

The Thousand Years War: Russia and the West,  
by Achala Moulik, Har-Anand Publications,  
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History is often written as a sequence of discrete events, each confined to its own time and place. Achala Moulik's *The Thousand Years War: Russia and the West* does not restrict to a limited period but presents history as a continuum—a long confrontation between Russia and the Western powers over a millennium. Starting from Viking incursions to NATO's expansion, Achala Moulik traces the confrontations happening at regular intervals with clarity, balance and finesse. The central theme of this book is that the West has carried out repeated invasions against Russia for centuries because of ideological clashes, and for lure of resources. Many times, Russia has faced the onslaught of geopolitical encirclement, however, each time, it has endured, survived and emerged stronger.

The narrative in this book begins with the 9th century, with Rurik the Viking and the early incursions into Rus. The author covers the initial rivalry between the Orthodox Russia and the Western Christendom, which led to Teutonic Knights' invasion of 1241. These medieval conflicts created chasm resulting in civilisational divide that shaped the future. Here, Moulik's

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narration is evocative. She postulates that the clash of faiths and cultures be seen beyond normal war but as battles between two worldviews—the Orthodox East and the Latin West. Her engrossing storytelling makes the reader feel that Russia's identity was forged while facing continuous confrontations which made them resilient—a strength that charted its destiny.

In early modern period, Russia faced new invaders—Charles XII of Sweden, whose dreams were nipped at Poltava, and Napoleon Bonaparte, whose Grande Armée was vanquished in the snows of 1812. Moulik recounts these episodes with vivid detail, emphasising both the arrogance of Western powers and the resilience of Russia. Napoleonic campaign receives particular attention. Moulik situates it not only as a military disaster for France but as an inflection point in European history, where a new chapter began. Russia emerged as a decisive power. Beyond the snowclad sentinel and harsh winter acting as Russia's natural defender, the author draws attention to Russia's invincible will, fortitude and legacy of civilisation that preserved the nation's existence.

The book covers relevant portion of the history of 19th century highlighting The Crimean War and the Western Coalition. The Crimean War (1853–56) is presented as a coalition of Western powers determined to contain Russia. Achala Moulik points out the geopolitical motives of the West, and the intrinsic desire to control access to the Black Sea and to limit Russia's influence in Europe. She explains Western strategies of encirclement of Russia that began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and grew bigger in the 21st century with NATO growing bigger. The 20th century occupies the heart of the book. The author's narration of the Siege of Leningrad and the Battle of Stalingrad is compelling, reminding the readers that Soviet Russia bore the brunt of defeating Nazi Germany. The chapters tell not just the story of wars, but also reflect on Russia's unwavering grit, sacrifice and remarkable fortitude. The Cold War is treated as a continuation of the thousand-year struggle, now fought through ideology, proxy wars and nuclear brinkmanship. Moulik emphasises Western attempts to contain Russia through alliances and interventions; she also highlights Russia's capacity to withstand and adapt.

The last few chapters of the book unfold details of Russo-Ukrainian war which began in February 2014 and is ongoing. In February 2022, Russia launched a large-scale offensive across Ukraine border to impose a settlement after a group of NATO countries had undermined the Minsk II peace agreement for seven years. US-led NATO is giving full support to Ukraine, even though it is not yet formally a member of NATO. Moulik articulates that the war in Ukraine is not an isolated crisis, but considers it as the latest

chapter in the millennium-long continuum. She cites Western analysts to show how Russia perceives NATO expansion as existential threat because of garrotte-like encirclement, and she situates the conflict within the broader emergence of a multipolar world order. Here, Moulik's analysis is particularly prescient. She argues that today's confrontations are giving rise to a coalition of non-Western nations—China, India, and others—who are shaping a new global balance.

Several themes have been reiterated throughout the book, and seamlessly blend Russia's survival against repeated invasions during the last thousand years. The desire of the West to control Russia's vast territory and resources, deep cultural and political divide, liberal economy versus mixed market-oriented economy, most importantly trade sanctions and economic blockade have been succinctly narrated, making the geopolitical picture clear. Moulik emphasised failure of The League of Nations and the United Nations to maintain peace and offer equitable justice. And finally, analysing how current conflicts are giving rise to a coalition of non-Western nations shaping a new world order. These themes embedded within the storylines with completeness make the book scholarly, and at the same time engaging. Achala Moulik's narration is lucid, elegant, and easily readable, enriched with quotations from both Western as well as Russian and Eurasian historians, journalists and opinion-makers. In her writing, delicate sensitivity of a storyteller shines through. This book is the testimony of the rigour of a scholar who has presented historical detail in a graceful style. The book is fair, thoughtful and deeply humane. The author looks at history from a non-Western point of view which otherwise dominates the historiography on the discussed topics. This makes the book particularly helpful for readers in the Global South who want to see world events from a different perspective.

*The Thousand Years War: Russia and the West* is a book of enduring significance. For scholars of international relations, students of history, policymakers, and common educated people with interest in geopolitical events, this book is an essential read. At the end, the book makes the reader think that resilience is not merely Russia's national characteristic trait but part of its long history. Achala Moulik reminds that history is a continuum, and Russia's thousand-year war with the West is far from over.