

Review of: "Rebuilding a 'Greater Russia' and the Russian Invasion of Ukraine"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The topic is most actual and the text professional and analytic. The author follows the argumentation and actions of Putin to enlarge Russian influence in Caucasia and East Europe and connects this to a longer history. He is clearly disappointed about the failure and unwillingness of Russians already in 1990s to join the western international legal system, but important is, how he enlists already the early measures of Russia to continue on the national, great power way despite of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The author discusses in this connection about the involvement of Moscow to the regional crises of CIS and the concept of "near abroad" and its extensions. He continues carefully with other Russian operations and shows clearly the connection of this policy finally to the Ukrainian war. The essay is well documented, it demonstrates, how logic the Moscow politics has been, although western politicians had not always understood this. Moscow has been also militarily active since the late 1990s and first of all its policy has been logic.

The big question is: Is Putin regime creating a new Soviet Union or Greater Russia or only responding to the expansion of NATO in the eastern Europe? The author gives an analytic and profound answer to this and is inclining to think that the mission is to re-establish USSR.

The sources and literature are valid and large enough. I do not find major criticism here.

The author is well aware about the long history, although he exaggerates the personal role of Putin. From western point of view, it is natural to think that this is a personal mission of a politician like Putin and his allies. But in the eastern and Russian context the question is more complicated. Russia has always been a communal system, where an individual does not play a decisive role. Thus, the mission of Putin is the Russian mission, and this is the danger of the issue and the value of this article, too. This way of thinking does not disappear from Russia with Putin, because it has been started already generations before him. I would like to see less individual and more communal perspective to the issue.

A small cosmetic mistake in the summary is the concept of the "Third Rome". Unless unprofessional history does repeat this concept, Moscow is and was never the "third" Rome because it was the "new" Rome or Jerusalem. This is a part of the Christian empire theory, where the heavenly Rome is the capital of Jesus Christ, and the "new Rome" is its icon, the capital of visible universe. Besides Constantinople, there has been many new Romes in history (Trier, London, Sofia, Hexham, Paris, Sevilla...). Moscow assumed this position since the late 14th century and the theory was ready in the empire of Ivan the Terrible in the 16th century. The slogan of the "third" Rome is mentioned only in a small Pskovian

pamphlet from the 16th century. It never became to an ideology. There is lot of professional literature about this issue. But as said, it is not at all essential for this text.