

RUSSIA, EASTERN EUROPE AND THE WEST

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Nowadays, many geopoliticians underline the fact that Russia has become a great power, with great resources and a great role in the international relations. It is a revival of old imperial supremacy, a revival of super-ethnos and what Lev Gumiliov named, "passionarity". Stanislav Secieru proposes a new vision of post-sovietic Russia, using the concept of "strategic identity". The strategic identity is a way of geopolitical representations about Russia, the construction of Russia's cognitive map; it may be seen as a way of the restoration of Russia's internal and external supremacy, as Stanislav Secieru says. In this way, Putin tried to monopolize the decisional processes and to stress the importance of geo-economical aspects in Russia's relations with the West. Euro-Atlantic integration of ex-soviet countries from the eastern border of the European Union depends on the relations between Russia and the West, the Russia's influence upon them and depends on their internal stability. But the eastern border of European Union seems "to suffer" from geopolitical instability. The ex-soviet countries (Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia) have still many problems related to economic, political and decisional instability. The geopolitical picture in this area is still unclear and vague.

Key words: *pan-ideas, pan-Slavism, Russia, NATO, European Union, eastern border of the European Union.*

Russia is "flexing its muscles" as an international power nowadays, after the decade of the economical and political instability that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. During Vladimir Putin's presidency, Russia had known a period of internal stabilization, an economical increase and an assertive foreign policy.

Nowadays Russia aspires to great power status and "has the responsibility for the keeping of security and international stability" (Secieru, 2008, p. 191). In the 2006 Country Report, Putin was talking about the crucial role that Russia has to play in the foreign policy. He said that "Russia is the most important element for the maintaining of the world order" (Secieru, 2008, p. 191).

At the end of the XXth century and also at the beginning of the XXIth century, the perception of Russian borders was the most important element for the searching of a new Russian identity. The Russia's foreign policy and the relations with EU and NATO can be analyzed through the way that Russia defines its identity. We are talking about a "cognitive map" of Russia and Eurasia. Geopolitics operates with mental maps, collective cartographic projects.

Edward Shils in his book, "Tradition" (1981) specified that people have a mental, cognitive map of their own representation. The geopolitics of representations took notice of the modeling of people's mental space through the tracing of mental frontiers. The representation of mental space reminds us of what Karl Haushofer evoked through the concept of "pan-idea".

THE GEOPOLITICS OF PAN-IDEAS. PAN-SLAVISM AND EURASIANISM

Karl Haushofer suggested the term of "pan-ideas" for the designation of aggregate between an ethnicity and what it is considerate to be the territory of legitimate expansion. (Bădescu, 2004, p. 184). He underlined the centrality of spatial dimension. Karl Haushofer was talking about the "spirit of frontiers", characterized through dynamic ideas. These are capable to remake the mental maps of populations.

After Haushofer, the world could be divided in four great spheres after North-South axis, each sphere being dominated by a prevailing power:

- Germany dominated pan-European sphere including Africa;
- SUA dominated pan-American sphere;
- Russia dominated pan-Russian sphere including Central Asia and India;
- Japan dominated pan-Asia sphere (Chauprade A, 2003, p. 36).

"Pan-ideas are psychological and ideological forces. Pan-ideas are imperialist in its essence, conquering mental space which hasn't anymore spiritual capacity and ideological force to riposte" (Bădescu, 2004, p. 185). In this way, the pan-ideas could be aggressive and have the power to remake the mental space of a people. The geopolitics opposes pan-Asiatic, for example, to a pan-Pacific idea, of American interest. German geopolitics underlined the opposition between Russian geopolitics and American geopolitics: first embraces pan-Asiatic and Eurasian ideas, while the second underlines pan-Australian and pan-Indian ideas (Chauprade, 2003, p. 36). After Haushofer, the American liberalism can be defeated only by the power of Axis, Germany and Japan. After Haushofer, Germany could play a crucial role as a pivotal state.

We'll concentrate our attention on pan-Slavism and Eurasism. Haushofer, Ratzel and Kjellen's theory about racial expansion and geographical determinism is continued in Russian area by Lev Gumiliov. The researchers of Gumiliov about Eurasia ethnical map shape a new vision of Eurasia as an independent centre of ethno-genesis, culture and history. His originality is expressed in the theory about the birth of a people and a state. He used for the explanation of these processes the concept of "passionarism" or "pasionar impulse". Using this concept, Gumiliov described biological and spiritual energy of a people or civilization. The high "passionarism" and the dynamic process of ethno-genesis lead to the appearance of a special "super-ethnos". "According to that, he insisted on the impossibility to

have only one history, which covers the life of different ethnos. Only the distinct history of every concrete ethnos and super-ethnos is real, and the reason is that each of them has its own passionate energy, its own behavioral stereotypes, and its own system of values" (Krasteva Galya Andreyeva, „The criticism towards the West and the future of Russia-Eurasia”, *The Eurasian Politician*, 11 July 2003). As Spengler and Toynbee, Lev Gumiliov was talking about the cycles of a culture or civilization and their ethnos. It is the influence of organicism. As Spengler, Gumiliov said that ethno-cultural organisations – nations, states, religious communities- are like human organisms. For Spengler, the birth, the childhood, the youth, the oldness and the death are the phases of biological organism; these phases are encountered in the evolution of each culture. For Gumiliov, these ethno-cultural organisations are passing a cycle of birth, youth, maturity, oldness and then, they disappear or are transformed in so-called “relics”. “The age of the super-ethnos is the factor that determines every Russian historical particularity” (idem). When the “passionarism” weakens, instead of “paseism” (the period of heroism, the devotion for national traditions), comes the “actualism” (the preoccupation only for present, the lack of traditions and without concern about future generations). Then, it is the “futurism” period (the type of dreamers, those who are losing their faith on the reality). The phases described by Gumiliov took to decay, the crash of empires and the dissolution of ethnos. This period takes until a new “pasionar” impulse appears and a new ethnos leads to a new ethno-genesis, said Gumiliov. (Gumilev L., “Eyhogenesis and the Biosphere”, <http://gumilevica.kulichki.net/English/ebe1.htm>).

Lev Gumiliov is developing the idea of Eurasianism. His work has been a source of inspiration for the Neo-Eurasianists. He proved that the Russians represent a special ethnos, which was born through Slavo-Turanian fusion. This Slavo-Turanian ethnogenesis was formed as an historic alliance between forest and steppe. This geopolitical combination of forest and steppe gives the Russian essence, determining its cultural character. Lev Gumiliov and Dughin believed in the special Russian ethnos, in its special cultural character and in fact, in its supremacy. Gumiliov’s theory of ethnogenesis shows that the people of the Eurasian steppe including Russians constitutes a “super-ethnos” (concept comparable with that of civilization). Eurasianists suggests that Russian civilization is unique and doesn’t belong to European category.

The analysis of historical Eurasia is recognized as being present at the highest level to the current situation. Russia is seen nowadays, especially by its political elites as an axis of a great geopolitical space, its ethnical mission being identified with the construction of the empire. Russia can define its strategic interests as old territorial ambitious.

Anyway, Russia’s foreign policy depended all the time on geopolitical position of the country and on its historical and cultural specificity. The ex-prime minister Igor Ivanov said that “the state’s foreign policy can not be built on an empty space. It has the continuity seal conditioned by its geopolitical situation of

the country, of historical specificity and of culture” (Ivanov Igor, 2003, p. 452 apud Secrieru, 2008, p. 8).

THE REVIVAL OF “PASSIONARISM”

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia came in decline because of radical changes in external and internal environment of the country. The crisis questioned the imperial identity of Russia. It has not only led to the decay of the Russia but also to elite’s disorientation and chaos.

After liberal project failure in the middle of the 90’s, it was a resurgence of national interest, of an old and imperial Russia. The project of realists proposes many changes in the Russia’s intern and foreign policy. It is a new era dominated by the new pragmatically realism. It was a revival of a new Russia, a new way to see Russia’s foreign policy, as a civilizational counterbalance of the West.

Russia’s efforts to expand its influence in the energy- rich countries of Central Asia is consolidating its status as a great gas supplier. The Russia’s Strategy of Development underlines the special mission of Russian state. It reflects the revival of old imperialist Russia, as Dughin said, the building of eurasian relations: e.g., Eurasia project, SEU, EV Raz, etc. Russia is attaching great significance in its relation with China, too, as a strategic shift in foreign policy.

Through its attitude towards West, Putin wants to remind everyone that Russia has recovered its strength.

Stanislav Secrieru proposes a new vision of post-sovietic Russia, using the concept of “strategic identity”. The author describes the strategic identity as “a vision of political elites concerning the main security threats, potential rivalities and allies and the great strategy which Russia wants to follow on international stage” (Secrieru, 2008, pp. 8-9).

Using the concept of strategic identity, the elites want to build a stronger Russia; it is a revival of old imperial supremacy, a revival of super-ethnos and what Lev Gumiliov named, “passionarity”. The strategic identity is a way of geopolitical representations of Russia, the construction of Russia’s cognitive map.

The strategic identity may be seen as a way of the restoration of Russia’s internal and external supremacy. In this way, Putin tried to monopolize the decisional processes and to stress the importance of geo-economical aspects in Russia’s relations with the West. Dimitri Trenin, a Russian geopolitician says that “Russian elite think in terms of geopolitics and geoeconomics, combined with military might” (Nodar Tangiashvili, “Russia, the European Union and the ESDP: an essential misfit?”, The Argentinian Center for International Studies, www.caei.com.ar.). The major objective is to rearrange post-Soviet territory and to establish a center of power under Russia’s aegis.

For the description of new Russia's identity, Stanislav Secieru proposes the social constructivism, as the paradigm of explanation of post-Sovietic strategy of Russia. The social constructivists consider that states are guided by national interests. The foreign policy of the states are constructed only through their vision upon national interests.

THE "MODERN" AND THE "POST-MODERN". RUSSIA-NATO AND RUSSIA-EU RELATIONS

For post-soviet Russia, the most important elements for its construction are the priority of so-called national interests and geopolitical ambitious in the CIS space. "Russia, whom many scholars see it as a part of the modern world, attaches more importance to national interests and power, understood as military capabilities and is prone to unilateralism"(idem). Robert Cooper applies the comparison between "the modern" and "the post-modern" world concerning different understanding of interests. Russia attaches more interest to realism, economic development being subordinated to the purpose of politics, as the National Security Doctrine demonstrates. Robert Cooper sees as the main characteristics of the modern world the fact that this world is close bind by the nation state, it is recognized the principle of sovereignty and it is a clearly separation between internal and external affaires of the state (Cooper, 2007, p. 48). The final guaranty of security is force, a world where the frontiers may be changed through force. In international relations, the modern world is that of force, described so well by Machiavelli and Clausewitz. The post-modern state defines itself through security politics. "In post-modern Europe, there no longer exists traditional hierarchy of national understand on the bottom line, it boils to the weakening of state sovereignty" (Nodar Tangiashvili, "Russia, the European Union and the ESDP: an essential misfit? The Argentinian Center for International Studies, www.caei.com.ar). The European Union, representing post-modern world, rejects balance of power and the monopoly of force.

Nodar Tangiashvili identifies three reasons why the EU and Russia haven't developed a strategic partnership within European Security and Defence Policy. Russia, says Nodar, bases its foreign policy on modern rational, which is not acceptable for the EU. Russia aims "1. to subordinate the ESDP to its interests of balancing the NATO, more exactly, SUA; 2. to aquire more influence and power in Europe by achieving a say in the ESDP equal to the Union's; 3. to serve its high priority interests and geopolitical ambitions in the CIS space" (Nodar Tangiashvili, "Russia, the European Union and the ESDP: an essential misfit?, The Argentinian Center for International Studies, www.caei.com.ar).

Russia's behaviour towards EU and NATO, as that of a modern world based on balance-of-power can be illustrated by the realist reason. After NATO

enlargement and the war of Kosovo, Russia had been trying to find ways to influence security in Europe, constraining the United States influence.

Russia's positions towards NATO's enlargement is more and more hostile. The NATO's basis in Romania and Bulgaria is a risk factor for Russia, creating favourable premises for the West penetration of the Black Sea.

In the 2006 Country Report, Vladimir Putin spoke about the important role of the Russia among the great powers. He said that "Russia is one of the essential pillars for the maintaining of the world order in the XXIth century" (Secieru, 2008, p. 190).

NATO's enlargement is opposed to Russia's interests. Russia is watching carefully every NATO's intentions, as White Paper of the Defence Ministry of Russia Federation, published in October 2003 specified. "In case that the Alliance keeps its offensive doctrine, Russia will have to change its military organisation and planning" (idem, 194). Russia's politics is that to maintain itself as a great power and to exploit the maximum West's benefits.

Putin spoke about a pro-Russian foreign policy. Russia has the interests everywhere and it defines its identity in strategic, geographical and geopolitical ways.

The Primakov Doctrine promoted multilateralism, by eroding the US hegemony and putting an end to the NATO's dominance in European security. Putin's multilateralism approach is an answer to Russia's isolation from the end of the XXth Century, helping it to guarantee an external environment for the promotion of national interests. "By establishing multipolarity, the Primakov Doctrine's purpose was to regain great power status for Russia, which can be read regaining its power and influence vis a vis EU" (Nodar Tangiashvili, "Russia, the European Union and the ESDP: an essential misfit?", The Argentinian Center for International Studies, www.caei.com.ar).

The relations between NATO and Russia are instable and unsure. There were a series of disputes between Russia and NATO, but, says Michael Emerson, "the two parts have the same objective for security" (Emerson Michael, "Time to think bargain of a strategic with Russia", Center for European Policy Studies, may 2008, no 160). The objectives were underlined in NATO's Bucharest Summit in April 2008 (crisis management, terrorism, conventional forces in Europe, proliferation of weapons, etc). Also, Russia wasn't agree with a series of objectives concerning missile defence, enlargement (the controversial case with Ukraine and Georgia), Black Sea (the inflammable situation from Sevastopol) and the frozen conflicts from the area.

The NATO-Russia dialogue is insufficient developed and even if apparently Russia seems to cooperate in many questions, it is still very cautious.

Concerning the relation with European Union, Moscow is also cautious. Even if Russia cooperates with EU states concerning energy or economic projects, it rejected every European Union's implications in its internal affaires and in the states around it upon which the great empire has the influence. Considering Cecenia an internal subject, Russia rejected European implications.

The incompatibility between Russia and European Union is perceived as a value gap. This is explained through Cooper's difference between modern and post-modern world. Russia is a hierarchy of interests topped by "high politics". In post-modern Europe, there is no traditional hierarchy. Post-modern world doesn't rely on balance of power and emphasis on sovereignty (Nodar Tangiashvili, "Russia, the European Union and the ESDP: an essential misfit?", The Argentinian Center for International Studies, www.caei.com.ar).

The cooperation between Russia and EU is closer than that with NATO because Russia sees EU as a counterweight to a "NATO-centric" European security system. But many European states didn't think that and many Europeans feared that a closer cooperation with Russia would give a signal to Washington. "The European Union wouldn't rush to balance the US/NATO which is used to provide security umbrella" (idem).

The Moscow's leadership doesn't want to integrate in EU or NATO in change of its strategic freedom. Russia rather prefers the partnerships with the great powers from the European Union. The accession of Russia is not impossible, but this may happen if Russia has the greater influence in European Union. Russia wants the best treatment in the region. Especially now, when it disposes of assets which are indispensable, as gas resources and negotiates only as a great power. In this way, it influences European member state's foreign policy. Almost half of the European's states especially France and Germany depends on the Russia's gas resources.

THE EASTERN BORDER OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

A problem that annoys Russia is that of EU enlargement to the east. The European Union wants to bolster stability and prosperity in ex-Soviet countries on its borders, while improving ties with Russia on this matters ("Russia and the West fume and fudge over the countries in between", *The Economist*, may, 2009). At the "eastern partnership", a project who manage to improve economic and political relations between the European Union and six former Soviet countries (Ukraine, Republic of Moldavia Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaidjan and Belarus), Russia sees the European Union as a competitor in its sphere of influence and reacts to any interference. Another subject that irritated Russia was that of Nabucco project, a gas pipeline meant to bypass Russia in the south ("Trouble in Georgia and a pow-wow in Prague point to new east-west tensions", *The Economist*, May 7, 2009).

The interests of the countries from the eastern borders of the European Union are violated by Russia. Russia threatens the independence and the democratization of Georgia, Ukraine and the other Baltic states. In August 2008, at Putin's order, Russian troops had occupied Georgia; Estonia was the target of a cybernetic war; Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia and Ukraine was the victims of the cutting gas and

Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine were punished through these trade sanctions (Karatnycky A., Motyl J. Alexander, "The key to Kiev-Ukraine's Security means Europe's stability", in *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2009).

Besides the Russia's negative attitudes and dominance of the ex-soviet states, another problem is the internal stability of these states. The states from the eastern border of the European Union confronts themselves with many internal problems as: democratic instability, the lack of decisional transparency, corruption, etc. The situation is more complicated because Ukraine, Georgia and Republic of Moldova are geographically, socially and demographically different.

Ukraine is a great country with 50 millions inhabitants, with an economic system low reformed (Serebrian, 2009, 175). Ukraine has a great geopolitical and geoeconomic importance concerning East/ West relation. But the economic crisis, the gas war with Russia, the dissidence among political elites suggest that the country is passing through an instability period, similar to the first year's period after independence.

The political instability and the different visions of the elites from Kiev concerning the closeness by East or West make the integration of Ukraine in the Euro Atlantic structures much harder. Linguistic, cultural and political regional differences between the Eastern and the western parts of the Ukraine lead to different visions of elites concerning the reforms.

Russia will take advantage of the Ukraine's weakness to impose its power. The polls from 2009 shows that 62% of Russians are against Ukraine and 24% are pro-Ukraine. In opposition, 9% of the Ukrainians had negative attitudes towards Russia (a small percent) and 71% had positive attitudes towards Russia (Karatnycky A., Motyl J. Alexander, "The key to Kiev-Ukraine's Security means Europe's stability", in *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2009). In the gas crisis period, mass-media from Russia has underlined that Ukraine is an enemy state for Russia. This thing lead to negative attitudes concerning Ukraine, many Russians treating it as the main enemy. In Ukraine, in the eastern part of the territory, the Russians are the majority of the population, this explaining the positive attitudes towards Russia.

Putin takes the advantages from the weakness of Ukraine taking into account two important targets: energy and the control over Crimeea. Even if the understanding between Russia and Ukraine concerning gas supplies is fixed for 10 years, the price will be negotiated many times and will be many disputes concerning this subject.

Crimeea is a place of disputes between Russians and Ukrainians. Factor of tension from the Black Sea, Crimeea is an autonomous republic, with a russian majority people, attach of Ukraine by Hruscirov in 1954. The disputes appeared when Kiev manifested its independency more than it should from Kremlin's perspective (Serebrian, 2009, p. 158).

Georgia remains extremely tense. "Any provocation could easily become a pretext for renewed conflict. Pavel Felgenhauer, an independent military analyst,

said that Russian troops are still poised to action” (“Trouble in Georgia and a pow-wow in Prague point to new east-west tensions”, *The Economist*, May 7, 2009). The European Union and NATO’s intervention in Georgia irritates Russia who claims that these two organisations violate its sphere of influence.

Republic of Moldova is itself a border between Euro-Atlantic security space and the space of Russian military interests. From 1989 until now, the current state of society from Republic of Moldova was marked by political and economical instability and confusion. Numerous strategies developed by communists until now led to a huge gap between Republic of Moldova and other countries from the West. In recent years the relationship between Republic of Moldova and Romania had known a significant improvement. The signing of small border traffic, lifting visa, the beginning of negotiations for other political agreements signals a closeness between Chisinau and Bucharest. This is a good sign for Republic of Moldova. But the situation is still vague and confuse in this area. The political situation from Chisinau is still uncertain and we can still talk about an economical instability.

“Some would like the countries from the eastern partnership to choose between Russia and European Union”, said Russia’s foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov at Prague miting. “We hope...there are no attempts at creating new dividing lines” (“Trouble in Georgia and a pow-wow in Prague point to new east-west tensions”, *The Economist*, May 7, 2009).

Post-Soviet Russia was passing through two periods: first Yeltsin revolutionary but instable period and, then, Putin’s period of consolidation and stability. Putin’s discourse seemed aggressive for the West. The nationalistic elements and aggressive actions of Russia concerning Georgia and other ex-Soviet countries took to a bad image for Russia and an unjustified fear of the West, seeing Russia as a potential enemy. There are a series of dissensions between Russia and NATO/UE relations and many scholars think that the dividing line between East and West didn’t disappear.

Michael Emerson think that it is necessary to:

1. open a dialogue over the perspective of NATO membership and the conditions that would go with this;
2. an offer by the EU to include clear strategic objectives in its next Treaty with Russia and;
3. a clear offer of membership perspective to Ukraine from both NATO and the EU (Emerson Michael, “Time to think bargain of a strategic with Russia”, *Center for European Policy Studies*, May 2008, no 160).

The eastern border of the European Union is still considerate to be the line of demarcation between East and West. Russia had offered a lesson to West whenever it comes closer to the eastern line of demarcation. The eastern border seems “to suffer” from geopolitical instability. The states from the near abroad have many problems related to economic, political and decisional instability. In the middle of

the economic crisis, Ukraine accuse its neighbors by territorial interests and in Georgia, the fact that NATO troops are still in the area means that are many fears about Russia's actions. The geopolitical picture of the area is still very unclear and uncertain. The states from the eastern border of the European Union should make an effort and should be helped to go towards West and to integrate in NATO and European Union structures. After Lisbon Treaty, starting with 2014, "a double majority will be achieved when a decision is taken by 55% of the Member States representing at least 65% of the Union's population". (European Commission, Lisbon Treaty, www.ec.europa.eu/lisbon_treaty). In this way, the decisions will be taken by the "old Europe" (France, Italy, Germany) to the disadvantage of the eastern countries, later integrated. So, in the future, the integration of any country from the eastern border of the European Union depends on the "old Europe's" decision. Anyway, a stronger cooperation between Russia and the "old core" of the European Union will reduce the chance of integration for the states from the eastern border of the European Union.

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