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Рецензия / Book review

**REVIEW OF**  
***Moscow's Evolution as a Political Space: From Yuri Dolgorukiy to Sergei Sobyenin, by Marina Glaser, and Ivan Krivushin.***  
**Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. 158 p.**

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**РЕЦЕНЗИЯ НА КНИГУ:**  
***Glaser M., Krivushin I. Moscow's Evolution as a Political Space: From Yuri Dolgorukiy to Sergei Sobyenin.***  
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Moscow's role in the development of Russia is one of the most intriguing aspects of the country's history. In their new book, Marina Glaser (née Kukartseva) and Ivan Krivushin, professors of the Faculty of World Economics and World Politics at the Higher School of Economics, set out to contribute to our understanding of the question by studying the relations between Russia and its capital from the beginning of the Middle Ages to the post-Soviet present. Taking the Schmitt concept of the political as the starting point of their analysis, the authors consider the metropolitan space to be a political phenomenon.

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In her guest introduction, the well-known Italian expert on Russia Mara Morini provides an opinionated survey of the historiography. As for their chapters, Glaser and Krivushin begin by describing their approach. They explain that political Moscow – a place where political activity has been unfolding for centuries – has long been described by the phrase “antagonism – agonism – Platonism.” This triad expresses one of the main challenges to the Russian state throughout its history: the iron grip of paternalism, which strongly inhibits its development. At the same time, the formula refers to the fact that the public space of Moscow as Russia’s capital has often become an arena for the struggle against the ambitions of both the state and the city’s administration.

The second chapter surveys the political evolution of Moscow into a great metropolis both when it was Russia’s capital and when St. Petersburg assumed that role. A kind of prolegomenon to the study of the topic, it introduces us to the city’s life by considering Moscow’s historical and ideological transformation into a space for politics. The chapter’s objective is to demonstrate how social and historical factors have affected traditions.

In looking at the causes of Moscow’s rise and its transformation into Russia’s capital, the authors analyze the earliest stages in formation of the political city as “Platonism” at the beginning. During the subsequent period, under Tsar Ivan the Terrible, Moscow was reshaped *politically*, becoming an antagonism, i.e. a binary opposition of the state vs. the ruler as a person, and then *physically*, as the oprichnina appropriated part of its space, the Alexandrov Kremlin, to serve as a quasi-capital not too far away from the real one. By now, politics was no longer a group activity and Russia soon succumbed to the Time of Troubles (*Smuta*). The result of accumulated internal contradictions, beginning in 1598, for 15 years the country suffered the worst socio-economic and political crisis of its medieval era. Consequently, the capital reestablished itself as a space of antagonism.

Moscow regained a semblance of stability under the first Romanov tsars. During the reign of Mikhail I (1613–1645), as a political space Moscow was transformed into agonism by virtue of the resurrection of the *zemskii sobor*, an estate-based parliament that Ivan the Terrible had first summoned in 1549, but suppressed later on in his reign. Under Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich (r. 1645–1676) agonism yielded its place to another form of the political – Platonism: a patriarchal family of Russian cities, in need of a firm paternal hand and wise guardianship.

Glaser and Krivushin conclude that during the Muscovite era the city acquired the characteristics that enabled it to become Russia’s political capital and maintain that status through the centuries. The chain of antagonism – agonism – Platonism of the Muscovite epoch inculcated the same ideology and patterns of political behavior in the elite, the people, and their leader; Moscow became a city-state, a spiritual center and a multiple mediator among internal interest groups and between the state and the external world. In short it became a homeland.

The capital concluded something of a social contract with the country’s regional cities that determined the nature and patterns of their interaction, as well as between the state and the people over a long period of time. The basis of this contract was paternalism – the dominance of the state over society, where the state, primarily the Kremlin, looks after the population. The latter, in turn, takes a passive and favorable attitude to the authorities thereby frustrating modernization and pushing the country into a dead-end of depoliticization.

The chapter’s second part considers Moscow as political during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, when St. Petersburg was the empire’s capital. In effect, Russia now had two capitals: Moscow vs. St. Petersburg, pitting the natural (Moscow was the original capital) against the artificial, center vs frontier, internal vs external, traditional vs non-traditional, Russian vs Western, “widowed” vs “married.” Glaser and Krivushin showed how in the “Moscow – Russia space,” both on a national scale and in an individual person, the components of a single, integrated political culture were combined, with its unequal functions and different directions in diverse social strata.

The binary opposition of the two capital cities reflects the opposition of two Russias: the old (the Oriental, the keeper of Byzantine-Muscovite tradition) and the new (the Western, opening Russia up to modern European civilization). Political Moscow continued to be defined by Platonism; Moscow embodied the “Russian idea” as a discourse of homogeneity, national identity, spiritual sovereignty, “Russian truth,” and the cultural and value codes shared by much of the population.

The chapter’s third part examines political Moscow before the very end of the Petersburg era, during the first 17 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and focuses on the revolutionary events – the Moscow Revolt of 1905, as well as the February and October Revolutions in 1917. Moscow’s history during those upheavals reveals that the political of the “old” capital, which turned out to be the epicenter of the country’s revolutionary movement, was implemented as antagonism, and as such, it entered a new era of Russian history – the Soviet era.

Chapter 3 describes how in the 1920s, political Moscow flourished as antagonism, which became increasingly harsh due to both a hostile external environment and the damage inflicted on the young Soviet Union revolution and civil war. The antagonism was supplemented by the aesthetic. New criteria appeared for the appearance of the capital, which now served revolutionary romanticism instead of real human needs. In order to fulfill the functions of a political capital, Bolshevik Moscow had to implement the sovietization of the people’s mentality, to form a “revolutionary cultural code” and set political standards for the whole country.

During the 1930s, the aesthetic was temporarily eliminated from political Moscow, and the capital became a space of antagonism during “Stalin’s Revolution.” Indeed, Soviet history as a whole exhibited antagonism during this period, as it underwent the terror of the 1930s and political repression in the 1940s. Moscow served to legitimize the USSR’s status as a great power and, at the same time, transmitted the state’s rigid centralization to the periphery.

The 1950s marked the start of de-Stalinization during the Khrushchev “Thaw,” followed by the period of “spiritual maturation of society” in the 1960s. By now, other major Soviet cities began to rival Moscow as a result of the public’s growing demand for changes. Society became increasingly politicized, and whether this would prove to be constructive or destructive to a large extent depended on the center. The authors accordingly examine the causes for the provincial population’s hostility to the capital as well as the gradual disenchantment of regional elites.

A look at everyday life in Moscow during the era of “stagnation” of the 1970–1980s sheds light on the reasons for its transformation into a center of the Soviet Union’s mild re-Stalinization and the rapid degradation of political Moscow. The authors also explain how, during the USSR’s waning years, the capital became the center of protest activity.

Chapter 4 examines political Moscow under Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, whose administration lasted from 1992 to 2010. During these 18 years, the capital emerged as a source of nationalism and great power discourse while evolving into a global city. Under the mayor’s aegis, the political Moscow turned into a business project. The authors go on to identify two stages in Moscow’s political evolution from the late 1980s to 2010: from the pro-government, so-called liberal bastion under President Boris Yeltsin, to the citadel of opposition to the Kremlin during the nineties and, then, during the next decade, as Vladimir Putin consolidated his authority, its return to loyalty to the central government.

The most important factor in the evolution of Moscow as the richest and one of the most “educated” cities in Russia was the changing political outlook of its rich and highly educated citizens. During the early post-Soviet period they had provided the main base of support for the liberal parties and reformist government, but, growing increasingly disillusioned with the latter, these constituencies shifted to the political center. Thus, if in the 1990s they increasingly opposed the regime, the new century’s first decade saw a return to loyalty to the Kremlin, especially among wealthier Muscovites.

Sergei Sobianin replaced Yuri Luzhkov as Moscow’s mayor in 2010, and Chapter 5 discusses the first eight years of his administration. It explains how political Moscow turned

into the aesthetic, visually marking the qualitative differences between the Luzhkov and Sobianin epochs. Sobianin's introduction of the aesthetic into the political space of the capital, with special attention to infrastructure projects, was dictated by, among other, the new mayor's worries that he lacked sufficient legitimacy, both in the eyes of the population and the "old Moscow" Luzhkov elite. Under Sobianin, Moscow turned into a "city where you have somewhere to go." The capital's architecture reflects the politics of the day, and its clashing styles betray the radical political changes it has undergone over the years.

Glaser and Krivushin argue that three cycles can be discerned in Moscow's political history from the late 1980s to 2018. The first, from 1989 to 1999 saw its transformation from a pro-Kremlin liberal bastion to a citadel of centrism which opposed the "liberal" Yeltsin government. The second was during the following decade: from anti-Yeltsin centrism to loyalty to Putin's regime. And the third, which began in 2011 and ended in 2018: from a political space loyal to the Kremlin to an opposition liberal center. The authors also believe that liberalism and opposition to the federal government were the characteristics of Moscow as a political community that opposed it to the rest of Russia; when they weakened, the center moved closer politically to the periphery, and when they intensified, the reverse was true.

The book's conclusion summarizes the authors' findings, and emphasizes their novelty: by applying C. Schmitt's methodology to political Moscow, they make a valuable contribution to the literature. Among the study's important elements are the ideas of statehood, military power, power and wealth on the one hand and those of citizenship, simplicity and service to the Motherland on the other. By focusing not only on Moscow's political history but also on cultural geography and Russian ideals of metropolitan urban culture, Glaser and Krivushin demonstrated that the ties that bind Russia to its capital are both strong and ambiguous.

Both in the breadth of the questions they addressed and the quality of their analysis, Glaser and Krivushin's new book reflects a high standard of scholarship. At the same time, it opens up further research in a number of very different directions, including political philosophy, political psychology, conflict management, diplomacy, and world politics. And this, in turn, promises significantly to expand our understanding of people's political behavior as well as establishing political trust in the context of political and social communication in the megalopolises.

This long-awaited work of two well-known Russian academics will be important both among scholars in Russia and abroad. At the same time, there is every reason to believe that it will also arouse great interest among the general public, including foreigners, as they become acquainted with the real Russia. Altogether, this will give the foreign and, above all, Western audiences a new impetus to gaining a serious and balanced understanding of the history and the current politics in Russia.

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