



RUSSIA'S BORDERS NEVER END

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Russia has undermined its own borders. It behaves like a nomadic tribe which no longer accepts its own internationally recognized borders. It is a philosophical question. On May 21st, Russia unilaterally changed its maritime borders with Finland and Lithuania (the next day the plan was scuppered). On the border with Finland, a poster was placed in April which says 'Russia's borders have no end' ('границы России нигде не заканчиваются'). Putin first made this statement on [November 23rd, 2016, on Russian Television](#).

Moscow considers itself as the cultural heir of Constantinople. The Byzantine State defined borders. Neighbouring countries were impressed. The Turkish word for border—sınır—derives from Byzantine Greek *σύνορον* ('synoron'). The border is not a meaningless line on a map. It allows trade according to rules and laws of export and import. The Arabs were also impressed by Byzantine border posts. They took over the Byzantine word for a customs checkpoint, *κομμέριον* ('kommerkion') and it became 'gümrük' in Turkish (compare to Arabic *جمرك*, *jumruk*, and Farsi *گمرک*, *gomrok*). These customs checks allowed and facilitated trade by regulating it. Byzantine culture believed in borders.

The collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 476 AD meant the collapse of the rule of law specifically concerning the regulation of borders. The Gothic king Theodoric had ample correspondence with other Germanic rulers who had seized different parts of the Western Roman



Empire. When the Goths reached the West, they took possession of what was Roman property. The collapse of international borders promoted the protection of smaller communities (feudalism). The collapse of western borders created one of the differences between the West and East of the Mediterranean and Europe.

The Byzantine Greek word *synoron* not only refers to a border with another country but also a border of a property. If borders are defined, then a dispute can be solved by a judge who will hear opposing opinions and decide. The judiciary requires clearly defined borders, internally and internationally. The understanding of property borders was a central aspect of Solon's creation of Athenian democracy in 594 BC.

Ancient Egypt managed to define property borders by using measurements which would compensate for the vanishing natural markers (due to the flooding of the Nile). Land measurement is an important aspect of the development of geometry (*γεωμετρία* means 'land measurement'). Geometric thought is integral to the development of philosophy.

The Greeks understood that 'definitions' were intellectual boundaries (*ὄρος*, 'horos', 'definition', also means boundary). They had indicated that the limit of the sky and earth was defined by a limit which they called *ὁρίζων* ('horizon', 'that which defines').

The Byzantine theologian Niketas Stethatos (Constantinople, 11th century) went as far as to say that everything is limited: *Nothing is without limit at all, except for the one who truly is.* ('*Τῶν ὄντων οὐδὲν οὐδαμῶς ἀόριστον, πλὴν ἐνὸς τοῦ ὄντως ὄντος*'). Limits and borders define Byzantine life and philosophy.

Why is Putin turning his back on Byzantine civilization? Has he given up on the idea of Moscow as the third Rome? Defining and manning borders is a contribution of Byzantine culture to the Mediterranean.

We may simply turn to the introduction to the Communist Manifesto. The second Russian edition of 1882 has a new preface written by Marx and Engels and indicates that an absence of propriety and possession, and therefore legal boundaries, is the future of the communist revolution:

'If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting point for a communist development.' ('Если русская революция послужит сигналом пролетарской революции на Западе, так что обе они дополняют друг друга, то современная русская общинная собственность на землю может явиться исходным пунктом коммунистического развития.')

Putin prefers communism to Byzantine culture.