

**CIS, EURASEC, GUAM, AND
BSECO REGIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS: THEIR ROLE
IN THE INTEGRATION
PROCESSES IN CENTRAL
EURASIA**

**ONE OF THE LIMITROPHE TERRITORIES OF
THE GLOBAL WORLD
(TRANSFORMATION OF THE STATES OF
THE BALTIC-BLACK SEA REGION
IN THE 21ST CENTURY)**

P a r t I

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In recent years the academic community has become increasingly engrossed in the conceptions of the Baltic-Black Sea system (BBSS) of international relations. Closer inspection reveals three major approaches. The first approach envisages the conceptual mapping of Europe (an

idea suggested by Stein Rokkan)¹ and its application in the Vienna-Moscow-Istanbul triangle.

¹ See: S. Larsen, "Modelirovanie Evropy v logike Rokkana" (The Modeling of Europe in S. Rokkan's Logic), *Polis*, No. 1, 1995.

The second approach relies on the Cold War logic best described as conflicting interaction; it rests on the agency interpretation, which concentrates on military-strategic aspects and became especially obvious after the Russian-Georgian war of 2008. The third approach is best described as structural and interprets all changes as the geopolitical re-division of territories.

The BBSS problem is undoubtedly topical. It was Halford Mackinder who pointed to the region's geopolitical importance by tagging it as the World Island. It was pointed out long ago that the BBSS was formed by two continental rings, conventionally described as internal (formed by the East European and African-Arabian platforms) and external (formed, with a great degree of approximation, by the Hindustani, Chinese, and Siberian platforms).

Europe, as part of the World Island, is fringed by the Mediterranean basin in the south and a pseudo-Mediterranean basin of the Baltics in the north. There is a fairly wide strip of intermediate territory of the Black Sea and the Baltic runoffs between Europe and the Heartland (formed by Eurasia proper). This makes the BBSS a link between Europe and Eurasia proper.

Geographically we can identify a vast Baltic-Black Sea *Mezhdumorie* (inter-sea area) formed by two strips, one of them being part of the Baltic and the other of the Black Sea basins divided by the Carpathian Mountains that stretch meridionally between them. The river outflows of the Black Sea (the Dniester, Southern Bug, and Dnieper) are found to the east; they are adjacent to the rivers of the Baltic basin (the Nieman, Western Dvina, and the long rivers that flow

across lakes: the Velikaia, Narva, Lovat, Volkhov, and Neva). This is a smaller inter-sea area of sorts, the pied-Carpathian bridgehead of Eurasia.

The Danube basin, to the west of the Carpathians, latitudinally crosses the Small Carpathians (the Beskidy) to join the Vistula and Odra basins. From the geographical point of view, this much more complex and varied area falls apart into several interconnected territories and can be described as the Trans-Carpathian bridgehead of Europe.

Political and economic activities in both geographical niches create *mestorazvitia* (development areas) associated, according to Samuel Huntington, for historical reasons with European and Eurasian civilizational confrontation and development. In other words, the geopolitical self-determination of these places was conditioned by the interaction of two civilizational entities—Europe proper and Russia-Eurasia. This geographic expanse can be described as *mezhdumorie* (an interface of two civilizations according to S. Huntington) with two civilizational orders—the pro-Western that tends toward Europe and the Eastern, which is mentally closer to Eurasia, Russia.

On the whole, the BBSS can be described as a specific geopolitical entity at the junction of two vast geopolitical expanses—Western Europe and Russian Eurasia. It is wrong to think, however, that it tends either toward Europe or Eurasia. Throughout centuries this area acquired an intermediate civilization marked by a very specific mentality, culture, economic order, an undeveloped statehood, and the continuing efforts to find its place on the geopolitical map of Europe and the world.

The “Barrier Reef” between Western Europe and Northern Eurasia

Situated at the junction of civilizations, the inter-sea is a geopolitically fluid area. According to Samuel Huntington, Central and Southeastern Europe and the post-Soviet expanse are found at the junction of the Western Christian, Eastern Christian, and Muslim civilizations.² Hence its geopolitical fluidity is shown in two different ways.

² See: S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Touchstone Books, New York, 1998.

- First, for a long time it was deprived of a statehood of its own and remained part of various state formations (the Russian, Austria-Hungarian, and German empires).
- Second, the low level of legitimacy of the state borders, which were fixed under external pressure rather than by an agreement between the neighboring nations.

For a long time the Baltic-Black Sea region (BBSR) played a special role in the evolution of the European and Eurasian civilizations; it affected their development as well as the level of conflict. In the early period it served a natural barrier between the West and the East; it stopped the Mongols who were pressing into Europe.

A vast Mongolian Empire appeared on Eurasian territory in the 13th century. It was during the lifetime of Genghis Khan, its founder, that the Mongolian vanguard under Jebe and Subadai penetrated the Black Sea coastal area, the southern periphery of the Baltic-Black Sea inter-sea area. In 1223, they defeated the united Polovtsian and Russian forces at the Kalka.

In 1236-1242, Batu Khan, Genghis Khan's grandson, undertook a wide-scale and carefully prepared march to the "last sea" (the Atlantic) to create a great empire stretching from sea to sea. The Genghisids reached the European *Respublica Christiana*. The Mongols penetrated the western sector of the Baltic-Black Sea inter-sea area, besieged and captured Polish, Hungarian, and Czech towns and, after crossing Croatia and Serbia, reached the Adriatic. The behests of the founder of the empire and the first Eurasian civilization were thus fulfilled. On the way back the Mongols established their strict control over the Black Sea steppes and the Crimea.

Kievan Rus disappeared under the pressure of the Genghisids' Eurasian Empire. In 1236-1238, the Eurasian fringes (the Bulgars and the princedoms in the Volga and Don basins) were plundered; in 1240, Kiev and other southern princedoms were captured. The Galicia-Volhynia Princedom withstood the onslaught and checked it. Never captured, the north and the west of Kievan Rus became a buffer zone.

The Mongolian invasion created four territories that, in turn, shaped a new *mestorazvitie*:

- The East of the Eurasian zone became a feudalized periphery of the Golden Horde;
- The North (the Novgorod and Pskov republics), a geographic periphery, became de facto part of the Baltic periphery and, on the whole, matched these republics' geographic location in the Baltic-Black Sea inter-sea area. Having accepted its nominal vassal dependence on the Golden Horde, the North prevented German infiltration into the Slavic lands across the Baltic. The North became an object of expansion of two mutually exclusive cultures, which inevitably interfered with its *mestorazvitie*;
- The Greater Kiev and adjacent territories were depopulated and became politically disintegrated; this caused degradation of their statehood and invited the negative consequences of early colonialism;
- The West came to the fore as the core of new Baltic-Black Sea regional *mestorazvitie* (it included the Galicia-Volhynia Princedom which had lost control over the lower and middle reaches of the Dniester and Prut and survived in the basins of Dniester, Southern and Western Bug, and Dvina, as well as the upper reaches of the Dnieper that remained relatively independent in the context of the mounting feudalization. It was at that time that Galich and Vilnius, among other centers found in the so-called paradoxical periphery, claimed the leading role as a new power center in the BBSR.

It was only in the mid-13th century that Lithuania came forward as a new power center, having become consolidated under Mindaugas into a powerful autocratic state with power concentrated in the hands of the grand duke, who never tolerated rivals. The hegemony issue was radically resolved

when Poland and Hungary became involved to a much greater extent; in 1323 the influence of the Galich princely house was finally destroyed. As a result, Lithuania acquired Volhynia, Poland took Galich, while the southern Carpathian foothills were moved under power of the Transylvanian Rumanians dispatched there by the Hungarian kings. By the mid-14th century, the Rumanians had set up a Moldavian state on the eastern slopes of the Carpathians. The Horde's, essentially no-man's, land can be described as the fringes of the Dikoe Pole that stretched to the middle and lower reaches of the Dniester, Prut, and Siret. In the past there were Russian towns Maly Galich (Galats) and Belgorod (later Akkerman) here; the Crimean Khanate appeared further south.

By the very end of the 14th century a new *mestorazvitie* appeared in the Baltic-Black Sea inter-sea area, the center of which was divided into three peripheries: the Greater Duchy of Lithuania that united the greater part of the Western, Central, and Southern lands of Kievan Rus; the northern periphery with the Teutonic Order in Prussia and Livonia (a federation of one Order and four church possessions), as well as the Novgorod and Pskov republics. The southern periphery included the Moldavian State and the Crimean Khanate.

Throughout the 14th century a new core/periphery configuration of the Baltic-Black Sea area was taking shape; the limes appeared between the Golden Horde and Respublica Christiana. There also appeared the outlines of the BBSS proper formed by the limes, which incorporated the outside centers of power into the system. V. Tsymburskiy offered a highly apt description when he said that a belt of target territories appeared in the Baltic-Black Sea inter-sea area "to become the BBSS meridional axis (including Chersonesos and Tmutarakan) with the BBSS foci found on both sides of the axis."³

Stein Rokkan demonstrated that a periphery oriented toward the continent appeared on the conceptual map of Europe, in which buffer fringes of empires were formed.

The limitrophe role of the Baltic-Black Sea area created political and economic conditions conducive to the emergence of Muscovy, a new center of political power, in the east along the upper reaches of the Volga. This can be described as the main result of the structuring of the Baltic-Black Sea region. The new power center was gradually gaining strength to challenge the Golden Horde, thus assuming the role of a great Eurasian power in its dealings with the Respublica Christiana and intermediate limitrophe lands.

The BBSS created unique conditions for Europe and Eurasia and allowed them to remain mutually isolated for some time. Europe was developing within its own cultural environment untouched by the Asian Mongolian culture. Russia created a new European-Asian culture with the ideology that rejected the European road and yet was gripped by the desire to borrow European (French, German, and Jewish) values, thus rejecting not only its national traditions but also its national interests.

The Baltic-Black Sea Area as a Containment Factor for Europe's and Eurasia's Imperial Ambitions

The period that followed spanned the 16th-19th centuries. The five partitions of Rzech Pospolita, the Peace of Tilzit and the Vienna Congress that allowed Russia to engulf the BBSS can be described as its landmarks.

³ V. Tsymburskiy, "Kak zhivut i umiraiut mezhdunarodnye konfliktnye sistemy," *Polis*, No. 4, 1998, pp. 52-73.

The 16th and 17th centuries were marked by a struggle between Russia and Austria for control over the Baltic-Black Sea area. Russia joined some of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian lands it had had its eye on for a long time. The Austrian Empire acquired the Carpathian foothills to set up the so-called Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria on the lands of Galich Rus of the past, thus moving into a target territory long coveted by Hungary.

Prussia received Pomerania (with the exception of Gdansk) and a large part of Greater Poland. What remained of the Polish-Lithuanian state became part of the Baltic-Black Sea area. When partitioned, Poland, an imperial BBSS center, degenerated into a target territory, being replaced by Prussia.

The 18th century was filled with a struggle for control over the BBSS. In January 1793, Russia and Prussia signed an agreement on a new partition of Poland, under which the former acquired the Ukrainian and Byelorussian lands while Prussia moved into part of Greater Poland, Kuyavia, and Gdansk, thus replacing Poland in the BBSS.

In 1793, the Sejm had to accept the conditions of the Second Partition and ratify the corresponding agreements with Russia and Prussia. It also adopted a new Constitution that placed de facto the remnants of the Polish-Lithuanian state (the historical cores of two polities, Small Poland with Podlasie and Masovia, and Lithuania proper) under the control of the Russian Empire.

In 1795, the Courland nobles initiated the process of joining Russia; on 27 May of the same year, the Duchy became the Courland Gubernia of the Russian Empire.

The Fourth and Fifth Partitions took place in the early 19th century: the process proceeded in stages. Under the Peace of Tilzite of 1807 Prussia lost some of the Polish lands transformed into the Grand Principality of Finland (the Duchy of Warsaw was declared to be a constitutional monarchy); and in 1809 the Principality acquired Western Galicia and the Zamojski powiat under the peace treaty with Austria.

Poland was finally partitioned at the Vienna Congress. Earlier, in March 1813 while the war with Napoleon was still going on, Emperor Alexander I had appointed an interim government of the Duchy of Warsaw. At the Vienna Congress the Russian emperor insisted that the Polish state be restored as part of Russia. Some of the Polish lands were united with Russia as the Kingdom of Poland “inalienably connected with Russia under a Constitution” in the form of a union. The Russian emperor added the title of the King of Poland to his royal titles. This reduced Poland to the status of a target territory, which it remained until its statehood was restored after World War I.

The Russian Empire moved into the BBSS’s flanks—Finland and Eastern Moldavia (Bessarabia).

Integration of the Baltic-Black Sea lands was not a success despite certain progressive domestic political steps and the model of enclave modernization in the form of an autonomy for the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Principality of Finland, which enjoyed the right to pursue their own domestic policies. The results cannot be described as a success despite the special regime in the Baltic-Black Sea area.

In 1816, Alexander I endorsed the liberation of peasants without land drafted by the Estland nobles. Similar laws were adopted in Courland in 1818 and, a year later, in Lifland. The national-liberation movements that swept the territories resulted in curtailed autonomy for Poland. In R. Dahl’s opinion, the Finnish experience was much more successful: the territory acquired a comparatively modern structure of political institutions which, by the end of the first decade of the 20th century, acquired the features of a polyarchy, that is, a democracy as we know it today.⁴

The target territories of the past were much more “European” than the rest of the empire and its standards. They were slowly but surely transformed into fertile soil on which the West-radiated de-

⁴ See: R.A.Dahl, “Polyarkhia, pluralism i prostranstvo,” in: *Antologia mirovoy politicheskoy mysli*, in five volumes, Vol. 2, Mysl Publishers, Moscow, 1997, p. 622 (Russian translation).

velopment impulses could flourish. There are numerous specific institutions and practices of dealing with everyday issues that can be described as grass-root politics still preserved in Ukraine and Byelorussia. Modernization processes were surging ahead in the Black Sea coast of Novorossiiia, the Crimea, Donbass and elsewhere.

Russia's policies on the newly acquired territories are best illustrated by the way the Crimean Tartars were treated once the peninsula became part of Russia. On 4 May, 1783, practically the day after the Crimea was joined to Russia, Grigory Potemkin, in his order to General Debalmen, wrote: "Her Imperial Majesty wishes that the troops treat the local people friendly without causing offense, ...those who violate this should be punished according to the law." Much attention was attached to religion: "Those who dare to treat their (the Crimean tartars.—*B.Z.*) holy places with disrespect and interfere with the Muslims' prayers should be treated with all possible cruelty as a rebel against the church." It was Grigory Potemkin who allocated money from the imperial budget to support the mosques and Muslim clergy.⁵

In 1936 Professor of Moscow University S. Bakhrushin wrote: "We should bear in mind that it was the nobility of the Crimean Tartars who profited in a very real way from joining the Crimea to Russia."⁶ Early in the 19th century the Tartar nobles owned 60 percent of the arable lands in the Crimea.⁷

The royal decrees of 19 October, 1794 and 17 September, 1796 fixed the rights and privileges of the Crimean Tartars, who became exempt from conscription, some taxes, and billeting; the peasants retained their personal freedom; the land and real estate could be inherited by Tartars of all social ranks and social groups.⁸

While the Crimean Tartars acquired freedom when the peninsula was joined to Russia, the Russian peasants remained serfs.⁹

The empire tried to strike root in the newly acquired territories, sometimes to the detriment of its own social standards; it proved unable to accept the new "European" ideas. The abolition of serfdom in 1861 came too late; this act merely tilled the soil for the 1905-1907 revolution.

The crisis of World War I stirred up revolutionary sentiments in Russia, which can be described as the second Time of Troubles. It should be said that the target territories of the BBSS (previously contested by Russia and Prussia) played a leading role in the revolutionary developments.

World War I created the Versailles-Washington system of international relations that destroyed the imperial German-Russian link. This allowed the temporarily forgotten Central and East European centers of power to come to the fore—this was a time of sanitary cordons. It proved to be short-lived, much shorter than any of Europe's political systems. In fact, by that time the continent no longer identified the BBSR as an independent power center.

In the first half of the 20th century, the evolution of the BBSR as an independent power center followed the common European patterns of totalitarian development: cooperation and confrontation between two totalitarian systems—national socialism in Europe and totalitarian communism in Eurasia (the U.S.S.R.). The geopolitical blunders of the British and French political elites in relation to the expanses to the east of the Odra allowed Germany and the Soviet Union to accumulate enough

⁵ E.I. Druzhinina, *Severnoe Prichernomorie v 1775-1800 gg.*, Moscow, 1959, pp. 93-94.

⁶ S.V. Bakhrushin, "Osnovnye momenty istorii Krymskogo khanstva," *Istoria v shkole*, No. 3, 1936, pp. 57-58.

⁷ A.A. Benningsen, "Ismail-bey Gasprinskiy (Gaspraly) i proiskhozhdenie jadicistskogo dvizhenia v Rossii," in: *Is-mail-bey Gasprinskiy. Rossia i vostok*, Kazan, 1993, p. 81.

⁸ See: S.P. Deriy, "K voprosu o deiatel'nosti komissii po razresheniu zemel'nykh sporov (1802-1810 gg.)," *MAIET*, Simferopol, Issue 3, 1993, p. 162.

⁹ See: B.V. Zazhigaev, *Evoliutsia politicheskogo ustroystva v Respublike Krym v period 1989-1998 godov: Dissertatsia na soiskainie uchenoy stepeni kandidata politicheskikh nauk*, MGIMO (University) MID RF Press, Moscow, 2003.

potential for another clash to seize the continent with the BBSR as its restored epicenter. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 23 August, 1939 made World War II possible. It, in turn, became the apogee of the program of an imperial international communist system that engulfed the entire BBSR territory. The bi-polar Yalta-Potsdam system dominated the world. The Heartland of Mackinder finally became completely identified with the Soviet Union, while the Rimland of Nicholas Spykman with the Atlantic civilization headed by the United States as the guarantor of its continued existence.

The Soviet Union and the countries of the socialist camp imbibed the main political and economic traits of the cruelest totalitarian regimes in their extreme forms of tyranny camouflaged by the international proletarian quasi-ideology of communism. In his *The Grand Chessboard*, Zbigniew Brzezinski has provided an outline of its structure.¹⁰

Moscow and the territories of the first echelon of the Russian Federation that radiated its political and power impact onto the adjacent Union republics became the linchpin of the inner empire. The empire's external circles (the satellite countries) living behind the Iron Curtain that separated them from the rest of the world formed the second group; the third group included the geographically distant client states.

The moral degradation of the Soviet political elite killed the Soviet Empire; in the latter half of the 1980s its leaders abandoned the ideological values of Marxism-Leninism. In his *Democracy and Totalitarianism*, Raymond Aron predicted the inevitable collapse of the communist utopia: he was convinced that bit by bit the revolutionary enthusiasm would be dampened; after a long period the revolutionaries, or their sons, might become bourgeois.¹¹

Mikhail Gorbachev armed himself with "values common to mankind" to declare detente as the Soviet Union's foreign policy priority. The Soviet leaders were resolved to draw closer to the West under the slogan of a "common European home from the Atlantic to the Urals."¹² The system began to erode as soon as the Iron Curtain was lifted and the Marxist-Leninist ideology abandoned. Milovan Djilas, a Yugoslav political scientist, offered a highly interesting opinion. He said that professional revolutionaries occupied the posts in the East European countries, which ensured them all privileges, and that the communist upper crust had become bourgeois. The new regimes, he continued, which called themselves People's Democracies, were, in fact, oligarchic states in which a small privileged class exploited the popular masses.¹³

Communism gradually underwent a decline and the "empire of evil" began disintegrating between 1989 and 1991; the Soviet Union was no longer a centralized mechanism. The socialist camp in Eastern Europe was the first to fall apart.

In these conditions Russia, the legal heir to the Soviet Union, was kept busy by appropriating the Soviet Union's diplomatic missions and their property as well as finances and assets. It was Moscow that initiated the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991; it was the first to declare its independence and worked hard to pry the union republics away from their common state. The world was stunned by what looked like the speedy decline of the Soviet Union. The August 1991 putsch in Moscow paralyzed the central government.

During several short days in December 1991, the heads of Russia, Ukraine, and Byelorussia announced that the Soviet Union had been disbanded. Later it was officially replaced with a loosely connected structure called the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

¹⁰ See: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1997, pp. 88-90.

¹¹ See: R. Aron, *Demokratia i totalitarizm*, Moscow, 1993, p. 127 (Russian translation).

¹² M.S. Gorbachev, *Perestroika i novoe myshlenie dlia nashey strany i dlia vsego mira*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1987, pp. 199-219.

¹³ See: M. Djilas, "Novyy klass (analiz kommunisticheskoy sistemy)" (The New Class: an Analysis of the Communist System), in: *Antologiya mirovoy politicheskoy mysli*, Vol. 2, p. 578.

“The collapse of the Soviet Union produced monumental geopolitical confusion. In the course of a mere fortnight, the Russian people—who, generally speaking, were even less forewarned than the outside world of the Soviet Union’s approaching disintegration—suddenly discovered that they were no longer the masters of a transcontinental empire but that the frontiers of Russia had been rolled back to where they had been in the Caucasus in the early 1800s, in Central Asia in the mid-1800s, and—much more dramatically and painfully—in the West in approximately 1600, soon after the reign of Ivan the Terrible.”¹⁴

Later, the feverish division of the post-Soviet legacy developed into a landslide, which in 1991 took the form of the “parade of sovereignties.” Zbigniew Brzezinski offered the following description of this: the territory “...was now to be filled by a dozen of states, with most (except for Russia) hardly prepared for genuine sovereignty and ranging in size from the relatively large Ukraine with its 52 million people to Armenia with its 3.5 million. Their viability seemed uncertain, while Moscow’s willingness to accommodate permanently to the new reality was similarly unpredictable.”¹⁵

The American political analyst looks at the CIS as a post-imperial structure in which the republics were moved away from the axis, the Russian Federation, to form a new outside empire (an autonomous shell or a new sanitary cordon).

It has deprived Russia of the possibility of exerting its political influence on the limitrophe territories of the past, which means that the disintegration of the Soviet Union had created a new geopolitical situation in the world. “The collapse of the Russian Empire created a power void in the very heart of Eurasia. Not only was there weakness and confusion in the newly independent states, but in Russia itself, the upheaval produced a massive systemic crisis, especially as the political upheaval was accompanied by a simultaneous attempt to undo the old Soviet socioeconomic model.”¹⁶

The seventy years of totalitarian regime destroyed all the prerequisites (including the genetic ones) needed to defend the Soviet Union by its citizens and to defend the CPSU by its members. “Three-quarters of a century of Communist rule had inflicted unprecedented biological damage on the Russian people. A very high proportion of its most gifted and enterprising individuals were killed or perished in the Gulag, in numbers to be counted in the millions.”¹⁷

It should be said that the nomenklatura (the Communist Party, Komsomol, and trade unions), as well as the KGB and its heirs in the form of the special services of the newly independent states were the main instrument that ruined and destroyed the Soviet Union. They used violence in its worst and most cruel forms rooted in the Stalin experience of the 1930s to impose their policies. Milovan Djilas wrote in his time that while in classical capitalism the hired worker and the capitalist were equal before the law even though in the material respect the former was the exploited and the latter the exploiter, in this case everything was absolutely different. With the legal equality in relation to material wealth (the nation was regarded as the formal owner) in fact a narrow circle of rulers profited from this material wealth using their monopoly on administration as an instrument. Any real demand for freedom under communism (this is what strikes communism at its very heart) in essence is reduced to a demand to correlate all relations (material and property) with the law.¹⁸

It was the form and causes of the disintegration of the Soviet Union that created a unique geopolitical situation in the region: “The disintegration late in 1991 of the world’s territorially largest state created a ‘black hole’ in the very center of Eurasia. It was as if the geopoliticians’ ‘heartland’ had been suddenly yanked from the global map.”¹⁹

¹⁴ Z. Brzezinski, op. cit., p. 88.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ See: M. Djilas, op. cit., p. 578.

¹⁹ Z. Brzezinski, op. cit., p. 87.

It was as early as 1992 that Zbigniew Brzezinski put forward the Balto-Pontic doctrine—which was the term American political science used to describe, in the post-Soviet period, a possible alliance between Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania. The doctrine's author insisted that the United States needed the Balto-Black Sea Union as a belt that would lock Russia and its expansionist intentions in Asia.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union restored the BBSR to its natural state; today it occupies the historical place identified by Samuel Huntington as a barrier between Europe and Eurasia. In the globalized world, however, the BBSR cannot be regarded as an independent power center.

The Territory of Interlinking Civilizations

The present configuration of the BBSS was determined by the repercussions of the disintegration of the Soviet imperial expanse. The imperial counterpoint was simplified to the extreme; it is created by Moscow and Brussels; individual Western states, the United States especially, have certain roles to play in the process along with historical traditions. They make it possible to influence the former target territories (now independent states), as well as Germany, Sweden, Poland, and Hungary. Rumania, which controls Moldova, the western part of the target territory, and exerts influence on the divided state, is a special case.

The BBSS is formed by the RF's Kaliningrad exclave, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova and branches off to Finland and, in certain respects, to Poland.

The domestic arrangements of the independent states of the Baltic-Black Sea area are obviously stamped with their previous experience. For nearly five centuries they were target territories of Sweden, Prussia (Germany), Austria, the Sublime Porte, and Russia. The latter dominated them for quite a long time as the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, a fact that helped the formula of state development created by the counterpoint of the national and imperial policies to take root there.

The dual position of the limitrophe territories of the Baltic-Black Sea zone contributed to the emergence of several common institutional traits caused by the hegemony of Poland, Sweden, and Germany, on the one hand, and Russia (the Soviet Union), on the other, in its northern part, and Austrian, Turkish and Russian hegemony in its southern part.

Let us look at the entire range of state forms in the Baltic-Black Sea area, albeit in general terms.

In the north Finland, which left the sphere of Russia's (the U.S.S.R.'s) imperial hegemony through a slow evolutionary process full of compromises, demonstrates sustainable development. This became possible due to its policy, which goes back to the early 19th century and can still be described as extremely useful to Finland and Russia (to a certain extent).

Estonia set up a classical parliamentary republic. In Latvia this state form demonstrates certain yet not entirely distinctive features. In both cases, however, statehood bears traces of the remnants of the autocratic syndrome; both states pursue highly nationalist policies that smack of apartheid. Lithuania is moving away from a parliamentary republic to the presidential-parliamentary system fraught with the danger of super-presidentialism, on the one hand, while it is encouraging pluralism and autonomy of the informal sectors of its polity, on the other. Both can probably be explained by traces of Russian and Polish traditions.

Belarus can be described as a super-presidential state, which is transforming into new "civilized" forms of authoritarianism. The state rests on the presidential-parliamentary system dominated by a policy that brings to mind Soviet practices. Today, the country needs imperial underpinning in the form of the Union State. Under certain conditions Warsaw, Brussels, and even Washington are pre-

pared to play this role, while Minsk has recently been demonstrating its readiness to accept this and received favorable signals.

Ukrainian statehood is very hard to interpret. The main problem is rooted in the Soviet past when a unitary state was set up to bring together different target territories. Those territories that are fairly close ethnically, culturally, and linguistically are still disunited by obvious, persisting, and fundamental differences. Ukrainian identity has existed for over a century and is still developing despite its contradictory nature. State development and nation formation within the only available framework of quasi-statehood Soviet style remain the main stumbling block. Even in much simpler contexts (Estonia is an ample example), life called for much more complicated and diverse institutional decisions. The Ukrainian political class, however, remains devoted to the “sacred cow” of unitarianism with the capital serving as the center and artificial administrative-territorial division. In fact, no productive and sensible state development in Ukraine is possible unless more complex forms of political organization are accepted, including the principles of territorial (federative or autonomous), con-social and corporative distribution of power. This calls for an account of the patchy historical past of the country’s political expanse, the varied nature of its population and its very different political cultures. This alone will transform the artificially created expanse into an integral state system.

In Moldova, parliamentarism is coupled in a very balanced and sustainable way with respected presidential power capable of national integration. The country still has its share of serious problems when it comes to state development and nation formation, but these problems can be resolved: under the pressure of the unfavorable conditions the political class and ordinary people are forced to seek agreement for the sake of small yet reliable results.

Moldova is a divided country, which interferes with its state development: Western Moldova belongs to Rumania; Bukovina is divided between Rumania and Ukraine, while the traditional Transnistrian core, the source of the country’s economic, cultural, and political progress, was separated from it and transformed into the Transnistrian Moldavian Republic.

Even a brief overview shows that in the presence of their different development patterns the Baltic-Black Sea countries are disunited by the recent systemic (communist) closeness. This means that many problems in the state development sphere (this is especially true of the CIS countries) cannot be shifted to the sphere of inter-state communication but are resolved along the old nomenklatura (mostly criminal) channels.

Mikhail Gorbachev, the last general secretary of the CC CPSU, is guilty of a geopolitical blunder or, rather, of betrayal of the Soviet Union’s national interests. This caused tectonic shifts on the Eurasian continent; the results are comparable with those of World War I and the October coup of 1917.

From the geopolitical point of view, these results can be divided into three levels.

Level One—global. The tectonic processes changed the entire structure of international relations. The bipolar system shaped by forty years of world history that helped mankind survive during the frightening years of “nuclear deterrence” has disappeared. With the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the world became unipolar.

The world with the only superpower, which emerged from the ruins of the old system in 1989-1991, did not stabilize the situation. The geopolitical global mosaic became different; the status of the states and their places in the system of international relations changed. The same applies to the regions, Europe in particular.

In the years of global confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States, the two principle actors regarded Europe as a buffer zone. The two superpowers were readying for a thermonuclear war and were resolved to wage it in the Old World. In his interview to the *Kommersant-Vlast* journal (Russia) that appeared on 28 March, 2005, Colonel-General M. Burlakov, the last commander of the Western Group of the Soviet Armed Forces, said: “I frequently met Chairman of the NATO Military

Committee Klaus Naumann, who once told me: 'I saw the plans of the GDR army which you endorsed.' He agreed with our timetable which said that we could have reached La Manche in a week's time."²⁰

The post-Soviet global geopolitical landscape was absolutely different. During the Cold War, the United States was the center of attraction for a large varied and poly-civilizational group of countries tied together by a shared objective: containment of Soviet expansion. Colonel-General Burlakov's interview confirms this. The end of the Cold War spelled the end of this multi-national intercultural community; the West was no longer afraid of the Soviet Union. In fact, it was this fear that tightened the allied bonds in the sphere of military, economic, civilizational, and cultural interests.

Freed from the common threat, the European countries revised their interests and foreign policy priorities. European integration contributed to the separation of interests of the European states; they became potentially conflicting (especially in the economic sphere, energy resources in particular). Europe is no longer a buffer zone between two opposing superpowers of the bipolar world. It has developed into an independent geopolitical actor with global interests.

The trend toward America's waning hegemony on the international scene became clear in the 21st century. The Soviet Union ceased to exist—the cherished dream of Kissinger and Brzezinski came true; this was the beginning of the end of American world domination. In his interview to *Newsweek*, well-known American political scientist Francis Fukuyama said that America's strength in the world was waning mainly because other powers were getting stronger, which could be predicted.²¹

New giants are coming out onto the world area; they are getting stronger before our eyes. They are united Europe, with united Germany insisting on its leadership, and China. America is still an uncontested leader but the growing monsters are pushing it out, from both the political and economic arenas. They will continue doing this until they move it away first from their regions and zones of influence and later from all the other places.

Dr. Kenichi Ohmae, a Japanese economist, predicted that by the mid-21st century the Chinese economy would be 8 times bigger than Japan's. This will obviously change the format of Eastern integration: ASEAN + 3 will be replaced with China + 12. This is how the "Eastern wing" of Eurasia will look. Complete symmetry might be achieved: the United States of Europe in the West and, probably, the United States of China" in the East.²²

In his *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, John Mearsheimer, professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, has written: "A rising China is the most dangerous potential threat to the United States in the early twenty-first century. ...the United States has a profound interest in seeing Chinese economic growth **slow** considerably in the years ahead." Prof. Mearsheimer has also written that China is not a single U.S.'s rival. He points to the European Union as another potentially formidable rival.²³

Professor of Economic History at Harvard University Niall Fergusson is convinced that power and force are not a natural monopoly; the power struggle is eternal and omnipresent. Unipolarity, writes Prof. Fergusson, a very popular topic of the early post-Soviet period, could not last long for the simple reason that history does not tolerate hyper-powers. Rivals that will appear sooner or later will bring the world back to the multipolar world of great powers.²⁴

In the post-Soviet world, Russia is no longer a pole of the bipolar world; the disintegration of the Soviet Union made it a fragment of the international relations structure. Russia's economy cannot be described as strong (its GDP comprises a miserly 2.4 percent of the global gross product); it has no

²⁰ M.P. Burlakov, "Interview," *Kommersant-Vlast*, 28 March 2005, available at [<http://vnr-su-army.narod.ru/interviu.html>],

²¹ See: "Francis Fukuyama: Back to the End of History," *Newsweek*, U.S.A., 29 September, 2008, available at [<http://www.inosmi.ru/translation/244157.html>], 8 June, 2009.

²² V. Konotopov, "Zakat imperii," available at [www.from-ua.com/politics/420b3bb377ba7], 8 June, 2009.

²³ J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, W.W. Norton, New York, 2001, pp. 362, 402, 386.

²⁴ See: N. Fergusson, "Mir bez gegemona," *Svobodnaia mysl'-XXI*, No. 1, 2005, available at [http://www.postindustrial.net/content1/show_content.php?id=119&table=free&lang=russian], 8 June, 2009.

serious army (its nuclear weapons are obsolete and cannot be used in local wars, particularly in Europe); its population is smaller not only than that of Brazil but also of Indonesia, Bangladesh, and even Nigeria. Russia lost its influence in the countries of the former socialist camp and in the Baltic countries. This context adds special importance to what Samuel Huntington has to say: "Overall Russia is creating a bloc with an Orthodox heartland under its leadership and a surrounding buffer of relatively weak Islamic states which it will in varying degrees dominate and from which it will attempt to exclude the influence of other powers. Russia also expects the world to accept and to approve this system. Foreign governments and international organizations, as Yeltsin said in February 1993, need to 'grant Russia special powers as a guarantor of peace and stability in the former regions of the USSR.' While the Soviet Union was a superpower with global interests, Russia is a major power with regional and civilizational interests."²⁵

The Soviet Union did not merely fall apart; its ruins buried the geopolitics of the strongest empire of the 20th century which had taken about 100 years to achieve its final shape. Throughout the 20th century Russia's geopolitics was shaken twice. This geopolitical collapse undermined trust in Russia as a partner in international relations. Today under certain conditions the Russian Federation might become one of the poles of the multipolar world but it is unlikely to impose its rules on others.

(To be continued)

²⁵ S.P. Huntington., op. cit., p. 164.