The Philosophical Journal of Conflict and Violence
Vol. VIII, Issue 1/2024
© The Authors 2024
Available online at http://trivent-publishing.eu/

On the Precipice of the Political: A Katechontic Consideration of Kojève's Concept of Empire

Kyle Moore

CRMEP, Kingston University London, UK

Abstract

During and in the immediate aftermath of WWII, Alexandre Kojève formulated two different and conflicting concepts of empire: one which promoted the idea of world empire, a so-called "universal and homogeneous state," and another advocating a multi-polar organisation of empire-states working in tandem to delay world unity. I analyse this tension in Kojève's political thought and suggest how it is related to the political theology of Carl Schmitt, in particular his concept of the katechon.

Keywords

Empire; authority; *katechon*; *Großraum*; end of history; multi-polar world; depoliticisation; globalisation; Alexandre Kojève; Carl Schmitt

DOI: 10.22618/TP.PJCV.20248.1.97.001

The PJCV Journal is published by Trivent Publishing

This is an Open Access article distributed in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial (CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0) license, which permits others to copy or share the article, provided original work is properly cited and that this is not done for commercial purposes. Users may not remix, transform, or build upon the material and may not distribute the modified material (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

On the Precipice of the Political: A Katechontic Consideration of Kojève's Concept of Empire

Kyle Moore

CRMEP, Kingston University London, UK

Abstract

During and in the immediate aftermath of WWII, Alexandre Kojève formulated two different and conflicting concepts of empire: one which promoted the idea of world empire, a so-called "universal and homogeneous state," and another advocating a multi-polar organisation of empire-states working in tandem to delay world unity. I analyse this tension in Kojève's political thought and suggest how it is related to the political theology of Carl Schmitt, in particular his concept of the katechon.

Keywords

Empire; authority; *katechon*; *Großraum*; end of history; multi-polar world; depoliticisation; globalisation; Alexandre Kojève; Carl Schmitt

I. Introduction

In the first half of the 1940s, after having completed his celebrated lectures on the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and in the midst and fallout of war, Kojève turned his attention away from Hegel to write a series of texts on political topics. These include an essay on *La Notion de l'autorité* (1942),[1] a book-length *Esquisse d'une phénoménologie du droit* (1943),[2] and a policy memorandum entitled "*L'empire latin : Esquisse d'une doctrine de la politique française*" (1945).[3] None of these writings were published in Kojève's lifetime and, as far as one can tell, were not intended for an audience wider than a circle of close acquaintances. Moreover, he continually stresses that the ideas described in these texts can only be "sketched" and, as two of the titles imply, are only "outlines" (*esquisses*) of their respective topics. Being incomplete, certain inconsistencies run across these political drafts. While many examples can be pointed to, I take as my point of departure an incongruity that has contemporary relevance.[4]

---

[1] Alexandre Kojève, *La notion de l'autorité* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004).

[2] Alexandre Kojève, *Esquisse d'une phénoménologie du droit* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981).

[3] Alexandre Kojève, "L'empire latin: Esquisse d'une doctrine de la politique française (27 août 1945)," *La Règle du Jeu* 1 (May 1990): 89-123.

[4] Other ambiguities can be found in these works. For instance, although the *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right* and *The Notion of Authority* were written contemporaneously and appear, at least superficially, to confront a similar set of problems (political power, legality, legitimacy),

Already in his lectures on Hegel, Kojève announced the possibility of an "empire" state that will replace the defunct nation state. He expands on this idea in the *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*, describing empire as a global or "universal and homogeneous state" that attends the end of history. At the same time, he is conspicuously unclear about when and how this empire will appear in concrete form. Compounding this indecisiveness, only a few years later in the "Latin Empire: Outline of a doctrine of French policy," he introduces what seems to be an entirely different concept of empire that is situated between the transition from the nation to the world state. In this case, empire is understood not only as a mediating term but also serves as a bulwark that prevents the arrival of the universal and homogeneous state. As far as I am aware, there has yet to be any discussion regarding Kojève's equivocation between these two uses of the term empire. Given that it plays a significant role in a lengthy epistolary correspondence between himself and Carl Schmitt, a closer examination of this qualification is demanded.

References to the Kojève-Schmitt correspondence (1955-1957) have focused on the affinity between Schmitt's concept of the political as a distinction between friend and enemy and Kojève's master-slave dialectic. However, despite certain similarities, their exchange also reveals a fundamental difference with respect to the philosophy of history. Against the Kojèvean prognosis according to which the circle of history has come to an end, Schmitt claims that something stands in the way of this closure by restraining its completion. Building on this observation, I argue that this disagreement between a closed and open circle can, in fact, be located in Kojève's own problematic presentation of the end of history, seen most acutely through his dual concept of empire — one striving for and one pushing against the final global state. In this context, I attempt to show that Kojève's concept of empire can be situated within the ambit of Schmitt's politico-theological figure of the *katechon*, an ambiguous power that withholds or restrains the end of the historical time.

II. A Post-War Prognosis

On August 27, 1945, Kojève finished writing a memorandum that he intended to reach the upper echelons of de Gaulle's provisional Government of the French Republic. In this text, he surveyed the situation facing France in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and provided a program outlining the country's future. It was in these pages that he introduced one of his lesser known but equally provocative political ideas of a "Latin Empire." Only recently, long after its supposed date of expiration, has this document, entitled "Latin Empire: Outline of a Doctrine of French Policy," gathered attention.[5] In 2013, Giorgio Agamben opined (in a piece that was controversial in its own right) that the discussion around

there is a sense that the two texts orbit around problems that do not intersect. In the *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*, Kojève describes an evolution towards "hyper-liberal" globalism where the rule of men is replaced by the rule of law. Conversely, *The Notion of Authority* describes the essence of legality as the cadaver of authority — "a corpse that endures while being deprived of a soul or life" —, and concludes with a descriptive analysis of fascism through the authority of Marshal Pétain. Some scholars have tried to square this circle with appeals to Kojève's esoteric approach to writing, but only with limited success. See, for instance, Robert Howse and Bryan-Paul Frost, "Introduction: The Plausibility of the Universal and Homogenous State," in *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*, ed. Bryan-Paul Frost, trans. Robert Howse and Bryan-Paul Frost (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 1–27. *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*, henceforth abbreviated to *OPR*.

[5] Alexandre, Kojève, "Latin Empire: Outline of a Doctrine of French Policy (August 27, 1945)," *Policy Review* (2004): 3-40.

Kojève's memo should be revived because it "is so topical that it is still of great interest today."[6] Even more recently, Bernard-Henri Lévy suggested that none other than President Emmanuel Macron should read and study the memo since

> great texts are like historical events; they need time, and often the time of a human life, to take on their full meaning; and because the world seems to be, seventy-five years after the first publication of these notable pages, in the exact state that Kojève predicted.[7]

Yet, what relevance does an obscure text, written nearly three-quarters of a century ago, still have for our world today? Before we can begin to answer this question, we must understand the historical circumstances that gave rise to the memorandum in the first place.

Only a few weeks before Kojève drafted his memo, General Secretary Stalin, Prime Minister Churchill (later, Attlee), and President Truman had concluded their momentous meetings in Potsdam where the fate of Europe was being decided. Besides deliberating on the division and administration of de-nazified Germany, the conference delegates also initiated discussions on how to establish a postwar economic, military, and political order across a devastated continent. Although not a participant, the political and economic fate of France was linked to the outcome of these talks. Displaying a certain amount of prescience, Kojève deduced that the agreement to divide Germany was unstable and prone to collapse. He argued that gradually Germany would likely be pulled out of its straitjacket and into the political orbit of one of the two emerging superpowers. Consequently, even if under the hammer of American or Russian industry, the stalled German economic engine would inevitably be reignited. From the perspective of France and the rest of Western Europe, it would not matter materially which way the pendulum swung (as we will discuss, Kojève believed an alliance with the Americans to be more likely). Based on the assumption that as Germany goes, so does the rest of the continent, Kojève argued that the immediate danger facing France would be its eventual reduction to the rank of a secondary economic and political actor within an Americanised or Sovietised Europe.

Despite being more remote, Kojève claimed that there was a second, even more urgent danger facing France. Only days before drafting his memo, on the other side of the world the first act of atomic warfare was committed — an event too acute for Kojève to mention explicitly. Nevertheless, he warned that in the wake of unfathomable devastation across Europe and beyond, a military danger remained that threatened the existence of both France and humanity as such:

---

[6] Giorgio Agamben, "The Endless Crisis as an Instrument of Power: In Conversation with Giorgio Agamben," *Verso Blog* (June 4, 2013). Translated from the German interview published in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (May 24, 2013), http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/1318-the-endless-crisis-as-an-instrument-of-power-in-conversation-with-giorgio-agamben.

[7] Bernard-Henri Lévy, "Perché a Macron serve l'Italia," *La Repubblica* (October 7, 2021), https://www.repubblica.it/commenti/2021/10/07/news/perche_a_macron_serve_l_italia-321126511/. Bizarrely, in 2022 an article was written that enacted an "imaginary dialogue" between Kojève and Macron. See Greta Cristini, "Dialogo immaginario con Alexandre Kojève," *Dissipatio* (February 9, 2022), https://www.dissipatio.it/dialogo-immaginario-con-alexandre-kojeve/.

> The more distant danger is, it is true, less certain. But on the other hand, it could be described as mortal, in the strict sense of the word. It is the danger that France is running of being involved in a Third World War and serving anew as an aerial or other kind of battlefield in it. But it is very clear that in this eventuality, and independently of the outcome of the conflict, France will never again be able to repair the damages which it will necessarily suffer above all on the demographic plane, but also on the economic one and that of civilisation itself.[8]

The destruction wrought in Japan proved that if war is indeed a continuation of politics by other means, then nuclear war threatens this continuity and hence the conditions of possibility for the political. To continue to have a say in its existence, France, like any other country, would have to find a way to maintain, as much as possible, a state of neutrality if and when war between the Russians and Americans would commence. This would require the transformation of France from piece to player in the post-war geopolitical chess game.

The task of Kojève's memo was to navigate a course in which France, the rest of Western Europe, and, indeed, the world can survive these two dangers. His solution: the creation of an enlarged European state, a Mediterranean alliance between France, Italy, and Spain, which would allow these countries to enter diplomatic relations with the two new global superpowers flanking them on either side. Kojève claimed that a "Latin Empire" is the only way France (along with Italy and Spain) would be able to maintain its economic and political position in Europe and the rest of the world; but more than a relationship paid only by lip service, Kojève also attempted to set forth conditions under which this alliance could create a kind of demilitarised space between the American West and Russian East that could prevent (or, at least, delay) a third world war and the nuclear conflict which would inevitably accompany it.

Now, as I have stated above, Kojève did not intend this memo for public consumption. It was addressed to Robert Marjolin, a student of Kojève's seminars on Hegel and who, under de Gaulle, would become a director in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For his part, Marjolin responded to Kojève's proposal negatively, explaining that the policy recommendations contained in his memo were archaic.[9] There is no evidence that the letter had any impact on the decision-makers of the time nor did the philosophical ideas present in the document figure in the numerous debates concerning the fate of postwar Europe. Consequently, before its partial publication in Bernard-Henri Lévy's journal *La Règle du Jeu* in 1990, the document was virtually unknown. Moreover, by the time of its rediscovery, the collapse of the Soviet Union meant that the policies prescribed by Kojève no longer had the political relevance they may have once had. Yet, following Lévy and Agamben, I argue that if the scope of the "Latin Empire" text is expanded out of its strictly French context, the analysis it contains remains topical.

Kojève's point of departure, a point that Marjolin, despite his misgivings, also found compelling, was that the outcome of the Second World War denoted a decisive turning point in history. As technologies change and armaments evolve, the form of the state must also change to accommodate an ever more advanced military machine. Providing an example, Kojève says that, for a time, the feudal prince enjoyed authority by providing weapons sufficient to ensure political autonomy and protection of its vassal citizens. However, technological advances led to the development of artillery which became indispensable.

---

[8] Kojève, "Latin Empire," 4.

[9] For a detailed account of this encounter, see Marco Filoni, *L'azione politica del filosofo* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2022), 230-238.

Consequently, feudal political formations showed themselves to be militarily deficient and fiefdoms were progressively absorbed by richer nations. Analogously, Kojève argues that the Second World War had shown that national economies and demographics became incapable of mobilising armies that were motorised, armoured, and involving an air force as an essential weapon:

> The fundamental inadequacy …of the national state is demonstrated in a particularly striking way by the example of the Third Reich …. Hitler expressed the essence and the motive of his political thought very well by putting himself at the head of a movement which calls itself "*national*-socialism," and which consciously contrasts itself with Soviet "*imperial*-socialism" as much as with Anglo-Saxon "*imperial*-capitalism." Generally, the Third Reich was undoubtedly a *national* state, in the particular and precise sense of the term. This is a state which, on the one hand, strove to realise *all* national political possibilities, and which, on the other hand, wanted to use *only* the power of the German *nation*, by consciously establishing, qua state, the (ethnic) limits of the latter. Well, this "ideal" nation-state lost its crucial political war.[10]

Just as the modern state system developed out of the passage from feudal to national units, Kojève argued that the state emerging out of the post-WWII world demands a larger foundation than the nation can provide. Thus, although talk of the demise (or resurgence) of the nation is still current today, Kojève argued that the nation-state — the fundamental building block of political relations since 1648 — came to an end in 1944 with the defeat of Nazi Germany. Going forward, instead of single nations, Kojève argues that "to be politically viable, the state must rest on a vast 'imperial' union of allied nations" that he referred to as empires.[11]

III. Empire with End

Kojève uses inverted commas around the word "imperial" throughout the "Latin Empire" memo which suggests that, although related, imperialism *per se* is not reducible to empire. But how is empire different from imperialism? The fact is that Kojève uses the term empire ambiguously throughout his corpus. The first mentions of empire appear in his 1930s lectures followed by his 1943 *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*. In both cases, Kojève uses empire interchangeably with the power that encompasses all of humanity, often referring to it synonymously with the "universal and homogeneous state" that marks the end of history and, thus, the political. Linking empire to an apparently apolitical system, Kojève writes that "a national state never succeeds either in absorbing all its enemies or in completely isolating itself from them. The limit is only attained by the universal state or empire."[12] In this context, the word empire is used in a "classical" way, i.e., *imperium sine fine*, which is to say, a world unifying power that seeks to eradicate the political distinction between friend and enemy. In fact, the *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right* paints a picture of empire that is not too distant from the figure described by Hardt and Negri in their 2001 book *Empire*.[13] Hardt and Negri describe empire as a universal market order of circuits of exchange and production that accepts no

[10] Kojève, "Latin Empire," 5-6.
[11] Ibid., 4.
[12] Kojève, *OPR*, 137.
[13] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Harvard University Press, 2001).

boundaries or limits. Similarly, Kojève writes that the universal and homogeneous state can be understood as a kind of world economic society which is "nothing other than a market."[14]

It bears mentioning that traces of this conception of empire can be found in work prior to his lectures on Hegel. In a short text first published in September 1929 for an issue of *Eurasia*, entitled "Toward an Assessment of Modernity," Kojève attempts to draw a picture of how the new global political order will unfold. In this context, he writes that "to speak about the future one must first recognise the contemporary moment, as it is the contemporary moment that indicates the future."[15] He argued that what was being "presented as an 'economic democracy' by 'democratic' organisations … is actually one of the clearest examples of financial autocracy, the absolute power of financial organisation over fragmented 'democracy'."[16] As this absolute power expands, Kojève saw that Europe would be trapped between two driving forces of world unification: "The United States of America has become the ruling possessor and embodiment of global capitalist unification, and the leadership of revolution has passed into the hands of the USSR."[17] Moreover, both capitalistic and revolutionary forces pushing toward world unification were contributing to a process of homogenisation which was leaving "present-day Europe, in its most profound sense, uncultured."[18] Losing any meaning outside of capitalistic competition or revolutionary progress, the dissolution of Western culture was concomitant with political decay. At the time, Kojève held a pessimistic outlook and did not seem to harbour any optimism about a reversal of this trend. He complains that the most serious attempt to overcome this political crisis, without leaving the framework of multinational capitalism, was Italian fascism. However, instead of offering any meaningful solution, fascism only offered camouflage by parading around in a "Latin theatrical mask in order to play someone else's game."[19]

At first glance, the contemporary moment described over 15 years later in the "Latin Empire" memo does not seem to be at odds with this picture. In the wake of Germany's defeat, Kojève identifies two forces that were working to overcome the political reality of nation-states and into whose dominion the earth was being divided and Europe squeezed. On the one hand, Kojève describes an American "bourgeois" liberalism that looks beyond the nation as a suitable political foundation by refusing to conceive of the state outside of its national setting and therefore seeks to abolish the state in favour of society. From this perspective, the state must be replaced "by a simple economic and social, not to say a police administration, put at the disposal and at the service of 'society' conceived, moreover, as an aggregate of individuals which embody and reveal, in their own isolation, the supreme human value."[20] On the other hand, internationalist "Trotskyite" socialism was arguing for a revolutionary movement which would replace the nation with a concept of humanity: "Since political reality is deserting nations and is moving on to humanity itself, the only (provisionally national) state which will emerge as politically viable in the long term will be the one which has as its highest and first goal to include all of humanity."[21] Thus, just as in 1929, Kojève

[14] Kojève, *OPR*, 434.
[15] Alexandre Kojève, "Toward an assessment of modernity," trans. Trevor Wilson, *Radical Philosophy* 211 (2021): 34.
[16] Ibid., 36.
[17] Ibid., 34.
[18] Ibid., 34.
[19] Ibid., 36.
[20] Kojève, "Latin Empire," 7 (modified translation).
[21] Ibid., 7.

argues that both capitalistic and revolutionary forces compete to unifying the globe under their own unique ideologies.

However, that is not the end of the story. Unlike in his previous analysis, Kojève does not think that the contemporary moment is fitting of a world hegemonic power. The reason is precisely because there are (at least) *two* competing claims to hegemony and, as a result, both ideologies lack a concrete support:

> Liberalism is wrong not to perceive any political entity beyond that of nations. But internationalism's sin is the fact that it sees nothing politically viable short of humanity. It likewise is unable to discover the intermediary political reality of empire, which is to say unions, or even international amalgamations of affiliated nations, which is exactly the political reality today. If the nation really ceases to be a political reality, humanity is still —politically — an *abstraction*.[22]

Kojève sees both liberalism and internationalism as lacking concrete reality and, thus, premature and utopian. That is not to say that he thinks the ideas are unworkable, but only that the contemporary moment meant that they remained out of reach. This same idea is illustrated in a passage found in the *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, where he provides an analogy that compares such projects to the history of man's attempt to fly:

> Let us suppose that, in the Middle Ages, a poet wrote in a poem: "*at this moment* a man is flying over the ocean." This was without a doubt an error, and it remained such for many centuries. But if we now reread that sentence, we are most likely reading a truth, for it is almost certain that *at this moment* some aviator is over the Atlantic.[23]

The contemporary moment of the poet dictated that flying remained only an idea without any reality; it is only in the 20th century that this idea became actual with the invention of the airplane. When writing the "Latin empire" memo in 1945, Kojève feels the same way about both world unifying capitalism and socialism — both remain mere ideas without political reality. Thus, in attempting either of these projects, civilisation "sterilises itself and disintegrates little by little, and also soon loses its specific gravity."[24]

We must keep this in mind when reading Kojève's controversial praise of Stalin. According to Kojève, Stalin was able to recognise, contra Trotsky, that to be politically viable socialism must take the form of empire:

> Stalin's political genius consists precisely in having understood this. The political focus on humanity characterises the "Trotskyist" utopia, of which Trotsky himself was the most notable — but certainly not sole — representative. By taking on Trotsky, and by demolishing "Trotskyism" in Russia, Stalin rejoined the political reality of the day by creating the USSR as a Slavo-Soviet empire.[25]

---

[22] Ibid., 7.
[23] Alexandre Kojève*, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit,* trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 188.
[24] Kojève, "Latin Empire," 10.
[25] Ibid., 8.

Stalin's "socialism in one country" put the brakes on global expansion — at least for the time being. But it was not just Stalin who received Kojève's praises. Having similarly grasped the historical reality, Kojève says that Churchill understood that the "quasi-national" Commonwealth, consisting of a union of subordinate territories, was "inadequate to affirm itself politically under the conditions created by the present war." Like Stalin, Churchill understood that to survive, the Commonwealth must allow itself to be swallowed up by "an Anglo-American politico-economic bloc, which is today the effective and actual political reality."[26]

However, it is not enough to simply limit themselves to a certain territory. For either the Slavo-Soviet or Anglo-American empire to be viable, they must find a way to achieve political unity. Contrary to the abstract universalism expressed in capitalistic liberal "society" and socialist "humanity," Kojève argues that in order to meet the demands of a post-war order, empires must be formed out of a closed "kinship of language, and civilisation, … manifested, among other things, through the identity of religion."[27] For example, what unites the Anglo-American sphere politically as "friends" is a shared "Protestant" identity. Referring to Weber's seminal work, Kojève argues that the Americans and British find common cause in and through a Puritan work ethic, combined with a degree of avarice, and a shared English language. On the other side, the political existence of the Slavo-Soviet empire has a natural support in the Orthodox Church (which may be a slightly unusual thing to say about a Communist state, but Kojève believes that despite its explicitly atheistic beginnings, the USSR still maintained ties to Orthodox Christianity) along with the Slavic language and tradition that accompanies it.

All of this is important for Kojève as it relates to the future of France and Western Europe. Following the Potsdam peace talks, Kojève tacitly admits that the fate of Germany has already been sealed: "it is hardly risking committing an error to suppose that the Anglo-American bloc will transform itself before long into a German-Anglo-American empire."[28] While he admits that Germany could slide eastward toward the Slavo-Soviet empire, this would be a highly irregular outcome given historic hostilities between Germany and Russia alongside the fact that the Protestant character of the Anglo-American empire lends itself much more to the German "spirit." With that said, the alternative available to Germany could only really be of theoretical interest since, in either scenario, France (and the rest of Western Europe) would almost certainly follow Germany into the hands of an empire with an epicentre far from Paris. Under this eventuality, France would quickly become a military outpost and its future political autonomy will be rendered illusory — in other words, any semblance of "independence" will only mask the reality of having been reduced to a protectorate. However, different from 1929 where he argued that Europe had to be content with donning a mask to play someone else's game, Kojève was now more hopeful that Western Europe could be saved from crisis and decay by providing itself with a political base sufficient to meet the demands of empire. Building on ideas first set out by himself and Jean Cassou in an unpublished (and undated) essay "*Notes sur les défaillances de la politique française*," Kojève suggested that the only way forward was for France, Italy, and Spain — based on their shared religious, linguistic and historical ties — to form their own political union.[29] Contrary to (but complementing)

[26] Ibid., 8.
[27] Ibid., 15.
[28] Ibid., 9.
[29] Alexandre Kojève, "Notes sur les défaillances de la politique française," (Paris : Fonds BNF, 2001). Marco Filoni notes that even though this article was found amongst Kojève's papers, there is reason to believe that the author was Jean Cassou. In any event, the "Latin

Orthodox and Protestant "spirits," Kojève suggested that this "Latin empire" should base itself on a "Mediterranean spirit" of *dolce far niente* — that is, an aesthetic mode of life based on a form of leisure (not equivalent to the stereotypical laziness often associated with this region) — supported by an anticlerical Catholicism.

Beyond questions of "kinship," the problem remained as to how the relatively small and weak Latin empire could protect itself in a potential war against its "enemies":

> If the undeniable spiritual *friendship* of the Latin peoples makes the creation of an empire *possible*, it alone is certainly not enough to ensure it becomes a *reality*. To be able to stand up to the two imperial formations already constituted, it is not enough for France to mention, from time to time, the existence of its "Latin sisters"; it is not enough for the Latin people to conclude, among themselves, more or less Balkan "Pacts," nor to form alliances in the style of "Ententes," small or otherwise. A real and effective *political unity* must be created.[30]

Only an empire can support the burden of an army capable of maintaining an autonomous political existence, a burden that would crush the economy of any one isolated nation. With that said, Kojève was not under any illusions that a transnational alliance between France, Italy, and Spain would be able to confront the Russian or American empires on the battlefield. Quite the contrary.

Lacking both an economic and technological advantage, the Latin empire could, at most, aspire to become a neutral — or, better — a neutralising power that could act as a bulwark against future military aggression:

> [I]t is only by enveloping itself in the Latin empire to which it will give rise that France will ensure peace for herself and all of Europe. This empire will never be strong enough to be able to attack the empires which will surround it so that its leaders will not be tempted too often to transform their imperial policy into "imperialism." But it will be powerful enough to remove anybody's temptation to attack it, on the condition, of course, that it does not fall out simultaneously with both of its possible imperial adversaries. If these two empires were to confront one another in a martial struggle, the sole fact of a Latin empire's existence would force them to limit their battlefields.[31]

Empire is here thought within the ambit of limit and is therefore in contrast with the classical model of *imperium sine fine*. Instead of an empire without end, Kojève thinks it in terms of boundedness: an empire with end. The goal of a specifically Latin version of empire would be to withhold hostilities in its region and beyond making sure that war remains only a possibility:

> Its ultimate goal is to assure peace to its participants, and thus to all of Western Europe. Too weak to attack, it could be strong enough to establish its neutrality

empire" memo was certainly indebted to ideas present in this document, see, e.g., Filoni (2022), 231.

[30] Kojève, "Latin Empire," 18.

[31] Ibid., 11.

> and thus to save the circumference of the Mediterranean and the entire West — the Latin West and the rest of it — from ruin.[32]

This image of empire is situated neither amongst the conflict of nations nor as the unfolding of a global form of sovereignty. Rather, empire is here understood as a kind of mediating third between these two forms maintained precariously: simultaneously being pulled toward a global order while refusing to let go of the tensions between nations. Said differently, empire is both the conditions for the possibility of war and what holds back its actuality. Although Kojève does not himself use the word, I argue that this concept of empire corresponds with the logic of Schmitt's notion of the *katechon*.

IV. Europe as *Katechon*

As a biblical concept, the Greek word *katechon* derives its meaning from a passage found in St. Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, Chapter 2, verses 6-7. In this passage, Paul addresses a concern of the congregation who have become impatient in their expectation of Christ's return:

> Let no one deceive you in any way. For unless the apostasy comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one doomed to perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god and object of worship, so as to seat himself in the temple of God, claiming that he is a god — do you not recall that while I was still with you, I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining [τὸ κατέχον], that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. But the one who restrains [ὁ κατέχων] is to do so only for the present until he is removed from the scene.[33]

This enigmatic word, *katechon*, appears twice (and, as far as I know, this is the only place in the New Testament where it is found): first, in verse 6, as τὸ κατέχον, "that, which withholds," and second, in verse 7, as ὁ κατέχων, "he, who withholds." The *katechon* is that which delays, holds back, or restrains the end of historical time. It thus serves a mediating function that bridges an eschatological gap. Complicating analysis, however, is the fact that in performing this function it has an ambiguous mandate. Beyond the distinction between the personal and impersonal forms, we can see that the term also has an equivocal relation to the messianic event. On the one hand, it performs a positive function by delaying the apocalypse concomitant with the appearance of the Antichrist; on the other hand, by postponing this encounter between good and evil it delays the salvation of the faithful. This ambivalence — the delay of both apocalypse and salvation — has contributed to the different interpretations of the *katechon* over the centuries (from early Christian theologians such as Tertullian, Origen, and Augustine, up to and including contemporary authors such as Schmitt, Agamben, and Cacciari).

Schmitt was the first to transpose the theological nuance of this concept onto a political terrain. In a letter to Hans Blumenberg in 1974, Schmitt writes that "for more than 40 years I have been collecting material on the problem of *katechon* (2 Thess. 2,6); I am searching for a human ear which will listen to and understand this question — for me the key question of

[32] Ibid., 23.
[33] 2 Thess 2, 3-7.

political theology."[34] Although Schmitt claimed to have begun his work on the problem of the *katechon* in the early 1930s, it was not until the 1940s that the idea is mentioned in writing. The backdrop in which the concept of the *katechon* appears is within the context of the crisis facing the modern nation-state and the disintegration of the *Jus Publicum Europaeum*. Beginning with his 1942 text, *Land and Sea* (a text that Kojève had received from Schmitt and which instigated their epistolary correspondence in the 1950s), Schmitt begins to employ the concept positively as something or someone that delays the dissolution of culture and politics. It is in this context that Schmitt indexes the *katechon* to a general political problem, more specifically one tied to depoliticisation. To understand this, we must recall his work in the *Concept of the Political*, where he described the fundamental political distinction in which political actions and motives can be reduced to that "between friend and enemy."[35] This opposition, we are told, denotes "the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation" but is not, as Schmitt emphasises, based on moral, aesthetic, or even economic relations. It is only necessary that the distinction be based on an otherness sufficient to produce potential conflicts and, in the last instance the political opposition between friend and enemy must remain capable of being expressed violently. However, despite the emphasis on killing and war, Schmitt's political philosophy must be distinguished from a kind of warmongering. For Schmitt, violence is an unavoidable fact and far from ameliorating this condition, the liberal and socialist ideology of peace and humanity replace war with another vocabulary: "executions, sanctions, punitive expeditions, pacifications, protection of treaties, international police," where "the adversary is thus no longer called an enemy but a disturber of peace and is thereby designated to be an outlaw of humanity."[36] Thus, just as in Vladimir Solovyov's "Short Story of the Antichrist" (an important reference for Kojève), Schmitt sees the Antichrist as a figure that emerges not immediately in the form of destruction and violence, but as a pacifying figure that promises world unification and an age of security and peace.[37] However, the "peace" that is brought is one that only camouflages a more insidious brutality.

In a diary written between 1947 and 1957, published posthumously in a volume entitled *Glossarium*, Schmitt makes explicit reference to the *katechon* describing it as a placeholder that extends throughout history, always occupied by something or someone: "It must be possible to point to a κατέχων for each era of the last 1,948 years. The post has never been empty, or

[34] Carl Schmitt and Hans Blumenberg, Letter written on October 20, 1974, in *Hans Blumenberg—Carl Schmitt, Briefwechsel 1971–1978*, ed. Alexander Schmitz and Marcel Lepper (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2007), 120.

[35] Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 26.

[36] Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, 79.

[37] Vladimir Solovyov, "A Short story of the Antichrist." *CrossCurrents* 12/ 3 (1962): 295–312. Kojève's relationship with Solovyov is important and complicated. In 1926, under the supervision of Karl Jaspers, he drafted a dissertation on *Die religiöse Philosophie Wladimir Solowjews*, which he would later publish as two truncated essays in 1934 and 1935, respectively, in French as *La métaphysique religieuse de Vladimir Soloviev*. Although he connects his reading of Solovyov to Schelling, commentators have also pointed out how Solovyov's theory of divine humanity (*bogochelovechestvo*) or Godmanhood, a synthesis of the human and spiritual achieved through love that justifies humanity's historical development, was instrumental for Kojève's later reading of Hegel. For more on this connection see Trevor Wilson, "Kojève's Gift: How a Russian philosopher brought an "other" love to the West." *The Slavic and East European Journal* 63/ 4 (2019): 579-596.

we would not still exist."[38] He includes extensive lists of institutions and persons who have held back the end of human history. In all cases, Schmitt says that the "*katechon* can be identified by the fact that it does not strive for world unity" — that is, a world unity which attends the appearance of the Antichrist.[39] It is also within this context that we are able to locate another one of his key concepts, *Großräume*. Literally a "great-space," Schmitt uses the term to index a new political entity that wields influence over a large territory. Practically, the term describes internally homogeneous transnational political entities led by a single hegemonic power (e.g., the United States' "sphere of influence" over Latin America as dictated by the Monroe Doctrine). Although larger than any one nation, *Großraum* must be distinguished from a global power and thus demands an orientation towards a plurality that allows for a limited co-existence on a divided earth. In his 1950 text, *Nomos of the Earth*, Schmitt sketches out the theory of these political territories and the geopolitical relations that coordinates between them. Very similar to how Kojève describes the function of his Latin empire, the post-war decline of the nation-state means that *Großraum* provides an alternative to global hegemony.[40] Schmitt writes that it must be decided if "the planet is mature enough for a global monopoly of a single power or whether a pluralism of coexisting *Großräume*, spheres of interest, and cultural spheres will determine the new international law of the earth."[41] Similar to Kojève, Schmitt opts for the latter.

As a defender of the multipolar world order, *Großraum* can be viewed as fulfilling a *katechontic* potential. Although the connection between these two Schmittian concepts is debatable, others have drawn similar conclusions. For instance, arguing for a specifically Latin American version of *Großraum*, Argentinian philosopher Alberto Buela writes:

> Taking into account the Apostle Paul's enigma regarding the personal and the impersonal *katechon*, and Schmitt's concept of *Großraum* (a large spatial political entity), the political change to be sought today is the construction of *Großräume* in general, and of a South American *Großraum* in particular, to function as a *katechon* against a fundamentalist vision of globalisation according to which this is the only possible world and …of a single government dominating the world.[42]

Buela's Latin American *Großraum* shares many features of Kojève's Latin empire, including the need for a shared language, a history, and religion. Of course, the idea of a specifically

[38] For the translation from the German by Rachel Murphy, see Michele Nicoletti, "Religion and Empire: Carl Schmitt's katechon between international relations and the philosophy of history," in *International Law and Religion: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Martti Koskenniemi, Mónica García-Salmones Rovira, Paolo Amorosa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 371.

[39] Ibid., 372.

[40] Riccardo Paparusso paints a slightly different picture of Kojève, arguing that in his formulation of "the concept of a Latin Empire, Kojève inherits Schmitt's concept of great space but tries to reshape it in a non-nationalist way, removing the tendency to seek out and stand against an enemy." See, Riccardo Paparusso, "Latin Empires and Large Spaces: Alexandre Kojève and Carl Schmitt on Europe after End of History," in *Routledge Handbook of Europe and Philosophy*, ed. Nicolas de Warren and Dariam Meacham (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 97-111.

[41] Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth*, trans. G.L. Ulmen (Telos Press Publishing, 2006), 243-4.

[42] Alberto Buela, "The Katechon and the Future of Latin America." *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary* 126 (2003): 166-175.

Latin empire dissolved with the collapse of the USSR in the early 1990s, and in its place arose the unipolar dominance of global capitalism lead by the US. Yet, what Buela tries to argue, writing in the early 2000s, is that a limited co-existence of political energies that serve to withhold unipolar globalism may still have contemporary relevance.

In March 2013, on the heels of the European Union's new "Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union"— otherwise known as the Fiscal Compact — Giorgio Agamben published a polemic in the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* re-raising concerns involving German economic imposition in the EU. Explicitly citing Kojève, Agamben suggests that as an alternative to the EU, Europe should reconfigure herself in the model of the Latin empire: "If we do not want Europe to inevitably disintegrate as many signs seem to indicate it is, it would be appropriate to ask ourselves, without delay, how the European Constitution …could attempt to turn political reality into something similar to what Kojève called a 'Latin Empire'."[43] In making his suggestion, Agamben could not have been unaware of a series of articles written in the 1990s and early 2000s by fellow Italian philosopher, Massimo Cacciari. In these articles, collected under the title *Europe and Empire*, echoing Kojève's claim made in 1945, that the era where all of humanity together will be a political reality still remains in the distant future, Cacciari argues that from "the crisis of [national] states to a global order, there is a hiatus, a leap, which is not answered by dreaming up imaginary bridges."[44] However, he is critical of Kojève's recommendations:

> Here is where we differ from Kojève. A Latin empire is impossible. Impossible and, indeed, portending of new conflicts with Germany and Eastern Europe. The "European empire" will be, if it comes to pass, the ambiguous power formed from the agreement between its always contrasting voices. Common voices, precisely, because of their centuries of tension and conjoined finally, through these very tensions, in reciprocal recognition.[45]

Like Agamben, instead of a Mediterranean bloc of France, Italy, and Spain, Cacciari argues for a European empire. The diverse cultural energies that comprise the European political landscape contrast with a unipolar *logos* that speak only in the language of the market. In this way, Cacciari says that an expanded application of Kojève's idea can still serve a katechontic function against the neoliberal consolidation of the world.

Kojève's concept of empire has also influenced, if only obliquely, a thinker who, in many ways, operates at the opposite end of the political spectrum from Cacciari and Agamben. Aleksandr Dugin has mobilised the concept of the *katechon* to support a traditional Orthodox reading that the Eastern Roman Empire (i.e., the Third Rome), in its Byzantine incarnation, acts to restrain the path of the coming Antichrist. In a recent article, Dugin writes that, serving as a bulwark against American hegemony and market-driven globalisation, Russia remains "the last restrainer, the *katechon*."[46] But is there not something antiquated about such claims? Just as Europe seems about the furthest thing from a *katechon* withholding the push toward neoliberal unipolarity, neither does Russia seem to meet the criteria necessary to function as

---

[43] Giorgio Agamben, "The Latin Empire should strike back," *Voxeurop* (March 26, 2013). https://voxeurop.eu/en/the-latin-empire-should-strike-back/

[44] Cacciari, *Europe and Empire*, 136

[45] Massimo Cacciari, *Europe and Empire: On the political forms of globalization*, trans. Massimo Verdicchio (Fordham University Press, 2016), 142.

[46] Alexander Dugin, "We are in a war with the civilization of the antichrist," Geopolitika.ru (May 4, 2022), https://www.geopolitika.ru/en/article/we-are-war-civilisation-antichrist.

restrainer of global imperialism. But is it only that a specifically European or Russian "empire" is incapable of forming a blockade against the rising tide of globalism, or is it that the very concept of *katechon* itself has become untenable? It is this question that situates Kojève and Schmitt's epistolary correspondence between 1955 and 1957. In the span of ten years, Kojève gave up on the idea of empire as a mediating middle, instead returning to a position he already held in the late 1920s and into the 1930s where he argued that it was only a matter of time before the idea of world unification became an objective reality.

V. Molotov's Cowboy Hat

The change in Kojève's political thinking regarding the possibility of empire from the early 1940s to the 1950s is most clearly stated in his correspondence with Schmitt between 1955 and 1957. When they began their correspondence, it was almost ten years since Schmitt had entered forced retirement from his post at the University of Berlin and was a persona non grata in the academic world owing to his past affiliation with the Nazi Party. Kojève was also on the other side of the cloistered walls of the university but under an entirely different set of circumstances. After completing his seminars on Hegel in 1939, Kojève joined the French Resistance before taking on a role at the French Ministry of economic affairs following the war.[47] But personal activities aside, the two also had an overlapping and complementary philosophical understanding of the political. This was not entirely coincidental. Schmitt's early writings on the political (especially *The Concept of the Political*) were influential in Kojève's work in the 1940s. In fact, in the *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*, Kojève uses Schmitt's political distinction almost verbatim in his conceptualisation of the state. "For there to be a state," Kojève argues, "there must be a society, of which all the members are 'friends,' and which treats as an 'enemy' all non-members, whoever they are."[48] However, despite this common point of departure, Kojève and Schmitt did not see eye to eye on all matters concerning the political, as is made obvious throughout their epistolary exchange.

Setting the tone for their discussion is Schmitt's 1953 essay "Appropriation/ Distribution/ Production: Toward a Proper Formulation of Basic Questions of any Social and Economic Order." In the essay, Schmitt offers an etymological deconstruction of the Greek word *nomos*. Usually translated as "law," Schmitt specifies that the Greek noun derives from the Greek verb *nemein* which has three distinct meanings: to appropriate (*nehmen*), to distribute (*teilen*), or to produce (*weiden*). While all three processes equally belong to the history of political order, Schmitt argues that the act of appropriation is predominant: "wars, occupations, colonisation, migrations and discoveries — indicate the fundamental precedence of appropriation over distribution and production."[49] Contrary to Schmitt, Kojève argues that meaningful appropriation is no longer viable. In place of wars, the post-war world follows only the logic of production and distribution. Consequently, Kojève argues that the world order is no longer structured out of political antagonisms, but instead out of an economic competition between producers and consumers: "The goal is — unfortunately! — homogeneous distribution. Whoever — in his hemisphere — attains it first will be 'the last'."[50] The reference is clearly to the battle between East and West for world dominance. However,

[47] Dominique Auffret, *Alexandre Kojève : la Philosophie, l'état, la fin de l'histoire* (Paris: Grasset, 1990), 270-1.
[48] Kojève, *OPR*, 134.
[49] Carl Schmitt, "Appropriation/Distribution/Production: Toward a Proper Formulation of Basic Questions of any Social and Economic Order," *Telos* 95 (1993): 55.
[50] Alexandre Kojève, Carl Schmitt, "Kojève-Schmitt Correspondence," trans. Erik de Vries. *Interpretation* 29/1 (2001), 95.

it is no longer a battle that runs along political lines. Although Kojève thinks that the USSR (and China) will distribute more slowly than the USA, the only thing that matters is that these "great-spaces" no longer distinguish themselves ideologically. It does not matter who is "last" since the end has already been decided.

The same idea is elaborated in a footnote added to the second edition of his *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* in 1962. Kojève hints at how he turned toward an apolitical vision of the world after having made trips to the USSR and the USA between 1948 and 1958 while working for the French government. He writes how these trips began to give him the impression that Americans are nothing more than rich Russian (and vice versa, Russians are merely poor Americans). Consequently, Kojève began to think that the post-war political reality was being suffocated under the weight of a global economic machine where international relations had been reduced to international trade:

> When I entered the modem democratic "state" after the war as a bureaucrat (foreign trade = foreign "policy") I thought (only after several *years*!) that there was no longer any state at all. Parliament and government (i.e., the formerly political structures) maintained the balance so well that neither of the two could decide, determine, or do anything at all. And thanks to this mutual "neutralisation" of the political the administration could carry out its work unencumbered.[51]

Schmitt firmly rejected this claim and remained on the side of politics and potential conflict made possible by a "tremendous, reciprocal match of powers."[52]

Interestingly, in his 2014 book, *The Withholding Power*, Cacciari argues that to understand the nature of their disagreement it must be situated within the context of the *katechon*:

> Kojève reproaches the Schmittian *nomos* for privileging the appropriative over the distributive dimension of the concept. The criticism is pertinent only with respect to the concept of the *katechon*. The correspondence between Kojève and Schmitt reveals a shared affinity on the fate of depoliticization (*Entpolitisierung*) but also a fundamental difference between their 'philosophies of history'. To the Hegelian prognosis, according to which history has come to an end, Schmitt opposes his own 'circle which has not yet been traversed' ('*le cercle n'est pas encore parcouru*'). Yet there is no 'global planning' and even less a 'World State', the present moment should be seen as a transition to the friend–enemy confrontation among the *magni homines* (states as *superman*).[53]

The Kojèvean end of history which ends in a world — or, as Kojève likes to say, "universal and homogeneous" — state, is contrasted with Schmitt's view of an open history whose end is held back by a katechontic division of *Großräume*. In making this observation, Cacciari shows just how much of a turn Kojève's thinking had changed over ten years. Even though in the early 1940s Kojève's writings contained the idea of a global apolitical administrative body he was still uncertain if, when, and how it would emerge. In fact, in the *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*, he unequivocally asserts that "the universal and homogenous state at the end of

[51] Ibid., 98.

[52] Ibid., 102.

[53] Cacciari, *Withholding Power*, 18-19. In the original text the two terms "appropriative" and "distributive" are reversed. This is clearly a typo, one that is easily recognised from the context in which Cacciari makes his claim.

history does not yet exist."[54] Similarly, as I have shown, he argues in the "Latin Empire" memo that it is not possible to leap straight from the nation to the global state without first passing through an age of empires. Yet, in his first communications with Schmitt in 1955, the idea of an intermediate stage between national political bodies and global administrative power had completely vanished. Not only was he no longer advocating the formation of empire-states, but he was also claiming that "it is self-evident that revolutions have become just as impossible as wars. Both are waged precisely by states, which no longer exist!"[55]

In the time between his memo to de Gaulle and his letters to Schmitt, Kojève's thinking had undergone a complete about-face. He even admits as much to Schmitt: "after 10-20 years, even a non-Hegelian can see that East and West not only *want* the same thing but *do* the same thing."[56] Consolidation of East-West political hostilities into economic trade agreements meant for Kojève that wars would no longer be politically motivated but may still occur to protect or expand economic power through production or distribution. This led him to conclude that the "American way of life," i.e., the organisation of life through the demands of the market, had become the "eternal present future of all of humanity."[57] In more colourful terms, Kojève told Schmitt that "Molotov's cowboy hat is the symbol of the future."[58]

This change in view is striking. And Schmitt can be forgiven for pushing the conversation to its limit in order to understand how, philosophically speaking, Kojève was able to support his new position. Understanding that their conversation had arrived at a standstill, Schmitt ventures one last "modest question" for Kojève concerning the concept of enemy in Hegel: "Who is this enemy? … It is generally — as with the question of the possibility of a dictatorship in the system of Hegelian philosophy — the question whether there can be an 'enemy' in Hegel at all."[59] This question is not merely meant as a provocation, but also a problem that troubles Schmitt himself. Citing a poem by Theodor Däubler, "*Nordlicht*," Schmitt asks if "the enemy is our own question in form."[60] If, as Schmitt's question suggests, the enemy takes on the shape of our own question — the question of what we as humans really are — then what is humanity without the possibility of enmity? Kojève's answer is surprising. Equivocating on whether the Hegelian philosophy has room for the kind of enemy Schmitt's political demands, Kojève only says that "already today only a few understand what the words 'enemy,' 'state,' 'war,' 'history' mean … .But if all this really disappears, one will perhaps no longer understand what they meant."[61] It begs the question: if after the end of politics, history, and humanity we can no longer understand what it all meant, then perhaps it

[54] Kojève, *OPR*, 310.
[55] Alexandre Kojève and Carl Schmitt, "Kojève-Schmitt Correspondence," 104.
[56] Ibid., 98-99.
[57] Alexandre Kojève*, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 161.
[58] Alexandre Kojève and Carl Schmitt, "Kojève-Schmitt Correspondence," 103. This is a reference to then Soviet Foreign minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, who, in an international conference in 1955 appeared wearing a western-style cowboy hat and allegedly refused to answer questions that were not given in advance. General Carlos Romula, the Philippines special envoy to the US, said that Molotov's gesture was part of a "new ten-gallon hat strategy" to consolidate interests between the East and West following Stalin's death and warned that the "old" Molotov would be back again if a strongman became dominant in the Soviet Union again. See, "Molotov's 'hat strategy' criticised," *The Canberra Times* (June 28, 1955), https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/91204053 .
[59] Alexandre Kojève and Carl Schmitt, "Kojève-Schmitt Correspondence," 105.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., 107.

is correct to say that Kojève's position in the 1950s was not so "final" after all. Perhaps the analysis that Kojève offers can only take us up to the precipice of the end, but no further. Indeed, if this is the case, then perhaps his suggestion of a "Latin empire" should not be dismissed in light of his later statements which disavow it. It may even be possible to read Cacciari's words slightly differently by considering the problem of the *katechon* not as an either/or between Schmitt and Kojève, but as a problem immanent to Kojève's own vacillations on the idea of empire. That is to say, speculations — on whether the globe can remain suspended in a multipolar configuration or one that already has collapsed into a universal and homogeneous singularity — which point toward a thought that is itself locked in a katechontic push and pull.

Conclusion

I prefaced this article with a curious comment by French intellectual Bernard-Henri Lévy which recommended that President Macron revisit Kojève's Latin empire memo since, as Lévy writes, "the world seems to be, seventy-five years after the first publication of these notable pages, in the exact state that Kojève predicted." But what state could this be? For his part, Lévy refers to the "Quirinal Treaty," the bilateral agreement between France and Italy signed by Draghi and Macron in November 2021. The agreement, amongst other things, is said to "promote the convergence of French and Italian positions, as well as the coordination of the two countries in matters of European and foreign policy, security and defence, migration policy, economy, education, research, culture and cross-border cooperation."[62] Yet, reading both the terms of the agreement and Lévy's interpretation, one gets the sense that it does not live up to the demands set by Kojève's analysis. What exactly is "European policy" these days? Whatever it may be, any agreement between the French and the Italians seems to have arrived far too late for it to carry the geopolitical significance that Kojève imagined was still possible nearly three-quarters of a century ago. But that is not to say that Kojève's deliberations on empire are no longer relevant. Quite the contrary. His examination of the post-war geopolitical constellation of powers, his proposal for a mediating third between the US and Russia, and, finally, his retreat from this position remain instructive for our present circumstances. No matter how one may feel about the specifically European situation, there are several questions that should be on the tips of all of our tongues as we collectively enter into what many are calling a new era in world politics: Have we entered a universal and homogeneous world order, free of proper political strife, where wars are ultimately fought only to achieve economic outcomes? Or, conversely, are we reverting to a multipolar world which would once again rekindle politics through the clash of empires? If it is the latter, in which "great-spaces" emerge to challenge American hegemony, how can these empires develop an autonomous existence if they remain situated in a world market controlled by global finance? Kojève, to be sure, does not provide any solutions to these questions — nor do I seek to venture forward any of my own — but he does offer us a way to begin to think about them.

[62] Sandrine Amiel, "Quirinale treaty: Will a new French-Italian pact shift the balance of power in Europe?," *Euro news* (November 26, 2021), https://www.euronews.com/2021/11/26/quirinale-treaty-can-a-new-french-italian-pact-shift-the-balance-of-power-in-europe

References

Agamben, Giorgio. "The Latin Empire should strike back." *Voxeurop* (March 26, 2013). https://voxeurop.eu/en/the-latin-empire-should-strike-back/

—. "The Endless Crisis as an Instrument of Power: In Conversation with Giorgio Agamben." *Verso Blog* (June 4, 2013).

Auffret, Dominique. *Alexandre Kojève: la Philosophie, l'état, la fin de l'histoire* (Paris: Grasset, 1990).

Buela, Alberto. "The Katechon and the Future of Latin America." *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary* 126 (2003): 166-175.

Cacciari, Massimo. *Europe and Empire: On the political forms of globalization*. Translated by Massimo Verdicchio. New York: Fordham University Press, 2016.

—. *The Withholding Power: An essay on political theology*. Translated by Edi Pucci. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.

Filoni, Marco. *L'azione politica del filosofo* .Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2022.

Hardt, Micheal and Antonio Negri. *Empire* . Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel.* Paris : Gallimard, 1947.

—. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by Allan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1980.

—. *Esquisse d'une phénoménologie du droit* .Paris: Gallimard, 1981.

—. "L'empire latin: Esquisse d'une doctrine de la politique française (27 août 1945)." *La Règle du Jeu* 1 (May 1990): 89-123.

—. "Latin Empire: Outline of a Doctrine of French Policy (August 27, 1945)." *Policy Review* (2004): 3-40.

—. *La notion de l'autorité*. Paris : Gallimard, 2004.

—. "Toward an assessment of modernity." Translated by Trevor Wilson. *Radical Philosophy* 211 (2021).

Kojève, Alexandre and Carl Schmitt, "Kojève-Schmitt Correspondence." Translated by Erik de Vries. *Interpretation* 29/1 (2001).

Lévy, Bernard-Henri. "Perché a Macron serve l'Italia." *La Repubblica* (October 7, 2021). https://www.repubblica.it/commenti/2021/10/07/news/perche_a_macron_serve_l_italia-321126511/

Nicoletti, Michele. "Religion and Empire: Carl Schmitt's katechon between international relations and the philosophy of history." In *International Law and Religion: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Martti Koskenniemi, Mónica García-Salmones Rovira, Paolo Amorosa, 363-382. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.Paparusso, Riccardo. "Latin Empires and Large Spaces: Alexandre Kojève and Carl Schmitt on Europe after End of History." In *Routledge Handbook of Europe and Philosophy*, ed. . de Nicolas de Warren, Dariam Meacham, 97-111. London and New York: Routledge, 2021.

Schmitt, Carl. "Appropriation/Distribution/Production: Toward a Proper Formulation of Basic Questions of any Social and Economic Order." *Telos* 95 (Spring 1993).

—. *The Nomos of the Earth*. Translated by G.L. Ulmen. New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2006.

—. *The Concept of the Political*. Translated by George Schwab. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Schmitt, Carl and Hans Blumenberg. *Carl Schmitt, Briefwechsel 1971–1978*, edited by Alexander Schmitz and Marcel Lepper. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2007.

Solovyov, Vladimir. "A Short story of the Antichrist." *CrossCurrents* 12/ 3 (1962): 295–312.

Wilson, Trevor. "Kojève's Gift: How a Russian philosopher brought an "other" love to the West." *The Slavic and East European Journal* 63/ 4 (Winter 2019): 579-596.