

The Contemporary Transformation of the International System

Professor John Wilton

Lecture 3

**The transformation of the
states-system: the role of
Russia**

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Additional sources:

King, C. (2008) 'The Five-Day War', in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, no.6, Dec. 2008. pp.2-11.

Sestanovich, S. 'What Has Moscow Done?', in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, no. 6, Dec. 2008, pp.12-29

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“One of the worst features of our peculiar civilisation is that we have not yet discovered truths that have elsewhere become truisms even among nations that in many respects are far less advanced than we are. It is the result of our never having walked hand in hand with other nations; we belong to none of the great families of mankind; we are neither of the West nor of the East, and we possess the traditions of neither. Somehow divorced from time and space, the universal education of mankind has not touched upon us.” (*Pytor Chaadaev, ‘First Philosophical Letter’, 1830*)

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Strategic Culture – supplement to realist or liberal explanations

- stresses importance of ‘ideas’ and ‘beliefs’ held by state elites = ‘*ideational theory*’

Alexander Radischev ‘*Journey from Moscow to St. Petersburg*’, 1790.

- period of the ‘*Enlightenment*’

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- WESTERNISERS and SLAVOPHILES

SLAVOPHILES

- Saw European society as held together by 3 things:
 - a) Christianity
 - b) Barbarians
 - c) a classical heritage
(rationalism/individualism)
- ***BUT***, saw Russia as religious society based on '*sobornost*' (communal spirit)

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community/people = natural will

society = rational will

‘organic togetherness’ = ‘living organism’

society = mechanical artifact

- For Slavophiles, Russia was *‘peculiarly’* and *‘specially’* Russian, not European or Asian

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For Slavophiles Russia was ‘the light of the world’

- and would bring ‘salvation’ to the West

- extension of Slavophilism = writers of ‘soil bound school’

- Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881)

Slavophilism in Russia today based on belief in nationalism/autocracy/Orthodoxy

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WESTERNISERS

- saw Slavophile vision of Russia (and of the West) as based on ignorance, superstition and utopianism
- accepted Russia was different from the West, but difference was due to *backwardness*, rather than *uniqueness*
- believed Russia should develop like the West and wanted Russia integrated into the West

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Post-1991

- For 10 years pursued strategy of Russian – European – American partnership on equal terms. After 2001 policy seemed to be achieving results.
- Within a year of Sept. 11th 2001 U.S.A:
 - a) agreed new strategic arms treaty with Russia;
 - b) shifted U.S. policy on Chechnya from condemnation of Russia to understanding;

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- c) recognised Russia as a legitimate market economy (easing bilateral trade disputes)
- d) Supported Russia's accession to the World Trade Organisation;
- e) agreed to have Russia chair the G8 for the first time;
- f) Upgraded Russian links/ties to NATO so that Russia's representatives participated on a more equal basis in discussions on European security

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BUT, events after 2002 changed Russia/U.S. relationship:

- Iraq war
- ‘Orange revolution’ in Ukraine, and U.S. Support for it;
- high rises in energy prices
- rising energy prices gave Russia increased economic strength, and political and military self-confidence

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- other events post-2002 were seen as threats to Russia:
 - support from U.S. for Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO;
 - the desire by U.S. to site a ballistic missile defence installation in Central and Eastern Europe;
 - U.S. recognition of an independent Kosovo
- = unequal and conflictual relationship with U.S.

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South Ossetia/Georgia crisis August 2008

- Russian re-assertion (re-birth post-1991) of independent action, independence, and military, economic and political power and strength in international system
- ***PLUS***, representation of domestic political and military power and strength of Russian nationalists and Slavophiles