

A Geo-Strategic Snapshot from the Perspective of Spring 1994

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EUROPEAN UNION

As the Euro-elections approach, the situation is characterised by feeling of impotence (FRY), lack of direction (more, less or different EU?) and growing nervousness in most member states about chronically overblown deficits and the absence of economic turnaround.

Being able to devise decision-making structures allowing for not only common but credible policies is integrated Europe's most demanding challenge. In the past, progress was contingent on the preparedness of successive German governments to push the process ahead. Now, struggling to come to grips with its new identity, constitutional constraints borne of another era and an atypically vulnerable economy, Germany is finding it increasingly difficult to play this role.

This is not the only reason why weakness is the order of the day in European foreign policy. But it is decisive in explaining unification's tarnished image and the tragic failure of the CSFP in the FRY. No German soldiers for the front line means that United Kingdom and France will continue to limit their engagement -- and the limited nature of European engagement is the single most important reason for the reluctance and irresolution which characterise US policy.

But German soldiers are only thinkable on the front line if there is a non-national structure and effectively functioning level of European authority for deploying them. A European Foreign Legion and a directly-elected Europresident are urgently required. With the US no longer prepared to take the lead in European security post-Cold War, EU states cannot afford not to organise their resources and decision-making in a way which allows them to exercise effective leadership. The question is whether integrated Europe possesses the will to move forward when the pull is backwards to the mirage-like oasis of renationalisation.

UNITED STATES

The Clinton Administration's inclination to prioritise the domestic agenda has been reinforced by the health care challenge and Whitewatergate. In addition, there are a growing number of continental issues which - as developments in Mexico, Cuba and Haiti underline - have increasingly important domestic ramifications. In foreign policy, the onus is on husbanding material and psychological resources, evolving new forms of regional cooperation and avoiding repeats of Somalia.

- Thus, there is no US unilateral leadership on Yugoslavia but a continuing interest in sharing responsibility with European states if - and probably only if - an acceptable agreement on the FRY's future and a suitable division of labour can be achieved.
- US policy on the FRY intimately interreacts with its approach to the Middle East. For the US to be associated with policies perceived to be anti-Moslem in Bosnia would irreparably undermine its credibility as mediator, and ultimately peace guarantor, in the Middle East.
- As in the case of the Middle East, Russia and its relations with the other FSU republics involve issues in which the US feels it has no choice but to play a leading role. But here Washington's approach has been unravelling as the cause of reform is increasingly challenged by the dynamics of reintegration.
- At the same time, the US is pursuing energetic policies in Asia. But in the world's new geo-economic hub, resistance is mounting. A curious *de facto* collusion of interests is in the making. Key players find themselves at loggerheads with the US over questions as diverse as human rights, trade, proliferation and civilisational styles; at the same time, the mounting military might of the PRC underlines that an Asian security balance will require strong and savvy US security policies well into the future.

RUSSIA

The domestic scene continues to be characterised by deep-seated contradictions.

As alternatives to the present situation, three scenarios seem most likely:

- a strong centre, authoritarian but pursuing reform and a cooperative foreign policy (model: Ataturk/Gandhi);
- a strong centre, authoritarian and pursuing both oppressive policies at home and aggressive policies abroad (model:Hitler/Stalin);
- creeping collapse into generally authoritarian units of both types at lower levels of aggregation (model: warlords and successor states in the FRY).

Increasingly, however, it is the issue of (not whether, but) how Russia will reintegrate with the other former republics of the USSR which dominates perspectives among former Soviet elites. Essentially, four models seem possible:

- elite-driven forced reintegration;
- popularly-supported reintegration by non-Russian FSU communities, not necessarily corresponding to existing republican entities;
- consensual creation of federalist structures;
- further fractal disintegration, both on Russian and other FSU territory.

Its current preoccupations will make Russia materially too weak to shape international developments for the foreseeable future. It can, however, still co-determine the course of world events, owing to the political skills of its leadership and foreign-policy practitioners, and its residual military strength. For the elites at the former Soviet and now Russian centre, maximising these attributes in the name of a Russian great power role is the key to stabilising their professional status and material position.

CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE

The central issue for most C&EE states is whether they will be able to continue their reform policies, notwithstanding the current weakness in Western approaches, the possibly threatening volatility in Russian policy, and the destabilising example of the FRY. Perhaps the time has come for C&EE states to abandon their narrowly-focussed scramble for EU and NATO membership and to seek jointly ways of re-engineering the European scene which will bring benefits to all. It is one thing to resist neo-imperialist tendencies in Russian policy. But there is no future in approaches which tend to isolate Russia and in the process strengthen its most revanchist elements.

MIDDLE EAST

With an early, successful effort to secure a fair settlement in the FRY, the chances for the peace process are 50/50. Without this, they are substantially less, and the world runs the risk of the Balkan and Middle Eastern/Gulf conflicts interlocking. The more successful the negotiation process, the more prominent will figure issues of domestic legitimacy and identity on the participating countries' agendas.

ASIA

Will the policies of Asian government continue to be driven by the expectation that the primacy of economics over politics will remain the *leitmotiv* of the region through this decade?

If yes, tensions between Asian and non-Asian states are likely to dominate over the short-term, ie in the lead-up to the Hong Kong handover. If no, expect an accentuation of existing divergencies within the region as this event draws closer. One way or the other, it seems set to be a defining geo-strategic episode for the final years of this millenium.

In both scenarios, the PRC seeks an opportunity to forge a regional coalition which, however weak and vacillating, would serve as a vehicle for obtaining a freer hand in Asian politics. The coalition would essentially be directed against the US but could also combine in a later stage with Sino-FSU rapprochement.

LATIN AMERICA

The movement towards more efficient and profitable economies seems likely to remain the dominant characteristic on this part of the globe over the medium term. But as the Mexican case has demonstrated, economic modernisation can not only spur increased pressure for more pluralistic political representation but also be accompanied by spiralling societal stress and large-scale violence.

AFRICA

As underscored first by Eritrea and now South Africa and Rwanda, the full-scale redrawing of colonialist borders is now well underway.

As megapolitical processes take shape as profound as anything the world has experienced since the American and French revolutions, the initiative is shifting from

- big states to small states,
- defence to offence in matters military, and
- rule of law to rule by force.