The Crash Of Civilizations, the Growth of Disorder, and The Rise of Crime: A View from Russia

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The present scale of the decay and crash of complex vital structures in many countries of the non-Western world – carrying with it the diffusion of disorder and the shadowy zones of social activity, the criminal dimensions of globalization, the totality of corruption and organized crime which often converges on terrorism – is so great that it calls for sweeping generalizations involving some basic civilizational principles.

True, this problem of disorder, crime and terror has always been present in the human history. Chaos existed at the dawn of civilization and has always been an ever-present danger. Disorder was described and deplored by chroniclers in ancient Egypt and China, Greece and Persia, Rome and India. It has been an essential part of the growth of capitalism and of modernization.¹

Although historical texts or literature are full of descriptions of destructive actions and of human suffering, they somehow disappear from theories of civilizations, relegated back to the reli-

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¹ Another testimony comes from reading Gibbon’s history of the decline of the Roman Empire. This has become a very reassuring occupation for those who find the current sociopathy in our world so dramatic. A further very serious theoretical picture of connection between the regression of civilization and the growth of crime is found in “The Mukkadima” (“A Study of History”) written by Ibn Khaldun at the end of the XIV century. That book foresaw a pending break-up in the Islamic civilization and anticipated its subsequent civilizational disintegration.

The growth of Western civilization was accompanied by protracted disorder and disruption in mentality, symbolism and orientations. The passage to modernity brought about a deep revolutionary transformation in the whole fabric of civilization. In its new “high” culture Europe received the inestimable wealth of its intellectual heritage, although at the price of liquidation of the folk culture which was mostly castigated as a low and criminal culture. Restrictions in individual behavior, induced by the Reformation, were important measures against the criminalization of a society as it passed from the previous forms of solidarity to new market relations. As Werner Sombart testifies, criminality, which had the more decent name of adventurism, was an important source of capitalism. A lucky robber had many chances of becoming a decent entrepreneur.
gious, juridical or psychological spheres.

For more than two centuries the relationship between civilization and barbarity has been viewed as inverse. It was presumed by many historians that the growth of cities surrounded by walls and maintaining their own police always constituted a basis of civilization. In spite of the cyclical pessimism of Arnold Toynbee, the prevalent attitude to barbarity has been one of optimism at its demise: barbarity is seen generally as a pre-civilized condition or, alternatively, as the beginning of civilization; the progress of civilization results in the elimination of barbarity and disorder. However, a necessary correction should be that disorder, criminality and terrorism bring the end of civilization, at least structurally in space and time.

Disorder, conflict and criminality always intensify during the periods of crisis when a society can not cope with its problems of social and moral regulation on the previous basis and has to seek another one which can open new horizons. One well-known testimony of such a transition is found in The Old Testament which is full of examples of misbehavior; thus, Sodom and Gomorrah have become symbols of moral depravity. But this was also the Axial turning point marking the Great Division between Vice and Virtue.

Criminality was a major problem for the rise of capitalism and only gradually, after a couple of centuries, did juridical methods come to be accepted as an essential mechanism of social regulation. However, elements of socialism had to be introduced into the new sociocultural system to ensure social stability. Later on, the rise of communism, a reaction of the developing countries to Western capitalism, was also accompanied by large-scale disorder, destruction of the previous high culture, and criminality which could be subdued only by severe state repressions. The inorganic and antinomian nature of the Russian civilization, as revealed in the Revolution, led to the overgrowth of the state machinery of repression. Following the destruction of the folk culture, continued state control became the usual method of establishing formal order in society.

Sometimes the degree of disorder and criminalization is con-
Considered to diminish when Central Civilization, with its impulse of democratization and its concern for human rights, arrives. However, recent decades have seen them become major problems for many countries and the world at large. We can see dozens of countries sink into the abyss of disorder, brought about by the dissolution of the state and the disintegration of civilization. Far-away Uzbekistan or Tajikistan — beyond even Russia — are becoming the new frontiers for the Central Civilization in the fight against spreading disorder and terrorism.

Taking into consideration the divergence of views over the problem of crime and deviance we assume here that crime can be regarded as an action undermining the stability, vitality or validity of civilization. And conversely, an unstable and weak civilization spawns disorder and criminality.

Some qualification is here necessary. Such a definition may lead to an undue amplification of the term. And it would be questionable to qualify as “destructive” certain actions taken in the international sphere: a conflict, a war or an invasion; here a loss for one nation state may mean a gain for the other. Presumably, there is a higher civilizational logic (or Higher Reason) which overlooks some misdeeds or takes them as signs of inner strength and passion — but only if they lead to innovative change, to the integration of a community or to its subsequent vitalization.

A loss may become a prerequisite for a gain, a success or a transformation. After all, the central symbol of the Western civilization is a loss – the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross, which has become the symbol of Resurrection and Transfiguration. In other cultures we also can find variants of a loss (death or destruction) as a precondition for a revival. Conflicts and wars involving a huge loss of human life and destruction of property may lead to – or accompany – a reorganization of a society, to its reintegration and to a revival of social and cultural activity.

*The destruction of the Kievian Russia during the nomadic invasions has been regarded by some Russian thinkers as a turn to the Eurasian civilization. They argue that the later Imperial or Soviet Russia were expressions of this civilization. Many wars between nation-states have become a prelude for a subsequently more civilized peace or for a revival of civilizational structure. The Indo-Pakistan partition has been a terrible experience for hundreds of millions. Nevertheless, it has become a prerequisite for a remarkable upsurge of two civilizations. Every revolution is full of cruel misdeeds, yet the event can hardly be judged from a moral point of view even if it destroys the old regime and corresponding civilizational foundations.*

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Every persistent civilization somehow has to cope with the problem of crime, to restrict it, to render it less harmful or even to use it for "constructive purposes" (extermination of heretics or banishment of minorities), thus ensuring indispensable homogeneity or cultural self-preservation. A negative attitude to deviance and crime has always been an essential part of the moral fabric of any civilization. For many centuries a large part of the population lived in the shadow of "sin", a greater or smaller misdeed for which a person or the whole country are to be punished. Later on the law has become the most respected institution guarding against deviance and crime.

However, there is *disorder and criminality in a broken and disintegrating condition* when a society has no capacity to cure its maladies and passively undergoes petrifaction under the impact of outside or inside forces. Criminality becomes a part of chaos and disorder, which are the opposites of any definition of civilization.³

And civilization, that is an Axial age civilization, is to be considered in this context as a system of relations and a social body based on some higher culture with corresponding values, norms and meanings, sustained by established institutions including the state, religion, education, etc. A proper, organic and vital civilization naturally inhibits disorder by means of symbolic orientations as well as by moral, administrative or political action. A broken civilization naturally generates and invites disorder and crime, thus accelerating its petrifaction.

We may presume that damage in the material, moral or spiritual aspects is a manifestation of a loss for a civilization in cases when it is unable to cope and to overcome the consequences of such loss or even make of it a source of recuperation.

Disorder and criminality become a part of impending chaos leading to a disintegration of civilization. Corruption, fraudulence, conflicts, desolation of large territories, deterioration of the conditions of existence, loss of human life and degradation of human potential are parts of this process. Today there are dozens of territories where conflicts are routine, where economic, administrative or political institutions either do not exist or do not
function and where primordial modes of existence and self-organization are revived by populations seeking a way to survive outside the pale of civilization.

The problem of disorder, chaos and troubles inherent in the dynamics of civilization has provided Toynbee with extensive material for analysis. True, after his tremendous study this problem somehow subsided and dwindled to become a sphere for law enforcement or a topic dealing with crime stories. We can see in many widely accepted works how the imposing pictures of "The Rise of the West" and "The Diffusion of the Central Civilization" have obscured all manifestations of "negative development" and the losses of other civilizations. In the last decades public opinion has been more concerned with the liquidation of authoritarian regimes and the defense of human rights. The intrinsic irony of civilizations put these efforts side by side with the growth of chaos, corruption, crime and illegal practices in the modern world.

At the turn of the millennium the problems of conflict, corruption and crime have become widely discussed at many regional and international conferences. Everyone knows about the enormity of the financial and material resources, billions of dollars consumed by the criminal, illegal and half-legal dealers throughout the world. Even in the "normal" countries of Europe the "underground" economy has increased its scope to 10-20% of gross national output. In "abnormal" countries this figure rises up to 40-50% — and more! All these resources become to a great degree assets of "anti-system", existing as a reversal of properly civilizational regulators.

Besides huge financial losses there are various outrages antagonistic to civilizational principles: corruption at all levels, inter-ethnic clashes and wars, widespread crimes against property, physical violence, and terrorism.

Evidently, there are various aspects of criminality in the modern world and different reasons for its growth: economic, political or geopolitical problems, redistribution of property, etc. But the main point of this paper is to reveal its correlation with the process of the weakening, disintegration and collapse of world
civilizations or proto-civilizational cultural systems.

In spite of its universality, this tendency has, as we shall see, a definite structure correlated with the degree of stability or, on the contrary, lack of stability of civilizational principles and structures.

The experience of imitated modernization in many countries has led to the acute problem of widespread criminality at all levels and in all spheres. Some Asian, African or Latin American countries exist among "the global community" mostly as crime-hotbeds and producers of drugs and violence. The evident involvement of Russia and post-Soviet countries in this "Brave New World" of global degradation, corruption and criminality makes this process highly typical, almost universal, on a par with the simultaneous globalization of the Western system.

However, Russia substantially augments this experience — given the level of corruption and convergence of the ruling elite and the extensive underground, half-legitimate and criminal structures. A particular and striking feature of modern Russia in this respect is not simply the amount (more than $300 billion) of stolen resources, the number of ruined people, and the wanton and arbitrary plundering of common property but also the almost total absence of a real fight against such state of affairs. The new "democratic" Russia has outstripped Soviet Russia in the rate of population decline.*

It can be presumed that rarely have other countries met with such a scale of organized crime entangled with the political regime, such a scale of its penetration into various spheres of social activity, especially the financial sphere, and such a scale of robbery of the population. The level of cynicism in the treatment of the victims of this depredation, violence and arbitrariness is unduly high, often outrageous even to tolerant public opinion.

In the last decade and a half open public concern has made the problem of crime and corruption a central problem for international and national bodies. Hot scandals and juridical actions

* In the past decade of "democratic reforms" in Russia the official although off-stage policy has been the promotion of an illegal privatization of the state and public property, "free" outflow of national capital and a radical diminishing of the state's social functions. The most important feature from the civilizational point of view has been the non-universality of the new social body: it was frankly and purposefully constructed for "rich owners" to the exclusion of "unfit elements".
have ruined many careers, destroyed the destinies of dozens of heads of states, prime-ministers, heads of gigantic companies or military-industrial complexes. Few countries have remained immune to this wave of accusations.

However, in quite a number of countries little has been done to fight this evil because the institutional structure there is evidently immune to it. Paradoxically, practically little has been done to fight criminality in the global framework. The highly publicized sensitivity of public opinion to the evidence of crime, corruption and illegal dealings on the national or international level has not led to effective concentrated action comparable with the anti-authoritarian efforts by the Western democracies.

To the contrary. Practical tolerance of the proliferation of disorder — as long as it does not hit directly representatives of other nations — can be compared only with the real inability of international bodies to cope with such situations. Civilizational aspects are often obscured by the interplay of political or geopolitical interests.

This lack of theoretical interest in worldwide criminality can well be compared with the interest in the geopolitical scramble of powers for territories or political influence on a global scale. The discussions around the well-publicized book of Samuel Huntington have evoked wide interest in the civilizational approach to modern problems, despite the fact that not properly civilizational but primarily ethnic or nation-state interests turned out to be a source of growing conflicts and clashes. Somehow this book, or rather the debate around it, has dealt a blow to the previous conviction of the pro-Western political elite in Russia that there is only one civilization, i.e., that represented by the civilized West. This was a book about geopolitical strife and clashes, involving civilizational means of identity based on core values and symbols and creating the ultimate reference of a major community.

One could see another irony in the fact that some prominent Russian leaders who used the term "civilization" in the singular were dismissed; they soon afterward almost entirely disappeared from the official scene. Among them there have been the first
(and last) Soviet President, the first (and last) Russian state-secretary, a minister for foreign affairs, two prime-ministers and even a famous multimillionaire (the latter still persists precariously in the scene). Somehow leaders who used this term in the plural stayed for a longer period.

The basic point of Huntington was that the aggressive imposition of Western culture "has had a major and at times a devastating impact on every other civilization." But now it meets with the growing assertiveness of non-Western societies, so that "non-Western peoples have increasing confidence in and commitment to their indigenous cultures". His ominous conclusion was that the future clashes and wars will be between civilizations.

The world as Huntington has described it, and as it stands in the normal civilizationist mentality, is a world in which ethnic, national, religious or civilizational identities are central. To him, cultural affinities and differences to a significant degree shape the orientations, behavior and structure of elites and state policies.

There is much to be said in favor of this position if we have in mind the established, well-sustained civilizations based on continuity and safeguarded by a strong state or having a core state within its domain. Such is the case of many Islamic countries, those in which Islam provides a persistent basis for some degree of identification and resistance to disruptive influences. The complex, perennially inclusive socio-cultural system of India has proved its resilience despite all challenges. Severe large-scale perturbations in modern China also have not undermined its continuity and capacity for resistance to adverse influences. Moreover, these three super communities are often regarded as challenger civilizations vis-a-vis the West.

Still, Huntington's estimate of civilizational vitality can be regarded as somewhat overly optimistic. This could please a true civilizationist but reality has a more complex and contradictory structure, one in which civilizational entities are put to a test of survival.

The scope of civilizational regulation in today's world is definitely dwindling in the face of destructive and wasteful disorder and crime. Side by side with cultural or political assertiveness
there are retreat and disintegration, degradation of mind and soul. Not wars between civilizations but national and global disorder and criminality are becoming the major problems.

Despite the growing dimensions of this phenomenon the problems of corruption and crime have not received a proper civilizational explanation. In the face of the enormity of disorder and the diffusion of crime throughout the world — as well as its concentration in certain less fortunate countries — the theory of civilizations has to put forward a plausible as well as specific explanation.

When we come to the fact that in the modern world, which is presumably getting more and more civilized, an increasing part of the population in dozens of countries is sinking to the level of pre-civilized existence, that about half of the activity of the whole world can quite justifiably be considered as partially or downright criminal, we have to change some basic points in our theory of civilization, which is presumably the largest intelligible field of study in history.

Evidently, there is something inadequate or contradictory in civilizational regulation if a great and growing bulk of human activity falls outside the proper civilizational boundaries in space or time. Is it due to an inherent weakness of classic civilizations unable to withstand the onslaught of the hegemonic Central Civilization? Or is it due to the inherent incapacity of the Central Civilization to become universal and to develop an adequate system of regulation valid for “the rest” and to integrate them in a united world? Is it not universal but restricted to a part of humanity and prone to destroy the other counterparts of the multi-civilizational symbiosis?

Critics and Apologists of Criminality

In various discussions about the place of crisis and chaos, of “the underground economy” and crime in modern society, there are several distinct approaches. Previously this analysis was the realm of Marxist theory; today, revived Neo-marxism is increasing its influence among those who do not accept “the new capitalism”.

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When we look at the current processes of the growth of market relations and class-formation or structure we have to abandon the concept of moral and rational acquisitiveness inherent in the nature of a prudent and hard-working bourgeois, as described by Max Weber.

Again and again, we have to turn to the stern and castigating criticism leveled by Karl Marx and also to the vivid descriptions and penetrating analysis by Werner Sombart concerning robbery and adventurism during early capitalism. Again and again, capital in its initial forms turns out to be a gain produced by some actors who use willful and repressive actions damaging the interests, life and property of other people. The industrial revolution implied to a large extent a destruction of the old order and its people — first within the national bounds and later within the colonial empires and other civilizations.

At present Marxism’s influence is curtailed by a massive anti-Marxist ideology, with its great arsenal of discrediting arguments. Nonetheless, there is a noticeable gap in macro-analysis which should be closed by some general theory taking into consideration sociocultural dimensions.

Some liberal thinkers in Russia recognize the tremendous scale and baleful consequences of criminalization of Russia or some other countries but see the reason only in poorly conceived reforms and “divergence between words and deeds of Western leaders” who refuse to help Russia or another particular country. The naivete of these thinkers has driven them from the intellectual scene.

Another assertive position proclaims a neutral value-free approach to shadow and crime in world history and the new world order. The assumption is that every mode of production is based on some kind of expropriation and therefore on violence and manipulation. Throughout all history a great part of humanity has lived in the “shadow”. And if in the religious period it was the “shadow” of sin, secularization has brought the division into legal and illegal activities, of normal and arbitrary actions. Consequently history is immune to moral injunctions and disregards the human factor. It may seem that mostly a list of great and
small crimes and misfortunes — and only the capacity to work out some acceptable measure and a modicum of consensus — ensures survival and development of a society.

There are social thinkers who completely reverse the former Marxist meanings and values. Instead of exploited and oppressed masses these new thinkers see only greedy and envious common people who are marginal to an effective process of production.

The brutal and disinterested objectivism of the world-systems theory does not take into account the human costs or moral assumptions of the ceaseless accumulation of capital. Not values but interests consistent with the market should become the ground rules of the new society. Deviance and criminalization are implicitly accepted, for they contribute to speedy riddance from the accumulated, redundant elements.

Now we come to the civilizational approach. This by any definition includes an assessment of the human participation, of cultural gains and losses in the dynamics of history. Therefore, within this approach we can assess the problems of disorder, corruption, crime and terror. These evils are mostly concomitant in the theory of civilizations with the break-up and the Time of Troubles which previously have been followed by Universal Empires and later by strong authoritarian states. What is the mechanism of these troubles in modern times and what can be the possible outcome?

* The idea of a moral foundation for economic activity and the growth of capitalism, elaborated by Max Weber and adapted by numerous followers in many countries, does not count for much to those who stand for property regardless of its moral or legal grounds.

Some adherents of the new post-industrial world coldly note the “progressive degradation” of the losers in the “catch up” phase of development. They see, too, the inevitable corruption and crime. They ignore the lamentations over the scale of written-off human resources, for people are redundant in the new system of production. The values of high classic cultures or values and the meaning of previous cultures are also to be written-off as old-fashioned.

Paradoxically, in the ideological framework of these thinkers, either those living in Russia or those who migrated to more benevolent countries, the first and primary contingent to be written off is the population of Russia. Russia as such becomes to them a carrier of some anti-universal orientations and meanings, an obstacle to the diffusion of universal values and institutions. Chaos, even at the price of massive criminalization, is recommended as a prerequisite for Russia of joining the “universal civilization”.

This new Star Chamber has drawn many former dissidents. Often, they cooperate with oligarchic structures which zealously ensure their influence as well as their property, which has been acquired by blatantly shadowy or downright criminal means. They firmly stand against any return to “the times of decay and totalitarianism” in favor of newly acquired freedom of action and the right of property. A consistent irony deeply rooted in Russian history unites brave fighters against totalitarianism with criminal elements.
Global Disorder, Shadow and Crime as the Reverse of the New Global Order

The fundamental cause of the growth of disorder, chaos and criminal behavior in today's world rests in the declining resistance of world civilizations to the global challenge produced by the Central Civilization and the world-system. The non-Western world has the option either of structural resistance and assertiveness, as suggested by Huntington, or withering away and turning into a breeding ground for anomie and crime. The tendency to chaos and criminal behavior is no less important, and represents as essential a field of civilizational studies as resistance and fundamental movements, today prominent fields of study.

The general structure of the global civilizational process is complex, differentiated and ambivalent. There has been an important shift in our understanding of the dynamics of civilizations, especially as compared to that presented by Toynbee. One variant of such dynamics in today's world is revival, which may somehow cure a civilization from impending disintegration caused by either impact with the West or by its own debility. However, this occurs with an organic civilization which has well-adapted and intertwined Great and Little Traditions capable, after a period of troubles and fragmentation, of meeting the challenge of modernization through symbiosis or synthesis. No civilization is immune to destructive trends and upsurges of criminality. But the presence of an all-pervading, holistic and differentiated culture can minimize these costs and promote the growth of a stable middle culture. An essential answer to the challenge of globalism is resistance and an effective affirmation of non-Western identity. Well-recognized specimens of such civilizations are the Islamic, Indian and Chinese.

So, globalism cannot be considered as "something culturally more advanced" and does not lead to the end of civilizations in the plural, as Roger Wescott has suggested, but to their structural differentiation. While some of them go through revival, others enter their Time of Troubles and Disorder.

Fundamentalist movements in these civilizations have provided necessary corrections to destructive tendencies. Until
recently a formidable resistance to such tendencies was based on the Socialist world system, the main justification of which was preservation of inner order and stability. The persistent communist regime in China has shown its vitality and an ability to assure rapid modernization without destroying the foundations of order.

But side by side with the resistant civilizations, or even inside them, or at their periphery, there are cultural territories which are less successful and which cannot resist the encroachments of the Central Civilization and creeping chaos. Globalization has become an intense but unequal race between the new approaches to life, active orientations, high technologies, and positive institutions, on the one hand, and destructive tendencies subverting social vitality, on the other. The necessity of “joining the universal civilization” with its “effective economy and finance” brings about “neo-archaization”, “de-industrialization”, “degradation”, “negative development”, “a world underground”, “anti-history” and “anti-civilization”.

For some parts of the non-Western world the time of the great Oriental civilizations (or of the local African cultures) has stopped — despite the widespread discourse occasioned by the Asian or African presence in the world or the possibilities of inter-civilizational dialogue. These countries are falling into a gigantic zone, an intercontinental archipelago fenced off from the other world not by a barbed wire but by well-organized international and world-system control in which the local rulers play the role of middlemen even if they accumulate great wealth during their self-perpetuating rule.

As the third millennium unfolds, the global structure is divided into: 1) the First World of the privileged and dominating part of the global network, 2) the persevering “Second World” of the resistant and assertive classic civilizations constituted by the Islamic, Indian and Far-Eastern civilizations and 3) a spreading alternative congeries of peoples on a sub-civilizational level having no meaningful civilizational superstructure or a strong state and divided into particular communities and groups struggling for survival.
We should stress that this division does not coincide with economic ratings based on income per capita. It is not necessarily the disaster zones that are prone to higher disorder or criminality, especially if these zones are within the pale of civilization — or retain the vestiges of the primordial norms and values. There are "poor but honest" peoples of rural Africa, of the Asian hinterland, or of the Far North. There is strong evidence that the center of every civilization is marked by a higher degree of order than a spreading periphery. And again Islam gives a very representative distribution of such a ratio.

Modernization of the non-Western countries during the last three centuries has been marked to a great degree not by adaptation of the market activity to the specific orientations and modes of behavior but by a growing disruption of established values, meanings and social structures. The construction of the new (and properly conducted) Temple of Law has proved to be a very long and complicated task without wide appeal.

The higher aspects of existence, the very identity of these peoples, has been for generations assured by the basic regulations provided by the particular civilizations with their norms, values, symbols and institutions. These civilizations with their high cultures, Great and Little Traditions, constituted complex and systematic structures providing a legitimate and acceptable place for all those who could have any claim of belonging to a particular civilization.

In the situation of the modern Great Passage, however, the social body and mind have become natural domains of severe strains in which corruption and crime or anomie are the few natural ways of active or passive — but all the same destructive and suicidal — answers to the challenge of modernization accompanied by Westernization. The passive answer is submission to downgrading, sinking to the bottom.

Globalization has greatly changed conditions of modernization into a pluralistic context. This diversity of cultural elements is to a large extent recognized as a possible and even functionally necessary dimension in the configurations of modernity. Relativization of cultural values is often presented as a prerequi-
site to a more tolerable and diversified world. This may very well be the case if we designate as “tolerance” behavior which has been previously considered deviant and heterodox. We may accept heterodoxy as a source of civilizational dynamics. However, there must be some stipulation that it does not lead into a destructive pattern enlarging a zone of criminality.

The End Draws Near: A Civilizational Review

There is some universality in the process of destabilization of Axial civilizations, including the Russian one, despite all their specificity. The basic step has always been the rising status of property and consumption as opposed to the significance of the previous social status or spiritual values. This change is often accompanied by expropriation, now called in Russia “privatization”, of previously accumulated property, by the new rich owners (or, alternatively, by the state). Classical enclosures in Great Britain, colonial expropriation of resources accompanied by disruption of local industries, and the transnational exploitation of global resources have been prerequisites and then driving forces of all other pressures on the non-Western societies.

Russia has become twice in this century a testing ground for a “new civilization”. First it was the “collectivization” of land and other property by the state, then it was “privatization” by the newly rich (although very poor managers).

In the last two decades a typical accompanying step in many countries has been the weakening of the state; in all societies the state is somehow connected to the particular civilization and provides some institutional means to defend it against destructive intrusions. In any civilizational approach we may by and large accept Toynbee’s idea that the state is essentially a substitute for civilization when it is incapable of self-regulation. And striking

* The configuration of modernity does not lead necessarily to a viable and culturally diverse world. This configuration is to a large extent indifferent to local traditions outside conditions that merely ensure the functioning of capital. It can successfully adapt some of the traditions and it can adapt many “wild”, “deviant” and downright criminal modes of action if they do not interfere with the functions of capital. There is a lot of rhetoric about “human rights” and democracy and this is a perpetual occupation for many international humanitarian organizations. But it is not a serious business for financial corporations or world banks which can just as well deal with Communist China or with authoritarian, corrupt and half-criminal regimes in Africa, Latin America or Russia.
out a state concludes the task, leaving the society at the mercy of its antagonists.

Again, in the early and late 20th century Russia may provide an exemplary model of such change in the status of material well-being, in the revolutionary expropriation of at first private and then common property. The recent dissolution of the former state institutes (including the Communist Party institutes) followed by "the biggest sale in history" provides an ideal type of the destruction of the state, socio-economic infrastructure and civilization.

From a civilizationist point of view the problem is not only in the class division between the few who get all the benefits of the property (which had been considered to some extent to be the common patrimony) and all the rest who become dispossessed. This difference in standard of living and in social status had been very significant in the past — it has increased many fold now. In Russia, the difference in income levels has grown 5-10 times.

However, the major problem lies elsewhere. It is caused by the cultural schism which has become the most significant change in the non-Western societies including Russia. Despite all later corrections of the Westernization process, the elimination of established modes of life has often led to a call for the radical and destructive refusal of "archaic traditions". Destruction of "traditional "cultures is always present in the formula of imitated modernization.

Thus, not only material means are expropriated from a great mass of the population. Accumulated spiritual resources count for little when compared with the new values of extended consumption and material achievement. The cherished sacred symbols and knowledge are relegated to the "heritage of the past." They become a field for the comparative study of civilizations or, better still, useful objects in the tourist industry or antique sales, but quite irrelevant to the new system of cultural orientations.

In many countries which are undergoing this process of destructive modernization the former civilizational structures* The usual irony of history has twice demonstrated in Russia the crash of a strong state, a subsequent Time of Troubles and Anarchy supplanted by a growing state machine. In the mid-century this state had all the features of totalitarianism. And at the turn of the millennium the nature of the future Russian state is anyone's guess.
exist in a narrow and specific meaning. Their place is taken by disorder and anti-civilization, by archaic groups and cultures or by decay in symbiosis with criminal elements.

All this cannot be explained by mere mistakes in the political or cultural strategy of governmental bodies. There is a strong presumption (discussed in the Russian publications) that either (1) Western democracy has exhausted its potential of diffusion and advance into other regions or else (2) this type of democracy contains an inherent ambivalence, one which has caused widespread accusations of duplicity, as revealed in the backing of the corrupt and anti-national regimes in the former Soviet republics — as long as they keep to openly anti-Communist orientations, in spite of the fact that this denotes tolerance of state corruption, disorder, and criminality in symbiosis with official institutes, they are permitted.

Another ambivalent factor in the current global regulation system is the support of ethnic minorities at the expense of the larger geocultural communities of national, confessional or civilizational nature.

The essential point: being a global economic system, capitalism remains tied to a specific local West European and North American civilization. It is not universal but unique. And modernity demonstrates that market relations can adapt to a wide variety of cultural conditions in which capitalism — in its Western variety — has no properly genetic roots. It remains alien and plays a limited part in socio-cultural or political regulation.

Financial capital, which is not connected directly with production, is even less concerned with the social and ethical aspects than is industrial capital, which has to support social functions and resort to some moral legitimization and values. These values, however, are essentially irrelevant to the flow of capital and no amount of anti-criminal activity can make up for the loss caused by big capital’s moral indifference. The Shadow of transnational capital can dim any Light of High Culture.

Despite all of its well-motivated wishes and humanitarian efforts, the general impact of the West is detrimental to the existence of specific civilizations. The reverse side of this global
process is "anti-ethos" — the product of the weakening of previous higher values, meanings and ascriptive ties. Those aspects of life previously valuable and meaningful — morals, human dignity, faith, spiritual salvation, human relations, duty, beauty, loyalty — now become objects of commerce.

The inevitable cultural result of this process is not only a disregard for previously deviant behavior but implicit acceptance of criminalization in all spheres of life. Actually, all modern and post-modern global culture is imbued with the symbols of achievement-oriented action devoid of moral dimensions and only measured by the degree of success. A necessary correlate is the imagery of conspicuous consumption, excitement, and hedonism.

Not principles, values or laws but only conditions or circumstances are to be taken into consideration. Growing mass anomie and the disruption of normative, axiological and symbolic structures create a fertile ground for mass criminalization.

This point usually eludes those who take into consideration primarily the growing resistance movements or the growing humanitarian activity of national or international bodies seeking to preserve the heritage of world cultures.

The Structure of the Process of Destruction

It would be a fair field of analysis to compare various sources and types of criminalization by civilizational criteria. One is endogenous, by no means "traditional" but very much innovative. It shows a great capacity to turn old forms into carriers of crime. The other is exogenous, adept at using high technology and world networks for quick and illegitimate enrichment — or just for making havoc. The other functional structure of criminality is the division into crime produced at the ground level, among the deviant majority, as opposed to criminality among the dominant minority.

* From the civilizational perspective it is quite logical also to dissociate acts considered to be crimes from a state point of view and those which cause damage to civilizational regulation. Following Toynbee we can presume that the state plays a double role: preservation of a civilization which is unable to do it itself but exacting a heavy price by suppressing freedom. Although both kinds of crimes overlap, it is not uncommon that acts classified as "high treason" prove to be beneficial to civilization. This dissociation has become actually a basis for all world civilizations: in all civilizational traditions it is the state which is considered to be a dangerous source of crime. Therefore, some institutional or at least moral measures are built in to restrict such inclinations.
It is usually accepted that there is a definite correlation between the condition of a civilization and the degree and nature of crime and corruption present. This correlation has been fundamentally shown by Gibbon and then by Toynbee, who revealed how in the time of troubles and deviance a society with its accumulated spiritual and material wealth falls prey to destructive forces and breeds crime against itself and other societies.

It is essential that destruction hits to a large extent the higher spheres of culture, of the accumulated heritage, of the Great Tradition and of the superstructures of the general community. Local, low-grade ties — of the family, tribe, clan or territorial community, unrestricted by the weakening Great Traditions, have a new lease of life and become more important, supplanting overarching ties of civilizational structures. Previously they survived in the bosom of the Great Tradition — although restricted in the destructive capacities of their core identities, which are always ambivalent as regards the outward groups. Now they become free from the pressure of Higher Reason and can display their anarchic capacity.

The Axial age comes to a stop, “time is out of joint” and modernity negates the previous periods as meaningless and relegated to the irrelevant past. There is no place for the accumulation of memory, in which every good or bad action could be fixed and therefore counted in the social symbolic structure as a sign of “dignity”, “guilt” or “sin”. The Axial dimensions of existence and time are nullified, for in the spreading secularization there are no other-worldly values and meanings. The old times are petrified. The future belongs to other people, more successful in the race.

This is really “the end of history” for a part of humanity, not in the spirit of triumphant liberalism, but rather as the ultimate nowhere. Every properly civilizational view sees in history a multiple and uneven structure, for every normal civilization has its own identity, history and course. But here the classical plurality of time acquires a new inverted form. While the “First World” is winning time, many people in other civilizations are not running; for them the time is flowing in reverse. Anti-history comes.
La recherche de le temps perdu (remembrance of things past) can be a preoccupation of the refined artistic elite or scholars or an attraction for tourist industry. But for a prospective Westernized manager it is an ineffectual business. For a great majority of the population the change of the old rationality, based on ideal values, into that which is purely sensate, and the sight of the earlier generations with their heritage nullified by the Stock Exchange, is a convincing experience of petrifaction. The old time must stop — at any price.

There are also dramatic structural perturbations. Previously, all “little traditions” and components of the civilizational structure were one way or another coordinated in an organic system of the Great Tradition or had some meaningful relation to it. Now, the disjointed elements of the previous body social lead a fragmented existence, reviving their primordial symbols and orientations. They revert to those archaic modes of existence which still play an important part in the survival of the “traditional strata” although very often at the price of exacerbating conflicts in the fight for the “limited pie” of resources. For them there is no prospect of a better future but only a survival in the continuous present or a return to previous modes of existence.

A vast part of the globe becomes the sphere of anomie. People are excluded from a meaningful participation in the modern civilization while their previous modes of existence lose ground and meaning. Crime becomes one of the few remaining alternatives available if one wants to survive or to gain an advantage in the Brave New World of disorder.

Another type of criminality is produced within the upper classes. Here, the ruling and dominating elites use all the levers of power or all media of mass manipulation to suppress the opposition and to turn power into gold. The oligarchs, for whom the highest value is the ceaseless accumulation of capital regardless of all human, social or ecological costs, pursue the symbiosis of power, capital and crime. And the bureaucracy stops functioning as a necessary ingredient of a civilized state and becomes one of the vehicles for corruption and criminality. All this creates a culmination of the New Criminal Order!
Breakdowns of civilizations reveal continuous internal tensions and conflicts between different groups within the society, the presence of extreme antagonisms and cleavages without the possibility of finding any reliable basis of coordination and mutual coexistence. Inner tensions inherent in any culture (reflected even in the binary oppositions of mythology) can be effectively mitigated by transferring these tensions outward, by finding an opposing group classified as “non-human beings”. The fight against other primary groups and neighbors becomes a widespread source of deviance and crime in the “post-civilizational” period of “non-history”.

Resistance to the impact of new modes of existence can take the form not of a protest or strife but of a passive anomic of the population retreating into “archaic” spheres where virtues count. This is a sphere of the “hopeless but irrelevant” part of the global population.

By no means do all dispossessed populations sink into a state of inanimate anemia. Shaking off the other-worldly orientations and self-abnegation of the world religions, a part of the population reverts to the pagan neo-archaic orientations with their vital capacities. A usual source of this neoarchaization is the ethnic culture which has resulted in a great explosion of ethnic feelings and a return to the pre-Axial times. The ethnic neo-archaic retribalization often becomes the source of deviant behavior against other ethnicities. “The aliens” are not human; and therefore any misdeed or violence is allowed against them. Violence is often a natural manifestation of radical religious movements which bring back to the faithful simplified but meaningful routes of escape from the feeling of inferiority and marginality in the new world.

The West and the Rest

In the face of such large scale anti-civilizational trends we must somehow appreciate the position of the Central Civilization, the so-called “world community”. The strategy of the world community is marked by ambivalence or duplicity. The emergency zones and poorer countries are subject to widely publicized humanitarian concern on the part of various national and interna-
tional bodies. But in reality this is a doomed population of the earth surviving only in the recesses of the New World.

Criminality is subject to severe condemnation on the part of public opinion and repression by the formal institutions. However, it is hardly a paradox that its glorification is actually built in a widely recognized system of mass values. It is seen as a manifestation of achievement orientation as well as of adventure and excitement in life. This glorification is diffused worldwide through the mass media.

Resistance comes from civilizations which can keep up their essential continuity and the totality of regulation, which can undergo some measure of modernization without destructive Westernization. A growing tendency in today’s world is represented by fundamentalist movements which entirely reject the world-system, and the global Westernized culture, in favor of a just and proper world as they see it.

Such movements restrict and quench the waves of world criminalization even if resorting to violence, terrorism and drug-dealing aimed against the other world. They proclaim a return to the primeval ideals and sacred meanings of their religions. Archaization becomes an effective answer to the challenge of the post-industrial world. Only highly effective Western military means, up to nuclear weapons, are in a great demand by the representatives of these movements.

There are numerous conferences and meetings discussing the political, social, psychological, and military problems of criminality and terrorism. A growing number of resources of the First World are being spent keeping off the external proletariat. However, the scale of anti-civilization is growing, making the global system more and more unstable.

**Conclusion**

The scale of both cultural and political disintegration in many countries of the modern world leads to danger: will our civilizational structures survive? This disintegration brings tribulations in some regions, with heavy consequences for the rest of the world. Intense measures are being taken to restrict these trends,
in their global dimensions, and many better-off countries have introduced heavy measures against the spread of disorder, criminality and terrorism. However, no amount of political or juridical regulations, of police or military measures, can reverse this trend. The prospect for a gradual improvement of the cultural quality of the global situation lies in the values, norms, symbols and institutions provided by civilizations as the main and persevering units of history.

NOTES
1. A well grounded comparative study of crime, mostly in the Northern Europe, is provided in the book The Civilization of Crime. Violence in Town & Country since the Middle Ages. Ed. by Eric A. Johnson & Eric H. Monkkonen. University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1996. A major conclusion of the book is that violent crime has decreased in this part of Europe in the course of the civilizing process, which can be considered as another compliment to N. Elis's ideas.
2. Intense meetings and consultations between political and military leaders of Central Asian countries are taking place in Tashkent, Dushanbe and Istanbul, with Americans and Russians present, in view of the rising wave of religious extremism and the incapacity of a number of Central Asian countries to cope with these problems.
3. The civilizational hopelessness leads to reflexive attempts to assume a possibility of an emergency exit. The hope is that chaos can be regulated, at least partially, structurally or temporally. This motivation can explain a growing interest in synergy among some Russian thinkers.
4. The recent Balkan War was to become a culmination of a concentrated effort to establish human rights and civilized order in a part of Europe. Disappointingly, this unhappy part of the Balkans has been turned into a place of irreconcilable strife and crime.
5. For a grim and exciting description of large-scale crime connected with large-scale business in Russia today see the feature article by Richard Behar (Capitalism in a Cold Climate (in Fortune, June 12, 2000).
6. A convincing general analysis of the tendencies to anarchy and criminalization in Russia as a result of the new "freedom" and debility of the state is provided by V. Fedotova in "Kriminalizatsiya Rossii" ("Criminalization of Russia") in Svobodnaya Mysl, 2000, No 2.
8. See the recent works by S. Eisenstadt on comparative study of fundamentalism in different civilizations.
10. S. Eisenstadt. “Heterodoxies, Sectarianism and Dynamics of Civilizations” Diogene, 1982, No. 120.