

De-evolution of Europe

The equation of Communism with Nazism (First Part)

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Vision & Global Trends. International Institute for Global Analyses
Piazza dei Navigatori 22, 00147 – Rome (Italy)
Analytical Dossier – N. 02/2020 – January 2020

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First Edition: January 2020

Analytical Dossier – N. 02/2020

www.vision-gt.eu

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(First Part)

It was indeed cynical and out-of-touch for the EU (Parliament) to suddenly blame, after 80 years, the Soviet Union for triggering WWII. It is unwise (to say least) to resurrect the arguments surrounding the circumstances of the start of World War II. The historians have agreed, the history has been written and well documented, and is in our books already for many decades.

There is no point in contemporary politicians of eastern flank of the EU (with a striking but complicit silence from the central Europe) pushing up the facts regarding who was to blame. There are neither mandated, nor qualified or even expected to do so.

Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, Mussolini 's Italy and its satellites (helped by the ring of Useful Idiots, then called Quislings) were the culprits and that is universally accepted with no exception. It is now all in the past. Let us leave it there and not in the 21st century which has severe multiplying challenges, especially for the EU, that are still waiting to be tackled.

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Enveloped in its own myopia of economic egoism and *überfremdung* phobia, Europeans are in fact digging and perpetuating defensive self-isolation. While falling short to constructively engage its neighborhood (but not conveniently protected by oceans for it like some other emigrant-receiving countries), Europeans constantly attract unskilled migrants from that way destabilized near abroad. The US, GCC, Far East, Australia, Singapore, lately even Brazil, India, or Angola – all have enormously profited from the skilled newcomers. Europe is unable to recognize, preserve, protect and promote its skilled migrants.

Simply, European history of tolerance of otherness is far too short for it, while the legacies of residual fears are deep, lasting and wide. Destructive efforts towards neighbors and accelerated hatreds for at home are perpetually reinforcing themselves. That turns Europe into a cluster of sharply polarized and fragmented societies, seemingly over history and identity, but essentially over the generational and technological gap, vision and forward esteem.

One of the latest episodes comes from a recent political, and highly ahistorical, initiative to make an equation of communism with Nazism. Driven by the obsessive Russophobe notion, this myopic short-term calculus may bring disastrous long-term consequences – first and most of all for the Slavic Eastern/southeastern Europe, as well as to the absent-minded Scandinavian Europe, or cynically silent Central Europe.

Needless to say, consensus that today's Europe firmly rests upon is built on antifascism. This legacy brought about prosperity and tranquility to Europe unprecedented all throughout its history. Sudden equation of communism with Nazism is the best and fastest way to destroy very fundamentals of Europe once for good.

One is certain, the EU-led Europe is in a serious moral and political crisis of rapid de-evolution. Let's have a closer look.

Una hysteria importante

History of Europe is the story of small hysteric/xenophobic nations, traditionally sensitive to the issue of ethnic, linguistic, religious, and behavioristic otherness. If this statement holds the truth, then we refer to events before and after the Thirty Years' War in general and to the post-Napoleonic Europe in particular. Political landscape of today's Europe had been actually conceived in the late 14th century, gradually evolving to its present shape.

At first, the unquestioned and unchallenged pre-Westphalian order of Catholicism enabled the consolidation and standardization of the feudal socio-economic and politico-military system all over the Europe. However, at its matured stage, such a universalistic world of Holy Roman Empire and Papacy (*Caesaropapism*) is steadily contested by the explicitly confrontational or implicitly dismissive political entities, be it ideologically (the Thirty Years' War culminating with the Peace of Westphalia) or geopolitically (Grand Discoveries and the shift of the gravity center westwards). The early round of colonizers, the two Iberian empires of Spain and Portugal, are the first entities that emerged, followed by France, Holland, England and Denmark. (Belgium too, although it appeared as a buffer zone at first – being a strategic depth, a continental prolongation of England for containment of Central Europeans, of Dutch and Scandinavians from the open sea, while later on also becoming a strategic depth of France for balancing Britain and containment of Denmark and Prussia.)

Engulfed with the quest of the brewing French revolution for the creation of a nation state, these colonizers, all of them situated on the Atlantic flank of Europe, have successfully adjusted to the nation-state concept. Importantly, the very process of creation/formation of the nation-state has been conducted primarily on linguistic grounds since religious grounds were historically defeated once and for all by the Westphalia.¹ All peoples talking the Portugophone dialects in one state, all Hispanophone dialects in another state, all Francophone dialects in the third state, etc.² This was an easy cut for peripheral Europe, the so-called old colonizers on the Atlantic flank of Europe, notably for Portugal, Spain, France, England, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

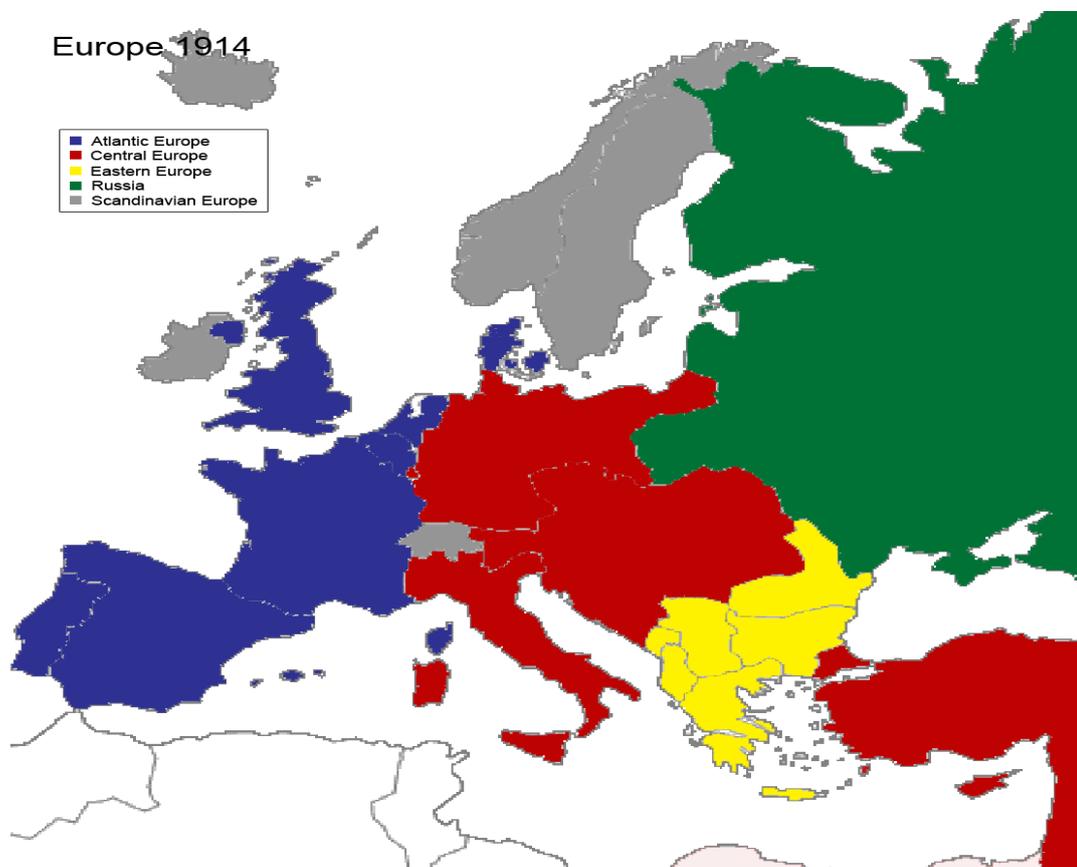
Although geopolitically defeated at home, in France, and ideologically contained by the Vienna Congress and its instrument – the Holy Alliance of Eastern Conservative Courts, the very idea of a nation-state remained appealing. Both of that-time federations of theocracies (the non-territorial principle-based Habsburg and the

¹ To be more accurate: Westphalia went beyond pure truce, peace and reconciliation. It re-confirmed existence of western Christianity's *Ummah*. Simply, it only outlawed meddling into the intra-western religious affairs by restricting that-time absolute Papal (interpretative) powers. From that point of view, Westphalia was not the first international instrument on religious freedoms, but a triumph of western evangelic unity. This very unity later led to the strengthening of western Christianity and its supremacy intercontinentally.

² All modern European languages that are taught in schools today, were once upon a time, actually a political and geographic compromise of the leading linguists, who – through adopted conventions – created a standard language by compiling different dialects, spoken on the territory of particular emerging nation-state.

Ottoman empires) were inevitably corroding by two ‘chemical’ precursors: secularism (enlightenment) and territoriality. Once the revolutionary 1848 ousted the principal guardian of feudalism and Rimo-Christian orthodoxy in Europe, Metternich, the suppressed concept got further impetus. And, the revolutionary romance went on...

Interestingly, the very creation of Central Europe’s nation-states was actually enhanced by Napoleon III. The unification of Italophones was his, nearly obsessive, intentional deed (as he grew up in Nice with Italian *Carbonari* revolutionaries who were fighting papal and Habsburg’s control over the northern portions of today’s Italy). Conversely, the very unification of Germanophones under the Greater Prussia was his non-intentional mis-chief, with the two subsequently emerging ‘by-products’; modern Austria (German-speaking core assembled on the ruins of mighty multinational and multi-lingual empire) and modern Turkey (Turkophone core on the ruins of mighty multiracial and multi-linguistic empire).



Despite being geographically in the heart of Europe, Switzerland remained a remarkably stable buffer zone: Highly militarized but defensive and obsessively neutral, economically omnipresent yet financially secretive, it represents one confederated state of two confronting versions of western Christianity, of three ethnicities and of four languages. Absent from most of the modern European politico-military events – Switzerland, in short – is *terra incognita*.

Historically speaking, the process of Christianization of Europe that was used as the justification tool to (either intimidate or corrupt, so to say to) pacify the invading tribes, which demolished the Roman Empire and brought to an end the Antique age, was running parallel on two tracks. The Roman Curia/Vatican conducted one of them by its hammer: the Holy Roman Empire. The second was run by the cluster of Rusophone Slavic Kaganates, who receiving (the orthodox or true/authentic, so-

called Eastern version of) Christianity from Byzantium, and past its collapse, have taken over a mission of Christianization, while forming its first state of Kiev Russia (and thereafter, its first historic empire). Thus, to the eastern edge of Europe, Russophones have lived in an intact, nearly a hermetic world of universalism for centuries: one empire, one Tsar, one religion and one language.³

Everything in between Central Europe and Russia is Eastern Europe, rather a historic novelty on the political map of Europe. Very formation of the Atlantic Europe's present shape dates back to 14th–15th century, of Central Europe to the mid-late 19th century, while a contemporary Eastern Europe only started emerging between the end of WWI and the collapse of the Soviet Union – meaning, less than 100 years at best, slightly over two decades in the most cases. No wonder that the dominant political culture of the Eastern Europeans resonates residual fears and reflects deeply insecure small nations. Captive and restive, they are short in territorial depth, in demographic projection, in natural resources and in a direct access to open (warm) seas. After all, these are short in historio-cultural verticals, and in the bigger picture-driven long-term policies. Eastern Europeans are exercising the nationhood and sovereignty from quite a recently, thus, too often uncertain over the side and page of history. Therefore, they are often dismissive, hectic and suspectful, nearly neuralgic and xenophobic, with frequent overtones.

The creation of a nation-state (on linguistic grounds) in the peripheral, Atlantic and Scandinavian, as well as Central Europe was relatively a success-story. However, in Eastern Europe it repeatedly suffered setbacks, culminating in the Balkans, Caucasus and the Middle East. The same calamity also remained in the central or Baltic part of Eastern Europe.⁴

³ Early Russian state has ever since expanded north/northeast and eastward, reaching the physical limits of its outreach by crossing the Bering straits (and the sale of Russian Alaska to the USA in 1867). By the late 17th and early 18th century, Russia had begun to draw systematically into European politico-military theatre. (...) In the meantime, Europe's universalistic empire dissolved. It was contested by the challengers (like the Richelieu's France and others—geopolitical, or the Lutheran/Protestant – ideological challengers), and fragmented into the cluster of confronted monarchies, desperately trying to achieve an equilibrium through dynamic balancing. Similar political process will affect Russian universal empire only by late 20th century, following the Soviet dissolution. (...) Not fully accepted into the European collective system before the Metternich's Holy Alliance, even had its access into the post-Versailles system denied, Russia was still not ignored like other peripheral European power. The Ottomans, conversely, were negated from all of the security systems until the very creation of the NATO (Republic of Turkey). Through the pre-emptive partition of Poland in the eve of WWII, and successful campaigns elsewhere in Eastern Europe, Bolshevik Russia expanded both its territory and its influence westwards. (...) An early Soviet period of Russia was characterized by isolated bilateral security arrangements, e.g. with Germans, Fins, Japanese, etc. The post WWII days have brought the regional collective system of Warsaw Pact into existence, as to maintain the communist gains in Europe and to effectively oppose geopolitically and ideologically the similar, earlier formed, US-led block. Besides Nixon's rapprochement towards China, the collapse of the Soviet Union was the final stage in the progressive fragmentation of the vast Sino-Soviet Communist block (that dominated the Eurasian land mass with its massive size and centrality), letting Russia emerge as the successor. The sudden ideological and territorial Soviet break-up, however, was followed by the cultural shock and civil disorder, painful economic and demographic crisis and rapidly widening disparities. All this coupled with the humiliating wars in Caucasus and elsewhere, since the centripetal and centrifugal forces of integration or fragmentations came into the oscillatory play. Between 1989 and 1991, communist rule ended in country after country and the Warsaw Pact officially dissolved. Subsequently, the Gorbachev-Jeltsin Russia experienced the greatest geopolitical contraction of any major power in the modern era and one of the fastest ever in history. Still, Gorbachev-Jeltsin tandem managed to (re-)brand themselves domestically and internationally – each got its own label of vodka.

⁴ Many would say that, past the peak Ottoman times, the aggressive intrusion of Atlantic Europe with its nation-state concept, coupled with Central Europe's obsessive control and *lebensraum* quest, has turned lands of a mild and tolerant people, these pivotal intellectual exchange-corridors of

Keeping the center soft

Ever since Westphalia, Europe maintained the inner balance of powers by keeping its core section soft. Peripheral powers like England, France, Denmark, (early Sweden and Poland to be later replaced by) Prussia and Habsburgs, and finally the Ottomans and Russia have pressed on and preserved the center of continental Europe as their own playground. At the same time, they kept extending their possessions overseas or, like Russia and the Ottomans, over the land corridors deeper into Asian and MENA proper. Once Royal Italy and Imperial Germany had appeared, the geographic core 'hardened' and for the first time started to politico-militarily press onto peripheries. This new geopolitical reality caused a big security dilemma. That dilemma lasted from the 1814 Vienna congress up to Potsdam conference of 1945, being re-actualized again with the Berlin Wall destruction: How many Germanies and Italies should Europe have to preserve its inner balance and peace?⁵ As the latecomers, the Central Europeans have faced the overseas world out of their reach, as clearly divided into spheres of influence solely among the Atlantic Europeans (and Russians).

In rather simplified terms, one can say that from the perspective of European belligerent parties, both world wars were fought between the forces of status quo and the challengers to this status quo. The final epilogue in both wars was that Atlantic Europe has managed to divert the attention of Central Europeans from itself and its vast overseas possessions onto Eastern Europe, and finally towards Russia.⁶

Just to give the most illustrative of many examples; the Imperial post-Bismarck Germany has carefully planned and ambitiously grouped its troops on the border with France. After the assassination of the Austrian Archduke in Sarajevo (28 June 1914), Europe was technically having a *casus belli* - as the subsequent mutually declared war between all parties quickly followed this assassination episode and the immediate Austrian ultimatum to Serbia. However, the first armed engagement was not taking place on the southeastern front, as expected - between the Eastern belligerent parties such as Austria, Serbia, Russia, the Ottomans, Greece, Bulgaria, etc. The first military operations of WWI were actually taking place in the opposite, northwest corner of Europe - something that came only two months past the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia. It was German penetration of Belgian Ardennes.

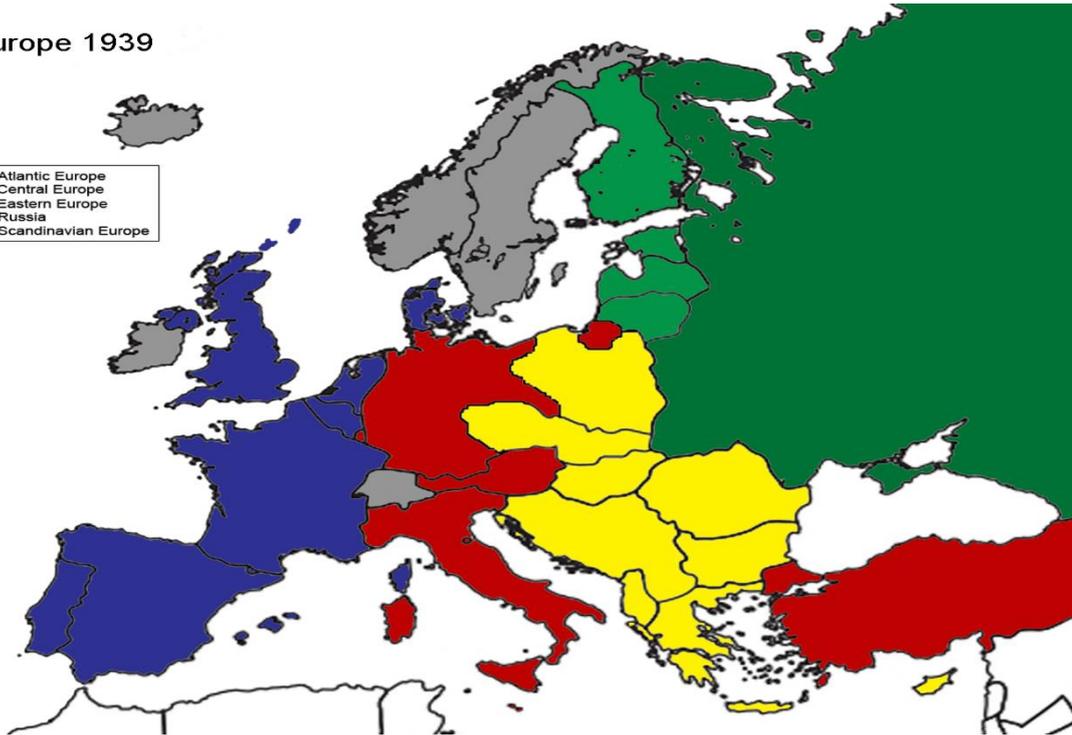
Still, the very epilogue of *la Grande Guerra* was such that a single significant territorial gain of Germany was achieved only in Eastern Europe. Despite a colossal 4-years long military effort, the German western border remained nearly unchanged.

southeastern Europe and the Near East into a modern day *Balkan powder keg*. Miroslav Krleža famously remarked: "It was us humans who transformed our good swine to a filthy pig."

⁵ At the time of Vienna Congress, there were nearly a dozen of Italophone states and over three dozens of Germanophone entities - 34 western German states + 4 free cities (*Kleinstaaterei*), Austria and Prussia. Potsdam conference concludes with only three Germanophone (+ Lichtenstein + Switzerland) and two Italophone states (+ Vatican).

⁶ Why did the US join up Atlantic Europe against Central Europe in both WWs? Simply, siding up with Central Europe would have meant politico-military elimination of Atlantic Europe once and for all. In such an event, the US would have faced a single European, confrontation-potent, block of a formidable strategic-depth to engage with sooner or later. Eventually, Americans would have lost an interfering possibility of remaining the *perfect balancer*. The very same balancer role, the US inherited from the declining Britain.

Europe 1939



The end of WWI did not bring much of a difference. The *accords de paix* – Versailles treaty was an Anglo-French triumph. These principal Treaty powers, meaning: Atlantic Europe, invited Germany to finally join the League of Nations in 1926, based on the 1925 Treaty of Locarno. By the letter of this treaty, Germany obliged itself to fully respect its frontiers with Belgium and France (plus demilitarized zone along Rhine) with the unspecified promise to arbitrate before pursuing any change of its borders with Czechoslovakia and Poland. The same modus operandi applied to the Austrian borders with Italy, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The Locarno accord actually instrumentalized two sorts of boundaries around Central Europe (Germany–Austria): strict, inviolable ones towards Atlantic Europe; but semipermeable and soft towards Eastern Europe.⁷ That is how the predominant player from Central Europe, Germany, was accepted to the League, a collective system which the Soviet Russia (meaning: Rusophone Europe) was admitted to only a decade later (1934). Soon after, this double standard sealed-off a faith of many in Europe and beyond.

(End of the 1st Part)

Prof. Anis H. Bajrektarević
Vienna, 04 JAN 2020

⁷ Farce or not, history of 1914 nearly repeated itself to its last detail in early 1990s. And, it was not for the first time. 25 and again 75 years after 1914 – meaning that 1939. was nearly copied by the events of 9/11 in 1989. Hence, November 1989 was the third time that the western frontiers of Central Europe remained intact, while the dramatic change took place to its East. Besides *Anschluss* of Eastern Germany by the Western one, borders there in 1990s nominally remained the same, but many former neighbors to Central Europe have one by one disappeared for good from the political map of Eastern Europe.



*Author is professor in international law and global political studies, based in Vienna, Austria. His 7th book **From WWI to www. 1918-2018** is published by the New York's Addleton Academic Publishers last winter.*