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**RUSSIAN IMPERIAL EXPANSIONISM AS A SUBJECT OF STUDY EXPLORED
BY THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF MARXISM**

Abstract. *The purpose of this paper is to conduct a detailed analysis of the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels that scrutinize historical circumstances of formation of the expansionist foreign policy course implemented by Muscovy – Russia, i.e., the works of the founding fathers of Marxism which were carefully hidden by the USSR Communist authorities because they give devastating criticism of the foreign policy of Russian state formations in the 13th – 19th centuries aimed at achieving a global domination. The research methodology is based on the principles of historicism, systematicity,*

authorial objectivity, and the use of both general scientific (analysis, synthesis, generalization) and special historical (historical and genetic, historical and typological, historical and systemic) methods. **The scientific novelty** of the research consists in the fact that the comprehensive study of the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels on the foreign policy of Muscovy – Russia was conducted, since the relevant research allowed these authors to find out historical origins of the Russian expansionism and to predict Russia's aggressive behaviour in the international arena for centuries to come. **The Conclusion.** Comprehensive analysis of the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels on the foreign policy of Muscovy – Russia, which were silenced and criticized in the Communist USSR, allows a researcher to find out the origins, essence, tools and consequences of the implementation of the foreign policy strategy of Russian state formations in the 13th – 19th centuries. Written in the second half of the 19th century, the articles of these famous German philosophers draw scientifically objective conclusions on the Russian policy of imperial expansion to have been borrowed by the founding fathers of Muscovy – Russia from the Khans of the Golden Horde. Since Marx and Engels were recognized as the foremost advocates of the Communist ideology in the USSR, their balanced assessment of the foreign policy doctrine of Russian state formations aimed at achieving global domination became extremely unpleasant for the Soviet totalitarian regime. In this context, all the conclusions on the imperial essence of Russia made by the founding fathers of Marxism remain extremely important and relevant. They allow a researcher to answer the key question of modern-day international politics by explaining why the Russian Federation is constantly violating the peremptory norms of international law and why its authorities are permanently seeking to regain Russia's superpower status.

Key words: Marxism, Muscovy, Russia, imperial policy, expansionism, global domination.

РОСІЙСЬКИЙ ІМПЕРСЬКИЙ ЕКСПАНСІОНІЗМ ЯК ПРЕДМЕТ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ЗАСНОВНИКІВ МАРКСИЗМУ

Анотація. *Мета дослідження* – проведення всебічного аналізу праць Карла Маркса і Фрідріха Енгельса про історичні обставини формування експансіоністського зовнішньополітичного курсу Московії – Росії: праць основоположників марксизму, наявність яких ретельно приховувалась владою комуністичного СССР, позаяк у них містилась нищівна критика зовнішньої політики російських державних утворень у XIII – XIX ст., спрямована на досягнення світового панування. **Методологія дослідження** заснована на принципах історизму, системності, авторської об'єктивності, використанні загальнонаукових (аналіз, синтез, узагальнення) та спеціально-історичних (історико-генетичний, історико-типологічний, історико-системний) методів. **Наукова новизна** полягає у всебічному дослідженні творів К. Маркса і Ф. Енгельса про зовнішню політику Московії – Росії, аналіз якої дав змогу їх авторам з'ясувати історичні витoki московського експансіонізму і передбачити агресивну поведінку Росії на міжнародній арені на століття уперед. **Висновки.** Всебічний аналіз замовчуваних і критикованих у комуністичному СССР творів Карла Маркса і Фрідріха Енгельса, в яких основоположники марксизму досліджують витoki, зміст, інструментарій і наслідки реалізації зовнішньополітичної стратегії Московії – Росії у XIII – XIX ст., допроваджує дослідника до науково об'єктивних, але вкрай неприемних для радянського тоталітарного режиму висновків про політику імперської експансії, що засновники Московії – Росії запозичили у ханів Золотої Орди. Ба більше, К. Маркс і Ф. Енгельс дають науково виважену оцінку зовнішньополітичної доктрини російських державних утворень, головною метою якої є досягнення світового панування. У цьому контексті висновки основоположників марксизму щодо імперської сутності Росії є вкрай важливими і актуальними, позаяк дають відповідь на ключове питання міжнародної політики сьогодення: чому Російська Федерація є головним порушником усталених норм міжнародного права й чому її влада прагне повернення Росії статусу “великої” держави.

Ключові слова: марксизм, Московія, Росія, імперська політика, експансіонізм, світове панування.

The Problem Statement. To tell the truth, the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were unlikely considered as collective works in any country in the world except the USSR and, therefore, the so-called ‘Socialist’ states. Lots of writings of these talented 19th– century

German philosophers were published altogether due to the appearance of *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* written by Marx and Engels as the Communist League's Programme in 1848, and this fact consciously or unconsciously downplayed the significance of their individual works (Acton, 1964, p. 235). However, our analysis of two individual works written by Marx and Engels while studying historical development of the foreign policy of Russia is not a tribute to the Soviet publishing tradition but a confirmation of common views of the founding fathers of Marxism on the essence of Russian imperialism and the main tools for achieving the foreign policy goals used by the Russian diplomacy.

In the Soviet Union, the works of Marx and Engels were considered as the indisputable truth (Cohen-Almagor, 1991, p. 1): so, some of their individual writings had either been hidden from the public for a long time or published in highly expurgated versions. When the manuscripts of the philosophers being inconvenient for the Communist regime were ultimately published, they were usually accompanied by a number of comments which strived to prove that Marx and Engels had not criticized Russia as an imperial state and had hit out at the Russian autocratic regime only. Therefore, the desire to replace capitalism with a socialist political and economic system in the modern autocratic Russia as soon as possible had been the leitmotif in the thinkers' studies (Resis, 1970, p. 219). As they were founders and advocates of the Communist doctrine, one naturally could not expect anything else from these philosophers (Wittfogel, 1960, p. 487). For example, Engels, while emphasizing the Russian Empire's constant interference in the affairs of the West as the main threat to European security, noted that not only socialists, but also all the progressive parties in different countries in the Western Europe were interested in changing the ruling regime in Russia (Engels, 1890). But those people, who examined the writings of the founding fathers in order to find the approval of the aggressive foreign policy of the Russian Empire, were actually seeking the justification for the aggressive foreign policy of the Soviet Union that was camouflaged by the process of formation of the world proletarian state to have supposedly been designed by Marx. However, one could find strong evidence for their wishful thinking. So, those people concealed or criticized Marx' and Engels's works that emphasized the invariable strategic goals of all the Russian regimes – from the Tsardom of Muscovy to the USSR, – since all of them inherited aggressive traits of foreign policies of the state formations set up by the Russian ethnic group. Having been 'inconvenient' for the Soviet authorities, these particular works of Marx and Engels are targeted by our exploration.

We are going to analyze the first editions of the *Revelations of the Diplomatic History of the 18th Century* written by Marx in 1856 – 1857 (Marx, 1857b) and Engels's *Foreign Policy of Russian Tsardom* prepared by the philosopher in 1889 – 1890 (Engels, 1890). As these papers on the diplomatic history identified historical foundations, basic principles, methods and means for achieving the Russian strategic foreign policy goals, Engels's article was published in the USSR and further criticized by its leader Yosyp Stalin in 1934 and Marx's work was presented to the Soviet public only shortly before the collapse of the USSR in 1989.

The Analysis of Recent Research and Publications. The above-mentioned articles have quite actively been considered by various authors: both by those who sought to justify the extremely negative assessment of the aggressive essence of the foreign policy of Russia carried out by the founding fathers of Marxism through the substantiation of the 'high mission' of this state in the world (Gemkov, 1986) and those who revealed a model for deep scientific analysis of historical material presented by Marx' and Engels's works (Kirsenko, 2008; Siundiukov, 2018). Finally, there are some publications whose authors did not hesitate to affix a stigma of

‘Russophobe’ to Marx (Andreev, 2018; Mishchenko, 2019) because of his critical evaluation of Russia’s imperial nature. Thus, it is quite interesting to find out the cause of such polar views and considerations on the two papers of the philosophers we have previously announced.

The Purpose of the Research. This paper aims to analyze the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels which scrutinize the foundations and essence of the foreign policy of the Grand Principality of Moscow, the Tsardom of Muscovy, and the Russian Empire in the 13th – 19th centuries. The object of our exploration is represented by state formations with the Muscovite (Russian) people as their core, and the historical origins and main stages of development of the imperial foreign policy of Russian state formations in the 13th – 19th centuries constitute the subject of the present article.

The Results of the Research. The reason for banning the publication of Marx’s *Revelations of the Diplomatic History of the 18th Century* in the USSR was the content of Chapter IV of this work which, according to the preface to the Russian translation of the paper, contains “extremely negative reviews of Russia and its rulers, as well as of the policy of Russian imperial expansion. Marx’s conclusions contradicted the great-power, patriotic concept of history to be instilled in the minds of people by the Soviet bureaucracy” (Marx, 1857a). Further, the Soviet leader Yosyp Stalin criticized Engels’s *Foreign Policy of Russian Tsardom* in his article for the printed party magazine *Bolshevik* in 1934 (the article was published in 1941), while convincing the members of its editorial board of the inexpediency of publishing Engels’s work because, in Stalin’s opinion, “it had a number of shortcomings which may confuse the reader if this paper was published without critical remarks” (Stalin, 1941, p. 1). However, views of the founding fathers of the Communist doctrine on the essence and basic tools of the foreign policy of the Tsardom of Muscovy and all its successor states, such as the Russian Empire, the USSR and the Russian Federation, remain relevant. First of all, we engage with the attempt of Marx and Engels to elucidate historical roots of the Russian expansionism as the main instrument of the aggressive foreign policy of the Tsardom of Muscovy and its successors.

At the very beginning of Chapter IV of his work, Marx formulates a key question being also crucial today: “How did this power, or this phantom of a power, contrive to assume such dimensions as to rouse on the one side the passionate assertion, and on the other the angry denial of its threatening the world with a rehearsal of Universal Monarchy?” (Marx, 1857c). The answer to this question is somewhat unexpected for researchers who have a little bit larger array of sources on the history of the foreign policy of Muscovy (Russia) than the one used by Marx. We primarily mean methodological inaccuracies that were inherent in most works on the history of formation of the Muscovite State written in the second half of the 18th – the 19th centuries. The main drawback of the papers employed by Marx was the identification of the history of Muscovy (since 1721, Russia) with the history of the medieval Kyivan Rus having its centre in the city of Kyiv. This fact does not seem strange, since the article *The Traditional Scheme of ‘Russian’ History and the Problem of a Rational Organization of the History of the East Slavs*, where the famous Ukrainian historian Mykhailo Hrushevsky argued that “the Kyivan State, law, and culture had been the product of the Ukrainian – Rus nationality” and the Vladimir – Muscovite State (the forerunner of present-day Russia) had become “the creation of another nationality, the Great Russian” (Hrushevsky, 1991, p. 8), was published only in 1904, i.e. almost half a century later (Voloshyn, 2017, pp. 210–211).

Even without having a sufficient source base, Marx, however, questioned the conclusions made by the researchers who claimed that the policy of Russia began “with the first Ruriks [the

successors of the Viking King Rurik being the founder of the ruling dynasty which usurped the throne of Kyiv], and has, with some interruptions indeed, been systematically continued to the present hour” (Marx, 1857c). Moreover, Marx, who worked with the version of history of the Kyivan Rurik Empire distorted by the Russian historiography and was a supporter of the ‘Norman theory’ of the origin of the Kyivan State (due to his acquaintance with the explorations of one of the authors of this theory, the German historian August Ludwig von Schlözer), reaches a logical conclusion that “warfare and organisation of conquest on the part of the first Ruriks differ in no point from those of the Normans in the rest of Europe” (Marx, 1857c). Casting doubt on the exclusivity of ways used by the Ruriks to expand the state territory of the Kyivan Rus through military conquest and seeking reasons for the aggressive essence of the Muscovite policy, Marx actually abandons the simplified (in fact, falsified) scheme of history of the ‘Russian State’ that predominated the Russian historiography during the stateless existence of Ukraine¹ and tries to discover the origins of the Russian expansionism in the other, ‘Mongol’ period of the Russian history, since, according to the philosopher, “the Russia of the Normans [the Kyivan Rus] completely disappears from the stage” (Marx, 1857c) after the Mongol invasion of Kyiv of 1240. Thus, Marx concluded that “the bloody mire of Mongolian slavery, not the rude glory of the Norman epoch, forms the cradle of Muscovy, and modern Russia is but a metamorphosis of Muscovy” (Marx, 1857c). He is absolutely right: we cannot state any kind of succession of Muscovy from the Kyivan Rus, as “the Tartar yoke had already lasted a hundred years before Muscovy emerged from its obscurity”, arose “by means of the Tartar yoke”, and ultimately got “an independent power by the disappearance of the Tartar rule” (Marx, 1857c).

Having become the successor of the Golden Horde by the end of the 15th century, Muscovy inherited all the domestic and foreign policy tools being intrinsic to the Mongol Empire (and not only to it). As Marx writes, “it was the traditional policy of the Tartar to check the Russian princes the one by the other, to feed their dissensions, to cause their forces to equiponderate and to allow none to consolidate himself” (Marx, 1857c). Thus, the Muscovite policy was based on the universal imperial principle *Divide et Impera!*

Marx considers princes Ivan I Kalita (1325 – 1340) and Ivan III (1462 – 1505) to have been the ardent supporters of this political line of Muscovy: the former laid the foundations of the Muscovite State, the latter turned it into the independent Grand Principality of Muscovy when, having conquered the territories around Moscow (e.g., Novgorod and Tver feudal republics), began the foreign policy expansion into the lands of the former Kyivan State which then formed part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rus and Samogitia. The further chronology of the Muscovite conquests is well known and there is no point dwelling on it in detail. However, we can undoubtedly understand the succession of the imperial policy of the Russian state formations by using Marx’s conclusion: “a simple substitution of names and dates will prove to evidence that between the policy of Ivan III, and that of modern Russia, there exists not similarity but sameness” (Marx, 1857c). The foundations of the aggressive foreign policy of Russia, according to Marx, were laid by the Prince of Muscovy Ivan Kalita. However, his policy based on the aspirations “to encroach by the fraudulent use of a hostile

¹ The decline of the Kyivan State after the Mongol invasion of the 1240-ies allowed the Moscow historian Mikhail Pogodin spreading the unscientific hypothesis about the ‘spillover’ of the history of the Kyivan Rus to Moscow that was fixed in the Russian historiography. Pogodin considered the dynastic connections to be a factor that linked the history of the Kyivan Rus with the history of Muscovy. The first arguments to refute this hypothesis were given by Mykhailo Hrushevsky: “This scheme is old, it has its origins in the historiographical scheme proposed by the Moscow bibliognosts, and it is based on a genealogical idea – the idea of the genealogy of the Moscow dynasty. This scheme has been forming the basis of the history of the ‘Russian State’ since the beginning of the scientific historiography in Russia” (Hrushevsky, 1991, p. 7).

power, to weaken that power by the very act of using it, and to overthrow it at last by the effects produced through its own instrumentality ... remained still the policy of Ivan III. It is yet the policy of Peter the Great, and of modern Russia, whatever changes of name, seat, and character the hostile power used may have undergone” (Marx, 1857c).

In Marx’s opinion, all these foreign policy tools were borrowed by the Muscovites from their former rulers, the Mongols. “It is in the terrible and abject school of Mongolian slavery that Muscovy was nursed and grew up. It gathered strength only by becoming a *virtuoso* in the craft of serfdom. Even when emancipated [from the Mongol yoke], Muscovy continued to perform its traditional part of the slave as master. At length Peter the Great coupled the political craft of the Mongol slave with the proud aspiration of the Mongol master, to whom Genghis Khan had, by will, bequeathed his conquest of the earth” (Marx, 1857c).

To realize the idea of creating the world empire, the Muscovite rulers lacked a direct access to the sea, as only “by the conversion of Muscovy from a country wholly of land into a sea-bordering empire, that the traditional limits of the Muscovite policy could be superseded and merged into that bold synthesis which, blending the encroaching method of the Mongol slave with the world-conquering tendencies of the Mongol master, forms the life-spring of modern Russian diplomacy” (Marx, 1857d)². Thus, to gain and maintain control over the Baltic Sea Area, Peter I founded the new capital of Muscovy, the city of Saint Petersburg. According to Marx, “it is the transfer of the capital which reveals the true meaning of his Baltic conquests. Petersburg was not like Muscovy, the centre of a race, but the seat of a government...” (Marx, 1857d) whose main foreign policy task was to transform the continental Muscovy into an influential maritime power. Having established quite friendly ties with the Western states, Peter the Great planned to turn Muscovy into the Eurasian empire through their mediation. However, permanent trade and economic relationships with all maritime powers established by Peter I after the Muscovite victory over Sweden in the Great Northern War and the consequent conquest of the Baltic provinces made these actors dependent on Muscovy while obtaining shipbuilding components and materials. Therefore, Muscovy, but not Sweden, started taking control of trade routes in the Baltic Sea.

In Marx’s opinion, the rulers of England were important in realising the plans of Peter I and his successors in the same way as the Khans of the Golden Horde had once been instrumental in realising the plans of Ivan III and his predecessors (Marx, 1857d). There was strong historical evidence to support his point of view. Despite a number of warnings about the dangers of indulging the Muscovite imperial ambitions contained in diplomatic and intelligence reports being sent from Saint Petersburg to the royal governments in London, the latter did not take these notifications too seriously. Trying to weaken the Swedish power and influence in Europe, England, however, involuntarily contributed to the strengthening of Muscovy during the Great Northern War of 1700 – 1721.

Just as Marx’s conclusion on the invariability of the foreign policy of Russia aimed at asserting its world domination was not taken into account, so Engels’s warning about the imperial nature of the Russian autocracy expressed in his article *Foreign Policy of Russian Tsardom* was not heeded by the Western politicians. In Engels’s point of view, “by its ceaseless meddling in the affairs of the West”, Russia “cripples and disturbs our normal development, and this with the object of conquering geographical positions, which will assure to Russia the mastery over Europe, and thus crush every chance of progress under the iron heel of the Tsar” (Engels, 1890).

² Chapter V of this work reflects one of Engels’s studies on Pan-Slavism to have never been published.

The leading Russian diplomats are at the forefront of Russia's progress toward the world domination, as, according to Engels, "Russian diplomacy forms, to a certain extent, a modern Order of Jesuits". By using any means to achieve the main goal of the state, this "diplomatic band of Jesuits", "originally recruited from foreign adventurers, has raised the Russian Empire to its present power. With iron perseverance, gaze fixed resolutely on the goal, shrinking from no breach of faith, no treachery, no assassination, no servility, lavishing bribes in all directions, made arrogant by no victory, discouraged by no defeat, stepping over the corpses of millions of soldiers and of, at least, one Tsar, this band, unscrupulous as talented, has done more than all the Russian armies to extend the frontiers of Russia from the Dnieper and Dwina to beyond the Vistula, to the Pruth, the Danube and the Black Sea; from the Don and Volga beyond the Caucasus and to the sources of the Oxus and Jaxartes; to make Russia great, powerful, and dreaded, and to open for her the road to the sovereignty of the world" (Engels, 1890).

Engels considers the huge territory and the slave and submissive population of Russia to be no less important factors that affect the growth of its power in the world. "Look at Russia in the middle of last century [the 18th century]", Engels proposes. It had "a colossal territory even at that time, peopled by a peculiarly homogeneous race. A sparse, but rapidly-growing population; therefore an assured growth of power with mere lapse of time. This population, intellectually stagnant, devoid of all initiative, but, within the limits of their traditional mode of existence, fit to be used for, and to be moulded into, anything; tenacious, brave, obedient, contemptuous of hardship and fatigue, unsurpassable stuff for soldiers in the wars of that time where the fighting of compact masses was decisive. The country itself with only one – its Western – side turned towards Europe, and so only attackable on that side; without any centre, the conquest of which might compel a peace; almost absolutely safeguarded against conquest by absence of roads, immenseness of surface, and poverty of resources. Here was a position of impregnable strength, ready for any one who knew how to use it, whence that might be done with impunity, which would have brought war after war upon any other Government in Europe" (Engels, 1890).

Taking into consideration all the above-mentioned conclusions made by Marx and Engels, we can state them to be relevant nowadays. It may be no accident that in 1934 Stalin declared some of Engels's works to be "extremely inaccurate", "absolutely hostile to the Russian people", as they "could be used by their enemies": so, such papers must be strictly forbidden (Siundiukov, 2018). It stands to reason that he meant the article we have analyzed. However, modern European politicians (especially those who have illusions about establishing constructive cooperation with Russia) should read the above-quoted works of Marx and Engels very carefully. In that case, they might get rid of the fancy ideas of mutually fruitful collaboration with the Russian Federation.

Marx' and Engels's warnings about the imperial nature of Russia and its foreign policy goals are more relevant today than ever. Because of the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the well-planned Russian aggression against Ukraine started in 2014, the history repeats: the lack of the European unity and the constant underestimation of the Russian capabilities pose the same threats to international security nowadays, just like more than 300 years ago, during the Great Northern War. European politicians are well aware of the dangers involved. However, some of them still indulge imperial ambitions of the Russian Federation in order to achieve the ephemeral goal of establishing a common security area stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok.

The overtures to Russia and support for its foreign policy are proved to be detrimental to the international security interests because of the Russian activities towards the post-Soviet states. When the Russian military forces entered Georgia on 8 August 2008, the global

political experts and leaders were divided into those who determined the Five-Day War as an act of aggression and violation of international law by Russia and those who considered the Russian invasion of Georgia as the historical mission of the Kremlin, since the RF military action ‘Operation to Force Georgia to Peace’ might put an end to political instability in the South Caucasus region. The fact that the Russian Federation would continue various dangerous military conflicts in Libya, Syria, Ukraine, and other countries in the world because of a centuries-old tradition of its expansionist foreign policy could only be predicted by the politicians and scholars who remembered the warnings about the unchanging aggressive essence of the Muscovite – Russian foreign policy to have been given by the contemporaries of the German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the second half of the 19th century (Naarden, 1990, p. 783).

The Conclusion. Therefore, the analysis of the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels on the foreign policy of Muscovy – Russia, which were silenced and criticized in the Communist USSR, allowed us to find out the origins, essence, tools and consequences of the implementation of the foreign policy strategy of Russian state formations in the 13th – 19th centuries. Written in the second half of the 19th century, the articles of these famous German philosophers draw scientifically objective conclusions on the Russian policy of imperial expansion to have been borrowed by the founding fathers of Muscovy – Russia from the Khans of the Golden Horde. Since Marx and Engels were recognized as the foremost advocates of the Communist ideology in the USSR, their balanced assessment of the foreign policy doctrine of Russian state formations aimed at achieving global domination became extremely unpleasant for the Soviet totalitarian regime. In this context, all the conclusions on the imperial essence of Russia made by the founding fathers of Marxism remain extremely important and relevant. They allow us to answer the key question of modern-day international politics by explaining why the Russian Federation is constantly violating the peremptory norms of international law and why its authorities are permanently seeking to regain Russia’s superpower status.

As leaders of the European countries have been playing very sophisticated geopolitical games since the official proclamation of the Russian Empire in 1721, they allowed once neglected and internationally weak Muscovy to undergo several state transformations and to maintain its imperial status under various names, such as the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and the Russian Federation. So, despite all the efforts to prove the contrary, Russia has long become the ‘Evil Empire’ whose collapse was awaited not only by the founding fathers of Marxism, but also by the entire civilized world.

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