

EASTERN EUROPE - DEINDUSTRIALIZED, INCAPACITATED, DEMORALIZED, OVER- INDEBTED, RE-FEUDALIZED, RARIFIED AND DE-SLAVICIZED

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ABSTRACT

The single trend of negative growth (incl. the income levels and income distribution, inequality extraction ratio, suicide rates and functional illiteracy figures) comparable by its duration and severity to this of Eastern Europe, is situated only in (the countries of Chad lake– Grand lakes– Horn of Africa triangle of) sub-Saharan Africa. Further on, recent generational accounting figures illuminate a highly disturbing future prospect for the youth of Eastern Europe. Neither their economic performance nor birth rates would sustain the financial burden left for the future by the present irresponsible and defeatist generation. Simply, set up to fail.

Is today's Eastern Europe a classic case of indirect rule? Is that a deterritorialized deep imperial periphery of nominally independent native rulers, while in reality the true power holder resides outside, although is domestically supported by a dense web of NGOs, multinational corporations and handpicked local 'elites'?

Keywords: *Eastern Europe, socio-political cohesion, external debt, de-industrialization.*

JEL classification: *F5*

INTRODUCTION

As early as in XVI century, the Eastern European thought – in the person of famous Sarajevan, 'Bosnian Machiavelli', Kafija Pruščak – is spelling a universal and far reaching wisdom that *progress is both the focus of a vision*

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*and attainable reality for all*² (Kafija Pruščak, 1596). If this futuristic assertion is still accurate, than the progress itself is unthinkable without social cohesion. That would – consequently – necessitate a shared interest brokered by consensus, which only comes with thorough debates affecting all segments of society (or at least its major interest groups) on the common denominator/s. How much of it resides today in the countries of transition?

Is today's Eastern Europe a classic case of indirect rule? Is that a deterritorialized deep imperial periphery of nominally independent native rulers, while in reality the true power holder resides outside, although is domestically supported by a dense web of NGOs, multinational corporations and handpicked local 'elites'?

Accidentally or not, for the last 25 years, our reporting on Eastern Europe was rather a matter of faith than a reflection of the empirical reality. This 'rhetoric' was dominated by fragmented intellectual trends that are more cultural (e.g. poetry, paintings, film, etc.) than coherently economic and geo-political in focus as they should be. How one defines a challenge largely determines the response – effectively points out Brzezinski. Hence, the arts will always elaborate on emotions, science will search for and examine the facts. After all, where is no opportunity, a hope is on offer. And, for the realization of opportunity a knowledge (experience-enriched information) will be needed. For a lame hope, a belief is enough.

If the front of Atlantic-Central Europe lately suffered (an economic) problem which has been diagnosed as a distributional and compositional, than who and when is holistically and scientifically to examine the Eastern-Rusophone Europe and its burning geo-economic (distributional, compositional), socio-political/ideological (space-time in history) and geopolitical (logical and areal) problem? There is a lot of (pre-paid and post-paid) attention diverting and velvet-silencing, but besides this cacophonous noise where is a serious research on that? What is the narrative and who does it shape?

Finally, if the equality of outcome (income) was a communist egalitarian dogma, is the belief in equality of opportunity a tangible reality offered to Eastern Europe or just a deceiving utopia sold to the conquered, plundered, ridiculed and cannibalized countries in transition? Thus, what is the current standing of Eastern Europe – state of its economy, the health of its society and the efficiency of its governance?

By contrasting and comparing available HDI data (UN DP's Human Development Index) and all relevant WB, OECD, UNCTAD, ILO and WHO socio-economic and health indexes including the demographic trends of last

² Taken from Kafija Pruščak, H. (1596), *Universal theory of the global governing wisdoms* (Usul Al-hikam fi nizami-el-alem, org. Temelji mudrosti o uređenju svijeta). At the time, he was nicknamed in Western Europe as the Oriental Machiavelli.

two decades, we can easily spot a considerable green, economic and socio-human growth in Asia, in Latin America and a moderate growth elsewhere. This inevitably translates into a political and cultural emancipation, too.

NEGATIVE TRENDS

The single trend of negative growth (incl. the income levels and income distribution, inequality extraction ratio, suicide rates and functional illiteracy figures) comparable by its duration and severity to this of Eastern Europe, is situated only in (the countries of Chad lake– Grand lakes– Horn of Africa triangle of) sub-Saharan Africa. Further on, recent generational accounting figures illuminate a highly disturbing future prospect for the youth of Eastern Europe. Neither their economic performance nor birth rates would sustain the financial burden left for the future by the present irresponsible and defeatist generation. Simply, set up to fail.

Let us briefly illustrate it. A sharp drop in LE (life expectancy) in Russia, sinking from age 72 to 59, is something faced only by nations at war. The evidence that Russia has suffered such a steep decline, unreversed ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union, is unprecedented in a peace-time history of any industrialized nation ever, Figure 1..

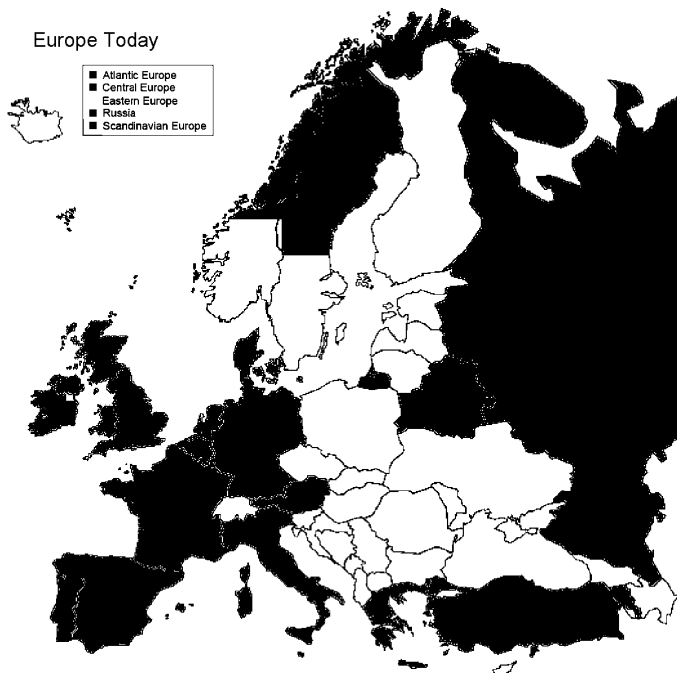


Figure 1. Europe today

Although not so alarming like in the post-Soviet Russia, the rest of Rusophone and Eastern Europe closely follow the same worrying LE pattern – not to mention devastating birth rates, brain drain and other disturbing demographic data. (E.g. the projected LE of the today's born Berliner is around 100 years, while of Muscovite is only 67 years.) Simply, Europe's East seems unable to (re-)produce its own life. Or, once it is conceived, to keep (the best of) that life at home. Some would argue that it is again the war for a lebensraum, but this time based on the seemingly self-imposed Endlösung (final solution)

East does not exercise its political sovereignty (gone with the EU)³, its military sovereignty (gone with the NATO), its economic and monetary sovereignty (gone with the massive domestic de-industrialization 'preached' by the IMF, EBRD, EIB and eventually ECB)⁴, and its financial sovereignty (gone by full penetration of German, Austrian and Swedish banks)⁵. Those

3 With some exceptions of *Visegrád* countries (such as Poland or Czech Republic, and lately Hungary) sporadically opposing a constant bandwagoning (but even that only in the domain of narrow EU fiscal or minor economic matters), Eastern Europe of today is unable to conceive and effectively promulgate a self-emancipating, balanced and multivector foreign policy. In East, the grotesque and disconnected 'elites' are repres(ent)ing the disoriented and disfranchised folks of those nominally existing states. Fergusson goes as far as to claim for Eastern European elites that: "they looked at Brussels (of NATO) the way former British colonies obeyed everything said and done in London." A high positioned Czech MEP does not hide her frustration: "We accepted a member of alien nobility as our foreign minister (Prince Karl Johannes Schwarzenberg, rem. aut.), a man whose family was a right-arm to the house of Habsburgs. That Clan holds a direct responsibility for death of 40 million Europeans in WWI, and enormous suffering of many more. In this 4-year long slaughterhouse many were Czechs fighting other Slavs in the East for the sake of notorious Crown. What was our domestic reaction to this huge humiliation of the nation? Our famous Soviet-time occupation dissidents and established freedom-lovers did not raise their voice at all. One of them even accepted a short-lived 'Austrian compensation' of becoming a director of Vienna's Diplomatic Academy (poet Jiří Gruša, *rem. aut.*). No wonder, our sovereignty is not seriously taken in Brussels."

4 The entry criteria for Eastern European states was particularly costly: the so-called small and open economies, de-industrialized and over-indebted didn't have any chance to be equal partners. For most of them, FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) is the only economic solution, which turned them into colonies... – admitted even the Nobel laureate, economist Stiglitz in his *The Price of Inequality*. Moreover, the overly strong and rigid exchange rate of the domestic currencies in Eastern Europe is good only for foreign lenders. It awards importers while disadvantages domestic manufacturing base and home exporters. This outdated anti-growth and anti-green economic policy has been universally abandoned long ago, even by the LDC (the UN-listed Least developed countries). No wonder that the GDP in the most of Eastern European states is well below its pre-1990s levels, and their ecological footprint index is of an alarming trend.

5 According to findings of the Budapest Institute of Economics (Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary), for the past two decades, the volume of Austrian banking sector has increased 370%. How is this spectacular percentage achievable for the country of a flat domestic economic and negative demographic growth? Such covert occupation of south-eastern Europe by the foreign financial sector did not create new jobs or re-create any industrial base there. As the Budapest Institute concluded aftermath, it was only meant to dry-out the remaining liquid assets (and private savings) from the rapidly pauperized, defeated belligerent. In 1914, Austria controlled banks as well; in Croatia, Bosnia, western Romania, northern Serbia, Hungary, southern Poland and western Ukraine. However, at that time, it also had a strict governing obligation as all of them were a part of the Monarchy. By having recognized the formal sovereignty to each of these entities, Austria today – like Sweden towards the three Baltic States in the northeast flank of Europe, and Germany in the central sector of Eastern Europe – has no governing obligations whatsoever. It can easily externally socialize (externalize) all its costs including banking risks, and individualize all profits (internalize), yielding it only

national currencies still existing in Eastern Europe lost – for already long ago – the vital substance: their anthropological and economic function. Additionally, most of the Eastern European states do not control a single commercial bank on their territory. Labor regulations and social protection is fractured, and well below the ILO-agreed standards. Calls to rethink and revisit them are usually denounced as a socio-romantism⁶.

EXTERNAL DEBT, FREE TRADE AND DE-INDUSTRIALIZATION

Many in Eastern Europe suffer from the suffocating external debt. The sort and volume of debt often reminds on the so-called Nigerian debt or Greek syndrome. Several LDCs further sank into the irreversible poverty due to a badly negotiated credit terms done un/intentionally by their negligible governments. Hereby a paradox today, some of the poorest countries on the planet have paid back their loans 3 to 5 times, but still owe on interest rates double or triple amounts. Is the disproportionately high debt along with its frequent 'generous' reprogramming, purposely set? Even the Nobel laureate in economics, prof. Stieglitz believes that it has more to do with a control than with 'economy' or any development.

Interestingly, a mantra of free trade – in which East asymmetrically participates by essentially buying and consuming foreign products and paying it by foreign loans – reaches the divine status in Eastern Europe. Nobody questions it, only admitted is to worship it – a Stalinism déjà vu? The fact that the Atlantic-Central Europe's economies industrialized through tariff protectionism is, of course as heretical, underreported. E.g. Britain, usually portrayed as a champion of liberalism, enjoyed an average tariff of no less

for itself. Hence, the EU accession criteria, combined with a nominal independence of Eastern European entities (pacified by the *pre-paid* media and guided by the *post-paid* 'elites'), means that the economic and other assets are syphoned out, but the countries have to take a burden of the state maintenance solely on themselves. "Creating the market economy attractive for FDI (foreign direct investments) in our case meant a de-industrialization, pauperisation, which eventually led to defunding of most of the state social activities. When someone dare say 'our education, housing and health sectors are knocked down due to this', they are quickly denounced as *socio-romantics* and accused for the social conservatism..." says Head of the Croatia's Economic Institute prof. Slavko Kulic, and concludes: "...suffering of ever larger segments of societies means nothing to the architects of misery, to those *Talibans of neoliberalism*." Recently released edition of the Oxfam study on the wealth distribution worldwide, unfortunately, confirms this bleak picture, too.

6 Current labor relations in the most of Eastern Europe (Rusophone Europe, too) resembles pictures of the 18th rather than of the 21st century's conditions, especially in the private sector of employment. It is all with a weak or even totally absent trade unionism, dismal labor standards, as well as the poor protection of other essential social, environmental and health rights. In many cases, it already compromises basic human rights "We have stringent labor conditions to the unbearable maximum, so that the few self-styled 'top managers' can play golf more frequently and for a longer time... How can you possibly build any social cohesion when disproportionately many suffer for the dubious benefit of the asocial, predatory few..." – confessed to me the Ambassador of one of the largest Eastern European countries who served as a mayor of his country's capital, before his ambassadorship in Vienna.

than 32% for a century and half (between 1700 and 1850), and did not abandon them well into the 20th century. Same goes for French, Dutch or German economies. Meaning, in Atlantic-Central Europe, free trade came only at the end of the industrialization process. To Eastern Europe it came in the beginning of 'transition'. This region was forced to move straight to free trade or near-free trade along with imposed deindustrialization – a process euphemistically called the EU Accession Criteria⁷. These instruments, combined, served to contain the production base of East and gradually to decompose it – a commodification of Eastern Europe for the ends of Atlantic-Central Europe⁸.

SOCIO-POLITICAL COHESION

In short, the social costs of the (further) advancement of the Atlantic-Central Europe's power base is paid by the de-industrialization, inequality extraction ratio worse than the one before WWI, arbitrary income distribution, legalized plunder called privatization, de-population and other sorts of desubjectification of Eastern Europe⁹. That was an 'industrial debacle' harder than one conducted by Atlantic Europe over India, SEA and China in the 19th century.

Without a socio-political cohesion via integralism, it is rather impossible to reverse the socio-economic decomposition of Eastern Europe. Unity for cohesion does not mean a (rigid communist) unanimity. But, the East is still mixing the two. Consequently, all three cohesive forces of Eastern Europe have disappeared: (i) atheistic elites (irrespectively from their ethnic, religious, social and linguistic background); (ii) antifascism; and (iii) Slavism.

While the secularism of Atlantists increases the intellectual appeal of their indigenous ideology – that of neoliberalism, transcontinentally, the newly discovered neo-clericalism of Eastern and Russophone Europe plays,

7 As taxing the imports is prescribed by the new mantra and is 'ideologically' unthinkable, Eastern Europe has to levy highly regressive taxes (i.e. indirect taxes). This – in return – penalizes the lower income groups, besides heavily taxing its rarified labor, and remaining domestic goods and services. It is the only way to squeeze out any surplus in deindustrialized country, which is badly needed in order to service increasing foreign debt. (Therefore, seemingly paradoxical situations: that in Dalmatia, the Italian grapes are as twice cheaper than the homegrown ones, or that in Croatia for a price of one bottle of local wine, one can get three bottles of Austrian wine.) This is how the redistributing income from the self-pauperized (consumers of) Eastern Europe goes to the very rich (savers and investors from) Atlantic-Central Europe. The precise amounts siphoned out from Eastern Europe for the last 25 years are yet to be calculated. Certainly, it is of no priority for the disconnected local elites nor for their Atlantist protégés.

8 Economy is like a technology; under similar conditions it gives about the same results. Giving to Eastern Europe same demographic, market, political and ownership ambient like one in Germany/Central Europe and result will be the same.

9 Since late 1960s, the OECD countries have started including (skilled labor) immigration in a projection of their national development strategies. Central Europe in particular has migration policy as an essential part of its development projections.

not an emancipating, but a powerful self-restraining role. At home, it only polarizes, fragments and undermines vital social consensus, and for abroad it serves as a powerful self-deterrent. Simply, beyond its narrow ethnic frames or national borders such neo-religionism motivates none to nothing. In the 21st century, dominated by the socially mobilized, secularized and knowledge-based nations across the world, religionism of East (static and rigid like its retrograde MENA sibling) only further alienates, isolates and marginalizes that region. It easily ends up in ethno-chauvinistic overtones that are not only isolating its proprietor, but also antagonizing or radically mobilizing its neighbors. Globally, it means that while East remains entrenched in its 'newly discovered' religionism, only one ideology remains unchallenged and uncontested – that of Atlantist neoliberalism.

Logically, East neither controls its own narrative nor (interpretation of) history: Due to a massive penetration of Central Europe, East grossly relativized, trivialized and silenced its own past and present anti-fascism. Additionally, this region does not effectively control its media space. Media there (of too-often dubious orientation and unspecified ownership) is distracting vital public debates: discouraging, disorienting and silencing any sense of national pride, influence over destiny direction and to it related calls for self-(re) assessment¹⁰. Today, Eastern Europe is not even sure, if its anti-fascism should be a question of choice or a matter of pure survival. Its mental deterritorialisation is corrosive and deep.

In a combination with above, the speed and dimensions of criminal redistribution of national wealth (euphemistically called 'western style privatisation' of 1990s) deeply transformed the East, turning many into a re-feudalized society. By the end of Yeltsin dizzy rule, even the biggest critics of the Soviet era were horrified by the post-Soviet destruction. In 2000, Alexander Solzhenitsyn screamed out loudly: "Will we continue looting and destroying Russia until nothing is left? ... God forbid these 'reforms' should continue." For that, he was of course, silenced and marginalized.

Indeed, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the severity, frequency and tempo of that social re-engineering via criminal redistribution of national wealth had no parallel historic example. Seems as if the region was left to choose between genocide (ex-YU) and its evil twin – social apartheid (elsewhere in

¹⁰ The founder and chairman of the leading Romanian geopolitical think-tank is rather forthcoming on this matter: "...prescribed or highjacked, as it is, our media lost any sense of narrative. Headline news (judged by the selection of news brought, *rem.aut.*) are to keep population in despair. Media role for us to the Europe's East shifted: it is not to inform population, it is neither patriotic nor constructive. Watch-depress-pack-and-leave... Its imperative is to accelerate brain-drain and speed-up our general depopulation...while West keeps satanizing us for *ciganizing* them with our migrants."

the East)? Where were the famous dissidents from East? Why didn't the academia of Eastern Europe debate about it?¹¹

Eastern communities on all their levels are using failed models of leadership. Too many institutions are still mired in a narrative of past victimization, and too many have no any mechanism for producing new leaders to serve true national interests. Currently, percentage of Eastern Europeans obtaining the foreign diplomas – most notably those from the universities in Atlantic-Central Europe – that are later admitted to the higher echelons of its national socio-economic, cultural and politico-military policy-making is higher than even in sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. the LDC situated around Chad or Victoria lakes or Horn of Africa). These figures reveal us that the 'elites' in Eastern and Russophone Europe are among the most unauthentic, least indigenous or less patriotically connected with its electorate – probably more than anywhere else in the world. That explains in detail why over the last two decades, the policies and their protagonists there, are so little responsive to a public opinion. Any research, which is not a pre-paid or guided by remote control, is usually quickly denounced. Any independent thinking must be condemned as a 'radical nationalism.' As if the emancipative democracy should be a lame talk-shop, not a pursuit of happiness' road-map.

CONCLUSION

Finally, East is sharply aged and depopulated – the worst of its kind ever – which in return will make any future prospect of a full and decisive generational interval simply impossible¹². Honduras-ization of Eastern Europe is

¹¹ While famous East intelligentsia remains mute, answers are streaming from the dominant narrative, that of West. Moreover, describing who these new elites of the East are, western authors are breaking another Eastern taboo – quoting Karl Marx. Number of quotation of Karl Marx in e.g. the New York Times, FAM, Economist, Wall Street Journal or other western neoliberal opinion-makers per annum is higher than all cumulative quotations of Karl Marx in Eastern Europe for the past two decades. Thinkers of the East expelled Marx and Engels to (intellectual) Gulag indefinitely. Hence, discussing the new emerging class, Daniel Henninger does not hesitate to consider them a retrograde force of 'lumpen proletariat', outcasts turned professional dissidents, a fake class of 'social scam'. Writing in the WSJ, to support his argument, he states: "Karl Marx, in a particularly dyspeptic moment, offered this description of what he dismissed as the lumpen proletariat: 'Alongside decayed routés with dubious means of subsistence and of dubious origin, alongside ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie, were vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, mountebanks, lazzaroni, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, pimps, brothel keepers, porters, literati, organ grinders, ragpickers, knife grinders, tinkers, beggars—in short, the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither, which the French call la bohème.'" /Henninger, D. (2016), *Trumpen Proletariat*, Wall Street Journal, July 06th 2016 (page 6)

¹² Eastern Europe is *Hondurized* – this term refers to an operationalization of Monroe Doctrine in Central America, by which Washington allows its strategic neighborhood to choose their own domestic political and economic systems to an acceptable degree, while the US maintains its final (hemispheric) say over their external orientation. The so-called Brezhnev doctrine (of irreversibility of communist gains) postulated the Soviet (Suslov-Stalin) equivalent to Honduras-ization – *Finlandization*.

full and complete¹³ (Bajrektarevic, 2005). Hence, is it safe to say that if the post-WWII Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe was overt and brutal, this one is subtle but subversive and deeply corrosive?

The key (nonintentional) consequence of the Soviet occupation was that the Eastern European states – as a sort of their tacit, firm but low-tempered rebellion – preserved their sense of nationhood. However, they had essential means at disposal to do so: the right to work was highly illuminated in and protected by the national constitutions, so were other socio-economic rights such as the right to culture, language, arts and similar segments of collective nation's memory. Today's East, deprived and deceived, silently witnesses the progressive metastasis of its national tissue¹⁴.

Ergo, euphemisms such as countries in transition or new Europe cannot hide a disconsolate fact that Eastern Europe has been treated for 25 years as

13 Some ten years ago, at the special OSCE forum for demographics, I warned: "...lasting political, social and economic changes including very important technological breakthroughs – throughout our history – primarily occurred at generational intervals. This was an engine of our evolution... Presently, with demographically collapsing East European societies (natality rates, generational and brain drain), the young cohort will never constitute more than a tiny minority – in the sea of aged, backward-looking, psychologically defeatistic and biologically incapable, conservative *status quo* keepers. Hence, neither the generational change that brings fresh socio-political ideas, nor technological breakthrough – which usually comes along – will successfully ever take place in future of such demographics." (For a detailed demographic outlook and tentative recommendations/ conclusions, see: Bajrektarevic, A. (2005), *Our Common Futures: EURO-MED Human Capital beyond 2020*, Crans Montana Forum, Monaco, 2005, as well as Bajrektarevic, A. (2005), *Green/Policy Paper Submitted to the closing plenary of the Ministerial (Chairmanship summarizing the recommendations and conclusions of the OSCE Ministerial Summit Prague 2005)*, OSCE Documents EEA 2005.)

14 Eastern Europe, the (under-)world of dramatic aging which, is additionally demographically knocked down by the massive generational and brain drain. Passed the dismantling of the communist order, these *emerging economies, countries in transition* of the *new Europe* contain reactionary forces (often glorifying the wrong side of history), predatory 'elites' and masses of disillusioned (in a life without respect and dignity, humiliated and ridiculed in the trivality of their lasting decline). Even if the new jobs are created or old kept, they are in fact smoke screens: Mostly a (foreign-loans financed) state-sponsored poverty programs where armies of the underemployed and misemployed cry out miserable wages in dead-end jobs. Former Slovakian cabinet minister laments in private: "Our 'liberated East' lives on foreign loans, or in the best case as the industrial suburbia of Western Europe, having these few 'generously' franchised factories like *Renault, VW or Hugo Boss*. Actually, those are just automotive assembly lines and tailor shops – something formally done only in the III World countries. Apart from the Russian *Energia-Soyuz* (space-program related) delivery system, what else do we have domestically created anywhere from Bratislava to Pacific? Is there any indigenous high-end technical product of past decades known? ... Our EU accession deals are worse than all *Capitulation agreements* combined that the Ottomans and Imperial China have ever signed in their history." His former Polish counterpart is even more forthcoming: "Unexperienced and naïve as it was in 1990s, Eastern Europe – in shock of sudden geopolitical change – foolishly embraced *shock therapy* in lieu of a badly needed economic program... We failed to understand that this destabilizing doctrine was simply a continuation of the Milton Friedman's experiment, which brought about one of the most notorious dictatorships, of Pinochet in Chile, and then discharged its plague elsewhere in Latin America, Middle East and Yeltsin's obedient Russia. We missed to make a comparative analysis and spot that this doctrine always follows the same pattern in three stages: (i) the first impact of primary destruction; (ii) 'economic' shock measures; (iii) their brutal enforcement, along with an absence of any democratic debate... Implications are practically irreversible reengineering that stretches far beyond our macroeconomic fabrics. Consequences are socio-political, cultural, moral and demographic, therefore existential..."

defeated belligerent, as spoils of war which the West won in its war against communist Russia.

It concludes that (self-)fragmented, deindustrialized and re-feudalized, rapidly aged rarified and depopulated, (and de-Slavicized) Eastern Europe is probably the least influential region of the world – one of the very few underachievers. Obediently submissive and therefore, rigid in dynamic environment of the promising 21st century, Eastern Europeans are among last remaining passive downloaders and slow-receivers on the otherwise blossoming stage of the world's creativity, politics and economy. Seems, Europe still despises its own victims...

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