

---

## How can we peacefully transform societal structures?

---

Gilbert Ahamer

Institute for Economic and Social History,  
Karl-Franzens University Graz,  
Universitätsstrasse 15/F2, 8010, Austria  
Email: gilbert.ahamer@uni-graz.at

---

As in five earlier Inderscience special issues by the same editor, this *IJFIP* editorial represents a conceptual *umbrella* under which all contributions to this second part of ‘Transition of global society and technology’ – find their appropriate place. This umbrella is the *quest for societal transition* [Ahamer, (2019), pp.189–204] including an energy transition (Grigoryev, 2020), making human species fully blossom to the best of their potential – even if current prospects might look weak.

This weekend witnesses the highest-ranking special day in Eastern European orthodoxy (this name literally meaning: ‘right believers’): Easter – which in itself represents the astounding breaking free of humankind from limitations of seemingly fixed borders. In the same country, however, restricting borders are felt more and more painfully, both personally and politically.

As reported in this astonishing news text (APA, 2021a), even the highest representative of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kyrill, expressed in a sermon distributed the preceding Saturday: The fulfilment of powers that sometimes required the restriction of the freedoms of others cannot go hand in hand with arrogance. “In this case, power becomes tyranny.” In addition, the Patriarch pointed out: If the church identifies itself with a political force and thus becomes a lever in the political struggle, could it still be an authority and spiritual mother for everyone? “Never”, said Kirill. Given the chronic critique that Russian Church is too close to state power, this expression might mark a new strategic turn.

Therefore, let us analyse the sequence of events that might have led to such alienation: after having produced a documentary on political practice (Youtube, 2021; Volkov, 2021) the best-know (but never explicitly named) rival with potential chance for success in the upcoming presidential elections is in jail – a well-known terrifying institution (Dubovy, 2021; APA, 2021b) – after having survived a poisoning attack and presently being threatened by medical problems potentially leading to losing a leg or life, which motivated him to a hunger strike (Sonin, 2021). Offices of this victim’s organisation Fund for Fighting Corruption (FBK) was declared an extremist organisation. Resulting huge demonstrations were successfully beaten down by mass arrests (AP, 2021).

At the same time, Russia’s Covid-19 death toll per population number is third-highest worldwide (RFE, 2021a; Shelin, 2021), paralleled with high vaccination scepticism among population despite huge vaccine offerings by government to other countries at the same time (RFE, 2021b). While death toll is higher than officially declared (Coalson et al., 2021), attempts for an interpretative success (Kremlin, 2021) might turn the state strategy into a success when citizens mainly listen to their own state TV. Within the same

speech, menaces to other countries were couched in unclear information provided: “We won’t say what our red line is. We won’t say how we’ll answer for violating Russia’s basic interests” – as outside observers (RFERL, 2021) perceived this annual speech.

Meanwhile, Russia’s (only) close international ally Belarus declared almost every expression of opinion ‘extremist’ (Martinovich, 2021) and in an unproven allegation even hypothesised an attempted state coup, while its economic power and the state’s ethical assets dwindle (Karbalevich, 2021; Boulègue, 2020; Niemann, 2019).

The state’s economic vertebral column, fossil energy industry, seems too slow in reacting to EU ‘Green Deal’ requirements and fails to notice the global megatrends away from fossils towards renewables (Ahamer and Mayer, 2013) but clings on an outdated pipeline (Lau, 2021; Thumann, 2021).

The academic system recently took efforts to purify itself from plagiarism (RSL, 2019) and also the author is being involved for a decade now in lifting Russian publication submissions to an internationally compatible level within a regular peer review system – a difficult exercise given continuous pressure and a cultural atmosphere to understand information as a tool to just project state power (Renz and Smith, 2016) into populations of other countries (Shaishmelashvili, 2021; Atlantic Council, 2021a, 2021b), including economic measures, information operations, and cyber-attacks, but also military attacks (Shandra, 2020).

Production of fake news structurally does lead to self-deception (Shelin, 2021), regarding Covid, energy and possibly even sentiments among population.

When abstracting from a single leading figure, the underlying substrate of a certain percentage of profoundly anti-liberal population and a growing percentage of disappointed loyalists (Bathon, 2021) seems to pose the deeper problem. Stability or stagnation, depending on the point of view, is the ‘system dynamics’ diagnosis, while hardly anyone currently sees a personnel alternative – admittedly by lack of realisable alternative visions. The differences are that the loyalists do not hold the leader responsible for grievances, but rather his entourage. For them, he is a good tsar who cannot keep an eye on everything and continues to be the best alternative. This is a significant difference to the so-called traditionalists, who do not (anymore) see the ‘good will’ of their president (Bathon, 2021).

What do these studies mean for Russia? The decreased approval of the government, both of which are noted among the population, increases the likelihood of unpredictable regional protests. As the Carnegie Center puts it, the government is at a dead end, a *clear vision of the future* – apart from the leading figure in the Kremlin – *is missing*. Here, the powerful should resist stagnation before their immobile apparatus becomes too rotten for reform from within – end of citation.

Thus – *more collective visioning* is needed (McTaggart, 2017, 2021) to overcome the structural blockades impeding *peaceful structural transformation of societies* towards humanitarian targets.

In this respect, the South American author, Villoldo (2021) wisely states: “What has to be hidden does not pose a permanent threat.”

Such insightful conviction encourages to *fight obscurity by sober clarity*, and – on another level – low academic quality by transparent review procedures. Then, the intrinsic need of all populations for a life in dignity prevails more easily – thus representing a planetary transition to humanitarian state systems beyond mere declaration.

## References

- Ahamer, G. (2019) *Mapping Global Dynamics – Geographic Perspectives from Local Pollution to Global Evolution*, Springer, Dordrecht [online] <https://www.springer.com/de/book/9783319517025>.
- Ahamer, G. and Mayer, J. (2013) 'Forward looking: structural change and institutions in highest-income countries and globally', *Campus-Wide Information Systems*, Vol. 30, No. 5, pp.386–403, DOI: 10.1108/CWIS-08-2013-0034.
- AP (2021) *3,000 Arrested at Protests Demanding Navalny's Release* [online] <https://apnews.com/article/vladimir-putin-moscow-arrests-europe-russia-56e06f50eab494213d09346a5d9b4e69> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- APA (2021a) *Millionen orthodoxe Christen feiern Ostern* [online] <https://www.msn.com/de-at/nachrichten/chronik/millionen-orthodoxe-christen-feiern-ostern/ar-BB1gheKM?ocid=entnewsntp> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- APA (2021b) *EU-Außenbeauftragter für neue Sanktionen gegen Russland* [online] <https://www.msn.com/de-at/nachrichten/other/eu-au%C3%9Fenbeauftragter-f%C3%BCr-neue-sanktionen-gegen-russland/ar-BB1dws6c?ocid=entnewsntp> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Atlantic Council (2021a) *Zelensky Unplugs Russian Propaganda – What's Next?* [online] [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Q7\\_YcSmOgE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Q7_YcSmOgE) (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Atlantic Council (2021b) *Can Biden Get Putin Out of Ukraine?* [online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-irkWVdSofo> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Bathon, R. (2021) *In der Sackgasse: Wie die Russen zu ihrer Führung stehen* [online] <https://mdz-moskau.eu/in-der-sackgasse-wie-die-russen-zu-ihrer-fuehrung-stehen/> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Boulègue, M. (2020) *Russia's Assets and Liabilities in Belarus*, CEPA [online] <https://cepa.org/russias-assets-and-liabilities-in-belarus/> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Coalson, R., Eckel, M. and Scollon, M. (2021) 'Red Lines' and Rosy Promises: Five Takeaways From Putin's State-of-the-Nation Speech [online] <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-putin-five-takeaways-state-of-nation-speech/31215781.html> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Dubovy, A. (2021) *The Russian Penal System* [online] <https://www.dekoder.org/de/gnose/strafvollzugssystem-fsin-besserungskolonie-straflager> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Grigoryev, L.M. (Ed.) (2020) 'Energy transition at the crossroads', *Russian Journal of Economics*, special issue, Vol. 6, No. 4 [online] <https://rujec.org/issue/2951/> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Karbalevich, V. (2021) *Belarus Becomes Europe's Sick Man* [online] <https://www.dekoder.org/de/article/belarus-karbalewitsch-thesen-zukunft> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Kremlin (2021) *Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly on 21.4.2021* [online] <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/65418> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Lau, J. (2021) *Rohrkrepiierer* [online] <https://www.zeit.de/2021/07/nord-stream-2-russland-alexej-nawalny-pipeline> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Martinovich, V. (2021) *No More Niches* [online] <https://www.dekoder.org/de/article/martinowitsch-verbote-repressionen-belarus> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- McTaggart, L. (2017) *The Power of Eight*, Atria Books, New York City.
- McTaggart, L. (2021) *Become a Better Healer with the Power of Eight. Compare* [online] <https://lynnemctaggart.com/> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Niemann, S. (2019) *Die Entwicklung der EU-Russland-Beziehungen seit der Ukraine-Krise 2014*, Master thesis, Curriculum International Development, Vienna University [online] <http://othes.univie.ac.at/57653/1/60657.pdf>.
- Renz, B. and Smith, H. (2016) *Winning Wars Without Battles: Hybrid Warfare and Other 'Indirect' Approaches in the History of Strategic Thought*, Aleksanteri Papers, Vol. 1/2016, pp.47–51, Kikimora Publications, Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki, Finland [online] [http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/english/publications/oa\\_aleksanteri\\_papers.html](http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/english/publications/oa_aleksanteri_papers.html); <https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/10549> (accessed 5 May 2021).

- RFE (2021a) *Russia's COVID-19 Death Toll Tops 225,000, Putting it Third-highest Globally* [online] <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-coronavirus-death-toll-third-highest/31184284.html> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- RFE (2021b) *Sputnik V: The Story of Russia's Controversial Covid-19 Vaccine* [online] <https://www.rferl.org/a/sputnik-v-vaccine/31133608.html> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- RFERL (2021) *Live Blog: Putin's Annual State-of-the-Nation Address as it Happened* [online] <https://www.rferl.org/a/live-blog-putin-annual-address-russia/31214619.html> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- RSL (2021) *International Research and Practical Conference "Revealing Plagiarisms 2019"* [online] <http://diss.rsl.ru/?menu=engnews/522/&lang=en> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Shaishmelashvili, G. (2021) *Russia's Permanent War Against Georgia* [online] <https://www.fpri.org/article/2021/03/russia-permanent-war-georgia/> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Shandra, A. (2020) *How Ukraine Can Defeat Russia* [online] <http://euromaidanpress.com/2020/11/18/how-ukraine-can-defeat-russia/> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Shelin, S. (2021) *Corona Policy: A Misery* [online] <https://www.dekoder.org/de/article/covid-19-uebersterblichkeit-statistik> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Sonin, K. (2021) *Die Fehler des Zaren* [online] <https://www.dekoder.org/de/article/nawalny-hungerstreik-gesundheitszustand-haft> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Thumann, M. (2021) *Pipeline zum Abschalten* [online] <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2021-02/nord-stream-2-ostsee-pipeline-russland-ukraine-usa> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Villoldo, A. (2021) *Healing the Dark Side. Online Course by Younity*, Muttenz, Switzerland.
- Volkov, D. (2021) *Navalny, Protests, and How Will it Carry On?* [online] <https://www.dekoder.org/de/article/nawalny-proteste-stimmung-umfrage> (accessed 5 May 2021).
- Youtube (2021) *Dvorec dla Putina (A Palace for Putin)*, English subtitles [online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipAnwilMncI> (accessed 5 May 2021).