

REGIONAL POLITICS

ONE OF
THE LIMITROPHE TERRITORIES
OF THE GLOBAL WORLD
*(Transformation of the States
of the Baltic-Black Sea Region
in the 21st Century)*

Part II

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Early in the 21st century, the effects of the Soviet Union's disintegration are only just starting to come to the fore, but I am convinced that the old world order is already dead.

Indeed, deprived of an external threat, the United States has been gradually losing its former role as global hegemon, while liberal democracy has proven unable to maintain its former Great Power status. The fear of the "red plague" in the East disappeared together with the Soviet Union; the old ideological bonds have slackened, while a new ideology is being formulated on the basis of particular interests. The political elite is still clinging to its imperial ambitions, however its social support is dwindling.

Continued from No. 4-5, 2009.

The Americans are losing their former patriotic zeal: “Recent trends in public opinion suggest that the U.S. electorate is even less ready to sacrifice blood and treasure in foreign fields than it was during the Vietnam War.”¹

America’s obsession with global domination died on the ruins of the bipolar system of international relations; the Soviet Union’s disintegration destroyed its “environment” and opened up wide vistas for the new rival geopolitical actors.

The imperial U.S.-dominated global system of international relations of the past became a mirage before our eyes, while the milieu in which confrontation with the Soviet Union demanded concentrated efforts was replaced with the competitive environment of states of the same economic formation.²

Professor of Economic History at Harvard University Niall Ferguson has written in this connection: “We tend to assume that power, like nature, abhors a vacuum. In the history of world politics, it seems, someone is always the hegemon, or bidding to become it. Today, it is the United States; a century ago, it was the United Kingdom. Before that, it was France, Spain, and so on. The famed 19th-century German historian Leopold von Ranke, doyen of the study of statecraft, portrayed modern European history as an incessant struggle for mastery, in which a balance of power was possible only through recurrent conflict.

“The influence of economics on the study of diplomacy only seems to confirm the notion that history is a competition between rival powers.”³

The Soviet Union’s withdrawal from history echoed at the regional level as well: Russia not only lost its geopolitical impact, but also its political, military, and economic control over large territories in Europe and across the former Soviet Union. According to Brzezinski, today “the space occupied for centuries by the Tsarist Empire and for three-quarters of a century by the Soviet Union was now to be filled by a dozen of states, with most (except for Russia) hardly prepared for genuine sovereignty.” He adds: “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 the simultaneous attempt to undo the old Soviet socioeconomic model.”⁴

It should be said that the reforms undertaken by Mikhail Gorbachev were possible because of the high level of social guarantees in the Soviet Union. He opened Pandora’s Box and imposed religion, nationalism, and social and political disputes on the nation while wielding the old totalitarian instruments, which, according to the American analyst, was dangerous for the unity of the Soviet Union itself.

In 1988, Zbigniew Brzezinski published *The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century* in which he predicted the Soviet Union’s most probable future as prolonged disorder, which would not bring any positive results, as well as further concessions and ill-considered changes which would bring the coming political crisis closer. The reforms indispensable for economic health would probably deprive the Soviet workers of the main boons offered by the current system: employment and wages unrelated to labor productivity. They would have nothing in exchange.⁵

¹ N. Ferguson, “A World without Power,” *Foreign Policy*, July/August 2004, available at [<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/afp/vac.htm>].

² See: A. Gat, “The Return of Authoritarian Great Powers,” *Foreign Affairs*, No. 4, July/August, 2007.

³ N. Ferguson, op. cit.

⁴ Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1997, p. 89.

⁵ See: Z. Brzezinski, “Bolshoy proval: rozhdenie i smert kommunizma v XX veke,” in: *Obshchestvennaia zhizn za rubezhom*, Issue 9, Moscow, 1990, pp. 12-15. (*The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1989.)

So far, no complete assessment of what the Soviet Union's disappearance from the map meant for Eastern Europe and the world is possible.

The replacement of global bi-polar confrontation with ethnic pushed the Baltic-Black Sea Region at least four centuries back. By the same token, Russia, a former world communist empire, was transformed into a "torn" state. (Samuel Huntington has offered an apt description of "torn" states: "Torn countries are identifiable by two phenomena. Their leaders refer to them as a 'bridge' between two cultures, and observers describe them as Janus-faced. 'Russia looks West—and East.'"⁶)

The Russians experienced a historical shock of sorts: they tried to adjust themselves to the new realities and a dim and unpredictable future.

Vladimir Lukin, the first ambassador of post-communist Russia to the United States, offered the following comment: "In the past, Russia saw itself as being ahead of Asia, though lagging behind Europe. But since then, Asia has developed much faster..." and "we find ourselves to be not so much between 'modern Europe' and 'backward Asia' but rather occupying some strange middle space between two 'Europes.'"⁷

With no Soviet Union in sight the geopolitical landscape of Europe changed beyond recognition. Until recently a great power and the leader of satellite states with territories stretching to the heart of Europe (or, at one time, to the South China Sea), Russia, the legal heir of the Soviet Union, became a state with no geographic access to the outside world; it was weakened by the never-ending conflicts on its western, southern, and eastern borders. Even its northern territories covered with ice the year round and therefore ill-suited for human habitation are geopolitically vulnerable because of their geological value.

American political scientist Parag Khanna has described new multi-polarity as a world dominated by the American, European, and Chinese "empires" with a "world of second order," the countries of which "can be described as the key bearing points of the multipolar world because their decisions can tip the global balance of forces;" this "world of second order" can be described as a "global middle class if such existed at all."⁸ Russia is one such country.

Empires and their global geopolitical interests are the main players on the "world chessboard." Today, only the United States and China can be described as "generalized empires." Regional alliances such as the European Union also create imperial structures and should, therefore, be regarded as main world players.

Samuel Huntington, Zbigniew Brzezinski and many other analysts agree that for the first time in the last 200 years Russia has lost its imperial status. In *The Clash of Civilizations*, Huntington described the change of geopolitical priorities on the World Island in the following way: "While the Soviet Union was a superpower with global interests, Russia is a major power with regional and civilizational interests."⁹ However it can no longer affect the policies pursued by the countries of the Baltic-Black Sea Region which have joined NATO and the EU; its grip on Ukraine and Belarus has weakened.

To my mind, this happens because, in pursuance of its nationalist and selfish interests, Russia is pushing the Slavic states out of its sphere of influence by political, economic, ethnic, and other methods. The objective international circumstances have nothing to do with this.

British historian Arnold Toynbee believed that at all times civilizations had been born to respond to challenges. Their growth can be described as a new script of the Challenge and Response drama; each turn produced a new script, while the Challenges and Responses were nothing more than repeti-

⁶ S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Touchstone Books, New York, 1998, p. 139.

⁷ V. Lukin, "Our Security Predicament," *Foreign Policy*, No. 88, 1992, p. 60.

⁸ V. Inozemtsev, "Mechty o mnogopoliusnom mire," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 18 September, 2008.

⁹ S.P. Huntington, op. cit., p. 164.

tions of the old plot. Seen as mathematical progressions of sorts, the repetitions can be formulated as: a challenge that received an adequate response led to a new challenge followed by an adequate response until the continuity snapped. The following describes progressive disintegration: a challenge with an inadequate response leads to another challenge and another inadequate response and so on until complete disintegration ensues.¹⁰

The twenty-year long history of the newly independent states can be described as a chain of challenges and inadequate responses with not much sense in them. In the majority of cases this happens because the selfish interests of the quasi-elites prevail over national interests. And, in particular, the last two decades have demonstrated to one and all that the Russian elite is unable to respond to the global challenges.

Disintegration of the Soviet Union affected the national (cultural) sphere and badly hit the Baltic-Black Sea Region.

Cultural distinctions were successfully suppressed first by the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union in which the militant Marxist-Leninist ideology replaced the monarchy as the main pressure instrument. Once the Soviet Union disintegrated these distinctions sprang back to life.

It should be said that the structure based on the national rather than territorial principle is a “delayed action mine” which made it next to impossible to address these problems. The Soviet nationalities policy added urgency to the problems in the course of the changes in social and political conditions.

National-cultural progress was an illusion based on “the tenacity of the belief in the immortality of universal states with their impressiveness rooted in the “Time of Troubles” and symbolizing a revival of the degrading society. A universal state captivates hearts and minds because it is the embodiment of a rally from the long-unhauled rout of a “Time of Troubles.” Politically, a universal state is the highest expression of a rally, a psychological product of social disintegration. A feeling of unity and universality is typical of all universal states.”¹¹

Communist ideology, which was easily grasped by the masses, replaced religion and culture; Marxism-Leninism explained the problems of human beings in simple terms.

The Soviet Union could offer totalitarianism and nothing else. In his book, *The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century*,¹² Brzezinski described communism as the most unusual political and intellectual delusion of the 20th century. He goes on to say that the doctrine elaborated by an obscure German Jewish immigrant librarian and enthusiastically embraced by an equally obscure Russian political scribbler became the most attractive theory of the century because it explained the meaning of life in comprehensive and, most important, simple terms. The Stalin system survived because of the personality cult and mass extermination of objectionable people. It went on living because the masses had no idea about any other alternative.¹²

Neither the Russian Empire nor the Soviet Union created conditions needed to overcome the national and cultural disarray; in fact, the political elite concentrated on deepening the gap.

More often than not, wrote Toynbee, the level of human prosperity is measured by power and wealth; this means that common consciousness looks at the already read chapters of tragic history of public decline as periods of amazing rally and prosperity. This sad delusion might go on and on for ages, but sooner or later it ends. Enlightenment dawns when the terminally ill society begins a war against itself. This war engulfs resources and depletes vitality, which causes society to devour itself.¹³

¹⁰ See: A. Toynbee, *Postizhenie istorii* (A Study of History), Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1991, p. 475.

¹¹ See: *Ibid.*, p. 499.

¹² See: Z. Brzezinski, “Bolshoi proval,” pp. 12-15.

¹³ See: A. Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

Map 1

Split of Civilizations



Huntington describes the majority of the Baltic-Black Sea Region's countries as cleft countries in which "major groups from two or more civilizations say, in effect, 'We are different peoples and belong in different places.' The forces of repulsion drive them apart and they gravitate toward civilizational magnets in other societies."¹⁴

Today, like many years ago, the spilt runs across the territory of the so-called Baltic-Black Sea Arc which comprised parts of contemporary Russia and the Baltic countries, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Rumania, and Bosnia. It is clearly shown in Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*¹⁵ (see Map 1).

It should be said that this is a unique situation unknown in the world.

The states of the Baltic-Black Sea Region considerably differ because of their culture and history. Some of them were able to integrate into the European Union fairly easily (the Baltic countries, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Hungary).

Kievan Rus and Muscovy had little contact with Western European societies. Russian civilization developed as an offspring of Byzantine civilization and then for two hundred years, from the mid-thirteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries, Russia was under the suzerainty of the Golden Horde. Russia had no or little exposure to the defining historical phenomena of Western civilization: Roman Catholicism, feudalism, the Renaissance, the reformation, overseas expansion and colonization, the Enlightenment, and the emergence of the nation state. Seven of the eight distinctive features of Western civilization—religion, languages, separation of church and state, rule of law, social pluralism, representative bodies, individualism—were almost totally absent from the Russian experience.¹⁶

The Slavic states that had checked the Asian onslaught on Europe underwent serious social and political changes that affected not only their statehoods but the ethnos as a whole, its mentality and psychology in the first place.

This means that the statehood of Eastern Slavs was formed under an alien yoke—the process that could not be described as natural. A special type of relations

¹⁴ S.P. Huntington, op. cit., p. 138.

¹⁵ See: Ibid., p. 159.

¹⁶ See: Ibid., p. 139.

between the elite and the class it ruled (G. Mosca)¹⁷ took shape: the national elite pressed harder than the foreign invaders to preserve its domination. “The appanage princes who obeyed the ‘czar of Russia’—the Tatar khan—had never been independent autocrats; they kept their possessions because the conquerors let them. Russians were ruled from the Golden Horde and, according to Fletcher, the Moscow czars were forced to perform a humiliating rite: every year in the Kremlin they fed oats to the khan’s horse from their caps.”¹⁸

The Mongol suzerainty widened the cleft between the elite and the masses, with the former being nothing more than a puppet handled by the conquerors. The cleft meanwhile was steadily widening under the pressure of the highly imperfect spiritual sphere.

Czar Peter tried to reform the Church according to the Western pattern by handing all the key posts in the Russian Orthodox hierarchy (which had traditionally belonged to Great Russians) to priests from left-bank Ukraine conquered in the course of the Russian-Polish war of 1667.

Under the strong influence of Roman Catholicism, the Ukrainian Orthodox clerics (irrespective of their acceptance or rejection of Romanization) had to study Roman theology. As a result, they were oriented, to a certain extent, toward Western world outlook.¹⁹

In the course of history the elite became totally alien to the people, who never looked at their betters as part of the nation. This is confirmed by almost all Russian 19th-century writers.

The elite, therefore, had to look for patrons abroad: in Byzantium, the Golden Horde, Europe (France and Germany) and the United States; the nation alienated from power had been living in internal deportation and accepted, without murmur, alien ideas imposed on it by the coup of October 1917.

Machiavelli believed that the concept of “monarchy” had nothing to do with the form of governance in Russia. It “acquired a different meaning interpreted as independence of absolute monarchic power or unlimited power rather than independence from external power.”²⁰

Well-known Russian academic A. Panov is convinced that “...in Russia the process of self-destruction of the country as a national-political and state structure is underway. This is officially confirmed: the autochthonous population has detached itself from power because power does not express its interests.”²¹

In his “*Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*” written in 1920, Lenin wrote: “It is only when the ‘lower classes’ do not want to live in the old way and the ‘upper classes’ cannot carry on in the old way that the revolution can triumph.”²² This profound remark indicates the deepness of the national cleft.

The October coup of 1917 in Russia was carried out according to a foreign script and with foreign interference. A new, ethnically vague political elite replaced the old national elite. Zbigniew Brzezinski described the results in the following way: “One cannot overstate the horrors and tribulations that have befallen the Russian people in the course of this century. Hardly a single Russian family has had the opportunity to lead a normal civilized existence.”²³

The seventy years of communist rule in the Soviet Union merely widened the gap between the ruling part and civil society. In actual fact, Gorbachev’s “perestroika” did not mean reforms since he

¹⁷ See: G. Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, edited and revised, with an introduction by Arthur Livingston; Transl. by Hannah D. Kahn, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1939.

¹⁸ V. Khalifov, *Nauka o vlasti. Kratologia*, Os-89, Moscow, 2008, pp. 282-284.

¹⁹ See: A. Toynbee, op. cit., p. 497.

²⁰ Quoted from: F.F. Kokoshkin, *Russkoe gosudarstvennoe pravo*, Moscow, 1908, p. 123.

²¹ A.I. Panov, “Politicheskiy pluralizm v sovremennoy Rossii,” Academy of Political Science. Department of Political Science and Political Governance, Academy of Civil Service at the RF President, Chelovek i kariera Publishers, Moscow, 2001, p. 98.

²² V.I. Lenin, “*Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*,” Resistance Books, Sydney, 1999, p. 83.

²³ Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, p. 90.

and his “loyal” cronies (Eduard Shevardnadze, Alexander Yakovlev, and other prominent party functionaries) spared no effort to ruin the state. His “new political thinking” and “openness” were nothing more than a new form of Western suzerainty.

In 1999, speaking at the American University in Turkey, Mikhail Gorbachev said: “Destruction of communism was the aim of my life. To achieve this I used my position in the party and country...”

The moral degradation of the Soviet nomenklatura requires no proof—this is an axiom confirmed by what Shevardnadze had to say about Stalin: “...as I plunge deeper into the material I become more and more convinced that Stalin was a rock unique in human history.”²⁴

The geopolitical changes that left their imprint in the Baltic-Black Sea Region were not caused by global economic processes. They were caused by the political (elite) sphere of international relations; they are civilizational changes determined by the historical conditions in which the Slavic states acquired their statehoods. The process went on by recruiting the political national elite and was determined by ethnic and cultural specifics acquired in the course of social evolution.

This process can be described as mutual alienation of the quasi-elite and civil society, which developed into antagonistic contradictions under the pressure of historical circumstances (the Mongol invasion, emergence of monarchy and serfdom, World War I, the coup of October 1917, the Stalin terror, the period of stagnation, and the rule of Mikhail Gorbachev).

In fact, these were centuries-old antagonist contradictions between the ruling class and the ruled rooted in violence as the major instrument of governance.²⁵

The history of East Slavic civilization abounds in facts of genocide of the Slavs. Witness the following: according to the report by O. Shatunovskaia, member of the Party Control Committee at the C.C. C.P.S.U. and the commission set up to investigate Sergey Kirov’s assassination and the political processes of the 1930s, “between 1 January, 1935 and 22 June, 1941, 19,840 thousand ‘enemies of the people’ were arrested; 7 million of them were executed; the majority of the rest perished in the camps.”²⁶

The same thing is going on today: in 1998, there were 64,545 criminal deaths in Russia, while 81,565 were injured in criminal incidents.²⁷ In 2002, Colonel-General Leonid Ivashov wrote: “In 2001, 83 thousand were killed, tens of thousands died of injuries in hospitals, and about 70 thousand disappeared without a trace.”²⁸ This policy created conditions for the “biological damage on the Russian people;” this is what Brzezinski writes about in clear terms in his *The Grand Chessboard*.²⁹

The country can be described as a “cleft country” because its leaders have their sights set on another civilization and are prepared to place their stakes on separatism to reach it: “‘The strongest tendency of the late [twentieth century],’ writes Jacques Barzun in his history of the West, *From Dawn to Decadence*, ‘was Separatism... It affected all forms of unity... The ideal of Pluralism had disintegrated and Separatism took its place; as one partisan of the new goal put it, ‘Salad Bowl is better than melting pot.’”³⁰

Separatism in the post-Soviet part of the world, in the Slavic states in particular, is of an elite nature because the quasi-elite is formed according to nationalities and fights for its interests by contending (in latent forms) with the autochthonous population living in an eternal state of inner deportation.

²⁴ *Bulvar Gordona*, No. 41 (181), 14 October, 2008.

²⁵ See: G. Mosca, op. cit.

²⁶ *Argumenty i fakty*, No. 33 (514), 18-24 August, 1990.

²⁷ See: S. Kara-Murza, *Sovetskaia tsivilizatsia*, Book 1, Eksmo Publishers, Moscow, 2008, p. 215.

²⁸ *Zavtra*, No. 45, 2002, p. 1.

²⁹ See: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, p. 89.

³⁰ Quoted from: P.J. Buchanan, *The Death of the West. How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization*, 1st edition, Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin’s Press, New York, 12 December, 2001, available at [<http://thelandofintellect.org/readings/DeathOfTheWest.txt>].

Over time, the elite's Western orientation took a novel form of mondialism; separate negotiations of Soviet leaders with the West became a precedent. The leaders of the countries of the Baltic-Black Sea Region, of the Soviet Union in particular (Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, Yakovlev, Yeltsin, Kravchuk, and Shushkevich), preferred the Kemalist strategy. They believed that Western culture was their own option for the sake of which they were destroying their own civilization.

In 1991, the quasi-elite pushed the Baltic-Black Sea Region back into the 17th century in the geopolitical sense. Later, the states that had long remained within the field of attraction of the European civilization joined the EU and NATO (the Czech Republic, the Baltic countries, Poland, etc.). Others, such as Belarus and Ukraine were split. Today America is interested in them to a certain extent.

V. Kolosov, director of the Center of Geopolitical Studies at the Institute of Geography (RAS), and R. Turovskiy, senior fellow at the Research Institute of Cultural and Natural Heritage, have written: "Encouraged by the West official Kiev is trying to become a geopolitical alternative to Moscow. Recent experience has shown that in Eastern Europe the idea of an alliance of any configuration without Russia is usually spearheaded against it. This means that the state should be concerned about the possibility of a medieval Baltic-Pontic belt ('sanitary cordon' along Russia's western border)."³¹

Zbigniew Brzezinski has written: "Most painful of all, Russia's international status was significantly degraded, with one of the world's two superpowers now viewed by many as little more than a Third World regional power, though still possessing a significant but increasingly antiquated nuclear arsenal... Russia's social condition was, in fact, typical of a middle-rank Third World country."³²

These processes were generated by the national elites first of the Soviet Union and then of the newly independent states that, since the mid-1980s, had been living under latent Western patronage.

It should be said that the national elites of the Eastern Slavs at all times looked at Western Europe and the United States as the only pattern for Russia. The interest of the liberal-democratic states is heated by the readiness of the post-Soviet political elites to support their geopolitical interests.

To my mind, Gorbachev's rule should be taken as the starting point of disintegration of Soviet power; he tended to ignore laws and abuse power. "The deliberately friendly posture adopted by the West, especially by the United States, toward the new Russian leadership was a source of encouragement to the post-Soviet 'westernizers' and reinforced their pro-American inclinations. They were flattered to be on a first-name basis with the top policy makers of the world's only superpower, and they found it easy to deceive themselves into thinking that they, too, were the leaders of a superpower... The problem was that it was devoid of either international or domestic realism. While the concept of 'mature strategic partnership' was flattering, it was also deceptive. America was neither inclined to share global power with Russia"³³ nor could it, even if it had wanted to do so.

It looks as if Alexander Rutsokoy, former vice-president of Russia, offered the most apt description of the processes underway in the Baltic-Black Sea Region: "It is apparent from looking at our country's geopolitical situation that Russia represents the only bridge between Asia and Europe. Whoever becomes the master of this space will become the master of the world."³⁴

This puts the new geopolitical trends in the Baltic-Black Sea Region and in Eurasia (Russia) in a nutshell. Because of the disintegration that took place in the region in the late 20th century, the lim-

³¹ V.A. Kolosov, R.A. Turovskiy, "Geopoliticheskoe polozhenie Rossii na poroge XXI veka: realii i perspektivy," *Polis (Politicheskie issledovaniya)*, No. 3, 2000.

³² Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, pp. 89-90.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111 (see also: S.P. Huntington, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-168).

itrophe civilization changed its geographic outlines. The unipolar world based on the United States is gradually losing its self-regulating ability, however the United States will remain one of the world's poles together with Europe and rapidly developing China.

Director of the Center for Studies of Postindustrial Society Vladislav Inozemtsev has written the following: "In the emerging world, the influence of the 'power centers' will be determined by four factors: first, the scale and degree of diversification of the national economy; second, the intensity of financial and economic cooperation with the other poles; third, the size and combat-worthiness of conventional armed forces (nuclear potential is mainly used for containment); and fourth, by the ability of the great powers to integrate their 'near abroad.'

"Alas, Russia, despite its 'rising up from its knees' over the last ten years, cannot claim the status of one of the poles: its economy wholly depends on oil and gas exports; its financial wellbeing depends, to a great extent, on the West; its army is not ready to maneuver far from the state borders, while its integration efforts on CIS territory cannot be called anything other than a complete failure."³⁵

Having lost its influence in the countries of the Baltic-Black Sea Region, Russia created conditions in which Europe ceased to be a limitrophe zone wedged between the poles of the bipolar world of the Cold War era to become one of the power centers of the global world.

Having lost its imperial status (which it enjoyed for 300 years), Russia became a limitrophe zone in the sphere of the geopolitical interests of the global players (America, Europe, and China).

The demographic situation in the East Slavic states aggravates the situation, while the Russians in Russia can be described as an internally deported nation. In addition, "some 20 million Russian-speaking people were now inhabitants of foreign states."³⁶ "Russia's birthrate had already plummeted. Its population had fallen to 145 million; one of the estimates had it headed to 123 million by 2015. 'If you believe the forecasts made by serious people who have devoted their whole lives to studying this question,' warns President Putin, 'in 15 years' time there will be 22 million fewer Russians. Just think about that figure—it is a seventh of [Russia's] population. A loss of 22 million Russians in fifteen years would be greater than all the Soviet Union's losses in the Hitler-Stalin war,' Putin went on to add ominously, 'If the present trend continues, there will be a threat to the survival of the nation.'"³⁷

Russia is again (it did this in 2004) cutting down its army and navy: before 2012 the land forces will be reduced by 90 percent; the air force by 48 percent; the navy by 49 percent; strategic rocket forces by 33 percent; aero-space forces by 15 percent; and airborne troops by 17 percent.³⁸

Ten years ago, in an interview to the *Vremia-MN* newspaper, Zbigniew Brzezinski said in particular: "A restored union with Moscow as the center is a chimera. It seems that some time would pass before the Russian elite woke up to the newly independent states as a new reality."³⁹

Early in the third millennium, the limitrophe zone shifted from the Baltic-Black Sea Arc to the Eurasian territories (Russia). Today, the East Slavic states are classical "corrupt" states very much in line with what Machiavelli wrote several centuries ago: "The city ran great risk of losing its freedom through civil discord; that its original institutions are no longer adapted to a city that has become corrupted, is plainly seen in two matters of great moment, I mean in the appointment of magistrates and in the passing of laws."⁴⁰

³⁵ V. Inozemtsev, op. cit.

³⁶ Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, pp. 89-90.

³⁷ P.J. Buchanan, op. cit. (see also: A. Gentleman, "Wanted: More Russian Babies to Rescue a Fast Dying Nation," *London Observer*, 31 December, 2000; R. Legvold, "Russia's Uninformed Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October, 2001, p. 63).

³⁸ See: *Rossiiskaia gazeta—Federalny vypusk*, No. 4772, 15 October, 2008.

³⁹ Z. Brzezinski, "Rossiiskim rukovoditeliam pora by protrezvet," *Vremia-MN*, 1 November, 1999.

⁴⁰ N. Machiavelli, *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius*, Transl. from the Italian by Ninian Hill Thomson, M.A., Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1, Paternoster Square, London, 1883, available at [<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/1/0/8/2/10827/10827.txt>].

These countries present a hazard for the liberal democracies and the totalitarian empires of our days. The quasi-elites have not abandoned their parasitic habits based on total violence, the masses' genetic fear of the powers that be, corruption, juggling with values, and lies.

Functionally, the post-Soviet quasi-elites differ from the national elites of liberal democracies: protected by the Western umbrella the former obey commands from the West and serve Western interests; the latter serve civil society. In Russia, the phobocratic traditions going back to the Mongol yoke are still very much alive.

This evolutionary form corresponds to the conception of "imposing" (according to Karl-Schmitter) and "revolution from the above" (according to Munk-Leff)—a situation in which the leading (old and new) elite groups resort to force to achieve political stability. This can be seen both in Russia and Ukraine.

The post-Soviet quasi-elite is the main instrument which destroys statehoods. In his *The Road to Serfdom*, F.A. von Hayek, a well-known German political scientist, economist, and sociologist, explained this phenomenon and demonstrated that in contemporary mass society the political elite "is not likely to be formed by the best but rather by the worst elements of any society."⁴¹

Even those who dedicated their lives to the struggle against the Soviet Union were caught unprepared. Brzezinski has described the near future of the newly formed limitrophe zone: "The Russian elite will have to wake from its dreams in which Russia is still a world power. It should merely lead the country away from the unfavorable geopolitical situation created by the following.

"China, Russia's eastern neighbor, has a population of 1.2 billion and an economy 4 times larger than the Russian; the Japanese economy is 5 times larger than Russia's. There are 300 million Muslims to the south of Russia whose enmity is heated up by Russia's policies. To the West, there are 360 million Europeans with an economy which is 11 times larger. There is America across the Atlantic, the economy of which comprises twelve Russian economies. The time has come for the Russian leaders to sober up."⁴²

A world of three poles is one of many probabilities of future developments. This is the closest, but not the final, prospect. America, China, and Europe are not the whole world. There are other important players—India, Japan, Russia, Brazil, Pakistan, Iran, and the Arab countries—which in the near future will be kept on the back seat; this means that conflicts and a struggle for zones of influence should not be ruled out.

In the 21st century, the current deficit of resources will transform the limitrophe territory, which due to globalization now covers the whole of Eurasia (Russia), into an object of the geopolitical and geo-economic interests of the main world players.

Niall Fergusson, for example, believes that "the alternative to unipolarity would not be multipolarity at all. It would be apolarity—a global vacuum of power. And far more dangerous forces than rival great powers would benefit from such a not-so-new world disorder."⁴³ "Today nobody knows what resources will be in greatest demand in 40 or 50 years and what will trigger the main conflict," writes Vladislav Inozemtsev. "It seems that the multipolar world will not enjoy peaceful cooperation of the poles. It will rather become a system of seigneur-vassal relations between the poles and their 'near periphery.' The great powers and the hatching power centers might cause conflicts on the borders of the peripheries. The multipolar world of the 21st century will be a world of violence and wars—it will never be stable."⁴⁴

⁴¹ F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, University of Chicago Press; 50 Anv edition, 15 October, 1994, p. 142.

⁴² Z. Brzezinski, "Rossiiskim rukovoditeliam pora by protrezvet."

⁴³ N. Ferguson, op. cit.

⁴⁴ V. Inozemtsev, op. cit.

Destruction of the bipolar system of international relations not merely pushed the Baltic-Black Sea Region back into its natural state of a limitrophe zone on the “World Island” between Europe and Eurasia. Globalization and the emergence of new power centers have changed the geographic outlines of the limitrophe zone.

The radical change of the balance of power in the globalized world created new global players with different spheres of geopolitical and geo-economic interests. They have already turned their attention to the territory of the East Slavic states, Russia in particular, which, under the pressure of circumstances, became a limitrophe zone of the globalized world.