

МДК 351

Valentin Yakushik

## THE POST-SOVIET SPACE: SOME ELEMENTS OF INFRASTRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

*An article proposes some theoretical approaches to the analysis of the Post-Soviet countries. Defining common basic infrastructures of these countries, the article deals with pluralistic perspectives of the development of Northern Eurasia within the combined political logic of a "civilised divorce" of nations, and of deepening and widening of natural processes of regional integration.*

1. The passing away of the main central political structures of the former USSR does not signify the immediate and total disappearance of a *spiritual and socio-economic organism* which that former (political and military) superpower represented. Being disfigured and partially transformed, that organism is still alive, and is usually perceived (both internally and worldwide) as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Nevertheless the CIS is only *one* element of *political* form (entourage) of that organism, and by no means the central (essential) one. (Even though the absence of an alternative viable self-denominator, a generally accepted term for that entity [organism] may create an opposite impression.)

There may be distinguished several types of system-creating elements (infrastructures) of any spiritual and socio-economic organism (which may exist as one nation or as a kind of symbiosis of several politically independent countries):

(1) the *non-material (spiritual, rational and emotional) elements*: (a) the "soul" of the nation (including the core civilizational, cultural programmes being implemented by the country); (b) rational and emotional non-material elements (including the educational system and collective memories);

(2) the *communicational elements*: channels of financing and providing other categories of resources; mechanisms of society's self-reproduction and functioning etc.;

(3) the *institutional framework elements*: political and other social institutions (including norms);

j

(4) the *material elements*: (a) human resources; (b) "hard infrastructures" (physical spatial boundaries, roads, pipelines, production units, depots etc.)

2. A specific spiritual infrastructure [1] (the *soul*) of the remnants of the former Soviet Union "per se" ("as such", not the conglomerate of new entities) may be seen in different ways, i.e. as:

(1) as a "quasi-soul" - an old ideology (quasi-religious but without the notion of god, and without a real faith of the "priests" - the privileged social class *of nomenklatura*) which has partially disappeared, and partially exists as the relict Soviet Communist ideology of various "shades" ranging from a hard-line (orthodox) Stalinism or Trotskyism to a kind of post-Soviet Eurocommunism;

(2) as a much deeper (in comparison with the pure ideology) rooted country's "national idea" which may be found:

- in (a) a "red" (Communist; Socialist) historic form characterised by the stress on the (1917) revolutionary and subsequent Soviet values,

- or in (b) a "white", Imperial, non-Communist (usually also anti-Communist) patriotic form,

- or in (c) some new historic forms (e.g. pure technocratic) which do not necessarily advocate the creation of one federated state, but may favour "Eurasian" integrationist ideas similar to those of "European" integration in Western Europe.

The main feature of these versions of national (non-ethnic, supra-ethnic) idea of an entity currently without a proper name (the ex-USSR,

the CIS, "[Northern] Eurasia" etc.) is the opposition to various kinds of concepts characterised by the vision of that entity:

- in (a) a totally cosmopolite perspective, ignoring interests of a particular nation (country) and concentrated only on private interests, or interests of a family, clan or company (it is a quite wide-spread attitude in the environment of the crash of the old system, ideological vacuum, rampant corruption, rise in criminality etc.),

- or in (b) a perspective predominantly supportive of other nations' interests (i.e. not related to the nations of the former USSR),

- or in (c) a perspective promoting policies which would be formerly (within the USSR) called "separatist" (now - anti-CIS-integrationist), and now in fact those supportive of the detachment from the core of the ex-USSR (those may be both concepts of ethnic nationalism, or of "territorial [political] nationalism'") or undermining the multi-culturalism, multi-ethnic nature of the entity (as is the case with a specific Russian "ethno-nationalist separatism" and isolationism).

Most probably, for many religious readers it is easier to understand the essence of that basic infrastructural *non-material (spiritual) element* of the entity which was the ex-USSR and of the present post-Soviet integrationist driving force: in terms of various religions it can be explained as the feeling of attachment to the great nation's guiding and guarding spirits. This non-material infrastructural element is opposed both to (a) a total lack of it, and to (b) the attachment to other national spiritual entities. (By the way, it is easy to accept spiritual attachment to an entity which is in the shine of its glory, is at its materially successful stage of development; and it is much more difficult to keep such attachment at the time of national trauma and public calamity.)

Now on the post-Soviet space of the ex-USSR, in each of the 12 new independent countries of the CIS, there are *coexisting' elements of the essentially different spiritual entities*: (1) those of a national (not necessarily ethnic) state and (2) those of the "untitled" nation (let us conditionally call it "[Northern] Eurasia").

The correlation between these elements differs in each new independent state (NIS), the former Soviet republics. In Byelorussia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and now also in Armenia "Eurasian" elements are very strong; probably they are the weakest in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkmenistan where the ideas of a graduate detachment from the CIS structures are gaining ground among the elites. Ukraine is a special case, where (according to the relevant polls) a very significant part of the population favours integrationist projects, nevertheless the present ruling political elite considers it more attractive to declare a pro-Western orientation while in fact refraining from active real steps in that direction.

3. *Educational and behavioural (non-spiritual) element - customary, communicative and deep emotional infrastructures.*

The Soviet "machine of education" (being in many aspects very effective and efficient) is usually not yet destroyed or replaced by other types of educational systems. Almost all post-Soviet people (both political and economic elites of the new independent states, and ordinary - "rank-and-file" citizens) remain a kind of "Homo Sovieticus" with his specific cultural, behavioural characteristics (within different strata - ranging from marginalised and even criminalised communities to the highest artistic or academic circles).

Usually, political elites of the new independent countries are connected to each other (to their homologues) by previous [Communist] party careers, education, service in the Soviet Army, relatives living in other regions, previous acquaintances etc., and especially by efficient (for them personally) schemes of overcoming "lacunas" and "disconnections" in traditional economic ties destroyed after the demise of the USSR. Such schemes usually presuppose obtaining huge super-profits through legal or semi-legal, or illegal channels [2] to maximise present incomes, avoid (or minimise) taxation for the companies controlled by or connected with these elites.

To this category of structures may also be included *situational psychological*

*attachments* between those who fail in their expectations, who have similar problems and can hardly expect some "saviour" to come and in an unselfish way to arrange the life of the "suffering young nations" etc.

4. For the time being, we shall leave aside those system-creating elements of the post-Soviet space which are mentioned above as the *communicational elements*, and the *institutional framework elements* (which seem to be rather obvious, but deserve special detailed analysis), as well as human resources, and shall mention some aspects of *material elements* of the "post-Soviet space" [Eurasian "hard infrastructures" - places of and units for the extraction of oil and gas, routes of their transportation, depots, units for their refinery and places of final consumption etc.)

5. *"Hard" physical infrastructures: communications* (roads, pipelines, other transportation routes) and *"common external" borders* which usually are (with some minor exceptions) less transparent than "internal" borders within the CIS provide a very important *material element* for the existence of a "common space".

Oil and gas extraction, transportation, refinery and final consumption is one of important processes in economic life of the post-Soviet space. The functioning relevant "hard" infrastructures are still mainly the direct reflection (and the result) of the major functions of the ex-USSR.

(1) In its internal aspect, the USSR was organised as a kind of a unitary "factory" where vertical power relations (i.e. those of subordination and centralisation) were predominant over horizontal ones (those of coordination, decentralisation and déconcentration). All energy infrastructures had to play not only an economic role, but also a political one: to strengthen country's rigid unitary frameworks (reflecting a primitive version of Imperial ideas). Thus, the relevant transportation infrastructures in oil and gas industry were oriented towards the centre of the Imperial-type socio-economic entity. None of the former Soviet Republics was a self-sufficient as to the structures of oil and gas energy production,

transportation and processing. The situation remains basically the same, even though there have been serious steps undertaken in a number of CIS countries (usually with the support of international actors in energy policy) in order to diversify and deconcentrate transportation infrastructures.

(2) In the international aspect of energy sector of the economy, the ex-USSR basically performed the functions of: (a) a supplier of energy resources (as in general - of raw materials) to international markets, (b) a subsidiser of "brotherly" and "friendly" ("Socialist" and "Socialist-orientation") countries via the sale of cheap oil and gas, and (c) a consumer of a number of foreign (Western, Japanese, COMECON - East-European) industrial products necessary for construction and maintenance of "hard" infrastructures of energy sector [3]. In this respect, the situation is also basically the same: the post-Soviet countries become more and more just raw-materials suppliers of the rest of the world; the difference between the world oil prices and those within the CIS in a way resemble the former situation within the COMECON, and thus to a great extent defines the further orientation of local consumption (in particular in Ukraine) towards Russian and Caspian oil.

On one hand, old rigid "hard" infrastructures remain basically unchanged." On the other hand, the global processes of régionalisation and the policies of major international actors in energy market create a strong tendency within the former unitary structures of a post-Soviet energy sector towards being gradually torn to pieces and included into other (not ex-USSR "per se") frameworks. This controversial situation stimulates different types of socio-political processes: (1) conservative Imperial "convulsions" to preserve the old-type monopolistic structures; (2) decentralised regional re-shaping within the logic of further detachment from the ex-USSR main entity; (3) pan-Eurasian regional re-shaping aimed at liberating from an "iron corset" (of primitive Imperial vestiges) those nations who wish to continue their cooperation within the attachment to centuries-long (and even millennium-long)

values and experience of Rus, Russian Empire, the USSR, CIS, unity of East-Slavic nations, Slavic-Turkic symbiosis, Christian-Orthodox peoples etc. (there are different kinds of arguments which are or may be put forward to explain or denote the idea of continuation of special kind of historic cooperation of nations of Northern Eurasia).

When the USSR was dissolved in December of 1991, there were two major concepts behind the creation of CIS structures: (1) finding institutional and normative instruments for a "civilised divorce" of new independent nation-states; (2) maintaining the existing infrastructures and all the achievements of previous integration process. Generalising the practice of the initial 7-years history of the CIS, the former Executive Secretary of the CIS Boris Yeltsin said: "The CIS itself is just a mechanism of approximation of interests, not more than that" [4]. The present moment is characterised by the following possibilities: (a) to complete the process of "divorce" (which not always was a civilised one), while preserving some infrastructures providing for further coexistence and cooperation of neighbouring nations; (b) to provide for re-defining of future strategic cultural, economic and political alliances of those who wish to preserve some kind of a historic unity (what is reflected in a number of legal and institutional forms, e.g. in the "union of two", "union of four" etc.) Both spiritual (cultural, emotional etc.) and "hard" material infrastructures are going to play an important role in re-shaping of the post-Soviet space.

1. Quite often some Russian political scientists and public opinion-makers refer to an "egregor" (high spiritual) level of nations' problems (e.g. see: *Кургинян С. Россия: власть и оппозиция. - М.: Симе, 1994. - С. 39,45,74,90,96*).

2. For example, through the use of: off-shore companies and banking arrangements; special "consultancy agreements"; appropriation of public assets by management; creation and functioning of parasitic companies owned or in some other way controlled by the top management of the public sector companies and exploiting all the resources of these public entities; charges for granting licences and permits; providing state guarantees for foreign loans or granting cheap state credits which in fact quite often require no or almost no real re-payment on a part of the credited private entity etc.

3. The USSR was providing for considerable purchases from the West and Japan of pipes [tubes], different types of trucks for their installation, insulation materials etc.

4. Cited from: *Карткова С. Будущее СНГ вновь под сомнением // Известия. - 1998. - 17 сентября. - С.1.*

Валентин Якушик

## ПОСТРАДЯНСЬКИЙ ПРОСТІР: ДЕЯКІ ЕЛЕМЕНТИ ІНФРАСТРУКТУРНОГО АНАЛІЗУ

У статті пропонується ряд теоретичних підходів до аналізу пострадянських країн. Визначаючи основні спільні інфраструктури цих країн, автор розглядає плюралістичні перспективи розвитку Північної Євразії в межах поєднання політичної логіки "цивілізованого розлучення" держав та поглиблення й розширення природних процесів регіональної інтеграції.