

The Russian Sphinx: Contemplating Danilevsky's Enigmatic Magnum Opus *Russia and Europe*

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"... This book is based on the idea of the originality lying in the soul of the Slavic world. The book embraces this issue so deeply and fully that it could be called a catechism or codex of Slavophilism."

- Nikolay N. Strakhov.

"Up to a point, he was successful, after his own fashion, in modernizing Slavophilism without a bizarre confusion of Christian charity and gunfire."

- Robert E. MacMaster.

Abstract

The relations between Russia and the *West* have never been particularly easygoing or unambiguous, and, presently, they are yet again at an all-time low. The way to better understand, as well as to successfully communicate and cooperate with another society is through learning about evolution (and revolutions) of their (as well as one's own) history and culture. Are there any important sources in the Russian cultural heritage that could illuminate these ages-old problems, tendencies, and trends? The year 2021 marks 150 years since publication of Nikolay Danilevsky's book *Russia and Europe* (1871), while the next one, the year 2022, denotes 200 years from the date of birth of Danilevsky (1822-1885) himself. The paper highlights multiple sociocultural, sociohistoric, geopolitical, and historiosophic layers of the Danilevsky's enigmatic civilizational legacy. Based on that analysis, it suggests ways for improving relations between the *West* and Russia.

Keywords: Danilevsky, Russia and Europe, cultural-historic type, local civilization, Pan-Slavism, Slavophilism, Pochvennichestvo, Fourierism

1 Creating *Russia and Europe*

During the years 1863-1867 the prominent Russian biologist, historian, mathematician, and philosopher Nikolai Danilevsky led yet another groundbreaking scientific expedition, this time surveying the geography and the wildlife of the Black Sea, as well as its tributaries. From the latter part of 1863 until late in 1867, he conducted a series of six grueling surveys; around the Sea of Azov, to the river Dnieper, to the river Manych, around the Black Sea, to the river Kuban, and to the river Danube. (MacMaster, 1967: 101). Danilevsky's biographer and translator Stephen M. Woodburn explains:

In the following year, 1863, Nikolai Iakovlevich ... was assigned as “head of an expedition for the investigation into the fisheries of the Black and Azov Seas.” This expedition lasted five years. In September 1863 Nikolai Iakovlevich took his family down the Volga to Tsarina,¹ then crossed the Don by rail and went down to the Black Sea. He tried to arrange a permanent residence for his family, first in Feodosia, then in Nikita, but finally settled in Miskhor on the South Coast [of the Crimea] on 9 March 1864. From Miskhor he made six journeys in the following order: in 1864, around the Azov Sea; in 1865, on the Dnieper; in spring 1866; on the Manych [River, tributary of the Don]; in 1867, from 19 May to 19 June, around the Black Sea; from 10 September to 17 October of the same year, to Kuban, and from 23 November to 26 December on the Danube. (Woodburn, 2013: XXXI).

In the year 1866, for an outstanding performance in conducting biological, geological, geographical, climatological, and ethnological research, the scientist and explorer won the highest award of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society — the coveted *Constantine Medal*. (MacMaster, 1967: 101). During the same years, filled with intense scientific research, field, and administrative work, between 1865 and 1868, Danilevsky wrote his historic, political, and philosophical treatise *Russia and Europe*.

What is this book? Why, after its appearance exactly one hundred and fifty years ago, do scholars and thinkers, as well as geopolitical “movers and shakers” continue to argue about its meaning? Perhaps, one of the reasons is that it is not one book, but rather several books in one. Like the iconic Russian wooden “matryoshka doll,” the volume contains multiple layers of historiosophy, geopolitics, culture, and even arts, as well as a whole lot of theorizing about the evolution of societies and, of course, about human nature. Let us take a brief look at the historic and cultural movements contextualizing, as well as a number of seminal ideas underlying this perplexing work.

2 *Russia and Europe* as a “Catechism or Codex of Slavophilism”

Danilevsky’s complex book reflects in itself multiple historic as well as contemporary sociocultural, socioeconomic, and historiosophic ideas, movements, and trends. Among some of the most influential are *Pan-Slavism*, *Slavophilism*, *Pochvennichestvo*, and *Fourierism*.

2.1 Pan-Slavism

Pan-Slavism was an ideology and a movement among the Slavic peoples in the 18th and the 19th centuries.

¹ Tsaritsyn (1589–1925), then Stalingrad (1925–1961), and presently Volgograd - a city on the western bank of the Volga river. (Author’s note).

It originated and was most widely spread in the Balkans, where the non-Slavic powers, such as the Byzantine Empire, the Republic of Venice, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire had ruled the *South Slavs* for centuries. Recognizing a common ethnic, historic, cultural, and linguistic background among the Slav peoples, *Pan-Slavism* was based on the idea of some form of Slavic integration and/or unification for the achievement of the common cultural and political goals. The American philosopher and historian Hans Kohn summarizes:

Pan-Slavism, a movement in which nationalist elements were mingled with supra-national and often imperialist trends, was a product of the political awakening of the intellectuals in central and eastern Europe, which was brought about by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. But even more potent was the influence of German romanticism and of a linguistic Pan-Germanism as represented by Arndt and Fichte. Pan-Slavism proclaimed the affinity of various peoples, in spite of differences of political citizenship and historical background, of civilization and religion, solely on the strength of an affinity of language. It could thus arise only at a time when under the influence of Johann Gottfried Herder the national language, the mother tongue, was regarded as a determining factor for man's loyalty — and his intellectual and spiritual life. ... In 1826, the word Pan-Slavism was first used. Like similar words — nationalism, socialism, etc. — it owed its origin and its spread to the early 19th century. (Kohn, 1960: IX; 325).

2.2 Slavophilism

Another source for Danilevsky's concepts has been the movement known as *Slavophilism*. In the mid-19th century, Russia is beginning to absorb the ideas and culture of Western Europe at an accelerated pace, and that inexorably creates an unstable sociocultural and socioeconomic climate. There is a tremendous growth in revolutionary activity accompanying a general restructuring of tsardom where liberal reforms, enacted by an unwieldy autocracy, induces a sense of tension in both politics and civil society.

Slavophiles vigorously oppose the dissemination of Western institutions in Russia, and, instead, envision its development upon the values derived from its early history. Some of the founders of the Slavophiles movement are littérateur Ivan S. Aksakov (1823–1886), his brother, critic and writer Konstantin S. Aksakov (1817–1860), religious poet Aleksey S. Khomyakov (1804–1860), literary critic and philosopher Ivan V. Kireyevsky (1806–1856), historian and journalist Mikhail P. Pogodin (1800–1875), one of the architects of the Emancipation reform of 1861 Yuri Samarin (1819–1876), great Romantic poet Fyodor I. Tyutchev (1803–1873), and poet Nikolay M. Yazykov (1803–1846).

Besides Danilevsky, among the most prominent Russian thinkers influenced by *Slavophiles* ideology are author and philosopher Konstantin N. Leontyev (1831–1891), writer and philosopher Fyodor M. Dostoyevsky (1821–1881), writer and philosopher Leo N. Tolstoy, religious and political philosopher Ivan A. Ilyin (1883–1954), as well as the 20th century novelist and historian Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008).

There is quite a difference of opinions among social thinkers about the roots of *Slavophilism* itself. Some Western scholars suggest them to be German classical philosophy (Schelling, Hegel) and the German idealism (Friedrich von Schelling). The American political science scholar Thornton Anderson notes:

Often presented as an indigenous pattern of thought peculiar to Russia, Slavophilism becomes more readily understandable if viewed instead as a part of the great philosophical reaction against the devastating rationalism of Hume, Voltaire, and the French Revolution. Its elements — its admiration for ideals (even when plainly contradicted by realities), its opposition to materialism and its tendency toward mysticism, its emphasis upon religion and its attempt to submerge reason in it — in short, its inconsistencies and irrationalities, then are more understandable. The most fruitful segment of that reaction, German idealism, attained in Friedrich von Schelling a form of religious mysticism adaptable to Russian Orthodoxy, and beginning with the professors of science in the universities, his system gradually captivated many Russians. It thus formed the principal connecting link by which the conservative thought of the West spread to Russia and reinforced opposition there to the importation of innovations from the West. (Anderson, 1967: 213).

Yet, the *Slavophiles* themselves defended the idea of the originality of *Slavophilism*, describing it as having been built on the premises of the *Byzantine* sociohistoric and religious heritage, as well as *Russian Orthodox theology*. In some ways, a classic of civilizational thought, the British historian Arnold J. Toynbee reconciles those contradictory views. He notes that in any society that needs to confront a more powerful adversarial civilization, two movements may arise: *Herodianism* — calling for the introduction of new ideas, as well as copying the advanced foreign institutions, and *Zealotism* — advocating isolation in order to preserve the traditional way of life. (Toynbee, 1957: 231–238)

2.3 Pochvennichestvo

*Pochvennichestvo*² was a late 19th-century movement in Russia that, while sharing a number of features with *Slavophilism*, represents a more conservative and assertive version of it.

² *Pochvennichestvo*: from Russian “почва” - “soil.” (Author’s note).

The prominent representatives of this school of thought were the writer and philosopher of history Konstantin Leontyev, philosopher, publicist and literary critic Nikolay N. Strakhov (1828-1896), as well as Danilevsky himself.

While supporting the emancipation of serfs, both the *Slavophiles* and the *Pochvenniks* rejected the universalism of the *Enlightenment* and the liberal and the Marxist ideas, as well as opposed *Europeanization* in general. At the same time, *Pochvenniks* adopted a more assertive anti-Protestant, anti-Catholic, and generally anti-Western stance, as well as embraced *Pan-Slavism*.

As is evident from Danilevsky's and Leontyev's legacy, they also developed and advocated the view of history as evolution of the unique "local" *civilizations (cultural-historic types)* while extolling the "true and eternal" virtues and values of the steeped in the *Byzantine* sociocultural, sociopolitical, and religious tradition *Pan-Slavic* "civilization."

2.4 Fourierism

In the 1840s, the utopian-socialist ideas of the French thinker Charles Fourier are becoming very popular among the younger representatives of Russian *intelligentsia*.³ Danilevsky eagerly studied and has been greatly influenced by them. For example, the features of the Fourier's *phalanx*⁴ may be discerned in Danilevsky's idealized depiction of the Russian rural *obshchina*.⁵

The American historian Frank Fadner notes that "the principle of nationality which supported the ideological structure of pan-Slavist thought ... most completely synthesized in the work of N. Ya. Danilevskii. ..." (Fadner, 1962: 1). The Danilevsky's biographer and translator Stephen M. Woodburn agrees, noting that "... classical Slavophilism lacked ambition and goals, its adherents having a narrowly Russian focus, rooted in the past. Danilevskii crystallized the identity politics of the Slavophile movement, but gave it a broader future orientation outside Russia's borders. (Woodburn, 2013: XII-XIII). The Russian philosopher, publicist and literary critic Nikolay N. Strakhov recapitulates: "It is certainly logical to attribute *Russia and Europe* to what is called the Slavophile school of our literature, since this book is based on the idea of the originality lying in the soul of the Slavic world. The book embraces this issue so deeply and fully that it could be called a catechism or codex of Slavophilism." (Strakhov, 2013: XXXVIII).

³ François Marie Charles Fourier (1772 – 1837) - a French philosopher and one of the founders of *utopian socialism*. (Author's note).

⁴ *Phalanx* - a utopian socialist commune. (Author's note).

⁵ *Obshchina* (Russian for "commune") peasant village communities in Imperial Russia in the 19th and 20th century. (Author's note).

Thus, there is a definite consensus among prominent social scholars and thinkers, that Danilevsky has skillfully conflated, laboriously substantiated (correctly or not), and impressively aggrandized the main ideas of *Pan-Slavism*, *Slavophilism*, and of related schools of thought, as well as “weaponized” them, thus creating a *Bismarckian-type* theory of a hard-nosed *Pan-Slavic* “realpolitik.” Let us now look deeper into Danilevsky’s thought process.

3 *Russia and Europe as an attempt at great historiosophy*

3.1 Cultural-historical types as local civilizations

Encyclopedia Britannica authoritatively informs us that Danilevsky “was the first to propound the philosophy of history as a series of distinct civilizations.” (Danilevsky, 2021). The thinker publishes his classic book, initially as a series of articles, in a monthly literary and political journal *Zarya*⁶ during the year of 1869.

Danilevsky is unhappy with canons of the contemporary to him, religion-based historic studies which claim a linear, teleological evolution of world history, as well as a rigid division of it into “ancient,” “medieval,” and “modern” periods. As a natural scientist, Danilevsky is searching for a rational as opposed to a superficial method of study of the sociocultural world. In other words, he strives to offer a *Copernican-type* rather than a *Ptolemaic-type* system of social sciences, and he calls it a “natural” versus an “artificial” approach. (Danilevsky, 2013: 58-75).

The scholar identifies four categories of the sociohistoric activity in various societies: religious, cultural, political, and socioeconomic (Danilevsky, 2013: 405). In this thinker’s view, those have given rise to ten *cultural-historical types*: Egyptian; Chinese; Assyrian-Babylonian-Phoenician; Chaldean or ancient Semite; Indian; Iranian; Jewish; Greek; Roman; neo-semitic or Arab; Germanic-Roman or European. (Danilevsky, 2013: 73). According to the scholar, those and other advanced societies develop according to certain “laws of historical development”:

“*Law 1.* Any tribe of family of peoples characterized by a separate language or group of languages with similarities that can be readily detected without deep philological investigation constitutes a distinct cultural-historical type, it has already grown out of its infancy and is inclined toward and generally capable of historical development.

Law 2. For the civilization of a distinct cultural–historical type to be born and develop, the peoples belonging to it must have political independence.

Law 3. The principles of civilization for one cultural-historical type are not transferrable to the peoples of another type. Each type produces its own, influenced more or less by foreign civilizations preceding or contemporary to it.

⁶ “Zarya” (In Russian: “dawn”) was published in Saint Petersburg, Russia in 1869-1872. (Author’s note).

Law 4. The civilization of each cultural-historical type only attains fullness, diversity, and richness when its diverse ethnographic elements, independent but not combined into a political whole, form a federation or political system of states.⁷

Law 5. The course of development for cultural-historical types closely resembles that of perennial plants that bear fruit only once, whose period of growth is indefinitely long, but whose period of flowering and bearing fruit is relatively short and exhausts its vitality once and for all.” (Danilevsky, 2013:76)

As it is clearly evident, Danilevsky consistently turns to bio-organismic metaphors in his analysis of his *cultural-historical types*, which, in his mind, originate and develop similar to living organisms. Each type proceeds through the predetermined stages of youth, adulthood, old age, and demise. And, just like live organisms, Danilevsky’s *cultural-historic types* are in a continuous competition with each other, as well as with the external environment. Thus, the course of history represents a process of displacement of one *cultural-historical type* by another. Stephen M. Woodburn comments on Danilevsky’s natural science-influenced analytical approach:

Here his scientific career informed his politics. It is crucial to remember that Danilevskii the nationalist was first and foremost a naturalist (or what we now call a biologist), concerned with the proper classification of specimens by their inherent similarities or differences. His vocation provides the essential metaphor and the scientific-positivist outlook shaping his book. ...As a naturalist he was concerned with proper classification, grouping like organisms together on the basis of similarities. (Woodburn, 2013: XII).

As to *Europe* and the *Slavs*, Danilevsky believes that they represent fundamentally different *sociohistoric types*. The scholar perceives the *Slavic sociocultural type* as an entity in its youthful prime and conceives a geopolitical agenda for its future. The plan involves integration of the Slavic peoples into a *Pan-Slavic Union* with its capital in Constantinople. In relation to the *New World*, Danilevsky puts forward a similar idea of a forthcoming new and uniquely American *cultural-historical type*. (Danilevsky, 2013: 192; 368). Stephen M. Woodburn reviews for us Danilevsky’s thought process:

The book can be divided into three sections. The first, chapters 1-7, develops his theory of the biology of nations to explain the disconnect between Russia and Europe, and compares his theory to other sciences — which progress from data collection to an “artificial system” or flawed paradigm that requires a “natural system” or improved paradigm to resolve its flaws — to justify his theory of cultural-historic types as a “natural system” of this kind for the study of human history.

⁷ A correct translation from Russian would be “independent *and* not combined into a political whole, form a federation or political system of states.” See: p. 116 in Danilevsky, N. I. (2008). *Russia and Europe*. (In Russian). Moscow: Terra. (Authors’ note).

The second section, chapters 8-11, delves deeper into history to explain a series of differences or distinctions (*razlichii*) between the Germanic-Roman and the Slavic types: the difference in mental framework, the confessional or religious difference, and the difference in the course of historical upbringing. It concludes in an examination of Russian history diagnosing “Europeanism” (*evropeinichan’e*) as the sickness or syndrome afflicting Russia in its development forcing its growth into an unnatural course. The last section, chapters 12-17, concerns the Eastern Question (the host of issues surrounding the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the fate of its territories and waterways), in which Danilevskii saw a coming shock that would jolt the Russian national spirit to awaken from its slumber, shake off this disease, and fulfill its historical destiny: to create a political federation of Slavic states with Russia at the head, bringing the Slavic cultural-historical type to fruition. The second and third sections account for Danilevskii’s association with the Slavophiles and the movement known as Pan-Slavism, although this requires some context. While he did quote Slavophiles in the text and epigrams throughout the work, and while his friend Strakhov called the book a “catechism or codex of Slavophilism,” Danilevskii pressed the romantic nationalism of the Slavophiles into the pragmatic mold of Bismarckian *Realpolitik*. (Woodburn, 2013: XXIV).

3.2 Criticism of Danilevsky’s theory

Danilevsky is a true pioneer of the macro-level and long-term sociocultural studies. In his classic book, he laid the foundations of a number of scholarly areas of expertise. Practically all the scholars of global studies owe a debt of gratitude to him. The scholar brilliantly succeeds in criticizing the linear notion of the progression of world history and especially of the contemporary (to him) artificial division of it into the consequently arranged “ancient,” “medieval,” and “modern” periods. He correctly asserts that every society may have its own stages of sociohistoric evolution. However, he also made mistakes since some of the most fundamental laws of the structure and evolution of the sociocultural universe have been discovered only after his untimely demise during his last scientific expedition in 1885. (Sorokin, 1956, 1963, 1966, 1991).

For example, when it comes to the elaboration of the evolution of “life-careers” of the “cultural-historic types,” his highly metaphoric bio-organismic concept understandably falters. Being a naturalist, Danilevsky “appropriates” his notions and concepts from the familiar, contemporary to him “toolbox” of natural sciences. He did not, and could not take in to consideration yet undiscovered properties, characteristics, and regularities, specific only to the sociocultural universe. As a result, his highly metaphoric schema of the structure and the evolution of the “cultural-historic entities” remained, in his own words, “artificial.” Pitirim A. Sorokin addresses the structure of Danilevsky (and his followers) “artificial” paradigm of the sociocultural universe as follows:

The first fatal shortcoming of Danilevsky's, Spengler's, and Toynbee's conceptions (on this point) consists of their acceptance of their "cultural-historical type," High Culture, or "civilization" as a real unity, in the sense of either a causal or a causal-meaningful system. Like the so-called "functional anthropologists" and "totalitarian integrators," they assume that the *total* culture of each of their "prototypes," High Cultures, and "civilizations" is completely integrated and represents one meaningfully consistent and causally unified whole, thus making a sort of cultural supersystem that embraces in itself all the cultural phenomena of the Egyptian, Chinese, Appollinian, Magian, Faustian, or any other culture-civilization they mention. (Sorokin, 1963: 209).

Grounding his analysis in the fundamental *theory of social and cultural dynamics*⁸ Sorokin further explains that "the Danilevsky-Spengler-Toynbee type, High Culture, or civilization is neither a causal, nor a meaningful, nor a causal - meaningful system, but rather a *cultural field where a multitude of vast and small cultural systems and congeries — partly mutually harmonious, partly neutral, partly contradictory — co-exist*. A part of the systems are meaningfully and causally connected to make vaster systems; a part are connected through causal ties only; a part only through indirect causal ties; and a large part are nothing more than spatially adjacent congeries. The totality of all these systems and congeries does not make any unified cultural system, whether Egyptian, Babylonian, Magian, or Mayan "civilization" or "culture-historical type." ... Thus all three scholars make the basic error of taking for a civilizational-cultural system something that is no unity at all. They crown this error by the further one of *mixing up the cultural and social systems (organized groups), and they display an additional inconsistency even in this operation*. After all, the Danilevsky-Spengler-Toynbee classifications are not so much classifications of civilizational or cultural systems as they are of social systems (organized groups)." (Sorokin, 1963: 213-214; 216).

As to the essential characteristics of theories which belong to the bio-organismic paradigm, Sorokin briefly summarizes them as follows:

First, the society or social group is a special kind of an organism in a biological sense of the word. Second, being an organism, society resembles, in its essential characteristics, the constitution and the functions of a biological organism. Third, as an organism, society is subject to the same biological laws as those by which a biological organism functions and lives. Fourth, sociology is a science which is to be based primarily upon biology. (Sorokin, 1956: 201-202).

⁸ See Sorokin, P. (1937–1941). *Social and Cultural Dynamics*. Cincinnati: American Book Company. 4 vols. (Author's note).

The “life-careers” of groups and societies obviously differ from those of plants or living organisms. Sorokin notes referring to the fallacy of the organismic univariant life-course of their “civilizations”:

The second mistake of Danilevsky, Spengler and Toynbee (in his earlier volumes) is their contention that the life-course of all civilizations runs one univariant “organic” cycle: They are all born, then grow, and eventually disintegrate and die. This unduly generalized model of the life-course of civilizations can, at best, be applied to some of the organized social groups as the central agency of each of their “civilizations.” ... But in no way can the univariant model of birth, maturity, and death be applied to any of the “civilizations.” Since the total culture of each of these “civilizations” has never been integrated into one consistent system, it evidently cannot disintegrate. (Sorokin, 1966, 219-220).

Thus, as an attempt at grand historiosophy, Danilevsky’s work fails to meet the rigorous criteria of contemporary scientific social research. The historiosophic schema, scrupulously elaborated by Danilevsky, is ultimately incorrect, although impressive. While striving to discover a rational, “natural” theory, he was able to offer only a highly metaphoric, “artificial” theory of humanity’s historic evolution. As all metaphorical schemas, it can only “work” within certain limits and to a certain extent.

3.3 New concepts

As we have already observed, Danilevsky's book prefigured a number of theories in Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History*, Carroll Quigley's *The Evolution of Civilizations*, and multiple other important sociohistoric sources, essentially establishing the field of the *comparative theory of civilizations*. For example, continuing in the framework of Danilevsky's paradigm, Toynbee had proposed five main stages of the civilizations-societies evolution: *Genesis, Growth, Time of Troubles, Universal State, and Disintegration*. Quigley has expanded their number to seven: *Mixture, Gestation, Expansion, Age of Conflict, Universal Empire, Decay, and Invasion*. However, the model remained not only cyclical, which for the developed societies is essentially correct (they are all finite), but unnecessarily rigid.

Yet, there are ways to solve this problem. Using the results of contemporary fundamental social research, we have developed a “universal” model of the sociohistoric evolution of societies. In it, we not only increased the number of stages to nine, but also introduced a virtually unlimited amount of possible variations. It includes such stages as: *Emergence of Groups; Formation of Societies; Mixture; Gestation; Expansion; Conflict/Time of Troubles; Universal State/Empire; Decay, and Invasion / Implosion / Force Majeure* stages.

A society (or a “civilization,” perceived as society) proceeds either through all or through a certain unique combination of those nine main stages.

It also incorporates Toynbee’s *Hellenic, Chinese, and Jewish models*, Toynbee’s later stage “arrest” and “petrification” stages, as well as various Toynbee’s patterns of societal disintegration (“*two-and-a-half beat*,” “*three-and-a-half-beat*,” “*four-and-a-half beat*,” “*five-and-a-half beat*”), etc. One of the main characteristics of such a model is its flexibility. While including all of the stages proposed by Danilevsky, Leontyev, Spengler, Toynbee, Quigley, and others, it encompasses virtually unlimited variations of societal evolution. (Alalykin-Izvekov, 2011: 107-114).

4 Legacy

4.1 Danilevsky’s ideas and contemporary political discourse

Despite the flaws which are obvious to a contemporary social scholar, Danilevsky’s book has become a rather successful “piece of political prognostication and prophecy” (Sorokin, 1966: 187), thus making a considerable impact on philosophy of history, political theory, and the field of the *comparative theory of civilizations*, among others. In some ways, it also tangibly and rather disastrously influenced the external policies of the declining Russian Empire in its waning years.⁹

Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism has interrupted the trajectory of Russia’s development along the path of *Slavophilism* and *Pan-Slavism*, and for most of the 20 century propelled it down the road of “class struggle” and “world revolution.” Yet, after 70 years of embracing those policies, Russia may be now returning to Danilevsky’s paradigm of multiple *local civilizations (cultural-historic types)* as opposed to the universal, global civilization, and choosing “every civilization for itself” policies and strategies.

Scholars agree that Danilevsky’s magnum opus has played, is playing, and is likely to continue playing an important role in Russian intellectual history. For example, Danilevsky’s ideas may have resumed their influence on contemporary political discourse. Let us see if we can discern the overtones of Danilevsky’s ideas in the national and ethnic agenda of the Russian President Vladimir V. Putin:

The Russian experience of state development is unique. Ours is a multiethnic society; we are a united people. This makes our country complicated and multidimensional and gives us unique opportunities for development in many spheres.

⁹ On the nearsightedness and inefficiency of the WWI era political leaders see, for example, Clark, C. (2012). *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*. NY: Harper. (Author’s note).

However, when a multiethnic society is infected with the virus of nationalism, it loses its strength and stability. We must understand the far-reaching consequences of indulging those who are trying to incite ethnic strife and hatred towards people of other cultures and faiths. ... The Russian people are state-builders, as evidenced by the existence of Russia. Their great mission is to unite and bind together a civilisation. ... This kind of civilisational identity is based on preserving the dominance of Russian culture, although this culture is represented not only by ethnic Russians, but by all the holders of this identity, regardless of their ethnicity. It is a kind of cultural code, which has been attacked ever more often over the past few years; hostile forces have been trying to break it, and yet, it has survived. (Putin, 2012).

The echo of Danilevsky's ideas may be also heard in recent statements of the Russian foreign envoys. On February 12, 2021, the top Russian diplomat mentioned that Russia is ready to sever ties with the European Union if the bloc would impose new, economically painful sanctions. He added: "If you want peace, prepare for war." (Lavrov, 2021). That same week German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier noted that "energy ties are almost the last bridge between Russia and Europe." (BBC News, 2021). Stephen M. Woodburn correctly recapitulates:

... It is worth persisting with this text because of its important place in Russian intellectual history of the nineteenth century, and its impact on the thinking of a growing number of twenty-first-century readers. Danilevskii provides essential background for Russian Pan-Slavism and Eurasianism, the ideologies best poised to inform Russian policy over the next decades. This makes a case for calling *Russia and Europe* the most important nineteenth-century book for the post-Soviet period, and thus an object worthy of further study by specialist and non-specialist alike. (Woodburn, 2013: XXV).

4.2 What's next?

Let us take a view of the planet as a whole. We see that, presently, the world is in deep distress. Humanity is dealing with unprecedented challenges, which include overpopulation, resource depletion, and global warming (Targowski, 2009). Starting in 2019, the world witnessed the COVID-19 pandemic unleashing its terrific force on human communities, cities, and societies around the planet.

The pandemic has greatly amplified already existing social, racial, ethnic, and economic disparities. Spurred by the pandemic, social tensions have ensued. (Alalykin-Izvekov, 2020; 2014). The adequate and extensive sociocultural and socioeconomic reforms are needed to ensure the continuing viability of humanity as a whole.

While Russia is “finding her roots,” the *West*, not excluding its leading nation, the United States, may be experiencing a “midlife crisis” of its own. In the aftermath of *European Union Migrant Crisis (2014-Present)*, *Hurricane Katrina Calamity (2005)*, *Black Lives Matter Movement (2013-Present)*, *Coronavirus COVID-19 Pandemic (2019-Present)*, *Storming of the US Capitol by Insurrectionists (2021)*, *Texas Power Crisis (2021)*, *European Union Coronavirus COVID-19 Vaccination Debacle (2020-2021)*, it may need to take a long and hard look at the civil, political, social, ethnic, racial, cultural, and human rights issues in its own realm.¹⁰

As our analysis demonstrates, Russian and Western elites may be finding ourselves in rather different mental *civilizational paradigms*, and therefore, operating in different *civilizational frameworks*. While Western elites tend to think and act in the universe of the Fukuyamian “*End of History*” paradigm of the liberal “universal” and “global civilization,” the Russian upper classes are inclined to think and act in the framework of the Danilevsky-type, “pluralistic” world of multiple “local civilizations” (“cultural-historic types”). As a result, the present level of the relations between the West and Russia is dangerously low. The obvious and reasonable foundation for balanced and mutually beneficial relations between Russia and the *West* may be something that both sides can agree on. Such a foundation exists. It is the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* together with other related documents, such as the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights*.

In his monograph on the origins and the evolution of universal human rights, the American scholar Jack Donnelly postulates, “human rights have become a central, perhaps even defining, feature of our social and political reality. The vision of human dignity they reflect and seek to implement is accepted by almost all states as authoritative, whatever their deviations from these norms in practice.” (Donnelly, 2003: 61).

The Universal Declaration and other UN documents enshrine the essential rights, values, and freedoms of all human beings. Created following the horrors of World War I and World War II, it was accepted by the General Assembly in Paris, France on December 10, 1948.

¹⁰ For history of problems with social, racial, and ethnic inequality in the *West* see, for example: Fredrickson, G. (2002). *Racism: A Short History*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press; Haney Lopez, I. (2006). *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*. New York and London: New York University Press; Montagu, A. (1964). *Man’s Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*. Cleveland and New York. The World Publishing Company; Whitman, J. (2017). *Hitler’s American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press; Wilkerson, I. (2020). *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. New York: Random House. (Author’s note).

The Universal Declaration model treats internationally recognized human rights holistically, as an indivisible structure in which the value of each right is significantly augmented by the presence of many others. (Donnelly, 2003: 27).

The principal drafters of the Universal Declaration were representatives of many countries — Canada, France, USA, USSR, Lebanon, China, and Chile. (Donnelly, 2003: 61). All member states of the United Nations have either signed on in agreement with the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* or ratified at least one of the nine binding treaties influenced by the Declaration, with the vast majority ratifying four or more. Presently, all involved sides, including Russia and the *West*, could substantially benefit from carefully re-reading those fundamental documents, as well as actually acting on them.

Conclusions

1. Nikolay Ya. Danilevsky is a major representative of 19th century sociocultural, historiosophic, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic thought. His magnum opus *Russia and Europe* contains multiple layers of a thoroughly elaborated civilizational legacy. Among important sources for Danilevsky's ideas are many seminal historic and contemporary theories, including such major schools of thought as *Pan-Slavism*, *Slavophilism*, *Pochvennichestvo*, and *Fourierism*. There is a definite consensus among social scholars and thinkers that Danilevsky has skillfully conflated, laboriously substantiated (correctly or not), and impressively aggrandized the main ideas of *Pan-Slavism*, *Slavophilism*, and of related schools of thought, as well as “weaponized” them, thus creating a Bismarckian-type theory of a hard-nosed *Pan-Slavic* “realpolitik.”
2. However, as an attempt at great historiosophy, the work fails to meet the rigorous criteria of contemporary scientific social research. The scrupulously elaborated by Danilevsky highly metaphoric historiosophic paradigm is ultimately incorrect, though impressive. It offers, in his own words, an “artificial” theory of humanity's historic evolution. As all metaphorical constructs, it can only “work” within certain limits and to a certain extent. It is not the scholar's fault since many important laws and regularities of the structure and evolution of the sociocultural universe have been discovered only after his untimely demise in 1885. Despite flaws which are obvious to a contemporary social scholar, Danilevsky's book has become a rather successful “piece of political prognostication and prophecy,” thus making a considerable impact on philosophy of history, political theory, and the field of *the comparative theory of civilizations*, among others. In many ways, it also tangibly influenced the external policies of the declining Russian Empire in its waning years.

3. Danilevsky's book prefigured a number of theories of other prominent social scholars, essentially establishing the field of the *comparative theory of civilizations*. However, his and his followers' models remained not only cyclical, which for the development of societies is essentially correct (they are all finite), but unnecessarily rigid. Using the results of contemporary fundamental social research, we have developed a "universal" model of the sociohistorical evolution of societies. In it, we not only increased the number of stages but also introduced a virtually unlimited amount of possible variations. Since one of the main characteristics of our model is flexibility, it encompasses a virtually unlimited amount of variations of societal evolution.
4. *Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism* has interrupted the trajectory of Russia's development along the path of *Slavophilism* and *Pan-Slavism*, and for most of the 20 century propelled it down the road of "class struggle" and "world revolution." Yet, after 70 years of embracing those ideologies and based on their policies, Russia may be now returning to Danilevsky's paradigm of multiple *local civilizations (cultural-historic types)* as opposed to the *universal, global civilization*, and choosing "every civilization for itself" policies and strategies. Scholars agree that Danilevsky's magnum opus has played, is playing, and is likely to continue playing an important role in Russian intellectual and sociopolitical history. Providing an essential basis for the *Russian Pan-Slavism and Eurasianism*, it may influence Russian ideological paradigms and policies for decades to come.
5. At the same time, the *West* may be experiencing a "midlife crisis" of its own. In the aftermath of the *European Migrant Crisis* (2014-Present), *Hurricane Katrina Calamity* (2005), *Black Lives Matter Movement* (2013-Present), *Coronavirus COVID-19 Pandemic* (2019-Present), *Storming of the US Capitol by Insurrectionists* (2021), *Texas Power Crisis* (2021), and *European Union Coronavirus COVID-19 Vaccination Debacle* (2020-2021), it may need to take a long and hard look at the civil, political, social, ethnic, racial, cultural, and human rights issues in its own realm.
6. As our analysis demonstrates, Russian and Western elites may be finding ourselves in rather different mental *civilizational paradigms*, and therefore, operating in different *civilizational frameworks*. While Western elites tend to think and act in the universe of the *Fukuyamian "End of History"* paradigm of the liberal "universal" and "global civilization," the Russian upper classes are inclined to think and act in the framework of the Danilevsky-type, "pluralistic" world of the multiple "local civilizations" ("cultural-historic types"). As a result, the present level of the relations between the West and Russia is dangerously low.

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