

The “New Great Game” in Eurasia is being fought in its “Buffer Zones”

Moldova: Caught between NATO and Russia?

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On April 7, 2009 in Moldova’s capital Chisinau, supporters of the Liberal Party of Moldova, the Liberal-Democratic Party of Moldova, and the Our Moldova Alliance ignited violent protests in response to the results of Moldova’s parliamentary elections. They respectively won 13.14%, 12.43%, and 9.77% of the total vote, while the ruling party, the Communist Party of Moldova won 49.48% of the vote. The Christian-Democratic People’s Party of Moldova also won 3.03% of the vote. While international observers have said that no irregularities were seen in the parliamentary elections, the three main opposition parties said that it was rigged and, in an all too familiar modus operandi, started violent protests.

The current crisis in Moldova, a former constituent republic of what was the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.), is part of the same continuum of geo-strategic events and crises in Eurasia extending from Asia to the Middle East and Eastern Europe. It is one of two types of regime change:

1. “Colour revolutions” characterized by political struggles and civil strife invariably triggered through U.S.-NATO interference and covert intelligence operations: Lebanon, Burma (Myanmar), Ukraine, the former Yugoslavia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tibet, and Georgia.

2. Outright military intervention: Afghanistan and the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq.

“Self-determination” is a factor in all these conflicts. “Self-determination,” “Democracy,” and “Governance” are used as a pretext for outright military intervention (e.g., Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq) or interference as in the case of the “colour revolutions” unleashed in Eurasia.

The Struggle for Eurasia’s Buffer Zones: From the Balkans and Central Asia to Southeast Asia

In Ukraine, this contest, starting in 2004, has almost geographically polarized the Slavic nation into two halves. The Orangist forces, led by the corrupt Viktor Yushchenko (who would become president) and Yulia Tymoshenko (who would become premier), dominate the Western Ukraine and the Party of the Regions and its political allies dominate the Crimea, Southern Ukraine in general, and Eastern Ukraine. The threat of Ukraine dividing into two states looms over the country as a result of this.

In Lebanon, events unfolded in 2005 within the framework of the so-called “Cedar

Revolution” and led to the political and violent face-offs between the March 14 Alliance and the Lebanese National Opposition. Both sides have aligned themselves with outside players and powers, but their objectives should be measured by their independent freedom of choice from these outside powers, the source of their decision making, and why they have sided with outside powers. The popular and legitimate demands of the Lebanese people in 2005 were harnessed and translated into what has become a parliamentary majority by only a few sets by the March 14 Alliance. The March 14 Alliance’s goals are not in the best interest of Lebanon, but are in the interests of their own political leaders as has been the case of most Lebanese politicians.

In Burma, the contest was played out, in 2007, between the so-called pro-democracy forces led by Buddhist monks and the Burmese government, which is a military junta closely allied to the People’s Republic of China. The clashes were totally misrepresented by the media in Australia, the E.U., the U.S., and Canada, amongst other places.

In Georgia this struggle started in 2003 with the Rose Revolution and has been fought out since between Mikheil Saakashvili and the Georgian National Opposition on the political front. Militarily it has translated into conflict with South Ossetia and Abkhazia, with the intervention of Russia as a combatant.

In the Balkans, the struggle over Kosovo is another front in this geo-strategic struggle. The struggle for securing Kosovo is part of a wider venture to control the entire former Yugoslavia and the Balkans, which in panoramic terms are part of the mammoth struggle over Eurasia. The background to the situation in Kosovo is tied to the division and foreign sponsored civil strife of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, later the military attacks against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the 2000 colour revolution in the Serbian half of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the separation of Montenegro in 2006 from the Union of Serbia and Montenegro (a restructured configuration of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), and finally the declaration of Kosovar independence in 2008.

In all these colour revolutions there is a factor that is missing: “informed” consent from the public. If the majority of the people supporting the Rose Revolution knew what its underlying motivations were and to what it would equate, it simply would not have happened. In fact there are members of the Georgian National Opposition who were originally supporters of the Rose Revolution when it was sparked, but realized the fraud behind it. It should also be pointed out that there were those in Georgia who also joined the opposition forces because of self-serving interests too. In Lebanon the case is similar, Michel Aoun and the Free Patriotic Movement supported the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon with the March 14 Alliance, but refused to join them in political alliance.

Although not part of Eurasia, the conflict zone in Darfur, Sudan is also a consequence of the same pattern and modus operandi. While there is a humanitarian crisis in Darfur, the underlying causes of the conflict have been manipulated. The reason for this tragedy, in which the Sudanese people are the victims, is intimately related to economic and strategic interests.

The U.S. and the E.U. are behind the fighting and instability in Darfur and have assisted in the training, financing, and arming of forces opposing the Sudanese government. They demonize the Sudanese government and place all blame squarely on its shoulders while they fuel the conflict in order to move in and control Sudan. In this context, NATO is anxious to get its boots on the ground in Darfur in so-called peacekeeping missions.

Russia, Iran, and China oppose U.S. and E.U. pushes to intervene in Sudan. This is the reason why Russia and China oppose U.S., British, and French efforts to internationalize Sudan's domestic problems and the reason why Iran led an international parliamentary delegation to Khartoum in a show of solidarity when an arrest warrant was issued by the International Criminal Court (I.C.C.) for Omar Hassan Ahmed Al-Basher, the president of Sudan, which is politically motivated and part of a manipulated discourse. If the I.C.C. was truly impartial, by the same token, it would have sent arrest warrants out for George W. Bush Jr., Tony Blair, Dick Cheney, Ehud Olmert, Ehud Barak, Tzipi Livni, Condoleezza Rice, Donald Rumsfeld, and a whole set of other leaders too, a long time ago.

The Rivalry for Eurasia: The Periphery versus Eurasian Powers

In each one of these struggles, there is rivalry between a distinctly "Eurasian base of power" and a "Peripheral base of power" that is dominated by Western Europe and the United States. In other words, the struggle opposes Eurasia to the Ocean-based powers of the Periphery. It is in this context that Eurasian powers have always been strong in regards to land power or their armies, while the Peripheral Powers have had superior navies. This is why Britain and Japan had powerful navies historically and why the U.S., on a global scale, has the largest navy. A look at China and Russia will show that they have had and continue to have large and powerful land forces.

Crowds can be worked on any ideals, but power is exercised on the basis of motives. With the proliferation of these colour revolutions in geographically and culturally diverse places, conflict can no longer be seen in the historic, and manufactured, East versus West lens of the Cold War era. To tag the opposing sides in Ukraine as pro-Russian/anti-Russian or pro-Western/anti-Western and in Lebanon as pro-Syrian/anti-Syrian or pro-Western/anti-Western does not recognize the reality and geo-political complexity of the Eurasian environment. It does not also recognize the indigenous dimension or facet of the colour revolutions. The demands and desires of crowds is a factor, but the objectives of the leaders in these rings should be the basis of any critical evaluation.

The geographic list of places given is where fluctuating battles on the basis of political manipulation are taking place. Offensive geo-strategic penetration by the Peripheral Powers and defensive geo-strategic attempts by the Eurasian Powers to roll-back these penetrative pushes is taking place in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. The battle-fronts are in Eurasia with Eurasian Powers themselves being the ultimate prizes for the Peripheral Powers.

Lebanon is being contested over in a match that has the indigenous elites allied with the Periphery or Eurasia. The Peripheral Powers, which include Israel and NATO as agents, consider Lebanon as a geo-political hub that can be used to penetrate into Syria, isolate Iran, and to further marginalize the Palestinians. Control over Lebanon is also a means for Israel to secure its strategic foothold in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Control of Lebanon would also threaten the interests of Russia and China in the long-term too because of the petro-politics of the energy corridor in the Levant. This is one of the reasons that the Russians, along with Iran and Syria, provided supportive military intelligence to the Lebanese Resistance when Lebanon was being attacked by Israel in 2006.

The resentment of the Lebanese towards the past presence of Syria in northern Lebanon is legitimate, but there should be no mistake the Cedar Revolution was used as a cover by individuals and interests who are the anti-theses of popular sovereignty. If the leaders of the

March 14 Alliance had the power to do so and could, they would quash any opposition to them by force. This does not by virtue epitomize the Lebanese National Opposition as exemplary either. Nabih Berri, the leader of the Amal Movement, is someone who has been known for his corruption in the past. The motives of the general population and the motives of political leaders are very different. The narrative that has been given about the sentiments for the rallies of the Cedar Revolution, in a popular sense may be true, but the motives for its political aspects are not.

The real narrative behind the so-called democratic uprising, or Saffron Revolution, in Burma is similar. It was originally the result of an expression of public anger over rising prices, which were a result of sanctions by Peripheral Powers like the U.S., the E.U., Japan, and Australia against Burma. Without denying or overlooking the authoritarian nature of the Burmese military government, the destabilization of Burma is motivated by geo-strategic objectives to install a government that would be opposed to Chinese national interests and energy security.

The democratic or undemocratic nature of such a government is not the real issue. International relations are about unprincipled *realpolitik*, albeit masked *realpolitik*. The real issue is the encirclement of China and the obstruction of Chinese attempts to create a secure energy route to the Middle East and Africa bypassing areas controlled by the U.S. Navy and its allies, such as Singapore and Taiwan. This is what China has been attempting to do by building ports and bases in the Indian Ocean that provide a securer route. Burma is essential to this formula.



Note: The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) are two of the overlapping alliances that outline “Eurasia” as a political entity.

Countries are defined by the following colours; Dark Blue countries are those that are full members of both the SCO and CSTO (Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrzgystan, and Uzbekistan); Turquoise countries are only full SCO members (only China); Medium Blue countries are only full CSTO members (Armenia and Belarus); and Light Blue countries are CSTO candidates with cooperation status with CSTO (only Iran).

Targeting Moldova: Europe’s Only Real Neutral State

Moldova is historically a Romanian entity and is also one of two countries in the political landscape of Europe headed by a president belonging to a communist party. The other country with a communist leader in the abstract polity of Europe is Cyprus, which is also a E.U. member. Moldova is also a representative democracy and has a relatively fair government in comparison to its neighbours and surroundings in Eastern Europe.

Moldova is run by a communist political party. Despite the fact that communists run Moldova, it is not run under the framework of a Marxist-Leninist economy. There is an attempt to analogously portray Moldova in a tainted or negative light simply because its government is formed by a communist party.

Even more intriguing, Moldova has managed to remain neutral: Chisinau has been pulled and pushed by the “West” (or Periphery, namely the periphery of Western Eurasia and the Outer Crescent), meaning the U.S. and E.U. on the one hand. This occurs while Eurasia, meaning Russia and its allies, push and pull Moldova from the other direction. The Moldovan government has stubbornly held onto its non-aligned position in the face of alluring offers and threats from both sides. Neutrality is a fundamental block of the political culture of Moldova. A neutral national position is also enshrined in Moldova’s constitution and laws.

Historically neutral nations caught between rivals have never fared well. Moldova has remained one of the poorest nations in Europe because of its neutral position. It has sat on the political fence and tried to balance both the pulls of Eurasia and the Periphery by cooperating with both sides. This is why Moldova is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (C.I.S.), which gravitates towards Russia, while it is also a member of the GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, which leans towards integration with the E.U. and NATO.

Because of its neutrality, no side has wanted to strengthen and develop Moldova out of the fear that it could one day join the opposing camp. Nor is Moldova rich in natural resources like Turkmenistan, which also held a policy of neutrality. The position of Turkmenistan, however, has shifted from its neutral position. Although Turkmenistan may claim to be officially neutral, its *vita activa* says otherwise. It is a matter of time before Turkmenistan in some way or manner joins the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and other organizations espousing fidelity or allegiance to Eurasia.

The tiny breakaway republic of Trans-Dniester (or Transnistria/Transdnestrria), which is part of Moldova and mostly peopled by Slavic groups (i.e., Russians, Ukrainians, and Bulgarians), is another face of this Eurasia-Periphery push that Moldova is caught in between. Trans-Dniester exists, at the expense of Moldova, because of Russian geo-strategic interests. Like NATO troops in Kosovo, without Russian troops the tiny breakaway republic would have collapsed. Russian interests have allowed the regionalist, nationalist, and pan-Slavic feelings in Trans-Dniester to build. As a result Russian troops have continued to remain in Moldova under peacekeeping duties. The military position of Russia in Moldova has always been viewed as important by Moscow as a means to counter NATO in Romania and the Balkans.



The West/NATO makes its move against Moldova

Despite of its neutrality, the U.S. and the E.U. have decided to bring Moldova into their “Euro-Atlantic” or “Trans-Atlantic” orbit. This is implemented with the objective of undermining the rising Eurasian Powers, namely Russia and its allies. The Peripheral Powers fear that Moldova will eventually be lost to Eurasia and so they have acted. This move has been in haste too. The protests in Moldova are the result of a NATO-E.U. covert operation.

The objective in Moldova has been regime change vis-à-vis a Moldovan colour revolution modeled on those in Ukraine and Georgia. Once again, colour revolutions brought Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko into power in Ukraine and Mikheil Saakashvili into power in Georgia.

The essential thematic point of this event is not the nature of the Moldovan government, but the political allegiance and alignment of such a government in relation to the E.U., the U.S., and NATO. “Freedom” and “justice” are not genuine concerns of the U.S. and E.U., they are merely pretexts for justifying the toppling of other national governments, violent regime change, and the creation of dependent neo-colonial shadow societies.

It is in this context that the E.U. and U.S. are making statements that inwardly and discreetly, in Orwellian terms, support the violent protests in Moldova. The European Union’s Foreign Policy and Security Chief, Javier Solana is one of the officials that have made statements that are supportive of both sides and that seem innocent on the surface. Under the surface, however, they have a double meaning; this is Orwellian doublespeak. While calling for an end to violence Javier Solana has also essentially legitimized the protests against the fair outcome of a democratic election by saying that the protests are valid. As a result of the instability brought about by the protests and the support given to the political organizers of the protest by the E.U. and the U.S. the Moldovan government has openly expressed feeling threatened by the E.U., NATO, and Romania.

Moldova’s government holds a firm conviction that Romania is being used as a bridgehead for a regime change campaign in Chisinau. The Romanian government has also given support to the protests. One of the main demands of the protestors is integration with the E.U. and Romania. This desire is not a crime, but it has not been democratically realized or received any type of mandate by a demographic majority in Moldova. Following the protests, certain Romanian citizens, including journalists, were expelled from Moldova for causing instability and declared *persona non grata*.

The Identity Game in Eurasia; Moldovans: Romanians or Not?

The double standards that the U.S. and E.U. use are blatantly exposed in their treatment of the protests in Moldova. The Moldovan government has pointed to the use of the Romanian and E.U. flags by the protesters as they stormed government buildings as a threat to Moldova’s independence and as part of a push for the political takeover of Moldova by Romania. Most Moldovans are ethnic or linguistic Romanians, but the use of these flags have a political tag and an under the surface meaning to them.

The media in the so-called West illuminates the fact that the Moldovan government dislikes the use of Romanian flags and tries to suppress Moldova’s Romanian identity. They point to the fact that Moldavian, which is the official language of Moldova, is really Romanian and other such facts. Yet, just a few nations across from Moldova, in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina they do the opposite and distinctively try to alienate or separate the Bosnian dialect of Serbo-Croatian from that of Serbia. While the Bosnian dialect of Serbo-Croatian is distinct in some cases from the dialect of Serbo-Croatian in Serbia, it is not a separate language.

The U.S. and E.U. have objectified the people of the former Yugoslavia through dividing practices, leading to differential classification, and finally the subjectification or internalization of prescribed and manufactured identities or new ethnic tags. Individual

personality or self-conceptualization can be changed dynamically under very traumatic situations, such as war, and individuals can become very open to suggestions and form new self-concepts based on these new suggestions very rapidly. This case is also very true about shaping individual societies through shock therapy in the form of war, sanctions, or/and neo-liberal restructuring. This dimension of war and conflict is something that strategic policy circles in the U.S. and NATO also take into consideration. To make way for new identities is why national heritage and cultural sites in Iraq and the former Yugoslavia, such as museums, were deliberately destroyed by the U.S., Britain, and NATO.

A similar *modus operandi* has been applied in Anglo-American occupied Iraq through the confessionalization of the Iraqi identity into Shiites and Sunnis. Iraq has wrongly been portrayed along the lines of two sectarian groupings (Shiite and Sunni) amongst the Arabs (a single ethnic group) in addition to the Kurdish ethnicity (which are mostly Muslims of the Sunni confession). This is also what happened in the former Yugoslavia, specifically Bosnia-Herzegovina, amongst the Bosnian followers of Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Islam; two of these “Southern Slav” (Yugo-Slav) groups, the Serbs and the Croats, were sister ethnic groups of very close proximity, but the Bosniak identity and self-conception was manufactured through a manipulated discourse for the Muslims. The majority, but not all (some Bosniaks are Muslim Croats), of the Bosniaks and Bosnian Serbs were the same ethnic group just with different faiths. This does not mean that the Bosnian identity is false, because Bosnia-Herzegovina has had a distinct historic identity and its own separate traditions from Serbia analogous to the distinctions between Austria and Germany.

It should also be noted that the majority of Austrians are Roman Catholic, while Germany is mixed between Protestants in its northern areas and Roman Catholics in its southern areas, but this has not resulted in the manufactured creation of two separate identities. On the contrary, the confessional differences between Germany and Austria have resulted in different polities in two historically powerful entities. Yet, new ethnic identity has been manufactured on these grounds in the former Yugoslavia. Paradoxically, while the E.U. grows and advocates for pluralism in a united Europe the nations outside of its sphere in the European continent have systematically been divided and fallen apart (e.g., the former Czechoslovakia, the former Yugoslavia, and the former Soviet Union). In the process the E.U. and NATO have been moving in and absorbing these areas.

Also, the U.S. and the E.U. have never contested the claims of a Montenegrin language and ethnicity. Instead both the E.U. and U.S. have supported this differentiation process between Montenegrins and Serbs. This does not mean that Montenegrins do not have a distinct identity and history. Montenegrins are distinct, but they do not form a separate ethnic group or language. In addition, the branch of Eastern Orthodoxy in Montenegro is represented by the Serbian Orthodox Church. Yet, through a manipulated political process a Montenegrin Orthodox Church has been created. In parallel to the Roman Catholic Church of China, because of the manipulated discourse behind the creation of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church it is not recognized as a legitimate church by all Eastern Orthodoxy. Scratching under the surface one will find that the support for this church is used by local Montenegrin elites working with the E.U. and the U.S. to alienate their own people from the Serbs.

Going back to Austria, if one also recalls the historic discourse of Europe, they will also realize that the Austrians who are ethnic Germans have been denied unification with Germany. This happened first after the First World War when Austro-Hungary was dismantled and whilst the Wilsonian concept of the nation-state was being applied to Eastern Europe and the Middle East, but deliberately excluded the Germans. The Treaty of

Versailles and the Treaty of St. Germain both forthrightly prohibited unification between Austria and Germany, which was a popular idea until after the Second World War. Later, in 1945, after the surrender of Germany in the Second World War the U.S., Britain, the Soviet Union, and France partitioned Austria from Germany (claiming to undo the 1938 “*Anschluss*” of Austria and Germany by Adolph Hitler) and discouraged pan-German views.

This narrative does not reject the distinct identity of Austria, but it illustrates that the definitions of “just causes” are defined by the motives of those in power. These considerations should be a facet in any of the foci of the historic discourse of modern nation-building in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Why have the national aspirations of the Flemish in Belgium or the Basque in the Pyrenees never been recognized, while, for example, Czechoslovakian secession from the Austro-Hungarian Empire was recognized by the U.S. before the Czechs and Slovaks even declared it? Two standards are being applied: one for “us” and another for “them” or more specifically “our rivals.” This cannot be excused as an ethnocentric mistake or unconscious exceptionalism on the part of strategic planners either (maybe on the part of populations) because it is full knowingly calculated.

Moldova: An Element of the Military Equation in Eastern Europe?

Although Moldova is a tiny state, if it were to solidly ally itself with Russia and enter the CSTO alliance it would affect the geo-strategic map of Eastern Europe. Every country counts in the formula of NATO expansion in Eastern Europe. The entry of Chisinau into the Russian orbit would allow Russia to amass more troops into Moldova and provide Moscow with another missile base, aside from the ones in Belarus and its Kaliningrad Oblast on the Baltic Sea to counter the NATO-U.S. missile shield being built in Eastern Europe to encircle the European core of Russia.

Such a move would also put significant pressure on Romania, and by extension NATO. It would also bring another Russian plan one step closer to fruition; the idea of bringing Serbia into CSTO. In such a scenario, Romania would be flanked on two sides. On one side would be Serbia as a CSTO member and on the other Moldova and really the Russian military through Moldova. This idea has been entertained in Serbia and by members of the CSTO alliance. Not only would Romania feel the heat, but so would Bulgaria because of its border with Serbia. However, for such a scheme to materialize there would need to be a new direction taken by Belgrade at the economic and political levels.

An end to Moldovan Neutrality?

Returning to Moldova, it is the inclusion of Chisinau, or its partnership, with Russia that is viable. In the post-Yeltsin days of Russia, in Moscow’s eyes the view has been that if Moldova would not ally with Russia, it would rather see Moldova stay neutral. Russia has come to the political support of Moldova’s government. In these tensions no side is saintly, but it is worth noting that it is not Russia, China, Iran or their other allies that want war. On the contrary, the Eurasian Powers do not need war for their influence to grow. It is the nations of the Periphery, such as the U.S., Britain, Germany, France, and Israel, that need war to obstruct their own declines and keep other states from rising.

Because of the April 2009 protests in Chisinau there will be new geo-strategic ramifications in Eastern Europe. These changes will be similar to the ones that were sparked in 2005 in the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan. In 2005, the failed attempt at a colour revolution in

Uzbekistan saw the Central Asian republic leave the GUUAM group, evict Western NGOs, evict the U.S. from an Uzbek military base, downgrade ties with NATO, embrace Russia, and return to CSTO.

The outcome of the protests and failed colour revolution in Moldova will ultimately see an end to Moldova's neutrality. Either Moldova will turn to the so-called West, if regime change becomes successful, or lean inwards towards its organic affiliations, Russia and Eurasia. The most likely scenario is that Moldova will ally itself with Russia and, in some manner, with CSTO as a result of the "Twitter Revolution" of 2009, another geo-strategic error by the U.S. and its allies in Eurasia.

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ANNEX

The "Twitter Revolution" in Photographs







Source: The official press agency of the Republic of Moldova, Moldpres

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