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REVISITING THE ONTOLOGY OF RUSSIA'S HEARTLAND GEOPOLITICS IN ITS CONTEMPORANEITY

Abstract:

The paper aims at assessing the long duree of Russian geopolitics from the perspective of the Heartland model as envisaged by Sir Mackinder. This was modeled in order to give an alarmist view about the locational supremacy of Russia over the Eurasian Heartland. But, the Heartland model has had many arguments that pointed to the approach long-seated before Mackinder could deploy them for the West. The paper looks at the conceptualization of Eurasianism or Russian geopolitical thought as an ontological praxis of Heartland thesis. The ethno-religious base of Slavism and Russian Orthodoxy made a complex compromise with the Asian peoples in order to strike multiple balances both in the European theatre and the Euro-Asian realm at large. The Heartland signified a perennial contest between western democracies and the Asiatic authoritarianism. Russia inherited this geo-cultural repository and worked with China giving rise to bigger Heartland discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Sir Halford Mackinder's 1904 paper examined Russia's geopolitical strength. He made a couple of axiomatic statements about the possible rise of Russia establishing its control over Mackinder's Heartland. One statement in his introductory remark that remained conspicuous by its general

absence in subsequent anthologies was that "[e]very explosion of social forces, instead of being dissipated in a surrounding circuit of unknown space and barbaric chaos, [shall] be sharply re-echoed from the far side of the globe, and weak elements in the political and economic organism of the world will be shattered in consequence" (Mackinder, 2004). The geographic centrality of such an explosive event could have more cataclysmic effect rendering concentric reverberations all through its periphery and beyond. The Heartland presages a perambulatory setting for Russia whose location was a teleological foundation to the pivotal thinking of Mackinder. The resurgence of the post-USSR Russia and its subsequent readjustments towards the three spheres of the West, the near abroad and the far eastern Asian periphery marks the Phoenician significance of Mackinder's 1904 paper. Sir Halford Mackinder envisioned the prowess of Russia's geopolitical location and its land richly endowed with vast resources. Mackinder did not take into account several anthropogenic factors that were essential to capitalise on these virtues. He believed in the passivity of geopolitical motivations that were sufficient enough to draw interest of a powerful nation or a race for its ownership. The post-Cold War Russia came a long way to re-engage itself with the Mackinderian notion of Heartland. This reflected upon President Putin's leadership, who carried a lot from the past as is evident in his foreign policy wherein he has integrated Russia's core geopolitical strength, namely, the Mackinderian Heartland. If foreign policy were to be an instrument of cultivating the international identity, then Putin's policy of Eurasianism could be seen as an ontology of the domestic balance in progression all around the Heartland (Kaczmarski, 2006).

This paper deals with the contemporary Russian geopolitical landscape and its antecedents demarked by the idea of Eurasianism as an ontological process of Russia's geopolitical ascendance. Both, the ideas of Eurasianism and Heartland constitute the inside-out of Russia's geopolitical dialectics and in terms of consciousness one reinforces the other. Mackinder's paper could be seen as a testimony to the rise of Russia as a significant power increasingly defining international order from the Heartland perspective. Russia's

predisposition to its geopolitical concerns and its gradual integration into global understanding brought a renewed focus on the Heartland thesis. The effort to integrate with the West whence failed gave rise to a new geopolitical thinking where Russia's geopolitical quest gave birth to a new epistemological understanding of the Heartland model. The paper makes a case for the need to understand the dual nature of the global order, where the US has its own generic behaviour betraying the networked approach. Russia, on the other, looks for the assimilative structures based on shared culture that emanates from its geopolitical centrality and resource backed geoeconomic rise. According to Buzan, the "civilizational cores of the classical world" need to engage with each other so that they develop norms of ordering their core interests and recombining them to sustainable levels of mutual assimilation (Buzan, 2010). The primary hypothesis of this paper is that Russia seeks to preserve its geopolitical consciousness that gives its strength and direction towards a sustainable and inclusive geopolitical action. This was given away in the idea of Eurasianism infusing Mackinder's Heartland as a model of Russian consciousness that incorporates its historic progression in terms of location in Europe-Asia and beyond.

MACKINDERIAN FOUNDATIONS OF EURASIANISM

Post-Soviet Eurasianism was interpreted as an outcome of Atlanticism, which was a rejection of the Cold war experience. The post- Soviet Eurasianism was neither a narrow interpretation of the national interest nor a stereotypical expansionist posture of the yesteryears. The Atlanticists and integrationists spoke in similar tone with the difference lying in their scalar view. The integrationists took the continental view of the assimilation with the West, meaning the Western Europe. The Atlanticists essentially looked for rapprochement with the US, which was the post-Soviet illusion that dissolved in the aftermath of Yugoslav disintegration. The Russian Eurasianists believed that Soviet Union was more than an empire and symbolized the cultural inheritance of the part of earth that embossed cultural distinctiveness of Russia on

world plenum. The defacing of cultural asset in the aftermath of the Soviet disintegration caused a strong reaction towards reclaiming the Eurasian geo-cultural space leading to the movement of new Eurasianism. Eurasianism could be seen as a pluralistic compage of nationalist sentiment (Tsygankov, 2003). It had imperial undertones of the Expansionists, who sought to restore the Cold war status of Soviet power. The Atlanticists looked to connect it with modern European axiology and abjure from any desire to reinstate communist legacy. This stratum also represented a civil society initiative in Russia that would often get a hard talk from the Russian authorities. They constituted a school of scholars who would blend the geo-culture with geoeconomic approach to delineate the soft power aspect of Russian influence as a Great Power. Eurasianism does not mean bi-valent in terms of the East and the West, but also stood for an equidistant focus from the both as well. The collectivism and the commune life formed the basis of Eurasian axiology. The Eurasianism also pointed to the sense of security dilemma that sought to pre-empt against any geopolitical split (Nikitin, 2005).

Eurasianism defined Russia's constructivist approach towards its geopolitical goals. According to the Duginists, this signified a locational 'Third' between Europe and Asia in a quest for a dualistic order (Shlapentokh, 2007b). A Slavonic ethno-religious bind at the European level, on one hand projected itself as a balance to the Turko-Muslim periphery. On the other at a larger scale, conveyed the larger idea of the Europe-Asia as a single geopolitical space visualised by the Russian Eurasianists who had the impetuous to remain sentinels of an Occidental-Oriental civilizational balance. This could be delineated as a foundational aspect of distinctive Russian cis-nationalism, which imbibed the eclectic trans-nationalism. The apprehension of thorough Westernisation and its institutional culture led on to the comfort of Asian (Oriental) axiological sense of authoritarianism. The idea of Eurasianism oscillated between the liberal viewpoints of engaging the West esp., the Europe to the neo-realist perception of safeguarding whole of the CIS from the pervading influence of the NATO. The extreme rightists like Alexander Belkov often usurped the Eurasian forum to supplant the idea of Russian (Slavic) ethno-

nationalism (Clover, 2016). The geopolitics of Eurasia could also be seen as dualism in the form of state polity as well as the statist response to ethno-polity. It underscored the dialectical axiom that if geography was the destiny then it was imperative upon man to write his destiny by building suitable geoeconomic landscapes to change that destiny. The West not only challenged the Russian state polity in post-cold war period but also threatened the conditioning of ethno-political construct on the Russian periphery that could disturb the hard earned accommodation of the last two centuries (Karpova et al., 2015). The famous Duginist, Pavel Zarifullin and the leader of International Eurasian Movement (IEM) underscored that the major objective of Americanism was to destroy all those regimes where the US interests were bounced off. He underscored the neo-conservative approach of the Berznisky's doctrine. The only difference laid in the US's approach during the post-Cold war period wherein it had successfully cultivated Yeltsin's regime for liberal concessions to the US investments. The retraction of those sops and Russia's decision to put the foot down amid rising American policy aggression created a new Russian perception about its geopolitical self (Spechler & Spechler, 2013). This notion of Eurasianism was associated with the return of the Great Power politics. According to Mankoff, the Eastern Slavic identity though in convulsion had many unifying under-currents. The most important was the Mackinderian postulate that the geo-cultural base was sourced into the vast geoeconomic inheritance. The Muscovy would always be liberal while sharing its resources with Kievan Rus, the Ukrainian and the Byelorussian halves. The Russians were also pivotal to the European order in the past, namely, the Concert of Europe (Mankoff, 2011). The culturists interpreted the first socialist model of society as something exclusive to the Soviet Russia. This socialist Russian exclusiveness was bellowed with the sentiments of nationalism. The nationalist sentiment was to an extent restored by the Stalinist liberalism towards Orthodoxy (Shlapentokh, 2014b).

SLAVISM AS ITS ETHNIC CORE

The Russian security complex rests on historic identity of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), Pan Slavism and the Soviet statehood. These have strictly near continental scope. Beyond that it has European, Asian and the Muslim world where Russia has intensive engagement. The Outer periphery is one of all round engagement with the US on a multilateral basis. Alexander Pumpiansky termed the urge for Eurasian identity as a 'moral compensation' for being the significant 'other' (Schmidt, 2005). If Eurasia could be seen and morphed as a geographical entity then Vasily Tatischev (1686-1750) could be credited for defining the territorial limits of Euro-centric Eurasia, with Urals as the easternmost limits. The European concerns largely emanate from the historical experience of the concert of Europe. The Eurasian landmass essentially conveyed the sense of immersion into myriad patterns of society. It was not the sense of appropriation unlike the West European experience. Russia experienced continuity and change across vast swathe of Asiatic lands. The American civilisation has had its counterpoised dreamers of Russian civilisation who nurtured Slavist ambitions, which could be one of the tipping points of Russia's protective approach towards Eurasia. The Eurasian movement according to Ishboldin represented the Russian fascination for Asia. Russianism in view of Fedotov was an heir to the Mongolian traits but the larger interest laid in the role of Asiatic parts of FSU that contributed to the rise of Soviet Russia. Waldemar Gurien had prophesied that if ever the Marxist regime would ever undergo change it would hardly shake off the totalitarian character, and, there remained a high chance of single party regime. The challenge was to secure the legitimacy for this regime from far and wider geographic expanse extending into Asia. Therefore, there was a unique geo-cultural co-option of Turkic Muslims in maintaining this empire (Ishboldin, 1946). Based on this, Russia could be seen as a Slavo-Turkish domain where religion was de-ideologised. Russia's secular state character allowed the blending of Orthodox Christian Slavs and Turkish Muslims to get along each other, surmising a blend of Huntington's

thesis mixed with Nikolai Danilevsky's ideas into neo-Eurasianism. Russia's neo-Eurasianism largely stemmed from the non-reconciliation with the West (Laqueur, 2015). The neo-Eurasianism could be credited to Gleb Pavlosky, who was Putin's advisor, and in 1995 created the Foundation for Effective Politics. This foundation resuscitated the 'Eurasian' idea for Russian nationalism (Shlapentokh, 2014a).

The Slavic understanding between Kiev and Moscow remained pivotal upon the Turkic population of Crimea. Crimean Khannate maintained its existence independent of Ottoman Empire before annexation by the Russian Empire in 1783. The Tatars earlier since 15th century were raiding Russia, Poland, Ukraine, Moldavia, Georgia, Mingrelia and Circassia (Kizilov, 2007). It was perhaps the loss of faith by Christian Slaves that characterized the discourse rather than the brutality of the Tatars per se. The Russian Orthodoxy stressed symbolic importance to the occupation of Crimea. The Crimean Tatars were symbolic to Slavic dominance in Europe and their identity that extended to the Far East. The annexation was a symbol of Moscow's growing closer association with the Orthodox Church. The identity of Crimea also included a large Russian population (Trenin, 2001). The Slavic identity beyond Europe was a part of the reaction to the Germanic, French or the Italian order. The loose association of Slavic nationalities and their national spaces were devoid of any hierarchical structure. But, the Russian capability to dominate the Slavic space was seen as a challenge to the European order. The nineteenth century saw the rise of competing Slavic nationalism. The Poles, Serbs and Russians tried to win as many Slavic groups on their side. The fact remained that it was the Russian Slavs who had the strongest geopolitical disposition so far as the European balance of power was concerned (Kohn, 1961). The Eastern European question in the wake of these geopolitical concerns was split into the dualisms of ethno-nationalistic and ethno-religious kind. These, dichotomous ethnic-identities were cardinal to Russia's position in reference to the Eurasian Heartland. Russian understanding of Balkans and the Slavic situation led them to look for wider encompassing doctrine. Scholars like Alexander Dugin took the moral authority in geo-cultural disposition of

the Slavs while balancing about Europe-Asia (Kubyshkin & Sergunin, 2015). The term Slavophile has etymological binary in and outside Russia. The origins of Pan-Slavism could be traced to Austrian federation in mid-19th century, when an all-Slav Congress was held in Prague in 1848. The successive rebellion in Vienna and involvement of Russian army to quell the resistance proved Russia's lackadaisical approach towards larger Slavic union. The Slavs were thus parcelled under three realms dominated by the Germans, Magyars (Hungary) and the Russians. Earlier there was an absence of any term such as 'pan-Slavism' in Russian geo-cultural discourse (Lavrin, 1962). Russian Slavonic policy was more about the ideas of Russian aristocracy and Orthodoxy. The idea about the League of Nations as an ideal testament for disembellishing from ethnological, religious and monarchical considerations was sourced from the Russian understanding of Slavism. It was considered that such deep delving notions could only be purged by any international system (Milyukov, 1928). One of the strongest observations made during the inter-war period was that Slavism had forbearance from racial affinity. The very idea of affinity served as spatially transforming value as one would travel from East to Western Europe. It appeared much more racial (continental) in the Eastern part, whereas it was more cultural in Germanic lands and far more elitist in Latin and French peoples (Jackh, 1934). In fact, it was not the Russians but the 17th century Croatian priest Yura Krizanic as the real promoter of pan-Slavism. The 18th century backlash in the form of Slavic intellectual tradition emerged to counter German cultural hegemony. Russian Slavism remained a near abroad internationalism. They viewed Slavism as a non-national and trans-territorial project. The Soviets believed that pan-Slavism could be the component in their larger defining of the struggle for nationalities that sought liberation from Germanic and Magyar dominance. The Eurasianism therefore was one-tier up in contra-distinction to Atlanticism. The pan-Slavism was essentially an effort to reorganize Europe. It still remained short of any possible reorganisation of Europe-Asia, which became a possibility with the inclusion of Turkic populations (Guins, 1950). The quest for the Russians was whether to confine their civilizational urge to Slavonic realm or

to reclaim the past that eventually encompassed the Tsarist expanse over Turkic populations and even the Soviet legacy that goes almost upto Mackinder's Middle tier. The western scholars have perceived Eurasianism as a sort of Slavophilism. It is something that appeared with strong ethnic consciousness, but the territoriality remained a permanent ambiguity (Smith, 1999).

THE MAKING OF A EURASIANIST HEARTLAND

The dichotomy of continental and maritime power relations that the signified relevance of Heartland theory was first pointed out by Russian geographer Nikolaevich Savitskii in 1921 in his chapter on 'Continent-Ocean, Russia and the World Market', which was a classical blend of Eurasianism and the Heartland thesis (Tchantouridze, 2001). Russia's Heartland approach evolved during its interaction with East Asia. At that time it was not Eurasianism per se as there was a greater emphasis on the distinctiveness of Slavonic realm. Russian policy maker Prince Espher Ukhtomskii under Tsar Nicholas II in 1920s chalked out its salient objectives (Rangsimaporn, 2006). This was coined as Russia's Asianism, and it was the predecessor of the Eurasianism. One of the little known considerations of geoeconomic aspects of Heartland theorisation has been the re-envisioning of economic landscape as a result of Soviet planning. This was somewhat keenly observed by none other than David Hooson, the famous economic geographer, who noticed the kind of transformation Russians were bringing to the Eurasian political economy (Johnston, 2009). In this context that one looks at the Middle Volga region centred between Kazan, Samara and Ufa as the miniature core of the Soviet Heartland. In fact, he used agnomen for the region as the 'Cinderella of all times' (Hooson, 1960). The imagining of geopolitical Russia is credited to Sir Halford Mackinder, who had his first stay as British High Commissioner to South Russia. The Eastern Europe mattered most to him as he was concerned with an effective curtailment of the Russian overtures towards the ownership of the Heartland. But, much to the misunderstanding of the

generations of scholars, the Mackinderian project was the least of an endeavour towards the Russian containment. He did not wish deprive Russia its geo-locational inheritances. Mackinder really envisioned the democratic governance of Heartland that would truly be an ordering imperative for the democracies at its periphery and by that standards he did not see such a possible Russia under the then Bolsheviks. According to Blouet, the Mackinderian scheme outlaid in his 1919 book, Democratic Ideals and Reality talked of preventing a Russo-German alliance and saw Eastern Europe to be a constellation of smaller states that would rule out any possibility of continental contiguity of geopolitical alliance (Blouet, 1976). Mackinder was quite active in forging an anti-Bolshevik alliance for laying the siege around Heartland. He met policymakers in Warsaw, Bucharest and Sofia while entourage to South Russia. He also sought expansion of the Treaty of Versailles to foresee creation of states such as Daghestan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and South Russia etc. He envisioned reformed post-Tsardom Russia, not of the Bolshevik kind. He tried to persuade British government of the times to support General Denikin and declare a formal coalition of anti-Soviet forces. He at the same rebuked his own working class failing to see the threat from proletarian state. He wanted a degree of absolutism at home to pander for a liberal western-style democracies in Eurasia (Polelle, 1999). He believed Germany being the most powerful industrial country had all the ingredients to usurp the Heartland. It took a German geopolitician Ewald Banse to naively articulate German strategic objectives during the inter-war year of 1932. Banse suggested that breaching the Maginot line would be an imperative for controlling the Eastern European theatre. However, it was Haushofer, who advocated a strong German-Russian alliance to command the Heartland geopolitics. The Russian military students were trained in Reich. It was Stalin who threw the spanner in German plans, when he removed the German-educated generals (Horlings, 1941). According to Hall, Germany had better prospects for being a pivotal power as it had both continental and maritime strength and was equally industrial and agrarian economy. And, the German periphery was largely an alliance periphery as no single power dared challenge her. The Treaty of Brest-

Litovsk in 1918 allowed Allied Powers to speculate the German rise in Eurasian Heartland (Hall, 1955). The only way to prevent German-Russian alliance was to interject in the East European lands. There were several counter-revolutionaries planted in the region, and Crimea and the Black Sea was the most important strategic route to aid and assist these forces. The geopolitical significance of Crimea could be understood from the historic fact that it held the key for controlling the Asian part of Russian territory. The British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) had a very famous spy, named Sidney Reilly, who produced reports about influencing the Crimean Tatars that would help them transform entire Russia, both economically and politically. The French troops were present in Sevastopol in 1918 and Royal Marines as well. The Bolsheviks reacted by overthrowing German puppet regime in Ukraine led by Skoropadsky (Ainsworth, 1998).

THE ISLAMIC ASIAN PERIPHERY

Russia's relation with Islam has an important bearing on the Heartland concept. The non-Slav population, largely the Tartars and other Turkic peoples is the reference to primordial continentalism under the Ottomans. The Slav population and the Turkic Muslims outside Russia have reacted in varied form. President Putin has emphasized that Russian Muslims outside Russia as their allies. There is a very significant departure of Eurasianism when seen from the point of view of Slavophilism (Shlapentokh, 2008). The Eastern Question at the time of decline of Ottoman Empire dealt with the religion of Islam albeit its presence in the populations of Eastern Europe. Interestingly, the epistemological growth of the Eastern Question in various European writings also referred it to the problem of the Asianess crept into European realm by the ways of Islam. The quest of Eastern Question remained in the form of effort to de-Asianize the Europe's eastern parts and re-Christen these with Orthodoxy (Karcic, 2002). The Slavic Soviet system could find connecting bridge in the innovative approach to deal with Islam, namely, under *Jadidism*. The discourse remained latent in Soviet times, which also nuanced the

- 15 -

transition from agrarian society to industrial society suitably reflecting the context of a Jadidist movement. But, the fine element that remained in the forefront of this idea was the sublime Turkish identity. This identity remained in contest for interaction within the Slavonic realm (Yémelianova, 1997). The Tatar identity rested on Bulgarism, Turkism and Islamism, which could locate the potential countenance in Slavic identity as well. The most important fact is that 'Tatarism' tends to hyphenate their identity of being a Muslim. This is quite reflexive of their ethno-territorial affinities and has refused to be subsumed under religious identity. Tatar historians such as Khalphin, al-Khursavi and Yalchigula cited that there was an attempt to balance the relations between the Slavs on the West and the co-religionists in the southeast. This inherent geopolitical balance created a scope for secular and innovative approach towards the 'Other'. Catherine II avoided the Russification of the Tatar-Muslims and it was the policy of persuasion and political measures that won their allegiance towards the Russian empire. The historic experiences of to and fro movement between Islam and Orthodoxy saw many Tatar uprisings during Bashkir movements from 1650s to 1750s. It was a failure of transforming the Tatars into Orthodox subject that the numerous ways were experimented to integrate them within the Russian Empire. The most important one was to invite the non-Russian ethnic leaders to Legislative Commission for venting out their grievances and concerns (Fisher, 1968).

The primordial theory of Eurasianism is closer to Mackinderian scheme of thought whence the Russian state is seen in continuum of the Mongol/Tatar dominance that coalesced with the native Slavic population serving into bureaucracy. Strata that grew with the European fervour in due course of time eventually gave birth to the Slavic empire, namely, the Tsarist Empire (Mileski, 2015). Shlapentokh emphasizes the 'Asianness' of this Eurasianism quite figuratively describing it as brutal despotism, corruption and absolutist abuse of power, which at times obfuscated even the religious tenacity. It is to this extent that even Islam was on the margins so far as the power alignment of medieval Russian princes and the Tatar/Mongols rulers were concerned. Russia's

enigmatic approach to non-Slavic Russians was quite visible in the nuances that Eurasianism held for these groups. Amongst, the post-Soviet communities, the Turkic/Tatar Muslims were witnessing the rising political aspirations to score better space in the articulation of 'Asiatic Eurasianism'. The scholars like Gimadi praised the benign patronage of Great Slavic people, whose progressivism affected their lives positively. It was a deliverance from the Ottoman parasitism and more dignified living for the Tartari population (Lazzerini, 1981). Islamist Duginists, like Niyazov, have been holding placards for Turkish-Slavic-Muslim-Orthodox Rossiyani Union that could be the most comprehensible counterpoised identity to the Western alliance. The slogan could be seen in a wider context of reaching out to the Central Asian Muslims, where especially, Kazakhstan officially advocated the Eurasianist movement. This was fret with concerns about the power adjustments between the Slavs and the Muslims. The demographic perception played heavy whenever there was an effort to integrate the Muslims as equal or junior partners in Russian national identity. Tsygankov identified that Russia's inter-ethnic relations had a degree of periodicity whilst it referred to Asia and the Muslim world (Tsygankov, 2010). The two being civilizational in their approach motivated Russia to affirm its civilizational identities with a degree of antiquity.

THE ASIATIC EXTRAPOLATION TO HEARTLAND

The idea of Eurasian Heartland essentially laid bare the discourse about the history of the peoples in Inner Asia. The eclectic terms such as the 'nomadic empire' have been used to demonstrate the complex nature of the region (Drompp, 1989). The metaphysical structure of Russian geopolitics can be studied from the post-structuralist perspective with the faith that there exists an ontological order of geopolitics to which the Russians are the heir apparent. This ontological order has been defined by the territorialisation process initiated by the Turko-Mongol empires, and their resuscitation had a unique basis. It was in recognition to this premise that Sir Halford Mackinder made the baseline to construct a larger Heartland model. The

auxiliary aspect which evaded the eye of Sir Mackinder for a good reason of being under the hubris of British supremacy was the normative side of the territorialisation. Sir Mackinder found a unique corollary in precession to his views of General Kaufman, who was responsible for integrating Inner Asia under the Tsarist Empire. Tsarist policy of subjugation and integration remained important tool in Russia's Asianist expansion. Moreover, there was a need to counter common antagonism against the Slavic empire that prompted Russians to cultivate ethnic consciousness among various Turkic tribes. General Kaufman often underscored that it was the ethnographic difference that mattered the most to distinguish groups rather than Islam, which remained on periphery. This led to the dichotomous elucidation of urban Muslims, who were considered debased because of the total loss of their ethnic content, compared to rural folk. This brought strange ecclesiastical combination of secularism with ethnicity all the more characterizing the modern nationality in Central Asia. It brought the importance of geographers, linguists and ethnographers in service of the Empire (Brower & Lazzerini, 1997).

The battle of Varna (1444) had set the European limits towards the East and the fall of Constantinople (1453) made Ottomans as the first possible heir to the Eurasian order, after the long hiatus since the Mongols. This legacy had huge significance in terms of religious and political territorialisation across Eastern Europe. It also defined the incapability of a European power to advance in the East through land. Amid, such experience the rise of Moscovy could only be seen as a counter-balance to the Ottomans. Therefore, the Euro-Asia represented in history a geopolitical dualism one within an extended Europe and the other as a Euro-Asian conjecture extending upto Turkestan. The 1683 defeat of Ottomans at the hands of Austrian Habsburgs and its allies revealed much of the transitioning geopolitical times. The rise of Habsburgs paved way for new source of centrality in European order along the Danube. It was setting the limits between Catholicism and Islam along the European periphery, as Poland finally sided with Austria (Hochedlinger, 2015). The maritime trade route to India had pulverized the continental monopoly of the

Ottomans. Their control over routes to Asia and the commerce declined. It led them to capture Vienna, which proved to be their nemesis. This continental dominance finally got shrunk further northwards towards the Slavic regions in later 18th century. The Russians were the subsequent beneficiary of the new opportunity that came to their door with the collapse of Ottomans (Grygiel, 2006).

The problem of centrality has been the everlasting thirst across Europe. The Ottomans wished to re-project the map where they stood central to Europe and maritime Asia. The Germans stood central to Europe in what was subsequently seen as emerging Atlantic order. The weak continentalism of the Ottoman Empire and poor maritime capabilities forced them to articulate strong territorial measures. Islam appeared to be one handy tool for putting the vast expanses under single continental influence. The zeal of Muslim holy war could be interpreted as geopolitical compulsion of Turkey to prevent subversion of land-based relations from being appropriated by maritime forces of Europe. The Eurocentric nature of Ottoman Empire sought to rally Turkic Muslim tribes against the Christian Europe. This could be verified by the fact that Ottoman Sultans were in general tolerance to Christian subjects and were not keen on conversion. This testified that religious zeal was put to rein in fiduciary limits of continental commerce. These salient features of Euro-Asian history goaded Sir Mackinder to infer as "every explosion of social forces, instead of being dissipated in a surrounding circuit of unknown space and barbaric chaos, will be sharply re-echoed from the far side of the globe, and weak elements in the political and economic organism of the world will be shattered in consequence" (Mackinder, 2004).

A MAKING OF A RUSSIAN HEARTLAND

Russia's ambivalence towards post-cold war Europe and latter's partisan approach forced her to fall back upon the image of the strong state, Orthodox Christianity and socialist welfare (Tsygankov, 2007). The role of supra-nationalism had grown sharper in post-Soviet period which sought to reclaim

Russia as a civilization that inherited geo-power and status. Tsygankov speaks of three civilizational constructs to view Russia's external action- the West, Eurasia and the Euro-East, which act as a cultural-civilisational dimension of Russia's foreign policy. Civilisation is understood as part of ideational cultural environment and it gives birth to the idea-based community that is more than a nation and is constantly evolving in time and space. The ideational basis of civilisation underscores the mental constructions that are sourced into regurgitation of inter-generational memory. Tsygankov further clarifies that civilisation territorializes itself with the help of institutional facilitation and repeated historical practices, and the actions of cultural entrepreneurs (Tsygankov, 2014a). The scholars point out to lack of pedigree in geopolitical thought in Russia. Especially, the hiatus of the Soviet times as it was considered a false science. Perhaps, the discipline might have been the latent one where it was the geopolitical thinking that went into play in many of the academic processes. In fact, the whole dichotomy of real versus liberal in international relations too came up only in post-Soviet pedagogy (Bassin & Aksenov, 2006). Bassin points to the Russian leadership, who sought the continuity from the past from the point of view of a strong state of Soviet Union. Russian leader Gennady Zuganov referred to the naturalness about the Russia's Heartland inheritance with a high degree of self-sufficiency. This was seen in reflection to the West's hostility towards Soviet Union. This perennial geopolitical envy continued to dominate in post-Soviet times; but Zuganov stops short of any expansionist idea. According to him, the only geopolitical control that needs to be exercised is on the Near Abroad. It is this Russian periphery that concerns most. Bassin terms this hard preference on periphery and abandonment of globalism as "isolationist imperialism". This was an attempt to look for the footprints only in terms of civilizational and regional economic integration. The collapse of Soviet Union proved to be the nemesis of Heartland approach. This could be inferred from the statements of Russian politician Sergei Shakhrai. He revealed that Gorbachev had a plan to retain Soviet Union by a formula in which the 20 ethnically autonomous regions would have been given the status of Union republics in lieu of supporting the USSR,

which had already 15 republics who were eyeing the article 73 of the Soviet Constitution for secession (RBTH, 2013). This was true for Baltic States, Ukraine and their neighbours. The plan was befooling as 16 out of 20 were already in Russia, so it would have really given a moth eaten shape to the Russian nation interpolated with these new republics, whose loyalty towards the Soviet framework could not be guaranteed. Therefore, Russia preferred an external dissolution of territoriality in retention of its single unit identity after the collapse of USSR. This raised consternations in 2015 as the news came out that Russia's chief prosecutor opined as illegal, both the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine and the unconstitutionality of the independence of the Baltic States (Patidar, 2015).

THE ETHNICISATION OF THE SOVIET IDENTITY

The Soviets did a yeoman's work in transforming the ethnic nation into a civic nation during the Soviet times. The Euro-centric vision of ethnicity laid in identity of the 'Other' against the demystified self. The Soviets essentially bound the two to liquidate the two counter positions. The ethnicisation meant locating the periphery, something which the Soviets actually did best by integrating it. This can be examined through the concept of core ethnie as propounded by Smith. It is unclear if the process of ethnicisation was a Soviet period invention or remained an evolved perennial entity as a post-Tsarist Russianism. It has to be seen in terms of foundational character, golden age and associated territorial claims (Kaufmann & Zimmer, 2004). The Russians according to Dugin are the Eurasian Romans, a group who accepted anyone confirming to their geopolitical testament (Shlapentokh, 2007a). This is quite a geo-cultural reference to protect supremacy acquired through location and its association. The debate is to locate this core. The dilemma is to identify its instrumentation either through Russian Tsarist imperial past or to put it as simple the ethno-national identity based on Slav and Russian Orthodox Church. The nationalist idea seems to have been nurturing on the idea of 'Holy Rus', as the post-

Soviet 're-imagination' of Russian identity through the lens of Russian Orthodoxy. The Russian Orthodox Church has geopolitical imagination, even if the state might not have one. And, there is active participation of Moscow Patriarch on this issue (Suslov, 2014). Russia's groping quest for a national idea has been a century long experiment from obscurantism to a highly idealized societal state, and added to this is a perennial conflict between secular and theological idea of state as Bokhanov said salvation lied only in cosmic principle and the scientific temper (Alekseev, 2013). The approach turned Russians suffering from constant threat and isolation into a superpower. These idea structures speak volumes about the Russian mind-set that refuses to be a simple definitive argument. But, then one needs a simple representation to borrow a case that befits from Huntington's premise of autochthonous nature of culture and its civilizational roots. Russia's Eurasian vision thus can be suitably modelled on cultural basis. The culture has important role in defining the periphery. It becomes a cognate structure embedded with self-consciousness. In fact, the two foster each other in a dialectical manner. The role of Soviet past in reinforcing the Russian culture and its resuscitation in post-Soviet period could not be less underscored. The 'great-powerness' had a bearing on defining the civilizational basis for Russia's long-term economic policy and military doctrine over Eurasian Heartland (Urnov, 2014). It implied that the West intended to disrupt the very source of self-consciousness as it betrayed in the past with the capitulation of those cognate structures in the aftermath of withdrawal from Afghanistan and later the fall of Berlin wall. Russia was shaken to the core when the Turko-Slavic geo-cultural moat wall collapsed during the Yugoslav war. It sought to create twin dissensions, one between the Slav themselves and the other between the Slavs and the Muslims. The Russian periphery was re-defined in conservative terms under the shadow of geo-psychological landlockedness from the Ottoman past that impacted Russia's own stakes in the Black Sea. Turkey largely inherited the post-Berlin wall geopolitical legacy and tried to create a buffer between the USSR and the Middle East (Ayas, 2012). Russia responded to this geopolitical predicament by asserting Eurasianist expansionism and

tackling the short shrift given by smaller states in and around Black Sea.

THE POST-SOVIET RUSSIFICATION OF THE HEARTLAND

Russia's question of territoriality emanated from the ontological ambivalence with reference to the West. Its corpuscular edge was not threatened by the near West, yet it's all articulation of territoriality lied in manipulating the borders that were the point of conflict with the far West. Thus far, the West was not again the territorial entity, but the institutional challenge to Russia that had strong territorial manifestations. The only possible explanation to this dichotomous situation could be the Heartland approach that remained a strong reference to its geographical location. The reference to the West was also reflexively poised from the Slavic core as well. Mackinder's Heartland does not geographically synchronize with the Slavic Heartland taking into account, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. This Heartland was threatened by NATO membership of Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic that liquidated the buffer between Slavic Heartland and the 'Western democracies'. Belarus had been a great moral strength for Russia's Heartland status. The Soviet collapse and the retreat of Russia from Heartland have been described by Prime Minister Putin as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century. Kremlin was near exhaustion with economic efforts to reintegrate the former Soviet Union (FSU). The choice had to be made to defend either the core interests or to look for international institutional opportunities for alleviating economic stress. But, the latter came at a price. The West attempted to destabilize Russia's periphery affecting the smaller states. The result was the price paid by Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan (Tsygankov, 2008a). Their territorial fragmentation and state failure happened as a result of the US-EU assault on Russia's position in Eurasian Heartland. Russia has survived the various tricks and tactics that threatened its state and economy. In fact, Russia was an important labour destination for most of the former Soviet republics, who have suffered largely due to

instability in the Eurasian periphery. Their cultural capital could only be realised in Russia. The elite in FSU also have had moral support with the geoeconomic capital being collectively realised by aligning with Russian business interests. This gave Russia a new confidence to handle its periphery (Tsygankov, 2012, 2013).

According to the integrationists, Russian Foreign Minister Primakov had set priorities for an exclusive idea of Eurasia inherited through the CIS. It was a hope for a capable body that would resist NATO expansion and retain its interest in collective domain with China, India and Iran. Their hopes were misplaced as the consternation in Baltics and Caucasus gave the first order blow to its conceptualisation. The integrationists envisioned the threat at two levels- the one in the former Soviet Union at the internal level, where they were looking for internal organisation of Russian dominance defining Eurasia at the ontological level. The second level was commanded by the external integrationists, who looked for the continental context of linking with Europe or China acting like a great-power balancers. According to them, the absence of buffer on Ukrainian West unlike Georgia, where Turkey and Iran formed a sizeable buffer created differentiated geopolitical priorities. The external integrationists saw the European Communitarianism as a next goal in succession to Eurasianism for a Greater Europe extending from Atlantic coast to Vladivostok (Laruelle et al., 2015). The balancers tried to condition this approach in terms of broadening their argument about the Russian defence. This could be in terms of the possible set of response in case of National Missile Defence (NMD) threat. Russian foreign policy paradigm essentially rested on state embellishment through Great power projection. The argument was to look for the larger concert with the purpose of engaging the US-led Western camp. The balancers were also keen on scoring geoeconomic valuation of Russia's strengths based on its vast resource base (Kuchins & Zevelev, 2012; Tsygankov, 2014b). The energy diplomacy had role in defining the territorial marking of inner periphery and outer periphery. Kotkin (2009) had put a case while speaking on Heartland ontology that Russia 'remains a regional power that acts like a global superpower', while comparing with China that

'has been transformed into a global superpower but still mostly acts like a regional power'. This had been one of the great Eurasian dilemmas for the Russian protagonists while looking at the skewness of the idea. It could equally be seen as the problem of scales, the visualisation of all regions on a uniform scale is a fallacy. The problem of scales could be verified from the observation that Russians too had theorized its 'Others' and the 'provincialisation of Europe' is one generic case of its attitude. The first struggle of civilizational order was the rejection of subaltern theorizing of Russia. Such theories presumed the superiority of the Self and inferiority of the Other (Tsygankov, 2008b). According to him, Russia could afford a region as big as Eurasia and its regional magnitude were geopolitically more widespread than the perceivable global impact of many states albeit far more than any European state.

RUSSIA'S HEARTLAND GEOPOLITICS IN PRESENT TIMES

The second world war neoconservative movement championed in the US got obsessed with the Soviet Union in repudiation of its totalitarianism, both right and left. This invariably pushed the American exceptionalism as an American ideal to be the beacon of world democracy. The war ended with a democracy nuking a totalitarian Japanese regime, which blew off the cover from democracies indicating they can go to any extent. The US, post second world war has maintained this posture with remarkable consistency against the states and non-state actors, whom it considers threat to American ideals of freedom and democracy. The whole idea of insisting a democracy in the Heartland was seen as a threat by the Eurasianists in the 20th century. The contempt for the Russian polity among the neoconservatives such as Moynihan, Neibuhr, Kristol and Bell provided an elixir to the Russian Eurasianists, who raised their sails against the hot winds blowing from the west and furthered their cause of eastward expansion (Chaudet et al., 2016). The Eurasianists were convinced that just as American hegemony is anything but democracy. The Russian peoples interest could best be preserved under the penumbra of communities cajoled under the ideal of benevolent

authoritarianism. They believed communism was the déjà vu for Russia's two century old Eurasianism based on historic experiences of enlightened authoritarianism.

Russians responded to the situation with further expanding the Eurasianist idea into a sort of 'Third Worldism'. And, in that sense they were the pioneers of geopolitical constructivism as the aid diplomacy they adopted was the effective use of economic resources to pursue albeit counter the geopolitical encirclement of the Heartland. The vast resources at the disposal of Soviet Gosplan created sufficient economies to counter the unbridled threat of western capitalism (Wigell & Vihma, 2016). The Soviets responded with assisting regime that were anti-American and authoritarian in nature. The US found increasingly difficult to strike a bargain against Russia's geoeconomic push, which soon led to its abandonment of democratic zeal in Reagan years. The obsession with a democratic Heartland back fired as the US ended up supporting military dictatorships and undemocratic regimes who can be bought off with lucrative military sales and generous aid. These right wing autocracies were much amenable to the western democracies under a new ordering of power relations. It was the for once and perhaps the last time that in 1979 the United States was defended in the boldest terms that the "United States is not in fact a racist, colonial power, it does not practice genocide, it does not threaten world peace with expansionist activities" (Kirkpatrick, 2007). And, quite in contrast stood Fukuyama in 2006 quoting the US's 2002 National Security Strategy that "America would have to launch periodic preventive wars to defend itself … and that it would work to democratize the greater Middle East as a long-term solution to the terrorist problem" (Fukuyama, 2006). Waltz interpreted it as structuralist realism to which the Heartland model stood in stark juxtaposition. The only convergence laid in the structural approach which was the covenant of geopolitical thinking as the spatiality of the Heartland map restricted the digression through the misperception of boundaries and nations (Forde, 1995). The essential question of democratic ideals, which Mackinder posed as the matter of distinction served the necessary connect between neorealist approach and the quest for democratic

ideals in the post-Cold war period. The more the US sought to build up against the authoritarian Heartland, the more exasperation and disillusionment if faced in the form of failed states with still-born democracies. It burnt both the ends of the candle by stoking political transformation in the countries and at the same time introducing social engineering; unfortunately, neither of the goals were achieved in many cases.

Sir Halford Mackinder conceptualised the Heartland model based on two most important facts, namely, a) location of the region, and b) vast economic opportunities. The major issues he dealt was the ability of Russia to own these structures and emerge as a strong power to command the giant order relationship that contained dichotomies of the Heartland continentalism and the Maritime West. The national question which got appended to the Heartland concept emerged only in the post-Soviet Eurasia. The Mackinderian proposition of containing the Soviet influence towards Europe and Asia and projecting further into Africa was an afterthought to his initial 1904 paper (Gray, 1986). The Marshall Plan intended to challenge the Heartland predisposition by seceding the European territory that earlier had been coveted by the Ottomans as continental power. It later went into making of the European Union. It was an attempt to create a counter-narrative that would guarantee the same privileges that a resource integrated economy would be able to challenge the Heartland advantage. According to Brzezinski, Eurasia is externally constituted self. Therefore, even China and India were part of Eurasian design so far as the assertions of Heartland are concerned. Eurasia is a very dynamic entity and it is seen as a pivot to Europe-Asia and Africa. The Eurasian dominance was the dominance over East Asia and West Europe. The Middle East and Africa would only be bonus to this dominance. The rise of Eurasian power demanded the single strategy for Europe and Asia. The Atlantic powers needed China to implement a successful Eurasian strategy. The US strategy of democratic bridgehead ran aside in the course of events in Middle East. Europe's expansion and the purported assimilation proved utopian dream amid the growing refugee crises (Brzezinski, 2014). France seemed to be more occupied with European Union's handling of Euro economies,

especially, the Greece. The Brexit seemed only testifying Brzezinski's concern of the Atlanticists strengthening the EU to tackle Eurasian challenge. The desire to further condition the Middle East and failure to include Turkey into the EU proved the growing exhaustion of Euro-Atlantic order. The colour revolutions on the periphery of Heartland brought many situations of confrontation between the NATO and Russia. It was seen by Russians as a breach of trust and the threat from the west. Gerach has documented eight incidents of colour revolutions between 2000 and 2012 on the Russian periphery out of which five were in Slavonic realm, 3 were in trans-Slavonic realm of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and only one in Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan. The colour revolutions operated through the linkages between the western democracies and the diaspora from these target nations. It was an exhaustive network of economic, civil society, information media propaganda and cyber social media networks. The authoritarian regime responded by isolating their state and society into the closet of Heartland. Russia, China, Kazakhstan and Belarus curtailed civilian freedoms within the geography of Eurasian heartland (Gerlach, 2014). And, the effort to preserve the heartland became collective priority of most of the Inner Asian countries. The west lost the plot with increasing violence and terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq consuming most of their focus and it Middle East became a battle ground between the Heartland authoritarian states and the western capitalist democracies. The contest between the Heartland powers and the western democracies became so acute that even the countries were torn apart with deep seated polarisation among peoples of a nation. It ethnicities in Iraq and Syria split on political choice, something that never mattered to them under an authoritarian regime. The western democracies pushed harder for 'democracy promotion' and it resulted in more conservative reaction from the Heartland.

The two and half decade of post-Soviet Eurasia saw myriad influences that reshaped the Heartland narrative. The nature of state appeared to be the primary focus in initial years, when authoritarianism was tagged with scepticism in the Central Asian Republics. Their ability to fend off Islamist extremist designs brought them into the ambit of legitimate

regimes under the Western lenses of good governance. The glorious oil years till 2009 were another boon when the Eurasian states were seen as emerging another Middle East and all sorts of lines and connectivity ideas were drawn. The giant ones such as laid by CNPC to access Russian oil and gas wealth had re-written the energy chapter in oil geopolitics. Then came the Afghan imbroglio with the 9/11 and it was the tremor for most of the Eurasian states. The idea of the sole superpower with no holds barred working across South and Central Asia got some jitteriness for both small and large powers. The idea of NATO-free Eurasia became one of the cornerstones of multiple organisations in the region, especially, the SCO. But, the fragmented picture of Eurasian periphery kept away the focus from new ideas and innovation that were kindled by economic capabilities. The important shift to Mackinderian paradigm was the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. This viewed from a Mackinderian prism had the potential for vast transformation of the Eurasian lands. But, this didn't write off the Heartland conservatism nor it showed any design of change to the Heartland ownership. Russia was uneasy about this new geoeconomics transforming the vast new transport networks across Eurasia. But, every threat posed by the western front pushed it closer to China, who provided full opportunity to Russia's quest for strategic depth against the western push for democracy. The Russian and the Chinese vary in their perception about the orientation of Heartland, but the reciprocal relations originated in the wake of the threat emerging from the west. The Russian and Chinese have their own dimensions of imperial mind as some scholars point out. The territorial organisation in terms of administrative hierarchy and integration has always been the Russian approach to Eurasia. China on the other has believed in vast autonomous units on its periphery maintaining their tributary presence in Chinese courts. This latter could be seen as networked approach to a larger Eurasian order.

The Sino-Russian convergence on Eurasian Economic Union and One Belt One Road (EEC-OBOR) initiative was a big statement by the custodians of Eurasia. The quest remained to frame this argument under the Mackinderian postulates of the Heartland model. He had postulated the role of railways in

engineering the production houses across Eurasia and making it a pivotal driver of resource based economy. The Chinese argument of OBOR re-envisions the same. In fact, Hewlett-Packard, BMW, Unilever and many others have moved their production facilities to Western China due to rising labour costs in coastal areas. This is a boon to the transport economy of Europe and Asia as it is twice more efficient and less time consuming to send goods by railway from China to Europe via Eurasia (Islam et al., 2013). One of the primary assumptions of the model has been that actions are in part reaction to global order formations. And, if one looks from this angle then the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) appears to be countering phenomenon vis-a-vis EEC-OBOR initiative. The neo-realistic paradigm once again takes in the driver's seat and it appears that Heartland would simply be one up on the much fragmented Inner/Outer Crescent. The quest here would not be who owns the Heartland as posed by Sir Mackinder; rather, it would be how long it would be an influential entity in shaping the Euro-Asian order. And, Russia and China seems to have cajoled up for re-inventing the Europe-Asia connectivity that would have sizeable impact on 'Rest of the World'. The understanding about Heartland is one guided by economic approach that seeks internal consolidation of the Eurasian landmass, and the other is guided by the political order that seeks the asymmetric balance of power in favour of the Heartland due to the fragmented Crescent. Russia and China own these reciprocities while articulating a common vision short of Mackinderian aspiration to 'Rule the World'. But, there is indeed one factor they have to bear in mind that unlike the Maritime networks that largely rely on ports and ship transportation, the continental chain of railways and cities has many anthropogenic costs that include the environmental damage to the Heartland homeostasis of large and small ecological regions. China has been aggressive on economic drive as it has the ability to invest huge; whereas Russia has been conservative to bear that costs. There is a public concern in Russia regarding the demographic and environmental shifts the Eurasian lands have witnessed. This could be a cardinal principle for differentiated understanding amid larger Eurasian Heartland modelling by these custodian powers.

The biggest challenge for Sino-Russian cooperation under BRICS was to integrate the belt-psyche into Heartland model. China's historic experience with special economic zones had been a caveat as it produced more inequality in the longer run. The development of Heartland economic base posed this challenge, which found rescue in new transportation technologies (Fan, 1995). Russians had little forbearance towards Eurasia being liquidated into economic territory as it was source of spiritual and moral strength in its relentless response to the west. However, the two nations modelled out their geopolitical priorities into a sort of offensive-defensive realism. The Russians allowed this new economic model to the extent it strengthened their position vis-à-vis west and partnered China in countering the threat only to a limited extent lest its own interest would co-axle. Russia didn't allow Eurasianism to be the price paid for the economic transformation of Heartland. It prioritised the political community of central Asia and the elite who maintained a common cause with Russia on Eurasianism. The possibility of China owning the curatorship of Heartland was surmised by no other than Sir Mackinder himself. However, the Asian order and its inertia were too bigger mass for China to translocate its geopolitical priorities; in fact, that would be ahistorical too. The duo of Turkey-Iran on the Heartland periphery have had special relationship with Russia. Iran and Turkey behaved quite differently in the Russia-West confrontation. Iran looked for nuclear sovereignty that it secured with the help of Russia. This was one of the sore points between the US's and Russia. The crises in Iraq and Syria shook Europe with an overwhelming influx of migrants. Turkey remained at loggerheads with Russia in Syria where it supported the ISIS formations under the common interest pursued with the West. However, Russia's exemplary patience in handling Turkey's warmongering showed its adept historic skills in dealing from the vantage point of Heartland.

CONCLUSION

The complexity of Russian thought and its inheritance of Europe-Asia remained the hallmark of the Eurasianist doctrine during the last century (Kerr, 1995). The Heartland was a sub-conscious phenomenon in the discourse of Russian scholars as a geopolitical function to which the actions by Russian statesmen indicate a plenty. Russian identity has remained amorphous mix of eclectic Slavism in blend with secular embrace of Orthodoxy. It allowed them to balance the East Europe with the near abroad Asiatic population, esp. the Turks and Tartars. The Soviet period brought some fundamental changes with the economic structuring of vast Eurasian lands and the institutional and cultural change created a stable course for Russia's perennial dominance of the Eurasian Heartland. The post-cold war period witnessed nervousness and weakened resolve to retain the ownership, but the leadership and the geographic location gave only two choices to the Russians i.e., to prevail or perish. The Heartland was not an imperialist doctrine so far as the Russian geopolitics is concerned. Russian geopolitics is constructivism ab initio. The dialectics of socio-cultural change within country has been co-axial to ethno-geopolitical ordering of the periphery. This continuity has rendered the dynamicity to the borders of Russia. The resistance to acknowledge Russian dominance rendered a permanent contest over the control for East Europe. But, Russia has co-partnered China in the management of the Eurasian landmass. And, it is not far that both might look for collective management of the Euro-Asian periphery, identified by Mackinder as Internal or Marginal Crescent. This would be the unfolding of the Grand Geostrategy from the seat of Heartland.

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- 35 -

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GLOBAL POSITION AND FUTURE OF ALGIERIA AFTER THE REVOLUTION OF SMILES

Abstract:

Algeria is a country of notable history of the fight for independence. Liberated in 1962, it came a long way of civil war and instability to the current point of international significance in Africa. In 2019 the country once again encountered a turbulent point. The Revolution of Smiles led to the overthrowing of Algeria's long-term president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika. This paper analyzes the history of the country as well as the events of the protests and actsas an attempt to predict the further progression of the Revolution of Smiles.

INTRODUCTION

Algeria, extending from the South-West coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the Hoggar Mountains, is the largest African country. With French, Spanish, Mediterranean, Arab, and Berber influences it is a truly multicultural melting pot. Moreover, it is considered to be one of the "young countries" with a median age of 28.5 years[1]. Population density is highest in the northern part of the country as 80% of Algeria's territory

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[1] Worldometers, *Algeria Population*, https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/algeria-population/, accessed: 30.05.2020.

is covered with the Sahara sands. The most significant cities are Algiers - the capital, Oran, and Constantine. The first two are the main seaports with Oran being a container terminal too. Algeria's economy remains dependant on the export of energy resources, mainly petroleum and natural gas, which provides up to 60% of budget revenues[2]. Algeria's past tells a story of subordination to other nations and a constant fight for freedom – even after formally reclaiming it.
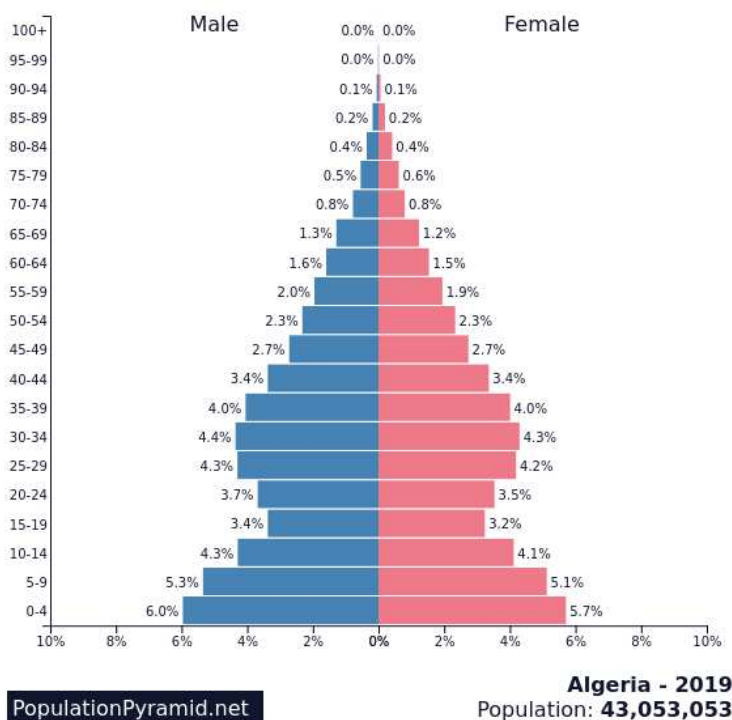
Figure 1: Algeria's Population Pyramid
(source: https://www.populationpyramid.net/algeria/2019/)

This paper focuses on analyzing and predicting the influence of the Revolution of Smiles on Algeria. Being a significant country on the international stage and having a rich and intricate colonial past, Algeria approaches a new phase in its history. Algeria's peaceful protests were an exquisite phenomenon on a global scale. Lasting over a year, they led to overthrowing the president and the prime minister and left

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[2] *Algieria. Przewodnik po rynku,*2018, Polska Agencja Inwestycji i Handlu S.A.

Algeria with an opportunity to redefine its future. The succeeding pages will set the historical context, allowing to properly understand Algeria's current position, analyze the protests and their consequences, and determine possible scenarios for Algeria's further development.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS

From the very origins of its history, Algeria connected Europe with Africa and the Middle East. Its advantageous location, as well as resources, were the cause of six major invasions, two of which took place in ancient times. Later in time, the country has been invaded by the Vandals, the Byzantine Empire, the Arabs, and Turkey. The last conqueror has subsequently yielded his place to France, who occupied the Algerian soil until the country liberated in 1962. Furthermore, the latter two occupiers overlooked the territory of Algeria in the XIX and XX century so their impact can be discerned to the present day (McDougall, 2017).

**Figure 2: The Territory of Algeria
(source: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html)**

The Ottoman Algeria was a rural society in which the agriculture generated the country's prosperity. Agricultural production was attainable in the desert climate due to specific underground canal structures and irrigation systems (McDougall, 2017). Nowadays agriculture is the source of employment for approximately 10% of Algeria's citizens and generates 10% of the country's GDP.[3] Despite such strong workforce engagement, this sector remains ineffective due to State interference, insufficient foreign investments, and daunting seasonal droughts. Additionally, the Ottoman period resulted in a specific legal comprehension of land property. In addition in the past rights to land use were dictated by the labor cultivating it. This legislation remains significant in the history of Algeria as it has been interpreted during the French rule as collective and communal. It allowed the heredity of the "right to labor" often financially foreclosing women who were seen as inadequate and unqualified for such work. Such legal a division of land exacerbated social stratification. In terms of economy, the Ottoman period enriched Algeria in the textile field and trade and provoked intensified development of cities. The political class was considered elite and held undivided governing and military power, inaccessible for the citizens (McDougall, 2017).

The new European order emerged from the Congress of Vienna. It not only reshaped Europe but also affected the rest of the world, especially countries which remained in tight restraints with the continent. In the name of liberation and peacemaking, the United Kingdom tried to put an end to piracy in Algeria as it was a common practice there at the time. First, through peaceful negotiations, next by bombarding the country, the United Kingdom established the new system on the African territory. These measures paved the way for future French colonialism (Bouchène, 2014).

The year 1830 marks a new chapter in the history of Algeria. French army landed on the Sidi Fredj beach in the vicinity of Algiers and therefore commenced the period of French occupation. Even though it lasted practically until the liberation in 1962, initially the occupation was not thoroughly planned by France. France was not convinced about the plans

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[3] *Algieria. Przewodnik po rynku,* op.cit.

for colonization until 1834, which resulted in the lack of a clear political vision and chaotic, inconsistent intentions towards the country. France participated in the colonial competition and aimed to augment its leverage in the region. Its main competitor in the Mediterranean area was the United Kingdom. France noticed a prospect in taking over the fading Ottoman influence in Northern Africa. The colonization was iterative; between 1830 and 1835 France took over main seaside cities such as Oran, Algiers, Bône, and Bougie. Further penetration of the Algerian land took place between 1835 and 1847 as well as 1848 and 1870. The profound Sahara part became occupied during the 1870 and 1930 period. Algeria's hero and religious leader, Abdelkader ibn Muhieddine al-Hasani, conducted protests against French colonization and was responsible for mediations with the occupant. Eventually, Abdelkader was compelled to surrender in 1847. Since then the French influence accelerated, leading to establishing the Ministry of Algeria and the colonies between 1858 and 1860. The situation worsened for the Algerians as France reintroduced the institution of the governor-generalship. Moreover, the country got afflicted with famine and disease between 1867 and 1868 (Bouchène, 2014).

Figure 3: Phases of the French Colonization of Algeria (source: https://www.lelivrescolaire.fr/page/16858697)

Such aggravation resulted in a major Algerian revolt between 1871 and 1872. These incidents were the foundation of the *Jeune Algérien* movement. It is considered a turning point in French-Algerian relations. The buoyant importance of the movement induced a significant increase in the negotiating power of the Algerians. Representants of the movement met with French officials in Paris in 1912. Since 1919 the Clemenceau government introduced rather frugal reforms. Therefore, resistance and political opposition gradually emanated in Algeria. 1926 marks the foundation of *Étoile Nord-Africaine* – organization often called the forerunner of the *Front de Libération Nationale (FLN)* which eventually liberated Algeria. The resistance continued during the war, with the *Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien (UDMA)* being formed in 1946. It entailed the formation of the *Mouvement Pour le Triomphe de Libertés Démocratiques* for electoral purposes. The aforementioned events led to revolutionary activities stimulated by the *Comité Révolutionnaire d'Unité et d'Action (CRUA)* and thereby to the beginning of the war of national liberation, relevant in the context of Abdelaziz Bouteflika's subsequent presidency (Naylor, 2015).

THE WAR OF NATIONAL LIBERATION AND ABDELAZIZ BOUTEFLIKA'S REGIME

Unhesitant to strive for freedom and encouraged by the defeat of the French army in Diên Biên Phu in Vietnam, the *Front de Libération Nationale* created an army and, despite internal issues in the organization, managed to promote the revolutionary environment within the country. France, with army potential as high as 80 000 soldiers, responded with indiscriminate violence by bombing the cities and forcing the Algerian citizens to seek refuge. The 1956 discovery of large oil and natural gas reserves in the Sahara put lucrative Algeria at stake for the French. The FLN organized the *Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens (UGTA,* the union of workers*)* and further defined its policy for future activism. In September 1956 the battle of Algiers commenced. Its end is symbolized by the execution of one of the guerilla leaders, Ali la Pointe. The

Algerian war aggravated the political situation in the already unstable French Fourth Republic. The *Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne (GPRA)* got established as a form of the temporary Algerian government. Meanwhile, Charles de Gaulle proclaimed the Constantine Plan aiming to equalize the socio-economic disparities in Algeria. After the detonation of an atomic bomb on the Sahara desert, negotiations began. On the 20 December 1960, the United Nations recognized Algeria's right to self-determination as a country which has been later on reinforced in the French referendum in 1961. In 1962, after 132 years of occupation, Algeria ultimately became a liberated, autonomous country (Naylor, 2015).

Irrespective of the liberation, Algeria still had to endure diverse problems of internal nature such as establishing the government and defining its future as an independent country. In 1963 Algeria proclaimed its constitution and elected Ben Bella for president. Soon after, the conflict with Morocco, called the war of sands, erupted. Ben Bella got overthrown by Houari Boumedienne in 1965. The economy was state-planned and Algeria launched the nationalization of mines, companies, and banks which has noticeable consequences in modern times. Algeria thoroughly conducted both the Cultural and Agrarian Revolution, becoming a leader of the Third World countries in terms of development. The following Chadli Benjedid administration was a troubled and challenging period. The "Berber Spring", an earthquake, the petroleum prices plunge as well as reoccurring riots aggravated the country's situation. The French occupation consolidated the spirit of Arab nationalism in Algeria. Further conflicts between Islamist extremists and the government led to the Civil War in Algeria which lasted from 1992 to 1999 and resulted in the presidency of Abdelaziz Bouteflika (Naylor, 2015). The Algerian civil war left the country in a serious economic, social, and cultural crisis that the new president had to address properly (Kasznik-Christian, 2008). The new president who seemed to set the country into new, better directions, over time turned out to be yet another menace for Algeria's rule of law.

Figure 4: President Abdelaziz Bouteflika
(source: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abd_al-Aziz_Buteflika)

Abdelaziz Bouteflika emerged from the core of resistance during colonial times. Fighting on behalf of the FLN against the French rule, Bouteflika was appointed minister for youth, sports, and tourism after liberation, and a year later was made foreign minister. After becoming president in 1999 he focused on restoring the country and ameliorating its international position. His endeavors to abbreviate Islamist-driven conflicts were inefficient as the Islamist insurgents formed a branch of Al-Qaeda and operated various suicide bombings. Moreover, Islamist violence appeared in western Algeria in 2001. re-elected in 2004, Bouteflika faced grave health problems, yet remained in power until 2019 despite citizen's objections and protests. Islamist bombings intensified in the country, causing internal issues. The international situation of Algeria could be considered stable and progressive as exemplified by the arms deal and debt forgiveness with Russia and an agreement with Niger and Nigeria on a trans-Saharan gas line. 2009 was supposed to account for the last year of Bouteflika's presidency, yet after introducing a change in the Algerian

constitution, he got elected to a third term. In 2010 Algeria joined Mauritania, Mali, and Niger to collaboratively defy terrorism. 2011 designated the beginning of social dissatisfaction with escalating protests over elevated food prices and high unemployment. Despite his stroke in 2013, Bouteflika announced his candidacy for the presidency and was once again re-elected in 2014. The opposition was restrained and the re-election caused the society to undermine the legitimacy of the elections (Naylor, 2015).President Abdelaziz Bouteflika ceased to appear publicly, nonetheless, he announced his fifth presidential candidacy in 2019. The announcement gave rise to intense social dissent and resulted in one year of peaceful protests called the Revolution of Smiles.

PROTESTS AGAINST THE RE-ELECTION

The protests erupted six days after Bouteflika had announced his candidacy. Unemployment as high as 25% among young people, monopoly of power lasting already 10 years, State-controlled media and economy as well as corruption and economic stagnation were, among others, the main reasons for people's outrage. Army veterans, firefighters, journalists, lawyers, students, and teachers marched in the protests.The beginning was characterized by tearing Bouteflika's posters and distributing information about the peaceful marches planned as a form of refusal to the fifth term of Bouteflika's presidency. Promoted in the social media, the protests amassed an estimated number of 800 000 people in the first and approximately 3 million in the second week. During the fourth week, the protests extended into the field of feminism with the action *Femmes Algériennes pour un Changement vers l'Égalité (FACE)* fighting for gender equality. Another group that joined the Revolution were students. Protests exerted pressure and resulted in the prime minister Ahmed Ouyahia and the Army Chief of Staff appealing to Bouteflika's resignation. On April 2ndAbdelaziz Bouteflika officially resigned from office. Therefore the constitutional procedure has been implemented and the president of the Council of the Nation, Abdelkader Bensalah, became acting

interim president until official elections. According to James McDougall, a specialist in Algeria, the military understood that it may need radical measures to hold the current system.

Figure 5: The Revolution of Smiles
(source: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/01/world/africa/algeria-protests-bouteflika.html)

The resignation of Bouteflika did not leave the Algerian people satisfied. They further demanded through protests the resignation of the prime minister, the acting interim president, and the Army Chief of Staff. Despite the peaceful character of the demonstrations, tear gas and water cannons were used towards the protestors. New elections were planned for the 12th of December but met another wave of society's objection being perceived by the people as staged and supportive of the old regime. The elections were held with an 8% voter turnout and detention of 1200 protestors. Further boycott and protest were interrupted by the outbreak of coronavirus in 2020.

The protests reached their goal and toppled Abdelaziz Bouteflika, present on the Algerian political scene for over 20 years. The power was temporarily held by Abdelkader Bensalah, just to be passed to Abdelmadjid Tebboune, perceived by the people as illegitimate. The protests left Algeria in a tipping point, with a realistic chance of overthrowing not only the president but also the whole obsolete regime. Suspended by the virus pandemic, the revolution cannot be

properly finished. Algeria remains on hold, not only because of COVID-19 like the rest of the world but also because of its uncertain and undefined political situation.

ALGERIA'S GLOBAL POSITION

Mass civil protests always destabilize a country, especially if they last for such a long time and lead to major political changes. Algeria has been shaken from the inside. The internal stability has an influence on the global position of the country. One could argue that the sudden overthrow of Algeria's long-acting president would be a shock on the global political scene. In reality, it is worth emphasizing that Abdelaziz Bouteflika remained in position only *pro forma* as after his stroke in 2013 he was rarely seen in public and was not in full capacity to govern the country. Multiple accusations appeared throughout the years that the real power remained in the hands of other politicians, businessmen, and powerful military officials. That's why the overthrowing of Algeria's president and vice-president has not really changed the *status quo* in the country. The current political situation brings into question the further democratic development of Algeria. The rule of the military officials may worsen Algeria's global position in the field of human rights, diplomacy, and the rule of law. On the other hand, Algeria has the opportunity to finally fulfill its process of democratization which started with the war of national liberation and has been suspended by the perennial presidency of Abdelaziz Bouteflika. A reinforcement of the democratic values in the country will definitely be beneficial for the country in terms of the quality of people's lives as well as the country's international position.

Taking into consideration all the relevant factors such as Algerian past, the military power, society's desperation, and the current global situation, one can distinguish three main, most plausible scenarios for the future of Algeria.

WORLD / COUNTRIES / ALGERIA

Last updated: May 30, 2020, 20:43 GMT

Algeria

Coronavirus Cases:

9,267

Deaths:

646

Figure 6: Coronavirus in Algeria, May 30th
(source: https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/algeria/)

What comes to mind first is the upholding of the status quo which is the political power lying in the hands of the military. Such a situation is rather common after societal uprisings and revolutions, which can be seen on the example of Cuba or Vietnam. Political power remaining in the hands of the military implies further restrictions considering public protestations, diminished freedom of speech, and repressions on all members of the opposition. Furthermore, the economic status quo would be upheld as well, pushing Algeria's economy into further-reaching reliance on the State. This scenario clearly does not meet the expectations of the Algerian society, which expects profound and effective reforms in the fields of economy, democratic rule, employment, international relations, security, combating terrorism, freedom of speech, human rights, and equality. Additionally, it bears a risk related to the economic deterioration caused by the lockdown of the global economy in the time of the pandemic.

Contrary to the above, it is plausible the Revolution of Smiles will take its influence even deeper, and revert even stronger after the pandemic of COVID-19. Seeing a real and tangible outcome of the protests, the young society of Algeria may strike again, mobilized more than ever, and overthrow the old regime in order to ultimately liberate the country. Such a scenario presents the image of Algeria entering a new reality in which it has to redefine itself as a country and set a new trajectory for its future development. The COVID-19 situation may enable such a process by giving enough time to the revolutionists to properly organize the interception. History has

proven the Algerians to be determined in their fight for freedom. An uprising similar to the one directed against colonial France is possible in the foreseeable future. The protests lasting over one year have truly revealed the power and the ascendancy of Algeria's society. Nevertheless, it is vital to keep in mind the disadvantageous position in terms of global interference. Algeria may not count on global support with other countries and organizations being primarily concentrated on fighting the pandemic and rebuilding their economies.

The second scenario provokes a deeper reflection on the nature of the protests. Although they were peaceful, it is worth taking into consideration the past tendencies of the Algerian society. With a wide background for nationalist tendencies, the country bears a risk of turning into an autocratic system once again and exchanging one dominant leader into another, who is going to occupy the political stage for decades despite the tremendous effort of those fighting for freedom and democracy for such a long time.

SUMMARY

As a significant country with untapped potential, Algeria faces a tipping point in its history. It stands a chance to once and for all finally cut the ties linking it to its colonial past of dependence and weakness. Its favourable location, profitable natural resources, and a young, sturdy society are excellent conditions for enhanced development and consolidation of the international position. Furthermore, Algeria has set a profoundly inspirational and substantial pattern of the possibility of a peaceful, yet a still successful revolution. Lastly, Algeria once again can be the pioneer of progress, the same way it was in 1962 in the moment of its liberation.

The peaceful protests unraveled the inefficient system, unable to respond to the citizen's needs nor to create any form of a new social contract. The revolution of smiles created a political culture of social empowerment.

It remains unknown whether the Revolution of Smiles will entail a total political transition in Algeria. What gives such a possibility a real chance is human capital and its internal

strive for greater living conditions. Such an attitude is seen among the protestors who underline that "This is just a little victory - the biggest is still to come." (*Abdelaziz...*, 2020). Hopefully, Algeria will proceed with its further peaceful democratic transformation and, as stated in the national motto, will become a country shaped "by the people and for the people".

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GEOPOLITICS OF ROMANIA AND POLAND IN 20ᵀᴴ AND 21ˢᵀ CENTURY

Abstract:

The Romanians and Poles share many cultural, economic and political connections since medieval times, but are often neglected in comparison to other "typical" alliances that both nations had in the course of their history. Yet in many of the occasions both Romanians and Poles were fighting in the same team or against a common enemy. It is geography in the end that tied these 2 countries into necessary alliances in the past and in the present day, and which will still affect in the future.

In the following document I will focus more on the 20th and 21st century socio-political scene but I will also take a short review of the context that lead to the current situation. It is also worth to mention that at the end I will try to offer a short description of what it might happen in the near future, based on the current data and context of the time of when this document was written (May 2020).

TERRITORIAL CHANGES IN CENTRAL EUROPE AFTER WORLD WAR I - INTRODUCTION

"Who rules Eastern Europe commands the heartland, who rules the Heartland commands the World Island, who rules the World-island commands the World." The quote belongs to Halford John Mackinder and it's a short description of his theory of the Heartland: The entity that manages to

control the "Pivot area" of the Eurasian continent will eventually come to conquer the whole of World-Island.
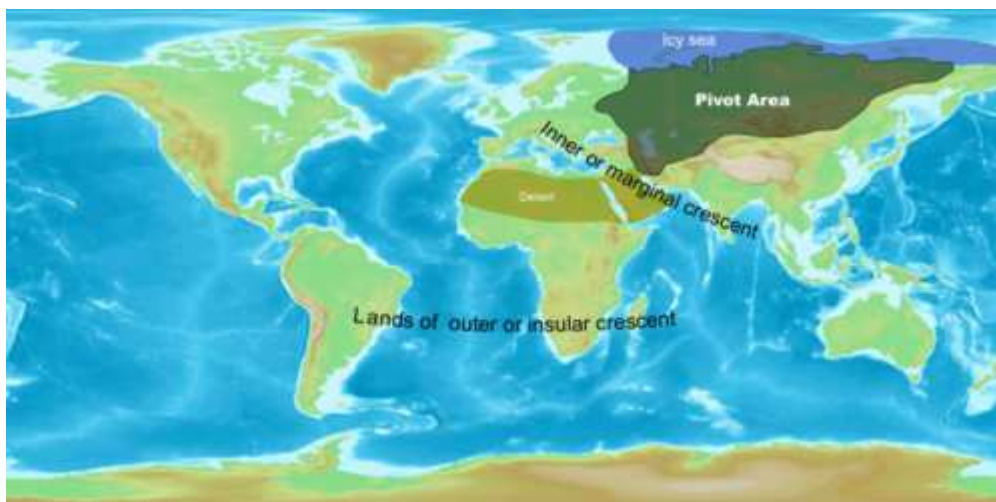
Figure 1: Demarcation of the Pivot area on the Eurasian landmass

"World-island" is the term used to describe the Afro-Eurasian land mass. Mackinder also uses the terms of "Offshore islands" which include the islands right next to the land mass: such as the British Isles and the Japanese Isles. Austria and The American landmass are mentioned as "Outlying islands".

"Pivot area" is the landmass that is defined by the Carpathian mountains, Caucasian and Zagros Mountains, The Himalayas and the Altaic Mongolian Plateau and the entity that manages to conquer this area will have enough power to expand further while the Outside forces are trying to stop this from happening. – This situation can be very easily described by "The Game" that existed between the Russian Empire and the British Empire. The Russians were in a constant struggle to access a warm port in Asia while the British were on the other side of the mentioned geographical barriers of the Pivot area and were doing all necessary to make the Russians fail in this objective.

While in Asia the geographical features were making an easy-defendable border, there is a gap in Europe which can be used as a "highway" to either invade the Pivot area or the other way around. This is the North European Plain on which today

it is situated Poland. And while in medieval time, when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had a firm grip in the area it had no centralized hostile power, neither in the east nor in the west. As soon as the Prussian and Russian states had a more stable and powerful position on the world stage the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth declined and ended-up being divided between those 2 powers, and a lesser extent to the Austrian Habsburg Empire.

The end of World War 1 brought dramatic changes of the borders of Europe. The most drastic ones happened in Central and Eastern Europe. Before the war there was a stable border between the Russian Empire and the German Empire which haven't changed since the Congress of Vienna in 1815, both of the countries keeping each other in check while they were focusing on other objective: For Germany the naval race with UK and colonization of Africa while the Russians were targeting Constantinople, Persia and Manchuria.

The whole situation changed dramatically after the First World War, all 3 Empires that were situated in the Central part of Europe were abolished and from them new republics appeared obtained their independence or countries such Romania and Serbia greatly expanded at their expense. The new states that appeared on the Northern European plain were mainly either with a small population or a hard to defend territory. In the chaos of 1918 and the wars that followed the war until 1921 some of them managed to secure their independence while countries such as Ukraine and Belarus ended up divided between the newly formed Polish republic and Soviet Russia.

In both the Romanian and Polish cases, the political situation of 1918 proved to be a chance that is impossible to happen again in the modern world. Both countries had a native population scattered in countries that were on the opposite sides of the conflagration. Normally, there would one side that emerges victories which could create a Polish puppet state on the territory controlled by the enemy and Romanians could take either the territory of Bessarabia from Russia or Transylvania and Bukovina from Austro-Hungary if they were situated in the victorious team. But the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the withdrawal of the country from the war

combined with the defeat of the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires created the opportunity to annex all the desired territories with a Polish and Romanian population. To secure the desired territories and to stop the Ukrainian threat in both of the countries (as Ukraine had territorial claims in both Bessarabia & Bukovina and Eastern territories of Poland) there was also a coordinated attack from both sides on the West Ukrainian People's Republic by the Polish and Romanian Armies, and thus, the Polish-Romanian border came into existence.

In 1921, after the end of the Polish-Soviet War Poland was situated between a revanchist Soviet Union, a defeated but not collapsed Germany, a Hostile Lithuania and with a Czechoslovakia with border disputes and Romania being situated between a recently occupied Hungary which was de-sovietized, a hostile Soviet Union and a Bulgaria with territorial claims on Southern Dobrogea region, the most logical action was the sign an alliance between the only two non-hostile neighbors.

ROMANIAN-POLISH ALLIANCE OF 1921 AND INTERMARIUM IDEA

In 1920 & 1921 there were signed 2 important Treaties that changed dramatically the borders of Central Europe. The first one was the Treaty of Trianon on 4th of June 1920 between the winning powers of the Entente and the Hungarian side of the dissolved Austro-Hungarian Empire. In this treaty the Romanian side was given control of the territories of Transylvania proper, half of Banat, Crișana and half of Maramureș territory. These territories were awarded with a demarcation line on the territories where the Romanians were part of the majority, even though there was a substantial Hungarian population as well, especially in the eastern side of Transylvania, which created an "island" of Hungarians broken apart from the rest. In the Romanian diplomatic circles this treaty was viewed as a victory of a millennial struggle for self-rule in the Transylvanian region, yet there were politicians who were not happy with the result: In 1919 when the Romanian-

Hungarian war was raging, the Tisza river proved to be a favorable defensive asset for the Romanians and a border on the river would prove helpful in case of a future Hungarian aggression. There was also a debate in the Western powers if Romania should be awarded any land considering the fact the in the spring of 1918 the country signed a separate peace treaty with the Central Powers but reentered the war on 10th of November 1918, one day before the armistice was signed. Nevertheless, the French help was decisive in defending the Romanian cause.

On the eastern side of the new Romanian borders the situation was more tense. After the Treaty of Saint-Germain in 1919 Romania received Bukovina but USSR never recognized the annexation of Moldova from 1918 and this created a tense situation that could have easily escalated into a soviet invasion in the beginning of the 1920s. The most delicate moment for Romania was in 1919 during the war with Soviet Hungary, when it was neighbored by 2 communist states, but the swift action of the Romanian army on the Hungarian front and the Polish-Soviet war prevented these 2 entities to connect and create a land-bridge that would halt the expansion of the new state to rule over the "Pivot area", USSR.

In 1921 it was signed the Treaty of Riga that defined the border of Poland and USSR, which will remain the same until the start of World War 2.
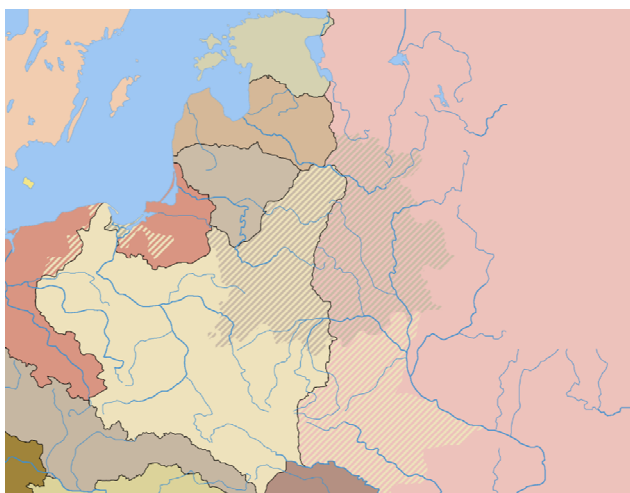
Figure 2: Polish borders of after the Treaty of Riga – 1921 with the pre-partition border overlaped

In Poland there were 2 important currents on which diplomatic stance the newly reborn country should follow:

1. The Intermarium idea backed by Józef Piłsudski, which followed the idea of a recreation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth path, with Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus together with Poland would form an Union and Poland being the senior partner.
2. The modern Polish nation-state backed by Roman Dmowski, which opted for the creation of a Polish state which ecompassed an absolute majority of the Polish population inside the country, and it should follow the national self-determination principle.

The treaty of Riga favored neither of the sides as it didn't make Poland obtain control of the historically desired territories that used to belong to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and in the same time it made Poland rule over significant non-Polish population on its eastern border which were of Belorussian and Ukrainian origin.

Faced with this issue the Idea of Intermarium shifted from the re-creation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the idea of having a "Sanitary cordon" that stretches from Scandinavian countries to Greece and Italy, creating a wall between the Soviet Union and Germany. This plan was doomed to fail from the beginning as it included countries that were hostile to each other, such as Bulgaria and Greece/Yugoslavia/Romania and the distrust that Lithuania and Czechoslovakia had towards Poland regarding the territorial disputes in Vilnius and Silesia.

The last attempt for the Intermarium idea was initiated in 1935 by one of Piłsudski's close associates, Foreign Affairs minister Józef Beck. In his contracted version of the Intermarium there were only 3 countries included: Poland, Romania and Hungary but this initiative was also doomed to fail from the start, as Romania and Hungary were having a tense diplomatic situation regarding Transylvania and that made the cooperation between them highly improbable.

As these 3 attempts to create a strong unified power in Central Europe as a balance to Germany and Soviet Union failed to materialize, the German Weimar republic also crumbled and instead it became a militaristic expansionist

power which desired to reclaim the lost land in the Treaty of Versailles but also to expand further into Eastern Europe. The "Lebensraum" (Living space) idea promoted by Adolf Hitler in his book, Mein Kampf, promoted the seizure of the rich soil and minerals from the Slavic countries east and to replace the native population with Germans. In the previous attempts to conquer the "World Island" the forces came from the east towards west but in this situation a country situated outside of the Pivot Area wanted to obtain the control of the territory that provided a leading role in the world stage.

Previous Swedish and French invasions were not targeted to obtain other material and territorial benefits but not the total control of this specific area: The Swedes desired full control of the Baltic Sea and the French were following to make Russia obey the Continental System and create one Unified economical force against the British, but never to direct control this specific area. Due to its ruling system the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth that stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea never desired to expand further than the territories it already controlled through the Union with Lithuania, preferring to interfere into the internal affairs of the Czarate of Moscow instead of direct administration. With the ascension of Peter the Great, the Russian Empire was consolidated as the sole power of the Pivot Area and it wasn't challenged until 20th century.

ROMANIA AND POLAND
BEFORE THE START AND DURING WORLD WAR 2

What is important to mention is that the Romanian-Polish alliance, when it was signed in 1921, was a defensive alliance against Soviet Union and not against any other neighboring state, as neither Poland didn't wish to get involved into a potential Balkan conflict nor Romania wish to sour relations with other Central European countries that have disputes with Poland. In the 20s and 30s there were 4 visits of the Romanian Royal House members in Poland with also a constant renewal of the alliance and substantial military purchases of Polish equipment, such as gas masks and P-11

planes from PZL, but both of the countries were too weak to handle the growing threat of both Nazi Germany and Soviet Union.

Figure 3: Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs – Grigore Gafencu executes a visit to Poland on 3-7th of March 1939 (source: The Diplomatic Archives of the Romanian Foreign Affairs Ministry)

On 17th of September 1939 when the Polish republic was attacked by the Soviet Union from the eastern side while most of the Polish Army was fighting on the western side against the Nazi aggression, the Polish state released the Romanian side from the alliance obligations. The move was done in the hope of being allowed by the Romanian authorities to cross the Romanian border and head to France and continue the fight from there. In the moment of crossing the border the soldiers were disarmed and the members of the Polish government were interned in places such as Bicaz, Slănic Moldova and Craiova before they were able to head to Western Europe and many common polish refugees settled, especially in the Bukovina territory. In October 1939 there were registered 21.042 soldiers from which in June 1940 there were around 6000 left on the Romanian soil, there rest being able to go either on the Western front or in the North-African Front with the tacit help of the Romanian government. The number of common Polish refugees that managed to escape to Romania varies between 50.000 and 100.000.

The biggest success is considered the transit of the Polish gold reserves to the port of Constanța under substantial Soviet and German pressure. Even though Romania struggled to maintain a neutral position during the invasion of Poland, the passive support for the Polish cause of the Prime-minister Armand Călinescuis one of the motives that led to its assassination by the members of the Iron Guard, ruled by Horia Sima on 23rd of September 1939.

The diplomatic relations between the 2 countries were officially closed on 4th of November 1940 when the Romanian authorities ordered the closure of consulates and posts with the Polish government.

ROMANIA AND POLAND IN THE WARSAW PACT

With their fate decided at the Yalta Conference, both Romania and Poland were at the end of the war in the Soviet sphere of influence. Both countries had a rapid and brutal switch to a communist-based government and had Soviet soldiers stationed on their soil. The military, political and economic grip of Soviet Union was maintained in Eastern Europe through Treaties of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance and through the military defensive alliance of the "Warsaw Pact" which was founded on 15th of May 1955, as a response to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

At this point the Pivot Area was not under threat anymore and Soviet Union could expand its influence in Asia and Africa. The singular moment of escalation was in 1968 with the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact members, when Romania condemned the ongoing invasion, but it didn't withdraw from the Alliance, like in the case of Albania.

The buffer-states that separated Soviet Union from the rest of NATO states gave more opportunities for the communist state to export its ideology in other parts of the world that were not bordering the country. The communist expansion in Asia in the 50s and 60s and the late stage of expansion in the 70s and 80s in Africa proved that Mackinder's theory can have a practical use. But the Soviet Union could not achieve full

control of the European continent and so it could not divert fully into expanding its power further.

Figure 4: European member states of NATO and Warsaw Pact in 1960

The buffer-states that separated Soviet Union from the rest of NATO states gave more opportunities for the communist state to export its ideology in other parts of the world that were not bordering the country. The communist expansion in Asia in the 50s and 60s and the late stage of expansion in the 70s and 80s in Africa proved that Mackinder's theory can have a practical use. But the Soviet Union could not achieve full control of the European continent and so it could not divert fully into expanding its power further.

In the end, with the internal and external pressures led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and to reset the Geopolitical playground of Central Europe, giving a significant advantage for NATO countries, and United States in particular. The buffer-states could not maintain a neutral stance and they will be absorbed into NATO and EU gradually and Russian sphere of influence was limited to the former member states of the Soviet Union.

FALL OF COMMUNISM AND ASCENSION TO EU AND NATO

The fall of communism gave the possibility of both Poland and Romania to apply to NATO and European Union.

On 25th of January 1993 the first treaty of economic cooperation was signed between the 2 countries and the military cooperation continued to improve as Poland joined NATO in 1999 and Romania in 2004.
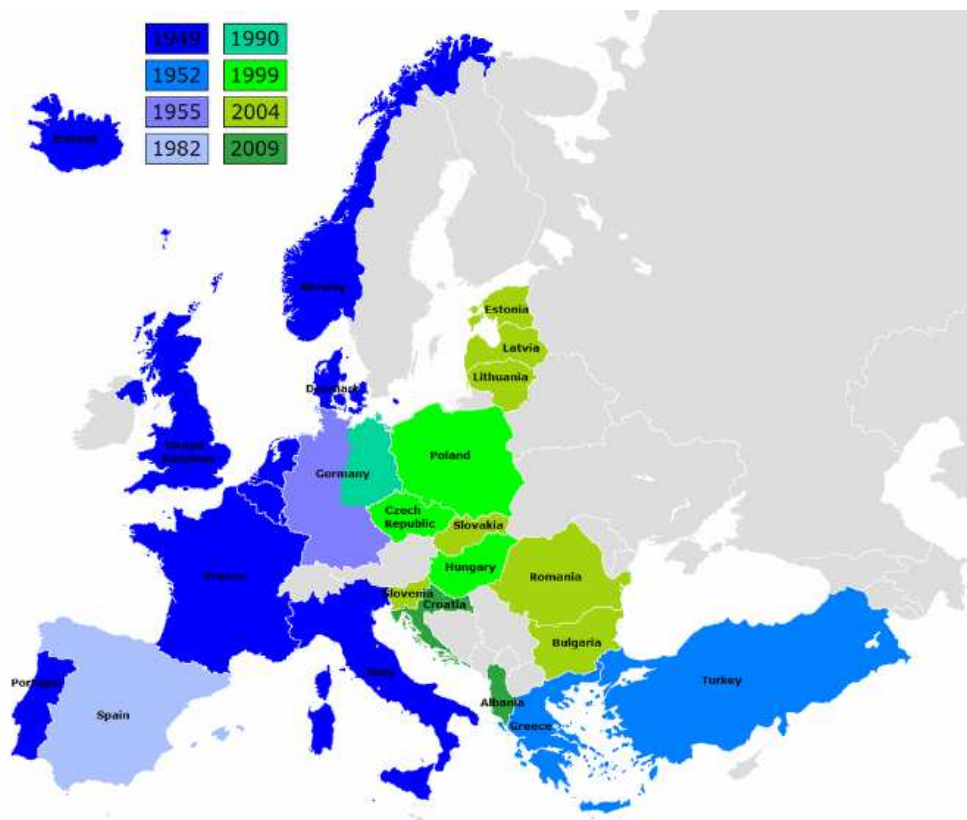
Figure 5: Expansion of the NATO member states in Europe

The same situation can be mentioned on the economical part, as Poland joined European Union in 2004 and Romania in 2007. The scope of this rapid expansion was to expand the European market, to consolidate the defensive alliance with the addition of the former soviet satellite states. Romania and Poland participated in the initiative of the American interventions to grow closer ties with the western powers. When it comes to foreign affairs policies both countries share a historical animosity with Russia, a relative dependence on the Russian Gas, even though Romania has a smaller percentage than Poland and a historical connection with the countries of

Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova which collides with the Russian interests in the region.

It is important to mention that during the time of the NATO and EU expansion in the eastern side of the continent Russia was in a very delicate situation and it could not put the same pressure to stop the former members of the Warsaw pact to join EU and NATO. At the beginning of the 21st century the Russian economic and military power started improving and it could react more hostile towards further incursions of the alliances in the countries that they perceive as being part of their sphere of influence. In 2008 the Russian army intervened into Georgia, to stop the pro-NATO and pro-UE stance of the Georgian officials. This moment can be considered as the moment when Russia re-emerged as a regional power and further incursions into Eastern Europe would be met by a Russian response.

The political cooperation forms a good basis to develop bilateral defensive cooperation. The cooperation of the two states within NATO is based on a common position in key issues related to NATO activities. Poland and Romania are mainly interested in maintaining the defensive nature of NATO, and in the face of Russia's aggressive actions, in maximum enhancement of collective defensive abilities based on art. 5 of the Washington treaty and strengthening the eastern flank of the Alliance. At the Newport summit, Romania was Poland's main regional ally who made endeavors for the Alliance to adapt strategically to the new situation concerning security in the East of Europe. Very helpful in developing a common position was the eastern flank summit organized by the Polish president, Bronisław Komorowski, on 22nd July 2014 in Warsaw. The participants included the presidents of Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. An example of mutual support within NATO may be the fact that in 2008 Romania delegated 2 officers to work with the Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin. It also joined the NATO Military Police Centre of Excellence in Bydgoszcz. The Polish army, in turn, have one person in HUMINT COE (Human Intelligence Centre of Excellence) in Oradea, Romania. Poland and Romania actively participate in NATO's programs and activities. Both

states joined the AWACS program (Poland in 2008, Romania in 2011), which is the aerial component of the of NATO's early warning system. Allied reconnaissance aircrafts regularly use Polish airspace for reconnaissance flights, they may use the airport in Powidz, and 6 Polish soldiers work in the structures of the NAEW&C Program Management Organization.

THE DEFENSIVE PILONS
OF THE EASTERN FLANK OF NATO

When it comes to the Eastern Flank of the NATO alliance defense, there are 3 countries that take the bulk of the pressure to withstand any interference from the Eurasian steppes: Turkey, Poland and Romania.

Turkish people themselves arrived in Anatolia from the vast steppes of Asia and formed a nation that stretched from Hungary to Caucasus and North Africa. Nowadays the mountainous relief of the country and vast population (around 82 million) and specific features such as the Bosporus and Dardanelles straits and the Caucasian mountains from the Georgian-Russian border separates them from any Russian clear threat and even traps the Russian fleet in the Black Sea, as there is no way of leaving this body of water into the Mediterranean Sea without their approval. This stability gives Turkey the strong position of having a more independent, if not "rebellious", attitude in the alliance and seek their own regional power projection in scenarios such as Northern Cyprus or the intervention in Syria and to placate the other regional power in the Middle-Eastern Area: Iran.

The other 2 pilons are Poland and Romania: both of the countries are based at the edge of the former Soviet territory, are in a process of transition from Warsaw pact-based military equipment to NATO-standard equipment and have a historical animosity with Russia.

Nowadays Poland is defended by relief from 3 sides: In the North the Baltic Sea, in the West the Border with Germany is formed mainly by the river Oder, this combined with the proximity of the German capital to the border and the demilitarized policy of the German government give guarantees

of stability for the Polish government. In the southern side the Carpathians and Sudeten mountains create a clear border between Poland and its southern neighbors. The main threat comes from the East and North-East. In the North-East the Kaliningrad enclave is the most militarized region of Europe, capable of disrupting the NATO support in the Baltic sea and the Baltic States. The Baltic states are especially vulnerable as the main land supply route goes through the small border of less than 100 kilometers between Poland and Lithuania, the Suwalki corridor. This corridor is caught between Kaliningrad Oblast and Belarus, which is heavily dependent on the Russian influence, economic and military decisions and It can be considered as part of the Russian sphere of influence, even though it has no official hostile relations with Poland or NATO in general. Belarus also has what it used to be the prime defensive asset of Poland during the time of the Commonwealth: The Smolensk corridor: This corridor is a narrow strip of land between the rivers Dnieper and Daugava rivers. These rivers used to be the prime defense on the eastern borders of the Commonwealth, and they had a much bigger defensive potential than Bug river, that creates now a part of the eastern border of Poland.

The main advantages of Poland include the EU and NATO membership and the fact that it can focus on mainly one side of the border while the other 3 are either stable and peaceful or the natural barriers deter any incursion on its territory. A strong economy with an expanding infrastructure, a modernization process of the armed forces and a significant population – being the most populated country from the former Warsaw Pact nations that joined EU and NATO.

Romania features 3 geographical particularities: The mountainous central terrain – which can be a formidable defensive feature, the Danube river which can also have defensive potential, especially in the Danube delta area which tunnels the transit route through the Vrancea corridor (between the Carpathians and the Danube), in similar way in which the Smolensk corridor worked for the Commonwealth but this one is still under the control of Romania, also the Danube river can create a strong navigable connection between Romania and Central Europe. The last feature is the Black Sea

presence of the country: The Black Sea main powers are Turkey and Russia, but Romania comes as a very important factor when it comes to balance the power struggle in the area. When Crimea was annexed by Russia in 2014, a strong process of militarization created the enclave to be in a similar situation with the Kaliningrad Oblast. The proximity of Romania to the peninsula puts pressure on the government in Bucharest to seek further NATO support in the stand-off with Russia. At the moment 2 of the most important NATO military bases are situated in Romania: Deveselu military base – part of the AEGIS missile system and the Mihail Kolganiceanu base in Dobrogea which grants fast access to the military forces dispatched for the Middle-Eastern theaters of operations. The only base that has a higher strategic importance for NATO in the area which is not on the territory of Romania is the Incirlik base in Turkey.

Romania has half of the population of Poland (around 19 million) and half of the national budget, which also implies half of the money for defense, as both countries have around 2% allocated for Defense, as part of the official NATO policy. What Romania lacks compared to Poland in demographic and economic factors makes up by defensive and strategic positioning while the process of rearmament that started in 2010s will continue in 2020s to bring the Romanian army up to NATO standards.

At the moment, there are Romanian military personnel dispatched in Orzysz, Poland in official military missions as well as Polish military personnel dispatched in Craiova, Romania as part of the multinational forces dispatched throughout the Eastern flank of NATO – the purpose of this action is to create strong military cooperation between the involved countries and be used as a deterrent against a Russian incursion in the Baltics.

ROMANIAN & POLISH INFLUENCE IN THE EAST: MOLDOVA, UKRAINE AND BELARUS

The countries of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus were all once part of the Soviet Union and Russia considers them as

part of their Sphere of influence. Once the Baltic states Poland and Romania joined EU and NATO in the early 2000s, this was considered as a turning point for Russia which had NATO troops on its border now and it would not accept any expansion in the east without repercussions, such as the intervention in Georgia in 2008 or 2014 in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. The countries caught between NATO/EU – Russia Tog-of-war present 3 different cases which can be exploited by Poland and Romania.

Belarus – From these 3 countries Belarus has the weakest national identity, as at the early years of independence the Belarusian language and symbols were suppressed by the pro-Russian attitude present in the county, even today the population speaks predominantly Russian over Belarusian as the first language and the economy of Belarus is heavily dependent of the Russian economy. Yet since 2014 there has been a change in the Belarusian society. The annexation of Crimea, which had a majority Russian-speaking population and the embargo that followed of the western products to Russia made Lukashenko to diversify its options and seek ties to the European market. This was taken into advantage by Poland which now also has a growing Belarusian population on its territory by giving Polish identification cards of Belarusian citizens of Polish descent and constant media coverage from Warsaw's press and NGO institutions of Belarusian Pro-nationalist messages. In Belarus even the use of the old White-Red-While tricolor flag could have gotten you in the past into prison, but lately there has been an ease on these effects and an increase for more nationalistic elements, such as the use of Belarusian language. The refusal of acknowledging of the Crimean annexation and a more neutral stance of the country could indicate a slow drift of the country from the Russian sphere, which EU and NATO could speculate at the right time. Unfortunately this is not something that could happen in the near future as Russia still holds a firm grip on the country and at any sign of rebellion could simply roll over the tanks on its territory so a more cautious stance must be applied.

Ukraine – One of the most efficient tactics of the Kremlin to halt any western expansion on the territories that they perceive as part of their sphere of influence is to create a

"frozen-conflict", to supply and support secessionist movements on the respective country and block its ascension to EU or NATO by having a unstable situation in the country which would make unprofitable and risky for the alliance to expand in the respective country. Ukraine has a much stronger national identity than Belarus, but it still lacks the unity other countries such as Poland or Romania have. Centuries of Moscow or Sankt Petersburg direct rule had a significant effect on the national identity of the country. Its literal meaning being "Borderland" it was always caught between the regional powers: Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Tsarist Russia and Ottoman Empire, it lacks natural defenses on all sides so it always had to switch to the influence of one of its stronger neighbors. There is also an East-West divide: The western part being predominantly native Ukrainian while the eastern parts have a much stronger Russian influence. In 2014 the Maidan protests toppled the Ukrainian president which suspended the EU-integration process in favor of Eurasian Union, and as a result the Russian Army invaded Crimea and started to support Pro-Russian rebels in the eastern side of the country. Initially the conflict was active but nowadays the fighting stopped and only minor skirmishes on the frontline can happen sporadically but without any territory gained by either side.

After the start of the conflict the Kiev authorities started to follow a more drastically nationalistic and pro-Ukrainian path which worried Romania, Hungary and Poland, all 3 of them having significant ethnic population on their respective borders. The economy of the country got hit hard by the conflict and many Ukrainians left to work abroad, a big part of them opting to go to Poland due to economical, linguistical and proximity reasons. This gave to Poland an increased soft power over Kiev and its decisions and due to historical connection, just like in Belarus, it is the main influence of the pro-EU and NATO affiliation.

At this moment, there is no possibility to interfere in the eastern conflict without a Russian intervention which would be detrimental. Russia also has the higher influence by controlling the Crimean peninsula which blocks a significant part of the Ukrainian mobility in the Black Sea and also puts additional

pressure on the NATO/EU countries that have access to the sea: Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey. In the same time the Russian economy was affected by the sanctions the west imposed on the after the annexation and there is no possibility for a direct attack on Ukraine without a provocation. The country's size and population make it more difficult to conquer and control compared to other past interventions done by the Russian Federation: Transdnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia or Chechnya. For the moment, the frozen conflict will continue until one of the sides will release some of its pressure.

Moldova – If the previous 2 countries have a stronger historical and economical connection with Poland, Moldova falls into the influence of Romania. It has even today a predominantly Romanian-speaking population after significant processes of russification. It used to be part of the medieval kingdom of Moldova until 1812, when it was annexed by the Russian Empire. In the chaos of World War 1 it was annexed by Romania and lost again 1940, only to be recaptured in 1941 and lost in 1944 due to the Soviet advance. The country gained its independence in 1991 with the fall of Soviet Union and at that point there were proposals for reunion with Romania but the election of Iliescu in Romania, which had a pro-soviet stance and the start of the Transdnistrian War in Moldova stopped this process. The aftermath of the Transdnistrian War created the Transdnistrian Republic, which is not recognized by any state of the world, a strip of land between Moldova and Ukraine which hosts the 14th Russian Army on its territory which is 6000 personnel strong, and in the case of a hypothetical Moldovan unification with Romania it could be used in the same way as it was used in Crimea in 2014 and put a halt on this process. As part of the russification process, Kremlin uses the "Moldovanism" idea, which separated Moldovans and Romanians as two different ethnic groups even though both of the people use the same Latin-based language to communicate which is understandable by each side and apart from regionalisms that exist in any language the similarities are quite evident. Moldova until recently was under the power grip of the socialists but in 2009 protests the government was changed, the new government had a significant increase in the pro-EU diplomacy but also turned

the country into an oligarchy. The Russian influence is still significant even though it's decreasing and the "Romanianizing" process increases: various TV and Radio channels connected to Romania air also in Moldova. The Romanian government offers scholarships to study in the country and provides financial and military help to the country.

At the moment, in Moldova, the latest polls over 30% of its citizens have a pro-unification or pro-EU sentiment while the rest of them are either for an independent Moldova which can be used as a buffet-state between the West and Russia or are for a more pro-Russia stance. It is worth to mention that the Russian military presence in Transdnistria it is the main factor why Moldovans prefer the buffer-state option instead of unification. In Romania more than 70% of the population are for an unification and the main reason why the rest of the citizens don't support the unification is because of the economical difference between the two countries: Moldova being the poorest country in Europe and would bring a significant pressure on the Romanian economy, which is also far from developed and solid compared to the rest of EU members.

The historical connection and the necessity for a continuous pressure on the country that controls the Pivot area obligate Poland and Romania to continue to exercise soft power of these 3 countries to take into consideration any procedure that could detach them from the Russian sphere of influence without triggering a Russian response: Poland in Belarus and Ukraine and Romania in Moldova respectively, according to their military, economic and mass-media options and capacity.

INITIATIVE OD THE 3 SEAS – THE RETURN OF THE INTERMARIUM IDEA

Consisting of 12 members and having its first summit in 2016, the Initiative of the 3 Seas is one of the most recent trans-national economical projects and the main objective of it is to create a stronger cooperation between the members states and tie them up through infrastructure and energy projects:

- Via Carpathia: to create a north-south highway from Klaipeda – Lithuania to Thessaloniki – Greece
- To develop the liquified natural gas infrastructure in Poland and Croatia with pipelines from Romania which will reduce the energy dependence of the respective countries from Russia.

For these projects Romania and Poland pledged to allocate 500 million euros through Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego and Export-Import Bank and USA pledged to support the Initiative with additional 1 billion dollars. The infrastructure of Eastern Europe goes mainly East-West as the countries of the Warsaw Pact were dependent on the Soviet economy and under military control from Moscow, all the infrastructure was designed to benefit them, neglecting the north-south routes. A north-south connection would especially benefit the 2 biggest economies of the initiative: Romania and Poland and it would tie the respective countries in their external-policy actions regarding their eastern borders. EU funds will also prove very beneficial to the development of these infrastructure projects alongside national budgets.

Figure 6: Members of the Three Seas Initiative in 2020

The expansion of the Initiative to include also Slovenia and Croatia could prove risky, as this move would also alarm Serbia and make the members of the initiative to divert resources to placate Serbia, which has a conflicting situation with these countries instead of focusing on its initial purpose of creating a stronger buffer region between Western Europe and Russia.

The initiative is still in its emerging state and it might require time to solidify into a real economical alliance between

these countries, yet the potential is much higher than just the Visegrad Group, which included just 4 members from Central Europe. If in the geopolitical game the cards will be played right, this might be the closest it has ever been to create a belt of states to oppose Russia, the holder of the Pivot area from the Baltic sea to the Black Sea, a 21st century version of the Intermarium idea that existed in the Polish diplomatic circles since it reappeared back on the map in the 20th century.

FORECAST FOR THE NEAR FUTURE IN THE REGION

As it was stated in the previous chapters, Russia still holds a firm grip in the countries of Ukraine Belarus and Moldova and in the last chapter I will try to point out on course of action of what might happen in the near future. It is important to mention that these actions are unpredictable in detail and it can cover just some broad idea based on the diplomatic tendencies of the countries.

Russia, as well as most of Central and Eastern Europe will head into a significant demographical decline which will affect its power projection. At this moment, Russia it is the sole ruler of the Pivot Area and so far I have covered its Western borders in Europe, but Russia is also facing pressure from the south and east: Fractions appeared in Syria between Russian and Iranian influence in the conflict and the emergence of Iran as a regional power makes Russia divert more of its resources to balance the scale in the region. Iran has a significant Azeri population on its territory and the country of Azerbaijan used to be part of Persia in various occasions, as such, Iranian soft power is also projected into a country that borders Russia. The emergence of India will also put additional pressure in the region of Afghanistan, as Afghanistan is an important part of the Anti-Pakistani strategy of India.

The biggest threat will come though from its eastern borders. The constant growth of China will lead to increasing pressure from their side on the Manchurian territory controlled by Russia, but it is seen as part of the Chinese historical territory from Beijing. China also seeks to expand its political and economic power into the former Soviet Central Asian

republics who are under Russian sphere of influence and were until recently unchallenged by any external power.

Faced with these pressures from all sides Russia cannot follow for long its own agenda and it will have to gravitate towards one of the factions. It seeks right now to federalize Moldova and placate Ukraine and Belarus from joining EU and NATO and as soon as these objectives could be fulfilled, they will be able to divert more resources combating the Chinese. It is necessary for EU and NATO to maintain a pressure on Eastern Europe until Russia will no longer have the capacity to dictate the policies of the countries that it perceives as part of their sphere of influences and prevent those countries into falling into a federalization that would benefit Russia or a frozen conflict that could hinder their ascension towards NATO and EU. Eventually, Putin will be out of office and the modifications that he is doing into the Russian political theater will lead towards a more decentralized and parliamentary Russia once he will step out from power. In the moment when Putin and his policies influenced by Alexander Dugin will be cease to be a threat there will be a chance of expansion into Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova which together with a switch from a weaker Russia from anti-Western stance towards a more Anti-Chinese policy will lead to a radical change of the political game and the expansion into the Pivot area of the World Island.

As mentioned, this is just one of the possibilities and everything is up to change and only time and the decisions of the leaders will decide the path in the future. For the moment Poland and Romania have a very strong alliance through NATO, EU and Initiative of the 3 Seas and it will continue to exist as both of the countries share similar interests and have a say in the never-ending political chess game of Central and Eastern Europe.

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GEOPOLITICAL TURBULENCE – THE US CRISIS AS THE SECOND POSSIBLE EDITION OF THE SECESSION WAR

We are currently witnessing an enormous civilization and cultural changes that may soon remodel our world

gen. R.T. Andrzejczak

Abstract:

This article is devoted to the analysis of the current crisis in the USA caused mainly by worldview discrepancies as new ideology and the assessment of the possible consequences of this crisis in the future not only for the American state but for the entire globe. The article presents a historical outline of the foundations of the greatest conflict in the history of the USA, the aim of which was the secession of the US Confederates. The identified global trends were also analyzed in terms of possible fulfillment of the darkest and most dangerous scenario of internal turbulence in the USA with the possibility of dividing the country. The aim of the article is a broad discussion on contemporary threats in the field of security, cultural and mental changes, and worldview confrontation. Additionally, the possible effects of the weakening of the US and possible secession and the related possible geopolitical scenarios are presented.

INTRODUCTION – THE GENESIS OF THE CRISIS

The current situation in the United States of America, caused by unrest on an unknown scale, draws the attention of many political scientists to the future of the world power. It can be concluded that the riots in the US on the basis of "race" are in line in the everyday life of modern America, and their outbreaks are nothing new, or even a well-worn pattern from the *To never-ending story* series. Killing in Minneapolis, at the hands of the white policeman, black George Floyd, it sparked a wave of several months of brutal demonstrations and riots in many US cities and Europe. It should be noted that the Minneapolis incident occurred during a huge economic recession that spread across the globe and was a consequence of the SARS-CoV-2 epidemic. The United States is one of the countries most affected by the economic recession.

Moreover, the tense situation arose during the presidential elections and the division of society, unprecedented since the Civil War, not only in terms of skin colour, but also economically, ideologically and politically. Politicians on both sides are also fuelling the public mood. The current riots are not only racial, but above all ideological in a polarized society it is extremely dangerous. It seems that this year's elections could be a key importance not only for the future of the USA but also for the change of the political power in the world. The aim of the article is a broad discussion on the possible weakening of the USA and possible secession and also the related possible scenarios in geopolitics.

Racial riots are one of the most important unsolved problems in modern America, and this is why the problem keeps coming back and it does so with multiplied force. According to many experts, one of the causes of the contemporary conflict is the effects of the Civil War between the South and the North in the years 1861-1865, considered the bloodiest in the history of America. According to the most simplified versions of the reasons for the outbreak of the war, it is stated that "*Abraham Lincoln, the Republican presidential candidate of the United States, sought to abolish slavery, and*

the southern states in which it was in force disobeyed to preserve it. The resulting war was thus fought by the forces of the North with the aim of liquidating this barbaric institution" (Nieroda 2018).

It should be noted that the states, especially the North and South of the Union in the nineteenth century, were very diverse in terms of economic, mental and political. These differences kept growing. According to many experts, the cause of the outbreak of the war was economic aspects, and more specifically fiscal discrimination. On the basis of the passed act, high export duties on agricultural products and high import duties on industrial products were introduced in the South. As a result, the South had to participate in almost half of the EU's customs revenues, despite the fact that it had a production potential much lower than the North (Nieroda 2018). This situation led to dissatisfaction and the desire of the rebellious states to leave the Union. Here comes the legislative issue in defence of the right to secession. The articles of the Confederation stated that each of the states making up the Union was fully sovereign and independent. In the Constitution that replaced the Articles of the Confederation, this formulation no longer appears. <u>This does not mean, however, that with the ratification of the Constitution, individual states lost their independence and sovereignty in favour of the federal government.</u>

The differences between individual states, especially North and South, remain enormous despite the industrialization of the South. The largest of these is the traditionalism of the southern states in relation to the northern states. The visible division concerns, above all, the mentality and worldview, including the attitude towards religion and family ties. *"Though Americans believe in God as a long and wide country, in the South, faith is the most expansive, encroaching on politics, state institutions, and schools. Some experts say that religion best defines the division into North and South today"* (Jarkowiec 2015). Analysing the recent events related to the riots in the US and Europe, it can be seen that the leading organizations are extreme left-wing groups, such as Antifa, fighting only under the guise of racial equality, and in fact carrying anarchist slogans. Regarding the left-wing

movements, it should be noted that Antifa does not have any central structures, nor even a single coherent ideological declaration written somewhere. There is no such thing as a formal membership in Antifa. Therefore, the activities and views of the various Antifa groups may differ significantly from each other, and their members can be easily manipulated.

A GAME FOR WEAKNESS

Currently, there has been a very clear division of the US society, and it does not only concern the election of President D. Trump, but also mental and philosophical differences. Additionally, old animosities about the North-South war and racial problems are heated and can be used to weaken the domestic US including its division. It should be noted that individual states did not renounce their sovereignty in favour of the Union in the constitution and did not grant it the right to stop secession by force. Under the Tenth Amendment, the central government has no power to act to prevent separation. Such behaviour would be a federal usurpation of the sovereignty vested in the states. All states joined the Union on equal terms, which means that if even one state (Texas) reserved the possibility of secession, it must be available to all (Nieroda 2018). So there is a possibility of destroying the currently greatest power through its internal problems in the social domain. Such a scenario is part of standard hybrid activities, the main goal of which is achieved by destabilizing the social domain, especially through social polarization. To this end, activities in the economic and political domains can be used to increase social discontent. Who may be interested in changing the superpower polarity of the modern world? Each power or empire is surrounded by enemies or contenders for the former power. In the case of the US, we are dealing with competition with emerging powers such as China, India, Turkey and the recovering Russian Federation. In the twenty-first century, another strong player enters the game - the non-state actor. In a connection with the above, the possible disintegration or weakening of the USA would be of great

importance in the new balance of power or would trigger the outbreak of a global culture and new ideological revolution.

IDENTIFIED TRENDS IN GEOPOLITICS WHICH INFLUENCE ON POSSIBLE SECESSION

Do the riots caused have a deeper foundation, especially analytical? The identified global trends in the geopolitical, social and economic areas affect the disadvantage of the USA in the context of a possible secession. The following trends were classified by authors as the most dangerous for future US (SFA 2017).

Challenges for state management

"Cultural changes in the modern world are lowering the role of government institutions. The current structures and management do not meet the needs and expectations of society" (SFA 2017). In developed regions and countries, management systems and institutions are influenced by many independent actors, both public and private, each pursuing its own goals and priorities, with its own clientele and constituency, its own technical language and organizational culture, its own mandate and specialized focus . The lack of decisive action to prevent high unemployment, illegal immigration, globalization and the loss of national identity contributed to an increase in dissatisfaction with existing institutions.

The dominant factor which hinders the management of the state is the loss of trust in the existing state structures and the political class. Changes in the world in the social area (mental and cultural changes) reduce the role of government institutions. The present structures and management methods do not support the needs of the society and increase the distrust of hierarchical institutions. The effects of this trend are noticed on the streets of the USA, where young people chant anarchist slogans and, with the consent of the liberal authorities, build enclaves of districts that are out of control. A clear example is the announced Autonomous Zone of Capitol Hill (CHAZ) *"in Seattle, an extraterritorial Antifa and Black Lives Matter (BLM) zone was established, where the authorities have no control"* (Nczas 2020). This situation resembles the script of

the movie entitled *Escape from New York.* As in the movie, experts say that *"while CHAZ has no formal authority or rules, there is already an informal code of conduct"* (Młynarz 2020) defined by rival criminal groups, often made up of ideological radicals.

The United States of America is still struggling with legal problems concerning the sovereignty of individual states. Consequently, the central authorities they are powerless to fight riots because the law does not allow them to intervene in states or counties, unless federal facilities are at risk.

Globalization

"Globalization, characteristic and dominant tendencies in the world economy, politics, demography, social life and culture at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, consisting in the spread of analogous phenomena, regardless of the geographical context and the degree of economic advancement of a given region" (Encyklopedia PWN).

It should be noted that globalization leads to the unification of the image of the world as a homogeneous whole of interrelated economic elements and a common culture of the consumer type. The process of globalization remains the main common factor influencing geopolitical trends. Globalization contributed to the diffusion of power between states. The growing importance of trans-national non-state actors will be noticeable in globalization. The processes and effects of globalization have led to a much more global level of economic ties than in the past.

One of the effects of globalization is that economic power, including financial power, is now more dispersed than in recent decades. The globalization trend may facilitate the direction of a more multipolar international system. The current fluctuations in dominance and power in the international system will increase geopolitical competition, including between regional entities. The economic and economic rivalry between China and the US and possible currency conversion of international settlements (getting rid of the US dollar) may contribute to the intensification of the US economic recession. Growing consumerism adversely affects the mental changes of society and the consumption mode with the possibility of losing the national identity.

Currently, in the large urban agglomerations of the USA, especially in the northern states, there is a noticeable trend to build a "new history". It manifests itself in cutting off from the past, especially the colonial past, and building a new state entity. A telling example is the large-scale devastation of monuments of national heroes. "*Antifa and BLM gangs are knocking down monuments across the United States. In some Democratic-ruled cities, the authorities do the same. This also happened in Chicago, where Mayor Lori Lightfoot ordered the removal of two statues of Christopher Columbus* (Nczas 2020a). Building and consolidating the United States of America as one nation and creating a sense of identity for a young state required many propaganda and educational efforts. Today, the effort of many generations is openly contested.

Public dissatisfaction / polarization of society

Loss of trust in the ruling elite, political stalemate and problems with introducing reforms lead to an increase in the polarization of society.

Social polarization, a process of profound stratification of society in such a way that two opposing social poles are formed (Encyklopedia PWN). The lack of trust in governments and institutions is due to disappointment from the current policy. Most often, social polarization occurs when social problems causing differentiation of attitudes relate to important spheres of social life, such as: politics, religion, etc. people expressing moderate attitudes is decreasing. The process of polarization very often contributes to the outbreak of social conflicts and the disintegration of social groups.

Nowadays disappointment and distrust of politicians and the so-called establishment, led to an increase in far-right nationalist sentiment, and on the other hand, left-wing and internationalist mood. The increase in the polarization of societies is noticed almost all over the globe and may result in conflicts on a local or regional scale including civil wars against the background of nationality and ethnic and cultural background defined them as a civilization wars. The course of these conflicts will be the so-called rebel wars, which will break out in several places at the same time, making it difficult to suppress them. "*After the end of the Cold War, when the conflicts were caused by ideological disputes, religious and*

cultural disputes will return to the first place. Western civilization is systematically losing its influence in the modern world" (Huntington 1996). This trend has dominated not only the USA, but the entire world today. It will increase the importance/influence of non-state actors, the emergence of parallel societies, the susceptibility of society to manipulation, and the risk of a conflict arising from different political, religious and cultural views. Due to unresolved racial issues in the USA, there is a continuous increase in the popularity of extreme left-wing and anarchist organizations, a decrease in the sense of national identity, secularization, and an increase in liberated ideologies. This may result in a large-scale civilization conflict breaking out as a civil war. It should be noted that this trend is very likely, and its growing.

The influence of a non-state actor on national and international affairs

Globalization and business flows have created a new powerful player in the international arena. Today, large trans-national corporations have incomes comparable to those of nation states. However, they are not burdened with budgetary, infrastructure or educational expenses. With such large incomes, they can influence the policies of individual countries or support dangerous ideologies. *"A non-state actor is independent of state actors, their sources of funding, policies, and government control"* (Josselin, Wallace 2001). Non-state actors influence the economy, politics and society at national and international level. Non-state actors include entities from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multinational corporations (MNCs), networks of ombudsmen, trans-national activists, legitimate or dishonest entities, and terrorist and criminal organizations. As state power is reduced, non-state actors will have a greater influence and roll over national governments and international institutions.

Aggressive non-state actors such as terrorist organizations, criminal organizations, traffickers and pirates will increasingly challenge governments by displaying state characteristics and threatening security in terms of cross-border terrorism, extremism, organized crime and common crime on the brink of anarchy. Considering the scope and scale of the riots in the USA, the question arises whether these

activities are not coordinated and, above all, financed and by who. *"According to President Trump and representatives of his administration, the riots are by no means spontaneous, but were planned, organized and carried out by leftist organizations, especially Antifa. Both Trump himself and the US attorney general, William Barr, have spoken about it publicly"* (PCH24 2020). Figure 1 shows the impact of a non-state actor on the social area. Influence is made through the political and economic domains, as well as through media indoctrination and cosmopolitan education.
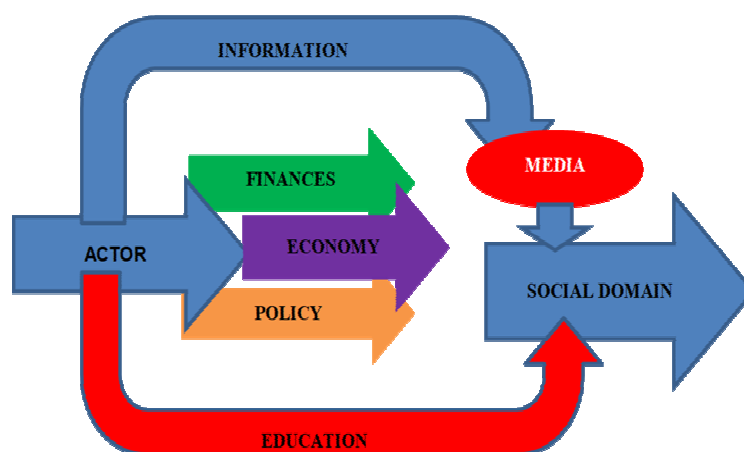
Figure 1: The impact of a non-state actor on the social area

Diminution the role of nation states

The direct effect of the actions of a non-state actor will be that the role of nation-states will be reduced to their complete disappearance. Currently, there is no obvious alternative to the system of nation states that has characterized geopolitics for over 300 years (SFA 2017). The probable scenario of the end of nation-states is presented in Fig. 2. The figure is a continuation of Fig. 1. In the activities of a non-state actor, the first stage is the social area, and after taking over the existing state entity is overthrown.
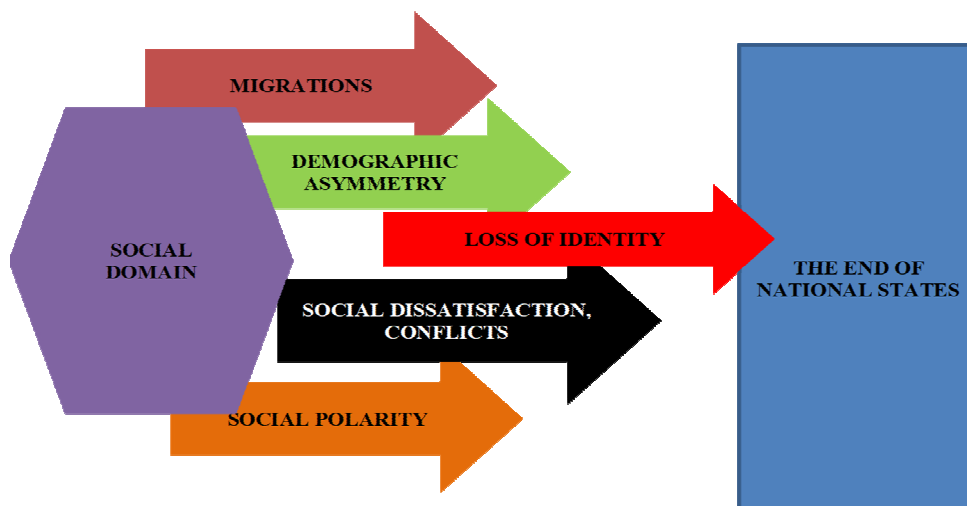
Figure 2: The impact of the non-state actor at the end of nation states

In support of the presented trend, apart from analytical research, one can quote the statements of many young people for whom the state only marks administrative borders. Internationalist movements do not recognize national boundaries, and their aim is to destroy the existing order in favour of an undefined entity more like lawlessness and anarchy.

Political rivalry and the trend of the US division

The current election campaign in the United States causes enormous emotions, not only in the states. In the shadow of the campaign, there is a clear ideological division and a completely different vision of international and domestic politics. "*Democrat candidate Joe Biden uses the adventures of the Black Lives Matter movement to present himself as America's "providential man" who will unite society. The problem is that at the expense of normality and anti-civilization concessions to "anti-racists"*" (Nczas 2020b). At the same time, D. Trump leads a completely different narrative, blaming the democrats, especially those in power in large agglomerations, for being compliant and supporting anarchy. President D. Trump announced that Justice and Homeland Security Departments are working on a joint plan to fight leftist riots. In his speeches he directly talks about the ruthless settlement with what he called vandals. (Cheda 2020).

Currently in the US, though not only the news media, are becoming more and more polarized. There is a high probability that their activities will be aimed at increasing divisions in society and fuelling public mood, by playing on the emotions of voters. Additionally, the polarization will be deepened by the use of various social networks and other media distorting the real picture of the situation. Biased news programs will be used by adversaries creating an alternative reality that adversely affects social cohesion. Today, the American people are divided and polarized. The trend of increasing social polarization will make it more difficult for the government to implement laws and reforms to stop dangerous separatist movements in the name of freedom and equal civil rights. Currently in the USA we are seeing the process of unfreezing the trend towards the collapse of the unity of the United States' Union, buried in the bloody history. However, now, unlike the Civil War 150 years ago, the possible division of the state would be of colossal importance not only for the American continent but for the entire globe. Given the internal political turmoil, US voters in November will have a choice between a policy of submission or a real confrontation with the problem. Not only the future of the USA will be at stake, but also Western civilization. However, it should be remembered that the trend does not disappear, it can only be weakened or reduce, and in extreme cases reversed.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE INTERNAL TURBULENCE IN THE US

Geopolitical effects

The US internal problems would upset the geopolitical balance which was so badly damaged by years of domination. US are received synonymously with the so-called Western countries that are already seeing a shift in the center of gravity towards Asia. Currently, the influence of Western countries on politics on a global scale has been limited. In the event that the US loses its power, China will become the only great heir. The NATO alliance will cease to exist in favor of smaller alliances or coalitions.

Therefore, China wants to fuel the secessionist sentiment in the US. Paradoxically, due to the US secession, the Russian Federation will lose from the regional powers in the long term. The economic and economic conflict between China and the US gives the Russian Federation a chance to carry out reforms and conduct regional policy. Disrupting this process will force the Russian Federation to submit to China. Europe without US support will plunge in total chaos that both Turkey and the Russian Federation can take advantage of.

Consequences for the US

The possible disintegration of the Union will be for today's United States a failure not only political, but also ideological and civilization. The weakening of the US position in the international arena may lead to increased tensions and conflicts on a local or regional scale. Additionally, the new administrative division will force migration within the former EU. The weaknesses of individual states may be exploited by the eternal enemy on the continent, ie Mexico, by implementing the long-held demands of the territories lost to the US.

Consequences for Europe

A lonely Europe with a highly divided society will be most affected when the US loses its world leadership. Such a situation will immediately activate extreme left-wing and internationalist movements, leading to the already announced world revolution. In addition, it will strengthen right-wing and Islamic organizations. The result of NATO's decomposition will be the lack of effective force intervention to contain the spreading violent riots. The disintegration of the EU will also be likely. As a result of the riots, rebel wars will break out in archaic categories, reminiscent of the incidents in Rwanda in 1994. Milan Chovanec, the Minister of the Interior of the Czech Republic, defined it in a similar way, describing future incidents as the Super Holocaust. As a result of the weakening of the governing and power organs, Islamic organizations and Turkey can offer help in bringing order, and thus subjugate Europe and to implement the announced plans of President R. T. Erdogan to rebuild, or even extend the former Ottoman Empire.

CONCLUSIONS

Historical experience confirms that the ideological, economic or religious polarization between social groups is the main source of conflicts within and between countries. It should be added that the United States can be classified as countries "at a crossroads" where there is one dominant culture that determines the belonging of a country to a specific civilization, but the leaders of the country want it to be within another. According to Huntington, the most important countries in which an attempt was made to change the civilization circle include: Russia - from the times of Peter the Great, Turkey - after the reforms of Kemal Atatürk, Mexico - from the presidencies of Miguel de la Madrid and Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Australia - the concepts of Paul Keating and Gareth Evans. However, the change was unsuccessful in any of the above-mentioned countries (Huntington 1996). The threat of secession or even weakening the USA in the international arena would have catastrophic consequences, above all for Europe. This article strongly emphasized not only the problem of the possible secession in the USA, but also the tense security situation, especially in Europe, including the disturbing mental, cultural and ideological changes. It should be remembered that all global trends presented in this article tend to increase.

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