

Russia's Concern about NATO's Enlargement: A Regional Approach

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INTRODUCTION

The implosion of the Soviet Union, in 1991, conferred to 21 European and Caucasian countries a new status, that of independence. Theoretically, since 1991, there is no longer any "iron curtain," and a new era started for Central and Eastern Europe, for the Baltic and Caucasian states. All these newly born countries – be they small or big – started to make efforts on the road to democracy.

One of the reasons why all these countries, more or less committed to democracy, are willing to be integrated in the Euro-Atlantic structures is that at the eastern border of the former Soviet empire, Russia is a threatening presence. The Russian Federation – the official successor of the USSR – is no longer a super-power as a decade ago, but a powerful actor on the regional arena. Many of these states feel threatened by Russia especially because

they are economically dependent on it, Russia making desperate efforts to maintain its sphere of influence in the countries of the CIS. The last years of the 20th century proved that NATO's enlargement process is a reality. Before any wave of enlargement, the officials of both NATO and Russia regularly meet and consult since the Central and the Eastern Europe is part of the former Warsaw Pact, the political and military block with which NATO was involved in the Cold War.

This article approaches one of the most important subjects of contemporary international politics. I intend to discuss the relationship between NATO and Russia, as it has evolved since the Second World War. The article attempts to give an impartial overview of the reasons for Russia's concern, whose underlying causes are discovered through historical, economical and geopolitical analysis.

1. Historical Background

The animosities between East and West have complex roots in history. The World War II (WW II) is, in this sense, a defining moment. At the end of WW II the balance of power was very much changed. Europe lost supremacy in favor of the USA, which supported the rebuilding of Western Europe. Countries like Germany, Italy and Japan – former great powers – were fighting to revitalize their economies that were in ruin. Other states like France and Great Britain

were in a more difficult situation trying to survive after the loss of their colonies.

To sustain the rebuilding of the economy of the whole Europe, the USA – that did not suffer too much damage caused by WW II – launched the so-called "Marshall Plan". More precisely, on June 5th, 1947 the US Secretary of State, General George C. Marshall proposed, in a speech at the Harvard University, a program through which to help the European economy. The program

contained measures to boost industrial and agricultural production; an increase of export rates and financial stability were also its major aims. Sixteen European states – Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Eire, France, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom – became the beneficiaries of American grants.

Although the sixteen nations asked initially for a total of \$29 billion to cover each country's deficit over the period 1948-1952, only \$12.5 billion were delivered. The Marshall Plan was introduced "not only to safeguard America's strategic political and military interests in Western Europe, but also to take into account the need of the US to maintain its colossal export surplus in the face of a predicted domestic recession"¹.

For most of Western society it was obvious that the closed system chosen by the USSR and its satellite states was destined for bankruptcy. On the other hand, in the beginning communist systems seemed to be functioning well and could even appear threatening for the capitalist world. For the capitalist world the whole international context was threatening since countries as: Portugal, Spain and Greece – all of them NATO members – experienced strong left-wing movements in the 1970s, when their dictatorships of the extreme right failed.

Almost parallel to the Marshall Plan, because of the increasing power of the Soviet Union, in April 1949, in Washington, the founding charter of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was created. NATO is an alliance of independent Western states that share as purpose the maintenance of peace and the protection of their liberty by constructing a military system capable to defend them from any aggression. Its act of birth was signed by 12 countries represented by their foreign affairs ministers: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy,

Luxembourg, Great Britain, Norway, Netherlands, Portugal and the United States of America.

On August 24th, 1949 the parliaments of all the signing member-states ratified the treaty. Defined as a defensive organization, Article 1 underlines that the parties are obliging themselves, as it is mentioned in the United Nations Charter, "to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and the removal of threats to the peace, and for the suspension of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and of international law, adjustments or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace"². The North-Atlantic Pact was created for 20 years with the possibility to extend it.

The Cold War ended because "it was impossible for the two superpowers to divide the world and to rule it," mentions M. McCauley in his book³. Apparently, the USA won the Cold War, but in reality both sides had significant economic deficits due to the huge amount of spending in the arm race periods.

In the post-Cold War period there is a change in the European political system that is "full of contradictions, a source of intellectual confusion and political uncertainty"⁴. This period is characterized by agreements like: The Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) in 1990, the Tashkent Agreement in 1992, many summits within NATO (1990, 1996, etc.). They underline that Cold War belongs to the past and that compromises and understandings between the former actors of the Cold War are possible. The periodic meetings that take place between the parts facilitate communication and signed agreements are possible.

2. Russian Concern about NATO's Enlargement

The disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the break-up of the Soviet Union did not result in a more stable system of international relations. On contrary, the dissolution of the

Warsaw Pact and of the Soviet Union resulted in many newly independent – larger or smaller – states being differently oriented: the Central European States and the Baltic States

directed to West, the Caucasus region directed to the Islamic world and the Russian Federation in an undefined category (it is not sure if Russia will follow the European or the Asian path). For Eastern Europe the post-Cold War period means a large area with an unpredictable future. When I mention "large area", I mainly refer to the fact that Russia inherited 76% of the former Soviet Union's territory and 60% of its population. In this significant part of the world, evils like extreme nationalism, chauvinism, authoritarianism or anarchy are not yet tamed and they have unpredictable consequences.

On the other side, the West remained strongly united "partly due to NATO,"⁵ which tends to extend towards the east. Russians see NATO's enlargement towards east as a threat to Russia's sovereignty. Some Russians go so far that they see in this enlargement process an attitude against Russia as a civilization. It is certain that Russia would have liked to see Central and Eastern Europe as a group of neutral countries, and the fact that some of them have already joined NATO makes Russia feel insecure. Some Central European nations made such significant progress in the transition period that they got accepted into NATO in the first wave of enlargement.

a) The Baltic States

More insecurity is provided to Russia by the idea that the Baltic States may join NATO in the next wave of enlargement. In the case of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, Moscow could make concessions more easily, while in the case of the Baltic States concessions are more difficult to make because of the existence of many economic and political ties. Although none of them accepted to be a CIS member, Russia is still in economic relations with the Baltic States, which are very dependent on it. For example, 73% of Lithuania's imports are coming from Russia⁶. The Baltic States have for Russia a historical geo-strategic importance because they have always represented Russia's connection to the Western society.

Since Russia does not want NATO to penetrate the space of the former Soviet Union, it had to revise its foreign policy strategy. Its main interests focus on establishing a cordon sanitaire on the western rim, to defend ethnic Russians and to protect its economic interests. Besides, Russia has a deep economic interest in this region and any integration into NATO is thus excluded from Moscow's perspective. Although oriented to the west, for the Baltic States there is still a place for an alternative to NATO: a Baltic Security Treaty. "This would be an international Baltic security treaty, to last initially for 20 years and signed by the US, Russia, the Baltic States themselves, the Scandinavian countries and the main West and Central European States. Such a treaty should have two main aspects: the first to guarantee the independence, sovereignty, neutrality, borders, territorial integrity, and freedom from external interference of all the countries of the Baltic region; the second to provide far reaching military reductions in the region, beginning with Russia and especially Kaliningrad"⁷. Therefore, the advantage would be to the US because through such a treaty Russia would be limited to be just a regional power.

Briefly, the Russian Federation is strongly opposing any encroachment of NATO upon the space of the former Soviet Union, which includes also the Baltic States. For this attitude the Kremlin has its own reasons. But are the Baltic States right to be afraid of a Russian intervention? And is NATO membership a real solution to the security threat of the Baltic States?

An important problem that may become a threat to the national security of the Baltic States are the difficulties that the states from this region are facing in the process of building national armies. It is difficult for these states to build their armies, capable of defending their national interests, because militarily the Baltic States are dependent on the equipment and on the expertise of the former Soviet Union officers. Another serious potential threat to the Baltic States' security may be an internal one and refers to the ethnic Russians who live in the Baltic States.

This minority can be regarded as an internal threat to the Baltic States security more on the psychological level since they are associated with the past of the Baltic States. But if the Russian ethnics will refuse to integrate themselves in the culture and the political system of the Baltic States, claiming a kind of union with Russia, the problem is no more at the psychological level. They may be regarded as a more serious threat to the security and the integrity of the three Baltic States. All the three Baltic States have tried to define citizenship and imposed different conditions on the region's ethnic Russians. Probably a self-confident national army and a well-defined defense concept will support Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in counterbalancing this potential internal threat. The solution to the above threats does not have to be NATO membership. However, it is true that there are threats for which NATO membership would be a salvation, such as in the case of building their own armies, for which there is a big need for a substantial help so that the Baltic States can cut any link with their Soviet past.

By not enlarging towards the East, NATO is respecting Russia's request not to interfere with the former Soviet Union space. In my opinion, this respect of Russia's will is not long lasting respect since NATO is thinking to include the Baltic States in a very smooth way. Before passing to facts, NATO tested the ground. I believe this because NATO first launched the idea and received strong Russian opposition. Noting that this second enlargement step was not going to be as simply as was in the case with the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, NATO initiated plans, meetings, etc. In this way a Baltic Action Plan took birth.

It stipulates from the first sentence the aim of the US (and not NATO – an attitude that *underlines who dictates in this multinational alliance*): "Our goals are the same with those of the rest of Central and Eastern Europe: integration into the evolving European security and economic structures development of prosperous free market economies; and commitment to respect human rights and the rule of law"⁸. After exposing the operating policy which proceeds in three different but

parallel ways that include "pragmatic cooperation with Russia," and "normal and balanced relations with Russia" (which goes with a simultaneous western integration), the plan stresses that the US "is reassuring the Baltic States that the US commitment remains firm, and that we will continue to promote the development of the political, economical and social infrastructure of the three states"⁹.

This is mainly the reason for which I see all the meetings between NATO and Russian officials as moments in which the West feeds the Russian nationalist pride or what is left of the Soviet glory and pride. The Baltic Action Plan highlights that the US will keep on proceeding in the way it considers appropriate.

Russia is not a super-power anymore, and economically it was in a free-fall for a long period of time. So Russia is not in the position to attack, still it demands NATO to respect its position by not invading the former Soviet Union space. At this point of the paper there is a critical question that must be addressed and attempted to answer: Why is NATO "burning" to get closer to the Russian Federation? Why does it want to have a border with it by including countries like the three democratically developed Baltic States? A possible answer is an instinctive one that NATO is a cautious and forward-looking alliance that tries to anticipate future threats. This would mean that the Russian Federation is still a powerful actor in the international political life especially taking into account the measurable elements of power such as: geography (with all its variables), underground resources, number of the population and its level of education, etc., so that once it recovers it can become a very serious potential threat.

The West would enjoy more knowing that Russia is just facing transitional difficulties and that sooner or later it will become a viable economic partner and an ally in the building of a new international community. Unfortunately, the Russian Federation has proved uncooperative in many ways and acts like it would rather encourage chaos. More than this, Russia is ruled by persons that lived and made their carriers in the Soviet Union. Some of the

people who accumulated hostility during the Cold War may still be in ruling positions and realizing the shame Russia is facing may act differently than a real democratic state would act, even if its army faces difficult times.

More precisely, "the Russian military faced a wide range of problems: economic turmoil, the disintegration of military-industrial cooperation with other republics and the need for military reform (...). In 1998, for example, the USSR's land forces comprised 1.6 million men equipped with some 60,000 tanks, produced at a rate of 3,500 a year. The 1992 military reform plans of the Russian Ministry of Defense projected a decline in the entire Russian armed forces to 1.5 million men"¹⁰.

Poul Funder from the *Central European Economic Review (CEER)*, approaching the issue of foreign investors in Russia, characterized the internal situation as "a country teetering on the brink of sovereign default. Add a stock market 85% off its highs. Throw in unpredictable elections and an abysmal record on corporate governance. And don't forget the civil war raging on the country's southern border"¹¹.

So the Russian Federation, according to the available data, was on a descendent trend in all domains, including economy and army. For the former, the CEER argues that the main reason of the economic standing of the country was due to "the Russian government that was still doing too much to help its friends, and too little to sponsor a level playing field that would benefit consumers"¹². Furthermore, the CEER reporter argued that the Russian banking system had no future without the Duma passing bankruptcy laws, a more protective law for the minority shareholders and an improved legal infrastructure.

Nowadays the Russian economy is on an ascendant trend. The structural reforms carried out in Russia by President Putin's administration have been praised the IMF as encouraging. "However, continued growth depends on continuing reforms."¹³

In an interview for *Russia* magazine, the former Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Yevgeny Primakov, admitted that Russia had economic difficulties, but still he described his country as being "a great

power" in terms of territory, population, military power (in its nuclear component) and in its economic and research potential. NATO's expansion towards the East is seen by the Russian Prime Minister as a result of the attitude of some persons who live with the undefeated stereotypes of the Cold War and who, in this new era, are trying to impose a unipolar world. When the issue of former allies and adversaries is approached, Primakov stresses that "the relationship between the two sides in the eastward enlargement must be based on a reliable foundation that refers to mutual transparency of intentions, partnership in peace-keeping operations or in preventing regional conflicts, and to a reliable mechanism of consultations between the two"¹³.

In conclusion to this section, the Baltic States are committed to embracing Western values, although they are dependent on the Russian Federation in many domains. In turn, NATO is committed to getting closer to the Russian Western border by including these states in the alliance in an undefined future. The Russian Federation, recovering after a long transitional negative slope, is strongly opposing it, sometimes becoming even threatening vis-à-vis the three Baltic States or NATO. Admitting that it still has economic difficulties, Russia has established connections with the EU and drives attention towards Caucasus and Central Asia.

b) *Russia, Caucasus and Central Asia*

The sociologist John Naisbitt argues that 500 years ago the commercial center of world trade moved from the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic¹⁴. Nowadays it is leaving the Atlantic to move to the Pacific. He is paraphrasing the words of the US Secretary of State John Hay who was saying that the "Mediterranean Sea belongs to the past, the Atlantic to the present and the Pacific to the future." The Asian shore is two times larger than Europe and the US. In Asia lives one half of the world population, in Europe only 6%. Thirty years ago the GDP of the Pacific zone was 1/2 of the American one and 1/3 of that of Europe. In 2000 it was estimated to be almost equal to the American GDP and to

have surpassed the Western Europe one. US exports to South Korea, for example, more than it exports to Italy and Sweden put together.

The Russian foreign policy drives toward collaboration with Asian States. The last visit of President Putin in South-East Asia is very relevant in this sense. The visit reflected both geopolitical interests and economic ones. Since the Russian Federation cannot face the West by itself because it is limited to being a – regional power, it tries to recreate the Moscow Beijing – Hanoi – Phenian axis that would concern Washington. Visiting Seoul, Putin brought forward the idea of building a railway that would connect Seoul with Phenian and the South Korean harbors with Vladivostok¹⁵. In Vietnam, Putin showed Russia to be disposed to selling weapons to Vietnam and to reduce the 85% of the debts this country has had to Russia since the USSR era¹⁶. Furthermore, Russia has extended its nuclear cooperation with Iran, a strategic enemy of Washington. In Bushehr an atomic pile is being constructed against Washington's critiques¹⁷.

Russia has a multifaceted relationship with the West. On the one hand it needs it, on the other hand it is trying to protect itself from its "invasion" in its space. The only way to protect itself is by showing its interest towards the Caucasus and SE Asia and, in parallel, by cultivating an interest in regaining its influence in the former Soviet space, such as Ukraine, Moldavia, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

One may question the importance of approaching the Caucasus issue, since there is no threat of NATO's expansion in this region. First of all, all of them applied for the NATO PfP program, which means that the countries in this region do show an interest for Atlantic integration. Secondly, I want to prove that these countries have a link to NATO, which might threaten Russia. This link refers to the proximity of Turkey, which is a NATO member and to which some of these countries are linked. It is a region with a pro-American attitude that can be augmented by Turkey.

Such is the case of Azerbaijan. Of all the Caucasus countries, Azerbaijan is the closest to Turkey from a cultural and a linguistic perspective. This affinity was evident

even in WW I, but Mustafa Kemal – "the father of the Turks" – gave up this cultural link with Azerbaijan during the process of Sovietization in order to obtain some permanent advantages from the Great Neighbor to the north. Although limited, the relationship between Turkey and the Turkish population in the USSR was always present in Soviet-Turkish relations. Azerbaijan is a particular strategic factor for Ankara's politics because it represents the gate towards Central Asia. Semih Vaner proposes to analyze Turkey's attitude towards Azerbaijan on several levels¹⁸: the first one is the attitude that is adopted by officials and that is dictated by prudence; at the society level there are two directions: the indifference one and emotional one (dictated by the political propaganda that the 21st century will be Turkish). At the society level there are the Islamists who show themselves very active.

In spite of Ankara's support for maintaining ties with Azerbaijan, the situation in the region is very complex, taking into account that Turkey does not have a direct frontier with Azerbaijan, between them being Armenia, an orthodox small country that is, also, in conflict with Azerbaijan. Armenia was the first state that after its independence from the USSR chose to "continue its collaboration with Russia and with the newly created community from December 1991"¹⁹. It signed – on December 29th, 1991 – a friendship, mutual assistance and cooperation treaty with Russia and since then it is a CIS member and a member of the Tashkent Pact – a collective security pact signed in Tashkent on May 1992. It asked the military support of the ratifying countries of this pact against Azerbaijan. Based on this reason the Armenian government is not sustaining the idea of a national army, as the Baltic States do, but prefers to maintain permanent Russian military basis on its territory.

Azerbaijan and Georgia (the third Caucasian republic) showed themselves more reticent to maintain their military dependence on Russia or to become CIS members. Because of the Tashkent Pact Azerbaijan can not throw out all Russian troops, but it tries to diversify its partners, by having good relations with Tashkent and with

Western partners. Still, Ankara can not pursue an anti-Armenian policy, first of all because this would remind its Western partners of Turkey's precedents and also because in Iran there is an important Armenian community and such an attitude would be a source of a clash of opinions with Teheran. Iran is conscious of the pan-Turkish current that exists in the area because "actual Azerbaijan is just 1/3 of the historical Azerbaijan, the rest of 2/3 is on the Iran territory,"²⁰ a situation that represents the discordance between Azerbaijan and Iran. This is the reason for which Iran is supporting Armenia against Azerbaijan, setting up with Russia a kind of alliance against the US ally in the region: Turkey.

Turkey's interest in Azerbaijan is not only cultural but also economic, because Azerbaijan belongs to the areas of the world richest states in oil with a long history of producing oil and natural gas. In the 20th century, the oil industry drew oil from the land, while the offshore exploitation is at a small depth because the soviet extractive technology was not performant. The Azerbaijan government invited the major foreign oil companies to develop the offshore fields with their technology and capital. A small country like Azerbaijan "was expected to reach in 2000, 25.6 million tones per years and 45.2 million tones in 2005"²¹.

Under such circumstances Turkey's interest in this former Soviet Union republic is considerable high. Considering all the above mentioned details and insisting on remanding that Turkey want to use Azerbaijan as a gate towards Central Asia, then, Turkey was admitted to NATO based on some geopolitical reasons, since in the moment of admission and for years to come Turkey had difficulties with human rights issues. Furthermore, in 1989 Turkey had two other very important problems to solve: the Turkish-Greek conflict over Cyprus and the Kurdish dispute. Why was Turkey accepted into NATO unless it is due to its geo-strategic importance?

Another group of newly independent states from the former Soviet Union is purely Muslim and is formed by: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Of those, Kazakhstan has the largest

population and the longest border with Russia. It represents a vital interest for the Russian Federation because it is a kind of "cordon sanitaire" state between the Christian slaves and the Turkish-Muslim world.

Russia considers Kazakhstan to be vital for its past, present and future interests. 40% of the USSR's uranium was extracted from Kazakhstan. This country has, also, rare metals that are necessary in terrestrial attacks and very deep lakes useful for military training and the testing of submarine components. The country's wide plains were preferred by the Soviet army for training exercises and were also good for space launches and air force training. This is mainly the reason for which Russia signs agreements only for 5 years, with the possibility to extend it for other 10 years, hoping that it will never leave Kazakhstan²². Besides these reasons, Kazakhstan is the second richest country – after Azerbaijan – in oil and energy resources. For 1998, Kazakhstan oil exports were estimated at 60% of its production. Because of its geographic position most pipelines cross Kazakhstan, and most of its exports go to the Russian Federation.

Moscow has strategic interests in Central Asia, a reason for which it insists on maintaining its present military force there. The withdrawal of the Russian troops from the region would mean a rise of the Islamic forces and a direct and internalized threat to Russia. Still, Russia has two countries in the region it can count on: Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The former is the beneficiary of substantial military Russian support because it stands for stability in the region. It has a transparent politics (for Moscow) and, because of its geographical position, it can influence and exert pressure on Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and even Afghanistan. All the troops on its territory are under its sovereignty. The first government in Tashkent was determined to set up the basis of a collective security system, so that in 1992 it forced all its associates to sign the Tashkent Pact that guarantees that each republic has its own army under the protection of the powerful Russian army that is considered the guarantor of security in Central Asia.

Russia has good relations with Turkmenistan as well, because the latter proved to Moscow that it has an open politics. In December 1993 in Ashlamabad the two sides signed an agreement on double citizenship. Turkmenistan became a trusted partner for Russia in the area.

A general characteristic of the Caucasus and Central Asia is that almost all states there are confronted with internal ethnic conflicts. Armenia is in conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh; Turkmenistan is in conflict with Tajikistan; in Kyrgyzstan the conflict between north and south is getting serious. I wonder if Russia does not feed all these conflicts so that it can impose its protectorate in the area and to keep its sphere of influence. The fact that these conflicts exist nowadays is at least partly attributable to Russia, which, in the process of homogenization of the Soviet Union's population, more or less intentionally cultivated an ethnic mixing policy. Because all these countries now have many minorities on their territories it is easy for Moscow to play the ethnic card. The new role of Russia – that of mediator – feeds the Russian nationalism and supports the idea that Russia is a powerful regional power.

To be a regional power implies being a strong state and having other states upon which to exercise one's influence. But the collapse of communism brought up other regional powers like Turkey and Ukraine. Oleg Serebriyan considers the "possible" alliance between Turkey and Ukraine to be powerful enough to counterbalance the Russian influence in the region. Moscow sees both countries as enemies, while in the Ukraine Turkey is perceived as the third Western partner (after Germany and the USA)²³.

The implosion of the USSR left the Ukraine not only with nuclear weapons, but it also inherited most of the former Soviet Union harbors on the Black Sea, creating difficulties for the Russian Federation in transporting natural gas and oil from Central Asia to the West. The Russian Federation must invest substantial funds to modernize Taganrov, Novoronisk and Tuapse harbors because otherwise other pipelines will be constructed and will bypass Russia. As a matter of fact

there are some options for pipelines and only one of them – the north route – is favorable to Russia. The rest are favorable to the USA, which has a special interest in the area, a reason for which it intends to help the former Soviet Republics in Central Asia to develop their own oil industry that will reduce the Russian influence in the area. The Russian influence in its former space will be further reduced because the US government considers that economic growth in this area can promote stability so that Russia will not need to play any mediator role.

In conclusion, for this part of the world I could not approach the issue of Russia and NATO since there is no threat of inclusion of these states in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Still, all the above-mentioned states applied for the NATO PfP Program and there is a small risk in this for Russia. Their integration seems utopian, but thinking that Turkey might intend to partially rebuild the former Ottoman Empire territory, the Russian concern becomes bigger. Furthermore, in the Russia-NATO relationship, American interests are covered by NATO, Russia being concerned with the penetration of the Western and especially American interests into its sphere of influence. When it comes of Central Asia and the Caucasus, American interests are not masked and are threatening for Russia. This threat is amplified because the US is sustaining and promoting the Turkish interests in this region, parallel with a policy of isolationism for Iran, whose sympathy towards the Russian Federation is evident.

c) Russia, Ukraine and NATO

The Ukraine is part of the so-called Russian "near abroad" or the former space of the Soviet Union that Russia considers to be its sphere of influence. Ukraine is, also, one of those four states that "inherited" nuclear weapons after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Compared to the other countries, it was reticent in giving up its nuclear status and became a party to START I and the Lisbon Protocol only after much outside pressure was exerted.

More precisely, after the USSR's dissolution Ukraine inherited the third-largest nuclear arsenal in the world. At that time, the legislative system was complicated. In accordance with international law, Ukraine possessed nuclear weapons, which were under the operational control of Moscow and were not at Ukraine's own disposal. Still, Ukraine had enough technical capabilities to take over control over these weapons and become the new owner of a part of the USSR's nuclear potential. But Ukraine's government, eventually directed towards a non-nuclear status, agreed that "Ukraine accepts all the commitments in terms of the NPT as a party-state to the Treaty, not possessing nuclear weapons, in the sense that it actually does have nuclear weapons, located provisionally in its territory in accordance with the Treaties in force. These weapons, while being its property, inherited as a result of collapse of the former USSR, are controlled by another state and, consequently, can be operationally used by Ukraine at its discretion. Ukraine guarantees that all nuclear weapons will be removed from its territory in the near future"²⁴.

The nuclear inheritance from the Soviet Union was not the only issue between the two countries. As mentioned above, Ukraine inherited the biggest number of the Russian harbors on the Black Sea, and it actually removed the Russian Federation's access to the Danube and the Black Sea. Russia lost full control of the Azov Sea and of the Bosphorus, which had a significant geo-economic and geo-strategic importance for Russia. The cost of losing Ukraine is high for Russia, especially that of losing control over the Black Sea harbors, Russia is forced to increase the capacity of its modest remaining harbors, Taganrov, Novorosuk and Tuapse. It has to move further in this direction, because of the oil pipeline I mentioned when I approached Central Asia and the Caucasus. A new pipeline network might be built which would avoid Russia, crossing Turkey and going directly to the Mediterranean Sea.

The economic and the geo-strategic implications of giving independence status to Ukraine are extremely high for Russia. All the

inheritance that Russia left to Ukraine transformed this country into "a partial substituent of the USSR at the eastern border of Europe"²⁵. In the international arena Ukraine is perceived to be a regional power, like Turkey and Russia. This is the reason why Russia is very interested in maintaining its connections with this country.

A method to maintain links with its former constitutive states is through the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which is an inter-governmental organization founded on December 8th, 1991. It originally consisted of three former Soviet republics, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia, but in time all the former Soviet republics joined, with the exception of the Baltic States. The CIS is, I may say, a parody of the EU, since all members were required to have the same currency (the ruble), agreed to respect human rights, the preservation of ethnic minority cultures, etc. Since it is a parody, a kind of copy without a real support, disputes soon emerged between the member states over control of the Black Sea Fleet, economic reforms, and so on. The CIS that wanted to create a "military strategic space" failed, and is now an organization that exists on paper, but whose future is unknown.

Moscow's desire to create a kind of cordon sanitaire at its western border, formed by Belarus, Ukraine and Moldavia, was utopian years ago. Now it might become a reality since in all these three states Communist Parties are ruling the interests of their countries. Still, there is a small chance for this buffer zone not to be created and that is for Ukraine to follow the Western path or at least to adopt and follow the Baltic States model.

This is a difficult and complex issue, and Russia is fully aware of the situation. That is why it is not worried about a close Ukrainian integration into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Ukraine has serious problems in building its nation. Although Oleg Serebrian approaches this issue in his book, no one does it better than Huntington in the "Clash of Civilizations"²⁶. Ukraine, says Huntington, is a mixture of two distinct cultures. The line of civilization splits Ukraine in two: the Western part and the Orthodox one.

Historically, the West part of Ukraine was part of Poland, Lithuania and the Austro-Hungarian empire. The population there was practicing the Greek-Catholic religion and was recognizing the Pope's authority. They were nationalists and were speaking the Ukrainian language, compared to those from the Eastern part that were Orthodox and spoke Russian. Nowadays, the consequences are evident: At the beginning of the 1990s the ethnic Russians were 31% of the Ukrainian population. At the presidential elections in 1994, Leonid Kravciuk – a nationalist – won the elections in the Western region of Ukraine, while his counter-candidate, the actual controversial president Leonid Kucima – who took Ukrainian language courses during the campaign – obtained the majority in the East part of Ukraine.

Because of this division within Ukraine, Huntington imagined three scenarios. There is a small possibility that Ukraine might split, and then the Western part will be an independent state while the Eastern one will be attached to Russia. A second scenario explains the reason why Ukraine and Russia overcame the dissention that existed at the beginning of the '90s over the nuclear weapons and Black Sea Fleet. The explanation resides in the fact that both are Slavic and Orthodox people that were connected throughout history, and thus a

Conclusions

The Russian Federation – the official successor of the former Soviet Union – wants to keep NATO and the American interests out of the space of the former Soviet Union. In a way, Russia wanted to transform these countries into a kind of cordon sanitaire. If such a buffer zone could be created, Russia would not share a border with NATO at its western rim. In the South the buffer zone would have a double benefit: first to keep NATO from getting closer to the border with Russia and second to prevent Islam from penetrating the Orthodox Russian society. This seems to be mainly what Russia desires.

"marriage" is possible. The third scenario, which looks like the most plausible one, imagines a unified Ukraine with tight connections with Moscow. The election results that showed that Ukraine elected a Moscow oriented president considerably increased the possibility of Kiev-Moscow cooperation.

Although a Western directed Ukraine would be desirable, there is only a small probability for it. The Ukrainian-Russian relationship is for Eastern Europe what the French-German one represented for Western Europe. Even though Ukraine adopted the Pfp and participates in the program it is not an encouraging participation because of the many links that exist between the two sides. Russia also adopted the Pfp, but it will never be part of NATO, although Putin likes to joke about an eventual Russian integration into NATO. Unfortunately, this attitude of Kiev has bad consequences on other countries, too, because from Tiraspol (Moldavia), to Sevastopol (Ukraine) and to Ponti (Gruzya) there is a chain of Russian military bases that are supported by this Kiev-Moscow axis. I intend to be optimistic and hope, probably as NATO does since it accepted Ukraine into its program, that one day Ukraine will overcome its difficulties in building a Ukrainian identity that would mean a compromise between the Western part and the Eastern one, and that Ukraine will be a regional power in a multi-polar world.

Unfortunately, NATO is determined to continue its process of enlargement. It acts as if it desperately wants to surround Russia. Why would NATO act like this? First of all, I want to make clear that, after the fall of communism, Russia did not act as if having offensive and threatening attitudes towards the West. If during the Kosovo crisis I found myself convinced that the NATO intervention did not reflect an offensive attitude, I do not dare to say that NATO's enlargement process is not offensively directed towards Russia. A possible explanation for NATO's attitude is that Russia is a threatening country and that

NATO is adopting preventive measures. But aren't these preventing measures stimulating Russia to act aggressively?

I think that NATO's and the American's approach to making Russia understand that it is reduced to a simple regional power may have negative consequences for the Russian nationalism and, in the political realm, may lead to the increase of left-wing or right-wing parties' opportunities and chances to get to power. The consequences would be negative for the world and especially for the states in the former Soviet Union space, because once in power these parties will attempt to recreate the former Soviet Union – an attractive idea for some Russians. What would NATO do then? Will NATO have the power to prevent the world from go back in history and relive the tragic past? Probably most of us think that the US will do everything possible lest the

history should be repeated, but would the American public opinion favor a conflict with Russia?

In conclusion, if things will remain on the level of collaboration and exchange of experience, there is nothing dangerous. But if NATO continues to enlarge without taking into account the strong Russian opposition this may have extremely strong and long-lasting consequences not only throughout the former Soviet Union space or Eastern Europe but, also, in the whole world. NATO's attitude proves that the Cold War did not end for it, but entered into a new phase. Whether it will continue or not, NATO should remember that the atrocities which happened in Vietnam war were mainly due to the fact that the USA did not stop in time. Is NATO going to repeat this American mistake of not stopping in time and consciously throwing the world into a conflict?

Notes:

¹ Jan McLean, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics* (Oxford, UK: OUP, 1996), p. 310.

² Article 1 of the UN Charter.

³ Martin McCauley, *Rusia, America și Războiul Rece 1949- 1991* (Iași: Polirom, 1999), p. 145. Trad. M. Barba.

⁴ Alexei Arbatov, "Russian Security or NATO Expansion". *Boston Review* vol. XIX. No.2, April/May 1994, p. 4-6.

⁵ Kokoshin Andrei A., *Reflections on Russia's Past, Present and Future* (Harvard University, June 1997).

⁶ Elaine M. Holoboff, "National Security in the Baltic States". *The International Politics of Eurasia*, vol. 5, 1995, p. 111-133.

⁷ Anatol Lieven, "Illuminating the 'Baltic States, NATO and Russia'." <http://wwics.si.edu/PROGRAMS/REGION/ces/natoweb/texts/lieven.html>, accessed Nov. 23, 2000.

⁸ "The New Atlantic Community", http://www.nato.int/usa/info/atlantic_community.html, accessed Nov. 24, 2000.

⁹ *Idem*.

¹⁰ Alexei Arbatov, "Russian Security or NATO Expansion?". *Boston Review* vol. XIX, No. 2, April/May 1994, p. 4.

¹¹ Poul Funder, "Forging Ahead" *CEER* vol. VII, No. 10. Dec. 1999, p. 20.

¹² Guy Chazan, "Up from the Rubble" *CEER* vol. VII, No. 10. Dec. 99, p. 22.

¹³ John Ashtead, "IMF Report: Russian Performance Encouraging", *Pravda*, <http://english.pravda.ru/diplomatic/2001/09/28/16433.html>, accessed Sept. 28, 2001.

¹³ *Russia*, March 1997, p. 4-6.

¹⁴ John Naisbitt & Patricia Aburdene, *Anul 2000 – Megatendințe* (București: Ed. Tehnică, 1993), trad. C. Ardelean.

¹⁵ Romulus Căplescu, "Putin își îndreaptă atenția spre Orientul Îndepărtat și Asia de Sud-Est" *Adevărul*, nr. 3332. Martie 1, 2001.

¹⁶ Romulus Căplescu, "Rusia și Vietnam își reafirmă potențialul strategic". *Adevărul*, nr. 3332. Martie 2, 2001.

¹⁷ Romulus Căplescu, "Rusia își extinde potențialul nuclear cu Iran". *Adevărul*, nr. 3332, March 3, 2001.

¹⁸ Vaner Smith, "La Politique transcaucasienne de la Turquie", *Le Caucase postsoviétique: la transition dans le conflit*, Bruylant-Bruxelles, Belgique, 1995.

²⁰ Oleg Serebrian, *Va exploda oare Vestul? Geopolitica spațiului pontic* (Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Dacia, 1998).

²¹ Arvanitopoulos, Constantine, "The Geopolitics of oil in Central Asia" *Thesis*, vol.1 issue 4, winter '97-'98, p.18-27.

²² Karam, Patrick, *Revenirea islamului în fostul Imperiu rus* (București: Ed. Scripta, 1998).

²³ Prof. dr. Shevtsov, A.I. "Ukraine's experience and Nuclear Disarmament", *Review of International Affairs*, vol. 1, No.1077, February 1999, p. 15-20.

²⁵ Oleg Serebrian, *Va exploda Estul? Geopolitica spațiului pontic* (Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Dacia, 1998).

²⁶ Huntington, Samuel P., 1998, *Ciocnirea civilizațiilor și refacerea ordinii mondiale* (Oradea: Ed. Antet). trad. Radu Carp.