

## The fate of Europe is being decided in Ukraine and France

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### Abstract

This essay encompasses the current geopolitical shifts and economic paradigms that are kneeling the old continent into a recession and energy crisis. France, under the leadership of Emmanuel Macron continues to play an important role in the framework of NATO and European Council as well as Brussels is increasing its influence in the war in Ukraine. The outcome of the battle of Mariupol has a strategic importance to Russian Federation and represents the tenacity and admirable counteroffensive held by the Ukrainian armed forces. Since February 2022, Ukraine is defending European democratic values, liberties and freedoms.

**Keywords:** Ukraine, France, Russian Federation, Mariupol, Vladimir Putin, Emmanuel Macron, European Union, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

### Introduction

The invasion of Ukraine and thus the destruction of its national identity, on one hand, and the exploitation of Europe's weaknesses, on the other, bring continental geopolitics back on the scene. The current crisis, not only the Russian-Ukrainian one, but also the one that may follow with accelerated proportions as a result of the possible political evolution in France, meanwhile it is more controlled with president Emmanuel Macron being re-elected, in this analysis will look at them through the prism of different theoretical geopolitical approaches.

The outbreak of World War II and its continuation under the umbrella of the Cold War, as claimed by researchers in the field, was based on the theory of the founder of geopolitics as a science by the British historian, Sir Halford Mackinder - that of Heartland, conceived in the context of the dichotomy "naval power" and "land power".

This theory remains dominant in the Anglo-Saxon world.

The war in Ukraine and the alignment of real pro-Ukrainian alliances are based on the terms of Mackinder's school.

The continuing war in Ukraine, the destruction of infrastructure and the killing of civilians and the river of refugees all over Western Europe, which is already over five million, divides the world into two camps, reserving to the Moscow paradigm the bloody realization of its corner of influence; for the further cultivation of the traditional Russian "autocratic" system, an inevitable process.

With the invasion of Ukraine, Russian policy has practically supported the new division of the world into democracy and autocracy, just as US President Joe Biden formulated at a virtual Democracy Summit held in Washington on December 8-10 last year. [1]

Meanwhile the elections in France and the going down in history of traditional politi-

cal forces, with emphasis on the possible victory of the right-wing extremist Marie Le Pen, accelerates this division and return to continental geopolitics. In fact this process already seems inevitable as the current president on the Champs Elysees is reconfirmed, restoring to it the etymological meaning of the word, but this time trampling the souls of anti-fascist heroes not only French.

### **Return to continental geopolitics**

The escalation of the war in Ukraine and especially the strong resistance of the Ukrainians confirm the fact that the war was planned in advance by both the Russian and Ukrainian sides, which enjoyed the strong support of the US and Britain. This fierce confrontation, which is already entering in the third month, proves that "Russian security circles believe that the problem of Ukraine must be resolved militarily." [2] Putin clearly formulated the purpose of the war and made it public in his speech just three days before the resumption of aggression against Ukraine on February 21 and in his declaration of war. [3] And this goal is clear: the annihilation of Ukraine as a people and as a cultural identity. Of course, this strategic goal of the Kremlin cannot be achieved without a large-scale war. The fierce fighting for the conquest of Mariupol - even at the cost of its flattening - testifies to the new phase of the war in Ukraine. Mariupol is of strategic importance, but also symbolic: it is the last port city in south-eastern Ukraine and the largest lying on the shores of the Sea of Azov, but also one of the cities where Ukrainian industry has been concentrated. From there, grain and steel are exported from eastern Ukraine to world markets. Mariupol is also one of the centers of the steel industry: the two steel mills it owns cover a large part of the steel demand of the entire Ukrainian market.

Essential to Putin, however, is the fact that taking Mariupol would create a direct land connection between Crimea and the separatist regions in the Donbas.

This goal of war can only be achieved by occupying at least the largest parts of Ukraine and the most important urban centers. Until that is achieved, there will not be much left of the city, says political scientist Gerhard Mangott in an interview with ZDF:

"Sure, they would have preferred to get a city intact, but the land bridge is so important to the Russians that they would get a city that has been razed to the ground." [4]

Therefore, there was no way that the Western diplomatic efforts to contain the war could not fail. In vain did the European leaders come to the Kremlin, since the Kremlin could be considered closer and friendlier (be it the French president, the German chancellor or anyone else), the talks from the Russian side, as it turned out, were never taken seriously. The maximum demands of the Russian side, on the other hand, were just an additional tool to lure the "enchanted" West with "liberal Russia", which could join the Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis, into the illusion of diplomatic talks; while Putin was weaving the reasons for the war he had already planned and the new division of the world.

But, in order to better understand this return of geopolitics to the center of Russian and Western interests, the ideas of the continental (European) geopolitical school come to our aid, with an emphasis on the German leadership, which, followed by contemporary American geopolitical ideas, will focus on three geopolitical tenets emerging on Russian soil (Slavophilism, Westernism, and Eurasianism).

All connoisseurs of these geopolitical theories, and among themselves, already agree

on one point: after February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022, when the Russian annexation of Ukraine resumed, the world will not be what it was on D day.

But February 24<sup>th</sup> was preceded by the silence and inaction of the West against the previous Russian military actions to the detriment of Ukraine and not only that. The annexation of the long-separated territories of Georgia - I mean Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in August 2008 and the triumphant annexation of Crimea in a few days, in 2014, and in the same year the creation of preconditions for the annexation of Donetsk and Lugansk. All this flow of politico-military developments was the de facto prelude to what is happening today in Ukraine. The move was the Kremlin's first successful test of implementing the National Interest Strategy contained in the "Russian World" project - the return of the geopolitical space that was part of the USSR. All this geopolitical tectonic shift seems to have a precursor history of test developments from all sides. The United States, in an effort to build a front against China on September 15, 2021, announced that it had laid the groundwork for a broader security partnership with Australia and the United Kingdom in the Indo-Pacific area - the military alliance called AUKUS.

"The first major initiative of this (new pact called) AUKUS will be to send a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines to Australia," Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said in a teleconference with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, US President Joe Biden.

"The United Kingdom, Australia and the United States will be even more closely linked, which reflects the level of trust between us and the depth of our friendship," said Boris Johnson, of whom the strategic act was a diplomatic success that paved the way for the avoidance of possible international isolation of Britain after Brexit.

On the other hand, the prudent position of China is revealed, which could easily be the biggest winner of this drama in the change of geopolitical paradigms, if we consider the expected weakening of Europe, in case the scenario of the return of the nation-state, respectively the descend of the EU towards the free confederation project, which Le Pen is warning. Although the victory of the incumbent president, will only postpone for a while this epilogue of this already starting to decline chapter of history.

### **Marie Le Pen's strategic approach to NATO**

At the conference on Wednesday (April 13, 2022), the candidate for president of France, Marie Le Pen, presented her foreign policy and diplomatic program. reiterated that if elected president of France, she would no longer support "Germany's request for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council". [5] But she did not hesitate to speak out again in favor of Europe's rapprochement with Russia after the end of the war in Ukraine, stressing that this rapprochement would be based on Europe's strategic interest in keeping Moscow as far away from a possible alliance with China as possible.

She further highlighted three tenets that reinforce my above thesis on the return of continental geopolitics.

First, it reaffirmed its intention to repeat France's historic 1966 act of abandoning NA-

TO's integrated military command, recalling to the electorate General de Gaulle's act as a product of French institutional nationalism. However, even after this repeated act, according to Le Pen, France will continue to adhere to the essential Article 5 of NATO under the next European command, adding that it will refuse any "submission to the American protectorate."

Second, French populist Marine Le Pen, an amalgam of the far right, has sharply criticized Germany and warned of an end to German-French joint armaments projects. "We will be able to clearly differentiate our strategic differences; we will be able to do this together with Berlin, but also with the most important camps in Paris and other countries.

With this statement she seems to express the will of the French right to maintain close relations with Germany. However she was particularly critical of the close bilateral ties established by her political rival and former German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Looking for this, she claims that "she will stop following the Macron-Merkel model of French blindness towards Berlin".

Third, with regard to the European Union, Le Pen has made it clear that any "Frexit" modeled on the UK's exit from the EU is not its plan. She argued that French predictions that Brexit would bring about a "cataclysm for the British" did not materialize. "The British got rid of the Brussels bureaucracy, which they could never afford, to move on to the ambitious project of global Britain", she underlined, not without purpose, in this revived electoral campaign, vital not only for her career. She added: "This is not our project. We want to reform the EU from within; "No one is against Europe," she said. "I would not like to stop paying the French contribution to the EU, but I want to reduce it." [6]

Marie Le Pen accused Germany of standing up for the "absolute denial of French strategic identity" and went on to use the typical populist intonation typical of election campaigns, but still acceptable to a large part of the French, adding that "It is normal for Berlin to "Defend his interests, even by buying weapons, and let us defend our interests, which (President Emmanuel) Macron has neglected." [7]

For this Marine Le Pen, known as a veteran of the French right, who had faced President Emmanuel Macron on April 24 in the second round of the French presidential election, warns of a "strategic approach to NATO". with the end of the clash between Russia and the West in Ukraine.

"Once the Russian-Ukrainian war is over and resolved through a peace agreement, I will call for the implementation of a strategic rapprochement between NATO and Russia," Le Pen told a news conference full of international journalists. Completely in line with the mentality of the French right and not only that, it hit the top ten, stating anxiously that "This is in the interest of France, but also of the United States, to prevent the Russo-Chinese alliance.

A victory for Le Pen, which turned out to be not possible, given the equal number of votes in the first round of elections, would resonate deeply not only in Europe but also across the Atlantic and bring about major change in international relations. A victory for Le Pen would bring to the Elysee Palace a president who is quite openly Eurosceptic, who previously did not hide her admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

## Expansion towards the East

But let us return to the theory of continental geopolitics to argue this non-random flow of developments in Ukraine today and the likelihood of a new world order after the end of the clash between the West and Russia in Ukraine. Russia, as we stated above, had started intensive preparations for this large-scale invasion of Ukraine since 2014, i.e. for a full 7 years.

The British seem to have initiated and implemented Brexit in response to the Russian and German projects. What about the EU, what was it doing? He was continuing to flirt with Russia and its obedient satellite Serbia. Europe de facto continued to sink into the rut of Russian geopolitics. This is best explained by the thesis on the return of the France-Germany duo to the continental geopolitics, respectively to the German project *Drang nach Osten*, which connects all these events that our civilization faces today.

Returning to European-continental geopolitics there is no way not to recall the names of the father of French geopolitics Paul Vidal de la Blasch (1845–1918) and the German Carl Haushofer (1869–1946).

Genuine analysis of current geopolitical tectonic movements, despite the irritation it can bring to ultraliberals and leftists of all colors, can only be done through the Haushofer diopter. Scholars of geopolitics bear in mind that Hitler as he had abused the theories of Darwin, Nietzsche Wagner.... He would abuse those of Haushofer as well. Haushofer saw continental Europe in unity with Russia. But his "*Drang nach Osten*" had nothing in common with that of Hitler. If Hitler, promoted by a non-German strategist, translated Haushofer's theory, which was based primarily on economic ties, into military action, is a matter for the political history of 20th-century Europe to explain. According to Haushofer, the "axis" of this connection: Berlin-Moscow-Tokyo, was not a military axis, but an axis of cooperation through which a strong Europe is possible. And in part, this essentially peaceful geopolitical idea was accepted in Germany at the time. It is astonishing to assume that the direct result of this idea was the "Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Attack Pact"! [8]

But like the events that would follow during and after the Second World War, even these now in Ukraine, have been and will be stacked in the collective memory of Europeans, making even clearer the fact that the idea of a strong Europe in alliance with Moscow, i.e. the Franco-German idea of secession from the Anglo-Saxon alliance, remains impossible to realize, if not tragic for the Europeans themselves.

So naturally the question arises: is Europe failing for the third time?

But if for Western Europe this is its third failure, it does not mean that it should be translated as such for its periphery, either in the Baltics or in Southeast Europe on the contrary. Even warnings about the abandonment of the myth of neutrality by Sweden and Finland, or the insistence of the Western Balkans, excluding the Russian satellite in the middle - Serbia, for accelerated NATO accession, speak of a new recomposing of the security map European and for the new order to come, from the one we had before February 24, 2022.

## Russia's landing in Europe and the Albanians

It was the spring of 1999, when I was invited by the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with Dr. Stefan Kuks (Stephan Kux), my friend and professor at the Institute for European Studies at the University of Basel, CH, to participate in the OST Forum. WEST, where the former USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev would also speak. The latter, in his speech, harshly condemned NATO's intervention in the war in Kosovo, urging Europeans to commit to building a "European Common House", under the auspices of which would be together all the peoples of old continent. This is an excellent rhetoric for the ears of many Westerners at the time. Many of the participants, I was impressed, applauded Gorbachev's speech, and there were even those who highly appreciated his role in the process of dissolution of the USSR and the rapprochement of the Russian Federation with Europe.

That exhilarating explosion after Gorbachev's speech, after reviving the idea of a close Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, could be its trap, the path of Europe to hell, I had then asserted to my friend Professor Stepan Kux. The bloodshed for a "Common European House", which would de facto have two federal entities - one based in Moscow and the other based in Berlin, turned out to be more an expression of the lack of real European unity.

In the last two centuries, when the Russians extended their influence in Europe, both during the period with the Eastern War (1875) and after that, when Russia would become the most powerful advocate of the creation of Slavic satellite states in Southeast Europe, until the outbreak of war; World War I, but even after the end of World War II, when the USSR would extend as far as Berlin, and then throughout the Cold War, the Albanians were the biggest losers in Southeast Europe.

Apart from Toplica and Pustareka up to Kurshumlia in the north and Vraja in the south, which were ethnically pure Albanian cities, along with six other cities with an absolute Albanian majority, immediately after the annexation of Crimea by the Ottoman Empire, Russia would do its best to make Serbia expanded to the south to the detriment of Albanian geography. It was precisely the Congress of Berlin (1878), where continental European geopolitics was fiercely confronted with the extension of Russian influence in accordance with the decisions of St. Stephen's Peace that Russia had imposed on the Ottoman Empire. The correction of the latter's decisions, however, was not complete. Serbia was awarded over 12,000 km<sup>2</sup> of Albanian land.

In less than three decades, at the Conference of Ambassadors in London (1913), Russian diplomacy will be imposed on the European one, gaining concessions again to the detriment of the Albanians with the conquest of Kosovo and Sandzak, which in total reached over 18,000 km<sup>2</sup> of the Albanian living space, with which he completely mutilated the newborn Albania on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

But the landing of the Bolshevik Russians would put Albania completely within the sphere of Slavic interest, from which, chances are, we will get rid of it once and for all, thanks to Ukraine, especially its titanic resistance.

It seems that the fate of the Albanians, this time, for the third time, when the Russians are landing in Europe, which began with the annexation of Ukraine, the Albanians

return to their European trunk, re-establishing Federal Albania as a dignified state. In this geopolitical alignment that is being imposed by the new order, the two Albanian republics (political Albania and the Republic of Kosovo) are clearly positioned with the West and against Russia. This rearrangement is likely to make the Albanian factor more useful for continental geopolitics compared to Serbia. Meanwhile, if Serbia continues to sink into its traditional ambiguity, it is likely to lose the support it has traditionally enjoyed from Europe.

Rightly, our writer Ben Blushi, in one of his essays published in the meantime, asks the question: "Can Serbia be given the right to vote in the European Union, provided it is not autonomous from Russia?"

Insisting on Serbia's integration into the EU without a clear separation from Russia, Blushi concludes, means that "Putin has the right to veto every day in European Union decision-making. This horror for Europe should be hell even in sleep." [9]

## Conclusion

Let us return to the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. After this act, Russia's relations with France and Germany continued to flow like oil, as if nothing had happened. Incumbent President Macron continues to be one of the few statesmen in Europe to cultivate extremely good relations with Putin. Marie Le Pen also warns of the resurgence of these relations with Russia. German Chancellor Angela Merkel and German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier followed suit.

During a visit to Paris in 2014, Russian Duma Speaker Sergei Naryshkin strongly recalled Charles de Gaulle's idea of a Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals. It did not bother official Paris at all why Russia had already annexed Crimea and was about to invade Donbas and Luhansk. Let us recall on this occasion the recent insistence of the current French President on a new security policy for Europe, after declaring that NATO is in a coma. Together, they would witness, as Thimothey Snyder put it, "a decline we had not foreseen." [10]

Meanwhile, when the war in Ukraine is concluding its second month, before our eyes we are now seeing the new clash between West and East, being perhaps witnesses of the destruction of the old order, respectively witnesses of the creation of the new order.

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