

## UNDERSTANDING PUTIN

By

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I think that, in the Euroatlantic establishment, there are some unrealistic expectations of the degree to which and especially of the manner in which the Russian President Vladimir Putin would facilitate Russia's compliance with the established world order, especially in the fields of institutions, national security policy, and political economy. There were, I am sure, expectations in the Euroatlantic establishment that Putin (with his well-documented career in the Soviet and Russian secret agencies and in Yeltsin's government, as well as with his pragmatic approach to the Russia-U.S. relations) would not only prevent any radical/politically “deviant” Russian politician from coming to power in post-Soviet Russia and contain the Russian mob, but he would also help to smooth over every problem in the Russia-U.S. relations at both the strategic and the tactical levels and perhaps even assist in the implementation of George H. W. Bush's vision of a “New World Order.” For Putin, however, this was not a role that he wanted to play.

On the one hand, Putin ensured that, indeed, no radical/politically “deviant” Russian politician would come to power in post-Soviet Russia, and, in his controversial yet, to a large extent, effective way, he contained the Russian mob. In fact, if we assume, as I do, that Putin did not want to enter Russian politics or did not act in the way he did, but if, instead, he chose to articulate a new ideological/cultural pole, then that would be not only a really revisionist attitude toward the “New World Order” that was proclaimed by George H. W. Bush in 1991, but also a strategic response to Samuel P. Huntington's theory of the “clash of civilizations.” Putin subscribed to fundamental premises of Western modernity and the established world order from the outset. On the other hand, within the context and according to the rationale of Western modernity and the established world order, Putin chose a different current of Western modernity than the one that the U.S. establishment chose in the 1990s, specifically, Putin's political model is more nationalist than the one that prevailed in the U.S. political establishment in the 1990s. Thus, gradually, even though Putin's proposals regarding ideology, institutions, and the management of the international system are integral parts of Western modernity, Putin exhibited an increasing, mainly tactical, political divergence from the mainstream political “line” of the Euroatlantic establishment, and, in this context, he started forging a new major economic alliance, namely, the BRICS, and alternative regional balance-of-power systems (e.g., in the Middle East). However, neither the BRICS nor Putin's alternative regional balance-of-power systems are essentially dissident forces against the core ethos and the interests of those elites that occupy the apex of the hierarchy that manages the established globalization process; far from that, Putin brings ideas drawn from traditional nationalist and Realpolitik “wisdom” to the established global elites' table, and, in this context, he requests some amendments to

the established globalization plan, especially in the realms of domestic policy, national security, and the distribution of economic power.

What Putin and his system really created for the first time in Russia's modern history is an essentially Western, nationalist and assertive parliamentary republic, and, thus, in my view, Putin ironically brought Russia into contemporary Western Europe politically to the same extent that Gorbachev and Yeltsin brought Russia into contemporary Western Europe economically and, to some extent, socially. Neither the fact that Putin is intellectually and ideologically inspired by Continental Europe's political heritage, specifically, by Continental nationalism, Realpolitik, and Prussian discipline, nor the fact that he shows understanding and respect for some peculiar aspects of Russian/Eurasian traditions, or even superstitions, should overshadow the fact that Putin has NOT raised a spiritually significant "antilogos" toward the contemporary Western political, economic, religious, and cultural elites' logoi. Arguably, given Soviet and pre-Soviet Russia's socio-cultural and political peculiarities, and, for all of their differences, personal tensions, and rivalry, both Gorbachev and Putin pursued a policy that, de facto, Westernizes Russia. In particular, regarding political culture, the fact that Putin is mentally close to the "Machiavellian prince" should not make us overlook or underestimate the fact that the "Machiavellian prince" is a purely modern Western political archetype and has played a key role in the development of modern Western political thought . . . Thus, the contemporary Western liberal critics of Putin should not worry very much, they should be patient, instead of politically undermining him in a stunningly narrow-minded way, and they should recall the history of Western Europe's transitions to nationalism and then to contemporary liberalism. However, those who, as I do, seek or bear an alternative existential strategic vision have serious reasons to be more concerned about Putin's policy. Furthermore, I think that, given that the core of the historical West has entered an era that the French philosopher Myriam Revault d'Allonnes has called a "crisis without end," and, therefore, it needs a new existential paradigm, Putin's policy of a peculiar Russian/Eurasian nationalist republicanism—even if, at some future point, it will evolve into some form of Russian liberalism—will preserve a historical time lag between the core of the historical West and a still Westernizing Russia. A new L O G O S is needed more than anything else; my strategic vision and proposal are contained in my book *Methexiology: Philosophical Theology and Theological Philosophy for the Deification of Humanity*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers/Pickwick Publications, 2016 (ISBN 13: 978-1-4982-3385-9).

Methexiological Workshop  
Athens, Greece, August 5, 2016  
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