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## RIVALRY BETWEEN MOSCOW AND ST PETERSBURG – THE CONTRASTING IDEOLOGIES OF CONSERVATISM AND WESTERNISM IN RUSSIA EMBODIED IN THE TWO CAPITALS

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### Summary

This paper argues that the two capitals of Russia, namely Moscow and St Petersburg, have each played a unique and defining role in the birth and development of the ideologies of Westernisation and conservatism in Russia. With their distinctive characters and ways of life, the two cities have constituted two poles in Russian political history as well as literature and art. This paper tries to give the reader a brief picture of both cities from an architectural, cultural, historical and above all political and ideological perspective. Thus, in an attempt to explore the different roles the two cities have played in Russian political history, the paper takes a brief look at the history and dynamics that shaped the distinctive ideologies of the two capitals. Finally, the paper tries to make a clear identification and comparison of the character and roles of the two capitals in Russian political life and history.

**Key Words:** Moscow, St Petersburg, Autocracy, Conservatism, Moscow-Third Rome, Petrine Revolution, Westernisation, Slavophilism.

### Introduction

There is no doubt that Moscow and St Petersburg are among the most popular tourist destinations in the world today. The two capitals of Russia, with their outstanding beauty and rich history, attract millions of tourists every year from all over the world.

No place better represents Russia than Red Square (Krasnaya Ploshchad). Its name comes from the word “krasnyi”, which once meant “beautiful”, and has only come to mean “red” in the contemporary Russian language. The name became official in the middle of the 17th century; previously it had been Trinity Square.<sup>[1]</sup>

Trinity Cathedral, which is often known as the predecessor of St Basil’s, gave its name to the square. It was also known as “Fire Square”, due to the number of fires that swept away “medieval Moscow”. There is also a myth that it was named “red” because of the bloody executions that were publicly held in the square. Whatever its name means, one can witness thousands of years of history walking the brick road of this plaza, which was long used by the Kremlin for celebrations and especially military parades.

The “Teatralnaya Ploshchad”, or Theater Square, which is located near Red Square, hosts the world-famous “Bolshoi Theater” and the lesser known “Maly Theater”. Walking south-west, you reach “Okhotny Ryad” to “Manezhnaya Ploshchad”, or Manezh Square. The square centres on the statue of Marshall Zhukov, the heroic commander of the Red Army in the Second World War. The former Central Lenin Museum<sup>[2]</sup> provides the background.

Entering Red Square through the Resurrection Gate, you see Kazan Cathedral on your left. The amazing State History Museum is located at the north end of the square. The enormous, elaborate facade occupying the east side of the square is the State Department Store, better known as GUM. The mighty towers of the Kremlin dominate the west side of the square. Lenin’s Mausoleum, which is located near the centre of the Square, is still open for visitors.

At the far end of Red Square, the colourful confusion of onion domes and tent peaks is the Cathedral of St Basil the Blessed, the 16th-century church that is probably Moscow’s most recognisable sight. The original name of the church is the Intercession of the Virgin Cathedral, named for the feast day on which the army of Ivan IV the Terrible captured the city of Kazan in 1552. One chapel was built over the grave of Vasily (Basil) the Blessed, whose name has stuck for the whole church. From here you can continue strolling south to the Moscow River for fabulous views of the gold domes of the Kremlin churches rising up over the red brick walls.

The so-called Seven Sisters are perhaps the most recognisable contributions of the Stalinist period to the city. Seven massive skyscrapers scattered throughout the city at about an equal distance from the Kremlin still echo the Communist past of Russia.

St Petersburg, the undisputed cultural capital of Russia, is often referred to as the “Venice of the North” with its beautiful canals, bridges and architecture. The city was intentionally planned and built by Peter the Great (1672-1725) as the window of Russia to the West. Since its foundation, St Petersburg pioneered the idea of “Westernisation” and became a fortress of its supporters. The location of the new capital — where the Neva River meets the Baltic Sea — also symbolised the liberation of Russia from its obsolete traditions and revealed the process of the “Russian awakening”.

St Petersburg was created not only by architects, but by poets. Russia’s new capital<sup>[3]</sup> became an inspiration for the works of the greatest poets of Russia, from Alexander Sergeevich

Pushkin to Marina Tsvetaeva. Russia's greatest poet, Pushkin, drew a marvellous image of this beautiful city in his famous narrative poem "Медный Всадник - The Bronze Horseman" (1833):

Люблю тебя, Петра творенье,  
Люблю твой строгий, стройный вид<sup>[4]</sup>

I love you, work of Peter,  
I love your sober and harmonious outlook

Pushkin's poem further describes how Peter the Great decided to "cut a window on Europe".

Природой здесь нам суждено  
В Европу прорубить окно <sup>[5]</sup>

Here nature instructs us,  
To cut a window on Europe

Today, St Petersburg still remains Russia's "window to the West". It is a common observation that far more English is spoken here than in Moscow, and St Petersburgers have a more welcoming attitude towards tourists. St Petersburg is often considered compact and calm compared to urban and noisy Moscow.

The Nevsky Prospekt features the best architecture of the city. Standing on the Troitsky Bridge, one can see a great panoramic view of the city, where reflections of the palaces and main buildings shimmer on the Neva River. On the other side of the Neva is located the Peter and Paul Fortress, which was built to defend the city and was later used as a prison. The magnificent spire of the Peter and Paul Cathedral with its winged angel blessing the city constitutes a great composition with the fortress and the Neva River.

Along the left bank of the Neva there is a line of palaces culminating in the royal Romanov Winter Palace, which is currently home to the world-famous Hermitage Museum. The museum not only offers the most famous masterpieces of painters such as Rembrandt, da Vinci and Matisse, but also displays magnificent ballrooms and throne rooms, reminders of the days of imperial life. The museum offers such a grand collection of paintings that if a visitor stops in front of every exhibit for at least 30 seconds, a tour of the entire collection would take more than seven years (given an eight-hour viewing day).

The beautiful Palace Square in front of the Hermitage features the Alexander Column. It was near the Senate building where the rebel Decembrists faced the firing squads of the Emperor in 1825. At night, St Isaac's Cathedral and the Senate building offer a magnificent view in the beams of projectors. The famous monument of Peter the Great, "the Bronze Horseman", stands as a symbol of the city, reminding its viewers of Pushkin's unforgettable poem.

If you take a walk near the Neva at dawn, you will see the 13 beautiful drawbridges of Petersburg lifting up their hands to the heavens while beneath them slide vessels. Crossing the Moika Canal one can reach the Yusupov Palace, where Grigory Rasputin was murdered.

The bridge across the Griboyedov Canal offers a perfect view of Kazan Cathedral, which reminds visitors of a small-scaled version of St Peter's Basilica in Rome. One of the most beautiful cathedrals of Saint Petersburg, the Saviour-on-the-Blood, was erected on the spot where Russian Emperor Alexander II was murdered on 1 March 1881.

Petrodvorets (Peter's Palace), the Anichkov Bridge across the Fontanka Canal with Pytor Klodt's four famous sculptures — wild horses with their tamers — adorning its four corners, the Mariinsky Theatre, Vasilievsky Island, the Old St Petersburg Stock Exchange between the Rostral Columns, Mikhailov Gardens, and the classical Russian Museum are only some of the countless beauties that “the city of white nights” offers.

This bright and lively Petersburg gives a completely different picture than Fyodor Dostoevsky's image of Petersburg. In his masterpiece *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky describes the city from the eyes of the hero of his novel, Raskolnikov. Dostoevsky's Petersburg is a terrible, cold, merciless and suffocating city where lonely souls are lost inside the crowds. It is a city that kills the good inside and liberates evil from its chains.

Dostoevsky's criticism of Petersburg is not the sole example in Russian literature and political thought. The rivalry between the two capitals of Russia, Moscow and Petersburg, has often been materialised in the works of famous writers. Gogol was perhaps the foremost among them. Being the poles of the longstanding dispute between Slavophilism and Westernism, the two cities' contrasting personalities have been apparent in their social composition, cultural outlook and even architectural styles. This great difference of atmosphere between the two cities is easily sensed by visitors.

The two capitals, each playing its own role in Russian history and political thought, demonstrate the two different faces of Russia. In an attempt to identify the differences of character between the two cities, this paper will examine the reasons for the division of roles of the two capitals of Russia.

### **The Birth of Moscow**

Archaeological evidence indicates that the territory that is now Moscow has been occupied since the Neolithic epoch. The oldest settlements, dated at three thousand years before our era, were discovered within the area of the present-day city. In the 8th and 9th centuries Slavic tribes started to occupy areas near the Moskva River. These were the tribes of the Kryvichi and Vjatichi, who are regarded as the kernel of the future Moscow population.

The first reference to “the village of Moscow” was made in an old Russian manuscript of 1147. In 1156, Prince Yuri Vladimirovich Dolgoruky erected timber walls on the present-day site of the Kremlin. He is regarded as the founder of the city of Moscow.<sup>[6]</sup> His monument, which is located near Tverskaya Street, is among the city's most visited touristic attractions.

Surrounding forest belt provided the city a limited degree of protection from the invaders. Its

unique location adjacent to several rivers also helped it to become a trade centre. From the 10th to the 13th centuries, Kievan Rus'<sup>[7]</sup> (Russia of Kiev) was the dominant figure of the Russian land, and it was well-integrated into the medieval economic system. The Tartar (or Tatar) invasion, which resumed in 1237 and lasted more than 250 years, tore Russia away from the West. The invasion, facilitated by the breakup of Kievan Rus', was followed by the division of the East Slavic people into three separate nations: modern day Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Despite having devastating consequences for Kievan Rus', the Tartar rule played an important role in the rise of Moscow and subsequently the Russian Empire.

Moscow became the seat of the grand dukes of Vladimir-Suzdal (1271), who later assumed the title of grand dukes of Moscow. By 1325, Moscow's princes obtained the sole right to rule over the Russian territories and collect tribute for the Golden Horde. During the rule of Dmitri Donskoi, the first stone walls of the Kremlin were built (1367). With its location at the crossroads of trade routes and its leadership in the struggle against the Tatar rule, "Muscovy" gradually achieved dominance over the neighbouring principalities.

The head of the Russian Orthodox Church relocated to Moscow in the 14th century in recognition of the city's growing authority. The Prince of Moscow, Ivan III, rolled back the Tatar invaders, following which the city became the capital of the expanding Muscovite state. By the 15th century Moscow became the capital of the Russian national state, and in 1547 Grand Duke Ivan IV became the first to assume the title of Tsar. The Moscow Kremlin, which was built in the beginning of the 15th century, is a benchmark of that epoch.

During the period of expansion, the young state was thrown into chaos when Ivan IV passed away without leaving an heir. In the ensuing power struggle, the country was invaded by several foreign armies before the Russian people were able once again to gain control of Moscow and elect a new Tsar, marking the beginning of the Romanov dynasty (1613–1917).

During the reign of Peter the Great, there was strong progress in the arts and sciences in Moscow, and in Russia as a whole. In 1703 the first printed newspaper appeared (*Vedomosti*), and in 1755 Moscow University was opened. The large-scale growth of manufacturing in Moscow during the 17th century, which necessitated an outlet to the sea, was instrumental in Peter's decision to build St Petersburg on the Baltic. The capital was transferred to St Petersburg in 1712, but Moscow's cultural and social life continued uninterrupted and the city remained Russia's religious centre.

Following the Battle of Borodino in August of 1812, Moscow was left to Napoleon's troops.<sup>[8]</sup> However, before the arrival of the French in the city, it was burnt by the Moscovites<sup>[9]</sup> almost entirely. Fires and hunger forced the French army to leave Moscow.<sup>[10]</sup> After the liberation of the city, a commission was authorised for the reconstruction of Moscow. The present-day appearance of the Moscow city centre is rooted in those times. Thus, the Alexandrov Garden and Theatre Square appeared with the Bolshoi and Maly theatres, as well as the buildings of Manezh and the First Gradskaya hospital.

Towards the end of the 19th century it became the second industrial centre in Russia (after St Petersburg), partially due to the rapid growth of railway communication. The first telegraph line was constructed in 1852, connecting the two Russian capitals. The first telephone lines were organised

between Moscow and Petersburg in the late 1890s.

The 19th century is considered as the golden age for arts and science, and Moscow was the intellectual birthplace of many famous Russian artists, writers like Pushkin, Gogol', Tolstoi, Chekhov and Herzen. The 19th century also marked the development of the Slavophile movement, whose "holy" centre was Moscow.

The process of rapid industrialisation and the formation of the labour class helped the communistic ideas of Karl Marx to spread among the working classes and intelligentsia in Moscow. The Krasnaya Presnya rebellion of 1905 and the July strikes of 1914 were the important milestones in the revolutionary process, which was finalised by the "Great October" Revolution of 1917. In 1918 the Soviet government, headed by V. Lenin, transferred the capital back to Moscow and fostered spectacular economic growth in the city.

The Soviet Union was announced on 30 December 1922 by the All-Russia Communist Party of Bolsheviks (VKPB) with Moscow as its capital. During World War II, Moscow was the goal of the German offensive. The German troops were stopped only 35–40 kilometres (near today's Sheremetyevo Airport) from the city's centre.

Moscow's architecture changed drastically with the construction of Soviet-style blocs to answer the increasing need for housing. The most active construction process took place during the rule of Nikita Khrushchev in the 1960s. These small-sized flats, which are often referred to as "Xrushovki" in the Russian language, were constructed quickly to meet the urgent demand and are, therefore, far from being beautiful or diverse.

Due to inadequate public funds, Moscow's infrastructure suffered after the 1991 demise of the Soviet Union. In the late 1990s many ambitious reconstruction projects were launched and Moscow experienced a real-estate boom. Today, with its gigantic size, huge population and unbearable traffic jams, Moscow is considered one of the most expensive metropolises of the world.

### **Muscovite Russia – The Centre of Autocracy and Absolutism**

The political evolution of Russia has occurred in an opposite direction compared to that of the West due to geographic, political and cultural reasons. After the conquest of Siberia, the borders of Russia were extended vastly, covering an immense territory and making her the largest kingdom on earth in the 17th century. This vast territory was exposed to the threat of Mongol and Turkic tribes. These conditions created a suitable environment for the development and justification of the concept of "autocracy" in Russia.

This feeling of insecurity led in Muscovite Russia to the development of a "military dictatorship". The entire Russian nation consisted of serfs: the development of a privileged aristocracy and a class of self-governing burghers was impeded. The absence of private property led to the complete concentration of power in the hands of Russia's rulers. Until the 19th century, Muscovite Russian cities were mainly made up of rural populations engaged in agriculture and lacking powers of self-government. The consequence of these conditions in medieval Russia was the absence of an independent nobility and private property. Thus, the lack of these two key institutions,

which served to limit the powers of kings in the West, helped the Russian rulers to consolidate their absolute power.

Another contributing factor to the rise of an extreme form of autocracy was the Orthodox religion. Byzantine dogma held politics to be the responsibility of the rulers and this helped the emergence in Russia of a form of monarchy that, in its powers, exceeded anything known in the West even in the age of absolutism. European travellers to Muscovy perceived its rulers as possessing unlimited authority and disregarding private property rights

The Russian monarchy emerged as a sovereign power in the second half of the 15th century. Until then, Russian rulers had been vassals of both Byzantium and of the Mongol-Tartar Golden Horde. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 ended Russia's dependence on the Byzantine Empire. Shortly afterward, the Golden Horde fell apart. As a result, by 1480, in the reign of Ivan III, the rulers of Muscovy could claim, at first cautiously and then boldly, the title of "samoderzhets", a translation of the Greek "autokrates", which meant sovereign: that is, a ruler dependent of any external power. The term "Tsar", an adaptation of Caesar, now also began to gain currency: it was formally adopted in 1547.<sup>[11]</sup>

During the century that followed, the rulers of Muscovy came to claim imperial prerogatives on the grounds that they were the world's only Orthodox sovereigns and, as such, the world's only true Christian rulers. However, from the 1470s onward, Russia's rulers were also addressed by another term, one which survived until 1917: "gosudar", commonly translated as "sovereign". This terminology provides a clue to the patrimonial nature of emergent Russian absolutism. Once they had shaken off Mongol domination, the rulers of Moscow suddenly became sovereigns. They considered their realm as patrimonial property, property inherited from their fathers, for which Russians used the term "votchina". Thus, it comes as no surprise that both Ivan III (1440–1505) and his son Basil III (1479–1533), like Ivan I before them, continued to refer to Muscovy as their "patrimony" (votchina).<sup>[12]</sup>

During the reigns of Ivan III, Basil III and Ivan IV, neither privileged status nor private property were tolerated. Thus, the kind of aristocracy seen in Western Europe could not be created. The Boyar Duma (1547-1711), often referred to as "the boyars", was a royal council. Its officials were invited by the Tsar. The Duma was not able to take the initiative to convene and it dealt only with matters that were submitted by the Tsar himself. In sum, the Duma was unable to limit the authority of the Tsars.

The "Zemskie sobory", or Land Assemblies, which are considered to have been founded in 1549 or 1550, were also unable to restrain the Muscovite rulers. The majority of their deputies were government officials appointed by the crown. Their sole purpose was to strengthen the government's control over the provinces. Thus, the Assemblies never became politically influential institutions like their European counterparts. In this patrimonial state, the monarchs were free to legislate and were confronted by neither private property nor established social estates, which, by their existence, set limits to authority.

## **The Birth of the Conservative Ideology: Muscovy – The Third Rome**

In the 330s, Emperor Constantine deserted the Tiber for the Bosphorus and built there a “New Rome”, which became the centre of the seven ecumenical councils and the home of the Orthodox emperors and patriarchs.<sup>[13]</sup> In line with the decision of the Council of Constantinople held in 381, the Byzantines themselves actually regarded their state as the “New Rome”.

For over a thousand years, the “New Rome” dedicated itself to the duty of preserving three great heritages: the classical Greek, imperial Rome and the church fathers. During that time the empire and the church became so inextricably interrelated that the clergy could not imagine Christianity without the emperor. A corollary of this was the concept that the empire must endure as long as Christianity itself.<sup>[14]</sup>

In search of Western military assistance against the Ottoman threat, Byzantium agreed at the Council of Florence-Ferrara in 1439 to rejoin the Catholic Church. Thus, the primacy of the Pope was acknowledged and all doctrinal issues dividing the two churches were conceded by the Byzantium. This accord was denied and considered as a betrayal of faith by the Russian Orthodox Church.

According to Orthodox theology, there could be no Christian church without a secular power to protect it and enforce its teachings; there had to be a “Third Rome” with its own emperor. When Constantinople was conquered in 1453 by the Ottomans, Russia remained the only rightful claimant to the status of Third Rome.<sup>[15]</sup>

This notion, in turn, led to the development of the theory of Moscow - The Third Rome formulated apparently sometime in the 1530s by the monk Filofei (Philotheus).<sup>[16]</sup> Filofei articulated his theory in one terse sentence: “Dva Rima padosha, a tretii stoit, a chetvertom ne byti”: “Two Romes have fallen, the third stands, and a fourth there will not be.”<sup>[17]</sup> Implicit in that statement was the belief that Russia was destined to rule the world and that the Russian Tsar was the ruler of all humanity. The responsibility of preserving the world’s cultural heritage was now on the shoulders of Muscovy. Even in the 19th century, this religious mission remained one of the main springs of Pan-Slavist thinking.

With the preparation of *The Book of Degrees of the Royal Genealogy* (*Stepennaia kniga*) by Metropolitan Macarius<sup>[18]</sup> in 1560–1563, Ivan IV was presented as the legitimate heir of the Roman and Byzantine emperors. With the support of the Church, the Russian rulers were now endowed with unrestrained power and the Church itself came under the full authority and control of the Tsars. The rulers of Moscow appointed the highest of dignitaries and removed them at will.

This voluntary subordination of the Russian Church to the state led to the bureaucratisation of the clergy and spared Russia the kind of struggle between the ecclesiastical and secular authorities that had afflicted Catholic Europe through much of the Middle Ages. The highly bureaucratized Russian Church also became hostile to all independent religious thought and condemned all sorts of independent thinking.

Thus, at the beginning of her new autonomous existence, Muscovy was given a sharp thrust towards conservatism and an admonition to watch warily against perverting influences from the outside, especially from Western Europe.<sup>[19]</sup>

### **St Petersburg – Russia’s Window to Europe**

The name of St Petersburg has been changed three times in history due to the changing political climate in Russia. However, the city is still called simply “Peter” by its residents.

Petersburg did not grow up like other towns. Neither commerce nor geopolitics can account for its development. Rather, it was built as a work of art. Petersburg was conceived as a composition of natural elements – water, stone and sky. Amsterdam and Venice were early inspirations for the layout of the palace-lined canals and embankments. Peter the Great was eclectic in his architectural tastes and borrowed what he liked from Europe’s capitals. The austere classical baroque style of Petersburg’s churches, which set them apart from Moscow’s brightly coloured onion domes, was a mixture of St Paul’s cathedral in London, St Peter’s in Rome and the single-spired churches of Riga, in what is now Latvia.<sup>[20]</sup> Important capitals of Europe like London, Paris or Vienna were built over several centuries with the accumulation of a great heritage, tradition and culture, reflecting different styles of diverse periods. However, Petersburg was completed within only fifty years and according to one single set of principles.

According to Orlando Figes, St Petersburg was more than a city. It was a vast, almost utopian, project of cultural engineering to reconstruct the Russian as a European man.<sup>[21]</sup> For Dostoyevsky, it was the “most abstract and intentional city in the whole round world”.<sup>[22]</sup> In fact, every detail of the city was intentionally designed for the refusal of “medieval Muscovy” and to compel the Russians to adopt a more European way of life. As Peter conceived it, to become a citizen of Petersburg was to leave behind the “dark” and “backward” customs of the Russian past in Moscow and to enter, as a European Russian, the modern Western world of progress and enlightenment.<sup>[23]</sup>

Laying the basis of a modern European state, Peter did not forget the noble class. By establishing a Table of Ranks, which ordered the nobles hierarchically according to their offices, he turned all nobles into servants of the Crown. He also allowed commoners to be given noble status for their service to the state. Thus, Peter’s new aristocracy was defined entirely by its position in the civil and military service, and rights and privileges were set accordingly.

The obsessive regulations introduced by Peter and the “obligatory imitation” of the European way of life gave St Petersburg the image of a hostile and oppressive place. Criticism of St Petersburg as a threat to the Russian way of life started to play a central role in Russian literature. This criticism was above all seen in Gogol’s novels. Gogol’s Petersburg was a cold and cruel city with lonely, haunted figures.<sup>[24]</sup> In Dostoevsky’s novel *Crime and Punishment* (1866), it was the home of criminals and murderers like Raskolnikov.<sup>[25]</sup>

The northern capital was an insular world teeming with ambition, where politics, culture and social life were inseparable and a careless remark could make or break a career. The city was, as

Peter had intended, Russia's "window to Europe". Diplomats and émigrés played important roles in the society. Ethnic non-Russians filled the upper reaches of government; there were also European tutors and governesses, foreign-language newspapers, Catholic and Protestant churches and foreign scholars in the Imperial Academy of Sciences; finally, many foreign merchants and well-travelled Russian naval officers lived in the empire's largest port city. Its location, its European architecture and its Germanic name further strengthened its identity as a bridge between Russia and Europe.<sup>[26]</sup>

Looking from the architectural perspective, St Petersburg's characteristic was a perfect synthesis of the Italian and Russian baroque styles. The harmonious network of avenues, squares, canals and parks, which were mostly planned and built by Italian architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli, gave an architectural unity to the city. Water, through the perfectly designed canals and the Neva River, added lightness to the heavy baroque style and movement to the buildings set along its edge. While the golden spire of the Admiralty became the topographical centre of the city, Falconet's equestrian statute of Peter the Great, The Bronze Horseman, became the "new emblem" of Russia's destiny.

### **Rivalry between Moscow and St Petersburg: A Comparison of the Distinct Characters of the Two Cities**

#### **A) Architectural Distinctions**

As St Petersburg was intentionally built for the sole purpose of forcing the Russians to adopt the European way of life, its architecture also resembled an adoption of the Western cities. Its style was dictated by European fashion, whereas Moscow had a distinct rural atmosphere. Following the construction of St Petersburg, the population of Moscow fell drastically. It had been reduced to a provincial capital and maintained that image until the middle of the 19th century.

According to the Empress Catherine, Moscow was a symbol of fanaticism while St Petersburg symbolised progress and civilisation. When in the early 1770s a part of Moscow had to be burned due to the Black Death, which swept through the city, Catherine saw an opportunity to reconstruct Moscow in the European style. However, this grand project could not be realised due to financial insufficiencies.

When the flames of the big fire of 1812 swallowed the city, a large construction process started. This was another chance to rebuild the city in a European style following the example of St Petersburg. Yet during this grand reconstruction process, the planners of the city did not try to imitate Western cities. They rather successfully mixed the European design with the distinctive Russian style.

Moscow's architectural character was defined largely by the Russian provinces. Being located on the crossroads of Europe and the Asiatic steppe, it had absorbed these diverse influences and created its own distinctive style. The streets of Moscow reflected a mixture of oriental customs, colours and motifs.

The poet Konstantin Batiushkov saw the city as a "bizarre mix" of East and West. In the

image of Moscow one could still make out the influence of Genghiz Khan. Moscow's semi-oriental nature was given full expression in the so-called neo-Byzantine style of architecture that dominated its reconstruction in the 1830s and 1840s. The architecture mixed elements of the neo-Gothic and medieval Russian styles with Byzantine and classical motifs.<sup>[27]</sup> The city also imposed its style on its provinces. Many provinces, Kazan being the most remarkable example, adopted the architecture of Moscow as a model. Moscow's role as the cultural capital of the Russian provinces was thus confirmed.

## B) Europeanisation versus Isolation

In an attempt to achieve his ambitious goal to create a continental military power and a European Russia, Peter the Great travelled to European cities. Hiding his identity, he worked as an ordinary shipbuilder in Holland to learn new maritime technologies. Following his return, he started an enforced adaptation process of European models of navy, military schools, law and Table of Ranks (civil service), which he believed to be necessary for Russia to become a modern European state.

Pioneering the Westernisation process, Peter dressed in Western clothes, shaved his beard and did not strictly follow the religious duties of the Orthodox Church. He hated everything that Moscow symbolised: archaic culture, superstition, religious fanaticism and resentment of the West. The Petrine Revolution<sup>[28]</sup> in Russian culture and politics created a contrast between Moscow and St Petersburg.

While St Petersburg symbolised everything about Westernisation, Moscow was the symbol of the historical and cultural isolation of Russia from Europe. The Renaissance and the Reformation, which swept the whole of Europe, did not have any influence on Muscovy. It took no part in maritime discoveries or the scientific revolutions of the early modern era. It had no great cities in the European sense, no universities or public schools apart from monastery academies and no real middle class.

The projection of Russia into Europe has always been the "raison d'être" of St Petersburg. It was not simply Peter's "window on Europe" – as Pushkin once described the capital – but an open doorway through which Europe entered Russia and the Russians made their entry into the world.<sup>[29]</sup>

## C) Contrasting Ideologies

Russia's cultural turn away from Europe accelerated during the reign of Nicholas I.<sup>[30]</sup> The Tsar and his ideologists felt sympathy towards the Slavophile doctrine that associated Russia with the eastern traditions of Byzantium. This departure of Russia from the European tradition led to the re-emergence of Moscow as the "genuine capital" of Russia. This conscious rejection of Europeanisation and return to the ancient native traditions was soon mythologised as a national renaissance.

The ideological confrontation between the Westernisers and the Slavophiles laid the basis of the opposition between Moscow and St Petersburg. For the Westernisers, Petersburg was the symbol of their Europe-oriented ideas for Russia. The Slavophiles, however, idealised Moscow, whose way

of life was more provincial and was closer to the habits of the Russian people. For them, the customs and traditions of the old Rus' were embodied in Moscow, reflecting the real Russian character.

#### D) The Role of Religion

Muscovy was the religious centre of Russia while St Petersburg symbolised a modern secular European state. Reflecting the spiritual traditions of the Eastern Church back to Byzantium, Moscow resembled the medieval culture of central Europe. The dominance of the church impeded all sorts of secular movements that had taken shape in Europe with the Renaissance and Reformation. The focal point of the Russian Orthodox Church was the icons, and it was hostile to the development of other forms of art like literature, painting, sculpture or instrumental music.

St Basil's of Red Square symbolised the triumphant restoration of the Orthodox traditions of Byzantium and set in stone the imperial mission of Moscow as the capital of the religious crusade that was set out in the doctrine of Moscow as the Third Rome. The double-headed eagle of the Byzantine emperors, which is currently the symbol of Russia, was added by Moscow's princes to their coat of arms. As was explained above, the support of the Russian Orthodox Church was fundamental to Moscow's emergence as the mother city of Holy Rus'. The Church marked the enemies of Moscow as the enemies of Christ. The union of Moscow and Orthodoxy was cemented in the churches and the monasteries.

Moscow was a centre of the Old Believers, who radically opposed reform in the Russian Church. Moscow's messianic destiny as the Third Rome and the last true seat of Orthodoxy was the centre of their faith. Living in enclosed communities, they were hostile to the influences of the West and any innovations from the outside world. They regarded Peter as the Antichrist, and thus St Petersburg was considered by them as "the kingdom of the Devil".

#### E) The Images of the Two Cities in Russian Literature

The liberation of the nobles from obligatory state service in 1762 opened the door to Europe for the curious Russian gentry. Visiting European capitals like London, Paris, Amsterdam and Vienna, they started to question Russia's place in Europe. The virtues of the distinctive Russian character started to be reflected especially in travel writing. Dostoevsky used the terms "corrupt, materialist and egoistical" to describe Europe.<sup>[31]</sup> This lexicon started to be frequently seen in the works of Russian writers, the Slavophiles being the foremost among them. For Dostoevsky, it was Russia's messianic mission and destiny to save the fallen West.

In the eyes of these writers, St Petersburg, as the symbol of the European Russia, was the centre of corruption, foreign artifice, alien conventions and pretension. They idealised Moscow as the symbol of real Russian character and soul, uncorrupted by civilisation or artificial European influences. Especially in the national narrative of the 19th century, the old romantic ideal of native soil placed Moscow at the centre of the image of "pure Russia with real Russian virtues". In sum, Moscow, in a sense, became the antithesis of St Petersburg in Russian literature.

#### F) The Impact of the French Revolution and War with France

During the reign of Catherine II, the influence of French culture on the upper class of St Petersburg was felt even more strongly. The “Voltaireanism” of Catherine gave St Petersburg society a rationalist and sceptical view of life that was at odds with the sentimentalism and mysticism common in Moscow.<sup>[32]</sup> However, everything changed with the French Revolution.

The bloodshed caused by the Jacobin reign of terror following the revolution of 1789 created dismay and reaction among the Russian gentry, who believed in the supremacy of French culture and idealised the French way of life. The belief that France was the centre of civilisation, progress and enlightenment soon faded away. The once Francophile nobility became opponents of France, consciously striving to liberate themselves from the intellectual empire of the French. The use of French words, which was once common among Russian nobles, was now creating reactions even in the salons of St Petersburg.

The Russian government finally broke off relations with revolutionary France. Moscow’s importance increased and its place as a symbol of everything “Russian in the real sense” was further strengthened following the French revolution. When Russia went to war with France in 1805, Moscow’s indisputable place as the “heart of Russia” was confirmed.

Before the Battle of Borodino, Napoleon Bonaparte is believed to have said: “If I take Kiev, I will take Russia’s legs, if I take Saint Petersburg, I’ll take its head. But if I take Moscow, I’ll take its heart”.

#### G) The Role of the Noble Classes

With Moscow being the former capital of Russia, the majority of its élite and intelligentsia was brought up in an ancestral patriarchal tradition. Despite being distant from St Petersburg, this élite, through friends and relatives serving in the St Petersburg bureaucracy and military ranks, had a sensible influence in politics. While the St Petersburg aristocracy represented the European fashion, the presence of wealthy nobles and the provincial gentry brought to Moscow the traditional attitudes of the countryside.

Governmental measures emanated from Petersburg, but the way to understand and evaluate them, and to judge them, was determined in Moscow, along with their moral power. Much more than Petersburg, Moscow remained the centre of the country’s spiritual life, and it approached politics with a defiant spirit of nationalism and fronde<sup>[33]</sup>.

### **Dominance of Moscow in Current Politics in Russia: The Victory of Autocracy Over Westernisation**

The foundation of St Petersburg and the enforced process of Europeanisation (or Westernisation) caused by the Petrine Revolution in Russian culture created an uncertainty on the part of the Russian nation about its place in Europe. This ambivalence, embodied in the characters of its two capitals, is still continuing in Russia today. Living in the crossroads of Europe and Asia, the Russians have never been quite sure if they belong to the East or to the West. During the reign of Peter, the upper classes of St Petersburg were forced to imitate the European way of life, while

Moscow remained the symbol of real Russian character and soul. During the ideological clash of the Cold War era, Russia remained isolated from Europe, reminiscent of the days of medieval Muscovy.

Since the collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1991, Russian academics, policy-makers, philosophers and bureaucrats have been trying to develop a new concept that could play a guiding role in building a new and powerful Russia. In the current debate on how to accomplish the revival of Russia as a great power, the Westernisers and the conservatives constitute two opposing poles.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there have been important developments that strengthened the position of the conservative camp against the Westernisers. The war in Chechnya, the eastward enlargement of NATO along Russia's western borders, the American military bases in Central Asia, the orange revolutions liberating ex-Soviet countries from Moscow's orbit, Washington's missile defence shield project that includes some central and eastern European countries, the violent terrorist attacks of Chechen radicals in various Russian cities, the war in Georgia and most recently the incidents of December 2010 played an important role in the rise of conservative and nationalist feelings.

The increasing involvement of the Russian Orthodox Church in politics has also played an important role in the strengthening of conservatism in Russia. The Russian Orthodox Church, whose centre has been Moscow since 1325–1326<sup>[34]</sup>, played the key role in empowering the Russian Tsars with unrestrained and indisputable strength, and this fact contributed to the strengthening of conservative Muscovy. Today, we observe that the Putin administration receives the open support of the Orthodox Church, an echo of the type of cooperation between the Church and the Tsars of Muscovite Russia. This revival of the Russian Orthodox Church and its increasing influence in current Russian politics marks the defining role of Moscow, and thus the conservative orientation of the Russian state.

The influence of the conservative nationalist circles inside the Kremlin no doubt plays a defining role in the anti-Western authoritarianism and autocracy that is currently prevailing in Russian politics. Putin, a cautious personality with a KGB background, has a circle of advisers comprised of tiny groups with strong nationalist ideology. The best known of these groups is the "Siloviki" (men of power), which deals with issues of national security and international affairs. The Siloviki are mostly officials with military or KGB backgrounds who dominate the country's security and intelligence ministries and believe in absolute state control of economic, political and social life in Russia. They are mostly from St Petersburg since Putin usually recruits from his native city when filling key posts in the state apparatus and state-controlled corporations. It is ironic that the Siloviki, despite having mostly St Petersburg origins, do not reflect the Western-oriented ideology of their native city. The leader of the Petersburg Siloviki – and the third most powerful man in Russia after Putin himself and President Dmitry Medvedev – is Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin, who is sometimes referred to as the "Russian Richelieu"<sup>[35]</sup> because of his control over a diverse network of officials and bureaucrats.

Following the advent of President Dmitry Medvedev, the concerns of the Siloviki network started to grow. Medvedev, despite being a protégé of the Siloviki and a native of St Petersburg, does not have a KGB background. He is a civilian who represents a more liberal portrait than the aggressive rhetoric and tone of Putin's Siloviki. President Medvedev, in his first days in office,

stripped Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov of his title as “First Deputy Prime Minister”. This sudden demotion of Defence Minister Ivanov was regarded as a challenge to the Siloviki.

Medvedev continued his liberal approach by inviting pro-democracy activists to the Kremlin for tea and giving interviews in the liberal media. Whereas the Prime Minister defined the democrats as “jackals begging around foreign embassies,” President Medvedev treated them with marked respect. Medvedev’s push for modernisation, innovation and the rule of law, juxtaposed against the sound resistance shown by the Siloviki to the “Europeanisation” of politics in Russia, reminds us of the days of Peter the Great when St Petersburg symbolised modernisation and civilisation while Moscow was the symbol of conservatism and anti-Europeanism.

The victory of Putin in the Presidential elections of 4 March 2012 brings us to the conclusion that the conservative camp, whose ideology is largely shaped by Orthodoxy, autocracy, nationalism and to some extent Slavophilism, will preserve its control over the Russian state and politics in the foreseeable future.

Thus, it seems possible to envisage that the “central” place of Moscow as the “heart” of Russia and its conservative ideology, which is largely dominating Russian politics today, will remain unchanged in the near future. According to Tolstoy, every Russian considered Moscow as a mother.<sup>[36]</sup> Tolstoy’s understanding of Moscow’s central place for the Russians is even more clearly defined in a Russian proverb, “Petersburg is our head, Moscow is our heart - *Питер - голова, Москва – сердце*”.

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<sup>[1]</sup>Г.В. Носовский, А.Т. Фоменко, Москва в Свете Новой Хронологии, Москва, 2010, р. 138.

<sup>[2]</sup> The V.I. Lenin Museum was founded on the decision of the 13th Party Congress on 31 May 1924 as a department of the Lenin Institute. On 15 May 1936, the Central Museum of V.I. Lenin was opened for visitors. In the almost 70 years of its existence the Lenin Museum was a powerful centre of propaganda for the ideas of Marxism-Leninism and for the formation of intellectual and emotional fidelity to the Communist Party’s policy and activity. On 12 November 1993 by presidential decree, the Central Lenin Museum ceased to exist as an independent historical and cultural institution. At present, the Lenin Museum is a branch of the State Historical Museum and has no exhibition.

<sup>[3]</sup>In 1713, Peter the Great moved the Russian capital from Moscow to St Petersburg.

<sup>[4]</sup>Александр Сергеевич Пушкин, А.С. Пушкин, Медный Всадник - Петербургская Повесть, Собрание сочинений в 10 томах, Том третий. Поэмы, Сказки, Электронная публикация — РВБ, Версия 2.2 от 30 января 2002 г, р. 284, <http://www.rvb.ru/pushkin/toc.htm>.

<sup>[5]</sup>А.С. Пушкин, Медный Всадник - Петербургская Повесть, р. 285.

<sup>[6]</sup>Иван Забелин, Основание Города и Боярские Кучки 1153 год., в Марина Федотова, Кирил

Королев, Москва - История Города От Участников и Очевидцев, Автобиография, Москва 2010, p. 24.

<sup>[7]</sup>Kievan Rus' (Russian: Киевская Русь) is the name used by Russian historian Nikolai Karamzin for the medieval state of Rus. The state existed from approximately 880 to sometime in the middle of the 13th century, when it disintegrated. It was founded by East Slavic tribes and Scandinavian traders (Varangians) called "Rus'" and was centred in Novgorod. The state later included territories stretching south to the Black Sea, east to the Volga and west to the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

<sup>[8]</sup>Евгени Тарле, Нашествие Наполеона На Россию 1812 год, Москва, 2009, p. 165.

<sup>[9]</sup>Count Rostopchin denied accusations that he had ordered the blaze ignited to drive out the French. The fire was most likely accidentally begun by French looters and was fanned by fanatic patriots among the few Russians who had remained behind when Napoleon entered the city. Whatever the cause, the fire sparked an anti-French uprising among the peasants, whose raids, along with the cruel winter, helped force Napoleon's retreat.

<sup>[10]</sup>See details in Тарле, Нашествие Наполеона На Россию 1812 год, pp. 181-223.

<sup>[11]</sup>Richard Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics: A Study in Political Culture*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2005, p. 13.

<sup>[12]</sup>Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics: A Study in Political Culture*, p. 14.

<sup>[13]</sup>According to the Apollinarian doctrine, taught by Bishop Appolinarius the Younger, bishop of Laodicea in Syria during the 4th century, Jesus was not a man but the "word of God dwelling in the human body". This transgression caused the capital of true Christianity to shift to Constantinople, where it made its home for the next nine centuries. This doctrine was condemned as heresy by Roman councils in 377 and in 381 and also by the Council of Constantinople in 381. In spite of its repeated condemnation, Apollinarianism persisted into the 5th century. At that time its remaining adherents merged with the Monophysites, who held that Christ had a divine nature but no human nature, a view articulated in the second half of the 4th century by Bishop Appolinarius,

<sup>[14]</sup>Thornton Anderson, *Russian Political Thought: An Introduction*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1967, p. 72.

<sup>[15]</sup>The first to claim their capital as the heir of Byzantium were the Bulgarians, who as early as the 14th century designated the capital of their empire, Tyrnovo (Tirnova), as the "New Rome." This claim lapsed in 1393 when Tyrnovo fell to the Turks.

<sup>[16]</sup>Старец Филофей Иван Забелин, Москва - Третий Рим и Семь Московских Холмов 1500-е годы в Марина Федотова, Кирил Королев, Москва- История Города От Участников и Очевидцев, Автобиография, Москва 2010, p. 88.

<sup>[17]</sup>Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics: A Study in Political Culture*, p. 39.

- [18] Macarius served as the Metropolitan of Moscow and all Russia from 1542 until 1563.
- [19] Anderson, *Russian Political Thought: An Introduction*, p. 74.
- [20] Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, New York, 2002, pp. 7-8.
- [21] Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, p. 10.
- [22] Федор Михайлович Достоевский, Записки из подполья, 1854, [http://az.lib.ru/d/dostoewskij\\_f\\_m/text\\_0290.shtml](http://az.lib.ru/d/dostoewskij_f_m/text_0290.shtml).
- [23] Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, p. 10.
- [24] Николай Васильевич Гоголь, Петербургские повести (Невский проспект, Нос, Портрет, Шинель, Записки сумасшедшего, Из ранних редакций), [http://az.lib.ru/g/gogolx\\_n\\_w/](http://az.lib.ru/g/gogolx_n_w/).
- [25] Федор Михайлович Достоевский, Преступление и наказание, 1866, [http://az.lib.ru/d/dostoewskij\\_f\\_m/text\\_0060.shtml](http://az.lib.ru/d/dostoewskij_f_m/text_0060.shtml).
- [26] Alexander M. Martin, *Romantics, Reformers, Reactionaries: Russian Conservative Thought and Politics in the Reign of Alexander I*, Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb, 1997, pp. 57-58.
- [27] Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, p. 154.
- [28] See details in James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Culture*, Belknap Press, London, 2004.
- [29] Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, p. 61.
- [30] Н.К. Шильдер, Александр - Его жизнь и царствование Иллюстрированная История Москва, 2010.
- [31] Федор Михайлович Достоевский, Зимние заметки о летних впечатлениях, 1863, [http://az.lib.ru/d/dostoewskij\\_f\\_m/text\\_0040.shtml](http://az.lib.ru/d/dostoewskij_f_m/text_0040.shtml).
- [32] Martin, *Romantics, Reformers, Reactionaries: Russian Conservative Thought and Politics in the Reign of Alexander I*, p. 58.
- [33] Martin, *Romantics, Reformers, Reactionaries: Russian Conservative Thought and Politics in the Reign of Alexander I*, p. 59.
- [34] In 1299, Maksim, the Metropolitan of Kiev, moved his seat from Kiev to Vladimir to escape the Tatar menace, thus making Vladimir the seat of the Russian Orthodox Church. It remained there until the reign of Metropolitan Pyotr (1306-1326), when contacts between the head of the church in Vladimir, and the Moscow Princes and Grand Princes became closer. In 1325-26, Metropolitan Pyotr (who was canonised in 1339) moved his seat from Vladimir to Moscow, thus making Moscow the ecclesiastical center. In the same year, Ivan I (Kalita) laid the foundation stone of the Cathedral

of the Dormition, which was the first cathedral to be built in the Kremlin. It was consecrated on 4 August 1427.

[35] Cardinal Richelieu was born in Paris on 9 September 1585. He became the prime minister of France in 1624. Richelieu argued that the state is above everything, and that religion is a mere instrument to promote the policies of the state. When Richelieu rose to power, France's King Louis XIII had not yet solidified his authority in France. Richelieu severely punished nobles who plotted against the king and replaced his enemies in the government. In addition, he expanded the king's authority in the provinces through the use of royal agents. Richelieu insisted that the king apply the law with severity; otherwise, the state could not survive. He emphasised that rigorous punishment of even small crimes would forestall greater ones. Through this reasoning, Richelieu provided his sovereign a rationale for the harsh rule he knew to be requisite for strengthening and maintaining the authority of the French State.

[36] Лев Николаевич Толстой, *Война и мир*, 1867, [http://az.lib.ru/t/tolstoj\\_lew\\_nikolaewich/text\\_0040.shtml](http://az.lib.ru/t/tolstoj_lew_nikolaewich/text_0040.shtml).

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