

Kosovo's FP, where Krasniqi remarks how "Kosovo's path to full international subjectivity is inherently linked to the issue of recognition and membership of international organisations. Therefore, in such cases, foreign policy gains a dual capacity, serving both as a tool of state-building and as a statehood prerogative" (217). The same could be said for almost all of the ex-Yugoslav republics: Slovenia and Croatia were faced with similar challenges on the eve of their 1991 independence, followed closely by Bosnia and Macedonia – as described by all the contributors in detail. These types of similarities provoke the narrative laid down in the very introduction to the book by its editors, Keil and Stahl, and especially by the welcome, but at the same time somewhat biased overview of the FP of Yugoslavia by Katrin Boeckh. While Keil and Stahl remain scholarly neutral in their introduction, it is Boeckh who somewhat fails to neutrally and objectively present the reality of Yugoslavia's FP. Her overview may be factually (or maybe even historically) accurate, but at the same time she falls into the trap of Western-centric critique of the subject, with highlighting only Tito and "Titoism" as being most responsible for the unique success of Yugoslavia's international relations. However, as all contributors noted, it was the very heritage of Yugoslav FP that was the foundation of the buildup of FP/IR actions of all post-Yugoslav states. And, as it is often notable through all entries, it was the domestic actors of Yugoslavia's FP that founded the initial FPs in the contemporary politics of today's independent states.

In the closing chapter of the book, Amelia Hadfield provides the necessary theoretical background on the subject, chal-

lenging the methodology used by the book's contributors, while giving a profound overview of modern FP theory with a special emphasis on foreign policy analysis (FPA) and its role in contextualising both ex-Yugoslav states' FP/IR and the EU in general. Maybe it would have been beneficial for the overall content of the book if the editors had decided to put such a chapter at the very beginning of the book, which can easily be circumvented by the reader by reading it straight after the initial introduction by Keil and Stahl. Nevertheless, this edited volume is to be highly recommended to all who have even a basic interest in the complex realities of the FPs of the ex-Yugoslav states.

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Review

Jardar Østbø

The New Third Rome: Readings of a Russian Nationalist Myth

ibidem-Verlag, Stuttgart, 2015, 308 pp.

While pursuing the slightest interest in international politics, a phrase one might have heard attributed to Russia is "Third Rome". Popping up occasionally in western media, more often when Russia engages in controversial international activity, it often comes in the form of news articles pointing out some worrying strains over

Russia's nationalist ideology, employing "Third Rome" as an orienting concept. The treatment and analysis of the idea are, however, mostly superficial. A more illuminating, serious and impartial attempt at analysis is Jardar Østbø's book, detailing the vigorous life and importance of the idea (or more precisely, multiple ideas) in contemporary Russia's nationalist discourse. Østbø is a post-doctoral fellow at Oslo University, in the Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages, and this is his first book, an updated version of his PhD thesis. The book is accordingly written in a highly academic style.

The idea of a Third Rome is investigated here in the form of political myth – that is, "a narrative about a political society, usually as an incitement to action" (from Kolstø's foreword). The phrase was first mentioned by Filofei, a 16th-century Orthodox monk, and it was mostly used for a religious/eschatological purpose. It has since resurfaced many times in many different versions and for different purposes. Østbø focuses on its occurrence in post-Soviet Russia's writings of nationalist 'intellectuals', as an element in their narratives whose aim is to construct and reconstruct Russian national identity. For the purpose of the study, he chooses four prominent Russian nationalist writers, all four with a certain degree of support by the regime, namely: Vadim Tsyburskii, Aleksandr Dugin, Nataliia Narochnitskaia and Egor Kholmogorov. All four are representative and influential within four of the most important currents of contemporary Russian nationalism – Dugin of neo-Euroasianism, Kholmogorov of Orthodox nationalism, Tsyburskii of isolationism and Naroch-

nitskaia of neo-Slavophilia/pan-slavism. Østbø's coverage of only four authors privileges depth over breadth. The work still manages to be representative, and choosing these authors not only allows for an in-depth analysis of the contemporary uses of the Third Rome myth and its functions, but also for an insight into contemporary Russian nationalism.

The second chapter, after the introduction, starts with Østbø seeking to place his study within the relevant theoretical approaches on nationalism. Thus, juxtaposing the 'modernist' school of authors such as Hobsbawm, Gellner and Anderson against the ethno-symbolist theory of Anthony D. Smith, Østbø seeks to define and clarify concepts of nation, nationalism and the practice of 'inventing' a nation. In all of these instances he leans towards Smith's theoretical framework. The ethno-symbolist emphasis on "shared memories, symbols, myths, traditions and values" (p. 13) as constituent elements of a nation and 'symbolic resources' of nationalist ideologies serves as a basis for Østbø's study, as he is interested in the 'attainment and maintenance of identity' through the use of myth in the (re)invention of the Russian nation by contemporary Russian nationalist intellectuals. Clarifying the notion of 'invention', Østbø agrees with Smith, against modernists, that it is impossible to "invent (fabricate) a nation from scratch". However, he distances himself a bit from Smith's idea that "intellectuals can choose only among specific myths that are already popular or at least have some 'prior resonance'" (p. 15), leaving more room for the reinvention and rewriting of existing and popular myths, making them more viable in present contexts. This is exactly what

happens with the Third Rome myth – Østbø deals with its wide array of transformations in contemporary Russia.

The rest of the chapter deals with peculiarities of Russian nationalism, namely, how the dichotomies of imperialism vs. nationalism and statist vs. cultural nationalism fall short in describing the nature of Russian nationalism, where these opposed characteristics come together almost dialectically towards forms containing elements of both. The seemingly opposed conceptions complement each other. Such a state of affairs introduces a common motive of Russian uniqueness and exceptionalism, as can be seen amongst authors analysed later in the book. The chapter finishes with emphasising Orthodoxy as a most crucial element of contemporary Russian identity, not to mention any sort of nationalist ideology.

The third chapter deals with the theory of political myth and how it applies to the idea of the Third Rome. Starting with a review of a number of important theories concerning political myth, Østbø points out key elements in each one – myth as an ideological narrative, as a story about a political society, as an incitement to action, as constructing boundaries between social groups, as constructing identity, and as establishing a significance and meaning of political experiences, each of which he considers in further analysis.¹ The chapter then considers the Third Rome myth in its original form, a trifecta of epistles attributed to *Starets* Filofei. The original meaning

of the idea is sought through interpretations by medievalist scholars, which, Østbø concedes, is likely accurate in interpreting Filofei's intentions as religious, rather than political in any way. Østbø concludes that, as such, the original idea cannot itself be considered a myth, only its later interpretations. Examples thereof, standing opposite to medievalist scholarship, are attempts at uncovering the meaning of Third Rome in 'generalist' history works. They posit that Third Rome signifies an 'essence' of Russia, which determines its nature, its behaviour and ultimately its fate, whether this were a geographical entity, a population, a transcendental principle, or some combination of these. Such essentialist accounts, which already somewhat function as myths, either paint Russia in a positive light, e.g., philosopher Nikolai Fedorov and his universalist Russian messianism, or in a negative one,² e.g., British historian Arnold Toynbee's conception of Russia as a 'distinct and different civilisation', ultimately hostile to the West, not only in the Cold War context, but through history in general.

What Østbø seeks is to distance himself from this 'purist' paradigm. Both generalist and medievalist approaches seek to find the 'true' meaning of the Third Rome. While medievalist scholarship is useful in uncovering the roots of the idea, it does not do much for understanding later interpretations, and labelling those as 'misunderstandings' or 'misuses' gets us nowhere. The medieval manuscripts serve to

¹ In accordance with the definition of political myth which Pål Kolstø anticipates in the foreword, and as mentioned in the introduction to this review.

² Negative accounts of Third Rome show that political myth is not only aimed inwards for the purpose of forming identity, but also outwards, forming identity in opposition to the other.

“... provide the basic narrative which is being constantly reappropriated in order to generate significance” (p. 55). Østbø concludes: “For the student of political myth, there is in principle no correct or incorrect use of a myth, since myths are not static, but dynamic... the political myth of the Third Rome does not have any meaning outside its use and no use without a context” (p. 54-55). He proposes a model of three interrelated, rather than strictly delineated, modes of expression of the myth – the original, the interpretations and the meta-interpretations, in constant interaction.

Chapters four through seven compose the main body of the work. They consist of “Close readings, reconstruction and interpretation of the individual authors’ versions of the myth of the Third Rome” (p. 10). The examined authors’ entire body of work is considered, whether it be in academic publishing (where applicable) or internet blog posts. The first is Vadim Tymburskii (1957-2009), a university professor and an influential theorist of Russian geopolitical thought. He can be readily distinguished from the other three authors as being the only one who does not argue for Russian expansion or at least greater Russian influence in the post-Soviet space. He suggests for Russia to concentrate its attention within its present borders, and presents the post-Soviet “huge territorial loss as a return to the ‘normal’ and ‘desired’ state of affairs” (p. 95). His work is an attempt to reconsider Russian history and make sense of Russia’s new status after the end of the Cold War. Using a Spenglerian civilisation approach, he argues that ‘Russia became Russia’ in the 15th and 16th centuries, under the influ-

ence of the geographically-determined ‘island mentality’ and influence of Byzantine culture. The Third Rome figures as a sort of mental image of the ‘true Russia’ convention. Tymburskii’s conclusion is the need for an isolationist stance and a Russian ‘counter-reformation’, bringing it closer to its true nature constituted in pre-imperial Rus’.

The second author is Aleksandr Dugin, who recently, once again, appeared in Western media as a Russian boogeyman. In an article published last December, the web portal BigThink called him “the most dangerous philosopher in the world” and “Putin’s Rasputin” (Ratner, 2016). Dugin is likely the most eccentric and esoteric of the four. His thought is firmly anti-rationalist and traditionalist with strong elements of mysticism. Drawing from a seemingly incompatible array of schools of thought, such as classical geopolitics and Jungian psychoanalysis, Dugin constructs a grand narrative of a historic Manichaean struggle between good and evil, with Russia representing salvation and the West corruption. As such, he gives Russia the messianic, divinely warranted mission to “lead other Eurasian peoples and free them from Western (‘Atlantist’) hegemony” (p. 81). The Third Rome represents this principle, while the West figures as an impostor ‘Fourth Rome’.

The third author is Nataliia Narochnitskaia, a historian associated with the conservative Orthodox sector of Russian nationalism. Her uniqueness amongst other authors lays in offering a meta-interpretation of the myth. Her approach towards the history of ideas posits religion as its essential foundation – for instance, every ideology or political doctrine, even the

most secular, can be explained by tracing its religious roots. Her main aim is to interpret Russian history in relation to the West. Østbø (noting the risk of oversimplification) summarises her thesis as follows: the countries of the West throughout history remain heretical or godless. They are hostile towards Russia and desire to destroy it. Russia figures as a protector of the true faith, and its historic behaviour is more justifiable morally than that of the West. Dominant images of Russia in the West are false stereotypes rooted in heretical and inhumane thought. The myth of the Third Rome as replicated in the West that paints Russia as imperialist and anti-democratic (for instance, Toynbee) is an example of one such stereotype.

The final author is Egor Kholmogorov, a freelance journalist and ideological mercenary, who seeks to win favour of both the regime and the country's more radical elements. He is by far the most difficult to follow, as he has an ability to write at length about a wide array of ideas, unexpectedly jumping from one to the other, while staying as shallow as a puddle, not to mention often contradicting himself. Presenting his bizarre set of ideas, which mostly revolve around Russian exceptionalism and widespread political mobilisation based on an Orthodox identity, would be difficult in such little space. Instead, I will quote Østbø's verdict: "Kholmogorov is no scholar, but a quintessential myth-maker. He sees historical events, facts and processes as a reservoir to be exploited to achieve his political goal: Russia is to be world leader, both politically and in religion" (p. 141).

The eighth chapter is a conclusion and a short review of the functions the Third

Rome myth serves in the authors' attempts at 'reinventing' the Russian nation in the post-Soviet era. They are definitions of who is Russian (and who is not), defining the boundaries of Russia 'as they should be', a foundation myth, a factor of historic continuity, moral prerogative, importance of Orthodoxy and Russian 'uniqueness'. The final chapter, dubbed an epilogue, is a short account of three of the authors' (excluding Tsymburskii, who passed away) reactions to the events in Ukraine between 2013 and 2015, as well as their most recent uses of the Third Rome myth. Østbø notes that in the context of these recent events, the Third Rome myth has entered the mainstream – in 2014 a conference devoted entirely to the concept of the Third Rome was organised in Moscow by no less than the Moscow Patriarchy and the Ministry of Culture. Dugin and Narochnitskaia attended and gave speeches.

Østbø manoeuvres several different areas of theory to prime his study, successfully mobilising each one. Especially in the area of political myth, which Østbø concedes is "relatively limited and far less known" (p. 28), he manages to wrangle with divergent sources to create a basis that fits well his object of study. The theoretical frames are well connected with other scholarship on various subjects such as Russian nationalism, medieval scholarship and religious interpretation. The history of the Third Rome myth prior to the contemporary era is well covered. The study of these four authors must have been quite a feat, give that the whole breadth of their work was considered. Østbø manages to competently handle the wide array of eccentric ideas the authors employ. It also needs to be mentioned that, as Pål Kolstø mentions

in the foreword, Østbø does not fall into the trap of presenting ideas and systems as more coherent than warranted, and is not afraid to point out contradictions and incongruities. The book will surely please readers coming from a wide array of different interests, whether it is nationalism, Russian politics, religion, the history of ideas or many others.

Source

Ratner, Paul. 2016. *The Most Dangerous Philosopher in the World*, http://bigthink.com/paul-ratner/the-dangerous-philosopher-behind-putins-strategy-to-grow-russian-power-at-americas-expense?utm_content=buffer74e90 (accessed: 9. 1. 2017).

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