

BLACK SEA COMPETITION

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An image from video released by Russia's Federal Security Service taken from a Russian coast guard vessel shows an incident between the Russian coast guard and a Ukrainian tugboat in the Kerch Strait on Nov. 25. Russia's Federal Security Service via AP



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Following the latest events in the Black Sea two old questions are reappearing. Both are inviting us for a repeated elaboration:

If a Monroe doctrine (about the hemispheric security exclusivity) is recognised at one corner of the globe, do we have a moral right or legal ground to negate it at the other corner?

Clearly, the 'might-makes-right' as a conduct in international relations cannot be selectively accepted. Either it is acknowledged to all who can effectively self-prescribe such a monopoly of coercion, or it is absolutely condemned as contrary to behaviour among the civilised nations.

Next to the first question is a right of pre-emption.

It is apparent that within the Black Sea theatre, Russia acts in a pre-emptive and defensive mood. For the last 25 years, all the NATO interventions were outside its membership zone; none of the few Russian interventions over the same period was outside the parameter of former USSR.

Before closing, let's take a closer look on the problem from a larger historical perspective.

Una hysteria Importante

Historically speaking, the process of Christianization of Europe that was used as the justification tool to (either intimidate or corrupt, so to say to) pacify the invading tribes, which demolished the Roman Empire and brought to an end the Antique age, was running parallel on two tracks. The Roman Curia/Vatican conducted one of them by its hammer: the Holy Roman Empire. The second was run by the cluster of Rusophone Slavic Kaganates, who receiving (the orthodox or true/authentic, so-called Eastern version of) Christianity from Byzantium, and past its collapse, have taken over a mission of Christianization, while forming its first state of Kiev Russia (and thereafter, its first historic empire). Thus, to the eastern edge of Europe, Russophones have lived in an intact, nearly a hermetic world of universalism for centuries: one empire, one Tsar, one religion and one language.¹

Everything in between Central Europe and Russia is Eastern Europe, rather a historic novelty on the political map of Europe. Very formation of the Atlantic Europe's present shape dates back to 14th–15th century, of Central Europe to the mid-late 19th century, while a

¹ Annotated from one of my earlier writings, it states as following: "...Early Russian state has ever since expanded north/northeast and eastward, reaching the physical limits of its outreach by crossing the Bering straits (and the sale of Russian Alaska to the USA in 1867). By the late 17th and early 18th century, Russia had begun to draw systematically into European politico-military theatre. (...) In the meantime, Europe's universalistic empire dissolved. It was contested by the challengers (like the Richelieu's France and others-geopolitical, or the Lutheran/Protestant - ideological), and fragmented into the cluster of confronted monarchies, desperately trying to achieve an equilibrium through dynamic balancing. Similar political process will affect Russian universal empire only by late 20th century, following the Soviet dissolution. (...) Not fully accepted into the European collective system before the Metternich's Holy Alliance, even had its access into the post-Versailles system denied, Russia was still not ignored like other peripheral European power. The Ottomans, conversely, were negated from all of the security systems until the very creation of the NATO (Republic of Turkey). Through the pre-emptive partition of Poland in the eve of WWII, and successful campaigns elsewhere in Eastern Europe, Bolshevik Russia expanded both its territory and its influence westwards. (...) An early Soviet period of Russia was characterized by isolated bilateral security arrangements, e.g. with Germans, Fins, Japanese, etc. The post WWII days have brought the regional collective system of Warsaw Pact into existence, as to maintain the communist gains in Europe and to effectively oppose geopolitically and ideologically the similar, earlier formed, US-led block. Besides Nixon's reapproachment towards China, the collapse of the Soviet Union was the final stage in the progressive fragmentation of the vast Sino-Soviet Communist block (that dominated the Euroasian land mass with its massive size and centrality), letting Russia emerge as the successor. The sudden ideological and territorial Soviet break-up, however, was followed by the cultural shock and civil disorder, painful economic and demographic crisis and rapidly widening disparities. All this coupled with the humiliating wars in Caucasus and elsewhere, since the centripetal and centrifugal forces of integration or fragmentations came into the oscillatory play. Between 1989 and 1991, communist rule ended in country after country and the Warsaw Pact officially dissolved. Subsequently, the Gorbachev-Jeltsin Russia experienced the greatest geopolitical contraction of any major power in the modern era and one of the fastest ever in history. Still, Gorbachev-Jeltsin tandem managed to (re-)brand themselves domestically and internationally - each got its own label of vodka..." (*Verticalization of Historical Experiences: Europe's and Asia's Security Structures - Structural Similarities and Differences*, Crossroads - the Macedonian Foreign Policy Journal, 4 (1), page 111-112, M-MFA 2008)

contemporary Eastern Europe only started emerging between the end of WWI and the collapse of the Soviet Union – meaning, less than 100 years at best, slightly over two decades in the most cases. No wonder that the dominant political culture of the Eastern Europeans resonates residual fears and reflects deeply insecure small nations. Captive and restive, they are short in territorial depth, in demographic projection, in natural resources and in a direct access to open (warm) seas. After all, these are short in historio-cultural verticals, and in the bigger picture-driven long-term policies. Eastern Europeans are exercising the nationhood and sovereignty from quite a recently, thus, too often uncertain over the side and page of history. Therefore, they are often dismissive, hectic and suspectful, nearly neuralgic and xenophobic, with frequent overtones.

Years of Useful Idiot

The latest loss of Russophone Europe in its geopolitical and ideological confrontation with the West meant colossal changes in Eastern Europe. One may look into geopolitical surrounding of at the-time largest eastern European state, Poland, as an illustration of how dramatic was it.² All three land neighbors of Poland; Eastern Germany (as the only country to join the EU without any accession procedure, but by pure act of *Anschluss*), Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union have disappeared overnight. At present, Polish border countries are a two-decade-old novelty on the European political map. Further on, if we wish to compare the number of dissolutions of states worldwide over the last 50 years, the Old continent suffered as many as all other continents combined: American continent – none, Asia – one (Indonesia/ East Timor), Africa – two (Sudan/South Sudan and Ethiopia/Eritrea), and Europe – three.

Interestingly, each and every dissolution in Europe was primarily related to Slavs (Slavic peoples) living in multiethnic and multi-linguistic (not in the Atlantic Europe's conscripted pure single-nation) state. Additionally, all three European fragmentations – meaning, every second dissolution in the world – were situated exclusively and only in Eastern Europe. That region has witnessed a total dissolution of Czechoslovakia (western Slavs) and Yugoslavia (southern Slavs, in 3 waves), while one state disappeared from Eastern Europe (DDR) as to strengthen and enlarge the front of Central Europe (Western Germany). Finally, countless centripetal turbulences severely affected Eastern Europe following the dissolution of the Soviet Union (eastern Slavs) on its frontiers.

Irredentism in the UK, Spain, Belgium, France and Italy, or Denmark (over Faroe Islands and Greenland) is far elder, stronger and deeper. However, all dissolutions in Eastern Europe took place irreversibly and overnight, while Atlantic Europe remained intact, with Central Europe even enlarging territorially and expanding economically.

Deindustrialized, incapacitated, demoralized, over-indebted, re-feudalized, rarified and de-Slavicized

² Ethnically, linguistically and religiously one of the most homogenous countries of Europe, Poland in its post-communist concepts reinvigorates the faith (as being, past the days of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, massively de-Slavicized). No wonder as the Polish-born Karol Józef Wojtyła served the Roman Curia as *Pontifex Maximus* from 1978, to be replaced by the German-born Joseph Ratzinger in 2005. Prizing Roman-Catholicism over ethnic and linguistic roots, even harshly denouncing any Slavic sentiment as a dangerous *roter russischer Panlawismus*, 'fortress' Poland effectively isolates itself on a long-run as none of its neighbors is Catholic. To the contrary, the four fifths of its land-borders are shared with other Slavic states. To externally mobilize, the elites (in any Eastern European state) would need an appealing intellectual case – not a mere ethno-religious chauvinism. One of the leading Croatian thinkers, Domagoj Nikolic says: "Austrian Catholicism is not anti-Germanic, but Polish is anti-Slavic. Belgian Catholicism is neither antifascism dismissive nor anti-Francophonous, but our Croatian Catholicism is very anti-Slavic and is antifascism trivializing... That undeniably leads us to conclude that (Slavic) Eastern Europe suffers the authenticity deficit...Only the immature nations can suffer such a historical disorientation."

Finally, East is sharply aged and depopulated –the worst of its kind ever– which in return will make any future prospect of a full and decisive generational interval simply impossible. *Honduras-ization* of Eastern Europe is full and complete. Hence, is it safe to say that if the post-WWII Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe was overt and brutal, this one is subtle but subversive and deeply corrosive?

The key (nonintentional) consequence of the Soviet occupation was that the Eastern European states –as a sort of their tacit, firm but low-tempered rebellion – preserved their sense of nationhood. However, they had essential means at disposal to do so: the right to work was highly illuminated in and protected by the national constitutions, so were other socio-economic rights such as the right to culture, language, arts and similar segments of collective nation’s memory. Today’s East, deprived and deceived, silently witnesses the progressive metastasis of its national tissue.

Ergo, euphemisms such as *countries in transition* or *new Europe* cannot hide a disconsolate fact that Eastern Europe has been treated for 25 years as defeated belligerent, as spoils of war which the West won in its war against communist Russia.

It concludes that (self-)fragmented, deindustrialized and re-feudalized, rapidly aged rarified and depopulated, (and de-Slavicized) Eastern Europe is probably the least influential region of the world – one of the very few underachievers. Obediently submissive and therefore, rigid in dynamic environment of the promising 21st century, Eastern Europeans are among last remaining passive downloaders and slow-receivers on the otherwise blossoming stage of the world’s creativity, politics and economy. Seems, Europe still despises its own victims...

Terra nullius

Admittedly, by the early 1990s, the ‘security hole’ – Eastern Europe, has been approached in multifold fashion: Besides the (pre-Maastricht EC and post-Maastricht) EU and NATO, there was the Council of Europe, the CSCE (after the 1993 Budapest summit, OSCE), the EBRD and EIB. All of them were sending the political, economic, human dimension, commercial signals, assistance and expertise. These moves were making both sides very nervous; Russia becoming assertive (on its former peripheries) and Eastern Europe defiantly dismissive.³ Until this very day, each of them is portraying the NATO enterprise as the central security consideration: One as a must-go, and another as a no-go.

No wonder that the absolute pivot of Eastern Europe, and the second largest of all Slavic states – Ukraine, is a grand hostage of that very dilemma: Between the eastern pan-Slavic hegemony and western ‘imperialism of free market’.⁴ Additionally, the country suffers from the consolidated Klepto-corporate takeover as well as the rapid re-Nazification.

For Ukraine, Russia is a geographic, socio-historic, cultural and linguistic reality. Presently, this reality is far less reflected upon than the seducing, but rather distant Euro-Atlantic club. Ukraine for Russia; it represents more than a lame western-flank’ geopolitical pivot, or to

³ Since the end of WWII in the Old Continent, there was no other external military interventions but to the Europe’s East. To be accurate, in the NATO history (nearly as double longer than the history of the Warsaw pact), the only two interventions of that Block ever conducted in Europe were both taking place solely on Eastern European soil. While the two Russian (covert) interventions since the end of the Cold War aimed at its strategic neighborhood (former Soviet republics, heavily inhabited by ethnic Russian; Abkhazia-South Ossetia and Crimea-East Ukraine), and were (unsuccessfully) justified as the encirclement preemption, the US-led NATO intervened overtly. In both NATO cases (Bosnia and Serbia-Kosovo), it was well beyond any membership territory, and short of any UN-endorsed mandate, meaning without a real international legitimacy. “Humanitarian intervention in Kosovo was never exactly what it appeared... It was a use of imperial power to support a self-determination claim by a national minority” – wrote Michael Ignatieff about the 1990s Balkans events, as fresh and accurate as if reporting was from Sevastopol in spring 2014.

⁴ This is further burdened by the *imperialism in a hurry* – an inflammable mix of the Lithuanian-Polish past traumas and German ‘manifest destiny’ of being historically yet again ill-fated; *impatient for quick results* – simply, unable to capitalize on its previous successes.

say, the first collateral in the infamous policy of containment that the West had continuously pursued against Russia ever since the 18th century.⁵

For Moscow, Kiev is an emotional place – an indispensable bond of historio-civilizational attachment – something that makes and sustains Russia both Christian and European. Putin clearly redlined it: Sudden annexation of Crimea (return to its pre-1954 status) was an unpleasant and humiliating surprise that brought a lot of foreign policy hangover for both the NATO and EU.⁶

Nevertheless, for the Atlantist alarmists (incl. the *Partition studies* participants and those working for the *Hate* industry), military lobbyists and other cold-war mentality ‘deep-state’ structures on all sides, this situation offers a perfect *raison d’etre*.

Thus drifting chopped off and away, a failed state beyond rehabilitation,⁷ Ukraine itself is a prisoner of this domesticated security drama. Yet again, the false dilemma so tragically imploded within this blue state, of a 50:50 polarized and deterritorialized population, over the question where the country belongs – in space, time and side of history. Conclusively, Eastern Europe is further twisting, while gradually combusted between Ukrainization and Pakistanization.⁸ The rest of Europe is already shifting the costs of its own foreign policy journey by ‘fracking’ its households with a considerably (politically) higher energy bills.

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⁵ Does the declining big power of a lost ideological grip, demoralized, with a disfranchised, ageing and rarified population, of the primary-commodities export driven, but shrinking economy need to be contained? Hence, what is the origin of anxiety: facts or confrontational nostalgia? The chief AmericanSovietologist, George Kennan, warned about the NATO expansion already in 1998: “I think it is a tragic mistake. Russians will gradually react quite adversely and it will affect their policies”. In that very interview, Kennan predicted that the NATO Eastern enlargement will provoke a major crisis in Europe with a hawk than ‘arguing’ a self-fulfilling prophecy “you see, we always told you that is how the Russian are”. Apparently, the Russian red-red line is Georgia and Ukraine. Kremlin kept stressing that calmly, but repeatedly for nearly 20 past years. Eventually, Georgia was territorially and politico-economically wrecked as a functioning, viable state before it was allowed to become a Western stronghold in Russia’s backyard. Georgia of that 2008. is an indication enough of how Ukraine – which is even a front-yard for Russia – might end up beyond 2014.

⁶ Putin’s “project is national, not imperial...to modernize Russia which, like any other state, has security concerns...” – fairly admits former French Minister of Defense Jean-Pierre Chevènement and confesses: “The pursuit of this conflict may turn Ukraine into a lasting source of conflict between the EU and Russia. Through a widely echoed ideological crusade, the US is attempting both to isolate Russia and to tighten its control over the rest of Europe”. /Chevènement, J-P. (2015), *No Need for this Cold War*, Le Monde diplomatique July 2015 (page 18)/

⁷ By the most scholarly accounts, Ukraine is the world champion in the re-feudalisation of its society. It goes well beyond pure income levels and its rampant systematic distribution inequality (inequality extraction ratio). Unfortunately, Ukraine is the world champion in other endemic disproportionality, too – in an asymmetry of wealth disposal and in a speed of acquiring it. The combined wealth of Ukraine’s 50 riches oligarchs equalled 85% of Ukraine’s (pre-war) GDP. Oligarhs needed only 16 years to accumulate it (1991-2007). Even the *Economist* (a well-informed magazine of a wealthy class-tolerant, neoliberal orientation) questioned these practices, as stretching far beneath a classical criminal activity and representing – in fact – a warfare of elites against its own population (*undeclared gerila war*). The Magazine concluded: ‘Ukraine today is as our western societies would be without *checks-and-balances* mechanism’.

⁸ *Ukrainization* could be attributed to eastern and western Slavs– who are fighting distinctions without significant difference. *Pakistanization* itself should describe the southern Slavs’ scenery: In lieu of truth and reconciliation, guilt is offered as a control mechanism, following the period of an unchecked escalation, ranging from a hysteria-of-a-small-difference to a crime -of-otherness purge. Both models share about the same ending result: a self-trivialization, barbarization and re-feudalization.



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