

GEOPOLITICAL REFLECTIONS AS WAR IN UKRAINE CONTINUES

- It is a war for Ukraine, the geopolitical and geo-cultural theater of war between Russia and the historic West in its various incarnations (Poland, Sweden, Germany, USA/UK).
- This war in a time perspective reminds of the Russian wars against Poland in 17th and 18th and against Sweden in early 18th century. It is a war from the Russian point of view to reclaim all the Dniepr left bank Ukraine and Kyiv/Kiev, the mother of the Russian cities, on the right bank. Furthermore, Russia pursues the recapturing of historic Novorossiia, aka the entire Black and Azof Sea belt, which once was territory of the Khanate of Crimean Tatars.

The war brings also to mind the offensive of the Red Army back in 1919, sweeping away the embryonic Ukrainian independence. And this Bolshevik victory was costly (Mikhail Bulgakov, "The White Guard").

- "Denazification" has been temporarily dropped as a Russian peace term, but on the other hand Moscow claims recognition by Kiev not only of Crimea's annexation but also of independence of the two People's Republics in Donbas. The latter in particular amounts to an ultimatum.
- The more the conflict rages, Poland might be tempted to harbor designs with regard to parts of Western Ukraine, notably eastern Galicia with its capital Lviv. In relative terms the same applies to Hungary and Romania, both having lost historic territories to the benefit of then Soviet Ukraine as a consequence of post WWII Stalin's geopolitical engineering.
- In light of North Stream II cancellation, permanent or not, it should not be lost from mind that natural gas pipelines crossing Ukraine, will keep functioning, an important element in the dealings btw Kyiv and Moscow and source of income for Kiev.

European Union, politically hard pressed since the outbreak of hostilities (February 24), should get their act together and energetically get involved in all efforts to save anything that can be saved before the war escalates and the ensuing economic, energy, food crises hit populations in Europe and beyond (e.g., Egypt), with dire social repercussions.

- Neutrality of Ukraine either declared and codified in binding international treaty or by revision of the Constitution of Ukraine, or both, seems to be the foundation of any peace settlement for Ukraine. Had neutrality being accepted by all stakeholders as the viable and beneficial future of Ukraine and proclaimed in time, Ukraine and mankind might have spared the scourge of this war.
- This page takes a positive note of Israel's balancing act and the fervent good offices initiative of the government in Jerusalem. The approach Israel takes with

regard to Iranian nuclear program and rejuvenation of JCPOA is another crucial issue.

- It is not entirely a truism to say that USA gains influence over Europe following the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, while NATO sees its vistas revived. Future remains uncertain.

China's position is by and large enhanced. China is incurring some damage as it has been heavily involved in technology cooperation with Ukrainian institutions, but on the global scale her position looks strengthened.

- Germany's clout, strenuously built up over the decades by successive chancellors, Schmidt, Kohl, Schroeder and Merkel, has been affected. Dramatic decision to rearm themselves is like awakening from an abrupt self-inflicted loss of conscience, after they rushed, before the actual invasion, to freeze vital Nord Stream II project. France in the short term is taking driver's seat in efforts to revamp European edifice.
- We will see how heroic Ukraine would look like at the cessation of hostilities, not any time soon. Policy of bridgehead rather than bridge, harmed European, Russian and Ukrainian interests. Future historians will dwell upon how we came to this abyss. It was though not a sleepwalking this time.

Russia, even winner on the battlefield, will be suffering for several years to come.

- Last but not least, yesterday's meeting between President Erdogan and PM Mitsotakis in Istanbul, not without hazard for the Greek side, might prove positive for both sides in the shadow of the ongoing world crisis. Bilateral difficulties are temporarily being put in the back burner. The meeting has the potential to foreshadow a measured stance of Eastern Mediterranean partners and Balkan friends and allies on the heels of the Russian war. Time will show.

Stravonas of Amaseia,

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