



The Crux of the Putin-Xi Revolution for a New World Order - Arresting the Slide to Nihilism

by

Alastair Crooke

on

[Strategic Culture Foundation](#)



It becomes questionable whether the West can compete as a civilisational state and maintain a presence.

The world "Map" is accelerating its shift away from the paralysed Washington "hub" - but to what? The myth that China, Russia, or the non-western world can be fully assimilated to a Western model of political society (any more than Afghanistan was) is over. So to where are we headed?

The myth of the pull of acculturation into western post-modernity [lingers on](#) however, in the continuing western fantasy of pulling China away from Russia, and into an embrace with U.S. Big Business.

The bigger point here is that former *wounded civilisations* are reasserting themselves: China and Russia - as states organised around indigenous culture - is not a new idea. Rather, it is a very old one: "Always remember that China is a civilization - and not nation-state", Chinese officials [repeat](#)

regularly.

Nonetheless, the shift to civilisational statehood emphasised by those Chinese officials arguably is no rhetorical device but reflects something deeper and more radical. Moreover, the culture transition is gaining wide emulation across the globe. Its inherent radicalism however, is largely lost to western audiences.

Chinese thinkers, such as Zhang Weiwei, accuse Western political ideas of being a sham; of masking their deeply partisan ideological character beneath a veneer of supposedly neutral principles. They are saying that the mounting of a universal framework of values – applicable to all societies – is finished.

All of us must accept that [we speak](#) only for ourselves and our societies.

This has arisen because the non-West now sees clearly that post-modern West is not a civilisation *per se*, but really something akin to a de-cultured "operating system" (managerial technocracy). Europe of the Renaissance *did* consist of civilisational states, but subsequent European nihilism changed the very substance of modernity. The West promotes its universal-value stance, however, as though it be a set of abstract scientific theorems which have universal validity.

The accompanying promise to the latter that traditional ways of life could be preserved under the wholesale application of these intentionally secular western norms – ones that demanded enforcement by the western political class – has proved a fatal conceit, these alternative thinkers contend.

Such notions are not confined to the Orient. Samuel Huntington, in his book *The Clash of Civilizations*, argued that Universalism is the ideology of the West contrived for *confronting other cultures*. Naturally, everyone outside the West, Huntington argued, should see the idea of "one world" *as a threat*.

The return to plural civilisational matrices precisely is intended to *break* the West's claim to speak - or to decide - for anyone other than themselves.

Some will see this Russo-Chinese defiance as mere jockeying for strategic "space"; as a rationale to their claims for distinct "spheres of interest". Yet, to understand its radical underside, we should recall that the transition to civilisation states amounts to a full-throated resistance (short of war) being mounted by two *wounded civilisations*. Both Russians (post-the 1990s) and Chinese (in the Great Humiliation) feel this deeply. Today, they are intent to reassert themselves, forcefully in uttering: "Never Again!"

What "lit the fuse" was the moment when China's leaders saw - in the plainest terms - that the U.S. had no intention whatsoever to allow China to overtake it economically. Russia of course, already knew the plan to destroy her. Even the smallest amount of empathy is sufficient to understand that recovery from profound *trauma* is what binds Russia and China (and Iran) together in a joint "interest" that transcends mercantile gain. It is "that" which allows them to say: Never again!

One part to their radicalism therefore, is the national rejuvenation that propels these two states to "step confidently onto the world stage"; to emerge from the western shadow, and to stop mimicking the West. And to stop assuming that technological or economic advance can only be found within the western liberal-economic "way". For, it follows from Zang's analysis, that the West's economic "laws" similarly are a simulacrum posing as scientific theorems: A cultural discourse - but not an universal system.

When we consider that today's Anglo-American world view rests on the shoulders of three men: Isaac Newton, the father of western science; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the father of liberal political theory, and Adam Smith, the father of laissez-faire economics, it is plain that what we confront here are the authors of the "Canon" of individualism (in the wake of the Protestant triumph in Europe's 30 years' war). From it comes the doctrine that the most prosperous future for the greatest number

of people comes from the free workings of the market.

Be that as it may, Zhang and others have noted that the western focus on "finance" has come at the expense of "stuff" (the real economy) and has proved to be a recipe for extreme inequalities and social strife. Zhang argues contrarily that China is poised to evolve a new kind of non-Western modernity that others - especially in the developing world - can only admire, if not emulate.

The decision has been made: The West then, in this view, can either "shut up, and put up" - or not. So be it.

Steeped in cynicism, the West sees this stance as bluff or posturing. What values, they ask, lie behind this new order; what economic model? Implying again that *universal conformity* is mandatory, and thus missing Zhang's point completely. Universality is neither necessary, nor sufficient. It never "was".

In 2013, President Xi [gave](#) a speech which sheds much light on the shifts in Chinese policy. And though its analysis was firmly focused on the causes to the Soviet implosion, Xi's exposition very clearly intended a wider meaning.

In his address, Xi attributed the break-up of the Soviet Union to "ideological nihilism": The ruling strata, Xi asserted, had ceased to believe in the advantages and the value of their "system", yet lacking any other ideological coordinates within which to situate their thinking, the élites slid unto nihilism:

"Once the Party loses the control of the ideology, Xi argued, once it fails to provide a satisfactory explanation for its own rule, objectives and purposes, it dissolves into a party of loosely connected individuals linked only by personal goals of enrichment and power". "The Party is then taken over by 'ideological nihilism'".

This, however, was not the worst outcome. The worst outcome, Xi noted, would be the state taken over by people with no ideology whatsoever, but with an entirely cynical and self-serving desire to rule.

Put simply: Were China to lose its sense of a Chinese "rationale", embedded for over a millennia in a unitary state with strong institutions guided by a disciplined Party, "the CPC, as great a Party as the CPSU was - would be scattered like a flock of frightened beasts! The Soviet Union - as great a socialist state as it was - ended shattered into pieces".

There can be little doubt: President Putin would concur with Xi whole-heartedly. The existential threat to Asia is to allow its states to assimilate into soulless western nihilism. This then, is the crux of the Xi-Putin revolution: Lifting the fog and blinkers imposed by the universalist meme to permit states a return to cultural rejuvenation.

These principles were in action at the G20 in Bali. Not only did the G7 fail to get the wider G20 to condemn Russia over Ukraine, or to insert a wedge between China and Russia, but rather, the Manichean offensive targeting of Russia produced something even more significant for the Middle-East than the paralysis and lack of tangible results, described by the media:

It produced wide and open *defiance* of the western order. It spurred pushback - at the very moment that the world political "map" is on the move, and as the [rush towards BRICS+](#) is gathering pace.

Why does this matter?

Because the ability of western powers to spin their spiders' web notion that their "ways" should be World's ways, remains the West's "secret weapon". This is plainly said when western leaders say that a loss in Ukraine to Russia would mark the demise of the "Liberal Order". They're saying, as it were, that "our hegemony" is contingent on the world seeing the western "way" - as *their vision* for their future.

Enforcement of the "Liberal Order" largely has rested on the underpinning of an easy readiness of "western allies" to fall into line with Washington's instructions. It therefore is difficult to overplay the strategic significance of any withering of compliance to U.S. diktat. This is the "why" to the war in Ukraine.

The U.S.' crown and sceptre are slipping. The peril of U.S. Treasury "N-bomb" sanctions have been key to induced "allied" compliance. But now, Russia, China and Iran have charted a clear path out from this thorny thicket, through dollar-free trading. The BRI initiative constitutes Eurasia's economic "high road". India, Saudi Arabia and Turkish inclusion (and now, an [expanded list of new members](#) are waiting to be signed up) give it an energy-based strategic content.

Military deterrence has constituted the secondary pillar to the architecture of compliance to western models. But even that, though not gone, is lessened. In essence, smart cruise-missiles, drones, electronic warfare and - now - hypersonic missiles, have capsized the former paradigm. So too, has the [game-breaker event](#) of Russia joining with Iran as a military force multiplier.

The U.S. Pentagon, even a few years ago, [dismissed](#) hypersonic weapons as "boutique" and a "gimmick" Wow - did they miscalculate on that one!

Both Iran and Russia are at the forefront in complementary areas of military evolution. Both are in an existential fight. And both peoples possess the inner resources to sustain sacrifice from war. They will lead. China will lead from behind.

Just to be clear: This Russo-Iranian link says: U.S. "deterrence" in the Middle East itself now faces a formidable deterrent! Israel too, will need to ponder that.

The Russo-Iranian force-multiplier relationship, the *Jerusalem Post* [opines](#): "provides proof that the two states ... together - are better equipped to make good on their respective ambitions - to bring the West to its knees".

To fully understand the anxiety lying behind *The Post* opinion piece, we must first grasp that the geography of the "shifting map" towards a BRICS+ - new corridors, new pipelines, new waterway and railway networks - is but the outer mercantilist layer to a nesting Matryoshka doll. To unstack to the inner doll layers is to espy in the final innermost Matryoshka - a layer of kindled energy and confidence latent to the whole.

What is missing? Well, the fire that finally bakes the New Order Z - "dish"; the event that instantiates the new World Order.

Netanyahu keeps threatening Iran. Even to Israeli ears however his words seem [stale and passé](#). The U.S. does not want to be led by Netanyahu into war. And without the U.S., Israel cannot act alone. The recent [MEK-led](#) attempt to [wreak havoc](#) in Iran reeks somehow of a "last resort" push.

Will the U.S. try some risky game-changer in Ukraine to "take out" Russia? It's possible. Or might it try to derail China somehow?

Is a Mega-clash inevitable? After all, what is in prospect is not the dominance of any one civilization, but a return to the natural, old order of non-universal realms of influence. There is no reason in logic for a Western boycott to try to explode the shift - except one:

In any assimilation to what this future portends, the collective West inexorably must become a civilizational state *per se* - simply to maintain an enduring presence in the world. But the West has opted for a different route (as Bruno Maçães, commentator and former Portuguese Secretary of State for European Affairs, [writes](#)):

"[The West] wanted its political values to be accepted universally ... In order to achieve this, a monumental effort of abstraction and simplification was needed ... Properly speaking, it was not to be a civilization at all but something closer to an operating system ... no more than an abstract



framework within which different cultural possibilities could be explored. Western values were not to stand for one particular "way of life" against another - they establish procedures, according to which those big questions (how to live) may later be decided".

Today, as the West turns away from its own key leitmotif - tolerance - and towards weird "cancel culture" abstractions, it becomes questionable whether it *can* compete as a civilisational state and maintain a presence. And if it can't?

A new order may come into being following one of two *events*: The West may simply self-destruct, following some systemic financial "breakage", and the consequent economic contraction. Or, alternatively a Russian decisive victory in Ukraine just may be enough finally to "cook the dish".