

The Construction of the *Katehon*: Memory of the Kievan Fragmentation and the Growth of Monarchical Institutions under Moscow until Ivan IV

Matthew Raphael Johnson
Johnstown, PA

Kievan Rus is a curious time for Russia and for historians specializing in the area because it is a fragile manifestation of what is undoubtedly a strong and unified linguistic, religion and ethnic world. There was little religious persecution, tyranny or mass warfare. Wars were, as always for the era, small scale and done among elites and their servitors. There was no serfdom and few, if any, taxes.

To oversimplify, the philosophical conception was based around the price as the unifying principle of the society. There was no “state” in any sense of the term. Each of the regions of Rus' had their own history, and these were incorporated into a common history of the Russian land as a single community was a fact, while fragmentation was a perversion rather than an inherent tendency.

Kiev was summarized largely by the thought and actions of the Caves Monastery: there, the philosophy of the Kievan realm was manifest and articulated. The ontology of the realm was that matter, always permeable by spirit, was brought to its terminus – its goal – through the spirit. The state, the crown and social life are granted its final telos by the church. Spiritual life is the striving for inner freedom. Logos, the very presence of Christ in His own creation, is the Trinity functional in natural law. The Father is the source, Logos the pattern and the Spirit its manifestation and grace.

In the thought of St. Euphrosyne of Polotsk (1173) centers around the ontological conception that any object, if perceived without the passions of life, sin and desire, appear as form. In the Chronicles, the person is revealed in the unfolding of events; the substance of all things shows itself historically. Nations are this substance. While it is fashionable in the age of immense profits from multinational conglomerates to deny the existence of historical nations, the empirical record shows a very different story. The Chronicles of both Kiev and Polotsk show nations to be essential actors manifesting the design of Substance over time.

In Kiev, there existed two parallel forms of political power: the landed estate and the prince. These did not always coincide. The Retinue (or the *druzhina*) were the old tribal leaders of the Slavic peoples who saw their relevance fade as the state developed. At the same time, the *veche*, or the assembly, was the forum for the old tribal landowners. Again, these two did not always coincide. Fragmentation occurred when the estates grew in power while the opposite occurred when the prince was a strong military figure with great authority.

The fragmentation of the Kievan realm is the result of numerous economic forces. The strengthening of the feudal estates is of immense importance as an oligarchy developed which led to substantial class struggle. Local nobles and their private armies no longer needed

Kiev, the church nor moral scruples.

Local strongmen took advantage of advances in agriculture such as the three field rotational system which led to increases the production. The oligarchs then took this excess product and turned it into an important source of income. Their private armies grew.

This was manifest in the strengthening of cities, all of which served as the capital of local regions and soon, the presence of oligarchical rule. When the route to Byzantium was closed off due to the Crusaders and the earlier monopolization of trade in Venice, this weakened the economic foundation of unity, diminished the flow of trade duties and of course, undermined the economic power of the prince of Kiev. The main source of wealth became the control over the peasants. This, added to the wars for the Kievan throne and the raids of the Polovtsian nomads, Kiev was rapidly weakening.

In the thought of St. Cyril of Turov and Clement (Smolyatich), “fragmentation” was the chaotic appearance of the world under the control of passion. Centrifugal tendencies in ancient Russia were stopped temporarily due to the Polovtsian danger which demanded joint efforts among local princes. After the death of the great St. Vladimir II Monomakh, Mstyslav the Great (1125-1132) continued his father's policy of centralization.

Upon his death, there were about 14 of these principalities in Russia: Kiev, Chernigov, Pereyaslav, Ryazan, Rostov, Suzdal, Smolensk, Galicia, Vladimir, Volyna, Polotsk, Turov, Pskov and Novgorod. Relations among these rulers and elites were preserved thanks to a common faith, language and legal tradition that proved Russia was a nation, just not unified into any political arrangement. The Extensive Pravda showed the general acceptance of a legal unity among the church and population, but elite princes would have none of it. Kiev had long entered an age where unity was more expensive than fragmentation. The short-term mentality won over long term interest.

Nomadic raids in the south forced many to the Northeast. The Lyubech Conferences (1097) and its Vitychev (Uvetichi) successor (1100) justified the existence of independent princedoms, but only sought their voluntary cooperation. The ideology of the Conferences was first, to legitimize the single, Rurikid dynasty in many parts. Cooperation and shared inheritance was the norm rather than a single ruling power.

North-Eastern Russia is located in the basin of the Oka and the Upper Volga and is the land that later became the core of the new Russian state. A large part of its territory is covered by forests, but huge fields at the edge of forest in the region of Rostov and Suzdal have a strongly rich black soil.

Rostov-Suzdal rose at the expense of Kiev in the 1130s. The younger son of Vladimir Monomakh, Yuri, nicknamed Dolgoruky, sought the Kievan throne but instead settled for building his own empire in the North. Wars, uncertain economics, nomadic incursions (financed largely by Italian merchants) and foreign interference from all sides made Kiev an uncertain investment. Yuri attacked Smolensk and Novgorod. It was clear that Kiev was the preferred nominal “ruler” of the oligarchical republic, rather than the more centralized Suzdal.

The war between Kiev and Suzdal was ideological. The latter strictly controlled nobles while the crown was centralized. Kiev maintained a balance between the *veche*, *druzhina* and the prince. Yuri was the main architect of the “Suzdal” idea that his son Andrei would perfect. However, Novgorod was dependent on Suzdal for her grain shipments. Allied with Galicia against Kiev, Yuri's reign was short-lived and he died in 1157.

Upon the death of Yuri, power passed to his eldest son, the infamous Andrew

Bogolyubsky. Lateral succession, the rotational system accepted by the Lyubech Congress, was rejected in favor of a stronger crown. Andrei transferred the capital to Vladimir, a move caused by the desire to avoid the influence of the old nobility of Rostov-Suzdal. This was essential in developing a strong state rather than a weak and vacillating oligarchic “republic.” Once free of oligarchy, he strengthened his own power by creating a new cadre of local service nobles.

Nothing put fear into the hearts of elites than service to the common good. Only the most consistent violence forced these oligarchs to do anything not immediately in their financial interest. In Vladimir, land ownership was theoretically entirely owned by the prince, that is, God whose vicar the prince was. Justice stated that the land belonged to those who worked it, so the grant there was implied. A clear alliance of crown, church and peasant developed.

Both Yuri and Andrei defeated the Bulgars at the Southern Volga. They served as the gatekeepers of eastern trade through the southern Volga regions. Twice defeated, they were not destroyed. Only trade concessions were granted. However, this helped solidify both men in power. At the same time, struggles with Chernigov also strengthened the Northeastern alliance.

The “Suzdal idea” is that the prince remains the strongest landowner. His own holdings were merged with public lands. Nobles were granted land in exchange for service – this is the conception of the Muscovite idea and clearly did not come from the Mongols. To the extent that service was carried out, the landlords were sovereign on their estates.

The art that developed in this context stressed the powerful facade. The compact, white stone facade for churches is the most notable and instantly recognizable contribution of Suzdal. The palace of the ruler was carved from a single block of white stone. Vertical motion was overwhelmingly the dominant concept. It stressed inner peace in that a static order was meant to rule. The cosmos is a strictly ordered harmony – this is the main ideological conception of Suzdal aesthetics. The attempt was to replace Kiev using strongly Byzantine models. Evil was a disorder – it was a state of affairs rather than an action.

Two coalitions developed in Russia by 1160. First, that of Andrei, Polotsk, Ryazan, Murom and Novgorod. Given Mstyslav II now in Kiev, Andrei's infamous decision to destroy Kiev became a reality. In 1169 Vladimir and Suzdal, allied with the Polovtsy, destroyed Kiev. He saw southern Russia as foreign. Once Greek trade revived, he wanted Kiev out of the way and saw this revival as creating a new power structure in the south.

A Dniiper coalition developed to take advantage of Greek trade and included Bryansk, Kursk, Cherkassy while the Northeast empire centered around Suzdal, but the southern forces of Galicia, Smolensk and Chernigov were his allies.

The basic political theory of Suzdal was the notion of patrimony: there was no private property since all was contingent on service, the crown included. The prince, as always, never ruled alone and never passed “legislation.” Law was something written in the heart, the custom of the people as manifesting some facet of natural law. Laws were only written down when they were under threat.

In each era of Russian life, the church consistently backed symphony and centralization. Noble rule and oligarchy were the very principle of passion. The service noble was the opposite: he was meant to serve the common good. This alone earned him the right to call anything his. He was free to leave, as were the peasants who were assigned to him in the same way he was assigned to the crown.

The main event, as mentioned above, was the 1169 sack of Kiev. It is puzzling why this method of taking power was needed: all contemporary accounts speak of this in the same sort of

voice as the sack of Constantinople in 1204. There were no other ways to show Kiev no longer mattered?

One issue was that Mstyslav II had been granted Kiev in 1167 and his military talents restored Kievan power: he took Volyna, Chernigov and freed the route to Byzantium. While de facto free, Suzdal was de jure still “under” Kiev. Sviatoslav, an extension of Suzdal, had been removed from Novgorod as the latter had clearly seen Kiev reborn. Their dependent on the northeast alliance need not be perpetual. Sviatoslav, as can be expected, appealed to Andrei while Novgorod appealed to Kiev.

In his freeing of the Dniper trade routes, Mstyslav II built the alliance with Chernigov, Volyna and Tver all agreeing to cooperate in ensuring the route remain open. Trade doubled as the Polovtsy were destroyed once and for all. Roman was Mstyslav's answer to Sviatoslav in Novgorod, and he took revenge on the supporters of Suzdal in the city. It was not long before Mstyslav took much of the north as well. The alliance with Andrei was Polotsk, Ryazan and Murom. This was all of Russia not under Kiev's rule. Andrei's mentality was that either Kiev be militarily defeated or the Suzdal idea would be permanently destroyed.

Vsevolod the Big Nest (1176-1212), Andrei's successor, strengthened the Vladimir principality and the power of the prince. He expanded his domain, strengthened the *druzhina* and, under the influence of Novgorod and Ryazan, undertook a new campaign against the Volga Bulgars. As a result, in the North-Eastern lands the strengthening of the power of the Grand Duke was such as to assert the primacy of the Vladimir-Suzdal principality among other Russian lands.

But the centrifugal processes have evolved, and after the death of Vsevolod again began strife and weaken the principality. As a result of the struggle Vsevolodovich came to power, his son George (1218-1238), who became the last ruler of the independent Vladimir-Suzdal principality, and died in a tragic hour of the Mongol invasion.

This chaos was reflected in the church as well. Metropolitan Mikhail of Kiev died in 1147. Prince Izyaslav of Kiev convened a purely local synod to elect the monk Clement (Smolyatich) as metropolitan without receiving the acceptance of the Ecumenical patriarchate. The bishop of Novgorod, Nifont, rejected this action. Yuri of Suzdal accepted this rejection and two parties emerged: the “Greek” and the “Slavic” parties in ecclesiastical politics.

The Byzantine Patriarchate sent Metropolitan Constantine to Russia to gather the facts and quickly deposed Clement as illegitimate and pronounced his actions invalid, meaning any priests he ordained were rejected. Many were sent into exile as schismatics. Not surprisingly, having created a vacancy, Constantine took the see of Kiev himself.

The princes, now divided, demanded yet another investigation and so the Patriarch in Constantinople sent Theodore to investigate. He removed both metropolitan from office and was appointed by the Patriarchate in 1161. His rule over the church was openly rejected and challenged by Andrei.

St. Clement was canonized and is generally considered the legitimate metropolitan. The canonical situation was complicated by the chaos in Byzantium at the time. Izyaslav, his patron, died in 1154, and the metropolitan was driven from his see.

As a reclusive monk, his election came as a surprise. He initially rejected his election in more than a perfunctory way. His philosophical work is remarkable for its time and centered around a semi-determinism that was used to make sense out of suffering and pain. History was the consistent and infallible unfolding of the mission of the logos, the presence of God on earth. While the Greek and Russian worlds were in chaos, the rationality of logos can be seen for those

living a life separate from self interest and passion.

Why did Kiev decline? Variables include poor communications over large areas, the growth of oligarchy, constant warfare and the rise of strong rivals. AN Nasonov and I Froyanov blamed the growth of cities. M Braichevsky said the growth of strong feudal estates were the main culprit while there was lacking a single source of ideological thought. The nomads closed ranks and unified while magnate growth in the countryside made princely power in Kiev almost impossible.

P. Tolochkov argued that by 1130 or so, nobles were removing themselves from all forms of service. The prince and the oligarchs had no common interest. The noble power destroyed Kiev as it was later to destroy Poland. The veche in Kiev, just like the Polish Senate, refused any large army so as to prevent any royal growth. The alliance of Galicia and Suzdal squeezed Kiev. Volyna was wealthy and connected itself to Vladimir. Pereslav was Greek dominated and was deep into Byzantine trade.

Mihail Hrushevsky, the famed founder of the Ukrainian-Galician school of history, argued that the changes in the Kievan crown after Mstyslav II were all the result of warfare. Prince-claimants were not above calling on the Turkic nomads to assist them in their wars for Kievan dominance. Warfare destroyed the economy and forced the population to move to Galicia or Volyna in the west or Suzdal in the north.

As is always the case, states fall into ruin when the central authority fails and oligarchy takes its place. There are only two forces in history – that of greed, the fragmentary power of oligarchy and that of honor, that of the monarchy. These need not be literal institutions, but can also be ideal types such that a “central” ideal can be the national culture being debased. Such a decay leads to the rule of appetite, leading invariably to the rule of oligarchy. It is as close to an iron constant as history can manifest.

Among the basic theories and ideas concerning Kiev's fragmentation, there is one variable that all agree upon: elite, oligarchic rule. Most of history is a battle between the forces of virtue, unity and the common good. Describing and explaining what this is serves as the basis for political theory. The other entity is that of oligarchy: personal, private, nominalist, individualist and egocentric. In Russian history – at any time – these two forces are at war in the most violent manner. When the oligarchs rule, disaster follows without fail. When the common good holds sway, prosperity is normally the result.

Debt, debt slavery and usury keep these people in power. They have become a parasitic class as Kiev falls into decline. Suzdal has kept these forces at bay and, despite their many problems, maintains the common good in the far north.

George Vernadsky offers one of the best analyses of Kievan economics in English. As always, periods of strong royal rule are periods of prosperity, while the opposite is true in periods of weaker central control. Just like money, however, political power does not go away, it merely changes hands. When princely power fails, the oligarchy takes it place as it did from 1202-1218 and again from 1227-1232.

The Mongol period will not be treated here except to say that it permitted the rise of centralized rule under Moscow. The argument is that Mongol rule was an interlude that, once weakened, led to the solution of the problems of Kievan fragmentation. This topic I have treated elsewhere and will not repeat it here.

The end of the Mongol period permitted Moscow to rise as a religious center. Simeon of Suzdal saw Russia as an emerging sacral kingdom. Once the Council of Florence removed Russia from the western mainstream, centralizing power was a necessity for the maximum mobilization of resources and national defense. A non-possessor, Russia was seen as the chosen race, one that needed to become holy.

Filofei was an Athonite. Far from uneducated, he was a master of Greek, a scholar of Athonite hesychasm, and a comrade of the great St. Maxim Grek. For him, the events of Moscow's rise, Byzantium's fall and the papacy's aggression showed that history was reaching its apex: from a theological point of view, it certainly was.

Simeon and Filofei saw the rise of Ivan III as the development of historical truth similar to Constantine, Vladimir or even Justinian. The 1497 Law Code was adopted along with both the Two-Headed Eagle and the icon of St. George as national symbols.

The 16th century was one of the most productive and progressive eras for the Russian peasant. Massive increases in Russian territory brought huge gains in productivity and an incentive to change techniques. Part of this was the growth of the extended family as an economic unit where 10 relatives within a single family society was the norm.

Serfdom did not exist and taxes were very low. In the central provinces, the rent paid by a peasant was roughly 30%, though it was collected very irregularly. The lord could be sued by his tenants and they were equal under the law. Free peasant ownership of the so-called black lands produced massive increases in yields and, as a result, paid low taxes only to the monarch himself. To an extent, the southern peasant was a yeoman, while the prevalence of the mir increases as one moves north. The commune made the growth of feudal tenure impossible.

Russia was and is vulnerable. In the west and north, she was surrounded by enemies. The response to this was the development of the military servitor class where land granted to a knight and his retinue was conditional. It was also inalienable. Thus grew a distinction that did not exist in Kiev – that between the boyar class and servitors.

The memory of Kievan decline never departed from Russia. By the end of the 15th century the Suzdal idea had taken hold both through the Mongol period and the memory of Kiev's slow demise. Part of this transition was the ability, for example, of a noble to leave the service of a prince and move elsewhere. In Kiev, it was accepted; after the Mongols, it was treason. As the Mongol empire declined, Russia, through Moscow, developed a centralized system to deal with the struggles of the previous Kievan era of decline.

Part of this transition was independent of the Mongols and was the result of a curiously obscure civil war taking place in the early 14th century. Yuri, the son of St. Dmitri Donskoy, took over Moscow at his father's death. A Galician, the boyarin of Moscow rejected Yuri, although Moscow was legitimately part of his patrimony through his father. The other claimant to the throne was Basil II, who had taken over after his father, basil I, died in 1425. Yuri was the older brother and, according to the recently developed notion of primogeniture in Russia, had the better claim. This is part of the reason why the resulting war was as much ideological as personal. Yuri was pro-western in most respects (as his Galician background might suggest), leading the church to side with the more Byzantinist Basil II.

In a very real way, this was a war between Galicia and the western, Kievan idea versus the Suzdal idea. The economic structure of the conflict follows accordingly: the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) had built a free-trade zone including Pskov and, of course, Novgorod

established by treaty in 1446. Being Galician, Yuri was the representative of strong merchant interests in western Ukraine.

Yuri defeated Basil II in 1433 and took Moscow. To do this, he required the Crimean Khan's assistance. The economic organization followed the ideological: the GDL helped establish a western-looking coalition of its own free trade zone, Galicia, the Uniat movement in Ukraine that was arrayed against Moscow, Tver and the Orthodox Church. The Metropolitan St. Photius was an essential figure backing Basil. However, when this war first developed after Basil I's death, Basil II was allied with the GDL and Tver. However, that was based on a personal relationship with Vyutas of Lithuania. Upon his death in 1430, that alliance fell apart.

Basil II had harmed Yuri by attacking, not Moscow, but Yuri's base in Galicia, underscoring the class nature of the war. Yuri died suddenly in 1434 leaving three sons, Vasyl, Dmitri and Dmitri-Shemiaka. Vasyl sided with Basil II. Shemiaka started a new phase of the war in 1434, having defeated Dmitri. Shemiaka pretended to be a supporter of Basil for the sake of "peace." When the monarch was at a monastic pilgrimage, Shemiaka took his family hostage and plundered Moscow. Had Shemiaka won, Moscow would have become a distant periphery of the northern European, urban capitalist elite as an oppressed exporter of raw materials to the European cities.

The famed Russian historian LV Tcherepin stresses the fact that this war, apart from being ideological, had deep class roots. Basil I, much like Ivan the Terrible later on, faced a strong, well armed nobility with deep roots in the west. The northern states in Russia needed to be crushed or the Novgorod-GDL trade federation would have defeated Moscow and inserted Russia into the mainstream of western capitalism. There was no question, especially under Shemiaka, that this was a class-based ideological war.

The post-Mongol legal order was laid out in 1497. Its primary purpose was to end the privileges of local nobles. At the time, these boyarin had private armies and their own republics ruled by them. This was the group represented by Yuri and Shemiaka. The nuts and bolts of Muscovite centralization was to break this class – as they had been defeated in the civil war – and make it possible for lower servitors to appeal their divisions to Moscow directly. Judges and governors, appointed by the prince, were paid directly from Moscow and were granted all forms of independence. Dishonesty and corruption were severely punished.

Judicial procedure under the 1497 code divided the trial – there was no distinction between civil and criminal – into three elements. First, that the two parties needed to be established. This was significant when a monastery, holding the land of a boyar noble, could be excluded from the decision. After all, the land was actually that of the boyar class. Hence, establishing identities permitted the state to remove all legal fictions that plague modern capitalism. Corporations were not "people" and the actual rulers of these entities needed to be flushed out before the trial can proceed.

Second, the pleas and arguments were made with, of course, the adjudication done according to statute. The burden of proof was always on the plaintiff. The decisions began to stress punishments over the older Kievan system of fines. The privilege of money was removed.

The reign of Basil III (1479-1533) saw the results of centralization: massive economic growth and development. Pskov was brought into line and 300 oligarchs evicted. Smolensk is retaken as both the Khan and Poland are defeated. The growth of the monarch's military power was based on a "social contract" of sorts. There was no means to force service, so the "contract"

was a matter of personal trust. Sobornost' was manifest in that the "parts" of the whole, the service nobility, could not function without the central direction and religion sanction of the center. The center, for its part, could not function without the new service class. When basil died, this contract will be broken as the oligarchy will again emerge and rule in all its irrational fury.

The Code of 1497 made it more difficult for peasants of any income level to leave the landlords for whom they worked. Under the circumstances, this was a progressive measure since it forced peasants to invest in a specific area. Warfare in the 16th century made it more imperative that such investments be made.

Wealthier landlords often enticed peasants away offering more favorable labor contracts. This was banned in 1592 under Tsar Boris and solidified in 1597. The Code of Alexis in 1649 created what vaguely might be called "serfdom," affecting between 40 to 50% of the nation's peasants. It was only under the force of the Enlightenment under Peter I and his oligarchic successors (none of whom had a legitimate title to the crown except Elizabeth) that peasants were (illegally, but often) bought and sold as slaves.

In 1719, serfs made up 56% of all peasants and this shrunk slightly to 54% in 1745. By the middle of the 19th century, this had dropped slightly again to 48%. Since the 18th century saw all church land nationalized, all church peasants became state peasants and, under normal circumstances, were free.

About 3% of all owners had more than 1000 serfs which was about 25% of the entire self population in the 18th century, which is certainly consistent with its oligarchic nature. In 1762, about half of all serf owners had under 20 serfs. These, again, were not "owned" peasants in small numbers, but were free renters under usually very poor landlords. Titles were the only distinction between the two classes. Under Catherine, her policies consolidated the wealthiest families in the "Duma" permitting the growth of a totally secular, if not pagan, oligarchy.

Hence, serfdom in the sense normally described in the literature did not occur until western ideas penetrated Russia. It is ironic to speak of the development of "western humanism" as a force for liberation without mentioning the intellectually lazy phrase "Enlightened Absolutism" as equally western, modern and scientific. Serfdom was a western development that, naturally enough, led to violent altercations at the level of civil wars. The most popular, Razin or Pugachev, were based around the old Muscovite idea of a popular tsar, the Old Rite and Cossack liberties. These were counter-revolutionary doctrines. It is absurd to say that these rebellions were secular or "liberal" as might be heard at Harvard, but rather, they were Old Russia at war with the Enlightenment.

It might be worth mentioning that in 1826, well over 1000 Petrograd bureaucrats had been former serfs. A century before, the census at the end of Peter's reign showed 35% of all urban merchants as former serfs.

The coronation of Ivan IV was designed to end noble oligarchy once and for all. In 1547, Ivan sought to distinguish his own office from the other princes and boyars, that of a supreme office rather than an equal one. Importantly, Ivan sought to emphasize the continuity of his power from the Byzantine emperors. This had been done by St. Vladimir I, St. Yaroslav, St. Vladimir II Monomakh and Ivan III, just to name four.

The 1547 Moscow fire was interpreted symbolically by the population. The fire was the very nature of noble rule, an elite without a king to guide and control them. A fire can be good

and is even necessary, but without control, it destroys all in its path without creating. A postmodern reader cannot read symbols, but in a non-nominalist world, it is a primary form of communication. Therefore, the consequent uprising was against the powerful Glinsky family, but also against all elite rule in general. It was a cry to Ivan for help, since most of the substance of the poor was taken by this rapacious elite.

Ivan's rule was the model for royal sovereignty, political propaganda notwithstanding. In 1549, naturally enough, the first order of business was to call a representative assembly. This was the Zemsky Sobor. This consisted of the Boyar Duma, court circles, clergy, townsmen and all grades of the nobility. The opening speech by Ivan was to repeat what the common folk were saying in the streets: the boyars abused their power (and him personally) during Ivan's minority. However, the only rational policy was to forgive all in the spirit of Christian morality. Repentance is first, the admission of a fault, second, the real, subjective desire to destroy this flaw and finally, to take concrete steps to ensure it does not repeat itself. "Forgiveness" is another symbol that most writers are blind to. It was a complex political program and not some trite commonplace.

Some of the concrete steps included the Code of 1550, which included punishments for the boyars and clerks for malfeasance (eg bribery), as well as limited legal rights of governors against the nobility. The proverbial St. George's Day rule was preserved.

The following year was another step, the famous Hundred Chapters Council, or the Stoglavy Sobor. Again, a representative assembly was called. Decreed by the assembly was the strengthening of order in the churches and monasteries, the standardization of ceremonies, and the very important collection of an "all Russian" choir of saints.

For the elite, it was a nightmare. In 1552, a full list of the Tsar's court was made, which, along with the princely and boyar aristocracy consisted of the nobility and the upper classes. This could only mean further regulation and demands for service. Those serving the new order were about 4 million people and became a new service elite different from the older boyarin. They served the office of tsar, not Ivan, and more importantly, saw the common good, rather than private interest, as the primary focus. Worse, Ivan created a standing army. The central government finally was going to have a highly limited way to enforce its demands.

Ending around 1556, Ivan then appointed governors over Russia's traditional regions rather than relying on noble good faith. These had existed before, but they used local resources for their sustenance. Ivan gave them a salary. The days of the oligarchy were numbered. Nobles families, the largest of which had substantial private armies, self-sufficient economies, and even intelligence services, prepared for war.

Ivan was not done. Lastly, and as a result of the foregoing, Ivan adopted the 1556 Code of Service, establishing a uniform procedure for the organization of military forces. Now, elites with a certain amount of land had to select, train and arm a warrior and an entourage. In practice, it meant the end of private armies. Practically, it meant that the oligarchy needed to actually earn their wealth and privileges. In other words, it had to function as an aristocracy and eliminate any oligarchic tendencies or be liquidated.

The old families were weakened and a new, far more representative group of servitors of various ranks were to rise in their place. This is the most that any civil government at any time can hope for: to control oligarchy and to maintain a loyal, patriotic military and civil service. Government is a highly limited and clumsy instrument – Ivan's reforms were designed to bring it to this limit while still ensuring that all politics was local.

This writer's analysis of Ivan's Oprichnina and his political theory have been detailed elsewhere. It is unique in the English language for striving to understand Ivan as he understood himself, rather than as an alienated, urban, culture-less American academic understands him.

Ivan's "foreign policy" was purely domestic. Its sole purpose has not changed in a millennium: to secure his borders. From 1552 to 1556 the eastern part of this was developed with the long overdue destruction of the predatory Kazan and Astrakhan states. As is natural, the Volga was the route to a basic prosperity with the east. No government in Russia could have done differently.

However, the west was developing strong states under Roman catholic monarchs who both served their own interests and followed papal policy through their "crusades" against the Orthodox. In 1558, he successfully began the war with the Livonian Order, caused primarily by the king's desire to establish Russia in the Baltic States and to develop maritime trade with European countries. Again, this was a national imperative. Further, the Livonian Order was a papal group for the express purpose of destroying enemies of Rome. Russia was one of these. Unfortunately, Ivan defeated one enemy, meaning the others needed to join forces. The Rzeczpospolita was the unfortunate result.

This is nothing more than a thumbnail sketch of the forces that went into the building of centralized Russia. The main theses have been:

1. That Russia's policy was created by the force of events. Any government, to the extent it was actually Russian, would have done precisely the same;
2. This was all a matter of Russian survival, not mere "policy preferences";
3. Ivan IV was a skilled leader far less bloody than his European counterparts and faced with an impossible situation. His measures were moderate and because of this, the old families returned to create the Time of Troubles;
4. These policies were very popular;
5. Kiev's fragmentation and decline was always an essential memory in this process. Her decline was part of her internal constitution. Moscow is thus part of the "Suzdal idea."
6. Most of all, internal consolidation was about the security of Russia's borders. "Empire" for Moscow and "empire" for London had nothing in common. For the latter, profit was the motive. The Russian "imperium" (to distinguish it from the commercial empires) was exclusively to secure the country and was a drain on the country's resources.

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