

European Union: Western Empire or Russian Periphery?

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Abstract: *This article is proposing to explore briefly the dichotomist, even paradoxical condition of EU, an original entity which can be regarded at the same time, as a postmodern form of empire, with two strategic directions of expansion (towards Balkans and towards Central Asia as classical heartland, strategically important for EU due to the energetic center of states once forming the USSR area of control) and also, as a periphery of Russia. This certainly is a very odd condition for EU, as political center of power but having several key-vulnerabilities (energetic dependency on Russia and Central Asia states as area traditionally placed under the Russian influence; lack of European army; immaturity of CFSP pillar; lack of a genuine and centralized CSDP dimension - here, the intergovernmental nature of these pillars, under Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice treaties and also, under the Lisbon reform treaty can be considered as a risk factor of fragmentation and blockage for the construction of a strong European military and security pillar-). From this perspective (hard-power), EU can be seen as a double periphery: as periphery of Russia (through energetic weapon; incapacity for EU to gain access to Central Asia and to built here a sphere of influence) and also, as a periphery of US (lack of a military personal army and of a strong CFSP pillar). EU is a vulnerable part of the Transatlantic Empire (seen as a twofold imperial structure, in our opinion, covering US and EU) in comparison with Russia, as a federal state, strongly anchored in its traditional military dimension (Russia, as a hard-type of imperial structure, rather than being a postmodern one). We use the geopolitical term "empire" and all other key-terms in this article, not in a subjective, emotional meaning but as a scientific category of analyze, that must be explored and treated in an objective way by present schools of geopolitical thought.*

Key-words: Russia, European Union, Transatlantic Empire, expansion, empire, Heartland theory, pivotal state, periphery, Rimland

The period between the end of the XXth century and the beginning of XXIst century is characterized (concerning the political evolutions of the European continent) by the tendency of some Western European states to form a kind of *interstate* community called "European Union". This original and complex political entity has progressively formed what we prefer to call a "hybrid empire¹". EU has started a process of expansion towards the European continent (claiming ambitious imperial objectives such as the *political reunification of a continent* divided by a continuous war history). This was a process initiated from the EU pre-imperial stage (regarding the *three European Communities*, as regional organizations with economic specialized profile²). The *first wave*

*of expansion*³ started in 1973, when Great Britain was been received as full EC member state.

At present EU has become a kind of regional power, neighbor of another great power (Russia), even if *we cannot speak about a continuous common "border"* (for areas as Belarus, Rep. of Moldova and Ukraine, that are not EU member states).

At this point, one can agree that, in comparison with Russia (holding, as a federal state, both the quality of being a *sovereign state*, as well as the *juridical personality and the territorial conception on a "westphalian state"*⁴ endowed with political and juridical borders), EU is not a "westphalian state", neither a federation, nor a confederation of states⁵.

At this moment (before the ratification by all EU member states of the Lisbon reform treaty signed at 18 October 2007) EU is not endowed with juridical personality⁶. Therefore, EU remains only a political entity; as result, EU is not a sovereign entity, and it is seen by a part of the doctrine as not holding the three constitutive elements of a state (territory, population, sovereignty or the competence to establish its personal competences, in order to exert the *exclusive* jurisdiction within its territorial borders). As a result, EU is not owning a "personal territory" like its member states⁷, and it has no personal *borders* (replacing the political borders of its member states). This "*invisible empire*" is, despite all these facts, expanding and maturing under our eyes. The legal international principles incident to the *interstate* relations are not presumed to be applied to an entity that is not a state, and that has no legal personality (*EU, condemned to remain into a "clandestine imperial condition"?*). As a paradox, EU can be seen as a political supranational entity, emanating supranational laws and a distinct legal order, both in comparison with international law and the national legal orders of its member states.

This empire is emanating a *legal order* (through its *first, communitarian pillar*) despite the fact that it has no legal existence from the point of view of international law and also, from the perspective of EU member states national law (it is not a *juridical* person, nor a *subject of international law*).

In this article, we'll try to analyze the EU imperial expansion from *the perspective of the Heartland theory*⁸, considered, as a theory adapted to the *present* international design of today's political world map. *Can EU be an empire interested in identifying what it is called "Heartland", in controlling this land and in preventing that other great powers exert their domination over it?*

The *entire article* is trying to explore this interesting perspective, being based on *this continuous oscillation* between the *EU imperial vocation* as a Western center of power, and its possible *fall into an inferior condition, that of becoming progressively the*

*periphery*⁹ of another empire or imperial state (the EU *dichotomist* condition).

The collapse of Soviet Empire, in 1991, followed by a political gap, determined the apparition, belonging to new geopolitical tendencies in the ex-Soviet space, tendencies represented by various theories of Alexander Dugin, Dmitri Trenin, Ghenadi Ziuganov, Vladimir Kolosov, Nikolai Mironenko, Nikolai Nartov¹⁰.

At present, one can assert that Russia stays at a crossroad of temptations: either to assume a new imperial role, trying to recreate its lost "Eurasian empire" (due to its *pivotal imperial role*, to its historical role of representing the main force of a multi-national superstructure covering the majority of *Eurasian continent*), or to choose adopting the democratic Western model and becoming a part of the European political project, by assuming and developing only its *European* identity. A third scenario in Russia's political evolution is based on the opposite tendency, which means for this great power to assume exclusively an *Asian* identity¹¹, to turn its back to all European collective (imperial or not) political project and instead being interested in the development of permanent, institutionalized relations with Asian countries (especially with Central Asia energetically rich belt of countries).

The *original* structure of *EU as post-modern empire* can determinate also an *original and complex political relation* between EU and Russia. In this article, we are going to *regroup* the basic arguments supporting the ideas that *EU, as a Western European empire* is interested in creating a *simple* type of cooperation with Russia (an *under-developed, symbolic* relation, which will not be able to represent the future base of negotiations between both parties regarding the New Framework Agreement of Cooperation). EU, in this scenario, will not be interested in negotiating with Russia a basic legal framework for cooperation as a suitable base for an *enforced* partnership with Russia (meaning that Russia becomes a part of the general European integration process, as involving *equal* contribution of both parts to

the creation of a *single zone of stability covering the entire Old Continent*). In this hypothesis, the objective of this potential “*unique area of stability*” (seen as a political concept, revealing an open will for an *intergovernmental* cooperation between EU’s member states and Russia on political field, progressively completed by an *intergovernmental* cooperation on *administrative, judicial and policy fields*, as a complete reproduction of the “*freedom, security and justice area*” introduced as the EU specific objective by the Amsterdam treaty) will not be conceived as an unilateral EU project. This “*single zone of stability*” covering Europe can be a *bilateral* project, expression of the *political agreement* between EU and Russia. This agreement would be a concrete contribution of Russia to the

historical reconciliation between the European East and the West, a political *reunification* of the continent, the genuine end of disputes and great walls dividing Europe. After the *German reunification* and its evolution as an EC founder-member state, the second great step to unify the continent will be, in our opinion, Russia’s admittance into the great European family, the recognition of its specific contribution to the European identity and the action to avoid any new segregation of Europeans into “*integrated zones*” and “*outsiders*”.

The *second scenario* of this article is focused on finding those arguments necessary to claim that at present, there are some clues indicating the EU’s odd situation: to be nothing else than a “*Russian periphery*”, at least from some specific reasons.

1. EU as Western empire and its political relations with Russia

Within this section we must begin our analysis from the perspective of the “*Heartland*” theory, where “*the continental core*”, according to Mac Kinder’s reviewed theory *Mac Kinder, is Central Asia*¹² (as a zone *different from the Eastern Europe, which is the “pivotal zone”*¹³). According to this scenario, *in order to be a genuine empire*, as a great (collective) power, and as a distinct centre of power, EU must elaborate a specific *strategy* and must take appropriate, concrete measures and common policies (within CFSP pillar, but also, by developing and adapting its existent European vicinity policy) focused on gaining access to the Heartland (Central Asia).

As the European part of the Transatlantic Empire¹⁴, EU is rather interested to adopt a kind of *formal, symbolic framework-relation* with what it is considered to be a real challenger for the political control of the Old Continent, as an alternative center of power (Russia). In this hypothesis, EU is tempted to conclude a kind of political agreement of cooperation with Russia designed to treat Russia as a special partner of political dialogue, *but not as a state with “European vocation”*.

For EU, Russia seems *to be rather an imperial state*, trying to regain control over its lost sphere of Soviet influence. EU is not treating Russia as a state that in the future will become an EU member. EU has not expressed the intention to open the door of political and economical *integration* to Russia, neither to allow full participation of Russia, as a future EU member state, into a fundamentally modified (if the treaty of Lisbon will come in force) but still European empire. Without expressing its will to candidate for EU membership, Russia seems to be condemned to devote all its efforts to the re-construction of its old imperial project, as an *individual* empire (having *one* state core), precisely because there is no place for it into the EU imperial *collective* project. Thus pursuing two distinct strategies of territorial expansion in Europe and towards Central Asia the two empires will gradually conceive two *different* imperial projects designated to take control over the same *Heartland* (Central Asia) and to prevent that the other empire gains access and implements its policies in this key-area.

Despite its "soft" nature (expansion through negotiations, political dialogue, through export of democracy, through market economy and rule of law; implementation of imperial legislation into the Eastern periphery, due to the supranational nature of European law) EU, as Western empire is still an imperial entity in full process of territorial expansion. The directions of EU expansion are mainly two: *integration of Central and Eastern Europe* (as key-region for EU, necessary for the EU access to Heartland) and *expansion towards East*, through other types of agreements (cooperation, partnership), as direction preparing *the second step* (full acquisition of the "candidate state" political statute, for states like Ukraine, Rep. of Moldova, Georgia, Armenia). Placed in the middle of the EU expansion towards Central Asia, Turkey remains partially an European-anchored state, participating to the *EU imperial collective* project either being integrated into EU as full-fledged member, or remaining a "special EU state" (not a "candidate" but a "partner" of EU): in both cases Turkey will represent the *EU interface* towards Heartland.

In order to be an empire dominating the World-Island, according to the Mac Kinder theory¹⁵, EU would take control *over its core*, a geographical zone starting from Central European plane to Western Siberia and dissipating its edges to the Mediterranean zone, to Middle East, and also, to Indian and Chinese areas¹⁶. At present EU represents a Western empire (dominated, from a certain perspective, by a *German-French political "engine"*, in fact, by an original alliance between a continental European power and an oceanic European power) where Germany (as a state of the EU core) has gained, according to the Mac Kinder classical theory, the access and the control over the Central European zone (that is the pivotal zone of the World Island). This geopolitical reality (Central and Eastern European countries are now EU member states, being integrated into the EU empire) symbolizes the territorial advance of EU into the former periphery of the Soviet empire and also, a *clear direction of the*

Western imperial project expansion towards Heartland. At this point, one can think about this direction of EU expansion as a part of a greater imperial strategy of "*new containment of Russia*" through the construction, the consolidation and the territorial enlargement of a Western European empire like EU, designed for an ambitious mission (to get control over the Heartland, that is to reduce Russia's access to *Central Asia* and to encourage *the European vocation of these countries* in terms of political democratic values and market economy, as well as by concluding with them several economic specialized agreements with a clear dimension devoted to the implementation of political dialogue framework).

According to the Rimland theory of Spkyman¹⁷, one can see EU as a Western part of a Transatlantic Empire dominated by an oceanic power (US), trying to get control over the Rimland, in order to control the Eurasian continent. As a component of the Rimland, *EU is a part of an oceanic-dominated empire*, needing to have access to the wealth of the World-Island (Central Asia), a strategy including, if it is necessary, a containment of Russia¹⁸ (as continental power, naturally advantaged by its geopolitical location near the Heartland). In this hypothesis, EU remains *an imperial extension of US*, through which the *leading power* of the Western Transatlantic Empire is ensuring its territorial penetration directly to Central Asian states of the energetically and geopolitical Heartland.

EU is an empire designed to accomplish an ambitious task: to put an end to the infra-European "conflicts", to unify politically the Old Continent, to embody an idea of "democratic, market economy, rule of law concept about Europe". But we cannot neglect the EU's initially proto-imperial Western core (even from the beginning, in the stage of the three European Communities creation, this empire was a *Western project*, and also, in the bipolar, antagonist context of the Cold War period, it was designed as a *counter-balance system of Western organizations against USSR system*). After the end of the Cold War, with the collapse of the Soviet Empire (1991) and after the EU was politically and officially

proclaimed (through the Maastricht treaty/1993), EU became a Western empire *continuing its basic strategy to represent a counter-balance to Russia influence over its lost European empire* (a kind of "balance of power" theory, over the Old Continent, at the beginning of the XXIst century).

EU, as an imperial project, had also other geopolitical great reasons to be created: first, to integrate Germany, as great continental power, within a Western collective project initiated by Europeans under US's political strategy to re-build a political form of unity, a system of re-conciliation between Europeans through economic integration. From this perspective, EU can be seen as a political form of preventing an *individual* and inevitable German expansion towards Eastern Europe (at present, one can see a *collective*, European expansion towards East, towards the Heartland). Secondary, EU was created in order *to prevent the creation of an alliance* (as a strategic bilateralism affecting European integration and US strategy to gain control, *through the EU project*, over the Heartland) *between two continental powers (Germany and Russia)*. Thus, from the Mac Kinder perspective, EU must define immediately a common energetically strategy, as a basic

instrument to prevent the enforcement of a bilateral framework of cooperation between these two continental powers on the key sector for the stability of whole EU project (energy), a real alliance that would fundamentally affect the energetic interests of other great powers like EU in general, or in particular, of states as France or Great Britain.

EU empire can also be seen, from the geopolitical perspective, as a *Western imperial "wall" against Russia's traditional expansion towards Eastern and Central Europe*. Within a much larger geopolitical framework, EU constitutes an empire pursuing not so much a strategy of containing Russia, *than a strategy to penetrate a territory of a Heartland naturally placed under the Russian control*. At present, Russia is still controlling this territory, due to the energetic alliances concluded with Central Asian states. From this different perspective, EU empire is designed to exert pressures over the "Russian imperial wall" that blocks EU accession to Heartland. Therefore at the beginning of the XXIst century we assist at an *imperial clash* between two opposite tendencies, of EU and of Russian empire, that will certainly re-shape the future political profile of the whole Europe and also, of the Eurasian continent.

2. EU as "Russian periphery" and the political consequences of this hypothesis for the EU evolution

In our opinion, it seems to be an interesting scenario, if not a paradox (if we are admitting that EU, from another perspective, still remains an *empire*), specific to the original nature of EU and to its odd relation with Russia, as another imperial power acting on the Old Continent, at the beginning of the XXIst century.

We can consider EU as the "soft" part (a sophisticated, but vulnerable, non-militarized entity) of a *double-cored* Transatlantic Empire (US being, in this hypothesis, the genuine, the hard core of the whole Western imperial structure) - and for these reasons (the absence of a "hard", militarized nature for EU), the European Union should be considered as the

vulnerable part of the Western empire. In fact, *EU should be considered as a "middle-zone"*, shared between an "official protector" (US, through the NATO military arm) and a "challenger": Russia, as a potentially imperial state, assuming in this scenario, *by force* or by using *soft* modalities, *an European imperial vocation*, that is to claim the equal *protectorate over EU* (a bilateral condominium over Europe, between two real, "hard-type" empires).

In this scenario, *EU would become a "common periphery", the "middle zone" shared* between states like US and Russia, interested in regaining its lost Soviet spaces of influence. Only if Russia would not be content with a role of US "imperial partner" in

exercising a tacit condominium over an integrated, prosperous and developed new type of *periphery* as EU, only if Russia would choose *not to share, but to gain* (through imperial policies of expansion and domination) the *exclusive control over the whole EU* (by managing, for example, in its favor, the Balkan affairs, by succeeding in controlling the conflicts of this region, while preventing any EU capacity to affirm as a great (collective) power into the Balkans), then we could say that EU is becoming *gradually*, a "Russian periphery".

The *lack of credibility* on managing different regional and international affairs (due to the difficulty to harmonize different voices of EU member states in CFSP area); the *lack of prestige* (as incapacity to manage regional conflicts at the borders of EU - like Kosovo - or to impose an European solution on "frozen conflicts" placed on ex-Soviet space, where EU is not perceived as a genuine important political actor, capable to project power *at distance*, towards key-areas as Central Asia, Iran), are sufficient motives *to argue the gradual degradation of the EU from an expansionist empire to an original, paradoxical statute of "periphery"*. In favor of this odd political statute are pledging some elements (that can be complemented by other tendencies, if this scenario becomes reality one day):

- the EU "*soft*" political nature, together with its common policies and specific *objectives*, that are all contributing to the development of an *original* entity, opposed to the *military* type of empire: EU as a *consensual* entity.
- the lack of an autonomous, distinct, powerful European military dimension, necessary to give credibility (in "hard power" terms) to EU on regional and international stage. EU has not, at present, a European army or navy, as has Russia, in its quality of imperial state.
- the difficulty for the EU to become a powerful political actor (insufficient development of the CFSP pillar) and to clearly affirm an unitary voice in the *international* and *regional* key-issues.

CFSP is still remaining an intergovernmental type of cooperation, giving the *preeminent* decisional role to the EU member states and not to EU institutions (European Commission, for example). Its *collective* way to manage CFSP affairs together with the *unanimity* rule in this pillar are representing two elements creating, in our opinion, a lack of prestige and also, difficulties for EU in gaining credibility. This sensible and major political EU pillar is rather affected by the *fragmentation logic* than having a chance to become progressively an integrated, communitarian pillar. With many distinct and even divergent interests EU risks to be reduced, from an unitary, imperial political *actor*, to an *object* for non-EU powers policies, an object suitable for becoming a part of a much larger vision, implemented in Europe by the genuine political centers of power (Russia, China, US). As supranational power (but in other fields than CFSP), *EU is affected by its inner intergovernmentalism and lack of imperial counter-strategies* to avoid the gradual EU transformation *from an empire (or center of power) into a periphery subordinated to another empire* (military, to US; energetically, to Russia). EU also lacks strategies focused on the management of its own peripheries (Balkans; Central Asia; Black Sea; Mediterranean area).

- the *collective* mechanisms of political decisions and the complex decisional procedures (within EU institutions such as the European Commission, the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers), together with powerful *national identities* of its member states, are aspects making difficult for the EU to behave and to consolidate as an *unitary* entity, in comparison with Russia, as a *federal state*. Russia has well-developed capacities to project power at distance, to manage "frozen conflicts" in order to control EU actions and to avoid concrete EU counter-strategies destined to resolve these conflicts. Russia has a well-defined (from the constitutional law

perspective) political and juridical *nature* (as federation), that is an advantage, in comparison with EU (EU is not a state, neither a federation, nor an international organization, but a hybrid entity'; in consequence, EU is not a subject of international law, it hasn't legal personality, and this gap can be interpreted, together with other elements, as a factor creating the premise for an *imperial regression* (degradation of EU from the status of a post-modern empire to a non-conventional kind of periphery). EU's peripheral status can also be caused by the constant political will of *Russia to take control over its lost territory*: the ex-Soviet space, including EU member states as Central and Eastern European states and the Balkans¹⁹, where Russia is directly interested in *dividing the zone*, regarding the newly-found European (EU) identity of Western Balkans (object of the future EU eave of territorial expansion) and in preventing an unification of the Balkans within EU framework (that will create a close door for one of the traditional directions of Russian expansion). As for the Central Asia zone (one of the core-area of its lost imperial territory), Russia has another direct imperial interest (preventing the EU expansion towards the energetic Heartland). If EU will not succeed in breaking the "Russian wall" and in expanding toward this strategic zone (by elaborating a specific strategy for Central Asia, based on *enforced partnership with these countries*, on the *creation of "common energy spaces"*, of *"democratic spaces"* (political dimension) or *"commercial common space"*; by elaborating an *European policy of Caspian friends*", complementary with another specific strategies, as a *simplified, specialized, Euro-Casp*, or a "strategy of Black Sea and Mediterranean friends"), if EU will not be capable to bring Western Balkan into its structures, by enforcing their Western democratic model identity, then EU will lose not only *prestige* (that is a *vital* element for any empire, when it is

evaluated by another empire) but it will lose *two strategic directions of imperial projection of power* (Balkans; Central Asia). These failures will contribute to the general EU regression from a Western empire to an entity incapable to oppose concrete strategies against Russian expansion towards these two key-areas.

- Russia has already a *specific, alternative project for a future Europe* that is not fitting with the imperial project on Europe proposed and already implemented by the EU. Any major failure of the EU collective, Western-democratic project of the future political configuration of the Old Continent will provoke lack of EU imperial prestige and will constitute an important break into the EU imperial profile, provoking the failure of the whole European construction and also, the opportunity for Russia to impose its own imperial, different model (from the "collective project" of an unified Europe, to the "individual imperial project", *single-centered empire*). *The Russian imperial project on Europe seems rather to embrace a traditional, "hard" kind of empire and expansion*²⁰, that might not be conditioned by the *free consent* of its components (as at the creation of EU): thus, from a democratic imperial project (EU), Europe might be caught into an *authoritarian, old-type empire* with a *single center of power* (Russia) – this is the radical scenario –, or it might be included into a Russian-style *democratic empire* (that is the moderate scenario), where EU will be simultaneously submitted to the Russian influence and where it will *participate* formally into a symbolic cooperation, at the governance of the new European empire (dominated by Russia, through "hard" or "soft" means). Even if the "hard hypothesis" (the control *manu militari* over EU, as the historical, old type of empires have realized in order to dominate their peripheries) cannot be totally removed in the XXIst century, *Russia can gain its European periphery* (not only the Central, Eastern states, the

Balkans, but the *whole EU*, as such) by using soft (non-military) tools, like EU energy dependence, for example. At present Russia is behaving as an *undecided empire* (or to impose its imperial project by using "hard" modalities, either to influence the EU member states policies through the "energetic weapon" or through other type of political pressures). In this context, we should ask ourselves: does Russia want to be a "hard" empire or does it want to become a "soft" kind of empire²¹; does it *contest or provoke* the EU hegemony over the Old Continent (as part of the Western empire) or is it rather interested in cooperating with EU, in participating to the EU imperial project by accepting the strategies of partnership and the creation of "Four common spaces"/2003, by accepting to be treated as an equal diplomatic partner of the Transatlantic Empire, when managing regional or international key-issues (Iran, Kosovo, Iraq)? It seems to be a major *dilemma* for the future evolution of the Russian policy regarding EU. For EU, both scenarios seem to be negative (provoking its regression to the statute of "periphery"), since as a "hard empire", Russia is a high-militarized regional power, while EU as such is not projected to act as a traditional, military empire (due to its historical dependence on the NATO will to defend the Europeans).

- inexistence of a coherent EU strategy for the Middle East (the second "energetic Heartland") and the lack of an European strategy for Central Asia (the continental core of the world). If EU is not able to manage the Middle East conflicts and to gain its credibility as a peace negotiator, if it is not able to penetrate into the strategic area of Caucasus, nor to influence in its favor the Iranian dossier, then EU will not be in a favorable position to control the "Continental Core" of the world, despite the fact that it has already integrated the Eastern and Central Europe (the "pivotal zone") into its structures. In other words it is of no use that EU has

integrated Eastern Europe, a periphery which is not capable (in realistic terms) to contribute to the "Europe-puissance" project (meaning the regional and international political affirmation of EU as a political center of power), if EU doesn't gain *access* to Central Asia.

- EU can become the periphery of Russia, beside other elements favoring this situation, if Russia will produce some coherent counter-strategies, designed to *limit* the EU expansion to *the Old Continent* and *outside its borders* (towards non-EU Mediterranean countries, Central Asia, Middle East). Russia would need, in this context, to counter-balance any European strategy (for Balkans; Turkey; Euro-Med; the vicinity policy) or to prevent the creation of a strategically coherent EU approach (regarding Middle East, Central Asia), in order to avoid the *general* EU expansion towards the "Continental Core" (Central Asia). At present, there are some elements showing the *clash* between two imperial tendencies (the EU tendency to export its democratic model and to expand - even to integrate into its structures, states of the former ex-Soviet Space; the opposite, the Russian tendency to block the EU territorial penetration into the ex-Soviet Space, precisely into the Central Asia).

- if EU is not an empire able to dominate *the Continental Core*" (the area from laying from Germany to Central Siberia), than, through the "energetic power" (a form of compulsive "soft power", distinct of "consensual soft power" used by EU), Russia will *insure* its control (through the creation of an *informal empire*) over this zone, due to a constant policy of exploiting the EU main vulnerability (*energy field* and the absence of an European policy in this field having as an objective the reduction of EU dependency on Russia energy). Thus, Russia will be the one who will have many chances to be the state dominating the Eurasian continent (from Germany to Central Siberia), and not the

EU that will simply become a part of the Russian "informal energetic empire".

- the peripheral status of the EU can be caused and even due to the EU multi-level system of governance, where *regions* are considered *new political actors* and where the nation-states are not anymore "entirely westphalian". If Russia is decided to transform EU into a periphery, it would be tempted, as some specific moment, to encourage, to press or to admit the "*Europe of regions*" political model, through a policy favorable to regional and infra-regional identities. This would be, in essence, a traditional imperial policy (*divide et impera*), destined to create a scission of the EU into many regions with different (if not opposite) identities, with two direct effects: weakness of sovereign nation-states, EU members; weakness of EU as an *unitary* political actor and as a *collective* empire. A "Europe of regions" will be inevitably a zone of tensions and secessionist entities, hardly to control and hardly to unite (by encouraging the "diversity" within EU and by pushing regional identities into EU to define each of them in *opposite* terms, Russia will transform the whole sophisticated, post-modern, multi-level EU system into a failed entity).
- the *original* EU nature (especially its dimension of integration, where member states *have freely ceded some sovereign attributes* in the favor of the EU) can be interpreted, in this perspective, as an element initiating in reality, the EU "imperial regression", its transformation into a periphery. Russia is not a political organization of *integration*; it is a federal state that has not ceded any sovereign powers to supranational distinct institutions, like EU member states (for example, Germany, as federal state, once integrated in EU structures, has ceded some sovereign attributes in favor of the EU institutions).

In the hypothesis that the EU is not succeeding in gaining access to Central Asia, neither in integrating the Western Balkans

(after creating an independent Kosovo state endowed with an "automatic" or compulsory "European vocation" to become EU member state), EU will risk to become a periphery for Russia. Russia will remain an imperial well-defined state, while EU member states will find that *their sacrifices to cede sovereign attributes to EU institutions* were in vain, if EU doesn't prove its capacity to dominate the "Continental Core" and to apply within the Balkans its prosperous and democratic formula of imperial peace. Once again, the westphalian state will be triumphant in relation with destroyed empires as in the EU case, due to their original, post-state, complex nature.

- Russia doesn't want to integrate itself into EU; until now it declined a "European identity" as "vocation to become EU member", rather preferring to define itself as an *alternative model to the EU project of political reunification of the continent*. Russia, by choosing to stay out of the "European integrated or candidate great family", reflects an attitude of being *a distinct political center of power, a counter-balance element to the EU collective empire*. This attitude is *apparently placing Russia in a formal position of "EU periphery"*, as an outsider, but, in reality, it is expressing Russia's imperial capacity *to resist to the expansion of another (potentially rival) empire* (regarding the gain of control over zones of interests for *both* Russia and the EU). It also reflects its capacity to *counter-balance, to limit EU expansion over the whole Europe* (by preventing EU to be identified with "Europe", territorially speaking) and it reflects its capacity to form another alternative European model, and to pursue its own lines of expansion towards the some zones of interest as EU. This is an important element (the non-incorporation of Russia by the EU) signaling Russia as an *autonomous European power*, that, in combination with another elements, creates the premise for *an imperial, non-EU integrated Russia to become an empire not only capable to stop EU extension into ex-Soviet space, but also, capable to create mechanisms and strategies destined to transform the EU in its own periphery*

(energetically and politically as well, as direct consequence of this fact).

- the *new* sphere of influence that Russia has created *within EU* is the *Western, economical prosperous, industrialized, democratic part of EU* (a paradoxical situation, in *political* terms, due to the strong energetic dependency of Western states on Russian natural gas and oil). Regarding *the new EU member states* (from Central and Eastern Europe, as components of the ex-Soviet sphere of influence), Russia is trying to adopt a strategy of *maintaining* them into a situation of energetic dependency, *preventing* them from searching alternative sources of supplies in order to emancipate from its energetically trust sheep. In this way, on energetic field Russia will gain the direct control over EU, by *"colonizing" its political core exactly* (the EU founder, *Western* core of the Union), with the major consequence, of also gaining the *political control over EU as such*, and influencing in its favor all the political EU evolution, policies and strategies, and as well, influencing the attitude of EU member states in key-problems like the elaboration of an European energy policy reflecting the EU wish for energetic independence). Thus, only through a radical, desperate action, EU could emancipate from Russian energetic control and could gain access towards Central Asia, as "energetic Heartland" (only if *all EU member states* would understand this major political stake and would accept to harmonize their energetic policies, by giving enforced powers in this sector to the EU institutions, in order to elaborate an European energy policy).

- EU can be seen as periphery of Russia, if we are taking into account a current imperial strategy of Russia, *to create a non-European center of power, alternative to Western centers (US, EU)*; in this hypothesis, Russia would be interested in *forming and in maintaining an imperial collective structure of non-Western powers either within or inside the EU*, in order to *counterbalance the Western empire with double core*. Russia would be interested, in this hypothesis, to give an impulse towards the consolidation of the multipolar world framework, to refrain EU in gaining access to

the "Heartland" (Central Asia). A newly-formed structure illustrating this tendency is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization/2001, whose core-state and founder-state is Russia. Regarding this situation (SCO, as a political *collective* imperial structure dominating the "Continental Core", Central Asia), EU is condemned to re-define itself as an "inevitable periphery" of a Eurasian, continental center of non-Western powers. EU has, in this hypothesis, not gained access to Central Asia (controlled by a Sino-Russian alliance within SCO) and it was not capable to exert any kind of influence over the SCO members in order to penetrate towards Central Asia as "Heartland". *This strategic zone* (the "Continental Core of the World", that is Central Asia) *is protected by Russia through a "belt of empires or imperial states" as Russia, China, Iran* (all defined as non-Western powers), in order to block the access of the Transatlantic Empire (EU; US) towards energetically rich countries "captured" by SCO.

- *EU, as Russian periphery, is also the object of a kind of "Russian containment"* (due to the fact that Russia is tempting to create around EU a "wall" of "energetically have-nots" and simultaneously, *to prevent EU access to the Russian "strategic periphery" is formed by Central Asian states*, as parts of former Soviet empire (historically connected to Russia, as imperial core).

- EU is a Russian periphery equally when we are referring to the Spykman's geopolitical concepts (Rimland, Heartland); according to Spykman, in order to control the Heartland one must firstly be capable to control the "Rimland" (a concept gathering a range of political actors and regions like EU, Turkey, Middle East, Arabian Peninsula, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, China, Mongolia, Korean Popular Republic, Japan). In this vision *EU is, a part of the Rimland* (in its quality as being the US instrument of projecting power, having as function the accession of the Transatlantic Empire to the control of Heartland). *EU is a geopolitical periphery in relation with the Heartland* (Central Asia) and therefore *EU needs to be controlled by a power (US or Russia)*

intending to control the Heartland. If Russia is becoming to convert EU in its periphery, then will be created for the US to penetrate into the Heartland. And this scenario is not only theoretical, due to the global struggle for energy and to the energetic EU dependency that might consolidate EU geopolitical status as the periphery of a Russian – controlled Heartland. US cannot, at present, exert control over the whole Rimland (it has no coherent and connected strategies with countries and regions of Rimland, designed in order to control the Heartland, neither has EU: for example, EU has no specific *strategies* devoted to Central Asia, to Iran, China, Arabian Peninsula, Mediterranean Sea).

- according to *Mac Kinder's theory about "Heartland* (as Central Asia), Russia is a power geopolitically placed in a favorable position to control this Heartland, while EU would remain in a fatal *peripheral* position.

- there is a tendency (through a specific Russian policy) to create *bilateral agreements* on energy between Russia and EU member states, a practice that would produce several major effects: it would hinder the elaboration

of a common approach of EU member states on energy matters and an European energetic strategy; it would increase the EU dependency on Russian energy, a fact risking to produce collapse into the EU political governance on medium and on a long term; it would promote the "*continental alliance*" on energy issue, between Germany and Russia, so far prevented through the creation of the EU (another "break" into the EU wall). Germany will be no longer interested in maintaining an inefficient, complex structure as the EU (in energy terms, and reflected on the *political governance* field) and it will rather be tempted to enforce bilateral cooperation with Russia, instead of pursuing a European (non-energetic) integration. This possible new orientation of an EU core-state like Germany would create a *major imbalance between the core-powers within EU*, and it would even provoke a *domino effect*, by encouraging other EU member states to establish and to enforce bilateral separate economic relations with Russia on energy matters, thus neglecting the common European approach – a moment of true collapse into the EU evolution?).

Conclusions

It is difficult to apply into the EU case a rigorous and clear political definition, even from the imperial perspective, because of the originality and the complexity of its nature, of its methods of enlargement, of its objectives or decisional proceedings. EU is an original, post-modern political system and it represents a *great scission* in the imperial history, by indicating a complete separation from the old type of empires, formed, maintained, extended and then destroyed through military means.

At the beginning of the XXIst century EU is placed at the crossroad between two geopolitical tendencies in its evolutions: the evolution *as a collective empire*, exporting democracy and being projected in order to avoid an alliance between Germany and Russia (two continental powers), equally acting for the purpose to penetrate (through a policy of integrating Eastern and Central

Europe) into the Heartland (Central Asia) and also, being designed in order to prevent the opposite tendency of Russia to keep under its control this key-zone (the defeat of the Cerberus). Meanwhile the EU can be seen as a strange type of *periphery*, controlled by its rival empire (Russia) for reasons exposed in this article, mainly because it lacks an European energetic strategy (while Russia is exerting its *energetic* power, as capacity to project an *imperial* type of *compulsory* soft power over the EU member states). Secondary, EU is a *peripheral location*, according to Mac Kinder's geopolitical theory, in comparison with Russia, naturally placed in the near vicinity of the Heartland (Central Asia).

Paradoxically, *EU as Russian periphery* (geographically speaking) needs to surpass this disadvantageous location, *by assuming an*

imperial mission: to force its territorial expansion towards the Heartland. This seems to represent an essential part of the EU reason of being: no longer to insure a political unity for Europeans (that is a mission almost fulfilled), but to assume a new key-mission (getting access to the “energetic Heartland”, because of the vital dependence of Europeans on the Heartland sources of energy). It is precisely this “soft dependency” that transforms EU into a Russian periphery and simultaneously, that is pushing EU to create an imperial expansion

towards the Heartland, in order to compete with a “*genuine empire*” like Russia.

EU is forced to re-construct itself as an empire, in order to get access to the means necessary to control the Heartland (Central Asia). From this point of view EU seems at present, from the energetic and geopolitical perspectives, to represent rather an “*emancipated periphery*”, a desperate Western European will to surpass its geopolitical fatalism and to enter into a genuine *imperial stage*.

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NOTES:

¹ Mădălina Virginia Antonescu, *European Union, ancient and medieval empires. Comparative study*, Ed. Lumen, Iași, 2008, pg. 85- 95.

² European Community of Charcoal and Steel, created in 18 April 1951, whose treaty entered into force on 10th august 1952, for a period of 50 years - the treaty expired in 2002-; European Community of Atomic Energy and European Economic Community (their treaties were signed on 25th march 1957 and entered into force on 1st January 1958).

³ In the communitarian jargon it is used the technical term of “**enlargement**” destined to show, in our opinion, the specific and unique nature of the European Union, in comparison with any other form of political organization (confederation, federation, international organization, state). Also, the EU is not a political structure stretching its territory through violence and use of imperial military force (as the martial, classical types of empires known by history). **EU is rather a legal, diplomatic and postmodern type of empire**, which is not recruiting the peripheries *manu militari*; on the contrary, EU, as a postmodern empire, is attracting the peripheries (*lato sensu*) by stimulating them to wish the integration into a prosperous, democratic structure. EU

is accepting under certain conditions, the eventual adhesion of South Eastern states, as the European Council of Copenhagen/ 1993 decided. These political criteria haven't represented conditions of adhesion for the previous groups of states that presented their demand to adhere to EU. See Helen Wallace, William Wallace- "Political process in European Union", trad. Genoveva Bolea, Ed. Arc, 2004, pg. 451.

⁴ The "westphalian state" is defined as the institution claiming to have the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within certain territory. See Sergiu Tamaş, *Political dictionary. Democratic institutions and civic culture*, Ed. Academiei Române, Bucureşti, 1993, pg. 262.

⁵ EU is rather a complex political structure that has been described by scholars as a multi-layered system of governance, as a network or as an original form of political governance, impossible to be inscribed in present patterns of political organization (EU defined as non-identified political object). EU was considered a **collective political system** and not an intergovernmental regime, surpassing the classical academic dichotomy supranational- intergovernmental; **a quasi-state system, a flexible and dynamic entity**. The elaboration of the EU policies can be described, by a part of doctrine, as a post- sovereignty one. See Helen Wallace, William Wallace- *op. cit.*, pp. 540- 543.

⁶ At present EU is passing through a kind of political crisis, as effect of the negative result at the Irish referendum in 2008. So, EU is still based on the present set of treaties (Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice, Treaty of European Community and Treaty on European Community of Atomic Energy). According to these treaties EU, has not juridical personality (by interpreting the silence of the treaties on this topic). Only the Lisbon treaty is expressly giving to EU the juridical personality. Through the Lisbon treaty, EU is also declared the successor entity to EC (practically, the communitarian pillar is disappearing). In the Lisbon treaty vision, the European Community of Atomic Energy is not dissolved.

⁷ Philippe Manin, *Droit constitutionnel de l'Union Européenne*, Paris, Pédone, 2004, pp. 66- 69; 92.

⁸ The theory of the "continental heart" is illustrating the global relation between terrestrial and maritime powers. It was formulated for the first time by Halford Mac Kinder in 1904 and then developed in its work "Democratic ideals and Reality"/1919, where the "pivotal zone" became the "continental heart"; the theory was for the third time modified in 1943. See Graham Evans, Jeffrey Newnham, *Dictionary of international relations*, Ed. Universal Dalsi, 2001, trad. by Anca Irina Ionescu, pp. 229- 230.

⁹ The „periphery” is a term used in relation with imperialism (the last one defining the hegemonic relation between a state and another state or group of states subordinated to its control). Imperial policy means in this case a deliberate projection of power outside its initial area of jurisdiction, having as purpose to create a coherent administrative and political unity placed under the hegemonic control. See Graham Evans, Jeffrey Newnham- *op. cit.*, pg. 254. Classical empires covered various societies from a geographically limited space that have been ruled but not governed by emperors. There weren't administrative means as the institutions, organizations, information, the administrative staff, necessary for ancient emperors had no in order to govern these peripheries. It was rather a political control over a social and geographical space, obtained and maintained by military force. See classical empires and their behavior in relations with controlled spaces in David Held, Anthony Mc Grew, David Goldblatt, Jonathan Perraton, *Global transformations*, POLIROM, 2004, trad. „By Ramona-Elena Lupascu, Adriana Straub, Mihaela Bordea, Alina- Maria Turcu, pg. 58.

¹⁰ See Vladimir Alexe, *Post-Soviet Russian Geopolitics*, www.conflict.md/comentarii.php?ID=2063

¹¹ In its basic geopolitical work, „The Essential of Geopolitics”, 2000, Alexander Dugin considers, for example, that the future geopolitical world will be marked by a global bipolarity between continental states and maritime states, between Eurasiatic states and Atlantic states. Dugin is seeing Russia as a kind of empire dominating the European empire organized around Germany and Mitteleuropa and also, dominating the Central Asian empire.

¹² See Paul Claval, *Geopolitics and geo-strategy. Political thought, space and territory in XXth century*, Ed. Corint, trad. Elisabeta Maria Popescu, Bucureşti, 2001, pg. 48.

¹³ As a geopolitical term, usually depicting peripheral states whose destiny can influence the regional or international stability. During the XIXth century Turkey was the central point of imperial rivalry between Russia and Great Britain for gaining such spheres of influences area as Eastern Mediterranean Sea. The identification criteria of the pivotal states are various, depending on the distinct interests of the great powers elaborating the lists with these kind of states, according to their own strategic interests. See Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham, *op. cit.*, pg. 446.

¹⁴ By this geopolitical term we are referring to a twofold empire, composed by USA and EU.

¹⁵ Marie-Claude Smouts, Dario Battistella, Pascal Vennesson, *Dictionnaire des relations internationales. Approches, concepts, doctrines*, Dalloz, 2006, pp. 248-249. Paul Claval, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47. The World-Island is the Old Continent (Europe- Asia- Africa) and the Heartland is the central point of the World- Island. According to another interpretation of this theory, the Heartland can be the industrial and commercial area essential at one moment in time for the great powers, interests (today this area can be the Persian Gulf or the emergent

economies from South-Eastern Asia). See Andrei Miroiu, Radu- Sebastian Ungureanu, *Handbook of international relations*, POLIROM; 2006, pg. 75.

¹⁶ Marie -Claude Smouts, Dario Battistella, Pascal Vennesson, *op. cit.*, pg. 248.

¹⁷ John Spykman believes in the importance of maritime powers, focusing also on the role of World-Island edges, called by himself the "Rimland". The powers succeeding in controlling the Rimland, either continental or maritime powers, are finding themselves into an advantageous position on the international stage. US must avoid a monolithic and hegemonic World-Island, and take advantage on the Rimland heterogeneity. See Paul Claval, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

¹⁸ The containment strategy was used in the Cold War period against Soviet Union. It means putting around USSR a belt of US allies in order to insure the US security. NATO is a genuine expression of Atlantism, a clear illustration of Mac Kinder theory on maritime powers solidarity. See Paul Claval, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-128.

¹⁹ See Saul Bernard Cohen, *Geopolitics of World System*", Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Oxford, UK, 2003, pp. 211-233.

²⁰ According to one opinion, Russia has in general a preference for embracing the hard-type of empire (as essentially a military empire)- see Serghei Witte, *Vospominniya*, Skif-Alex, Tallin-Moscow, 1994, vol. 2, pg. 476, quoted by Dmitri Trenin- „The end of Eurasia”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC and Moscow, 2002, pp. 46, 74.

²¹ According to Dmitri Trenin, much depends on how we can define the term „empire”. This author disputably considers that Russia is within its present borders, an empire, including not only the North Caucasus but also Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and in a broader sense, Siberia and the Far East. See Dmitri Trenin, *op. cit.*, pg. 24.