



THE LJR 2023-24 | VOLUME 5



A Westminster School Publication





A note from the Editor...

There is a lot of history going on right now.

Of course, there are historical events going on geopolitically, in the Middle East, Ukraine and China. However, there is an incentive to view historical events with an eye to their relevance in current conversations. Shedding light upon lesser-known impacts of historical themes—empire, revolution, warfare – can help us re-examine history as a medium through which we can critique current events.

In this issue, Kristina Akova (p.5) writes a thought-provoking piece bringing much-needed attention to the relevance of the 1791 Haitian Revolution in influencing the formation of the United States as we know it today.

Though the LJR describes itself as the Westminster History Review, it is important we realise the need to use an informed historical lens to unpick contemporary politics. As articulated by Kumar Banerji Ballester in his article (p.11), the Russia-Ukraine crisis is widely perceived to be the climax of a frictional relationship, being the tangible incarnation of centuries of regional dispute. The ability to disagree and have a divergent opinion underpins every LJR contribution, and indeed historiography itself. Shashi Tharoor's lack of an intersectional lens to view the British occupation of India in his book *Inglorious Empire* is critiqued by Arran Syed-Raja in his review (p.17). Arran suggests the absence of nuance in Tharoor's attitudes give a one-sided interpretation of history.

In editing this year's LJR publication, I was struck by the range and breadth of topics covered. Themes of religion, art, history and film showcase how our contributors, inspired by current global events, form distinctive and calculated judgements on the past. It has been fascinating to edit this review of political thought by Westminster students. I wish you a fascinating read of the at times uncomfortable but important compilation. I myself am going on to study History and English Literature and look forward to seeing the continuation of these thoughts in the many future editions of the LJR.

Editor in Chief - Laetitia Sanai





THE LJR 2023-24 | TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents:

Welcome to the Balkans! *p.3*
Yovana Konrad

Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité – The Unknown Outcome of the French Revolution on Haiti *p.5*
Kristina Akova

Why is Machiavellainy a bad thing? *p.7*
Laetitia Sanai

Review: A Historical Atlas of Hasidism, Martin Wodzinski *p.9*
Daniel Pesin

The Origin of Crisis: Historical events meet Putin’s take on Ukraine *p.11*
Kumar Banerji-Ballester

Review: Inglorious Empire- Shashi Tharoor *p.17*
Arran Syed-Raja

Review: Maoism: A Global History – Julia Lovell *p.20*
Julian Herbst



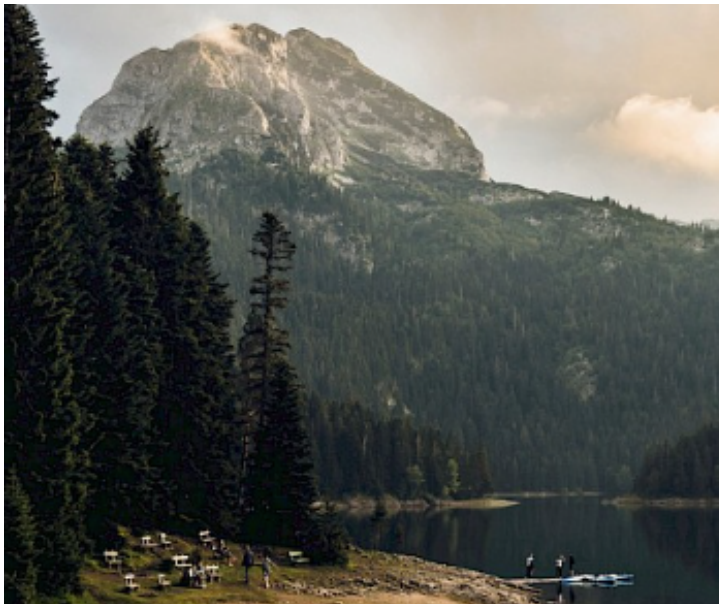
Liberty Leading the People, Eugène Delacroix

Welcome to the Balkans!

Yovana Konrad

Welcome to the Balkans! Europe's most dysfunctional family. Most Eastern and Central European countries needed the Red Army to help them defeat the Nazis, but the partisan resistance movement led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and Josip Broz Tito had liberated most of the region without Allied/Soviet help. Tito became leader of the new Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on 29 November 1945 until his death on 4 May 1980. The next decade saw the crumbling of the Yugoslav economy, giving rise to nationalism and eventually Croatia and Slovenia seceding in 1991. Bosnia followed in 1992. Bit by bit, Yugoslavia was dissolving. But Serbia and Montenegro remained steadfast to the last, and from 1992 to 2006 were joined as one country known as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Serbia and Montenegro each became independent in 2006.

Montenegro (or 'Crna Gora' in Montenegrin) directly translates to 'black mountain' - clearly not a misnomer, as you can see here:



The pines are so dark they look black! Topographically, mountains and hills dominate the country, with mountains making up 80 percent of the total territory. Alas, Montenegro's mountainous might can hardly be translated into its population. There are only about 622,000 people. So, what's the big fuss?

Although Serbs and Montenegrins are a very similar kind of people (both are Eastern Orthodox Christian with virtually the same language despite some dialectal and accentual disparities, and both primarily use the same Cyrillic alphabet), some Montenegrins tend to associate more with a staunchly Montenegrin national identity (about 45 percent) while others feel themselves to be Serb (about 29 percent), according to 2011 census data. In 2006, the Montenegrin Montenegrins voted in favour of a separate state through a referendum held in May. By June, the country had gained independence from Serbia. Unlike Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia, Montenegro achieved independence without a shattering struggle. Why? In the early 1990s, the Serbian state was desperately trying to hold Yugoslavia together. By 2006, however, Yugoslavia was in ashes and there was no point in trying to preserve it anymore. Besides, Serbia viewed Montenegro as a kind of little brother. You want more independence? Yeah, sure...

Back in the days when Serbia and Montenegro were one, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation initiated an intense bombing campaign of the remnants of Yugoslavia lasting from March to June 1999. This was blatantly done without the approval of the UN Security Council. NATO concentrated on Serbia, but some of Montenegro was also targeted, as seen through the smoke billowing from Podgorica, Montenegro's capital, on 15 April between seven and eight p.m.



The bombing killed thousands of people and destroyed residential buildings, hospitals, schools, and bridges. Life in Serbia and Montenegro, therefore? Not great.

Nowadays, Montenegro enjoys a healthy degree of profit-boosting tourism, but a not so healthy degree of foreign investment. The luxury marina of Porto Montenegro was the dream of Canadian entrepreneur and business magnate Peter Munk, who bought the land in 2007. Munk personally approached the Montenegrin prime minister with his development plans; the Montenegrin government enthusiastically embraced such an idea by establishing a new international standard for business barriers. In 2016, the Investment Corporation of Dubai bought Porto Montenegro and has been managing it ever since. Whilst many think Montenegro is better off without Serbia, rising from rubble to riches, it is important to remember that most city-dwelling Montenegrins don't live in such places.





Michael Zeno Diemer, in Montenegro with the Gospa od Skrpjelar

Meanwhile, Montenegro's national debt to GDP ratio was 105.3 percent in 2020, according to the World Bank . The higher the debt to GDP ratio, the higher the country's risk of default and the less likely the country will be able to repay its debt. This could generate a financial panic in both the international and domestic markets. Russian, Arabic, and Chinese millionaires buying up luxury marinas and the consequent construction of brand- new, up-to-date facilities such as swimming pools, restaurants, and highways isn't going to remedy debt incurrence.

So, what's in store for Montenegro? Montenegro acceding to the EU by 2025 is considered possible. In April 2023, presidential elections were held, which, if you know anything about the Balkans, you'll know that these are always very fun. Potential candidates included Milo Djukanovic (the former president and leader of the Democratic Party of Socialists), Zdravko Krivokapic (the former prime minister), and Andrija Mandic (who leads the New Serb Democracy, a Serbian nationalist right-wing party).

In former Yugoslavia, there's a regional joke that runs something along the lines of: when you're born, there are only two factors predetermined in your life. The first is your family, and the second is who the next president will be. But Montenegro was in for a surprise. These old-timers were defeated by none other than Jakov Milatovic, a candidate from the recently inaugurated Europe Now! movement, who ran on an anti-corruption platform.

Anti-corruption? In the Balkans? That is one cracking paradox. What arises from a new election are always more questions than answers. Under Milatovic, will Montenegro's national debt increase even further? Will Montenegro join the EU? But perhaps most importantly, will it ever be able to fully secure its independence, having been, as a federal republic, dominated by Serbia in its past, and as a republic by foreign investors in the present? But no matter how Montenegro evolves, one thing will remain reassuringly certain.

There'll always be mountains.

The unknown outcome of the French Revolution in Haiti

Kristina Akova

The French Revolution of 1789 - 1799 has several well-known consequences that include, but are not limited to, unleashing Napoleon Bonaparte (1769 - 1821) and the French Revolutionary Wars (1792 - 1802), reinforcing democratic ideals in Europe, challenging the feudal system and introducing nationalism to Europe. What is less recognised is the French Revolution's key role in instigating a revolution in its prized Caribbean colony between 1791 and 1804, which led to Haiti becoming the first non-white Republic in the world, and the second nation in the western hemisphere (after the United States) to win independence from a European power. Despite this, almost all schools of interpretation of the French Revolution limit scope of analysis of its consequences to France, or at most Europe, and it is only recently (1970s) that constructive research[1] has been conducted into events in Haiti and their respective repercussions (Reinhardt, 2005). As such, historians of the French Revolution and those of the Haitian Revolution (1791 - 1804) tend not to overlap in their work and an international evaluation of outcomes has yet to find its place in the mainstream historiography of the French Revolution. Through the lens of different historians' interpretations, this piece will try and identify the most important consequence of the French Revolution, defined as the ramification that brings a profound change to contemporaries' lives and has a legacy that remains prevalent today. It will also attempt to understand what the engagement with histories outside mainstream narratives means for historians of the 21st Century.

The orthodox interpretation of the French Revolution proposes the development of an egalitarian society to be its most important consequence. The Assembly's "enthusiastic" adoption of equal taxation and the "similar success" of proposals such as equality of punishment (Lefebvre, 1962) hint at deep change within a population stratified since at least the 800s, while the removal of the patronage system in government and the introduction of laicite (office eligibility being blind to religious orientation) are corrections of the "unjustifiable social inequities" (Doyle, 2019) that remain seen in the present day (Hampson, 1989). With origins in 19th Century works on revolutionary tradition, the school is superficially Jacobin and Marxist and can also be adopted by historians applying a Pareto lens (Stromberg, 1986).



Attack and take of the Crête-à-Pierrot, Auguste Raffet



Toussaint Louverture, Governor General of Sainte Dominique

However, post-World War II research by revisionist historians[2] such as Alfred Cobban and George Taylor has challenged the conclusions drawn. Not only did tax paid exclusively by non-nobles not exist (Fuertes, 2010), but there was movement within social divisions - members of the Third Estate could join the "idle class" by purchasing land, a practice so common that by 1789, over 40% of noble families had acquired that status after 1750 - and the bourgeoisie "did not see themselves as a distinct social group superior to others" (Doyle, 1980). Such evidence dispels the idea that there were impermissible social divisions to be overcome, and both the argument and school have largely been abandoned.

Focused on political events (Berenson, 1995), post-revisionism sees the "experiment" with democracy as the most important consequence of the revolution (Furet, 1977). Elections before 1789, ostensibly conducted by "order", often included wealthier members of the Third Estate exercising control over assemblies and deputies of the local government's lower tiers. The reform of the National Assembly, which included replacing previous orders with two new ones, enabled individuals such as parish priests and lesser nobles to become representatives (Berenson, 1995) and is thus considered a stark "contrast" the population would have acknowledged (Crook, 1993). Although not used in France until the early 20th Century (Crook et al., 2007), the conception of the written ballot holds relevance in today's world as it is considered the precursor of the modern secret ballot (Blaufarb, 1995). However, with Enlightenment ideas circulating in Europe, France would have likely eventually adopted democracy; of the eleven countries that had modern democracy before 1900, eight were in Europe (Desjardins, 2019). Additionally, the leading post-revisionist classed democracy as the most important consequence because it was "universal and unique for its time" (Furet, 1977), yet, at the time of writing, neither Brunei nor Saudi Arabia had held non-rigged and policy-defining elections for at least 12 years and the US' New England colonies had had direct democracy since the 1630s (Zimmerman, 1999). Nevertheless, a post-revisionist view has yet to be challenged and democratic developments in revolutionary France set a significant precedent for the system's future.



Leading historians of the Haitian Revolution concur that it originated from multiple sources, one of them the “turmoil of Revolutionary France” (Fick, 1990) and its “catalytic ideology of liberty, equality and fraternity” (Baur, 1970). The revolt in Haiti was undeniably important in of itself: severing colonial ties with France profoundly impacted the island’s 556 000 citizens, most of all slaves now free and the subsequent increased talk of abolition in colonial nations (Baur, 1970) reveals its non-insignificant role in slavery’s eventual termination and by extension, effect on modern society. Even though anti-slavery sentiment was present before the French Revolution and the Haitian Revolution did not spark the dismantling of the system by itself, events in Haiti following the French Revolution nonetheless had two important outcomes explored below.



Battle of San Domingo, January Suchodolski

American scholars view the geographical expansion of the US precipitated by events in Haiti to be the most important consequence of the French Revolution. After two years of fighting the revolt and 60000 dead soldiers, the French, abandoning plans for a Haitian stronghold and a transatlantic empire, sold the Louisiana territory to the US (1803) (Farnham, 1965), who may not have been able to secure it militarily with their 3000-strong, “pathetic” and “feeble” army (Hammond, 2003). Full access of the Mississippi River and the port at New Orleans enabled \$13 million worth of goods to be transported in 1817 in comparison to the \$8 million pre-1803 (Lee), suggesting significant development in bankside settlements and their economies. The acquisition also has a legacy today; it facilitated the US acquisition of its Westernmost coast (Sloane, 1904). There were, however, other reasons behind the Louisiana offer: aware of the depleted French economy and that the Treaty of Amiens (1802) secured a temporary peace, Napoleon tried (in vain) to evade war and blockade from Great Britain by simultaneously replenishing his Treasury and securing the US as a powerful ally (History in Charts, 2022). Ultimately, provided that Haiti was the wealthiest colony in the Caribbean – accounting for over 40% of France’s foreign trade (Geggus, 1981) – it is unlikely Napoleon would have needed to sell Louisiana without the French Revolution’s impact on events in Haiti.

Caribbean academics consider the “deep effect” on the “psychology of the whites throughout the Atlantic world” to be the most important consequence of the French Revolution (Knight, 2000). Plantation owners in Jamaica, trying to “save [themselves] from the example of Saint Dominigo and the dagger of [their] slaves” ensured the “island was guarded by its militia to the water’s edge” (Bridges, 1828), constituting a significant change to the lives of all inhabitants. Mainland Britain was spurred to a more progressive view – MP James Stephens proclaimed in 1804 that events in Haiti showed “the sustained slavery of our colonies cannot longer be maintained, we might look forward to progress not only of African freedom, but of African sovereignty, in the Indies, with satisfaction rather than terror” (Baur, 1970). That being said, the impact of Haitian events on white attitudes to slavery were limited. There was likely awareness of Coro, Western Venezuela temporarily proclaiming herself a republic in 1795 (Domínguez, 1980) and the UK’s Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade was founded two years before the revolution, hinting at pre-eminent, gradual change in perceptions of ethnic differences. Haiti may have affected “white” mindsets, but not enough to warrant political change (Geggus, 1981) – George III and William Pitt delayed parliamentary discussions on slavery (Klingberg, 1926) and the system was not dismantled until 1833.

From a historical, international viewpoint, the most important consequences of the French Revolution were the events in Haiti. Even if the Haitian Revolution had limited impacts on the abolition of slavery, it significantly contributed to the formation of the United States as we know it today and precipitated its rise in influencing global politics, the economy and culture. Although the French Revolution set important precedents for democracy, the presence of the system elsewhere implies it would have evolved regardless. Contemporarily speaking, a citizen of France, unaware of events in Haiti (Fick, 1990) would consider developments in French democracy to have been the most important and Haitian citizens, the Revolution itself. The most common histories of the French Revolution have generally been, if not obscured by modern French politics, commemorative, orthodox, and focused on its origins, occasionally detracting from research on global impacts. Progress has been made and should continue with research on its consequences on slavery, ethnic beliefs and the feminist movement. The lack of recognition of such outcomes by the main schools of thought suggests not only that modern historians should be conscious of delays in holistic coverage of the past, but also that if we, as members of the 21st Century, want our time to be remembered as inclusive and accepting, we should not let aspects of an event that do not chime with the main, underlying narratives in our communities disappear from our understanding of it.

[1] Caribbean historians maintain that the history of the Haitian Revolution has been trivialised, with slave success often explained by soldier deaths from yellow fever, the involvement of other European countries and bad weather.

[2] Their theory that a diminishing group of middling officers trying to introduce meritocracy sparked the Revolution has found little empirical evidence and is not included in this analysis.

Why is Machiavellainy a bad thing?

Laetitia Sanai

Manipulative, pragmatic, deviously cunning. Frustratingly astute. Niccolò Machiavelli wasn't only thinking of himself when writing *The Prince*. The handbook on how to retain effective power has not only been popularised by the power-hungry anarchists it was intended for, but has been devoured by contemporary media.

After the Medici family returned to power in Florence in 1512, Machiavelli was exiled on suspicion of conspiracy to San Casciano, where he wrote *The Prince*, published in 1532. Detached from politics in rural Tuscany, it is likely Machiavelli was seeking to gain favour from the Medicis to gradually return to the governmental scene himself. While Machiavelli's work seems relatively focused on effective governance of 16th Century Europe and beyond, the idea of being able to overthrow an integrated ruling hierarchy is a concept that is not just exclusive to Machiavelli's own Renaissance era. The Machiavellian ethos has been distilled into becoming a sort of societal code – “Machiavellian” has been reduced to simply a byword for ruthlessness. Not only this, but the traits he advises that every successful autocrat should display, whether it be Lorenzo ‘Il Magnifico’ or Alexander the Great, have made their historically found their place in the arts, with film and literary protagonists drawn together by their mutual threads of Machiavellian villainy.



Stefano Bianchetti/Corbis via Getty Images

Silence of the Lamb's Hannibal Lecter, *Gossip Girl*'s Blair Waldorf and Shakespeare's Macbeth rarely appear in the same sentence, yet their Machiavellian traits draw them together all the same. So what makes a Machiavellian villain so deeply enticing? What makes the film industry so enraptured by the art of Machiavellian protagonists? And why do we find escapism in indulging in Machiavellian tendencies, albeit from afar?

While the word itself might muster up images of literary or film protagonists for the most part, politicians and leaders (*The Prince*'s intended audience) in 2023 seem ever enraptured by Machiavelli's ideas. The expansion of power at the cost of civilian welfare is and has been a deeply enticing and ‘necessary’ political prospect. For a more concrete understanding of the difference between modern day Machiavellianism and the actual ideas Niccolò summoned up in his brief period of FOMO, we look to the arts.



The Godfather, Francis Ford Coppola, 1972

Often seen as the prototype of Machia-villainy, Marlon Brando depicts a cutthroat, apathetic Vito Corleone in Francis Coppola's 1972 film *The Godfather*. Vito Corleone is the effortless patriarch of 1940s New York's largest crime syndicate: his statement rose pinned to his lapel, clutching a cigar in hand, he has no issue controlling New York's largest criminal organization through his network of fearfully loyal subordinates. His web of contacts allows him to retain absolute authority through a hybrid system of ruthless and rewarding behaviour. He has the man responsible for the sexual assault of a family friend assaulted himself, and when a business deal falls short he gets the severed head of a prize racehorse placed in the bed of the individual responsible. Whilst Corleone's clinical ruthlessness marks him as governor of a kind of warped justice system, he makes sure to distinguish his own loyal acolytes from his rival dissenters.

Justice, apathy and manipulation aside, Corleone both conforms to and subverts Machiavelli's logic. Whilst the disbandment of an existing power structure and establishment of dominant autocracy was a main focus of Machiavelli's manifesto, the *Godfather* seeks only retain the position of his mafia within the neighbourhood, ridding it of outsider influence and thus creating absolute control. The Tattaglia family, in their bid to overthrow the Corleones, should have taken notes from methods advocated in *The Prince*: exploit political instability, overthrow the Corleones then, inhabiting the existing structure of absolute power (which prevents any prospect of anarchy), rule with respect towards the customs and traditions of the civilians. Machiavelli highlights the importance of winning over the subjects of newly acquired territory: in this case, people used to such a ruling hierarchy will be unlikely to contemplate rebelling against it, so long as their previous rights and customs are still respected.

Similar gravitation to Machiavillainy is seen in *Breaking Bad*. The serialised Emmy award-winning TV show covers the gradual descent of a small-town high-school chemistry teacher into the Mexican criminal underworld. A taste of the hefty profits of drug production lures him further into the field of class A drugs after descending into a power-obsessed drive to dominate methamphetamine production in Mexico.



Breaking Bad, Vince Gilligan, Michelle MacLaren, Mark Johnson, 2013

White's distributor Gus Fring has a collected, calculated outlook which both paints him as a Machiavellian villain and drives a bond between himself and White. Fring's ethos is rooted in caution, professionalism and decisiveness driven by personal rather than moral obligation, and he seeks these traits in every individual he works with. Whilst the more obvious choice for the Machiavellian label is Fring, the title of Machiavellian villain in this case can be applied more to White.

The audience's gradual desensitization towards the frequent acts of violence committed by White is a direct mirroring of White's descent further into a life infested with death, violence and power obsession. We ourselves become blind to Walt's character transition: from a man consumed by the cost of his cancer diagnosis on his family, to playing an active part in the massacre of an entire drug cartel in the Mexican desert. Whether his payment from Fring is \$85m or \$88m is irrelevant to him: his main motivation is seemingly a tyrannical desire for absolute control. Despite being drawn into a corrupt and corrosive industry, White does achieve his initial goal to set his family up for life after he himself inevitably passes away.

As such, through adopting those various Machiavellian tendencies displayed by his big-name rivals, his intended outcome is complete. White makes a financial, though perhaps not a spiritual, profit.

It is often the villains of this world who are labelled as Machiavellian. It is our frustration, our envy of their success with no strings which aligns us apart from our evil counterparts. For better or for worse, White achieves his initial goal. Vito Corleone rids New York of a mafia potentially more cruel or corrupt than his own. In reality, Machiavellian traits aren't just exclusive to those fictional or perhaps non-fictional dissenters.

Our envy, commonly masked by disapproval, speaks to our own Machiavellian traits. The detachment we feel between ourselves and the protagonists we see on screen is comforting yet frustrating - we wish we could be as apathetic, as pragmatic, as gloriously ruthless as our unspoken idols. That being said, we don't commit mass murder in a Mexican desert to reap the rewards of operating a drug cartel. Very few do. But the ability to act in a Machiavellian way is something that society may disdain but viscerally craves.

A Historical Atlas of Hasidism - Marcin Wodziński

Reviewed by Daniel Pesin



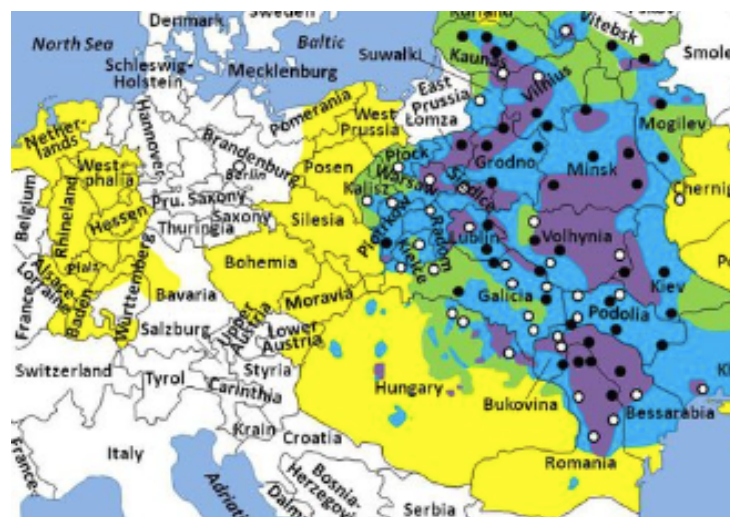
If I asked you to describe the first picture of a Jewish person that came to your mind, the chances are that it would be of someone with a beard, curled payos (sidelocks), and a black hat. Perhaps unknowingly, you have described some aspects of the traditional appearance of the Hasidic Jews.

What is Hasidism? For the uninitiated, it is a religious and social movement within Judaism that originated in the 18th century in Eastern Europe. It emphasises fervent spirituality, the importance of joy in worship, and spread quickly through the teaching that every individual, regardless of their level of religious knowledge or social status, can attain closeness to G-d through prayer, acts of kindness, and mystical contemplation. Hasidic teachings often highlight the spiritual dimension of physical or mundane actions - key elements of Hasidic philosophy draw heavily on Kabbalah (a school of Jewish mysticism which some say today counts Madonna and Ariana Grande among its followers). Despite being a relatively new movement, Hasidism has had a profound impact on Jewish religious practice, thought, and cultural expression - as the Atlas' author puts it, "Hasidism has become in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries an icon of Jewishness".

The Atlas, written by Marcin Wodziński, a professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław in Poland, provides an insight into the Hasidic movement's extraordinary growth from its beginning, with the wandering mystic known as the Baal Shem Tov (meaning Master of the Good Name), who journeyed the many towns and villages of what is today Western Ukraine. The Atlas explains the way that the myth of the Baal Shem Tov, whose life is largely unchronicled, has played a strong role in forming the "cultural imagination" and self-image of the early Hasidim (plural of Hasid - the adherents of Hasidism), even when it is today unknown to what extent this hagiography is based in fact. Still, the Baal Shem Tov inspired a "growing circle of mystics calling themselves his pupils, or his pupils' pupils", some of which, such as the Maggid ("Preacher") of Mezrich, who founded their own various Hasidic "courts", spreading the geographical and cultural influence of this burgeoning new movement among Eastern European Jewry.

This tale of "spectacular expansion", as the Jewish Review of Books puts it, emerged beyond even the limits of Europe, reaching the Land of Israel before the 18th century's end. In Europe, the rapid expansion of Hasidic leadership is made clear by a series of maps showing the number and location of the tsadikim (lit. righteous ones, or Hasidic rabbis and leaders, who were said to act as intermediaries between their communities and G-d); in 1772, the map shows a sprinkling of small dots in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but barely a century later the map shows a vast quantity of Hasidic courts stretching from Congress Poland in the north-west to Romania and Bessarabia in the south-east. An interesting detail that the Atlas examines is the relationship between the historical context of the country the sect was mostly located in, considering the ever-changing nature of Eastern European borders in this time period, and the way it perceives its own identity. For instance, the Satmar sect (subject to the unflattering 2020 Netflix series *Unorthodox*) often sees itself as Hungarian, though the village of Satu Mare where the sect originated is today located in Romania. This relationship and many others between "space" and "spirit" - to paraphrase Marcin Wodziński - are often overlooked by those who look at Hasidim as living solely with "their heads in the clouds".

This micro-mapping extends even to individual shtiblekh (prayer rooms), which give an insight into the Tsadik-disciple relationship. Wodziński writes that just "as not all Roman Catholics live in Rome... the overwhelming majority of the Hasidim of Kotsk did not live in Kotsk". The Atlas shows that the shtibl (which would often be affiliated with a specific Hasidic sect) acted as a social space, as well as a marker of the individual Hasid attendee's beliefs. The metre-by-metre map of one such shtibl, detailing the positions of the lecterns, Ark of the Covenant, and tables to read and study Torah, helps picture something that otherwise is lost to the past.



You might ask why so many of the remnants of Hasidic life in Eastern Europe are lost. The answer lies in the World Wars, the interbellum period, and the Holocaust. Often understated are the effects of the First World War, which Wodziński describes as a "caesura in the history of Hasidism", which brought losses on a "hitherto-unseen scale" in addition to regional changes in control over land in Eastern Europe.



Hasidic Dance, Max Weber

This also caused a new encounter with urban environments, as tsadikim began to move away from smaller settlements into cities like Warsaw, Kraków or Vienna. A new atmosphere was created, one where many lay-Hasidim would be in proximal contact with their leaders on a far greater scale than had been possible beforehand in towns or villages. The atrocities of the Holocaust devastated Hasidic populations, as it did almost all of Jewish life in Europe. Hasidim, who were easily identifiable as Jewish due to their appearance, quickly “fell prey to war crimes at the hands of Wehrmacht soldiers.” The vast majority of Hasidim, as well as their tsadikim, perished.

The sheer scale of the annihilation of Eastern European Hasidism makes the movement’s subsequent survival and rebirth much more powerful. Initially post-1945 the number of survivors was so small that “Hasidism itself was regarded as a dying phenomenon”. However, due to a variety of factors including an exceptional determination to rekindle the fire of a vanished world, and a very high birth rate, the Hasidic movement has restored itself and created “exceptionally vibrant centres in North America, Israel, and a number of enclaves in Europe”, including London’s own Stamford Hill, which is home to Europe’s largest Hasidic community.

The Atlas measures in depth not only the populations of these new post-war centres, but the number of adherents to the original sects, in addition to the emergence of some new groups, while some pre-war titans have now been forever extinguished.

The Atlas’ final chapter hones in on the complex relationships between modern-day Hasidim (born and raised post-World War Two) and the Eastern European origins of their sects, with regional differences between “Hungarian” and “Polish” dress, for instance, still reflected today. Journeys to pilgrimage sites, which are centred around the graves of tsadikim of yore, are also interesting phenomena – I have written more, for the Times of Israel, about the Hasidic pilgrimage to one such tsadik’s grave in Kerestir, Hungary.

There was so much of the Atlas that I was not able to explain or even outline in this review, including its power as an archive not only of maps, but as a compilation of photographs, art and other artefacts, which deepen our understanding more deeply. Ultimately, therefore, I would highly recommend this book, as a comprehensive yet ingenious description and explanation of the history of Hasidism, which is, according to the Princeton University Press, “one of today’s most important religious movements”.

The Origin of Crisis: Historical events meet Putin's take on Ukraine

Kumar Banerji Ballester

On 21st February 2022, in a televised speech, Putin questioned the legitimacy of Ukraine statehood, stating that modern Ukraine was artificially created by the Bolshevik, communist Russia. Three days later, Russia invaded Ukraine.

Putin claims that Ukraine is not a real country. So, who are the Ukrainians? This article is to provide a succinct history of Ukraine, and conclude with a reply to Putin's perspective on Ukraine.

PART I – A SHORT HISTORY OF UKRAINE

From 800 AD, the Vikings from the North came down the rivers – Danube, Dnieper, Dniester – to trade with the Byzantines in the South. They called themselves “Rus” or boat people, and over time they created a state and ruled over the local Eastern Slavs and chose Kiev as the local capital. They allied themselves to the Byzantine Empire, who employed them as an elite force, the Varangian Guards. Harald Hardrada, who died at Stamford Bridge in 1066, was in his youth a Varangian Guard in Byzantine.

In 988 AD, Grand Duke Vladimir of Kiev converted to the Byzantine Orthodox religion in Chersonesos, Crimea. This was a political decision -- a condition for his marriage to the sister of the Byzantine Emperor. Soon, the whole Kievan Rus followed in conversion. This event is a founding myth of the Rus Orthodox nation, and resonates even today with Putin and his group.

By 11th century, migration of fresh Vikings declined. The Varangs mixed with the local East Slavs. The Grand Duchy of Kiev was still held in high esteem, but several warlords – descendants of Vladimir -- had fragmented the Rus lands into smaller duchies.



Heinrich Siemiradzki

THE MONGOL INVASION

Batu Khan, a grandson of Chengiz, invaded Rus-lands in 1235 AD. Vladimir, Moscow, Kiev were all sacked. The Mongols (called Golden Horde or Tatars) settled in Crimea and the south-east.

The Kievan Duchy disappeared. The land was slowly absorbed by the pagan Lithuanians, who moved in from the North pressured by the Teutonic Knights. The laws and customs of Kiev as well as the Church language (Church Slavonic) were transmitted to Lithuania. But as the authority of Kiev diminished, the language of the peasants (east Slavic) became widespread.



Kalka, Pavel Ryzhenko

Smaller duchies in the east survived. They had to pay annual tributes to the Khans of the Golden Horde. Alexander Nevsky, Prince of Novgorod, who had earlier defeated the Teutonic Knights to preserve Orthodoxy, was appointed by the Mongols as “Grand Duke” to collect the tributes. Daniel, his son, moved to Moscow which grew into a small regional power. Daniel's grandson, Ivan, was appointed Grand Prince by the Mongols in 1325, and given suzerainty over all their Rus lands, in exchange of paying the annual tribute. The Duchy of Muscovy became the buffer state between the Golden Horde and the Lithuanians.

COMING OF THE COSSACKS

During the 13th and 14th century Tatar raids on the lands of Kiev for slaves and booty had kept them unsettled. Without a strong state, the peasant was vulnerable to the raiders.

Many migrated to south-west beyond the rapids of the Dnieper River, a land of forests and rivers and steppe, isolated from the north. They called themselves Cossacks, meaning ‘free men’, and banded together to defend themselves in these lawless frontier lands. They were nomads at first, pirates and freebooters raiding the Ottoman towns and the Crimean Khanate.

Over time, they formed a loose confederation called Zaporizhia; an officer class evolved, who elected a leader, the Hetman. Although the majority were Slavs, there were also Greeks, Tatars, Alans, Cumans and other minorities in the Cossack population.

As Lithuania absorbed the old western Kievan Rus lands, the Cossacks came under their control. In 1492, the Lithuanian authorities were asked by the Crimean Khan to punish these raiders.

This was the first time official records named these marauders as Cossacks, and the steppe borderlands that they inhabited as Ukraine. The registered Cossacks were given special status within the state. They were incorporated in the armed forces of Lithuania and Poland – in 1621, they halted the Ottoman army at the battle of Khotyn and saved Poland from falling under the Ottomans. The Cossacks flourished, and became different – linguistically and culturally from the Northern duchies, especially Muscovy and its environs.



POLAND AND LITHUANIA

The Poles had converted to Catholic Christianity in 966 AD.

In 1386, Jagiello the Lithuanian Duke married the Jadwiga the Catholic Polish princess uniting Lithuania and Poland under the Jagiello dynasty, and in the process Lithuania became Roman Catholic.

Through the Union of Lublin In 1569, Poland-Lithuania Commonwealth with an elective ruler was established. Most of Lithuanian Rus Lands (today's Ukraine) were transferred to Poland by this Treaty. Poland started to actively colonise Ukraine. The term 'Ruthenia', another version of 'Rus' was commonly used to designate the east Slav territories.

The Catholic Polish nobles moved east, and acquired most of the fertile land; local Ruthenians were now bound to the great latifundias as "serfs". Only 2% of the Ukrainian population were nobles. The intense stratification of society reduced the Orthodox peasantry from poverty to penury. Many serfs escaped to join the free Cossacks in the south.

Cossacks demanded equal legal rights within the Commonwealth. Except for a limited number of registered Cossacks, such rights were denied to the majority. In 1648, the tensions between the Cossack and the Polish magnates led to an open revolt.

COSSACK REBELLION OF KHMELNYTSKY 1648-1654

The Zaporozhian Cossack Hetman, Bohdan Khmelnytsky, entered Kyev in triumph in December 1648 when the Orthodox Church in Kiev and its College acclaimed him as heir to the Kyevian Rus.

Khmelnytsky, now wanted more than Cossack rights; he wanted a State for the Rus nation which was the only way to guarantee the rights of his people.

The Cossacks fought for 7 years, and all modern Ukraine was liberated from Poland. Unfortunately, the Jewish leaseholders of lands of the Polish magnates suffered the most. However, the wars had ravaged the Cossack population, and Khmelnytsky made a fateful decision to agree to a treaty with Russia to gain future protection from Poland and Ottoman Crimea. This was against the advice given to him by Oliver Cromwell.

On January 8, 1654, at Periaslav, the Cossack State entered into an alliance with the Tsar Alexis Romanov of Muscovy. The Tsar recognised Cossack statehood, and a privileged status for Cossacks; in exchange for the Tsar's protection, the Cossacks promised loyalty and military service.

WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO MUSCOVY SINCE THE MONGOLS?

While Lithuania was absorbing Kiev and Ukraine in the 14th Century, Muscovy was bringing eastern Rus lands under its control. In 1471, Muscovy under Ivan III stopped paying tribute and defeated the Golden Horde Tatars, weakened by internal discord. Ivan III took the title of 'sovereign and autocrat of all Rus.'

Muscovy was now the sole Duchy still ruled by a Prince descended from the Vikings. As it transformed from a Mongol dependency to a sovereign state, the Kievan Rus myth of origins was the foundation for its self-definition.

Ivan III had married the niece of the last Byzantine Emperor, and at the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans 1453, he considered himself the heir to the Byzantine tradition. His grandson, Ivan IV 'the Terrible' took the title "Tsar", signifying the unending Eastern Empire where the capital has shifted from Constantinople to Moscow, the Third Rome. He made wars on the Baltic States, and expanded Muscovy to the West, while annexing the remaining eastern Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan.

Muscovy, or "Russia", was a competing power to Poland-Lithuania. Its Orthodox church was richer than any other eastern churches, and in 1589 the Moscow church was raised to the title of a Patriarchate - becoming equal to the other Patriarchates in Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Constantinople.

As the Viking line of Princes died out, Moscow was ruled by Romanovs of mixed Tatar and local origin - but the claim of Tsars to be rulers of all Rus remained intact. It was a Romanov Tsar who signed the Treaty with the Cossacks of Ukraine in 1654.



Meeting of Bohdan Khmelnytsky with Tugay Bey, Juliusz Kossak



UKRAINE UNDER RUSSIA 1654- 1918

The agreement of 1654 guaranteed a Hetman from the Ukrainian Cossacks to rule over them; an independent Cossack Army and Ukrainian Church, and freedom of foreign policy (except relations with Poland and Ottomans remained with Russia).

Russia did not live up to these terms, and as a result there were successive uprisings against Russia now, as there were earlier against Poland.

In 1690, Russia and Poland partitioned Ukraine. River Dnieper became the frontier between the two. For the West Ukrainians in the Right Bank i.e Galicia, Polish language infiltrated their language, and Polish rituals followed in the Church. And in Russia, the Hetman role became ceremonial, all real administration was now in hands of officials (Ukrainian or Russian) trained in Russia. People from Muscovy settled in the fertile steppes. When the Northern Wars between Sweden and Russia of Peter the Great started in 1700, Hetman Mazepa joined Sweden – a futile attempt to regain the independent Cossack state. Russia felt betrayed by the Cossacks, and Mazepa and his hand together with the Swedes were crushed in 1709 at Poltava. Peter declared a ‘Russian Empire’ in 1721. In this Empire, the Little Russia of Ukraine, and White Russia of Belorussia were integrated with the Greater Russia. Peter took away all that had remained of Cossacks’ separate identity. While maintaining Cossack regiments in his Army, he promoted ruthlessly integration of Ukrainians with Mother Russia.

The integration continued under Catherine the Great, who abolished even the ceremonial “Hetman” title in 1764. Local Cossack laws were abolished, a Ukrainian was now subject only to Russian laws, and was no different than any other Russian in the great state of Russia. And the peasant Cossack, which meant “free men”, was no longer free. Ukrainian peasants who had been free since 1648 now had “serfdom” imposed on them in 1783. [In 1861, serfdom was abolished in Russia after the Crimean War.]



Johann Baptist Homann’s *Ukrania quae et Terra Cosaccorum*, 1716.

UKRAINE BEFORE 1917

In 1772, Poland disappeared from the maps; it was partitioned off between Russia, Austria and Prussia. Polish Ukraine, or Galicia on the Right Bank became part of Austria.

The Austrian Ukraine, enjoyed fruits of Enlightenment under lenient Hapsburg government. It was allowed to develop distinct Ukrainian culture, language, and religious rituals; this accelerated after the 1848 European revolutions. Some Polish influence remained, and Lvov the capital remained Polish. Schools were multilingual, and taught Ukrainian, German and Polish. It was here in the mid-19th century Ukrainian nationalism began to take hold, rooted in the traditions and dialects of the peasants and the aspirations of the intellectuals who had fled from the stifling rule of Russia in the east.

The Russian Ukraine on the east of Dnieper was by contrast forced into Russification by the Romanovs, who believed in assimilating all parts of the Empire into one Russian culture. The Ukrainian language was banned. The Church was subjugated to the Patriarch of Moscow. Many Ukrainian leaders (former Cossack atamans) were given Russian nobility and became loyal to the Romanovs. Schools were taught only in Russian. Immigrants from Russia settled in the fertile soil of Ukraine, bringing with them Russian culture and traditions.

However, there was a strong nationalist Ukrainian feeling amongst middle class professionals and peasants influenced by the development on the other side, in Austrian Galicia, and also from the example of militant Polish nationalism. Ukrainian language flourished underground, and in the absence of universal primary schooling, Russian never got taught to the children. Taras Shevchenko, the national poet of Ukraine, wrote in the Ukrainian dialect and spoke of old glories of the Cossacks.

1917 – WORLD WAR I AND CIVIL WAR

In March 1917, as Imperial Russia fell apart, Ukrainian People’s Republic was declared by the Russian-Ukraine intelligentsia in Kiev. It reflected social democratic values but was not communist. The Ukrainian state was recognised by the German Empire, and on 3rd March 1918 it was a co-signer of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk where Bolshevik Russia withdrew from hostilities – this was the first appearance of Ukraine as a national state in history.

By the end of 1917, however, another competing government supported by the Bolshevik Russia had been set up in Kharkov. Soviet Russia, which had not recognised the Kiev government, started to arm the Kharkov faction.

The Kiev government was supported by the Germans who were still holding great swathes of Russia. But in November 1918– the Germans withdrew from Ukraine. A civil war started between the Kiev and Kharkov factions.



1919 – SITUATION GETS MESSY

Meanwhile, as Austria withdrew from its empire Austrian Galicia became a bone of contention between the Poles and the local western Ukrainians. Lvov, the capital was Polish but the countryside peasants were mainly Ukrainian. The newly revived state of Poland annexed Galicia in July 1919 after a bloody war. The Galician Ukrainians were denied unification with the Russian Ukrainian brethren [this unification was delayed until 1939, when Soviet Russia invaded Poland]. In the Russian Ukraine, another new party joined the fray. These were the ‘White Russians’ led by a Russian general, Denikin, who wished to revive pre-Bolshevik Russia.

The Ukrainian Republic at Kiev was now fighting both the Red Army (supporting the Kharkov faction) and the White Russians. Petiliura, the Ukrainian leader, appealed to Woodrow Wilson for support in the quest for “national self-determination” but received no reply. Polish help arrived when Petiliura accepted Polish annexation of Galicia. However, in March 1921, with the Treaty of Riga between Poland and the Bolsheviks, this stopped. By the end of 1921, the communists had won, and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was declared, which joined the Soviet Union.



This was the Holodomor, a man-made famine. Ethnic Russians were settled in the south east – the Donbas region – and new industries were initiated here. Resentment renewed between the Ukrainian nationalists and Moscow.

In 1939, Russia invaded Poland and annexed Galicia and Lvov, which was merged with Ukraine SSR. For the first time since 1690, all Kievan Rus lands were united in one state. When Nazi Germany invaded in 1941, some Ukrainian nationalists led by Stepan Bandera took this opportunity to throw off Moscow's shackles by joining the Germans. However, later Soviet historians considered Bandera and his followers to be “fascist” and traitors to a unified Soviet Union.

FROM 1922 TO INDEPENDENCE IN 1991

Lenin took control of most of the Russian Empire by accepting that each different republic that joined the Soviet Union was independent and had willingly applied for the membership of the federal Union -- a clause also allowed them to secede from the Union. Lenin understood that each republic post-WWI had declared or fought for its independence, and therefore accommodating the national cultural aspirations, including giving right to native languages was important. Thus, Ukraine SSR was a distinct state, and also had the ability to leave the Soviet Union.

In 1954, Khrushchev, a Russian from Donbas, transferred Crimea to Ukraine as a 300th anniversary present of the Bodan Khmelnytsky's treaty between the Cossack state and Muscovy. This became controversial (Putin considered Russia was robbed) as Crimea was 90% populated with ethnic Russians, who were not asked to vote to join Ukraine SSR. Crimea had been annexed by Catherine II from the Ottomans, and Stalin had displaced the Crimean Tatars and had it settled by Russians.

However, when Stalin took over in 1924, all changed. A process of renewed Russification followed. Ukraine's language was discouraged. Forced collectivisation of private Ukraine lands, and requisition of all crops for export [for needed technology imports] led to famine, hunger and 4m deaths in 1933.

As the Soviet Union broke down, in 1991 Ukraine formally declared its independence. Its first President, Kravchuk, was born in Poland (Galician Ukraine) who became citizen of Soviet Russia at age 5 after 1939.



PART II – PUTIN’S VIEWS ON UKRAINE’S HISTORY AND A REPLY
Putin came to power in Russia in 1999. He has asserted several times that Russia, Ukraine and Belarus are the same people, as they go back in history to the Kievan Rus. In fact, the unity of East Slavs is an *idée fixe* for Putin.

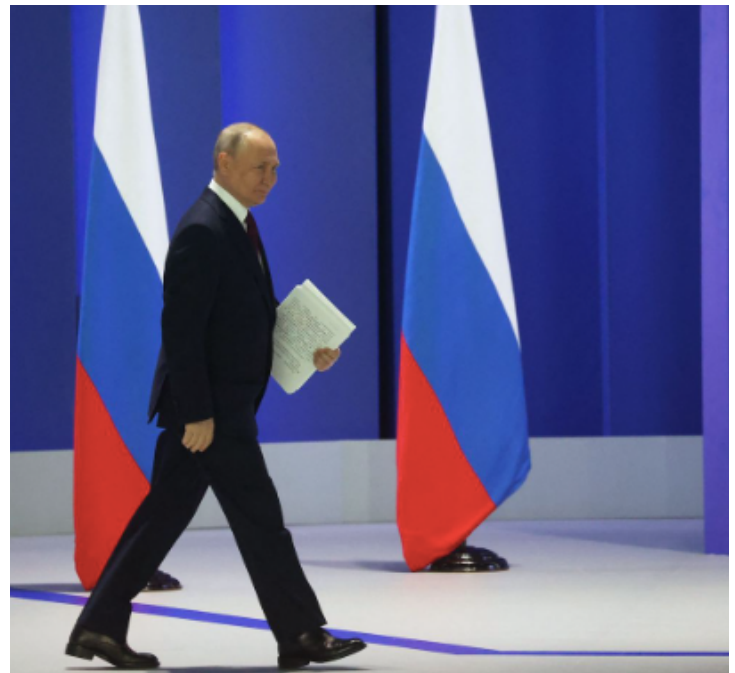
In July 2013, on a trip to Ukraine, Putin visited Chersonesus in Crimea where Prince Vladimir of Kievan Rus converted to Christianity. His speech foreshadowed what was to come: “Our spiritual unity began with the baptism of Holy Rus 1025 years ago....our unity is so strong that is not subject to any action by any authority...”. Putin followed this up in September 2013 at an official summit in Moscow: Ukraine and Russia “have common traditions, a common mentality, a common history and a common culture...we are one people.”

In response to the Kiev Maidan demonstrations (Nov 2013- Feb 2014) in favour of Ukraine’s integration with the EU and the flight of the pro-Moscow President Yanukovich, Putin annexed Crimea on 18th March 2014. Putin declared: “Everything in Crimea speaks of our shared history and pride. This is the location of ancient Chersonesus where Prince Vladimir was baptised. His spiritual feat of adopting Orthodoxy predetermined the overall basis of the culture, civilization and human values that unite Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.”



In his annual state of the union address on 4th December 2014 Putin elaborated on his theme: “It was thanks to this spiritual unity that our forefathers for the first time and forevermore saw themselves as a united nation”. The following years saw an undeclared war between Russia and Ukraine over the south eastern provinces in Donbas region.

On 12th July 2021 an extraordinary essay titled “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians” was published by Putin. While giving a summary potted history of Ukraine, he asserts, “Russians and Ukrainians were one people – a single whole....” He argues that today’s Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians are all descended from “ancient Rus”, who shared the old Russian language, the rule of Viking Princes, and Orthodox Christianity. Putin blamed Lenin for allowing Ukraine to identify as a separate republic within the Soviet Union, and states “modern Ukraine is entirely the product of the Soviet era,” as it was the Soviet Union that allowed the unification of Ukraine with Galicia in 1939, Carpathian Ukraine in 1945, and Crimea in 1954. “Ukraine was shaped ... on the lands of historical Russia.”



Thus, Putin openly challenged the legitimacy of Ukraine’s contemporary borders. He ended with, “...true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia.... For we are one people.”

Finally, on 21st February 2022, Putin gave a televised address. He said: “Ukraine is not just a neighbouring country for us. It is an inalienable part of our own history, culture and spiritual space....” He again blamed Lenin for “detaching Ukraine from Russia”, stating that modern Ukraine was created by the Bolsheviks in 1917 as part of a communist appeasement of nationalism of ethnic minorities in the former Russian Empire. Three days later Russian forces invaded Ukraine.

REPLY TO PUTIN

There are two ways to answer Putin – the first, to question his use of historical facts; and the other, to address the concept of his approach to history.

Putin ignores several historical facts.

He uses ‘Rus’ to signify the unity of Russia and Ukraine. ‘Ancient Rus’ were Viking migrants, not Eastern Slavs that Putin wants to unite. Today, the inhabitants of both are admixtures of Slavs, Tatars, Poles, Mongols, etc. Even Putin’s comment on unity of language is wrong – Ukraine is a bilingual country where Russian and Ukrainian are spoken together. From 1830, Ukraine’s intelligentsia had been motivated by the Polish nationalism they saw in their midst and developed literature and writing in Ukrainian – the national poet Taras Shevchenko was a driver for this.

The Ukrainians were part of the Russian Empire, but had never felt the spiritual unity that Putin asserts. In fact, Ukrainians fought Russians (both White and Red) during 1918-1921 for their own independence. Putin remains silent on this.



Lenin did not create modern Ukraine. In 1918, he sent the Red Army against the independent Ukraine state, and then replaced it with a puppet state, the Ukraine SSR. As Professor Serhii Plokhy states: “what Lenin created was the Russian Federation...in 1991, Yeltsin removed this from the USSR, leading to the collapse of the latter. Lenin was the creator of modern Russia and not Ukraine, and should be considered as such.”



Reply of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, Ilya Repin

Putin claims that Ukraine consists of Russian lands – he gives examples of Galicia, Carpathian Ukraine and Crimea included in modern Ukraine. But, apart from Crimea – all these lands were Kievan lands; they were united within Poland-Lithuanian Commonwealth prior to 1654. None of these were ancient Russian land and were acquired by Russia only through annexations after the partition of Poland and further after WWII. Crimea also was never historically Russian. The Crimean Khanate was populated by Tatars (offshoot of the Mongol Horde), Cossacks, and other tribes. The Khanate was a vassal of Ottomans till 1783, when it was annexed by Catherine the Great.

Even when Putin invokes Vladimir’s conversion and the unity of the Ukrainian and Russian churches – he is wrong.

Vladimir the Viking was not a Slav – thus he was not a Russian nor Ukrainian as conceptualised by Putin. He was Prince of a migrant minority ruling class in a country of Slavs. One can speculate that Vladimir’s conversion had less to do with spiritual religiosity, and more with hard political calculations, as his conversion was a condition for his marriage to the Byzantine princess.

And the religious situation in Russia and Ukraine are different. Ukraine has a Greek Catholic church, which thrived from long association with Poland but was discouraged by the Russian Empire. It also has from 1991 an independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church as well another Orthodox church under Moscow Patriarch.

Kiev as part of Poland since 1569, absorbed Renaissance, Reformation and Counter Reformation. In the 18th century, encouraged by Peter the Great and Catherine the Great, it transmitted through its Kiev Academy western thoughts to isolated Moscow. So, Ukrainians could make a case that Russia is simply an offshoot of the Ukrainian culture. Kiev existed 500 years before Moscow!

One should also comment on Putin’s approach to history.

In his title “on the historical unity of Russia and Ukraine,” the words ‘historical unity’ mean an eternal unity. For a historian this is wrong. There is no eternal happening in history. Professor Timothy Snyder calls this an attempt to create ‘politics of eternity,’ to classify every new event as just one more instance of timelessness, to leap over decades and centuries to build eternal myths. “Myth closes down the questions that history is meant to ask. And it prevents us from learning almost anything of interest.”

Putin did not take into consideration what Ukrainians think of themselves. He dictated his history of eternity as if it is a universal truth accepted by also the Ukrainians – which we know is not so.

History is not static. History is not an eternally determined set of outcomes. There is human agency. According to Professor Snyder, it is more interesting to explore how Ukraine or Russia formed to become today’s states than to accept nothing changed from ancient times. One must remember that history is not destiny. Over time, borders move, national cultures evolve, faiths, ideologies and communities change. To think Ukraine of 2022 is the same as Kievan Rus of 800 AD is as absurd as for an Indian to claim that the Indian borders must shift to “Hindu Kush” mountains, named after ancient Hindus, or that the borders of India must include Pakistan or even Afghanistan – all ruled for centuries by the Moguls.

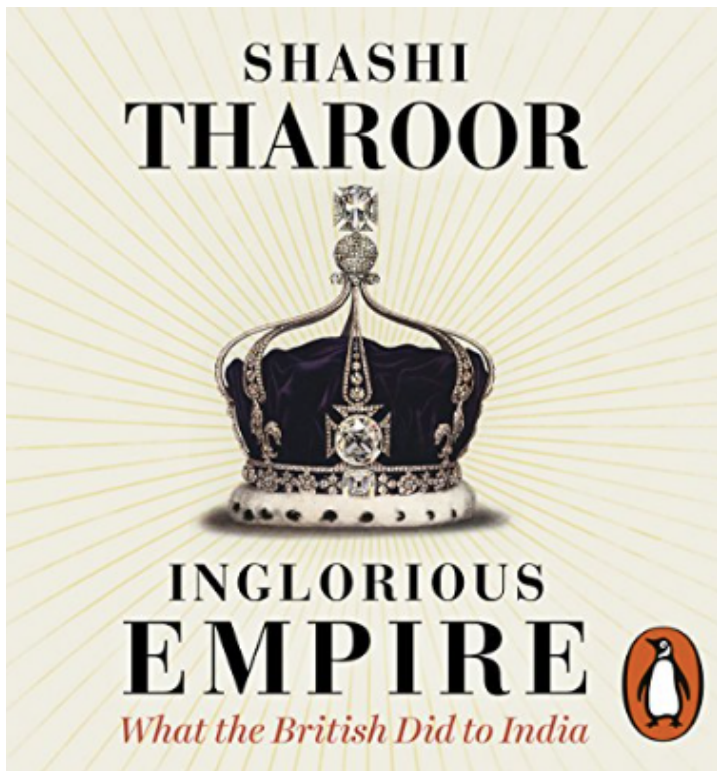
The resistance of Ukraine to the Russian invasion of 24th February 2022 shows that it is not a fictional state, but it exists, and it fights for survival. Ukraine today is a civic state, not defined by its ethnicity or its religion, but by its democracy --- in this, it differs profoundly from its autocratic neighbour. The two can never be ‘the same people’ in their attitudes to civic society and politics!

REFERENCES

- Timothy Snyder: “The Road to Unfreedom”, Ch 4, 2018
- Timothy Snyder: “The Reconstruction of Nations – Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus 1569-1999”, Part II on Ukraine, 2003
- Serhii Plokhy: “The Gates of Europe, a history of Ukraine”, 2015
- Serhii Plokhy: “Lost Kingdom, a history of Russian nationalism”, 2018
- Mark Galeotti: “A short history of Russia”, 2022
- Washington Post, “How Ukraine became Ukraine in 7 Maps”, 9th March 2015

Inglorious Empire- Shashi Tharoor

Reviewed by Arran Syed-Raja



'Inglorious Empire' by Shashi Tharoor, an eminent Indian politician and academic, is a thought-provoking and meticulously researched work that challenges the prevailing narratives surrounding the British Empire in the Indian subcontinent. Tharoor presents a compelling argument against the glorification of British imperialism, delving into its devastating impact on India while exposing the fallacies that perpetuate the myth of a benevolent empire. Tharoor's writing is impassioned, eloquent, and unapologetic in its condemnation of the Empire's exploitative practices.

Drawing on extensive historical evidence, he provides an account of the economic, social, and cultural plunder inflicted upon India by British rule. Tharoor's analysis is well-supported by a wealth of facts and figures, lending credibility to his arguments. From the destruction of indigenous industries to the exploitation of resources and the imposition of oppressive policies, Tharoor lays bare the harsh realities of colonialism. He frequently highlights the economic drain of India under British rule, explaining in detail the process of deindustrialisation and the systematic destruction of the Indian textile industry which had contributed so significantly to the economy. Tharoor closely describes the policies which brought Indian raw goods to Britain to be manufactured into textiles in British industrial centres, and subsequently exported these products back to the subcontinent at an exorbitant price; thus fuelling the Industrial Revolution in Britain while eradicating the existing industry in India and plunging a whole class of artisanal craftspeople into poverty. There is also attention given to the British confiscation of arable land which led to the creation of a 'new class of landless peasant deprived of his traditional source of sustenance' 'for the first time in Indian history', as well as to the relentless system of taxation on Indian farmers which forced millions into destitution.

Tharoor's unwavering commitment to rigorous research is evident throughout the book. He draws on a wide range of sources, incorporating academic studies, official documents, and first-hand accounts to substantiate his arguments. He capably analyses official government statistics from the late 19th and early 20th centuries to illuminate the falling incomes and increasing impoverishment in India under British administration at the time and to demonstrate that the death-toll and frequency of catastrophic economic disasters in India was growing systematically under British rule.

One of the book's strengths is Tharoor's ability to contextualise historical events and policies within a broader framework of imperialism. He skilfully connects the dots between past and present, highlighting how the repercussions of British colonialism continue to shape socio-economic inequalities and geopolitical dynamics in present-day India. Tharoor repeatedly refers to a fairly blunt statistic as evidence of India's plunder; that the GDP of India in 1700, only decades before the beginnings of British rule, had constituted approximately 24% of the world economy, making it the largest economy in the world. Yet by the end of the Raj in 1947, this figure had been diminished to only 3%, and this is often alluded to by Tharoor as a manifestation of Britain's mismanagement of the subcontinent. Tharoor effectively groups this effect along with many others as factors of part of the fundamental cause of India's condition throughout the latter half of the 20th century; one rife with poverty and inequality.



Benjamin West

Moreover, Tharoor provides quite a successful refutation to the apologist argument, as he argues that the achievements of British India often used in its defence were never implemented with the purpose of benefiting the Indian people; rather to advance the interests of Britain and of British residents in the subcontinent. He criticises the argument that the introduction of the British legal system benefited the population; he cites many examples of British law being applied solely to increased British control, mentioning that while a European could be let off with a fine for murdering an Indian, an Indian would be given a decades-long sentence for minor offences.



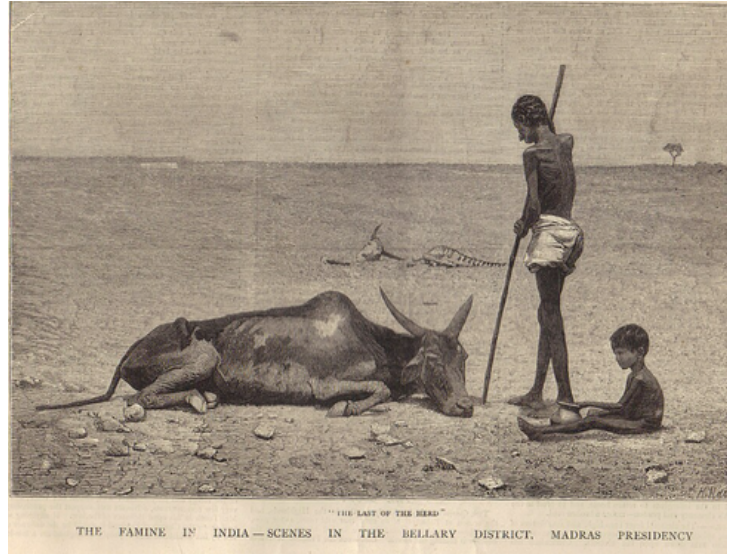
THE LJR 2023-24 | A. SYED RAJA

Tharoor also argues that the values imposed by the British law system often conflicted with those of the local population; homosexuality had never been considered a crime in India until the influence of Victorian values had led it to be criminalised by the Raj in 1862. Considering the vast network of railways constructed by Britain throughout the subcontinent, Tharoor criticises them as being primarily built for the purpose of transporting exploited resources and materials to the ports, to then be shipped to Britain itself for use in British manufacturing. He argues that the transit of locals was restricted and those who did were kept in third-class compartments almost fit for cattle.

Tharoor also highlights two critical atrocities conducted in India under British rule, which are still widely remembered in India with sorrow to this day as a scar on the nation's history; and he uses these as evidence for the light in which British officers and lawmakers viewed their Indian subjects. The first example he refers to is the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar in April 1919, in which a group of around 1500 men, women and children were shot dead by Brigadier General Dyer and his regiment for peacefully protesting against the Rowlatt Act, which gave powers to the British police to arrest any Indian person without any reason. Tharoor vehemently condemns Britain's government for concealing news of the event for six months after and for, while dismissing him from the army, allowing Dyer to retire with the rank of Colonel with a large pension; never regretting or apologising for the brutal killing of over a thousand, including hundreds of elderly men and women as well as infants and children.



The second example is that of the approximate 35 million Indian deaths caused by the series of deadly famines under British rule, such as the Great Famine of 1876-78, killing almost 10 million, and more recently the Bengal Famine of 1943 which caused the deaths of over 3 million people. Tharoor is highly critical of the British administration during the Second World War for diverting resources, notably grain and rice grown in the Indian province of Bengal, away from the local population and instead shipping it to Britain to be used for rations and supplies, which caused a massive shortage in the food supply of Bengal. Tharoor utilised both of these examples to illustrate how Britain, certainly the British government and military, viewed the hundreds of millions of Indians it ruled over.



Engraving from *The Graphic*, October 1877 depicting famine in the Bellary district

Tharoor utilised both of these examples to illustrate how Britain, certainly the British government and military, viewed the hundreds of millions of Indians it ruled over. He took the view that Britain saw Indians from a fundamentally racist perspective, as less important and of less worth than others, causing them to be treated in such a thoughtless manner.

While Tharoor's critique of the British Empire is clear and compelling, some readers may find the book's tone to be strongly biased at times. Tharoor's unwavering condemnation of the Empire leaves little room for acknowledging any potential positive aspects or complexities within the colonial experience; there is little to no mention of the Raj having any constructive lasting impact on India. While reading, it can sometimes seem as if Tharoor's writing is influenced by a personal hatred or resentment against Britain and its treatment of his country, being an Indian himself. If one approaches this book as a comprehensive account of the history of British rule in India, one may find that it lacks balance and objectivity. However, it seems more likely that 'Inglorious Empire' is an attempt to fill the gaps in the narrative of Indian and British history which Tharoor feels need filling, which Tharoor feels are not discussed or highlighted frequently enough.

It is rather an effort to inform and to educate those who may seek to glorify the Empire or deemphasise its faults, by providing arguments which counterbalance that view. Instead of being a thorough explanation of the history of India in this period, it is a purposefully one-sided perspective which is used to challenge the apologist view which has such prevalence. Thus, perhaps it is less suited to those totally new to the subject with little knowledge of the period, and more suited to those who are already fairly informed and are able to understand this book for what it is, a critique rather than a history.

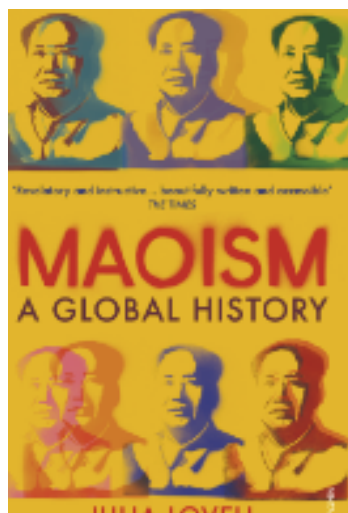
Nevertheless, it is still a thoroughly useful read and one which will perhaps introduce the Western reader to a more critical and nuanced take on their own history, and a better understanding of the complicated legacy of the British Empire.

Maoism: A Global History- Julia Lovell

Reviewed by Julian Herbst

Maoism is a thing of the past, and remains firmly lodged in the dustbin of history. It is a concept now only vaguely championed in China, and for the rest of the world was a plaything of orientalist students. For Londoners, the infamous sex-offender Aravindan Balakrishnan of the Worker's Institute of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, headquartered in Brixton, is perhaps the epitome of that type of Maoist. But has it really disappeared?

Julia Lovell's "Maoism: A Global History", the winner of the Cundhill Prize 2019, aims to reassert that Maoism was a major force in the 20th century and will be vital to understand in the near future. Lovell is Professor of Modern China at Birkbeck, and has translated Chinese authors including Lu Xun, a pioneer of modern Chinese literature. She argues that the West has bought into Chinese repression of information on Mao's foreign involvement, to China's reputational benefit, and that that is why we have such a dim image of Maoism. Her book outlines the origins of the CCP, Maoist influences across the world and how Xi's current regime incorporates elements of Maoism. Its great strength is how extensively and comprehensively it describes the stories of Maoism outside of China, from Cambodia to Peru to Tanzania. However, as wide as her scope is, she successfully focuses on the significance of Edward Snow's seminal book, "Red Star Over China", and other works written by or about Mao. These books not only influenced communists across the globe, but also mujahideen, ANC members and ordinary Chinese in the 1940s, all from Mao's small utopia of Yan'an.



(Above Right) Students outside the Sorbonne in 1968. The poster next to the portrait says "Serve the People", the title of a famous speech by Mao.

Importantly, they set out the future appeals of Maoism. China's "successful" transformation into a nuclear power with heavy industry that could battle the "US imperialists" to a standstill in Korea from a country humiliated by foreign powers, provided, Lovell says, "a practical and theoretical tool kit for turning a fractious, failing empire into a defiant global power." With European imperialism diminishing, such a blueprint would naturally be attractive to agricultural countries recovering from or fighting colonial influence.

Another appeal was Mao's indomitability. In complete contradiction to Clausewitzian logic, he split himself from both other powers in the triangular relationship between China, the USSR and the US,



Mao with the founding father of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere

to his arguable benefit (as Henry Kissinger describes in his book "On China"). Nor did he succumb to fear of the "paper tigers" of nuclear bombs, something which of course was welcomed by countries who also did not have nuclear capabilities. This gave Mao a further boost in what Lovell describes as a "global moral glamour". Add a vague sense of feminism, a championing of "encirclement" by rural populations (which were the majority in most colonies) and a talent for aphorisms, and one can see why Mao was an icon for some.

Why should you read the book and understand a bit more about Maoism? Not only are ongoing insurgencies in Peru, India and the Philippines, and a major political party in Nepal all Maoist, but the concept is enjoying a strong revival under Xi Jinping. Lovell asserts that Mao never really left the CCP and never stopped being lauded. Even the arch reformist Deng Xiaoping said Mao was "70% right and 30% wrong", and the "great helmsman" has strong popular nationalist support in China. Xi is the strongest ruler China has had since Mao, and often evokes Maoist nostalgia in his own iconography and rhetoric, for example describing a trade war with the US as another "long march". Deng's final advice of "hide your strength and bide your time" seems to have flown out of the window with Xi pursuing the most aggressive foreign policy since Mao's time. He has a lot to learn, after all Maoist successes were random and not particularly satisfactory considering the billions China poured into aid while millions died of famine at home. The infrastructure provided by the Belt and Road Initiative and the calligraphy lessons Confucius Institutes provide are in stark contrast to the guns and "advisors" China provided in the past, but rooted in the same quest for power internationally.

The only minor quibble I have is the inadequate linking together of the threads of global Maoism in the rather short seven-page conclusion. Lovell also doesn't dwell particularly on the actual principles of Mao Zedong Thought, but perhaps it is for the better so that young readers like me are not indoctrinated. But overall, the book is all encompassing, accessibly written and remarkably timely. Learning about Maoism at Westminster could give us an insight into the Western populism gripping us now. Is there somewhat of a parallel to draw between Mao's "mass line" idea of public upheaval and voice, and alienated voters expressing their criticisms by voting Trump? Maoism: A Global History is most certainly worth reading, if only for the arsenal of Maoist aphorisms it provides for use in daily life.

LJR



THE LJR AUTUMN/WINTER 2023/24 | VOLUME 5