Battle for Eurasia and Failure of Vladimir Putin as an Eurasian Leader

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Grey Cecily, Lady. Battle for Eurasia and Failure of Vladimir Putin as an Eurasian Leader. Since mid-nineteenth century, Eurasian space has always been a place of political and cultural competition of several superpowers’ national meta-narratives. Now the competition continues. Reverse post-colonialism with idea of European Union guilt before former colonies, Muslim assault on Eurasia, idea of incessant Chinese expansion, Russian idea are the major competitors in ideological tense struggle. That who wins in this struggle, will dominate Eurasia not only in cultural sense, but politically too. A special attention is given in the paper to investigating the “Russian idea,” a set of ideological stories having emerged in late nineteenth – early twentieth centuries within Eurasianism social movement. “Russian idea” has much in common with ideas of Slavophiles as it is to emphasise Russia’s dominating role in Eurasia. The ideological and political influence of Russia on Eurasia reached its apogee at the end of nineteenth century, during the reign of Alexander III. Now in his international Eurasian politics, Vladimir Putin obviously wishes to be a successor of last Russian emperors. However, his administration was critically defeated in its Eurasian claims, due to internal ideological insolvency of Putin’s regime in Siberia and external factors such as Chinese economic and trading Crusade on the whole of Eurasia.

Key words: Eurasia, Russian idea, Chinese assault, Slavophiles, Vladimir Putin

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Евразия, идея непрекращающейся китайской экспансии, русская идея — вот главные конкуренты в текущей идеологической напряженной борьбе в Евразии. Тот, кто победит в этой борьбе, будет доминировать в Евразии не только в культурном смысле, но и политически. Особое внимание в статье уделяется исследованию «Русской идеи» — набора идеологических историй, возникших в конце XIX — начале XX веков в рамках общественного движения евразиства. «Русская идея» имела много общего с идеями славянофилов, поскольку подчеркивает доминирующую роль России в Евразии. Идеологическое и политическое влияние России на Евразию достигло апогея в конце XIX века, во время правления Александра III. Сейчас в своей международной евразийской политике Владимир Путин явно желает быть преемником последних российских императоров. Однако его администрация потерпела критическое поражение в своих евразийских претензиях из-за внутренней идеологической несостоятельности режима Путина в Сибири и в целом факторов, таких как идея о китайском экономическом и торговом доминировании повсеместно в Евразии.

**Ключевые слова:** Евразия, Русская идея, китайское наступление, славянофилы, Владимир Путин

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
There, down to a sunless sea...

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Kubla Khan.*

**RUSSIA’S CLAIMS TO BE AN EURASIAN SUPERPOWER**

**USUALLY WESTERN MEDIA AND A WELL-KNOWN COHORT OF EUROPEAN POLITICIANS** criticise Eurasian authoritarianism devotedly and severely (Merkel and Croissant 2002). I do not think that we should consider authoritarian forms of government in China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and many other Eurasian countries as a priori false and incorrect political systems that need to be “amended” or “corrected” by patching their historically determined political canvas, through which the sun of democracy is about to appear and warm everyone.
Despite what the official “unifying” ideology of the modern European Union implies, “democracy” that is used as a political label, is obviously not a panacea for all woes at all, but only one of the forms of government (Pakhomova 2007). Speaking in favour of authoritarianism in Russia, China, Singapore, Saudi Arabia and many other Asian countries as an historically predetermined form of governance, I am far from criticising true democracy. Real democracy is exceptionally hard to achieve but is worthy to strive for. The largest part of Eurasia was and is governed in an authoritarian way, and we have to accept this truth.

We just have to understand what is good and works effectively in one place, turns out to be absolutely clumsy and inapplicable in the other. The politics suitable for the problems, objectives and mentality of Belgium and Holland will not work in the Eurasian spaces of dozen thousand kilometres from Alaska to the Baltic sea, from North Land archipelago and New Siberian Islands in the North to Sentosa Island in the South. China, Russia and even many states like Singapore, small in territory, are heirs of the Eurasian mentality and authoritarian systems of public administration that existed not even for hundreds, but thousands of years. Most of European Union members are the successors of the political system of Greece and the Athenian democracy of Pericles. China, Russia and the aforesaid Asian states are heirs of political system of the Mongols and political principles and the Confucian heritage of two and a half thousand years old, which was the basis for the authoritarian state management (Byrne et al. 2018). The Eurasian roots in legislation, public administration, political governance, historical memory and culture, of course, put Eurasian states together in many aspects, and not only put together, but also make the mentalities of Eurasian people more understandable to each other by crystallising similar national psychological archetypes.

Russian empire reached an apogee of its power and influence in Eurasia, being ruled by a truly authoritarian emperor Alexander III (Fig. 1). However, shortly before and during World War I (Fig. 2), during the reign of the last Russian emperor Nicholas II, Russia did not cease its claims over Eurasia. Russian territory included all Central Asia as its territories, with Mongolia and Manchuria as satellites, and Russia spread its tight political net over Persia and Ottoman empire. Defeated only by Empire of Japan in Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, Russia kept its leading positions up to the fall of empire in 1917. Long period of USSR led by Bolsheviks and on the whole Communists ensued. Now Russian President Vladimir Putin obviously has a desire to return the Russian dominating role in Eurasia. His manoeuvres in Syria were presumably aimed at proving Russia’s superpower abilities to the world. Yet I should ascertain that Mr Putin’s plan failed completely. The major reasons for that are

1) insolvency of Moscow politics in Russian Siberia that is deemed by Putin’s government as a natural gas and crude oil producing Moscow’s colony without any need to be developed in a social and infrastructural way;

2) inability of Putin’s Foreign Office and secret services to control governments of neighbouring states (Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Belarus) due to the absence of any consistent and congruent politics that otherwise would have
helped Russia to collect shatters of former Soviet Union together, effectively returning to the borders of Russian Empire;

3) tremendous rates of decrease and aging of Russian Far East population due to poor level of life and the lowest income in Russian Far East in comparison with the rest of Russia;

4) failure of Putin to organise Russia as a high-tech manufacturer and know-how scientific base, instead relying totally upon fossil energy production with subsequent selling them to trade partners ("petrol station" syndrome);

5) unwillingness of modern Russian government to participate in New Silk Route programmes, whereas other countries of the post-Soviet space (e.g. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) are eager to collaborate with People’s Republic of China in mapping and constructing infrastructure for the New Silk Route.

Fig. 1. Russian Empire in 1890, during Alexander III reign.
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AUTHORITARIANISM IN EURASIA

MODERN RUSSIA’S FAILURE TO BECOME AN EURASIAN SUPERPOWER is even more strange, if we recall that Russia has authoritarian traditions of government as the major part of Eurasian countries.

The success of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in their sooth inclusion in New Silk Route programmes can be partially explained by their authoritarian models of administration similar to the Chinese one (Komkova 2018). Authoritarian traditions in political power for the states of Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, as well as for Russia and China are not just historical “mistakes,” or “wrong facts,” as many Western media try to emphasise, but they represent a Eurasian form of legislation and governance that has proved its effectiveness
during centuries. Putin cannot make use of the similarity of Russian and Chinese administrative systems. Russia and China are the bearers of the Eurasian mentality, where vast spaces, endless wildernesses and deserts, extreme scarcity of the population in some places with high concentration in the others, remoteness of the regions from the centre and utter need for a strict local control formed autocratic power traditions, cultural artefacts and psychological archetypes of national consciousness. Famous Russian ethnologist Lev Gumilyov called this mentality characteristic for Russia, China and Singapore (through Chinese inheritance) a mentality of Great Steppe (Gumilyov 2006). Russian people were not scared that it took two years for a diplomatic delegation to get to Nerchinsk from Moscow during the reign of Princess Sophia. The Chinese were not surprised by the fact that in the heyday of the Tang dynasty, on the shores of Aral Sea a local Confucian official could substitute the Emperor that was ruling far away, in Chang’an, the capital of Tang China.

Instead of making a strong political and military alliance with PRC, Putin got completely satisfied by the “Force of Siberia” (“Sila Sibiri” in Russian) agreement that gave Russia a possibility to construct a natural gas transporting pipeline to Northern China. Hardly anyone of Putin’s and Medvedev’s governments, perhaps excepting Foreign Secretary Mr Lavrov and Defence Secretary Mr Shoygu, realises that the control over Eurasia cannot be achieved through imposing natural gas and low-quality crude oil to all neighbours with simultaneous rattling the sabre. This type of the “armed petrol station” stratagem was not overcome during twenty years of Putin’s rule, only strengthened and became almost the only source of making Russian budget. Putin’s authoritarianism did not line up with the Chinese authoritarianism. This opens bright hopes for UK and EU to intervene to the process of making Eurasian political blocks and reformulating what future Eurasia shall be like.

**EURASIANISM AS AN IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF RUSSIA’S CLAIMS TO A LEADING ROLE IN EURASIA**

The Eurasian type of legislation, culture and political thinking is comprehended and studied in the Eurasian political philosophy, a distinct trend in Russian political thought.

Some of the origins of the Eurasian political philosophy can be found even in the writings of Slavophiles Alexey Khomyakov (2016), Ivan Kireevsky (1984); Nikolay Y. Danilevsky (2011), Yury F. Samarin (1890), the brothers Aksakovs (Aksakov and Aksakov 1981), late Slavophile Konstantin N. Leontiev (1885-1886), as well as the works of famous Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky and philosopher Vladimir Solovyov. Of course, Slavophiles Danilevsky, Samarin and Leontiev can be considered “Eurasians,” very provisionally. Danilevsky advocated the principles of pan-Slavism; Samarin saw an historical relationship of the Russians with the descendants and successors of the Medo-Persian Empire, but not with the Chinese, Mongolian, Manchurian and Korean nations whose cultural impact on Russia he admitted but at the same time feared (Lazareva 2003). At last, Konstantin Leontiev sought in the Eastern countries a means of combating the revolutionary uprisings in Russia at the beginning of the
twentieth century. Dostoevsky and Solovyov limited themselves to just a few ideological statements in the field of Eurasian thought.

The real Eurasian movement was born in the 20-30s of the twentieth century, in the writings of linguist and ethnologist Prince Nikolay S. Troubetskoy (2015), economist and geographer Petr N. Savitsky (1931-1997), historian George V. Vernadsky (2013), ethnologist Lev N. Gumilev (2006), musicologist Petr P. Suvotchinsky (2004), religious thinker Lev P. Karsavin (2007), theologian, philosopher and historian Fr Georges Florovsky (1993),1 philosopher Sergey I. Hessen (1925) and a number of other thinkers. In modern Russia, the idea of Eurasian thought is defended, e.g. by Alexander G. Dugin (2012). The main thesis of the Eurasian political philosophy is objective genetic, legal, cultural, political and administrative unity of the countries of Eurasian civilisation (Russia, China, Central Asia, Mongolia, Iran, India, Turkey, South Asian states, South-East Asian states). This relationship between these countries was possible, first of all, due to the incredible expansion of the Mongols and related to them Turan peoples in the 13th-16th centuries, which led to the fact that the territories separated from each other by insurmountable mountains, watersheds, deserts, were at one time or another parts of a single cultural and administrative space (Figs. 3-4). Vasily Vanchugov (2017) demonstrated that Eurasianists saw similarity of their movement and Bolshevism in USSR but stipulated the total difference from Soviet political system.

Fig. 3. Comparison of territories of Mongol Empire and Roman Empire.
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1 Florovsky, however, subsequently refused to support the ideas of Eurasian movement and became one of their most ardent critics.
From the viewpoint of Russian Eurasianists, Eurasia is not just a geographical entity, not just a set of territories of two continents, Europe and Asia, but a part of these territories, coinciding with the borders of the Chingissid Empire, Russian Empire, USSR, China, Mongolia, the states of South and Southeast Asia, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, where similar forms of statehood, law and culture are being constantly reproduced, with authoritarianism being the most effectual form of governance (Isaev 1994).

Via Babur’s conquest that laid foundation to Empire of Great Mughals, Indian subcontinent was also included in the united Eurasian political and legal space (Fig. 5).
Fig. 5. Indian subcontinent as a part of Eurasian space. © Swanston Map Archive Ltd.
Persia and Middle East may be also regarded as specific constituents of Eurasian space since the time of Timur’s invasion (Khanykov 1958) (Fig. 6).

**Fig. 6.** Coercive inclusion of Persia and Middle East in Eurasian space during Timur. © Swanston Map Archive Ltd.

**COMPETITION OF NATIONAL IDEAS IN EURASIAN SPACE**

Speaking about a national idea, we mean neither nationalist programmes nor slogans, nor chauvinist surrogate narratives of mass culture, nor nationalism as a political or legal doctrine. We are now talking about an archetype of national consciousness, national meta-narrative, belief in some mission or important task entrusted to a nation, shared by many of its representatives.

For Russia, this is the so-called Russian idea. Everyone knows what the Russian idea is, but almost nobody can explain it (Kocherov 2012).

Russian philosopher of the 19th-20th centuries Nikolay Berdyaev (2007) believed that the Russian idea was what God designed for Russia by His own will. Another Russian philosopher
Vladimir Solovyov (1999) thought that the Russian idea was a spiritual and moral mission of Russia on a global scale. It was by Solovyev that the term “Russian idea” was first introduced and comprehended conceptually and critically (Serbinenko 1994). Ivan Ilyin (1993) who opposed a special nationalist variant of the Russian idea to the concepts of Berdyaev and Solovyev, is often considered as one of the main ideologists and inspirers of the Russian idea in the twentieth century. He interpreted the Russian idea as a whole range of legal, political and socio-philosophical programmes of national identity (Vanchugov 1994). Today, Ilyin is often interpreted in an even more nationalist manner than his works normally permit to do.

The Russian idea was developed not only in the works of Russian political philosophy. Currently we are facing a new rise of the Russian idea, its transition to a new level of development in the context of contemporary Russian realities (Parkhomenko 2012). Today the Russian idea can be found in the works of V. Gidirinsky (1997), A. Sevastyanov (1995), I. Artyomov (1997), A. Prokhanov (2012), A. Dugin (2000), A. Gulyga (2006), E. Troitsky (1991), V. Shevchenko (1992). Literary and publicist works of Alexander Solzhenitsyn can be considered as a separate independent source for the formation of the Russian idea (Gidirinsky 1997, 110–113). As a whole, the Russian idea has a certain permanent leitmotif in spite of the difference between its moderate and radical versions: Russia has its own “way” in the world dissimilar with development paths of other countries and nationalities. This way may serve as an example for imitation, as an instruction material, or even fulfil the messianic mission in the global world society.

It is not difficult for one to see that Russian idea has much in common with Eurasianism. Moreover, Russian idea may be regarded a foundation of Russian Eurasianism (Bulychev 2018). Political, diplomatic, military, economic, infrastructural and territorial unprecedented expansion of Russian Empire during the reign of Alexander III was almost officially based on Russian idea as a set of theoretical provisions and practical principles, while Eurasianism was conceptually formed only in 1920s, after the fall of Russian Empire. Today Mr Putin, despite all his desire to see himself a direct successor of Russian emperors, cannot lift the Eurasian sceptre that once fell from the hands of the last Russian Emperor Nicholas II. Putin possibly has no real political will to do this, being satisfied with mere unavailing and pompous ambitions.

In spite of the presence of elaborated political philosophy of Eurasianism and Russian idea as well as rich imperial governmental traditions that in 1880–1890s made Russia the indisputable political and military Eurasian leader, Putin has so inept government and poor political wisdom that he simply does not understand how to utilise Russian historical advantages in Eurasia now, when the real struggle for future leadership in Eurasia had commenced. Recently, in 2017 Russian President visited Crimea where he opened the monument of Alexander III erected in Livadia palace, at the place of last refuge of the Russian emperor here on earth. The event was planned as a signifying and pivotal moment in the Eurasian development of modern Russia (Fig. 7).
Fig. 7. Opening of Alexander III monument in Livadia, Crimea, by Russian President Vladimir Putin. © Protocol Service of Russian President

However, it turned out to be much ado about nothing. Eurasian international organisations BRICS and SCO are used by China, India, Pakistan and Kazakhstan as effectual tools, mainly instruments of economic influence, while Russia failed to utilise these possibilities to reclaim its role in Eurasia, at least partly.

CHINA’S TAKING OVER

The current competition for leadership in Eurasia is tight. Political influence and economic expansionist prosperity that once belonged to Russian Empire, is now being expropriated by People’s Republic of China. The place of leading Eurasian politician left vacant by Nicholas II is being gradually but steadfastly expropriated by Xi Jinping.

The Chinese threat to Eurasia is not a trifle. The corona crisis demonstrated evidently that Chinese government and business will do everything in their power to achieve dominance in Europe. Tremendous inflows of Chinese capital to European stock markets after the sharp fall of European stocks in February-April 2020 must draw our attention. They show that PRC uses every possibility to spread all over Eurasia. Buying cheap European stocks, producing
heaps of lowest-quality goods and exporting Chineseness to every corner of Eurasia are constituents of the massive assault approach. Communism multiplied by Confucianism begot dangerous offspring.

Nevertheless, neither Communist past that is being carefully hidden nor Confucian façade demonstrated publicly at every opportunity, deterred PRC from pretension to the role of the sole Eurasian superpower. Confucianism approach to life is an analogy of Russian idea, but more disguised. What can UK, EU, Korea or Japan propose to beat PRC’s rate of growth or surpass its ethnical expansion, even brought together? Till crude oil from Middle East and natural gas from South China Sea are transported to Chinese docks, PRC is hardly conquerable.

PRC’s claims to the legacy of united Eurasian space ruled by Mongols are as plausible as Russia’s, but supported by Chinese tremendous economic and financial expansion. Figs. 8–9 show the Mongolian influence and conquests in East and Southeast Asia under Kublai Khan, a grandson of Genghis Khan. Kublai Khan (1215–1294), the founder Emperor of Chinese Yuan dynasty (Emperor 世祖 Yuan Shizu), after the conquest of the South Chinese lands under the rule of Song dynasty, annexed Burma and Northern Annam (Vietnam, or Dai-Viet) and defeated the troops of the Delhi Sultanate in Assam (Chen 2014; Du and Chen 1989). As a result of his military campaigns he turned Siam (Thailand), the Khmer Empire (modern Cambodia), the Malay Empire of Srivijaya, as well as the Javanese Empire Majapahit into satellite states formally dependent on the Great Mongolian Ulus (Mongolian Empire) but really of Chinese power (Brief History of Singapore) (Bucholtz et al. 1999).

The rulers of these South-East Asian dependent states were to receive “labels”¹ for their legitimate ruling from the Chinese emperor or his direct Governor like the labels received by Russian princes from the Great Khan of Golden Horde (Du and Chen 1989). Also Kublai began to keep Chinese fleet in Java; and Singapore (called then Temasek in Malay, or 单马锡 Danmaxi in Chinese) was cleared of pirates and used by Kublai as a naval base for the transfer of soldiers by sea routes from Sumatra and Java to Nanjing and back (Ho 2003; Koh 2003). It is since that time that the Chinese diaspora significant in number appeared in Singapore (Clements 2015; Saunders 2001; Singapore History n.d.). All that gave an ideological basis and historical legitimation to the modern Chinese expansion in Eurasia.

What seems impracticable has come true. Moscow and Singapore, separated by 8.5 thousand kilometres, the middle Volga taiga, Kazakh steppes, Taklamakan desert, Pamir plateau, Karakorum and Himalayas mountain ridges, Tibetan plateau, jungles of Burma and Siam, in the 1280s became parts of one empire and heirs of a similar mentality.

¹ Yarlyks in Mongolian.
Fig. 8. East Asia ruled by Kublai Khan.
© Swanston Map Archive Ltd.
This empire also involved such initially dissimilar capitals as Delhi and Khanbaliq\(^1\), Samarkand and Karakorum\(^2\), Trowulan\(^3\) and Tiflis\(^4\), Palembang\(^5\) and Baghdad, Lhasa\(^6\) and Saray\(^7\) (Sen 2006). Surprising as it may seem, but the Russians, on the one hand, and the Chinese and Malays from Singapore, on the other, in the thirteenth century had one citizenship. Moscow Prince Daniil Aleksandrovich, the youngest son of St Prince Alexander

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1. Modern Beijing was also called 大都 (Dadu, Grand Capital) at those times.
2. The capital of Mongol Empire.
3. The capital of Majapahit Empire in the Eastern part of Java.
4. Modern Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia.
5. The capital of Srivijaya Empire on Sumatra.
6. Tibetan capital.
7. The capital of Golden Horde in the mouth of Volga not far from the modern Russian city Astrakhan.
Nevsky, and Srivijaya Maharaja Srimat Tribhuwanaraja Mauli Warmadewa from Singapore, became co-tributaries, received permissions for legitimate ruling ("yarlyks") from a single Kublai Khan’s administrative source and paid levies and contributions to one Kublai’s Mongolian treasury (Tamney 1988; Turnbull 2009)!

CONCLUSIONS

KUBLAI KHAN RECOGNISED EVERY RELIGION HE EVER MET WITH (Clements 2015). He admired the Chinese cult of Heaven, Mahayana Buddhism, Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Nestorianism, Manichaeism, Judaism, Islam, Taoism, shamanism, Brahmanism, as well as ancient Chinese paganism as state religions (Goh 2009). Moreover, he donated money from the Treasury to almost all religious denominations for the construction of their temples and legally recognised the unprecedented religious tolerance.

When Marco Polo arrived to Beijing and was tormented by doubts about how to celebrate Christian Easter in a strange Asian world, Kublai, having noticed that, turned to Marco with a proposal for a whole programme of Easter celebrations. When the traveller was astounded with amazement, why the Chinese-Mongolian ruler is familiar with the main Christian holiday, Kublai Khan was eager to explain that he reveres Christ, Muhammad, Buddha, Moses, and the main idol of pagans Shakyamuni-barkhan, and he reads the gospel and even smokes the incense in front of it with his own hands with pleasure, as a true Christian deacon. The emperor explained his strange religious relativism: which God is real, that one will undoubtedly help him, or which is the same, to pray more is better than to pray less (Anderson 2001). It is clear that this historical anecdote has a more significant influence upon the current struggle for Eurasia than it may be thought.

China’s future successes as the one and only Eurasian leader seem incontestable. However, there is nothing more delusive than the obvious. The current systemic crisis initially caused by viral pathogen SARS-CoV-2 demonstrated evidently that PRC’s highly-praised administrative model can generate the same managerial chaos as the governmental system of almost any other country in the world. Despite all media hustle and bustle as well as empty streets meticulously shown by Chinese TV channels in January-March 2020, PRC government did not achieve any real success in combating the novel virus that might become exemplary for the rest of the world.

United Kingdom has an huge list of Commonwealth state members including Hong Kong with its banks and exchanges that may become a convenient springboard for counteracting PRC financially. Once leading metropolitan state in the world, UK’s political position in Eurasia may become tangible ere long.

European Union may re-consider major principles around which its governmental bodies

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1 Constructing Beijing with subsequent making it the capital of China should be credited precisely to the Mongolians.
are gathering the member states. Transition from an indefinable “European solidarity,” i.e. solidarity for empty and futile ideals, to a constructive programme of forming a future place for continental Europe in Eurasian space may be very fruitful.

Russia has its fantastic asset, Orthodox Christianity, whose unifying force was observed several times during the twentieth century (Religious Belief... 2017). St Archbishop John of Shanghai and San Francisco proved that Orthodoxy may become a true Eurasian religion. Indeed, he made in practice what Eurasianists tried to deduce theoretically. However, Putin’s Russia is hardly capable of using Orthodoxy as an Eurasian unifying force. The current Russian Orthodox Church high officials, including Patriarch Cyrill and many of his top Metropolitans and Archbishops do nothing to spread Orthodoxy across Eurasia. Just to compare, in PRC there are more than seven hundred Roman Catholic parishes and no (!) acting Orthodox parish. Old Orthodox temples, even famous like Holy Virgin Cathedral in Shanghai, remain desolate or profaned. Cyril and Department of External Church Relations are more interested in how to serve Mr Putin, effectively making Russian Orthodox Church nothing else as a costless adjunct to Putin’s bureaucracy, than in using huge transforming force of Orthodox Christianity in those places where St John’s foot did not step.

Lately the Speaker of Russian Parliament (Duma in Russian) Vyacheslav Volodin stated that “there can be no Russia without Putin” and “the advantage of Russia is not crude oil nor natural gas but Putin” (Volodin 2020). Putin’s Russia Mr Volodin dreams of can be but a blackmailing monster that produces natural gas and crude oil for imposing them on Eurasia and, therefore, a weak political force in the Eurasian context. Putin cannot formulate a modern Russian idea and does not adhere to the imperial Russian idea.

Will we see that a future Russian leader after and beyond Vladimir Putin can be like Alexander III and make Russia an Eurasian superpower?

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EXTENDED SUMMARY

GREY, CECILY, LADY. BATTLE FOR EURASIA AND FAILURE OF VLADIMIR PUTIN AS AN EURASIAN LEADER.
RUSSIAN EMPIRE REACHED AN APOGEE OF ITS POWER AND INFLUENCE IN EURASIA IN 1880-1890S, BEING RULED BY ALEXANDER III. However, shortly before and during World War I, during the reign of Nicholas II, Russia did not cease its claims over Eurasia. Russian territory included all Central Asia as its territories, with Mongolia and Manchuria as satellites ("territories of influence"), and Russia spread its tight political net over Persia and Ottoman empire. Defeated only by Empire of Japan in Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, Russia kept its leading positions up to the fall of the Empire in 1917. Long period of USSR led by Bolsheviks and on the whole Communists ensued. Now Russian President Vladimir Putin obviously has a desire to return the Russian dominating role in Eurasia. His recent manoeuvres in Syria were presumably aimed at proving Russia’s superpower abilities to the world. But we have to recognise that Mr Putin’s plan failed completely. The major reasons for that are

1) insolvency of Moscow politics in Russian Siberia that is deemed by Putin’s government as a natural gas and crude oil producing Moscow’s colony
without any need to be developed in a social and infrastructural way;

2) inability of Putin’s Foreign Office and secret services to control governments of neighbouring states (Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Belarus) due to the absence of any consistent and congruent politics that otherwise would have helped Russia to collect shatters of former Soviet Union together, effectively returning to the borders of Russian Empire;

3) tremendous rates of decrease and aging of Russian Far East population due to poor level of life and the lowest income in Russian Far East in comparison with the rest of Russia;

4) failure of Putin to organise Russia as a high-tech manufacturer and know-how scientific base, instead relying totally upon fossil energy production with subsequent selling the energy resources to trade partners (“petrol station” governmental ideology);

5) unwillingness of modern Russian government to participate in New Silk Route programmes, whereas other countries of the post-Soviet space (e.g. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) are close partners of People’s Republic of China in mapping and constructing infrastructure for the New Silk Route.

Instead of making a strong political and military alliance with PRC, Putin got completely satisfied by the “Force of Siberia” (“Sila Sibiri” in Russian) agreement that gave Russia a possibility to construct a natural gas transporting pipeline to Northern China. Hardly anyone of Putin’s and Medvedev’s governments, perhaps excepting Foreign Secretary Mr Lavrov and Defence Secretary Mr Shoygu, realises that the political and economic dominance in Eurasia cannot be achieved through imposing natural gas and low-quality Urals crude oil to all neighbours with simultaneous rattling the sabre. This type of the “armed petrol station” stratagem was not overcome during twenty years of Putin’s rule, it only strengthened and became almost the only source of making Russian budget. Putin’s authoritarianism did not line up with the Chinese authoritarianism. This opens bright hopes for UK and EU to intervene to the process of making Eurasian political blocks and reformulating what future Eurasia shall be like.

Political, diplomatic, military, economic, infrastructural and territorial unprecedented expansion of Russian Empire during the reign of Alexander III was almost officially based on Russian idea, a set of theoretical provisions and practical principles. Today Mr Putin, despite all his desire to see himself a direct successor of Russian emperors, cannot return to Russian idea and lift the Eurasian sceptre that once fell from the hands of the last Russian Emperor Nicholas II. Putin possibly has no real political will to do this, being satisfied with mere unavailing and pompous political ambitions in Eurasian diplomacy and international relations.

In spite of the presence of elaborated political philosophies of Eurasianism and Russian idea as well as rich imperial governmental traditions that in 1880-1890s made Russia the indisputable political and military Eurasian leader, Putin has so inept government and poor political wisdom that he simply does not understand how to utilise Russian historical advantages now, when the real struggle for future leadership in Eurasia had commenced.
Lady Grey’s main scope of research includes the following topics: UK in the globalising world; transformational processes of social institutes, organisations and relations; national and international culture shifts; UK and EU relations; history of the UK countries from Roman Empire thus far; history of British science and philosophy.

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