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CORONAVIRUS 2019:
IS THIS THE CATALYST FOR THE LARGEST GEOPOLITICAL SHIFT OF THE
21st CENTURY?

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Abstract

Popular discontent and strong political narratives driven by emotion take time to express themselves in the foundation of concrete national policies that impact international relations. There are times however, when change may become cataclysmic, especially when a catalyst appears out of the blue. The Coronavirus-2019 may become one of the igniting forces of the largest geopolitical shift in the 21st Century, namely the Unholy Alliance between Germany, Russia, Turkey and Iran. Such a change comes when current alliances are deemed to be redundant and union of nations fall apart.

Introduction

As Coronavirus has displayed a healthy appetite to devour older aged victims, their forced departure leaves empty space on this overcrowded planet for a younger generation to fill it in. A generation of Europeans that has been taught about the horrors of countless wars and conflicts since the Peace of Westphalia to the end of WWII only by studying colourful war stories in History 101. The images of human pain and suffering due to war and especially the numerous stories from the last war on European soil and their underlying message are easily forgotten. They are forgotten because they are mere impressions and not real-life experiences scalped on the subconscious out of exposure to life-changing events. With the passing of the older generation the remanences of their real-life experiences wither away, and the only memory left behind is bits of coloured information, with no mental blocs to ponder about the vicissitude of their fortunes.

Without those live memories in the collective mind, there is enough of open space left to be filled in by the critical mass of explosive but nevertheless contained emotional need for a remodelling of the current status quo; and then a cataclysmic event acts as a catalyst¹. A catalyst that is poised to start a geopolitical chain reaction by igniting this critical core mass, could be pictured as either an implosion of a red dwarf in the cosmos or as a spin-off of a celestial object due to gravity or maybe both.

Pandemic, famine and War. Three words that describe different human circumstances, nevertheless, prescribe to a similar outcome: individually and jointly at any degree, should they amass the right critical substance, they become catalysts for geopolitical shifts. Any permutation in their order of appearance in the depths of human history does not alter their fallout. Any combination of the weighted coefficients of their perplexed correlation does not alter their aftereffect either. All these sums up to the unleashing of forces that lead to the unavoidable appearance of the other two components, again at any degree of force. When these components are combined they bring about the ignition of the explosive need to restructure an ailing 'old' system of geopolitical equilibrium based on Westphalian principles.

The alliances and unions that were formed during the 20th Century² were born out of the need to mitigate the risk of war on the European continent. The horrific memories of the people that experienced those tragic events of WWII were fresh on their memories. A younger generation is now slowly taking the realms of political power. Its lack of intimate understanding of the profound psychological reasons that led nations to be tied together in the uneasy alliances that were formed after the end of the last war, is already on the onset to show its effects: Brexit was only the beginning.

It becomes more than obvious to the random by-passer that those old alliances are dying out. It is also obvious in the eyes of those among the elites who see alliances not as treaties scalped on granite, but merely as a word text on a screen. In the ancient times to delete a paragraph on granite it usually took a few days of sculpting. To correct a paragraph on a good old typewriter it was a task. Nowadays, to delete a paragraph on a word processor it takes only a second. Psychologically it does make a subconscious difference in the perception about the robustness of the international treaties in any decision-maker.

Thus, the random by-passer may momentarily question whether *Pacta sunt servanda*³ is a real, true and unquestionable dictum⁴ inherited to our civilization by our Roman ancestors, when pandemic, famine, war or even nuclear war clear the way for the genesis of the new, historically speaking of course. *Pacta was servanda* always by the weakest actor and *non servanda* customarily by the strongest, keeping in check the first rule of 'geopolitics of the real'⁵, that small states must behave like small states. However, in a world where the comfortable with the old pacta political generation is departing this world, the new elites realised that current alliances are based on a postulation that is a moving sand that momentarily stopped flowing⁶.

Ideology was the culprit⁷ for nations to seek geopolitical gains during the past century. The US used ideology to convince states to form alliances, work together in blocs and used sheer military force to impose its will on the defeated and the unwilling. The narrative was that the

Americans represented freedom and democracy. What a better instigation for a union within diversity. Ideology, however, has since died. Democracy not yet. The postlude of the division of Liberal/Communist⁸ thus, Left/Right, was written on the ruins of the Berlin Wall, at a time when new Walls are built, both visible and invisible. Those visible ones isolate those who have, from those who have not. The invisible ones are the bits travelling at mega speeds in cables, controlling information and algorithmicating our lives. This takes place at a time when we all thought that the best incentive for diversity would be the liberal, free for all, internet⁹. As an upshot, peaceful geopolitical change was to usher in through open borders and through globalisation, terms that signified the new 'ideology' which opposed all those that were in favour of a new localism within a federation.

Life is always full of surprises. This time the surprise showed up in the form of an invisible, to the eye, virus that caused, fear, death and a lock up, that metamorphosed the way we think of life, of the future, and of everything else. When people change the way they think, geopolitical shifts comes in cataclysmic galps. Consequently, the unthinkable ensues. Constants in the geopolitical equation become variables because Real Geopolitics as well as *Real Politik*¹⁰ does not rely on any ethical or moral premise. Imagine therefore, Germany, Turkey, Russia and Iran in a rerun of a now extended Unholy Roman Empire of the German Nation.

The temptation for them to form a union of about 400+ million young and dynamic inhabitants with a strong army, a healthy appetite to consume and a self-sufficiency in energy may be too strong of a force to overlook. The prospect of a dynamic group of four that may well carry them on to the 22nd century may be too enticing to disregard. The new bloc may be short on democracy something that historically suits well most of its players, counting in the worst of Germany. Her being the perceived leader of the group of four, it certainly has more legitimacy than the three other members to face eye to eye the rest of the world. A new world which will certainly have not, in the meantime, upheld its democratic traditions as we currently know them. The new bloc will be long however, on population, land, and natural resources¹¹. It will be feeling comfortable with the diverse cultural background of its population and it will be facing west an aging and dilapidated Union.

We will examine those potentially explosive but nevertheless so far contained forces that were brewing in the background waiting to be unleashed and result in a shift in allegiances and alliances. Epidemic, one of the three components of geopolitical change, now prepares the ground for the birth of a new alliance, a geopolitical bloc, with the dynamic to usher in the 22nd Century, eighty fast years down the road. During the 21st Century, Famine and War, should they ensue, might substitute Ideology and become the culprit that will conclude the geopolitical shift in the 'Eurasian Heartland'. The Pandemic has already fractured the fabric of the existing alliances. Famine will certainly test the allegiances of those that might experience it, and War will end old alliances and break down even older taboos.

The uneasy superstructure the Bolsheviks would hate to love

Breaking of unions of nations, take place when the benefits from the union do not serve well the master of the union¹². There is always one master in a union, the strongest nation, strong

enough, politically, militarily and financially that its gravity exerts a pull to the rest of the state members. Additionally, unions of state-nations fail when they did not deem to serve the political purpose of their set up, for and more importantly did not serve the political interests of its strongest nation-member¹³.

A very recently broken union that has not attracted a lot of press attention, but is quite an example in international affairs, is that of the United Arab Emirates. The rift in this Arab Union started in 2014 but escalated since reaching its zenith in 2017 with the infamous blockade of Qatar by the rest of the Arab union members¹⁴. Kuwait tried to save the Union, to lift the blockade and to return it to its previous status quo to no avail. It failed to bridge the differences between the union members even though it commissioned to the task its most experienced negotiators and diplomats. The psychological rift between the state actors was so strong that made it impossible to return to the status quo ante, a situation that is even questionable if the main actors ever want to return to.

Saudi Arabia, would have liked Qatar to become her satellite state, excluding even Finlandization¹⁵ as a compromising option. Qatar, nevertheless, withstood the first shock, adopted extremely well to the unprecedented attack by its neighbours and now carries on its geopolitical meddling at a different level of equilibrium. This despite the belief of the Saudi instigators of the blockade, that projecting soft power and even on a personal level bullying a leader of a member state will result in the target-nation giving in. The Saudi instigators of the Qatar blockade failed to realise that the target-nation of the initial concerted campaign to neutralise, moved on to function on another state of equilibrium. This state of equilibrium is now at an equal or even at a higher level than the one that existed before this silent conflict erupted. This outcome was predictable just because geopolitical hardship, in the form of war, blockades and the like, only hardens the state system and the people that are subjected to it. In the long run it makes them and the state entity that is subjected to the blockade and isolation stronger and antifragile.

As an opposite to antifragility of a state due to hardship and blockade, unions that are only serving the elites and their bureaucrats, become fragile and implode. They offer nothing to their multiple parts thus disintegrating from within. Those bureaucratic unions usually have the characteristic that there is no technological innovation and risk taking and there are no concrete financial or other benefits for most of its members.

The core of Europe is hard hit by the epidemic. The psychological shock of the population as a result of the immense human loss in Southern Europe is significant. It is more significant for the future of the Union however, that the EU bureaucracy stared stunned as the dramatic events were unfolding the very first days of the disaster. At that time the eurocrats lost the game of the psychological connect with the population that is paying their salaries before they even had a chance to play it. Already in the middle of an existential crisis even before the pandemic arrived, the Union proved its redundancy in a situation where the stakes were of life or death. With the pandemic defeating political propaganda, Europeanist public relations theatrics, and empty declarations of “unity” and “togetherness,” Brussels, and its de facto imperial controller, Germany, faced impasses: an already creaking EU economy; the absolute refusal of the “haves” to contemplate emergency measures to defend the “have

nots” from collapse; the stubborn fixation of the Eurocrat elite upon transforming independent nations into obedient clients of the German-dominated EU “unity;” and burgeoning anti-EU hostility of several members over the illegal immigration crisis and EU efforts to browbeat all into “accepting” and “integrating” unassimilable throngs of undocumented Third World hordes¹⁶. As a result, a psychological rift is silently building up between the populations of the Union, which now stands to suffer devastating jolts¹⁷.

Inevitably, the post-pandemic Union will be changed to its core. Any balance of power that is in force today and brings a stable and a functioning “system”, will start losing its appeal to its members. This is since members’ priorities will deem to change faster than the ability of the Union’s structure to adopt to those changes. Should the system of present alliances survive, it will be nevertheless unrecognizable vis-a-vis the pre-pandemic universe. The main players within the Union will remain the same, for the time being, trying to reposition themselves not only internally but in the international arena as well, having to face both the economic, the social and the political consequences of the period they were fighting the pandemic. At the same time, all members will re-examine whether under the post pandemic conditions their pre pandemic alliances still serve their interests.

It is for Brussels a standard operational procedure to look the other way and ignore both the forces of change that exert political pressure on the elites and the early warning signals indicating that a change in course is required. Propensity to change its current status is not the strong point of any bureaucracy, however. Bureaucrats tend to disregard the fact that even if a few of the attributes¹⁸ of geopolitical change are spearheaded by an outside factor, realistic outcomes could be produced; in other words, a geopolitical shift. Geopolitical change is inevitable when: i. there is the explosive but contained emotional need for change, no matter how policy makers, the elites and the general population arrive to that emotional stage; and ii. a cataclysmic event acts as a catalyst that unleashes the forces of change, either abruptly or more often incrementally. A recent example of a legal imbroglio that Brussels is still facing came up when it failed to realize or to acknowledge the existence of political forces that would manage to reverse via a simple referendum a centuries long British policy¹⁹.

The United Kingdom once a large force in the Union, now is disconnected from the core of the Union by a Brexit that was long overdue, as a result of both its pro-Atlantic position, its remnant imperial geopolitical leanings and its economic freedoms. Freedoms that mostly lack when you cross the channel. The UK was always deemed to be part of the Union, but an invisible but nevertheless politically active faction within the Kingdom has never swallowed the incremental loss of sovereignty to a supranational structure. Brexit, therefore, was a shock to Brussels but not a shock strong enough to ignite other forces to spin out of the Union. It did create however a psychological gap among its members. It proved to them that the superstructure is not so strong, at least at its flanks, ascertaining that there is no possibility to break from its central gravity force, namely Germany.

Germany ushered in the new century with a generation uncomfortable with its winnings²⁰, its affluence and its reformed past, all of which were well earned through blood and tears. All those uncomfortable with the old status quo seeking the new and not being able to express the form which it might take, a catalyst for change popped up in the most unpredictable way.

Rather, in a predictable one, but no bureaucrat cared to listen to predictions because as a bureaucrat was busy enough to ignore. Predictions of a pandemic were ignored because nobody believed that a virus, would prompt *inter alia* to swap long established geopolitical constants into variables. It is an axiom in geopolitics that when long-established constants become variable then alliances shift as a new level of equilibrium is sought by the strongest actor at the core of a Union.

It is not a twist of fate that history will be written again on European soil, as the primary virtual (or real as per the Aristotelian logic) battlefield of geopolitical change, with the participation of the same main actors. EE will not dissolve immediately after the end of the present crisis as many Cassandras predict. It will hang on for some time still. The virus-catalyst was not strong enough to split the Union but certainly strong enough to support the internal centrifuge forces. In physics, the larger the object, the stronger the forces it exerts in the neighbouring planets. One can only imagine what will happen to the Union if the strongest member ceases to exert gravity and instead were to spin out of it.

Amidst all this reshuffle in the making, both psychological and financial, at a time when profound mechanisms are at work eroding the core of alliances not only all around the European rimland but also globally, Germany stands there all mute²¹.

A Spinning Red Dwarf

Germany stays mute during this pandemic, uncomfortable and unable to play the role of Europe's leader. She is more comfortable however, as Europe's accountant and having a veto power on every European decision. Luckily for the rest of the world she remains naked militarily, but however mute on leadership she has the might to machinate decisions in the Union in its favour, with an efficiency that would have made jealous even the Byzantines. In a subtle way, she puts all her energy in mobilizing her northern allies into a larger "mini" EU. Unsavoury World War II alliances revive, and the perceived underdeveloped southerners discover they need to become "service areas" for Berlin's benefit. Italy, Spain, Cyprus and Greece for example, already a holding pen for tens of thousands of undocumented aliens trying to obtain asylum, become the de facto illegals detention facilities of the German sphere.

Germany, nevertheless, she feels boxed in the European superstructure. The best proof being that although she reacted to the virus with German efficiency her policies towards the other EU members was one of an introspect. It managed well so far. However, with its purely export economy receiving body blows, with burgeoning political agitation that has devastated the country's traditional "decent" democratic forces, and with the rise of nationalistic political parties with thinly-veiled National Socialist leanings, Germany feels that she should urgently strike alliances that can "even out" her deteriorating imperial EU dominance. Alliances that also liberate her from the post war Atlantic embrace²².

NATO's utility as a military organisation is now being taught in the history books and is being questioned in international forums. Among European leaders some legitimate questions arise about its continuing existence and utility as an independent bureaucracy, albeit one with the ability to exert military force. As conventional wisdom has it, the presence of the US

military in Germany and the purpose of NATO was to defend Germany and Europe from the Soviet Union and after her fall to defend the 'free world' from any threat. In the secret and undocumented battles of the geopolitical arena, it is obvious that Germany does not want to be defended from Russia because it does not perceive Russia as a foe. On a second and higher order logic, we can conclude that the only utility of NATO in the 21st century is to keep Germany disarmed and without having herself a menacing military force. It seems that this is the only rational reason that explains the continuing existence of an organization that its only *raison d'etre* was to counter the Soviet military machine.

As the US is debating whether to start withdrawing its forces from Germany, one does not ponder about the inspiring 'event' that prompted the US to be spying on Germany, in an incident that was made public and raised eyebrows to the political establishment in Germany. The easy excuse to broadcast was that the US is in fact spying on anything that is moving on earth, thus also on Germany. Therefore, there was no specific event that prompted such action. But was this so? Or was it rather feelings of mutual mistrust in the uneasy lien between Germany and its 'natural' allies since the end of the second war?

The response to the spying 'allegations' by the German deep state was the use of old styled typewriters to write and to submit to the upper echelons of power confidential reports about national policy. Therefore, there may be a fundamental misconception between the western governments regarding the exact composition of the connecting material of the West's alliances and whether the real attributes for geopolitical change are brewing in the background.

As the western world is slowly coming out of its lockdown that was necessary to battle the spread of the coronavirus, some events of significance go unnoticed, namely that: i. Many world leaders have expressed an uneasiness about the utility of existing alliances; ii. Governments are wary about the ways to mitigate the social and financial risks on their societies caused by the lock down of more than one third of the global population; iii. There is an upcoming threat of famine²³ as both the UN and the WHO have warned. Iv. There are numerous areas for the potential outbreak of armed conflict between nations around the globe. Every event examined independently does not necessarily ring any alarms. All the above events though combined with either the outbreak of famine or war may signify a change of fortunes for alliances and unions. Famine will test the already overstretched limits of solidarity for members of unions and alliances. Whether war will bring in the breakdown of old alliances or the breakdown of old alliances will bring in war it is a roll of a dice.

Is The sick Man of Europe ready to Break old taboos?

In the past 50 years, Turkey turned from rags to riches. It is now a country seeking 'respect' and its righteous place in the geopolitical and international arena²⁴. There is a lot of literature about the uneasy relationship between Turkey and the European Institutions. All hope for Turkey to adopt western values and the western way of life has withered away long ago. Now Turkey stands alone pretending to feel betrayed by western hypocrisy as she thought that it could manipulate western institutions with occidental ruses. Nevertheless, one must credit Turkey the fact that while the eurocrats in Brussels were pursuing their own agenda of

enlargement they were frivolously encouraging Turkey to join the superstructure. At the other end of the spectrum, the European governments sensed that Turkey was never willing to participate in a Union that would oblige her to sacrifice the advancement of her national agenda in order to oblige to the Westphalian principles that cemented the present day geopolitical equilibrium. During the enlargement negotiations, EU officials were aware that their desperate attempts to direct Turkey to adopt western values was propelled by the wishful thinking of the political correctness of the media and by the politically sensitive European elites. Turkey was also aware of the hidden objections regarding her membership in the Union. In retrospect, it seems that both European politicians and the eurocrats were advocating an illusion to covertly hostile domestic populations. The average person in the street loathed the idea that Turkish nationals would be flooding not only their neighbourhoods but also the very European Institutions²⁵, nevertheless political correctness obturated any expression of opinion. The Atlantic alliance, on the other hand, considered Turkey a buffer against the Soviet communist threat, and recently a buffer against Russia. Moreover, thanks to her support of the Uighur Chinese the US administration consider Turkey a useful ally acting as a spear at China's side. It is a still open question whether both the EE and the US via NATO wished to exploit Turkey as a potential buyer of both their consumer and military products. They thus allowed Turkey to bite on the false narrative of EU enlargement as the carrot of inclusiveness to the large European 'family'. Indirectly they used Turkey as a distant nouveau riche relative who had unlimited appetite to consume their products. In other words, as their best client of the day.

As a member of NATO Turkey enjoys political benefits, sitting at the table with the rich and powerful of the world, NATO itself being a remnant of a bipolar world long gone. A rapidly withering NATO usefulness for its members, however, remains a largely administrative "obstacle" for Turkey in its efforts to reposition itself during the inevitable reshaping of Europe. Turkey senses that NATO becomes redundant as US strategic interests shift away from the old post-WWII Atlanticism model. That strategic shift allows Turkey to continually weigh its options in favour or against membership. She is comfortable playing with such in-out position, positioning herself to gain as many geopolitical advantages and prestige from membership as possible, as well as to advance its expansionist appetites as a reformist force.

As the NATO alliance is trying to maintain a straight face and the façade of unity, Turkey with its well-documented history of ignoring and violating international law, international treaties and to that effect UN Security Council resolutions, is allowed to improve its relative position in the periphery. Turkey in the 21st century seeks to become a peripheral power and a geopolitical player with a small-scale simulacrum of the ottoman rule. This 'revisionist' state-actor is also member of the unaccountable but nevertheless powerful G-20²⁶. Membership in such powerful organisation, however, does not seem to appease Turkey's appetite for seeking additional territory to expand her influence. On the contrary, she brings forward a national policy that is destabilizing the Mediterranean periphery and at the same time is building up tensions in the Middle East, with Egypt already amassing troops and equipment near the Libyan border. From Turkey's viewpoint, she is having the world under her thump. An astonishing performance from a poor country which in the middle of the 70s turned its back to the international status quo with the invasion of Cyprus. Subsequently she ignored all UN

Security Council resolutions regarding the occupation of the northern part of the Cypriot Republic²⁷ without any serious effects.

As Turkey is used to test the limits of her reformist geopolitical agenda, she actively questions, directly, and indirectly via President Erdogan's close associates, the ability of the Anglo-Saxon world to uphold the post-World War II order. Turkey also questions whether the Anglo-Saxon world would have the first role in world affairs in the new world order of the 21st century. A willing pawn in the hands of the new actors that are seeking more space and power in the new multi-polar world, Turkey has managed to advance its strategic relationship with Russia and to wash out, via the acquisition of the advanced SS400 platform, the direct insult that she inflicted to Russia by downing its war plane over Syria.

Turkey also challenges Greece, and indirectly the EU, by allowing its air force to violate Greek airspace daily and by actively promoting the exploitation of hordes of illegal immigrants as a means to blackmail Brussels. Actions that infuriate both France and the upper echelons of the European bureaucracy, but not necessarily Germany. A country that also wishes to cultivate closer ties with Russia in a move reminiscent of the 1920s and 30s formula²⁸, with its uneasy allies trying to keep a close eye on her with both legitimate and other means, just to desperately ascertain that she as well remains within the prescribed limits of the post-World War II Westphalian order, during which Turkey had only observer status.

For the time being Turkey walks the walk and talks the talk, with the West going one more time out of its way to keep her at bay. A replay of a scenario well-rehearsed in the past, until Turkey feels ready to break an old taboo: to exit from the Atlantic alliance in the era that 'exits' from alliances seems to be more fashionable than memberships²⁹. A roll of a dice for her expansionist policies however, since it is questionable whether the US, the EU and more importantly Israel would easily favour any peripheral role for Turkey over and above that of a humble servant of their interests and a good customer for their hardware³⁰.

The Theocratic Islamic Republic of Iran and Israel

When Iran exchanged its imperial past in the name of Islam, it was classified by the international community, for its support of terrorism and its pursuit of its illegal nuclear ambitions, a rogue state. Despite the decades of isolation and blockade that ensued, its theocratic government managed to remain a regional player with the ability to exert military power in the region. Notwithstanding the theocratic revolution in the 70s, the devastating in the number of human victims Iran- Iraq war of the 80s and the complete economic and political isolation in the 90s and the new century, the former imperial Iran still poses a credible threat against the existence of Israel. Its government has declared this as a national policy and is willing to use both its conventional forces and through proxy war to achieve this objective.

Although Israel was put on the defensive it has nevertheless clearly demarked its red lines. Using back channels and covert diplomacy, the Israeli government has communicated to both its allies and the international community that should Iran advance its enrichment programme and reach the technical ability to build a nuclear weapon, *'it will burn Tehran to the ground'*. This direct and credible threat can be sustained by Israel which can strike, with

its nuclear arsenal of 90+ warheads, with its air force, lacking though the ability to launch the nuclear heads from land-based missiles.

Besides the nuclear question, Iran, an ardent proponent of Shia Islam, exports its regional doctrine with an audacity that makes semi-secular Sunni Turkey resentful for the perceived effortless with which it secures the ability to influence the regional players. Since 2011 Iran's overextending military meddling in the region increased friction and tension between the two uneasy allies. However, they both find common reference, an interlocutor and a willing partner, in this game of geopolitical manoeuvring in Kremlin. They are both seeking space for autonomous decisions navigating within the asphyxiating gaps allowed by the international order and the intricate web of US- Russia relations³¹. Additionally, they are now both declared enemies of Israel.

Israel squeezed between two regional players that are competing in their anti-Semitic rhetoric was forced to re-evaluate its strategic dogma and built additional regional alliances. It has already extended a strategic corridor with Greece and Cyprus. Joint military exercises with Greece are conducted regularly and the Israeli air force has simulated air attacks against Iran on Greek terrain. Greece on the other hand welcomes an ever-growing military and strategic closeness with Israel as she is also threatened by a reformist Turkey.

Despite those geopolitical impasses in the heart of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, Iran, and Turkey the two poles of trouble in the region, both currently perceive their largest threat to be coming from Saudi Arabia. Iran has already been fighting a proxy war with Saudi Arabia even before the appearance of the coronavirus and the recent oil crisis, when crude prices turned negative for the first time in their history of trading. Turkey on the other hand has built a military base on Saudi Arabia's local enemy, Qatar. Turkey and Saudi Arabia have often been at loggerheads since they established diplomatic relations in the 1932. The two countries differed in their strategy towards Syria since 1990. Despite a small impasse in their relations with increased Saudi investments in Turkey from 2008 to 2011 the Arab Spring exaggerated one more time the strategic differences between the two countries. Currently, Turkey has overextended herself in many fronts, in Syria, in Libya and in the Eastern Mediterranean and Saudi Arabia, with the volatility of crude oil prices, is facing its own demons and is no longer as threatening to Turkish or Iranian national interests.

Iran contends to have received unjustly an unfair and harsh treatment by the international community. It has nevertheless managed to navigate through the financial restrictions and blockade with some help from Turkey, Germany, and Russia.

Turkey assisted the Islamic republic survive, by laundering the income of its illegally sold oil³². This was a task performed for a significant profit by members of President Erdogan's family, and so far, has faced extremely limited consequences. With Turkey's undercover financial assistance Iran has managed to survive day by day, making the country almost antifrangible. This financial rapprochement between Turkey and Iran was made possible because of their mutual pro-Qatar stance in the recent rift in the United Arab Emirates that was sponsored by their common enemy, the Saudi Arabia. Additionally, both countries oppose an independent Kurdistan in northern Iraq and they both have troubled relations with the US³³. Rogue

countries like Turkey³⁴ and Iran, effectively bankrupt and faced with insurmountable domestic crises, hasten to hang on Russia's tail.

Russia is never late in trying to exploit the gaps left by the retreating geopolitical position and the partial strategic withdrawal of the US in the Middle East. As a major strategic partner of Iran, it has stood by its side during all these years of isolation and international blockade.

Iran has also managed to gain a sympathetic ear from Germany³⁵, which is seeing the softening of the political Islam as a way that may allow Iran to reposition itself in the World arena and shield her from her enemies. The now functioning European supported INSTEX system is a reminder that nothing is a constant in a fast-changing world. INSTEX is a proof that Iran's troubled and tumultuous relationship with the US does not preclude Germany, Britain and France, to conceive and construct a barter platform in order to bypass US financial sanctions to Iran and make it possible to continue trading without the watchful eye of the Federal Reserve.

Iran is certainly not a victim of the aggressive regime change policies of the United States, but rather is the victim of its own policies. Like, Qatar which may at times have overextended its arm in its support of the Muslim brotherhood, Iran has played the Hezbollah card too far for the liking of the strongest regional actor Israel. As its Islamic rigour is being softened throughout the years, Iran's geopolitical identity is much more complex than a simplistic militant Shia expansionism. Forty years of Islamic governance has marginalised a country with a long history and an imperial past. Internally strong nationalist forces are on the rise and could well turn the tide towards more reconciliatory policies and reacceptance of Iran in the world stage.

Could these upcoming cataclysmic shifts cause schemata that would defeat all traditional "conventional wisdom?" The US is already an introspect force eager to commence a retreat of its armed forces from Germany. China has already penetrated Europe and at the same time is seeking and developing a detente with Germany. By extension, China is augmenting its understanding with Russia as well, a development which may prompt faltering States and alliances once bound to the Westphalian principles to reconsider their respective roles in this geopolitical moving sand.

The bear that awoke from its hibernation

Russia, although already barricaded behind secure borders, is hardly immune to the pandemic impact, both financial and geopolitical.

The wobbly European economy and the unbearable pressure of the US administration upon Germany to block Nord Stream 2, threatens Russian natural gas revenues which form a strategic core of Russian economic wellbeing. Moscow, despite its constant political-military mobility and interference in "hot spots" like the Middle East, is still unsure about an international strategic environment full of imponderables.

Putin's Russia, now consumerist and "democratic," is secured by an improved and "civilized" labyrinth of state protection secret police agencies. Despite the control of the society reminiscent of its Communist part, Russia does have her own financial, political, and military

weaknesses, which could avalanche in unwanted ways. Thus, Putin remains extremely careful to cultivate Russia's internal balances and project himself as a global man of peace, a mediator, who nevertheless uses brute military force to promote "stability." His complex play in Syria has provided us with ample evidence of how today's Russia labours to be a superpower.

Russia is deemed to have violated international law with the cessation of Crimea, and has come out of the violation largely unscathed, notwithstanding international sanctions against her³⁶. Additionally, Russia as a national policy objective is seeking to politically penetrate its natural extension, the European Heartland. Culturally and historically there is an interaction between Russia and the Continental European powers since the Treaty of Westphalia. Thereafter, Russia interacted with the Continental European powers in a way that safeguarded the interaction of the forces of history and kept the world in an equilibrium³⁷. This interaction was interrupted after the end of the Second World War by the Soviets. As the Soviets pursued their communist dogma of international expansion of their undemocratic model of government American placed a buffer against this expansion given their distaste of anything Communist, and presently anything Russian. However, it may well be that the continuation of such policies by the US may now be against history and certainly against the Westphalian principles adopted at the time by Imperial Russia.

Today, the Russian deep state also distrusts its European neighbours due to the influence exerted upon their policies by its superpower protector, and as a twist of destiny the Russian deep state is also using old style typewriters to write its sensitive reports. This does not prevent Russia however, to build and export one of the most advanced anti-aircraft systems in the World. A system that Turkey was eager to buy for the purposes of both appeasing and approaching Russia. A suave political move that also blackmailed an introspect American leadership and speared a numb European Union.

Russia's relationship with Germany continuous to be one of trust and cooperation. Both countries have enjoyed political proximity throughout their history. The Nazi attack on the Soviet territory and the occupation of East Berlin by the Soviets interrupted this long relationship. The scourge of communism, however, is not a dividing force between the two countries anymore. Today, Germany is hungry for energy. Russia possesses the natural resources and can provide its natural gas at competitive prices. Thus, the commercial arrangements between the two governments were almost finalized with the completion of Nord Stream 2. Only a strong statement by the US State Secretary Pompeo about the geopolitical disadvantages of the pipeline and the subsequent statements and pressure by the governments of Poland and the Baltic States created for both Germany and Russia an impasse.

The US and the Anglo-Saxon world in general are deeply suspicious of Russia. They never fail to conceal their discontent for any rapprochement between the European States and Russia by overemphasizing the need to hedge the dependency on Russian energy. Being the winners of the Second World War, they have since held a right of veto for any decision that Europe may take regarding the deepening of its relationship with Russia. This affects directly German national interests, expressed in their quest for additional sources of cheap energy. Germany

more than any other European State feels the pressure of the Atlantic policies. Her experience having lost two world wars has taught generations of her politicians the limits of their geopolitical manoeuvrability. Within the limits of its economic might Germany has in meantime, imposed its agenda in the European Union to the expense of numerous of its other less robust members balancing its act between East and West to the benefit of the Russian State.

The Events and the Signals

The two global players, the United States and China, face the extreme test of pivoting “at speed” to maintain their influence and expand their alliances at the expense of lesser actors.

With fear and confusion overtaking the world due to the lockdown and the political tensions currently at their height in all democracies, the one firm conclusion so far is that the “next day” will dawn upon radical power realignments and remodelled “spheres of influence.” Presently, this fear and loathing generated by the pandemic has saturated the universe with wildly differing “estimates” attempting to predict the shape and strategic reach of the New World Order.

The United States and China coexist in a precarious tussle over international economic relations and the building of strategic defences. China’s “rehabilitation” by the Nixon-Kissinger duo in the 1970s has had outcomes that the Americans could have hardly foreseen. China’s spectacular transformation – economic, social, defence, and global reach –was attained by a rigid Maoist communist party deftly exploiting the capitalist game to cement its permanent dictatorial power over Chinese society and quickly developed worldwide dominance expectations.

Today’s Chinese communists enjoy all the perks of Western lifestyles while maintaining a vast system of digital oppression that safeguards communist political dominance which is not well regarded by the most liberal western states. With hundreds of millions of Chinese graduating from abject poverty to the status of Western-style spenders, it is difficult to discern how genuine Western liberal democracy advocates can survive in Xi Jinping’s communist consumerist “paradise.”

In this threatening global environment for her national interest the United States, once the undisputed world superpower, is being severely tested by the idiosyncrasies of its political elites, the near collapse of the two-party system amidst bitter quarrels between liberals and conservatives, the widening gap between haves and have nots, the ugly deterioration of race relations, an education and illegal immigration crisis, and an economy with strategic shortcomings that do not cultivate confidence for the long run. Whenever there is a gap in the US presence around the world there are almost always lurking forces in the background waiting to fill the gap and expand their power locally or regionally. President Trump’s recent decision to withdraw more than 9,000 American troops from Germany opens Pandora’s box. The US and Germany have divergent policies on matters pertaining to China and Hong Kong, on G5 and Huawei and Iran and more importantly on the significance of completing the Nord Stream 2 project.

The Westphalian world order and Germany's first unification and expansion was followed by two devastating World Wars. Germany was allowed to be re-unified after the fall of the Soviet Union, NATO and the continuing presence of US armed forces on its soil assuring that German policies remained within the limits set by the victors of the Second World War. The oversizing of the EU allowed German policies to overshoot the foreign policy limits imposed upon her since the early 1950s. In the turn of the century an overconfident Germany imposed her policies, aligned solely with her national interests, on the rest of the EU members. Those policies were put forward invoking principles of protestant economic orthodoxy to divert attention from the fact that when Germany is dealing on matters pertaining to the European Southern States the Westphalian principles are grossly violated.

In this not so comforting international and regional geopolitical environment the role of NATO only exaggerates Turkey's intransigence. Turkey managed to put NATO in the uneasy situation to be facing a lose – lose position. NATO has either the option stay put when Turkey pursues her geopolitical adventures at the expense of other members of the alliance, or should NATO intervene to stem her illegal advances against France, Israel, but also Greece in Libya and the Eastern Mediterranean, it risks to have Turkey find a good excuse to break the ranks and run away free to pursue her 'reformist' regional agenda. To add insult to the injury, there is an uncomfortable feeling among various EU members that Turkey's aggressive stance in the region has the silent approval of the deep German State. This dual German foreign policy rather long on declarations and short on action, allows enough breathing space to Turkey's strongman, Mr. Erdogan, to even mock Europe's democratic foundations and to take advantage of the inevitable delays in the response mechanism of the Union when confronted by an 'event'.

The world has witnessed times when a strong headed state leader managed to turn history around, almost always paying the price of a heavy human toll. Those leaders' power emanated from the clear perception they attained about the ability of related and unrelated state actors to act or react to events that they were willing to enact. Almost all European nations have felt the consequences of the actions of those individuals with those strong nationalistic feelings, it will be repetitive to mention them in this present analysis³⁸. In a democracy the power of an individual is adequately contained within the limits of the Constitution. This is the reason democracy is appreciated, despite its shortcomings. In a democracy there are checks and balances. In a dictatorship there is only the will of the dictator that determines public policies of the state³⁹.

When the underlying forces that favour a geopolitical change pre-exist the appearance of a catalyst, its very appearance prompts events that may be deemed as cataclysmic⁴⁰. The Western democracies are focusing their energy on trying to contain the political fallout caused by the internal turmoil they face due to the anti-racist movement in the US and the aftereffects of the Coronavirus epidemic. At the same time, undemocratic states like Turkey, Russia and Iran lurk in the background waiting to take advantage of any misstep they make. Turkey is already trying to encircle Europe, at the expense of Israel, France, and Egypt, by violating all relevant EU, NATO, and UN resolutions regarding the blockade of Libya. The geopolitical position of Turkey is the only unresolved peripheral issue in the 21st century that

threatens the very existence of the European structure. Turkey is the underlying force that favour's geopolitical change to advance her peripheral status. Russia and Iran do not directly threaten the European superstructure as they already playing a strong role in their immediate periphery.

The end of the Westphalian order that was established in two German towns the seventeenth century is coming to an end. A Western model of order, without a concrete system of underlying values, seems to be creating cracks to the bureaucratic superstructure that is, unable to inspire and lead nations. People in the West are changing the way they perceive their values and history. It is therefore inevitable that a different perception of the universal western values will certainly change the way people in the west live⁴¹. Radical Islam, on the other hand, possesses values that are unacceptable to most of the European national states. This may prove to be convenient enough for the 'most German of the Germans' way of thinking, 'where danger threatens, that which save us from it also grows'⁴². Namely, the inevitability of cataclysmic change due to war.

The only way to mitigate the risk of war with radical Islam will be the establishment of new world order where Germany, Turkey, Russia and Iran unite and by their union radical Islamic values are crashed in a new internal system of order and cannot take advantage of the democratic principles of Western democracies. This union will have all the attributes to become the emerging peripheral superpower of the 21st century⁴³ and it will assimilate and diffuse the political and cultural contradictions now present in the European Union. Their union will intermix the western Westphalian model with the radical Islamic version of world order mitigating the risks of clash between these two opposing models of world order. Their union will assure a continuation of the world order as this was established in the early eighteen century stamped with the provisions of the Treaty of Vienna.

The formation of a geopolitical bloc by the four powers and their satellites will be a cataclysmic event in the 21st century. Should this scenario ever materialize it will be seemed as the aftermath of a sequence of events that will follow the CONVID 2019 pandemic. Namely, famine and war.

Now that Germany has sold everything it could to the rest of Europe through the EE and the member states lack financial resources to feed further into her industry, Germany is being asked to pay back what it gained all those past decades. Germany is also asked by the US to curtail her ever increasing energy needs that Russia is so eager to supply. Germany reluctant to comply to pressure exerted upon her by both its European and Atlantic partners, she is using her satellite States to express objections on her behalf. As Real geopolitics as well as *Real Politik* does not rely on any ethical or moral premise, it is rather a consideration of *Real Politik* combined with valid national security concerns that will prompt Germany to act or react to future events⁴⁴. This time her actions will validate the concept that Baudrillard's geopolitics of the real⁴⁵ is not just an illusion.

Should the 'real' German national policy (the one that is internally distributed written on old styled typewriters) be the spin out of the European Union, this spin out, is going to ensue not with a whimper but necessarily with a bang, and the timing could be only when war disrupts

the relationship between so called allies, leaving one more time (financial) ruins on the European continent. This war is already being fought, it is just legally not been declared yet, in the southern border of NATO and the southernmost but politically undeclared borders of the Union. This undeclared war is being observed by the political elites both in Brussels and in Berlin, with either dismay or fear or both, both capitals seeming unable or unwilling to stop it, paralysed by their own preconceptions and attitudes about their divided loyalties between their supra national and national interests. Brussels is hostage to the existential fears of all bureaucracies, that of its own redundancy. It is thus promoting policies which will only safeguard the Eurocrats' tax free jobs and will expand the massive soviet style superstructure. Berlin, on the other hand, preaching its protestant narrative as an excuse for financial orthodoxy, is preparing in the background for the time that she will pull the financial plug from the monster it has helped created. Nowadays, she neither has control over it nor wishes to continue financing.

The only remedy to this upcoming violent spin off by Germany from Europe, that was held put for so long with an illusion of Anschlussfaehigkeit⁴⁶, is to fully federate continental Europe, with a subsequent fervent reduction in its bureaucratic superstructure mechanisms. Those undemocratic mechanisms are currently serving as a German GTS to any decision that does not suit German interests. Coronavirus proved the redundancy of those mechanisms in time of crisis. As a reflex for survival the massive bureaucracy has kick-started discussions for a financial reconstruction, discussions that may take place with or without German blessings. Coronavirus is as much an opportunity for the rest of the European Union members as of a challenge and a subsequent test of the individual members' political perseverance and stamina. It is an opportunity for winning the 'war', any war to that effect, and not just of 'battle'. As the second source of continuity is rebirth, the question ponders whether the political leadership of Europe is up to the task; this unique opportunity to bridge a psychological gap between the peoples and their leaderships. Only time will show, and this time is coming sooner rather than later.

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