

**POSTMODERN PHILOSOPHY AT THE CONTEMPORARY
STAGE OF WORLD DEVELOPMENT: LONG PARTING WITH
THE 20TH CENTURY**

Allergy to any final and categorical order is happily universal.

“The Spirit of Terrorism” (Jean Baudrillard)

...one must have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star ...

He who possesseth little is so much the less possessed.

“Thus Spoke Zarathustra” (Friedrich Nietzsche)

The value of postmodernism is that, reflecting the spirit of the era, it convincingly describes the decaying reality of the world after the end of the Cold War. All works by Dostoevsky, with postmodernists included in the ranks of those eating scraps from his table of ideas (just take polyphonism alone), come to the thesis that there can't be the “last word” (the end of history, etc.) — this is one of the main conditions and consequences of freedom. Events of the recent years certify in favour of the fact that after such meta-narratives aspiring to “finality” as capitalism and socialism/communism, the last one is destroyed — liberalism that thanks to the efforts of Western elites, first of all, with the help of political correctness, acquired features of a totalitarian ideology with all its attributes — violation of the freedom of speech and suppression of dissenting views.

Development issues that cannot already be solved in the previous binary ideological coordinate system, have come to the foreground in case of all countries, including Western. Binarity is authorities' pragmatism and it is always drawn to totality (according to Nietzsche). Because of that it's in the interests of elites to build new bipolarities, be it the United States — China or liberalism —

authoritarianism. As I.S. Ivanov writes, “we should refuse from the concept of Western universalism in favour of development pluralism.”ⁱ Thus, the real meaning of the end of the Cold War is revealed (this year, the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall is celebrated), namely the emancipation of international relations from ideological determinism that objected all international actors in the person of sovereign and independent states over the whole long 20th century. To put it differently, Deng Xiaoping’s famous cat, whose colour is not important, triumphs. Trump in the United States and Bolsonaro in Brazil became the reaction to the development crisis, as well as long nailing together of the old coalition in Germany and G. Conte’s government in Italy but also Brexit pains and on the whole the proverbial spirit of populism/Weimar in the West.

Multi-layered geopolitical reality comes to replace the bipolar confrontation and transient “unipolar moment,” and this reality provides for democratization of international relations by its complexity, there are conditions formed in them for various kinds of pluralism. These are residual bipolarity of the previous era, and hierarchical verticals of the Western alliance (NATO and G7), and multipolarity (United Nations, G20, BRICS), and all kinds of regional orders structures, global and transregional situational alliances (e.g. Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran’s Nuclear Issue) and many others. Status quo apostles frighten with chaos as it was done in its time in relation to democracy in general. But after-war legal world order was and still remains the order with the central role played by the United Nations and its Charter.

It’s still early to say how the world will develop at the level of ideas, though there is an opinion about the long-felt need of “neoclassical synthesis” of the ideas of the 1960s, i.e. the heritage of the period before the West sank into political averaging (“kingdom of total mediocrity”) and lack of the ideological content. As a matter of fact, the West-European social welfare state was such a synthesis. It became the result of two world wars and the consequence of the imperative

“answer to the Soviet Union’s challenge,” the way of peaceful co-existence of capitalism and democracy (according to Habermas). But now it’s being destroyed by economic neoliberalism in the form of Reaganomics/Thatcherism and the Lisbon Agenda of the European Union. The prophesy that 1968 will be repeated 50 years later in France strangely came true at the end of 2018. It seems that development issues will be first of all solved within every individual country as the function of the long overdue restoration of democratic power’s accountability and answerability.

Development problems keenly made themselves known in all European countries, referring among other sources to the famous John Maynard Keynes’ maxim, according to which free trade supposes that if you deprive people of employment in one area, you employ them in some other. As soon as this relation is torn, all arguments in favour of free trade collapse. These are the reasons of “The Trump Revolution”. America has turned out to be “possessed” by others via its empire/globalization. The elite got profits and the country as a whole turned out to be neglected — hence an average American’s feeling that he/she was betrayed. Analysis of a part of the conservative elite demonstrated that over several decades the United States worked for the rise of China with their capitals, technologies and even the U.S. market, naively believing that Beijing will turn out to be an accommodating and compliant partner that will accept global leadership of the United States.

Because of that we should not be surprised that the United States are rolling back their geopolitical project, no matter all the objections of Western elites. At the same time, Americans will be maximally realizing still existing advantages of their dominance in the global monetary and financial order. The main unknown factor is what the privileged dollar status fate will be used to “burn.” The most likely variant is that such reissue of the total commitment (engagement of all cash resources to solve existential tasks) of the Cold War type will be addressed to

China but in promising issues such as the future of information technologies (including means for “rejecting access to Big Data”) and artificial intelligence. Possibly, as an addition to the attempt to “re-deal cards” in the current trade and economic issues by way of imposing their shale gas on Beijing among other things.

On the whole, non-confrontation — like no-war and no-peace (who can fail to remember Trotsky in Brest-Litovsk!?) — and many other non-events and absences, including Russia’s non-participation in NATO and lack of an inclusive collective security system in the Euro-Atlantic region, make us come back to the topic of postmodernism. What will happen in the future? As the whole geopolitical heritage of the previous era, including elements of global and regional architectures, tends towards zero, we should hardly hope for their “soft” transformation — zeroing of everything, though with different degrees of obviousness, is inevitable. Most likely, the logic of what is going on, that is directly opposing the European secular culture of rationalism, means that the ground for the new stage of historical creativity should be cleared — emancipation or chaos, ultimately the name is not important. And the world was created out of chaos. One thing is clear: the world that existed 30 years as a reflection of the recent past (the past also throws a shadow, right?), is on the brink of finally acquiring its present time and the future together with it.

Brodsky wrote about “the end of Belle Epoque” in 1967; Jacques Derrida’s book *Speech and Phenomena* was also published then, and it became clear at the same time that there would be no Kosygin’s reforms. Let’s remember the original — Belle Epoque — the period between the Franco-Prussian War and World War I that was marked by inertness of saying farewell to the 18th century and even bigger globalization degree. Proust as no one else is convincing in this longing and in saying that the whole long 19th century was transitional to the 20th century. That is, it was the time that was to be acquired and acquired via war. Other postmodernist forerunners— James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, S. Beckett, H. Miller, J.D. Salinger,

Kurt Vonnegut, H. Hesse, S. Kubrick, F. Fellini, Luis Buñuel and then others including Q. Tarantino — foresaw the present timelessness/inter-temporal period in their own way. There was emptiness then (Chekhov, Blok, Rozanov and others) — and there is emptiness now. “Thrones, classes, social groups, labour, riches” fell into it then. And what now, when the time of wars and revolutions is over? Everything in the Euro-Atlantic region is in the “state of enormous perplexity” and non-understanding the essence of what is going on, confirmed by the loss of belief in improvement based on the post-Cold War. There is only one thing left – to acknowledge the deterioration of this heritage, artificially transferred from the previous era, including its blowing off by the Western elites’ attempt to return capitalism to the times before 1929. Fyodor Lukyanov writes that “the old conceptual framework has become outdated.”ⁱⁱ

Russia, the reality of which was denied by the Western policy of deterrence, exactly by establishing the reality of its existence – unfortunately, on the way to creating the potential for power projection and providing resistance to forceful and financial and economic pressure, as the most convincing arguments in the context of Western political culture – drew nearer this G. Apollinaire’s hyper-reality’s overcoming, or, to put it simply, correlation with the reality. Russia’s experience shows that “there is life after empire”. Russia itself turned out to be “possessed” in the immediate circle of the Soviet Union and the wider circle — the Soviet bloc, or the social camp, and gave an example of empire’s disintegration/fragmentation.

China has already acquired its present and future to a large extent, if we judge by the happiness/optimism rating (92% of the surveyed). The state of affairs in Europe is more complex. Russia advanced itself and helped the Western society that entered the system crises, to advance. Russia denies Western militarism, proving its insolvency as a “big strategy”, by its military construction. Because of that it’s unthinkable for Europe to accommodate American medium- and short-range missiles in view of the United States withdrawal from the Treaty on the

Elimination of Medium- and Short-Range Missiles. It will be required to end this “landing in reality” process jointly after the long surrealistic being. First of all, because of cultural and civilization common identity, common history, necessity to jointly, collectively deal with common historical heritage in all its disjoint. We’ll be capable to survive in a qualitatively new global competitive environment only in our recreated and reinterpreted identity.

Ivan Krastev writes about the Western elites’ fear of the fact that “their own society is becoming to look not so different.” “Why are we having problems like the Russians?” — “that’s the real fear.”ⁱⁱⁱ That is, we’re dealing with another convergence and we have to reword the definition of the Alien, refusing from previous mythology and his demonization.

What to expect from Trump’s America? Sergey Shnurov in his recent interview to the *Russia in Global Affairs* journal touched upon the issue asked by many people: Can America exist differently and not like the global hegemon? First, this refers not to all America but only its elites. Second, there is Jackson’s America satisfied “to speak to the world” by its example. Exactly this America is represented by Trump. Neoisolationism is the therapy suggested by the psychoanalysis widespread in the United States. No one doubts the Kremlin’s pragmatism. America has its own long tradition of pragmatism — in the spirit of Paul Feyerabend’s “Anything goes!” that equals Deng’s cat. Especially when there is only one step from pragmatism to postmodernism with its multiplicity/pluralism, fragmentariness (“decomposition of one whole into pearls of fragments”) and electivity, on the ground on which it’s possible to overcome obstructions in world development and world politics accumulated over 30 years.

If applied to the arms race, our defense expenditures were seriously reduced in 2017. The United States do not have such possibilities to participate in the defense (notwithstanding Trump’s rhetoric) that R. Reagan had 35 years ago: in the dollars of that time, in the opinion of experts, today’s US\$ 700 billion lack US\$

500 billion plus the enormous national debt (22 trillion, that exceed 100% of the GDP), and the aggregate deficit of the federal budget and current-account deficit is about 6% of GDP, or over US\$ 1 trillion, and that requires external financing among other things and is tended to grow (according to *The Financial Times*, it will be required to borrow US\$ 12 trillion in the next 10 years^{iv}). The Chinese defense budget already exceeds the American in purchasing power parity, excluding expenditures for the personnel support.

We can come to the conclusion that no mass arms race threatens the world. Its three-side character as the United States chose double restraint — Russia and China, will serve as an additional guarantee. The arms race, as it can already be judged by recent Russian designs and projects, will be with relatively small expenditures and in the “technological mannerism” format forecasted by Baudrillard already in 1991 basing on the experience of the Persian Gulf War^v. Cybersecurity and artificial intelligence, information struggle and space have already become the areas of such competition. The only thing left to acknowledge is that there are no winners and losers and there can't be in principle, and it will be required to agree on control and restraint measures on mutual foundation in the three-side format.

What is the Western elites' problem in the post-Cold War period, and a part of Russia's and the whole world's problem? It was thought that the past would continue but already without the USSR. It was not understood that the experience of the 20th century and the longer history raised the issue of totalities as a whole, no matter how these ideologies are disguised. Even beneficial liberalism mutates into totality. Nazism, when concentration camp commandants read Goethe in their leisure time, questioned all the European culture, or, it will be better to say, Western civilization. The Germans as performers of this strictly Western project had to repent, but it was collective — it just went out of the elites' control, the elites that allowed themselves this improvisation. It was required to overcome the

consequences with the decisive role of the Soviet Union. In Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, his Prussian with his socialism, to be more exact the state as means for realizing historical imperatives, was to take the place of the global/Western hegemon, occupied by an Anglo-Saxon, but history decided differently. And Russia twice, in its different incarnations, fought on the Anglo-Saxon side with their primary personal freedom.

It proceeds from the said above that the problem is deeper than the specified differences, and the Soviet experience used the products of the European thinking, though others. Postmodernism makes the issue wider: it's in the fascisoid mentality, rooted in anthropocentrism (human-deity according to Dostoevsky) and metaphysics of presence. Fascism appears as Hegelianism (apotheosis of total modern) the state is armed with. Hence deanthropologization and elimination of the subject via the written language/texts, disjoint of totality via deconstruction. Because of that roots are not in Nietzsche but in all the German classical philosophy, going — like Anglo-Saxons' experience — to the Reformation that, according to Tyutchev's apt remark, threw the baby out with the bath water. The primacy as to the Reformation became the key point of German nationalism.

From the point of view of postmodernism, the European project as it looks today has no future. The European Union like the Western alliance is totality, only at the level of international relations. It can be saved either by going to the even higher totality/supranational level that is not seen, or “soft” dismantling (deconstruction?), let's say down to the common market that could keep/return the English. The postmodernist alternative is leaving for national flats (sovereignty as fragmentation) with their “repairs” but selected accounting of worked out European values. History will show what will take place later. But the life itself proves that our time does not stand totality. The British acted wisely, preserving the pound sterling as a guarantor of their freedom and independence. If you look around from the Lutheran North with the center in Berlin, there may be a feeling of

siege at all fronts: the Anglo-Saxons in the West (Brexit and the Americans supporting it), the rebellious East-Europeans and Mediterranean peripheral countries digesting the Greek experience. The burden of the German order turned out to be heavy for everyone, though for various reasons, when the “fat times” became history. Even the Germans acknowledge that an “accidental empire” in the form of the European zone has been formed^{vi}.

Besides Dostoevsky, Tyutchev allows to judge the Russian roots of postmodernism. He foresaw that Russia will deny the future of the West by the very fact of its existence, i.e. its totality. Consequently, convergence is inevitable, and there were many of them in the 20th century. The little known fact is Russia’s participation in building the Statue of Liberty to celebrate abolishment of slavery in the United States and serfdom in Russia (Urals copper and money collected under the patronage of one of the Grand Dukes). But not everything is so gloomy — one has to know how to wait. Already Dostoevsky wrote about synthesis (let’s add another, modern variant of it — *fusion*) when he launched *A Writer’s Diary*. Who knows, maybe this is the secret left for us by Pushkin to figure out, about which Dostoevsky said in his Pushkin Speech delivered not long before his death. It’s not accidental that he specially spoke about *Little Tragedies* — this mini-Shakespeare as a striking example of Russia’s culture conjugation with the best traditions of the European culture. When Turgenev lived in Europe, he suffered because of people’s unattractiveness like his friend Flaubert who, preceding James Joyce, wrote: “Irreparable barbarism of the humanity fills me with black anguish ... I’d drown the humanity under my vomit!”^{vii} Actually this pessimism coming to misanthropy, pushes James Joyce, the first postmodernist. Like all references to Homer, *Ulysses* heralds the deep crisis of the European civilization. One hundred years of its artistic interpretation and 50 years of theoretical do not give grounds to be surprised at everything that took place after the end of the Cold War.

Postmodernism denies but it denies what denied the ideals of Enlightenment for two centuries. The farther we are from the 18th century, the more “barbarism (let’s add, enlightened by ideology) is in the highly civilized environment.” The example is the contrast between the Congress of Vienna and the Treaty of Versailles, between how conquered France was treated and how conquered Germany was treated. And after the end of the Cold War the West considered any official regulations with Russia’s participation unnecessary.

The end of the Cold War revealed George Orwell’s universal meaning with his tub and Newspeak organizing the society, when some are more equal than the others. Eventually, any “great ideas”, “big strategies” and similar exercises in self-elevation were questioned. Living dead continued in them. Not only an individual “became smaller”, Leontyev’s “secondary simplification” exposed elites to the world. With this background, Trump acquires nearly Ulysses’ scales. Empires still maintained some ties with the 18th century and traditional society in the minds, but when they collapsed, the heroics of the 20th century were already provided by wars and revolutions and related to them meta-narratives, and that was achieved by the price of freedom. After 1989, the issue of pseudoheroics was included in the Western elites’ agenda — it was provided by the anti-Russian policy (Soviet Virgin Lands, Baikal-Amur Mainline), as alienation of Russia was fairly predictable in connection with NATO expansion.

Everything pseudo-imperial is resembling a commedia dell’arte but with bloody consequences, including the war in Iraq and terrorism, where the “triumphant globalization collided with itself.”^{viii} This dissonance could not fail to provoke the postmodernist views and ideas. It’s not difficult to understand the wish to finally (though nothing is final!) destroy the foundation of human non-freedom at its very source. It can happen that a seditious understanding will come that all their disjoints/disintegrations confirm the true Christian understanding of freedom as it was stated by Dostoevsky in his Christ-centered apologetics (according to

Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury^{ix}), that does not determine an individual in any way but determines all the rest.

There is no doubt that postmodernism is doomed for its denial. Synthesis is just a guess. Meanwhile we have to wait for a complex unbinding of the web of various conflicts and contradictions, accumulated over the centuries. Here we have market's totality/totalitarian character, its chaos in which we have been living for a long time — in contrast to the supposed multipolar, which we are being frightened with. And Pitirim Sorokin, who predicted collapse of the consumption sociocultural pattern on both sides of the ideological confrontation. The question is how long the non-crisis virtual reality can hold in the worn to the holes system. Nothing short of summing up the result of the European civilization development over the last five centuries is being done, and that serves the decisive factor for the issue of unpredictability and rapid reduction of manageability of the global development in our times.

ⁱ <http://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/2019-god-problemy-i-vozmozhnosti/>

ⁱⁱ <http://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/vneshnyaya-politika-rossii-v-2018-godu-problem-bolshe-chem-uspekhov/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://globalaffairs.ru/number/My-bolshe-ne-mechtaem-o-buduschem-my-ego-skoree-boimsya-19829>

^{iv} Gillian Tett, America faces a battle to find buyers for its bonds, *The Financial Times*, February 7, 2019

^v Jean Baudrillard. *The Spirit of Terrorism. The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, RIPOL classic, Moscow, 2016, p.28

^{vi} Quoted by: Jan Zielonka, *Counter-Revolution. Liberal Europe in Retreat*, Oxford University Press, 2018, p.8

^{vii} L. Grossman, *Literary Portraits*, RIPOL classic, Moscow, 2010, p.262

^{viii} Jean Baudrillard. *The Spirit of Terrorism. The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, RIPOL classic, Moscow, 2016, p.101

^{ix} Rowan Williams, *Dostoevsky. Language, Faith and Fiction*, ROSSPAN, Moscow, 2013, p.280