

Putin-Xi Geopolitical Game-changing Summit at the Kremlin

In Moscow you feel no crisis. No effects of sanctions. No unemployment. No homeless people in the streets. Minimal inflation.

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How sharp was good ol' Lenin, prime modernist, when he mused, "there are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen". This global nomad now addressing you has enjoyed the privilege of spending four astonishing weeks in Moscow at the heart of an historical crossroads - culminating with the Putin-Xi geopolitical game-changing summit at the Kremlin.

To quote Xi, "changes that haven't been seen in 100 years" do have a knack of affecting us all in more ways than one.

James Joyce, another modernity icon, wrote that we spend our lives meeting average and/or extraordinary people, on and on and on, but in the end we're always meeting ourselves. I have had the privilege of meeting an array of extraordinary people in Moscow, guided by trusted friends or by auspicious coincidence: in the end your soul tells you they enrich you and the overarching historical moment in ways you can't even begin to fathom.

Here are some of them. The grandson of Boris Pasternak, a gifted young man who teaches Ancient Greek at Moscow State University. A historian with unmatched knowledge of Russian history and culture. The Tajik working class huddling together in a chaikhana with the proper ambience of Dushanbe.

Chechens and Tuvans in awe doing the loop in the Big Central Line. A lovely messenger sent by friends extremely careful about security matters to discuss issues of common interest. Exceptionally accomplished musicians performing underground in Mayakovskaya. A stunning Siberian princess vibrant with unbounded energy, taking that motto previously applied to the energy industry - Power of Siberia - to a whole new level.

A dear friend took me to Sunday service at the Devyati Muchenikov Kizicheskikh church, the

favorite of Peter the Great: the quintessential purity of Eastern Orthodoxy. Afterwards the priests invited us for lunch in their communal table, displaying not only their natural wisdom but also an uproarious sense of humor.

At a classic Russian apartment crammed with 10,000 books and with a view to the Ministry of Defense – plenty of jokes included – Father Michael, in charge of Orthodox Christianity relations with the Kremlin, sang the Russian imperial anthem after an indelible night of religious and cultural discussions.

I had the honor to meet some of those who were particularly targeted by the imperial machine of lies. Maria Butina – vilified by the proverbial “spy who came in from the cold” shtick – now a deputy at the Duma. Viktor Bout – which pop culture metastasized into the “Lord of War”, complete with Nic Cage movie: I was speechless when he told me he was reading me in maximum security prison in the USA, via pen drives sent by his friends (he had no internet access). The indefatigable, iron-willed Mira Terada – tortured when she was in a U.S. prison, now heading a foundation protecting children caught in hard times.

I spent much treasured quality time and engaged in invaluable discussions with Alexander Dugin – the crucial Russian of these post-everything times, a man of pure inner beauty, exposed to unimaginable suffering after the terrorist assassination of Darya Dugina, and still able to muster a depth and reach when it comes to drawing connections across the philosophy, history and history of civilizations spectrum that is virtually unmatched in the West.

On the offensive against Russophobia

And then there were the diplomatic, academic and business meetings. From the head of international investor relations of Norilsk Nickel to Rosneft executives, not to mention the EAEU’s Sergey Glazyev himself, side by side with his top economic adviser Dmitry Mityaev, I was given a crash course on the current A to Z of Russian economy – including serious problems to be addressed.

At the Valdai Club, what really mattered were the meetings on the sidelines, much more than the actual panels: that’s when Iranians, Pakistanis, Turks, Syrians, Kurds, Palestinians, Chinese tell you what is really in their hearts and minds.

The official launch of the International Movement of Russophiles was a special highlight of these four weeks. A special message written by President Putin was read by Foreign Minister Lavrov, who then delivered his own speech. Later, at the House of Receptions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, four of us were received by Lavrov at a private audience. Future cultural projects were discussed. Lavrov was extremely relaxed, displaying his matchless sense of humor.

This is a cultural as much as a political movement, designed to fight Russophobia and to tell the Russian story, in all its immensely rich aspects, especially to the Global South.

I am a founding member and my name is on the charter. In my nearly four decades as a foreign correspondent, I have never been part of any political/cultural movement anywhere in the world; nomad independents are a fierce breed. But this is extremely serious: the current, irredeemably mediocre self-described “elites” of the collective West want no less than cancel Russia all across the spectrum. No pasarán.

Spirituality, compassion, mercy

Decades happening in only four weeks imply precious time needed to put it all in perspective.

The initial gut feeling the day I arrived, after a seven-hour walk under snow flurries, was confirmed: this is the capital of the multipolar world. I saw it among the West Asians at the Valdai. I saw it talking to visiting Iranians, Turks and Chinese. I saw it when over 40 African delegations took over the whole area around the Duma - the day Xi arrived in town. I saw it throughout the reception across the Global South to what Xi and Putin are proposing to the overwhelming majority of the planet.

In Moscow you feel no crisis. No effects of sanctions. No unemployment. No homeless people in the streets. Minimal inflation. Import substitution in all areas, especially agriculture, has been a resounding success. Supermarkets have everything - and more - compared to the West. There's an abundance of first-rate restaurants. You can buy a Bentley or a Loro Pianna cashmere coat you can't even find in Italy. We laughed about it chatting with managers at the TSUM department store. At the BiblioGlobus bookstore, one of them told me, "We are the Resistance."

By the way, I had the honor to deliver a talk on the war in Ukraine at the coolest bookshop in town, Bunker, mediated by my dear friend, immensely knowledgeable Dima Babich. A huge responsibility. Especially because Vladimir L. was in the audience. He's Ukrainian, and spent 8 years, up to 2022, telling it like it really was to Russian radio, until he managed to leave - after being held at gunpoint - using an internal Ukrainian passport. Later we went to a Czech beer hall where he detailed his extraordinary story.

In Moscow, their toxic ghosts are always lurking in the background. Yet one cannot but feel sorry for the psycho Straussian neocons and neoliberal-cons who now barely qualify as Zbig "Grand Chessboard" Brzezinski's puny orphans.

In the late 1990s, Brzezinski pontificated that, "Ukraine, a new and important space on the Eurasian chessboard, is a geopolitical center because its very existence as an independent state helps transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire."

With or without a demilitarized and denazified Ukraine, Russia has already changed the narrative. This is not about becoming a Eurasian empire again. This is about leading the long, complex process of Eurasia integration - already in effect - in parallel to supporting true, sovereign independence across the Global South.

I left Moscow - the Third Rome - towards Constantinople - the Second Rome - one day before Secretary of the Security Council Nikolai Patrushev gave a devastating interview to Rossiyskaya Gazeta once again outlining all the essentialities inherent to the NATO vs. Russia war.

This is what particularly struck me: "Our centuries-old culture is based on spirituality, compassion and mercy. Russia is a historical defender of sovereignty and statehood of any peoples who turned to it for help. She saved the U.S. itself at least twice, during the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. But I believe that this time it is impractical to help the United States maintain its integrity."

In my last night, before hitting a Georgian restaurant, I was guided by the perfect companion off Pyatnitskaya to a promenade along the Moscow River, beautiful rococo buildings gloriously lighted, the scent of Spring – finally – in the air. It’s one of those “Wild Strawberry” moments out of Bergman’s masterpiece that hits the bottom of our soul. Like mastering the Tao in practice. Or the perfect meditative insight at the top of the Himalayas, the Pamirs or the Hindu Kush.

So the conclusion is inevitable. I’ll be back. Soon.

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