with Covid though, unlike the heffalump, the rest of



the poem reveals that the threat from Covid is apparently real. Streets and squares are deserted (12), and the pharmacy is unable to sell ‘hope, love, faith, vaccines, medicines, potions’ (11) that would be able to remedy the situation.

Findings across the two groups of poems will be presented in the next section.

## Discussion

The two groups of poems are now compared, from the perspective of the individual/collective dimension. Based on what was said above, we might hypothesize that the Anglo poems will tend to show the former quality more strongly than the latter, and vice versa for the Russian group. All three of the UK poems do check up in this sense. In the first, for example, the poet uses the first-person singular pronoun to anchor the poem in his own subjectivity; the opening frames the pandemic itself as a personal challenge to this one individual, rather than a social catastrophe:

Because I could not challenge lockdown;

It did kindly challenge me.

The second poem, too, focuses exclusively on the experiences of two individuals; ‘he’ and ‘she’, whose dramatic, ironic actions appear to satirize government precautions and the gravity of the moment. The only references to the tragic events playing out are implicit (readers know why she is kneeling two meters away, and why only ‘virtual’ friends attend the wedding). The fact that she ‘coughs up’ champagne is another implicit suggestion that the writer is aware of the awful backdrop, but once more underlines that the perspective is comic. What matters in this poem is the couple’s experience, and they claim the right of all wedding couples to hilarious memories of their special day, whatever is going on in the world outside.

The individualistic perspective dominates the third poem, once more mainly construed via the singular pronoun ‘I’. The poem reads as an incoherent outburst of subjectivity, the writer seemingly desperate to articulate her own response to the changed social circumstances: *I have shut out the world / this new life is something I cannot understand / I don’t like rules / I now fear I cannot think clear / will I survive? / I feel out of control*. However, there is also a sense that the writer expects that this individual experience will be shared by others; she uses plural

pronouns too (what have we come to?, is this virus with us for a while? Is nature trying to tell us something?). Something similar occurs in the first poem, as the writer consistently uses his own experiences to reach out, via rhetorical questions, to readers:

Does the loss of freedom make you shiver?

Does it?

These three poems then, in different ways, suggest an individualistic perspective that is not entirely without an awareness that other subjectivities exist, nor are they exclusively focused on individual ends.

Turning to the Russian poems, the first opens with a first-person reference that might lead us to think we are in similar territory:

I hunker down at home as in a trench

However, this is the only use of ‘I’ in the poem, which immediately takes on a broader perspective. The writer talks of ‘the fate’ (not ‘my fate’), and then pans out to a medium shot:

Coronavirus is roaming Europe,

Elusive as a specter of communism.

There is a focus on general, sociological features rather than on personal experience, the meanings carried by plural nouns (*people, everyone*):

The quarantine, having closed borders,

Brought the communication between people to an end

And everyone is dying by himself

The second Russian poem, like the second British one, has a light-hearted, satirical tone. An extended metaphor, a masked ball, is used to convey the new social circumstances where what is familiar feels subtly, confusingly, different:

The war is on but in a strange way.

Everything is deceptively silent.

However, where the British poem focused on the experiences of a couple in the pandemic, this poem, like the first Russian poem, is interested not in the experience of the individual, but rather in what is going on at a broader, social level. He says that ‘the whole world is unhappy with its

destiny’, ‘science is unable to help us’, evokes an image of a crowded ball, a waltz by Khachaturian, and so on. As in some medieval painting, the ubiquitous threat of death is the point – someone will come in sooner or later and offer you a cup of poison. A subjective perspective enters at the end, as the writer says how ‘painful’ the situation is, for him; however, his suffering is not motivated by self-pity alone, but clearly relates to the general situation.

The third Russian poem is also ironic, self-mocking. Here the first-person pronoun is used consistently as the writer talks of a trip to the pharmacy, gives details of his childhood and personal habits. First person perceptions and feelings are important:

Wherever I see, there is ambush everywhere, all doom and gloom.

This poem feels closest to the mood of the Anglo ones, as the writer’s interest appears to be on his own experiences (*I don’t need anything*), though this is tempered by statements like ‘we are all humans’, and references to common experiences ‘we are all a bit nervous’. Something of a broader perspective is also recovered at the end:

There is no hope, love or faith, no vaccines, medicines or potions.

Streets and squares are deserted,

Police officers carry the guard of honor at the stalls.

To sum up, the Russian poems do appear to have a more collective focus than the British ones. They attempt to convey what is passing at a social level, to view the pandemic from a variety of angles that includes the collective. By contrast, the individualistic note appears more characteristic of the Anglo productions.

## CONCLUSION

Based on such limited data, any conclusions in terms of the intercultural issues set out above must be careful to avoid unreasonable generalizations. It is not the intention to ‘prove’, for example, that Russian society is more ‘collective’ than British, or that individualism is more a feature of British society. Rather than suggest that this study can confirm Hofstede’s intercultural research, the heuristic value of the poems as cultural artefacts is hopefully demonstrated, as well as the usefulness of this analytical methodology. The study may be seen as tentative work in progress, offering outlines towards a more ambitious project

that could involve a more principled exploration of the individualistic/collective paradigm, applied to these two countries with their vastly differing cultures.

The study has shown a tendency for UK poems to feature a personal, subjective perspective, rather than a collective one. These poems, however, are not without features of other-orientation, sympathy, care, compassion, social awareness. Likewise, the Russian poems, which tend to embrace collective positions, also find space for subjective elements. The study has hopefully shown the relevance of background cultural notions such as those of Hofstede, Wierzbicka and Larina, both in explicating the linguistic effects of single lexical items, and in achieving a deeper understanding of the cultural meanings that the poems display.

In a time where a heavily mediated, global public health crisis foregrounded the semantic field of *fear*, the study has shed light on the way people in Russia and the UK conceptualized, and hence to some extent dealt with, this unprecedented situation of existential threat.

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## Appendix A

### English Covid poems

<b>Title / Author</b>	<b>Individual</b> (I, me, my, mine)	<b>Collective</b> (We, us, our, ours)
Untitled by Sakshi Shinde	5	0
Mentality of lockdown by Edward Parish	5	0
Haiku: Schools Closed by Connor Parish	0	0
Lockdown by Jennifer Boit	11	3
Oh Corona! by Shagun Jain	0	4
Lockdown Parents by Sarah Smith	12	1
Hope by Clive Grewcock	4	0
Internet searches during lockdown by Emma Mason	10	1
Grieved in Absence by Ermira Mitre	0	0
Meditations on the Spring Lockdown by Ermira Mitre	0	6
One Day Soon by Alison Lovett	0	4
Lockdown Universe by Brenda Cox	1	2
Viral by Rich Hammond	1	0

House Arrest by Jeanette Plumb	0	0
Joseph's Hug by Elizabeth Whitaker	3	1
ZoomDoom by Carolyn Brookes	9	0
We said Goodbye by Angela Fendley	0	3
Cummings and Goings by Sarah Miles	0	5
The Medic by Fatemeh Moussavi	14	0
It's My Cage – OK by Ian Rabjohns	7	0
This Dance by Dagmar Seeland	0	7
Perfect Storm by Ilse Pedler	0	0
The New Normal by Kelly Hunter	0	5
The Virus by Angela Nix	0	6
What I've learned from lockdown by Michael Field	2	0
Total	84	48

## Appendix B: Russian Covid poems

<b>Title / Author</b>	<b>Individual</b> (I, me, my, mine)	<b>Collective</b> (We, us, our, ours)
Spring of a student by Alexey Ostudin/ А.Остудин Весна студента / Vesna studenta	0	3
Masquerade by Alexander / А.Городницкий Маскарад/ Maskarad	1	1
Pure rhetoric by Andrey Polonsky/ А.Полонский Чистая риторика/ Chistaya ritorika	0	4
Comrade bird, where are you from? by Alexey Alexandrov /А.Александров Товарищ птица, вы откуда? /Tovarishch ptitsa, vy otkuda?	0	2
Nature takes revenge on us for Michurin by Alexey Alexandrov /А.Александров Природа мстит нам за Мичурина /Priroda mstit nam za Michurina	0	4
Get well soon, Planet! by Olga Andreeva/ О.Андреева Выздоровливай, планета / Vyzdoravlivay, planeta	0	7

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Quarantine selfie by Evgeny Vezhlyan/ Е.Вежлян Карантинное селфи /Karantinnoye selfi	4	8
I am a microbiologist by life by Herman Vinogradov/ Г.Виноградов По жизни я микробиолог / По zhizni ya mikrobiolog	3	1
Don't get used without me by Tatyana Voltskaya/ Т.Вольтская Ты без меня не привыкай /Ty bez menya ne privyuka	2	4
We know what is good by Anna Gerasimova/ А.Герасимова Мы знаем что такое хорошо / My znaem chto takoye khorosho	1	7
Quarantine by Alexander Gorodnitsky/ А.Городницкий Карантин/ Karantin	2	3
Doing nothing by Dmitry Danilov/ Д.Данилов Ничего не делать / Nichego ne delat'	1	7
Quarantine will end by Andrey Dmitriyev /А.Дмитриев Закончится карантин / Zakonchitsya karantin	0	3
I am afraid for Verona's citizens by Veronika Dolina/О.Андреева Боюсь за жителей Вероны/ Boyus' za zHITEley Verony	1	2
And so, we'll live remotely by Olga Andreeva/ О.Андреева Так и проживем дистанционно/ Tak i prozhivem distantsionno	1	2
Creaking hinges by Herman Vlasov / Г.Власов Скрип петель/ Skrip petel'	0	2
For all of us by Veronika Dolina / В.Долина Для всех для нас / Dlya vsekh dlya nas	0	5



So as a community we sit in the quarantine by Victor Yesipov / В.Есипов Вот так всем кагалом сидим в карантине/ Vot tak vsem kagalom sidim v karantine	1	2
People and animals by Vadim Zhuk/ В.Жук Люди и звери / Lyudi i zveri	0	3
During a week of coronavirus by Marina Kudimova / М.Кудимова На мировой коронавирусной неделе / Na mirovoy koronavirusnoy nedele	0	4
The virus poem by Marina Kudimova / М.Кудимова Вирусное / Virusnoye	0	3
Today is Saturday's Friday by Aleksander Lavrin / А.Лаврин Сегодня пятница субботы / Segodnya pyatnitsa subboty	0	7
So, the tram is on the rails by Evgeny Lesin/ Е.Лесин Вот трамвай на рельсы встал / Vot tramvay na rel'sy vstal	4	7
At first coronavirus walked here as the Heffalump by Vadim Yampolsky /В.Ямпольский Сначала здесь коронавирус прошёлся, как слонопотам /Snachala zdes' koronavirus prosholsya, kak slonopotam	4	1
When else are we going to sit with dignity like this by Tatyana Voltskaya /Т. Вольтская Когда еще так важно посидим/ Kogda yeshche tak vazhno posidim	1	3
Total	26	95

**Appendix C: Original Russian poem texts**

<p>Poem 1</p> <p>В своём доме сижу я, как в окопе.  Судьба неумолима и капризна.  Коронавирус бродит по Европе,  Неуловим, как призрак коммунизма.  Напрасны утешительные речи.  Не разорвать губительного круга.  На опустевших улицах, при встрече,  Шарахаются люди друг от друга.  На общности людей поставил точку  Границы перекрывший карантин,  И каждый умирает в одиночку,  С бедой один оставшись на один.  С соседями на дружеские узы  Надежду понапрасну не питай, –  Италии, стране Евросоюза,  Россия помогает и Китай.  И не поймут чванливые столицы,  Что смерть висит над каждой  головой,  И надо бы нам всем объединиться,  Ввиду начала Третьей Мировой.  (А.Городницкий)</p>	<p>V svoynom domu sizhu ya, kak v okope.  Sud'ba neumolima i kaprizna.  Koronavirus brodit po Yevrope,  Neulovim, kak prizrak kommunizma.  Naprasny uteshitel'nyye rechi.  Ne razorvat' gubitel'nogo kruga.  Na opustevshikh ulitsakh, pri  vstreche,  Sharakhayutsya lyudi drug ot druga.  Na obshchnosti lyudey postavil  tochku  Granitsy perekryvshiy karantin,  I kazhdyy umirayet v odinochku,  S bedoy odin ostavshis' na odin.  S sosedyami na druzheskiye uzy  Nadezhdu ponaprasnu ne pitay, –  Italii, strane Yevrosoyuza,  Rossiya pomogayet i Kitay.  I ne poymut chvanlivyye stolitsy,  Chto smert' visit nad kazhdoy  golovoy,  I nado by nam vsem ob'yedinit'sya,  Vvidu nachala Tret'yey Mirovoy.</p>
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<p>Поem 2</p> <p>МАСКАРАД</p> <p>Идёт война, но как-то странно. Вокруг обманчивая тишь. Услышишь вальс Хачатуряна И поневоле загрустишь. Дурацкие напялив маски, Весь мир, судьбе своей не рад, По чьей-то дьявольской указке, В печальный втянут маскарад. Помочь не может нам наука. Сиди и жди в своём углу, Где смерть тебе, войдя без стука, Протянет яд, как на балу. Мне горько слушать сводки эти, – Скупую траурную весть. Не знаю, есть ли Бог на Свете, Но дьявол, вероятно, есть.</p> <p>(А.Городницкий)</p>	<p>MASKARAD</p> <p>Idyot voyna, no kak-to stranno. Vokrug obmanchivaya tish'. Uslyshish' val's Khachaturyana I ponevole zagrustish'. Duratskiye napyaliv maski, Ves' mir, sud'be svozey ne rad, Po ch'yey-to d'yavol'skoy ukazke, V pechal'nyy vtyanut maskarad. Pomoch' ne mozhet nam nauka. Sidi i zhdi v svoynom uglu, Gde smert' tebe, voydya bez stuka, Protyanet yad, kak na balu. Mne gor'ko slushat' svodki eti, – Skupuyu traurnuyu vest'. Ne znayu, yest' li Bog na Svete, No d'yavol, veroyatno, yest'.</p>
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<p>Поem 3</p> <p>Сначала здесь коронавирус прошёлся, как слонопотам, потом и я в аптеку вылез буквально по его следам.</p> <p>Поскольку все мы, человеки, слабы нервишками слегка – я шёл до названной аптеки, надев вязанку чеснока.</p> <p>Я, прямо скажем, неспортивный, все детство чем-нибудь хворал, хотя жевал имбирь противный и спиртом руки протирал.</p> <p>Куда ни кинь – кругом засада, тоски зелёной торжество... Провизор спросит: «что вам надо?». А мне не надо ничего.</p> <p>Надежды нет, любви и веры, вакцин, таблеток и микстур. Пустынны улицы и скверы, и у ларьков карабинеры несут почётный караул.</p> <p>(В.Ямпольский)</p>	<p>Snachala zdes' koronavirus prosholsya, kak slonopotam, potom i ya v apteku vylez bukval'no po yego sledam.</p> <p>Poskol'ku vse my, cheloveki, slaby nervishkami slegka – ya shol do nazvannoy apteki, nadev vyazanku chesnoka.</p> <p>YA, pryamo skazhem, nesportivnyy, vse detstvo chem-nibud' khvorol, khotya zheval imbir' protivnyy i spirtom ruki protiral.</p> <p>Kuda ni kin' – krugom zasada, toski zelonoy torzhestvo... Provizor sprosit: «chto vam nado?». A mne ne nado nichego.</p> <p>Nadezhdy net, lyubvi i very, vaktsin, tabletok i mikstur. Pustynny ulitsy i skvery, i u lar'kov karabinery nesut pochotnyy karaul.</p>
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## **ИНДИВИДУАЛИЗАМ И КОЛЕКТИВИЗАМ: ИНТЕРКУЛТУРАЛНЕ ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ БРИТАНСКЕ И РУСКЕ COVID ПОЕЗИЈЕ**

**Апстракт:** Велика Британија и Русија посматрају се у светлу различитих националних обележја у погледу индикатора индивидуалистичког vs. колективистичког приступа животу, и наш рад разматра културне факторе који су укључени у начине појмовне артикулације, као и проживљена искуства lockdown-а. Криза COVID 19 је, заправо, у већини земаља била праћена друштвеним мерама које су ускратиле оно што се дуго сматрало фунаменталним слободама, и ово је узроковало поновно појављивање старих контроверзи о природи личне слободе, демократији спрам државне контроле, праву на здравство, расподелу богатства и сл. Истражујемо поезију која се стварала у два друштвена контекста током lockdown-а, како су људи одговарали на драматичне околности, окрећући се поезији како би исказали лична осећања. Поеме нису анализиране према критеријумима литерарних заслуга, напротив, истражују се из перспективе лингвистичке теорије приближавања са интеркултурног становишта. Промислићемо питање да ли се претпостављени „колективистички“ начин размисљања Русије уочава у овим текстовима, спрам „индивидуалистичког“

*одговора у англосаксонском контексту тј. да ли такве генерализације, чак стереотипи, имају било какво значење у кризи каква је она узрокована вирусом COVID.*

**Кључне речи:** COVID 19, Русија, поезија, приближавање, интеркултуралност, индивидуализам, колективизам.

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## **AFTER NEOLIBERALISM – RUSSIA AND EUROPEAN VALUES IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

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### **Abstract**

*In this article, the author first analyzes the political and social consequences of the “neoliberal turn” as exemplified not only in the policy of US exceptionalism but likewise in the project of the EU, their common signifier being the politics of NATO expansion and hegemony. Moreover, it is argued how Europe’s self-cancellation of its own system of values began with the first contemporary European wars i.e., the wars against Serbs. This biopolitical militarism of the West has been further exemplified by a series of wars – from Iraq, Libya, Syria all the way to Ukraine. However, different phases of neoliberal biopolitics are outlined, i.e., the movement from “humanitarian interventionism” to neocolonialism and finally neo-Nazism as the truth of neoliberalism. In the second part of the article, the reinterpretation of Russia is articulated as the question of the transition of epochs and “the end of American century” as well as a potentiality for a new political-philosophical discourse of equality and true democracy. Simultaneously, this process appears as a renewal of the Aristotelian relation between ethics and politics vs. the neo-Hobbes of the West and as a possibility for “the rest” to realize new practices of the self-determination of the people enabled by a theory of subjectification, i.e., sovereignty, otherness,*

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*and pluralism. Finally, the question of twenty-first century Europe at the crossroads is presented as a chance for the rebirth of its best traditions.*

**Key Words:** *neoliberalism, biopolitics, European values, reinterpretation of Russia, equality, true democracy, politics of the people.*

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## NEOLIBERALISM AND THE END OF EUROPEAN VALUES

Indisputably, the neoliberal turn in its political, social, and economic aspects corresponded precisely with US hegemony and the creation of a unipolar world, beginning in 1989, while its first most relevant political articulation – as the politics of *American exceptionalism* – can be traced back to the 1992 Wolfowitz doctrine (Tyler 1992). Or, more precisely, the concepts of not only superpower status and US primacy but likewise that of unilateralism that downplays the value of international coalitions as well as the doctrine of preventive intervention have been formulated and later on reaffirmed in, for example, the Bush doctrine as well, which Kennedy described as “a call for 21<sup>st</sup> century American imperialism that no other nation can or should accept” (Gaddis 2002). The policy of *US exceptionalism* has most notably been exemplified by full political implementation of the concepts of *hegemony* and *extraordinariness* and *per se* referred to exclusion of *otherness*, *difference*, as well as *equality*. In this way – in direct opposition to the ultimate proclamation of *democracy as the highest value* – US politics presented a *structural totalitarian impulse*, one which, moreover, has been inscribed in the heart of *the neoliberal system*.

This impulse is precisely why Fukuyama was able to declare “*the end of history*” and why the goal was to *spread neoliberalism on global scale via globalism* or, why, for instance, Brzezinski’s project from the beginning of the 1990s has been full control of Europe by the US (Brzezinski 1997). Therefore, Monnet’s technocratic vision of the project of the EU corresponded precisely to *the crux of the neoliberal system*, i.e., to the dominance of what Badiou has named as the *materialistic paradigm* (Badiou 2012) and Rancière described as *a conformism and an atomism* which, in final instance, produced even *the hatred of democracy* (Rancière 2007).



Thus – based on the lack of *European values per se* – the EU has been able to, in coalition with the US, launch *the first contemporary European wars*, i.e., the *NATO bombing of the Republic of Srpska* in 1995 and the *war against Serbia* in 1999 (Badiou 2012). Neoliberalism, therefore, manifested itself in direct opposition to the *proclaimed politics of perpetual peace* in the destructive attitude and aggression of the entire West. Moreover, launching such wars in the heart of Europe demonstrated *the lack of European autonomy* and, most relevantly, *how the EU has been constructed as the US project par excellence*. From the perspective of European values these wars presented not only a brutal violation of international law, and therefore the end of diplomacy and dialogue, but likewise a radical movement away from *principles of justice, equality, freedom, democracy, and political subjectivity*.

Furthermore, the NATO bombings and the involvement of the EU in this practically displayed *how there is no structural difference between NATO and the EU*, i.e., that they are – in Baudrillard’s terms – *the other of the same*. In final instance, what lies at the heart of this logic is *the militant, conquering and totalitarian aspect* which operates on *the friend-enemy distinction, binarism, and Manichean divisions* (Bernstein 2006). Simultaneously, this reveals the Foucauldian structure of *biopolitics as neoliberalism* at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries exemplified precisely in the political and military institutions such as the EU and NATO, as well as economic institutions such as the IMF and World Bank. Moreover, the so-called “*humanitarian interventions*” of the West – as well as the practically infinite “*wars against terrorism*” – present contemporary biopolitical phenomena *par excellence* and political practices of “*exporting democracy*” (Koljević 2015). In the first two cases, the biopolitical movement is mostly exemplified through *the de-humanization and criminalization of the enemy, the other who does not act as an obedient subject to the neoliberal system and its projected totalization* while in the third case the presupposition is *the hierarchical division between more and less “civilized” peoples*, i.e., the political existence of barbarians to whom democracy *must be exported* for the sake of their own as well as global prosperity.

In any retrospective analysis of how neoliberalism de(con)structed practically all European values, a special emphasis needs to be put on the fact that *the Western wars against Serbs* appeared as the beginning of *biopolitical militarism*, i.e., that the wars in Iraq, Libya, Syria as well

as the “Arab Spring,” the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine, proxy wars, hybrid wars and different types of political interventions aiming at regime change were *a logical continuation of one and the same process*. Finally, if the war against the Serbs presented *the first contemporary EU war*, then the war in Ukraine – first and foremost caused by *hegemonic politics of NATO expansion*<sup>1</sup> and the *Nazification of Ukraine and then of the West as well* – appears as a *second contemporary EU war*, which closes the circle of *neoliberalism as the biopolitics of the EU*, i.e., *its beginning and its politically logical end as the self-realization of its concept*.

Certainly, the entire creation of – in Hegelian terms – an *upside-down world* in which the *master/slave dialectic* enabled reversing the roles of *oppressor* and *oppressed* would not have been possible to such an extent had it not been for the previous destruction of the system of values replaced by a *media-dominated society*. Or, more precisely, the establishment of a *parallel, illusory world* and creation of a *society of the spectacle* (Debord 2002) in recent decades took on many forms – from Orwell’s *1984* all the way to Huxley’s *Brave New World* – in such a way that even Clausewitz’s formula according to which *war is a continuation of politics by other means* – as well as Foucault’s inversion of it – became outdated because *war literally became peace* and *vice-versa*. Along the same lines, *slavery appeared as freedom* and *the quest for autonomy as aggression* and ignorance, even more, manifested as strength.

In this light, one can also recall how Simone Weil emphasized that an impulse of Nazism and fascism played a relevant role in Western history, culture, and everydayness *en générale* and that, in such a way, the figure of Hitler was a radical manifestation of a *persistent Western phenomenon* (Weil 2015). This view is also expressed by W. E. B. Du Bois, who underlined how there is *no such Nazi crime that Europe has not practiced against people of color all over the world a long time before* (Du Bois 1997). Or, indeed, Sartre’s well-known speech, “Genocide,” articulates how the war between the US and Vietnam follows Hitler’s pattern precisely (Sartre 1968). The key point, therefore, which different intellectuals addressed in their own ways is that *biopolitics has a prehistory in Europe*, i.e., that *the imperialism and colonialism of the West were present for centuries* and are inseparable from their *racism*, exemplified in the belief of the superior race determined to rule the world.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1997, Brzezinski wrote how NATO expansion should take place in phases, i.e., how the first to join the alliance should be Eastern European countries such as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, but that then the process should continue (Brzezinski 1997).

This way, it becomes clearer how, at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries, it was possible for European political and theoretical discourses to practically become the *politics of NATO expansion*, i.e., a *politics of hegemony par excellence*, as the project of *transatlantic elites* which *politically, socially, and economically turned even against their own people*. Finally, a paradigmatic example of how *the war in Ukraine* appeared as *the ultimate carrier of contemporary “European values”* – and then, respectively, *as the end of Europe per se* – is found in Žižek’s article, “The Heroes of the Apocalypse,” in which one of Europe’s leading intellectuals outlines unconditional and uncritical *support for neo-Nazism* and, after which, it becomes plausible *how neo-Nazism appears as the truth of neoliberalism* (Žižek 2022). Or, more precisely, contemporary events clearly affirmed Foucault’s thesis of *biopolitics as neoliberalism* and *vice-versa* and how *neoliberal governmentality* – which has included *interventionism, terrorism, “wars against terrorism”, migration crisis, economic crisis, security paradigms* and more *biopolitical phenomena* – now appears as *biopolitics proper*, i.e., *as neo-Nazism*.

In this way, the war in Ukraine exemplifies the final phase of a movement from the ideology of “*the end of history*” to *counter-history per se* – *as the ultimate phase of the self-destruction of the West*. This movement means a full revisionism of both First World War and then the Second World War. Moreover, this process simultaneously manifests itself as a revival of *racism in Europe*. In the final instance, if the beginning of neoliberal totalitarianism was marked by so-called “*humanitarian interventionism*” and a *selective politics of human rights* – as accurately described in Douzinas’s *Human Rights and Empire* (Douzinas 2007) – and the second phase *neocolonialism*, the third and final stage of *neoliberal Europe* is the movement to “*selective humanism*” and then “*transhumanism*.”

Moreover, inasmuch as the contemporary West – and especially the EU – has recently been deepening the division between “*civilized*” peoples and states, and “*the rest*” – which, therefore, are perceived as *barbarians*, European values appear all the more *dislocated*. Or, more precisely, the more Brussels elites refer to Europe as a “*colorful garden*” – as different from “*the planet of the jungle*” – the racism of the “*collective West*” is becoming more and more transparent. In this way, in the name of free speech, both freedom of speech as well as Russian culture are cancelled in Europe, the continent which respectively turns to its own

*self-cancellation*. Furthermore, all of this is just an example of *liberal democracy as post-democracy* i.e., as *hatred of democracy* and, in such a way, as a *hatred of politics*, i.e., as the *nihilism of post-politics per se*.

## REINTERPRETATION OF RUSSIA AND EUROPEAN VALUES

From such a political-philosophical perspective, the reinterpretation of Russia in the twenty-first century appears as much more than a relevant geopolitical analysis of its new role and the country's greatest challenges in building a new reality. Or, more precisely, world transformations which are currently taking place on the one hand signify a *transition of epochs* (Koljevic Griffith 2021) and therefore mark a new era of multipolarity and *the end of the American century* (Hoffbauer 2023) in which *new strategies will be necessary* (Haass, Kupchan 2023). In this sense, one can speak of *structural turbulences* which appear as a *new world map with new centers of power restructuring several decades of US dominance*. However, because this transition refers equally to *the end of neoliberalism as biopolitics* – and in such a way to *the end of post-politics and post-democracy* – the transformations most notably include *new political, economic, social and ethical models*.

This transition is precisely how the *reinterpretation of Russia* is deeply interwoven with the issue of *European values per se* and – in practically direct contrast to the *hyper-production of anti-Russian hysteria in the West* – the multiple ways in which it has to do with the rebirth of the most decisive values. Moreover, it is possible to articulate how the fact that contemporary Russia is reemerging as a relevant new world power, one which will greatly influence the twenty-first century, first and foremost comes forth from *its creation of a new discourse after biopolitics*.

This is to say that the irreplaceable character of Russia's aspirations lies in what Rancière calls *politics of equality* (Rancière 2007b) or what Marx names *true democracy* when speaking of a *self-determination of the people* (Marx 2016). The crucial issue at stake in Russia's new political discourse is the concept of the *equality of states and peoples* and their right to decide their own norms and choose their own destiny. Simultaneously, in the heart of this new logic is the opposition to every form of the *politics of interventionism*, which presupposes a clear stance against *neocolonialism and neototalitarianism*. In this way, the new

political discourse has an Aristotelian echo in it, i.e., it reminds us of the inseparable line *between politics and ethics* or, rather, *the ethics of infinity inscribed in the heart of politics* (Critchley 2007).

Therefore, the system of values which Russia is attempting to affirm is structurally based on *equality, freedom, and justice* as well as on *plurality and the respect for differences and multiplicities, contra the globalized uniformity* which has been a constitutive part of numerous *neoliberal and postmodern theories and practices in recent decades*. In this light, most relevant concepts of the new system are at the same time *sovereignty and pluralism* – as concepts which are not only mutually interrelated and permanently reaffirmed in discourse and politics, but are also unthinkable without their common signifier, i.e., without *subjectivity*. This is the case with practically all forms of individuality and collectivity because the recognition of *otherness via otherness* (Levinas 1969) is precisely *the path of subjectification and self-determination and vice-versa*. Furthermore, all the decisive concepts of the new political framework form a set of relations between themselves, i.e., *equality, freedom, justice, sovereignty, pluralism, and subjectivity* are reimagined as *the basis of a new politics of the people as true democracy*.

Indisputably, in the contemporary setting such a discourse finds a fertile ground both in terms of *Realpolitik* and of new theories in *practically all the non-Western world* in the West-created dichotomy or binarism of “*the West*” vs. “*the rest*.” Since “*the rest*” have been stigmatized by hegemonic neoliberalism as “*the Third world*,” i.e., as “*uncivilized*” and “*barbarians*,” basic political logic entails that they appear as *the ultimate carriers of new politics of the people*. This issue is exemplary because it demonstrates how the reinterpretation of Russia through its newly founding discourse is not simply a matter of its *self-reinterpretation* but rather a *political, economic, social, cultural and philosophical expression of the act of refusal and the right to say “no” to the neocolonial status quo*. Or, more precisely, the majority of the world’s populations, states, and peoples *reject the hierarchical divisions* reentering the processes of *subjectification, sovereinization, and democratization*.

In this respect, a relevant part of this new discourse is likewise a rejection of the *historical revisionism* which became a foundational structure of Western public, media, but also academic mainstream discourse – as exemplified, for instance, in Snyder’s work (Snyder 2012). Moreover, this rejection always already presupposes comprehending how the path to one’s own *self-development* and future progress – be it

individual and/or collective – rests on *the acceptance of objective history as the issue of truth coming into being*. Or, in other words, *the precondition of the appearance of the subject qua subject* is the abandoning of *the neoliberal “eternal present,”* i.e., the understanding of *past and future and the intertwining between them*. It is only from such a perspective that *the rebirth of politics, ethics, and society can take place* and the chance for this is emerging precisely with *twenty-first-century multipolarity*. Furthermore, doing so is exactly how the *reinterpretation of Russia* becomes, *first, the issue of political subjectivity of “the rest”* – in the rediscovered *dictum* of the Enlightenment, “to have the courage to use one’s own reason” – and then the issue of *political subjectivity per se*.

What is in play here is both *bios* and *zoe* precisely because what is at stake for the great majority of humankind is the issue of both *bare life*, i.e., *survival*, and, respectively, of *dignified life*. These two issues fall into one in the *metaphorical* and *normative* but likewise *factual reinterpretation of Russia*, which refers to *the potentiality of a new world system*. Therefore, this is a process in which *the many of the world* are attempting to reaffirm the *crino* in *crisis*, i.e., the insight that every crisis presents a chance for *a new beginning*, with the awareness that the most relevant issue is *the rebirth of the political*. Furthermore, such a theoretical and political movement *eo ipso* carries the reference to the ancient *polis* and the *agora* as its center in which *the free discussion of equals is realized*. Because, if the war between “*the West*” and “*the rest*” exemplifies a contemporary version of a Hegelian *master-slave dialectic* – *as a real struggle for recognition* from which the right to *freedom* and *political subjectivity* emerge – then it is precisely *the ancient and modern rearticulation of European values* which appears as a *proper response*. In such a way, inasmuch as Russia is successful in the discursive and practical foundations of these values, it will arise *as their ultimate carrier par excellence*.

The revival of *political subjectivity* – of *the political per se* – is precisely the revival of Europe’s best traditions: *antiquity, Christianity, and modernity*. Or, rather, *the opposition to neoliberal biopolitics in political, social, economic and cultural terms* most notably refers to the issue of a *true democracy* inseparable from *sovereignty* because both concepts are intrinsically linked with *autonomia*. Moreover, as *the politics of the many* or, rather, the *politics of multiplicities* – that are structurally divergent from *politics of the one*, i.e., the *politics of totality* – they always already presuppose respect for *otherness* and *differences*,

both internally and externally. Therefore, the call for *the equality of all in international politics appears as the end of the politics of hegemony*, presenting a potentiality for a creation of an *international system* in which there would be no *exclusivity* and no *exceptionalism*.

The reaffirmation of the *polis* as the space of dialogue and equal participation, i.e., of free speech and world debate, simultaneously discloses the perspectives of the renewal of the Aristotelian relation between politics and ethics. This is the act of practically direct opposition to *the neo-Hobbesian stance of the West* and, likewise, incorporates the rebirth of the concept of *virtue as measure*. At the same time, the new normative framework of Russian discourse constitutively includes the principles of justice and freedom, and therefore the entire philosophical path from Rousseau to Marx's true democracy, which explains how *a state is democratic inasmuch as it is the live presentation of self-determination of the people*. In opposition, therefore, to *the neoliberal return to the state of nature* and, consequently, to the framework of *the obedient subject* – which is, in fact, *objectified in its core* – the affirmation of new *status civilis* comes forth precisely from the idea of *equality*.

Such is how, seemingly paradoxically, European values have the potentiality of being reborn *first in Euro-Asia* which – both conceptually and geopolitically – does not *per definitionem* exclude the idea of *Greater Europe*. Or, more precisely, not only is it the case that from the principle position of its new discourse – and in difference to current EU practices – Russia is not banning European culture, but it is *structurally opposing biopolitics* as, in Foucault's terms, “*one regime of truth*.”

In this way, Russia is likewise standing against all processes which Rancière names the “*medicalization of thought*” (Rancière 2015) and this means a non-judgemental approach to populations, peoples, and states in their choices.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the discourse Russia is attempting to affirm is articulated against the structural set of relations between *the body*, i.e., the *politization of the body as biopolitics*, as well as what Badiou calls “*democratic materialism*” as the contemporary paradigm. Moreover, this set of relations further includes *fear* – as the dominant emotion of *the obedient subject* turning it into an *object of dominance* – and then *slavery* which signifies the final capturing of the subject. At the same time, this net incorporates *tutoring* – as the model applied to *the*

<sup>2</sup> In “Democracy and Its Doctors” Rancière elaborates how Western discourses in various ways attempted to demonstrate to the people, i.e., to their own populations, how they are a “sick population” if they believe they can really choose.

*objectified subject* – and, finally, the *medicalization of thought* – as the final instance which disables *critical thinking and autonomous action*. Now, this set of relations i.e., *the body-fear-slavery-tutoring-medicalization of thought*, leads to the unraveling of its further consequences which are, namely, the *permanent state of war* or, rather, the indistinguishable state between *war and peace* and *vice-versa*, that at the same time appears as a “*oneness*,” i.e., the *totality of post-democracy* – and the final logical implication of this is precisely the *politics of neo-Nazism* as the *politics of thanatos*.

On the other hand, a structurally different conceptual chain is being reconstructed, i.e., one of *subject-freedom-equality-true democracy and the polis*. This way, the new *zoon politikon* supersees “*the therapeutic Leviathan*” while perceiving that *the true political subject* – the one which *overcomes biopolitics* – is *the people*. Furthermore, it is only in this way that the theoretical and political affirmation of *logon didonai* can take place, enabling, therefore, both *a new philosophical framework and a world communicative practice of a completely divergent system*. Finally, *the rebirth of the political* at the same time refers to a potentiality of a *rethinking of power*, i.e., to a discursive movement towards a conception of power articulated either along Arendtian or Foucauldian lines – a *power* not equalized with *force* but realized as a *power of subjectivities* and then, further, as a *power of collaboration*. Such “*humanization of power*” would, on the one hand, mean its manifestation through *speech and dialogue*, the co-existence of “*the one*” with “*the other*” and then “*the third*,” i.e., the functioning of *society* (Levinas 1969). At the same time, in the domain of *political science and international relations*, this rethinking of power would signify “*the realistic stance*” according to which power is always already present or, rather, *in play*, and there is no utopian escape from it – but what can be achieved in concrete practice is, in Foucault’s terms, *the realization of power “with a minimum of domination”* (Foucault 2003). Furthermore, such a discourse on power enables different world powers to adopt and manifest in practice the concepts of *limited* and *divided power*, which would be fundamentally different from the neoliberal hegemonic, i.e., *limitless power of the one*.



## POST SCRIPTUM: TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY EUROPE AT THE CROSSROADS

In such a way, the new discourse which Russia is attempting to conceptualize and affirm, precisely through *the rebirth of European values* presents *a specific potentiality for twenty-first-century Europe to overcome neoliberalism in theory and practice*. Or, more precisely, the Old Continent is currently at the crossroads where, on the one hand, *the project of the EU is appearing in its self-destructive political shape* while, on the other hand, *a new beginning is yet to be articulated*. Contemporary Europe is therefore at the stage of entering *a process of dissolution and political, economic, and social fragmentation* and, moreover, this is the case with *“the collective West” en générale*, most notably with the US. These are politically logical consequences of the fact that the neoliberal system is falling apart, and this *fall* is simultaneously *destructive and self-destructive*. In the case of Europe, the final implication will most likely be *further disintegration of the EU on practically all levels*. However, it is exactly this fundamental crisis that *presents Europe’s chance in the twenty-first century*, i.e., for the reappearance of the *polis* in the plural, as a rebirth of both the political and multiplicities, and as *a return of true democracy and a political subjectivity of the people*.

The *ethical-political political perspective*, therefore, for the possibilities of a new Europe lies in its creation of discourses of *equality, justice, and freedom* in which, *eo ipso*, *a return to history* will take place as well, as inseparable from the path to the future. Simultaneously, this will mean a new self-awareness of how the welfare state collapsed in Europe, i.e., how such a collapse corresponds to the disappearance of European values. Therefore, it is precisely the neoliberal hegemony in Europe and the prevalence of profit as the ultimate value where the gap between *the Brussels crypto-elites* and *the people* was formed and deepened with time. This is the proper *topos* of dissolution of European values, while perhaps the irreplaceable irony lies in the fact that exactly in time of dominance of what Badiou’s as *democratic materialism* – which refers to a materialistic paradigm *per se* – the differences between classes become broader while the discourses on *equality and justice* were replaced with those on *globalism and prosperity*. Indisputably, protests across Europe will continue to grow and expand, which is *la chance* for *overcoming biopolitics in a rebirth of democracy*. Furthermore, the end of neoliberal biopolitics in Europe will also be the end of *both regulation*

*and control of the population* and will, relevantly, appear as the process in which *the masses become the people*, i.e., *a political subject*.

Doubtless, in its own return to European values, different European peoples will *per defintionem* reframe the propagandist and revisionist political-philosophical interpretation of Russia – such as most notably exemplified in the work of Prozorov (Prozorov 2022) – in the process of *reinterpretation* in which it also becomes clear *how Russia is Europe and vice-versa*.<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously, this reinterpretation presupposes the re-articulation how the *topos* of European values lies in the new Russian discourse, which is a chance for true multiplicities in Europe to emerge. As a movement, in Leviansian terms, from *totality to infinity*, or as, in Critchley's terms, an *infinitely demanding ethics*, this process would manifest itself as an original openness for *the other via other*. Moreover, in such a shift from the materialistic paradigm, i.e., from *democratic materialism*, the Hobbesian *fear for life* diminishes as the prevailing emotion and is replaced by *the will for collaboration, autonomy, and individual and collective self-determination*. Therefore, *the rebirth of the political* signifies precisely *how the neoliberal philosophy of fear* – as exemplified by Hobbes – overturns to *a new philosophy of freedom* and this movement is inseparable from the entire philosophical tradition from Rousseau to Hegel and Marx. The recreation of *polis* in different European countries in the twenty-first century is precisely the act of the *self-becoming of the demos* and, simultaneously, this is the only way *a polis can exist qua polis*. Or, more accurately, in opposition to the permanent state of nature, the renewal of *political topoi* represents *the politics of the people as the proper name for twenty-first-century politics*.

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<sup>3</sup> This however does not mean that Russia is *just* Europe or, more precisely, one is inclined to say Russia is *both Europe and more*.

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## **ПОСЛЕ НЕОЛИБЕРАЛИЗМА – РУСИЈА И ЕВРОПСКЕ ВРЕДНОСТИ У XXI ВЕКУ**

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### **Апстракт**

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*У овом чланку аутор прво анализира политичке и друштвене последице „неолибералног заокрета“ који се препознаје не само у политици америчке изузетности већ исто тако и у пројекту ЕУ, док је заједнички именитељ за оба политика НАТО експанзије и хегемоније. Штавише, аргументише се како је Европа почела да уништава сопствени систем вредности сас почетком савремених европских ратова тј. ратова против Срба. Биополитички милитаризам Запада даље се приказује кроз серију ратова од Ирака, Либије и Сирије све до Украјине. Истовремено се апострофирају различите фазе неолибералне биополитике тј. кретање од „хуманитарних интервенција“, преко неоколонијализма све до нео-нацизма као истине неолиберализма. У другом делу рада питање реинтерпретације Русије артикулише се као питање промене епоха и „крај америчког века“ и као потенцијал за нови политичко-филозофски дискурс једнакости и праве демократије. У исти мах, овај процес појављује се као обнова аристотеловске релације између политике и етике наспрам неохобсовског приступа Запада и као могућност „осталих“ да реализују нове праксе самоодређења народа које извиру из теорије субјектификације тј. суверенитета, другости и плурализма. Најзад, питање Европе у XXI веку која се налази на раскрсници*

*приказује се као потенцијал за поновно рођење њених најбољих традиција.*

**Кључне речи:** неолиберализам, биополитика, европске вредности, реинтерпретација Русије, једнакост, права демократија, политика народа.

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