

Conflict Studies Research Centre



**Geopolitical Patterns of
Euro-Atlanticism
A Perspective from
South Eastern Europe**

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Key Points

- * Geopolitically, states and empires can be divided into sea power and land power in character, based on their historic mindsets.
- * Currently, Europe plays the role of a geopolitical platform of the sea-power which is America.
- * The Euro-Atlantic civilization is becoming globalised, and the Global Heartland moving to the space between Europe, the Persian Gulf and the Far East.

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Summary

- With the US-European differences on current international issues (NATO's new role, the war in Iraq, the strategy on terrorism), it is necessary to reinterpret the transatlantic relationship. Most analysts agree the Euro-Atlantic canon as established after 1945 is no longer valid. Geopolitics is a useful tool in interpreting current events as it allows students to analyze events and processes on large spaces and over *longues durées*.

- From a geopolitical point of view, the world has a dual structure. States and empires are thalassocratic (sea power) or tellurocratic (land power). In spite of a rationalization process, quite obvious in the modern age, geopolitics has kept its archaic core structure, still having somehow a “sacred character”. Perceptions, visions, projects are still inspired by some non-rational mindsets. Geopolitically, civilizations, as expressions of “sacred concepts”, are *thalassocratic* or *tellurocratic*. Therefore, the hypothesis of the sea-power and the land-power that this paper is based on is quite significant, because it reveals the relationship between the Anglo-American sea-powers and the European land-powers from a new angle.
- The European continent has a dual geopolitical character, being at the same time Euro-Atlantic and Eurasiatic. Geopolitically, Europe might be Euro-Atlantic or Eurasiatic. Moreover, there might be no autonomous European geopolitical entity yet. Currently, Europe plays the role of a Euro-Atlantic platform, ie of geopolitical support to the Anglo-American sea-power.
- This role presupposes the American strategic presence in Europe with the prevention of EU (German) transformation into a continental power, with the containment of Russia and the appeasement of France. The American hegemony has the role of keeping Europe in a preunification stage which, in turn, leads to a geopolitical neutralization of Western Europe.
- With NATO enlargement to the East, the Euro-Atlantic dimension in Europe has actually strengthened. Poland and Romania have become allies and promoters of the Atlantic perspective and therefore players of the American European strategy. These two countries are the pivotal countries for the American strategy of the Global Heartland.
- With the American initiative to stabilize the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Gulf, the circle of global Euro-Atlantic strategy closes. Practically, with the end of the Cold War, with NATO expansion and interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, we are witnessing a process of globalization of the Euro-Atlantic civilization, based on sea-power, with all its associated expressions in the economy (free market), politics (democracy), ideology (freedom) and technology (the Internet).
- South Eastern Europe is about to play a significant role in the stabilizing strategy of Euro-Atlanticism for the Caucasus and Central Asia due to its geographic location next to the new Heartland. Romania and Bulgaria are the regional players which can give Euro-Atlanticism a new dimension on the Black Sea.

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Introduction

In April 2004, NATO's frontier moved to the Baltic-Black Sea isthmus, including Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia and the Baltic countries in the North Atlantic Alliance and giving Euro-Atlanticism a new geopolitical landscape. A decade ago, no one would have thought a Latvian airman would fly at the outskirts of St Petersburg or that a Bulgarian fisherman would hoist a NATO flag while sailing on the Black Sea. Constanta in Romania has become an important NATO sea and air base next to the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East. In May 2004 the European Union also enlarged eastwards to include 10 new members into the club of the most prosperous countries in the world. It is the biggest step the Europeans ever made. Prague, Warsaw and Budapest are now again part of the Western world. In 2007, more new members (Bulgaria, Romania) are to join. By 2010, EU and NATO most probably will overlap in Central and South Eastern Europe, creating an arc of security and stability from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

The goal of this paper is to link these two events of historical significance into a coherent geopolitical explanation on a *longue durée* and to give a reasonable policy prediction for the fate of Euro-Atlanticism and for the Central and South Eastern European countries as part of the Euro-Atlantic world. With the war in Iraq, no one would deny that Euro-Atlanticism faces a crisis. The differences in international politics between the Europeans and the Americans have increased. The gap between Washington and Brussels became more evident when the crisis in Iraq deepened one year after the fall of Saddam Hussein.

The question is whether the relationships over the Atlantic will be conflictual or complementary. Will America be able to keep its leadership in world affairs? Will, on a long run, a united Europe able to replace America in world affairs? From a geopolitical point of view, the question is if the Euro-Atlantic system might be refounded or whether on its ruins a Euro-Asiatic one will be raised. Geopolitically, this question is about the competition between the sea-power and the land-power.

Enlargement and the relationships of both USA and EU with third parties (Russia, the Muslim world, Iraq, Middle East) have certainly changed the substance of the Trans-Atlantic relationship. In consequence, a redefinition of the conceptual apparatus of understanding Euro-Atlanticism is necessary. The Euro-Atlantic canon as established after 1945 is no longer valid. Why, then, should the Central and South Eastern European countries care about it?

Therefore, this paper examines whether there is merely a readjustment of the American-European relationships or a dramatic change. On the one hand, it seems the American presence in Europe and the perpetuation of Europe's role as a Euro-Atlantic platform will not diminish in the near future. It is based on the hypothesis

that the end of the Cold War, NATO enlargement and the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq have increased the function of the sea-power which is America. On the other hand, EU enlargement to Central Europe and improved EU-Russia political cooperation have increased the land-power strategic capability which is Europe. In such conditions, can Euro-Atlanticism survive its own success in spite of so many uncertainties? In order to explain this one should go to the core of modern geopolitics.

Towards a Non-Rational Definition of Geopolitics

Many of us believe that in the last few decades geopolitics has been reconsidered. Others think it has been reinvented. Either way, the fact is that geopolitics is perceived as having more relevance and this is a good thing simply because it enlarges our capacity to interpret and predict events in a time of great uncertainty.

We have witnessed a process of continuous rationalization of human knowledge in the modern age. However, is there anything to escape reason? A short incursion into the archaeology of geopolitics is useful for understanding the horizon under which we can discuss the issue of Euro-Atlanticism, that is the opposition between the land-power and sea-power.

In the pre-modern representations, with alchemy and magic as the main “sciences” in society, geography enjoyed a particular status as *sacred geography*. It is probable that in primitive thinking the contiguous land had generated the notion of space while the idea of water and rivers had generated the notion of time. Desacralization of geography is an incomplete process, so humans still operate with less scientific notions of distances, space and time. We are mapping reality. Maps are usually subjective representations of the human mind, whether political actors, students or the public are aware of it or not. Hence, geopolitics is not yet a complete “science”. It still operates with less rational concepts, visions and projects. Geopolitics still has a non-rational content. This silent and rudimentary knowledge lies at the bottom of the human mind.

The German geopolitician Karl Haushofer pointed out the significance of what he called *pan-ideas* to explain things that otherwise might not be rationally explained.¹ A pan-idea is a geographical representation of a political, religious, ethnic or regional project that emerges from places and populations. The ancient world is where most pan-ideas were elaborated. Hence, one could presume irrational elements of sacred geography might still be at the bottom of modern thinking and influence the style of thinking, political projects and even scientific works. Samuel P Huntington’s idea of the clash of civilizations with religious conflict in the depths of it is a case in point. From a geopolitical point of view it is a pan-idea of the Western Christian world. No rational explanation could tell us why religions should clash. There has been competition and conflict among religions for more than 2,000 years. Why should they clash now in particular? It is most probably an example of “primitive” thinking expressed in a modern theory that Huntington just brought to the surface.

Therefore, if we accept geopolitics is not a science in the current understanding of the term but rather a reflexive thinking relative to power, geography and politics, then we can define it as an actual expression of a deeper process that usually combines primordial images and current representations of world politics. It is, I

should confess, a non-orthodox way of approaching geopolitics. However, not being rational does not mean being completely irrational.

Geopolitics of Land-Power & of Sea-Power: *tellurocratia* & *thalassocratia*

The anthropology of sacred representations helps us to define the constitutive elements of it. The prevailing elements are the *land* and the *sea*. They represent everything relevant to human life: body and blood, soil and water, solid and liquid. In sacred cosmology, the *Land* represents stretching, immobility, territoriality, stiffness, stability and, of course, space. The *Water* represents mobility, non-territoriality, movement, softness and, of course, time.

The Russian geopolitician Alexander Dugin considers land and sea represent universality, the link with the cosmos (the source of water is in the sky, the land is lifeless without the water, land and sea are the Cosmos on Earth).² These two primordial elements have generated two ways of thinking and hence two concepts of geopolitics: in Greek, *thalassocratia* and *tellurocratia*, the sea-thinking and the land-thinking. States and empires are thalassocratic or tellurocratic powers.

With this categorization, one could assume Carthage was the first major sea power in history while Rome was the first tellurocratic one. The Mediterranean Sea is to be considered the cradle of sea-thinking. The nostalgia for Atlantis expresses the nostalgia for a sunken land which all sea-oriented populations share. The ancient Greek diasporas in the Mediterranean supposedly passed thalassocratic thinking to the mediaeval city-states of Venice and Genoa which later handed it on to the people of the North, particularly to the Anglo-Saxons. Such a hypothesis presumes that the sea-thinking of the Anglo-Saxons was transferred through the ancient Mediterranean civilizations and not through the Vikings of the north. It is Euro-Atlanticism a prolongation of Mediterraneanism and not of the Viking tradition? Most probably it is.

As compared to Carthage, Rome was a tellurocratic power. Three Roman frontiers had established the limits of European territorial expansion. The Gallic frontier to the west, to include Spain, France and Britain; the African frontier to the south to include territories of North Africa; and the Dacia frontier to the east, to include today's Romania. An alternative geopolitical explanation of why the Romans conquered Dacia (offered by the ancient Greek geographer Strabo) is that Roman strategists thought the distance between the Baltic and the Black seas was so short that it might be defended by two Roman legions. By militarily defending this isthmus the whole of Europe could be protected from Asian invaders. As a consequence, the Romans were the first to delineate the strategic fault line between Europe and Asia some two millennia ago.

Over time, all tellurocratic empires in Europe called themselves “Roman” too. In the West, the Holy Roman Empire. In the East, the Russian Orthodox Empire, with the Tsar in Moscow and, later on, in St Petersburg. The German Kaiser represented the land-power in the West while the Russian Tsar represented the same power in the East. “Kaiser” in German and “Tsar” in Slavic both mean “Caesar”. To a certain extent, Hitler and Stalin illustrated the same geopolitical power base.

In the gallery of images and representations of sacred geography, the maritime vision presupposes the representation of seashore and islands as the “motherland”,

as the place of origin. The condition for keeping the seashore safe is to master the sea. The seaman always returns home. In the continental vision, what is important is the idea of “holy land”, “sacred territory” (or *Mittelpunkt* in Friedrich Ratzel’s anthropogeography),³ but not necessarily the idea of returning home as well.

For the thalassocratic power, mastering the seas between the land mass is the source of power (the *Sea Power* in Alfred Mahan’s theory).⁴ For the tellurocratic power, mastering a land mass as large as possible is the real source of power (as in Friedrich Ratzel’s *Lebensraum*). In its purest form, the Empire of the steppe is the ideal of the land power; Venice of the sea power. ‘Contiguous’ on the sea means mastering the seashore (this is Spykman’s *Rimland*).⁵ ‘Contiguous’ on the land means reaching the critical land mass that is the source of power (the *Heartland* in Mackinder’s view,⁶ *Lebensraum* in Ratzel’s view).

Distances, time, surfaces, continents and seas have dimensions which people attach to them. From this point of view, one could assume the Greek mind is Mediterranean, the American mind is Euro-Atlantic (sea-minded), the Russian mind is Euro-Asiatic (continental) and the German one is purely European (land-minded). The North Americans have an island character in their mind, in spite of the huge dimensions of their land, while the Japanese islands have generated a continental mind. The American “dream” is to extend the American frontier on the sea: the American frontier is where the US Navy is. The Japanese “dream” is to move the frontier into Korea and mainland China. Today’s Japan is where Toyota and Mitsubishi are. The political forms and the military means are also associated with these mindsets. From this perspective, thalassocrata is committed to the “West”, to trade, capitalism and material power. Tellurocrata is associated with the “East”, to the Euro-Asiatic world and spiritual power.

As Rudolf Kjellen also noticed at the beginning of the 20th Century, in Western culture (mainly American) one of the most used expressions is “go ahead”, denoting progressive culture, political action and geopolitical optimism.⁷ On the contrary, with the Russians one of the well known expressions is “nichego” (nothing), incorporating pessimism, contemplation, fatalism, etc. It seems then that Atlantic geopolitics is optimistic, oriented toward progress, it is open and based on frontier enlargement. Asian geopolitics is pessimistic, fatalistic, based on the closure of the frontier. Quite interesting are the historical empires that might result from here: the Western empire is based on material domination and capitalism, while the Eastern Empire is based on spiritual (ideological) domination and militarism. It implies, for instance, that the Russians are reactive because of “fear” while the Americans are proactive because of “mission”. Since we keep to the purely theoretical realm, it is not so difficult to presume the Americans expand to the places where they think they have an invitation to “go ahead” for progress, while the Russians expand to the places they fear most and where “nichego” would happen without Russian “salvation”.

The hypothesis that there are geopolitical mindsets, derived from the pre-modern sacred geography, that suggest an opposition between two ways of thinking (sea-thinking and land-thinking), is quite challenging. One should examine this matter further.

Europe, the Continental Power; America, the Sea-Power. The Sources of Euro-Atlanticism

If we take into account the differentiation between the concepts of sea-power and land-power as operating at the level of geopolitical representations, then we should consider the British scholar Sir Halford Mackinder as the founder of modern geopolitics in spite of the fact that, as it seems, he never used the term. It was the Swede Rudolf Kjellen who coined the term in 1899. However, it was Mackinder who foresaw and built the geopolitical system in the light of the opposition between land-power and sea-power. This opposition is, in the understanding of this paper, the main driving force behind mainstream geopolitics.

In order to illustrate the case, I think we should take two European examples. The modern state system was created in Europe with the 1648 peace of Westphalia. It seems that behind this moment of enormous importance for world politics was the action of a basic geopolitical principle that intended to delay the establishment of a major land power in Europe. Henry Kissinger points out⁸ that the peace at Westphalia had no role other than to prevent the political unification of German *länder* into a political landmass in Central Europe. For the security of France, the diplomacy initiated by Cardinal Richelieu tried to prevent the coming into being of a *Mitteleuropean* empire as early as 1648. It was a *raison d'état* until 1871 to keep a politically fragmented territory between France and Russia. The unification, indeed the reunification of Germany was greeted without enthusiasm outside Berlin.

To a certain extent, most of France's European policy is related to the necessity for a "European" supremacy in Central Europe, or at least equality with Germany. After the Nazi experience, the formation of NATO in 1949 and of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1957 have had in the background the integration of Central Europe (ie Germany) into a political, strategic and economic network to prevent the raising of an isolated land power at Europe's core. A European Germany is safe for France and, therefore, for Europe.

Today, this political vision in the European Union is uncontested. Its principles come from the incipient modern world almost four centuries ago, but at their bottom lies a geopolitical calculation. One could say Richelieu has made European policy for the last 350 years. After 1990, an enlarged Central Europe, to include the former GDR into Germany, and Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia into the European Union, most probably would follow the same logic. Without expanding the EU to Central and Eastern Europe, a unified Germany might become too strong in Europe. As I shall explain later, Poland is one of the counterbalancing pieces to Germany within the EU, and therefore an important partner to France.

A second example is Russia, which from a geopolitical point of view has the characteristics of a land-power. It is not only its huge territory but its mindset. The Romanian interwar historian Nicolae Iorga pointed out that Russia is a Eurasian empire, because it is an expression of Asian power with European clothing. The Varyags of the North (the Vikings) that established the first Russian state in Kiev in the 9th century were replaced by the "people of the steppe" coming from the East that moved the capital city to Moscow by the 16th century. Since then, Russia has played the role of a land-power into conflict or cooperation with another (Central) European land-power.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Polish kingdom and the Romanian principalities were the buffer zone between these two geopolitical entities. For Romania, the

Crimea War of 1853-1856 was a war between the sea-power (Britain and France) and the land-power (Russia). It had an enormous significance for Romania. Due to an increasing need for wheat in the metropolis, Britain had to secure trade at the Danube mouths. The strategic presence of Britain on the Black Sea and the political support of France led to the political unification of Romania in 1859. From our point of view, the presence of a Western sea-power in the Black Sea made possible the Romanian adventure to Europe. In a certain way, defeating Russia in Crimea meant the delay of occupation (and later on Sovietization) of Romania until 1945. However, in 1945 Mr Churchill decided the other way around and curbed a century of European history for Romania. For half a century, Romania turned to the "Egyptian slavery" imposed by Moscow. Just to mention it here, Romania's NATO membership in 2004 might be better understood within the framework of sea-power expansion to South Eastern Europe and to the Caucasus. One could presume that geopolitically Romania entered NATO in 2004 mainly because of the Black Sea.

From this short description of the functioning of two basic geopolitical principles results the conclusion that Eurasia becomes possible with the unification of Central and Eastern Europe in a single geopolitical entity. Hitler and, after 1945, Stalin both tried it. In Europe, the powers geopolitically interested in limiting the influence of either part are France and Great Britain. From a theoretical point of view, the condition for France to be an influential power in Europe is to develop relationships with both Russia and Germany to the extent that it prevents either of them becoming dominant. Between 1945-1991, Russia was an "enemy" to France to the extent it took over the role of Germany in Europe, while America was an "ally" to the extent it protected France's interests on the continent. De Gaulle's project of a "Common European House" might be as well understood as a reaction of France to both the American and Soviet domination of Europe. I think it is not exaggerated to say that de Gaulle envisaged a Europe having a German engine and a French driver which is, from a geopolitical point of view, impossible. The "natural" partner of Germany is Russia, not France. The "natural" partner of France in a united Europe project is America (including Britain), because, at this moment, America seems to have the vision and the capacity to build in the long term a geopolitical entity able to subordinate both France's competitors (Germany and Russia) to continental supremacy.

Apart from Germany and Russia, that reveal the case of purely land powers, the dualistic geopolitical character of Europe is illustrated by the geopolitics of France. Some current studies point out that France is both sea-oriented (towards the Atlantic and Mediterranean) and land-oriented (towards Central and Eastern Europe). It might be a paradox of French geopolitics to be Euro-Atlantic and Eurasiatic at the same time. France is "condemned" to encourage as well as to discourage the involvement in European affairs of both America and Russia. A balance between Russian and American influence in Europe is most desirable to France simply because it gives a prominent role to Paris on the continent. If America and Britain are not present in Europe, then Germany might be tempted to cooperate with Russia, not with France. Germany is close to France when France is close to Britain and USA. Is the French diplomacy on Quai d'Orsay aware of this? When America's influence is about to increase, France will counterbalance this by encouraging independence in Berlin and by getting closer to Moscow, and vice versa. When France fights both Germany and Russia ... well, that is no longer France! Napoleon, Oswald Spengler said in the 1920s, was not French but an Anglo-Saxon "agent", because he fought both continental powers in Europe to the benefit of Britain. Marshal Petain, on the contrary, was an "agent" of Eurasian

power, because he subordinated France to a continental power (Germany). Moreover, any conflict between the continental powers serves the sea-power principle. France achieves a high profile in European politics when Germany and Russia are struggling against each other. At the start of the Cold War, for Chancellor Adenauer, France was the most precious ally in managing Russian (Soviet) occupation of Eastern Germany. No German recovery would have been possible without French support at the end of WWII.

Therefore, from a geopolitical point of view, the bases of the Euro-Atlantic power are on the European continent and they rely on the transformation of Europe into an Atlantic platform that is a base for the sea-power. By contrast, the sources of Eurasian power lie in transforming Europe into a land-base of Germany (EU) and/or Russia. The geopolitics of the 20th century was certainly Euro-Atlantic. It has involved the American strategic presence, the prevention of Germany becoming a continental power, the containment of Soviet Russia and the dualistic politics of France. Not by accident, the best known phrase related to NATO says the Alliance was created in order “to keep Germany down, Russia out and America in” Europe. One could add, “and France at the margin”.

The War of the Continents & “Atlanticist” Geopolitics

If we accept that there are mindsets that are paradigmatically determined, then we have two opposing perspectives. Peoples, states, foreign policy and, last but not least, individual and collective psychologies reflect these perspectives. The Greeks represented the sea-mind by developing a coastal civilization on the Mediterranean seashore (including the Black Sea) based on trade (mercantilism) and market (currency). This is the prototype of the sea civilization (mercantilism-market-currency) where economics is above politics. Rome, on the contrary, was the prototype of land civilization based on militarism, administration and bureaucracy; where politics is above economics. Both of them lie at the bottom of modern Europe.

Immanuel Wallerstein explained⁹ that, at the dawn of the great geographical discoveries in the 16th century, China was better suited for this endeavour. It already had improved navigation and administration techniques, the gunpowder and the fleet. Why the Chinese did not do it? Simply because they are not sea-minded, explained Wallerstein. Chinese psychology is not geopolitically expansive but defensive. The Great Wall was in the Chinese mind first. The Europeans explored instead, despite being less technically prepared. They had the mind. By crossing the Atlantic, Columbus not only discovered America, but initiated the modern sea-power adventure: the Columbian era. One might wonder, why not call it the Atlantic era as well? The Mediterranean civilization expanded to Atlantic.

Getting back to geopolitical thinking, Halford Mackinder’s theory seems to catch quite accurately the character, on the one side, of the maritime perspective which means, in the modern age, Atlanticism, ie the primacy of the individual, economic liberalism, protestant democracy and urban life and, on the other side, of the continental perspective which means hierarchy, communitarism, authoritarianism and rural life. Mackinder’s main work is called “Democratic Ideals and Reality”.¹⁰

Mackinder is, of course, pessimistic about the optimism inspired by the sea-power thinking. At the beginning of the 20th century, he warned the sea-power of the time (Britain) of the danger of a Eurasian union formed either by Germany or Russia or

by both. He argued that the world was coming to the end of the "Columbian epoch". Sea-power was declining relative to land-power. His thesis, widely known as Mackinder's *Heartland Theory*, suggests that there was a pivotal area "in the closed heart-land of Euro-Asia" which was most likely to become the seat of world power. For Great Britain, the condition for keeping supremacy in world affairs was to prevent the formation of a Heartland that bridges Europe and Asia. The Rimland strategy launched after 1945 was a geopolitical countermeasure against the Soviet Heartland strategy. Protecting the sea routes by mastering the sea shores is at the core of it. From this point of view, the "war of the continents" is not a war between mainlands but between the land power and the sea power. The Atlantic powers won both wars against land powers in 1945 and in 1991. Is the next stage of the "war of the continents" related to Afghanistan and Iraq?

One could conclude that the world has a dual geopolitical structure which has been generated not just by the physical and geographic environment in which have appeared and evolved different forms of social and political organization, but the mental structure of the populations that illustrated these organizing forms as well. In spite of a clear rationalization process which has become evident in the modern age, geopolitics has kept an archaic core. From a geopolitical point of view, civilizations, as expressions of sacred ideas, are still either maritime (ie thalassocratic) or continental (ie tellurocratic). Therefore, on a *longue durée*, the core question of Euro-Atlanticism is about the expanding powers of the sea power which is America. Euro-Atlanticism survives if the sea power civilization survives.

The American Offshore Strategy to Dominate Europe

In the context outlined above, the task of following the evolution lines of Euro-Atlantic geopolitics is much easier. The dual geopolitical character of Europe is now better delineated. Hence, it is hard to define Europe as an autonomous geopolitical entity. The "Atlantic Europe" is currently an American geopolitical platform while Euro-Asia is, potentially, a German (EU)-Russian conglomerate. This means there are two ways to define Europe's geopolitics: with its Atlantic or its Asian facade.

The Atlantic strategy has had in Europe its main bridge to world supremacy. To a certain extent, the reason the New World joined the two world wars was that any European power gaining supremacy of the Old World would challenge the American supremacy in the Western hemisphere. Before 1945, the possibility of Germany controlling Europe would most probably have deprived USA of its influence on the continent. After 1945, the Marshall Plan and NATO prevented Soviet domination. If NATO had not been created, the USA would have found something else to serve the American hegemonic interest in Europe. NATO thus transcends the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the reasons of its very existence pass over the issue of the Soviet communism. NATO is the tool America uses to be a European power. Between 1949-1991, NATO was linked with Western Europe. After 1991, NATO is mainly about Eastern Europe.

Christopher Layne recently called this geopolitical equilibrium *offshore balancing*: establishing American hegemony on the mainland through a sea-power strategy.¹¹ It means the USA gets involved in Europe only when its strategic supremacy is challenged. Its policy is restricted to balancing any European initiative aimed at challenging American hegemony. From a US perspective, the Atlantic Europe

should be a militarily denationalized entity, economically integrated but not politically united.

From this point of view, NATO expansion to Central and Eastern Europe means the preservation of US hegemony. It involves a minimal effort from America from “above” because, once the strategic umbrella is extended, under its protection “European affairs” might take their own course with the condition that they do not challenge US hegemony. This is the way one could explain the relative lack of US involvement in the Central and East European affairs *en details*. On the one hand, American hegemony has the role to maintain Europe in a preunification stage due to the fact that, by the American presence, the Europeans lack the very reason for political unification. On the other hand, any initiative aimed at replacing the American hegemony is taken as a hostile act, no matter its source, West or East European. This was the case when European states questioned American hegemony on the Iraq issue. The crisis in Iraq gave Berlin and Moscow the opportunity to reaffirm their geopolitical ideal, that is of an autonomous and united Europe. After 1939 Germany and Russia for the first time had a common strategic goal against America.

In short, the American strategy has, in the long term, the effect of geopolitical annihilation of Western Europe. To challenge the US hegemony, Germany has two options: to nationalize its foreign policy or to reform the EU decision making process. A renationalization of Germany’s foreign policy is impossible at this time; while a German leadership in European affairs is less probable because, with NATO extended, the Euro-Atlantic dimension has actually strengthened in Europe.

Poland and Romania are Atlantic allies and, one could presume, highly “Americanized”. To “deamericanize” Poland and Romania a complete absorption of them into the European Union would be necessary. In the case of Poland, this requires a longer time than currently envisaged. Bulgaria is safe for the Alliance as long as it is a member of it.¹² Bulgaria’s EU membership increases the eventuality of improved EU-Russia relationships. However, this process needs time. By preserving and enlarging NATO and by the current process of EU redefinition, Western Europe is somehow geopolitically neutralized for a certain period of time. Neither could the individual EU countries adopt a straightforward foreign policy, because of the internal EU political procedures, nor could they raise the EU as a political entity, because of incomplete integration processes within the Union. Being geopolitically neutralized does not mean having no role in current international affairs, only that the important countries (Germany, France) have lost their traditional role and, as yet, the Union has not acquired a proper role.

Global Balkans & the New Heartland

Global Balkans, a new wording of current geopolitics, was submitted by Zbigniew Brezezinski as a form to define the space between Europe, the Persian Gulf and the Far East comprising the Caucasus, Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria.¹³ Brezezinski defines the Global Balkans as “the most volatile and dangerous region of the world – with the explosive potential to plunge the world into chaos – [that] will be the crucial swathe of Eurasia between Europe and the Far East. (...) It is here that America could slide into a collision with ... Islam while American-European policy differences could even cause the Atlantic Alliance to come unhinged.”¹⁴

What is the geopolitical relevance of the Global Balkans? This area has 68 percent of world oil reserves and 41 percent of natural gas. In 2020, the United States, Europe and the Far East will consume 60% of world oil and gas. In such conditions, the interest of each geopolitical entity in the world energy reservoir is quite understandable. The matter now is how to stabilize this area so that its transformation into an energy supplier in the 21st century is not endangered. Taking into account the current US interest in the area and its *longue durée* geopolitical relevance, one might call it the New Heartland or the *Global Heartland*.

The neighbouring countries to the Global Balkans – Russia, Turkey, Israel, India, Pakistan – have limited capabilities to contribute substantially to its stabilization. Israel is not seriously involved in the Global Balkans, while each of the others, starting with Russia, failed to do so in the past. Because of its failure in Afghanistan, Russia is not able to play a leading role in the region, India can not get involved due to its conflict with Pakistan, while Turkey takes a low profile because of the Kurdish issue. In such conditions, without the cooperation of the above countries, the US considered useful the participation of the new NATO countries (mainly Poland and Romania) to stabilize the Global Heartland. Access to the Global Heartland is critical, hence the relevance of Baltic and South Eastern European countries as a safe strategic base and of the Black Sea as a safe sea route.

With the American initiative to stabilize the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Gulf, one could conclude that the circle of global Euro-Atlantic strategy closes. “Atlantic” organizations have spread from Georgia to Kazakhstan in the former Soviet republics. Moreover, NATO is to get involved in Iraq. Practically, with the end of the Cold War, with NATO enlargement and the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, one could notice the globalization of the Euro-Atlantic civilization, based on sea-power, with all of its economic (market), political (democracy), ideological (freedom) and technological (Internet) expressions.

In the 21st century, the Heartland to decide geopolitical supremacy is geographically Eurasiatic, but geopolitically it is Euro-Atlantic dominated. One might say the sea-power has reached the heart of the land-power. The only challenge to the Euro-Atlantic supremacy might not be from Europe, because Germany and Russia are geopolitically neutralized, but from within the USA or from the Pacific, more exactly from China. If China changes its current political system, then most probably it will look outward and challenge the USA sea-power hegemony. Only with that “accident” the world would move to the Pacific era.

ENDNOTES

¹ Karl Haushofer, *Geopolitik der Pan Ideen*, Berlin, Zentral Verlag G.m.b.H, 1931. Haushofer (1869-1946) is known as the leading interwar German geopolitician.

² Alexander Dugin, 'From Sacred Geography to Geopolitics', text published under the title “Ot sakral'noy geografii k geopolitike” in *Elementy*, No 4, and as Chapter 7 of *Misterii Yevrazii* (Moscow 1996). Trans from the Russian original by M Conserva.

³ Friedrich Ratzel, a German geographer in late 19th century coined the term anthropogeography, but is better known as the founder of the term *Lebensraum*.

⁴ Alfred Thayer Mahan, 1840-1914, published *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* in 1890 and *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire* in 1892. According to his analysis of history, the great powers were those that maintained strong navies and merchant marines. He urged the United States forward in its naval building programmes.

⁵ Nicholas John Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1942.

⁶ Sir Halford Mackinder, English geopolitician. Educated at Oxford (1887–1905), he led the revival of British geographical learning. He established geography as an academic subject, teaching at the universities of Reading and London, and was (1903–8) director of the London School of Economics. He was a member of Parliament (1909–22) and later held various imperial posts. In *The Geographical Pivot of History* (1904), Mackinder propounded the view of Eurasia as the geographical pivot and “heartland” of history. The theory received little attention in Great Britain and the United States before World War II, but the idea of the heartland as a natural seat of power was adopted in Germany, notably by Karl Haushofer.

⁷ Rudolf Kjeleen (1864-1922), a Swedish political scientist who coined the term *geopolitik* in 1899.

⁸ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1955.

⁹ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, New York: Academic Press, 1974.

¹⁰ In 1919, Mackinder's main work was published in an updated edition with the title *Democratic Ideals and Reality*. Mackinder became "the grand old man of British geography" who, with the development of his New Geography, led the field from an age of exploration to an age of education (see Martin, Geoffrey J & James, Preston E, *All Possible Worlds: A History of Geographical Ideas*, Wiley Text Books, 1993.)

¹¹ Christopher Layne, “America as European Hegemon”, in *The National Interest*, No 72, Summer 2003, pp17-31.

¹² Bulgaria's membership in NATO is, from my point of view, a “preventive membership” which means Bulgaria received the invitation to join the Alliance in 2004 because, if not invited, most probably would have turned its strategic orientation as it had done in the past. Bulgaria is a NATO member mainly to prevent its strategic turnover.

¹³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Hegemonic Quicksand”, in *The National Interest*, No 74, Winter 2003/04, pp5-17.

¹⁴ Brzezinski, op cit, p5.

Want to Know More ...?

See: Christopher J Fettweis, "Sir Halford Mackinder, Geopolitics, and Policymaking in the 21st Century", in *Parameters*, Summer 2000, pp58-71

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