

# East-West Relations

## at the Turn of the Century

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Ten years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, in the last year of the millennium, the East-West relations have reached a new low point. Even a resurgence of the Cold War seems not impossible. At the same time, there is a widespread disgust of, or, disinterest in Eastern European countries among the population in the Western hemisphere. The medias help to propagate an image of Eastern Europe that shows poverty, decay, anarchy, brutality, criminality and destruction - a collection of sheer horrors. Especially inside the European Union, many people are fascinated by the economical and technological power of the United States; they turn their backs to their Eastern neighbours and feel attracted by the 'Light from the West' like an insect by an electric light bulb.

The cultural divide between East and West that exists since the days of the Roman Empire is not likely to disappear in a near future. On the contrary, in 1999, the two wars at the Southeastern borders of the European continent - on the Balkans and on the Northern rim of the Caucase - helped to reshape the old fault line, accentuating the cultural gap that exists between the West (that has its Rome in Washington D.C.) and the "barbarian<sup>2</sup> East (with its Rome in Moscow). But for Europe as a spiritual and cultural entity, the present situation is a calamity. Perhaps Europe is about to develop an economical or even political cohesion on Western foundations, but she will be unable to play an independent cultural role in the world context as long as the mental cut between her two hemispheres continues to exist.

In 1534, *Sebastian Münster* drew in the Swiss city of Bale a map for his *Cosmographia*. He and his friends, who were close to *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, wanted to represent Europe as a Virgin Queen, stretched out on the continent, with her head on the Iberian peninsula, her lower limbs as far east as Moscow and the Ural. But already in Münster's days, the identity and dimension of Europe was a hotly disputed question(1), for the Roman Church saw Europe as a mere vessel for the Catholic creed, as much as today's European Union with its Vatican, the Commission, is propagating a standardized and sterile model of society.

Today, Europe's arteries are still constipated. Her head is separated from her lower parts, causing a metabolic disorder. There is no functioning heart, only an electric brain. A fitting symptom for this is the present destruction of one of the oldest European cultural and trade routes: the Danube waterways. All traffic on the

Danube is cut since the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia had started in March 1999. For the borderstates from Bulgaria to Hungary, this means an economical disaster, but it is also a tragic symbol for the new wound which divides Europe and which will kill it for good as a spiritual and cultural being in next two generations, if this wound is not to be mended and healed.

Seen from a Western point of view, North America and the European Union are bent to intensify their economical and military links, eventually leading up to some closer fusion on the cultural and political levels as well. This common goal was openly formulated in the US for the first time in early 1917 by the young journalist *Walter Lippmann* who wanted to motivate the American public to join the Allies in their war efforts against the Central Powers. He wrote:

"On the shores of the Atlantic Ocean there has grown up a profound web of interests which joins together the Western World. Britain, France, Italy, even Spain, Belgium, Holland, the Scandinavian nations, and Pan-America are in the main one community in their deepest needs and their deepest purposes. They have a common interest in the ocean which unites them. They are today more inextricably bound together than most even as yet realize."<sup>(2)</sup>

Even Germany was supposed to belong to this 'Atlantic Community', although not so her Slavic neighbours. Western leaders in this century never stopped to pursue the realization of this idea. Right after the the downfall of Communist regimes, the 'Atlantic' concept was again propagated by influential Western shapers of public opinion, who were afraid that Europeans (especially reunited Germany) might now look for a new orientation in the global balance of power. As NATO seemed to have lost its purpose, Western leaders were afraid that the American public might favour isolationism again, and that the ties between the two sides of the Atlantic might loosen.

Thus, in September 1990, the British journal *The Economist* stated:

"It is a good moment to contemplate a new Euro-American thought. [...] On each side of the Atlantic, this will involve an adjustment to some people's picture of history. On the European side it will be necessary to accept that the new entity Europe is trying to create - whether it finishes up as federation, confederation or something less - will be part of another, wider, looser entity that includes North America."<sup>(3)</sup>

This Atlantic 'entity' can grow and mature much better if there is a clear frontier to the East. From very early on, it was evident that neither the Soviet Union nor a

## east west relations

"free" Russia should be part of this entity. It was even important to create and maintain a global polarity between the Anglo-American and the Eastern Slavic world that should function like a natural law in the evolution of civilizations, a bit like the two polarities of a magnet. As early as in 1900, the US magazine *The Outlook* expressed a point of view that was common among Anglophone statesmen on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean:

"(...) as the issue of the past was between Anglo-Saxon and Latin civilization, so the issue of the future is between Anglo-Saxon and Slavic civilization"(4)

*Winston Churchill* reformulated a similar statement when he said: "The two great opposing forces of the future [Š] would be the English speaking peoples and Communism." (5)

And the British geopolitician *Halford J. Mackinder* wrote in 1904 about Czarist Russia, when he wanted to illustrate his thesis on the geopolitical polarity of Seapower and Heartland: "Russia is more or less apart, inaccessible to world commerce. It is impossible for Russia to be fused with with West. (...) Russia replaces the Mongol Empire. (...) In the world at large she occupies the central strategical position held by Germany in Europe. (...) [It is not likely] that any possible social revolution will alter her essential relations to the great geographical limits of her existence."(6) Western circles tend to quote from the so-called 'Testament of Peter the Great', a forgery from the Napoleonic Wars, to pinpoint Russia's eternal strife for Anti-Western imperialism and for aggressive annexation of its neighbors. For the Nazis, the 'Testament' was an instrument of propaganda as much as for U.S. President Truman and for strategists of the State Department like George Kennan or Zbigniew Brzezinski.(7)

Such thoughts were at all times clearly perceived on the Russian side, and they fit only too well into the thinking of those who pretend that Russia must find her destiny without being influenced by the cultural and social life of the 'West'. Very early on, Samuel Huntington's thesis of the unstoppable 'Clash of Civilizations'(8) had a feedback in Russia where it was interpreted as an open statement of Western intentions. It added fuel to the voice of those who would like to link Russian identity exclusively with the destiny of East Asia.(9) Radicals like Aleksandr Dugin even evoke the century-old strife between Atlanticists and Eurasians for world supremacy as an occult law of human evolution.(10)

What does this mean for Europe? Should European countries have a voice of their own when they address the 'mighty Russian bear'? Or should America 'take the lead' and hold Europeans on the mental leash? Russian analysts expressed their concern back in 1996 that the US foreign policy aims at the enlargement of NATO in order to prevent the very probable future rapprochement of the Germans and the Russians on a platform of opposing the US, not an ideological platform, but a pragmatic political and commercial platform. To put it shortly, the intention to surround Germany in the east with a semicircle of new NATO states is [Š] explained [Š] by the attempt to establish control over Germany's eastern policy.(11)

Wars therefore can not only be fought for 'just moral causes' - to prevent 'humanitarian crimes' (as the NATO did in Kosovo) or 'Islamist terrorism' (as the Russian Army does in Chechnya) - but also because they further concise geo-political or strategical interests, and help to shape 'public opinion' in a way that serves these interests. This is an old, if cynical insight, formulated by the Machiavellian Jesuit Giovanni Botero when he wrote in his work *Della Ragion di Stato* in 1589:

"Military enterprises are the most effective means of keeping a people occupied, for nothing arouses their interest so much as an important war." (12)

Seen from the perspective of East-West relations, both wars, the one in Kosovo and the one in Chechnya, have in common that they were instrumentalized by professional 'shapers of identity' in order to mobilize societies which increasingly distrust their political leaderships and raise grave doubts in the justification of simple, one-sided cultural concepts. When a Western commentator lamentated in 1994, that as a result of the West's Bosnian debacle, NATO would be lost, and only a renewed Russian menace could save her (13), he was making a point: every Russian commander of the old Soviet school would have signed such a statement in its inversed meaning. The corrupt Russian oligarchy desperately needs an enemy in order to stay in power, and nothing is more effective (as Samuel Huntington would agree) than to rouse old prejudices and fears - in the Russian case, the antipathies against the Caucasian peoples and the fear of Islam.

The five explosions that have killed almost 300 people in Moscow and other cities last summer have horrified Russia. Almost every official identified the bombings as the work of Chechen guerrillas. Yet separatist leader Basayev and Chechen President, *Aslan Maskhadov* have both denied Chechens are responsible for the explosions. Of course, authorities in Russia rejected the idea that other culprits with political or criminal motives might be behind the explosions - for instance the Russian secret service FSB itself.

Most Russian newspapers and TV stations fully endorsed the view that Chechen warlords masterminded the bombings. In September, Russia's most popular commentator, *Sergei Dorenko*, went so far as to say the Russian army should 'submit Chechnya to carpet bombings' (14), thus preparing the mental ground for massive military intervention. The oligarchic-controlled media plays an all-important part in pushing Russian society and its fragile democratic institutions toward chauvinism and militant xenophobia.

Seen from the inside, the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo had to prove to the Western public that there is an urgent need for a strong and rejuvenated Atlantic alliance, called 'the international community of states'. The Chechen wars serve similar purposes, and they continue a long and bloody tradition of Caucasian wars under the tsars in the 19th c. with similar domestic aims. Russian leaders point at some sort of 'silent arrangement': the new, rather offensive military doctrine stresses the parallels to steps taken by NATO on the Balkans.(15) Russian participants of the last Bilderberg meeting (16) in Sintra signaled that NATO's intervention in Kosovo gave Russian politicians a feeling that

Russia now has equally *carte blanche* to intervene in Chechnya, and that NATO certainly will not bomb Moscow if Russia invades a province of its federation.(17)

On the other hand, after all the recent scandals which caused outrage in Russian society, there is a need for the governing oligarchy to show that they are not mere pawns of those Western circles, who, as Russians often tend to believe, wanted since the fall of the Soviet Union regime in 1991 to weaken and control the situation on the territory of the Russian Federation. This suspicion, a feeding ground for wild conspiracy theories, is unfortunately not entirely unfounded. Already back in 1919, a Subcommittee of the U.S. Senate was confronted with the argument:

"Why should a great industrial country like America desire the creation and consequent competition of another great industrial rival? Are not the interests of America in this regard in line with the slow tempo of development which Soviet Russia projects for herself?" (18)

Since last year's financial breakdown, it is clear to everyone that Russia's economy is not on the path of recovery; quite the contrary. While one must agree that the primary responsibility lay with debile president Yeltsin and his corrupt entourage, the U.S. and the IMF was also at fault since, in urging Russia to adopt the 'Washington consensus,' it pushed the country toward an economic program that was unsuitable for it. Those who warned early on that it was unsuitable and might lead to a social disaster with dangerous consequences had been ignored. Foremost the US and the UK, to a lesser degree the continental governments of the European Union, had urged Russia to continue the policy even after it became clear that it was not working. It had adopted a paternalistic attitude to Russia and over-personalized its relations with Yeltsin, associating itself with leaders who were unpopular in Russia, such as Anatoli Chubais. It colluded in the subversion of democracy by putting pressure on the Russian government to push unpopular policies through parliament. This could only foster the view among increasing numbers of Russians that the West was bent on destroying their country.(19)

At the same time, a New York investment bank with close ties to U.S. treasury secretary Robert Rubin, Goldman, Sachs & Co., was deeply implicated in the Russian economic collapse. According to *The New York Times*(20), "in 1992, under its chief executive, Robert Rubin, who is now the U.S. treasury secretary, Goldman was named banking adviser to Boris Yeltsin's new government, recruited to help attract foreign investment. Business was slow, however, and Goldman pulled out of Russia entirely in 1994, angering some senior Russian officials, bankers said. When Russian markets took off two years later, however, Goldman rushed back in - and opened its checkbook to make temporary loans as a prelude to winning investment banking. Goldman's willingness to shell out big, up-front loans bolstered Russia's confidence that Wall Street was unlikely to shut off the financing spigot, and that even companies with spotty track records could count on a flow of money from abroad.<sup>2</sup> Secretary Rubin has been a strong proponent of massive loans to Russia. The Goldman Sachs

story makes one wonder how his presence came into play in this series of events.

"Investors - including big mutual funds and hedge funds - also complain that Goldman was so eager to prove its underwriting prowess to the Russian government that it flooded the international market for Russian bonds in the final weeks before the country defaulted," the New York Times continues.

An early target of Goldman Sachs in Russia were 'companies controlled by the oligarchs, businessmen who control most of the country's big industries.' Through Goldman's backing of the Russian Menatep Bank, there is an implication in the so-called 'Bank of New York scandal', in which at least \$6.5 billion were funneled out of Russia from late 1996 to August 1999 by members of the oligarchy on private bank accounts at the Bank of New York.

Fritz Ermath, a former senior officer with the CIA, accused U.S. policymakers of consistently ignoring the threat to Russia posed by top level corruption.(21) In the end, these hidden corporate interests behind the scheme of loans, payments and money-laundering tend to repeat a dangerous pattern that has been applied already during the 1920s and early 1930s in Continental Europe with disastrous results.(22)

Last, but not least, beyond the war of Chechnya, there is the battle between East and West for future of the Transcaucasian pipelines, "a confused and multi-sided contest for influence over the chief no-man's-land of



## east west relations

the post-cold-war world, the energy-rich area of central and south-western Asia that stretches from Arabia to Kazakhstan's border with China", as Economist editor *Brian Beedham* stressed in a lecture at the annual meeting of the New Atlantic Initiative (23) in Istanbul in 1998, while pleading for a strong Atlantic alliance.

"Call this [Š] the Great Game, Round Two. [Š] The battle of the pipelines has begun. It will be fought chiefly with money and political pressure, though rougher instruments may sometimes get used. And, when the successful pipelines are at last in place, the winners of the battle will still have to keep a close eye on the region to make sure its politicians do not succumb to the blandishments - and threats - they will get from the countries which did not get the pipelines. This many-sided tug-of-war over central Asia will be a long, complicated business."(24)

In this Machiavellian outlook, there is no place for a Europe that tries to heal the wounds of the last century that she has inflicted on herself and on mankind, nor for Europeans who try to find a balanced place in the global system of the planet, where they make an impact less by military power as by their wealth of ideas and initiatives, for an Europe that serves as a spiritual mediator between East and West, against the rival and yet so similar interests of oligarchic ruling circles. But is this really the outlook Europeans eventually will embrace in the century to come?

### NOTES

1 *La nascita dell'Europa. Per una Storia delle idee fra Italia e Polonia*. Ed. Sante Graciotti. Firenze 1995, pp.47-51.

2 *The Defense of the Atlantic World*. The New Republic, February 17, 1917. In: Walter Lippmann: *Early Writings*. New York 1970, p. 74f.

3 Brian Beedham, The Economist, Sept 1st, 1990, Survey Defence, p.12.

4 Bradford Parkins: *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914*. New York 1968, p. 77

5 Fraser J. Harbutt: *The Iron Curtain. Churchill, America, and the Origins of the Cold War*. Oxford 1988, pp. 17, 24.

6 Halford J. Mackinder: *The Geographical Pivot of History*. Geographical Journal 23 (1904). Cf. W. H. Parker: *Mackinder. Geography as an Aid to Statescraft*. Oxford 1982, p. 156, 436.

7 John Garry Clifford: *President Truman and Peter the Great's Will*. Diplomatic History 4 (1980), S. 371-385. Gabriele Camphausen: *Antisowjetische Propaganda im Kriegsjahr 1941. Das »Testament« des Zaren Peters des Großen* [Anti-Soviet Propaganda in the War Year 1941. The Testament of Peter the Great]. *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 48 (1993), S. 37-44. Albert Resis: *Russophobia and the "Testament" of Peter the Great, 1812-1980*. *Slavic Review* 44 (1985), S. 681-693. Ludwig Polzer-Hoditz: *Der Kampf gegen den Geist, und das Testament Peter des Großen* [The Fight against the Spirit, and the Testament of Peter the Great]. Stuttgart 1922, 2nd ed. Dornach 1989.

8 See my recent article *The West and the "Serbian Question"* in *Transintelligence Internationale*, no. 3/4 (1999), pp. 26-29.

9 Cf. *XXI vek: Konflikt civilizacij?* [The 21st Century: Clash of Civilizations?]. *Moskovskie Novosti* [Moscow News], no. 10 (March 6-13 1994), p. 9a.

10 *Den'* [The Day], Nr. 15 (1993). Aleksandr G. Dugin: *Osnovy geopolitiki* [Foundations of geopolitics]. Moskva 1997.

11 G. Trofimenko: *The U.S. National Interests and Russia*. *International Affairs*, Moscow 42 (1996), p. 58. Cf. the corresponding US point of view formulated by Zbigniew Brzezinski: *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*. New York 1997, p. 56.

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13 Richard Cohen: *Bosnia Is Lost and So, Probably, Is Nato*. The Washington Post/International Herald Tribune, November 30, 1994.

14 Floriana Fossato: *Russian Media Propagating Xenophobia In Society*. *Russia Today*, September 24, 1999. <http://www.russiatoday.com/features.php3?id=94508>

15 Interview with Colonel-General Leonid Ivashov. *Krasnaya Zvezda* [Red Star], October 10, 1999. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* [Independent Journal], November 5, 1999.

16 The Bilderberg Group exists since 1954 and organizes an annual meeting. It is a little-to-none publicised power-elite forum which has played an important role providing a means for debates and discussions to take place amongst different bankers, industrialists and national governments from North America and (Western) Europe over long-term planning issues and, especially, in co-ordinating strategic policy at an international level. Cf. Peter Thompson: *Bilderberg and the West*. In: *Trilateralism: The Trilateral Commission and Elite Planning for World Management*. Ed. by Holly Sklar. Montreal 1980; Mike Peters: *The Bilderberg Group and the project of European unification*. In: *Lobster*, no. 32, December 1996, pp. 2-9.

17 Confidential Bilderberg Minutes June 3-6, 1999 in Sintra, Portugal. <http://www.schnews.org.uk/bilderberg/index.html>. One must not exclude the possibility of a forgery.

18 U. S. Senate, Bolshevik Propaganda, Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary, 65th Congress 1919, p. 679sq.

19 Jacques Sapir: *Le krach russe* [The Russian Crash]. Paris, Ed. La Découverte 1998. Jacques Sapir: *Autisme occidental envers la Russie* [Western Autism towards Russia]. *Le Monde Diplomatique*, December 1999, p. 10. Michel Chossudovsky: *The Globalization of Poverty: Impacts of the IMF and World Bank Reforms*. London-New York, Zed Books 2nd edition 1998, pp. 225-242.

20 The New York Times, October 18, 1999.

21 Simon Marks: *Moscow's Money Problems*. Online News Hour, September 15, 1999. [http://www.newshour.org/newshour/bb/europe/july-dec99/russia\\_9-15.html](http://www.newshour.org/newshour/bb/europe/july-dec99/russia_9-15.html).

22 Christopher Simpson: *The Splendid Blond Beast: Money, Law, and Genocide in the 20th Century*. Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press 1995.

23 A new Atlanticist pressure group founded in Prague in 1996. See their website at <http://www.aei.org/nai/>.

24 Brian Beedham: *The Atlantic Community in 2012: Three Scenarios*. <http://www.aei.org/nai/istanbul/beedham.htm>

