

# POSSIBLE GLOBAL AND REGIONAL EVOLUTIONS OF GEOPOLITICS IN THE XXI CENTURY (I)

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**Abstract:** *In the paper, the author briefly presents possible global and regional evolutions of geopolitics in the XXI century grounded on the analysis of some regards expressed by foreign and Romanian specialists in many papers appeared in the late years on this subject. A special attention is granted to the book published by STRATFOR founder George FRIEDMAN "The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century", edited in Romania to the Litera Publishing House in 2012. The evolutions forecasted on medium and long term will practically damage all Earth's population and its regions, with dramatic consequences on economic, financial, social, military and environmental plan.*

*The most of the geopolitics' specialists appreciate with arguments and grounded there will be following intricate decades with riots and wars with spectacular up side downs of situations and major reconfigurations of areas of influence of major powers with important influences also over Romania.*

**Keywords:** *Geopolitical evolutions, USA, Russia, STRATFOR founder George FRIEDMAN, Europe, Asia, Pacific*

In the late two decades the regards expressed by politicians, military analysts, economists, IT specialists, financiers multiplied on the sense of world development, the short, medium and long time dangers possible to appear in our planet's life. These regards were and are expressed in treaties, encyclopaedias, thorough studies, books and articles published in foreign policy magazines mainly in the countries with economic and military potential important to the global and regional scale.

It is perfectly understood there exist major gaps in the approach of the complex problematic on the major – geopolitical, technological, demographic,

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cultural, military - trends on global level and in different regions of the world with serious problems as concern the affirmation and obtaining some force positions related to other states and groups (alliances) of states.

The divergences in the approach can be explained by the authors' allegiance, their honesty and correctitude and as well as their way to operate with scientific research tools in the field of history, geography, geopolitics, demographic movements and environmental and economic-financial phenomena.

From the study of some papers mentioned in the selective bibliography to the end of this material, the most Romanian and foreign authors focus on the study of world evolvments following the 1989 and short and medium term forecasts at the most until 2025 year. Among the Romanian authors we name the ones analyzing world's phenomena in **LUMEA (WORLD) – 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2011, „Enciclopedie politică și militară” (Political And Military Encyclopaedia) coordinated by Teodor Frunzeti, PhD and Vladimir Zodian, PhD** and published under the aegis of **Romanian Scientists Academy**.

This series papers offer a valuable expertise to the Romanian politicians but also to the businessmen and even to the wide public interested in the global and regional security problematic.

There is also a well-known American author, prestigious politologist, the founder and General Director of STRATFOR (private agency for geopolitical analysis) – George FRIEDMAN who in his paper **“The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century”**<sup>1</sup>, expresses shocking regards on the world evolutions until the end of the XXI century.

The paper does not seem to be a scientific one, it does not have footnotes and either indicate a reference list but, by the thanks addressed to the end of the material to some important members of his STRATFOR team, it results that it benefited by their entire expertise and a rich database accumulated in time at this institute. From the summary of the paper it also results the fruitful author's cooperation with United States of America power structures.

We are not obliged to believe all the author's predictions will happen but the reader will surely be amazed by the approaches courage and the major possible consequences, mainly on the great geopolitical breakages contouring more and more clear.

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<sup>1</sup> George Friedman, *The next 100 years – a forecast for the 21st century*, Litera Publishing House, Bucharest, Romania, 2012

George Friedman in person confesses in author's note: "I do not have a crystal globe. But, still, I have a method at hand to me, even not perfect, to understand the past and to anticipate the future. Under the opponent chaos of history, my task is to try to see the order and to forecast what events, trends and technologies this order will bring with it. To do forecasts for the following 100 years can appear to be a frivolous act, but as I expect you to see, it is only a reasonable, feasible not frivolous process".

Among the geopolitics specialists there exists utmost a consensus the world evolved from USA-USSR bipolarity from the Cold War, to an unipolar world with a single dominant power – USA, after the collapse of the Soviet Union (period which is about to end) following a long multipolar period with few new power centres.

On the contrary, **George Friedman** states in fact the "**American Era**" has barely started and at least to the end of this century USA will continue to dominate the world from economic, military and technological perspectives. We do not think he is making such affirmations only because he is American, the presented arguments seem credible and of course they will rise in the next period of time. Critical analyses from the authors from the specially regarded countries or organizations as Russia, China, the European Union, Japan, Turkey, Poland, Mexico, etc.

Actually, since now we can see totally antagonist regards expressed in papers published previously among which I recall the paper of Russian politologist **Dughin Alexandr: „The geopolitics grounds – the geopolitical future of Russia”**<sup>2</sup>.

Dughin speaks about the "Russian influence sphere" considering it in full expansion, he supports the "open rays" theory initiated from Moscow and believes Russia will be meant to install "a new geopolitical order" firstly in the former space of USSR and then to amplify its power in the Eastern Europe and in the South and South-East of Asia. Among the Romanian specialists (beside the already mentioned ones in regard to their contributions to the LUMEA Encyclopaedia) we can get more attentive to the "Security Geopolitics" paper, author **George Nicolaescu**, wherein are critically analyzed the regards expressed by a great number of Romanian and foreign analysts in geopolitics and geo-strategy inclusively with original points of view from the author.

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<sup>2</sup> Dughin G. Alexandr, *The geopolitics grounds – the geopolitical future of Russia*, Eurasiatica Publishing House, Bucharest, Romania, 2003.

In my opinion, the study of the available set of papers and their comparison can offer us sufficiently credible instruments to form an acceptable regard on the future evolutions, peculiarly because Romania will be also touched by those, historically and geopolitical speaking being situated on the one active breakage.

**Returning to George Friedman's theses and ideas** we will try in a sequel of three articles to emphasize his arguments and ours and others justified doubts, all in the intention to clearer see the global trends, the European space trends and of course the trends around Romania.

## 1. XXI century

A much wider characterization of the century we just passed to starts from the need to identify some crucial events able to happen, as the events from XIX and XX century shaping the world with references to which there are formulated some of the theses expressed by the author:

- **The United States** represent from economic, military and political perspective the strongest nation in the world without equal measurable adversary. This owes not only to the American power. The explanation consists in a **fundamental modification** of how the world functions. In the late five hundred years, the international system centre was Europe, its empires creating a single global system for the first time in the humankind history. The main road to Europe was the Northern Atlantic. The one who controlled the Northern Atlantic controlled the access of Europe to the World.

- **At the beginning of the 90s** something remarkable happened. For the first time in history, the Trans-Pacific commerce equalled the Trans-Atlantic one. From here comes the conclusion that now the country which controls the **Northern Atlantic** as well as the **Pacific** will be able to control the entire commercial system of the world and in a matter of consequence the world economy. In XXI century, each nation placed to the both oceans has an enormous advantage.

- **Because of the asserted costs** to fulfil a military fleet and to send it in the world, this power of the world born with access to the two oceans became the main actor in the international system. Thus, Northern America replaced Europe as gravity centre of the world, and who dominates the Northern America, theoretically, dominates the entire world. At least in the XXI century, this role was for the United States.

- **The inherited power** together with the geographical position does from the United States the core pivot of XXI century. The XXI century history, mainly in its

first half, will undergo around two fights to the opposite poles. One will be represented by the trial to form coalitions of secondary powers which will try to control the United States. The second will be the one of the United States which will try to stop the formation of such coalitions.

- **If we look to the beginnings of XXI century as the rise of the American era (taking place of the European era) we will see this era debuted with the trial of some Muslims to recreate Caliphate** - the great Islamic empire that some other times stretched from the Atlantic to Pacific. As this concerns, there were unavoidable seen forced to hit the United States in their trial to attract the supreme power of the world in the war in order to prove their weakness and to trigger an Islamic ascension. The United States answered by invading the Islamic world. But their goal was not victory. Their goal was purely to dismantle the Islamic world and to put it against itself in order to stop the formation of a new **Islamic Empire**.

- **The United States** do not need to win wars. There just should accumulate enough power to oppose them. At a certain level, XXI century will be marked by a series of confrontations among smaller power which will try to create coalitions by which to control the American behaviour and the United States which will initiate military deployments to stop such initiatives. XXI century will know even more wars than XX century, although they will be less catastrophic ones owed to the technological changes and to the nature of geopolitical challenge.

- **The American – Islamist war** is about to end but the future conflict is already seen to the horizon. **Russia** reorganizes its old influence sphere and this will undoubtedly prove to be a challenge for the **United States**. Russians will displace to West on the wide Northern European plains. As Russia will prove its power it will confront the three Baltic countries dominated by NATO – **Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania** – and, obviously, with **Poland**. There will also be other friction points to the beginning of XXI century, and this **new Cold War** will attract over it all the attention after the end of the American-Islamist war.

- **Russians cannot resist to the temptation** to reinstall their power and the United States will undoubtedly answer to this challenge. But, in the end, **Russia** cannot win. Its serious internal issues, the massive decline of population, poor infrastructure, will later shadow Russia's trials to survive on long term.

- **There are many people who predict** that the next adversary of the United State **will be China**, and not Russia. The author does not agree with the idea owed for two reasons. The first is that if you look closer China's map it can be easily seen it is a very isolated country from physical perspective. With Siberia in north,

Himalaya and the jungles in South and great part of its population concentrated in the Eastern part of the country, the Chinese cannot extent so easily. Moreover, century by century, China was not major navy power and the achievement of a fleet requests as successive generations not only to build ships but also to train crews and to create an adequate culture. There is also more serious reason in order not to be worried about China. This country always has been an unstable nation. Each time when it opens its borders for the outside world, the border region becomes prosperous while the most of the Chinese inside the country are very poor. This brings tensions, conflicts and instability, economic decision taken from political reasons and failing in ineffectiveness and corruption. Far from being a competitor, China is a country which the United States will try to support and to maintain united, as a counter-weight to Russia.

- **In the middle of the century** there will be rising other powers, countries nobody sees nowadays as great forces on world plan. Especially three countries emphasize themselves: Japan, Turkey and Poland. The author brings arguments of historical, geopolitical, economic, demographic and other nature which all together creates a possible and intricate scenario with major influences over Romania.

- **These three countries: Japan, Turkey and Poland** each will deal with a more confident America then was following the fall of the Soviet Union. The future relations between the forth countries will seriously mark XXI century, leading, lately, to the future world war. This war will be totally different than the others – with weapons which today are considered to be science-fiction.

- **The impressive development of technique** will be favoured by this war as also happened in the World War II. All the parties involved will look for new forms of energy to replace the hydro-carbonates. The sun is theoretically the most effective source of energy on the Earth but solar energy caption needs massive concentrations of capturers. Along the future world war, concepts developed before the conflict's burst, aiming the generation of electricity on cosmic grounds and its transmission to the Earth by microwave radiations will become overnight reality. Benefiting by the military capacities, the new source of energy will enjoy the same governmental support as it had **Internet** or the **railway**.

- **The social-economic realities** will lead until 2050 to the end of demographic explosion. The developed countries will know dramatic diminution of population. Until 2100 the most underdeveloped countries will reach to a birth rate stabilizing the number of population. These evolutions will have complex effects in the economic, social, military, cultural, etc. fields; effects which were not and are not

still attentively studied in the developed countries, in the developing countries or in the underdeveloped countries. By all means, on global plan, there are appreciations Mexico and Turkey will maximum benefit (there are many arguments able to be presented) threatening inclusively the United States position.

## 2. The formulation of some forecasts for the next 100 years

**From the study of many studies and analyses** it results in the end an utmost unanimous opinion: it takes place an unprecedented complication of the international relations system in all the plans (economic-social, financial, cultural, religious, and military, environmental. etc.)

• **Under these circumstances** it is appreciated that geopolitics is not just a big term for "**international relations**". It represents a manner of thinking about world and to anticipate what will happen in time. **Economy** speaks about an invisible hand, which, by personal interests and humans' short term activities leads to what Adam Smith called "**nations' wealth**". Geopolitics goes on the application of invisible hand concept to the behaviour of the nations and other international actors. The both, **geopolitics and economy** suppose the players must be reasonable at least in knowing their own interests on short term. As reasonable actors, the reality offers them limited alternatives. This theory of limited alternatives should be better thorough, particularly by the politicians, in order to avoid as possible the adventure and the serious mistakes with consequences often tragic on own nations.

• Thus, **the geopolitical forecasts** do not mean all is meant to be. It means what people believe they do, what they hope to get and what happens in the end are one and the same thing.

• **Geopolitics** presumes two things. **Firstly, people should organize in larger communities than family** and by doing this, to involve in politics. This also presumes people should prove native loyalty to the environment they were born in, to the other people and places. Loyalty to a tribe, town or country is natural. Nowadays, the national identity counts enormously. Also, geopolitics teaches us the relations among these nations represent a virtual dimension of human living, and this means war is omnipresent. **Secondly, geopolitics** sustains nations have a character greatly decided by **geography** as also happens in the relations among nations. We use the **geography** term in wide sense. It includes the physical characteristics of the place, but it also goes beyond this, until the effects of the place over the individuals and communities. If we understand these principles, then it is possible to imagine a great number of people, connected by natural human tides, constraint by geography, acting in certain manners. The United States are the

United States and therefore they must behave in a certain way. This is also available for Japan, Turkey or Mexico. If we dig deeper to observe the forces shaping the nations, it can be seen "the menu" they can choose is limited.

• **XXI century** will be just the same as the others before it. It will have part of wars, poverty, victories and defeats, tragedy and luck. But, XXI century will be extraordinary by two regards. It will constitute the beginning of a new era and it will know a new power dominating the world. The author believes by presenting some arguments hardly to be argued that now we are in an American era. An argument it would be that the European era ended, and the Northern America era started, but the Northern America will be dominated by the United States for the next one hundred years. The XXI century events will pivot around the United States. This necessarily presumes the United States represents a right and moral regime. And it means neither that America already developed a mature civilization. But it means in many regards the United States history will be the XXI century history.

• **Certainly many authors will contest the above affirmations of STRATFOR director, but, in the end, they should answer honestly to some simple questions as formulation but complicated as answers:**

- **Is there today**, on medium and long term, any great country with more favourable geographical position (to Atlantic and Pacific)?
- **Can any other country** develop a military fleet the same dimensions and technological capabilities as the American one, able to control all the world's oceans?
- **Can other country develop** air and spatial, observance, positioning, communication and targeting **capacities** at the United States quantitative and qualitative level?
- **Does it have or will have in the XXI century other power alliances**, land and navy military basis all over the world?
- **Who and When** could overtake the USA economic and technological performances keeping in mind the main followers China, Japan, the European Union already seem to be tired?

### 3. Aspects of "American Era" apparition and strengthening

**There are many analysts, including Americans; who strongly sustain the idea the United States could go to the dawn of their destruction.** Their arguments seem solid at first sight:

–**Disastrous wars**, uncontrollable deficits, great price of combustible, armed attacks in universities, corruption to the governmental level and in the



business environment and many other problems of social, ethnical, religious and different nature.

–**American culture** is a mad combination of exaltation and deep depression. The net result is a trust feeling permanently undermined by the fear that all the misfortunes of the world, starting from the environment to destructing wars.

• **The truth is that the United States** are still impressively strong starting from concrete facts:

◆ The Americans represent about 4% of world population but produce about 26% of goods and services;

◆ In 2007, USA Gross Domestic Product was about 14 trillion dollars comparatively to the world GDP of 54 trillion dollars. The next great economic power of the world was in that year Japan with a GDP of 4.4 trillion dollars. The American economy overlapped the economies of the following four countries together: Japan, Germany, China and the Great Britain.

◆ **The United States** produced 8.3 million barrels of oil every day in 2006, comparatively to 9.7 millions of Russia and 10.7 millions of Saudi Arabia. Imports are also big, but given the industrial activity, this is understandable.

◆ **Because of the wide economy of America**, it is interesting to remark that the United States remain, even today, underpopulated if we take into consideration the global standards. Thus: the world range– 49 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, Japan – 338 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, Germany – 230 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, and USA only 31 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>.

◆ **The USA have five times more land for agriculture** per inhabitant than Asia, twice more than Europe and three times more than the world range. An economy is composed by lands, labour force and capital. For the United States the numbers show the nation is able to increase more – disposes of a capacity big enough to develop in all the three directions.

◆ **There are many answers to the question** “Why is the United States economy so strong?”, but the easiest is: **the military power**. The United States completely dominate an invulnerable continent to invasions and occupations, disposing by the military force of their neighbours. The military power and the geographical reality created an economic reality. Many countries lost time trying to revive after wars. But not the USA. On the contrary, they developed more.

◆ **The military fleet of the United States** controls all the Earth's oceans, each ship in the world is moving under the American eyes spatial satellites, and their movements are approved or rejected as the American marines want. It is a reality that the USA military fleet is bigger than the reunited fleets of the other states of the world. This is an unprecedented situation in the humankind history. There were

regionally dominating fleets but never one to dominate on the global level, with so overwhelming force. Moreover, the United States control the world commerce. It constitutes the basis of American security and welfare.

◆ **George Friedman** decisively states that the United States are hardly to the beginning of their ascension, "**XXI century will be American**". In the late five hundred years, the global system grounded on Atlantic Europe power, meaning on European countries to the Atlantic Ocean: Portugal, Spain, France and England, and less to Holland. As we know, the European power dismantled along the XX century, consequently with the European empires. This leads to the creation of an open space filled in by the United States, the dominant power in the Northern America and the single great power with shores to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The Northern America took Europe's place, place held for five hundred years by Europe, from the Columbus' journey to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

• **The arguments and counterarguments** on the ascension or, on the contrary, the regress of the United States will intensively continue in the next years but it will be extremely difficult for the annalists to ignore the USA economic and military power, also potentiated by a single geopolitical position which advantages them against their possible competitors (Russia, China, Japan, Mexico, Turkey).

• **An example** worthy to be studied is the political ascension and strengthening of **Europe** as consequence of mastering the Northern Atlantic and the main routes of commerce. The main role in this process had **the Atlantic Europe** (the Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands). Since the XVI century to the XX century almost there was not a part of the world escaping from the European influence and power. This power grounded on the geographical position (Atlantic), capital, technology and, of course, military power. But Europe did not succeed to remain united and initially lost its role of global development.

• **The events decisively rushing** the passing through the Europe to the Northern America power (with the United States as leader) were **the both world wars** and the end of **Cold War** confrontation against the Soviet Union which disintegrated in 1991, as we all know.

• **The confrontation between the USA and the Soviet Union** – represented a real world conflict. Initially, it was about a competition for the inheritance of the dismantled European empire. Also the both parties had big military powers, the United States also had an advantage. The Soviet Union was enormous but limited by land. America was about the same wide but it has easy access to the world oceans. While the soviets cannot master the Americans, the Americans surely were able to control the soviets. And this was the Americans' strategy: to control the soviets and to strangle them. From the northern Norway to Turkey and to the

Aleutians isles, the United States created a massive centurion of allied nations all limiting the Soviet Union – a belt that, after 1970, included also China. In each point where the soviets found a little gate, they were blocked by their position and the United State military fleet.

- **Geopolitics has two basic directions** where the competitions are developing: **geography** and **power**. In conformity to one of the directions, defined by the **Englishman Halford Mackinder**, who controls Eurasia controls the world. This theory dominated British and the United States strategy during the Cold War when took place some fights to master and subjugate the European Russia. Another regard is of **Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan**, considered the greatest American geopolitical thinker. In his book „**The Influence of Sea Power upon History**“, Mahan brings a counterargument to the Mackinder theory saying that who controls the seas' waters leads the entire world.

- **The history confirmed** that somehow the both regards were available. Mackinder was right if we think that the crash of the Soviet Union left free road to the United States to become the single world power. But the American Mahan was the one who understood the two crucial factors. The Soviet Union fall was determined by America's power on the sea, also opening the gate for the American navy forces to the world dominance.

- **Along the Cold War**, an alliance of other countries with the United States was by far more advantageous than an alliance with the Soviet Union. The Soviets could offer armament, political support, few technology and many other things. But the United States could offer access to their international commercial network and the right to sale in the American economy framework. And this shadowed anything else. The excluding from the system meant poverty; the introduction in system meant richness.

- The author of “The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century” believes **all these geopolitical transformations**, peculiarly those taking place in the XX century, lead to the strengthening of the USA geopolitical position, so that there are created the economic, financial, technological and military conditions for the United States power to show off stronger in the XXI century.

My **initiative** will continue if it is possible, in at least two materials wherein I will try to present another aspects of forecasts for the started century: evolution of the USA – JIHAD war; cultural wars; demographic explosion and computers; apparition of new geopolitical gaps; China of 2020s; Russia of 2020s; American power and the crisis in 2030; evolutions from 2040 as initiation for the war; 2050 – a new world war – a possible scenario; the geopolitical placement of the world following 2060 and USA – Mexico disputes in the horizon of 2080s.

All these geopolitical events presumed to happen will be able to be confronted with the regards expressed in different forms by the foreign and Romanian authors as well amended by each reader (will be continued II and III parts).



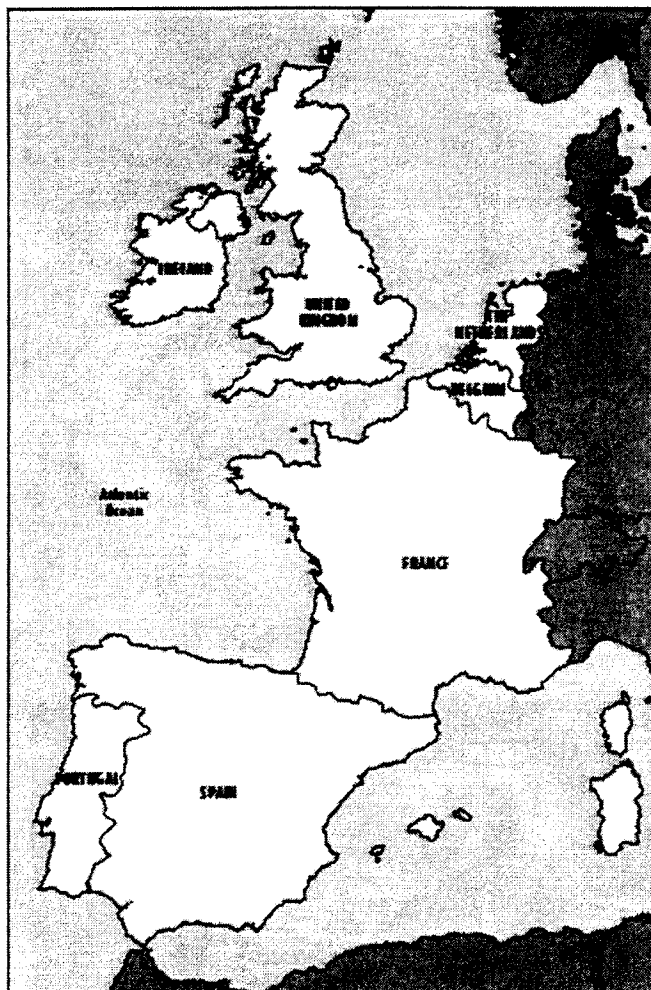
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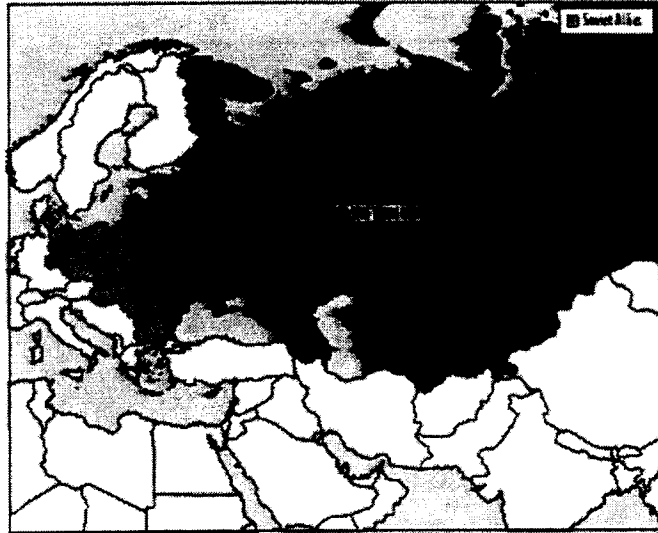
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Annex no. 1 – Atlantic Europe



### Annex no. 2 – USSR components



### Annex no. 3 – Balkans

