strategic-culture.org
Die Geopolitik wandelt sich in jedem Augenblick
Alastair Crooke
https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2022/03/28/geo-politics-is-metamorphosing-at-every-moment/

34-43 Minuten

28. März 2022

Während Europa und die USA nie enger zusammenstanden, war der "Westen" paradoxerweise auch nie mehr allein.

Gelegentlich kann eine einzige Anekdote einen historischen Moment fast vollständig zusammenfassen. Und das ist hier der Fall: Im Jahr 2005 setzte sich Zbig Brzezinski, der Architekt Afghanistans als Sumpf für die Sowjetunion und Autor des Buches The Grand Chessboard (das das Mackinder-Diktum "Wer das asiatische Kernland kontrolliert, kontrolliert die Welt" in die US-Außenpolitik einbettete), in Washington mit Alexander Dugin, dem russischen politischen Philosophen und Verfechter einer kulturellen und geopolitischen Renaissance des "Kernlandes", zusammen.

Brzezinski hatte bereits in seinem Buch geschrieben, dass Russland ohne die Ukraine nie zur Kernlandmacht werden würde, aber mit ihr kann und würde es das. Das Treffen wurde mit einer Fotoreportage eines Schachbretts zwischen Brzezinski und Dugin inszeniert (um für Brzezinskis Buch zu werben). Dieses Arrangement mit einem Schachbrett veranlasste Dugin zu der Frage, ob Brzezinski Schach als ein Spiel für zwei Personen betrachte: "Nein, Zbig schoss zurück: Es ist ein Spiel für einen. Sobald eine Schachfigur bewegt wird, dreht man das Brett um und bewegt die Schachfiguren der anderen Seite. In diesem Spiel gibt es 'keinen anderen'", beharrte Brzezinski.

Natürlich war das einhändige Schachspiel in Mackinders Doktrin implizit enthalten: Das Diktum "Wer das Kernland kontrolliert" war eine Botschaft an die englischen Mächte, niemals ein geeintes Kernland zuzulassen. (Das ist natürlich genau das, was sich in jedem Moment entwickelt).

Und am Montag ließ Biden Brzezinski lauthals zu Wort kommen, als er vor dem Business Roundtable in den USA sprach. Seine Bemerkungen kamen gegen Ende seiner kurzen Rede, in der er über Russlands Einmarsch in der Ukraine und Amerikas wirtschaftliche Zukunft sprach:

"Ich denke, dies bietet uns einige bedeutende Möglichkeiten, einige echte Veränderungen vorzunehmen. Wissen Sie, ich glaube, wir stehen an einem

Wendepunkt in der Weltwirtschaft: [und] nicht nur in der Weltwirtschaft - in der Welt, [der] alle drei oder vier Generationen auftritt. Wie einer meiner hochrangigen Militärs mir neulich in einer sicheren Sitzung sagte, starben zwischen 1900 und 1946 60 Millionen Menschen; und seitdem haben wir eine liberale Weltordnung geschaffen, wie es sie schon lange nicht mehr gegeben hat. Es sind viele Menschen gestorben, aber bei weitem nicht so viel Chaos. Und jetzt ist der Zeitpunkt gekommen, an dem sich die Dinge verschieben. Es wird eine neue Weltordnung geben, und wir müssen sie anführen, und wir müssen den Rest der freien Welt dabei vereinen."

Auch hier gibt es keine "anderen" im Vorstand. Wenn die Züge gemacht werden, wird das Brett um 180º gedreht, um von der anderen Seite zu spielen.

Der Punkt hier ist, dass der sorgfältig durchdachte Gegenangriff auf diesen Brzezinski-Zeitgeist in Peking mit der gemeinsamen Erklärung, dass weder Russland noch China akzeptieren, dass Amerika allein und ohne andere am Brett Schach spielt, formell eingeleitet wurde. Dies ist die entscheidende Frage dieser kommenden Ära: Die Öffnung der Geopolitik. Es ist ein Thema, für das die ausgeschlossenen "anderen" bereit sind, in den Krieg zu ziehen (sie sehen keine andere Wahl).

Ein zweiter Schachspieler ist aufgetaucht und besteht darauf, mitzuspielen - Russland. Und ein dritter steht bereit: China. Andere stehen stillschweigend Schlange, um zu sehen, wie der erste Einsatz in diesem geopolitischen Krieg ausgehen wird. Aus Bidens oben zitierten Äußerungen geht hervor, dass die USA beabsichtigen, mit Sanktionen und dem vollen, noch nie dagewesenen Umfang der Maßnahmen des US-Finanzministeriums gegen die Dissidenten von Brzezinski vorzugehen. An Russland soll ein Exempel statuiert werden, was jeden Herausforderer erwartet, der einen Sitz im Vorstand verlangt.

Doch dieser Ansatz ist von Grund auf fehlerhaft. Er geht auf Kissingers berühmtes Diktum zurück, dass "wer das Geld kontrolliert, die Welt kontrolliert". Das war von Anfang an falsch: Es hieß immer, dass derjenige die Welt kontrollieren kann, der Nahrungsmittel, Energie (menschliche wie fossile) und Geld kontrolliert. Aber Kissinger hat die ersten beiden Bedingungen einfach ignoriert - und die letzte hat sich in den mentalen Schaltkreisen Washingtons eingeprägt.

Und hier liegt das Paradoxe: Als Brzezinski sein Buch schrieb, war das eine ganz andere Zeit. Heute sind Europa und die USA zwar enger zusammengerückt als je zuvor, aber der "Westen" war paradoxerweise auch nie einsamer. Die Opposition gegen Russland mag anfangs wie ein Volltreffer für die globale Einigung gewirkt haben: Die Weltöffentlichkeit würde sich dem Angriff Moskaus so entschieden widersetzen, dass China einen hohen politischen Preis dafür zahlen müsste, wenn es nicht auf den Anti-Russland-Zug aufspringen würde. Aber so läuft es nicht.

"Während die US-Rhetorik Russland unter anderem wegen "Kriegsverbrechen" und der humanitären Krise in der Ukraine an den Pranger stellt", stellt der ehemalige indische Botschafter Bhadrakumar fest, "sehen die Hauptstädte der Welt dies als eine Konfrontation zwischen Amerika und Russland. Außerhalb des westlichen Lagers weigert sich die Weltgemeinschaft, Sanktionen gegen Russland zu verhängen oder das Land auch nur zu dämonisieren".

Die Erklärung von Islamabad, die am Mittwoch nach dem 45. Treffen der Außenminister der siebenundfünfzig Mitglieder zählenden Organisation der Islamischen Konferenz veröffentlicht wurde, lehnt es ab, Sanktionen gegen Russland zu befürworten. Kein einziges Land des afrikanischen Kontinents oder der westasiatischen, zentralasiatischen, süd- und südostasiatischen Region hat Sanktionen gegen Russland verhängt".

Möglicherweise spielt hier noch ein weiterer Faktor eine Rolle: Denn wenn diese letztgenannten Staaten Sätze hören wie 'die Ukrainer haben durch ihren Heldenmut das Recht errungen, unserem 'Club der Werte' beizutreten', wittern sie einen Hauch von geschwächtem 'weißem' Europa, das sich an die Rettungsboote klammert.

Die Realität ist, dass die Sanktionen, auf die sich Biden in seiner Rede bezog, bereits gescheitert sind. Russland ist nicht zahlungsunfähig, die Moskauer Börse ist offen, der Rubel erholt sich, die Leistungsbilanz ist kerngesund und Russland verkauft Energie zu Schleuderpreisen (sogar nach Abzug von Rabatten).

Kurz gesagt, der Handel wird "umgeleitet", nicht zerstört (der Vorteil eines Exporteurs von Waren, die fast vollständig vor Ort produziert werden - d.h. eine Festungswirtschaft).

Die zweite Merkwürdigkeit in Bidens Politik besteht darin, dass die Clausewitzsche Doktrin (der Russland weitgehend folgt) die Demontage des "Schwerpunkts des Feindes" fordert, um den Sieg zu erringen, in diesem Fall vermutlich die westliche Kontrolle über die globale Reservewährung und die Zahlungssysteme. Heute sind es jedoch Europa und die USA, die sie selbst demontieren und sich in einem unerklärlichen Anfall von moralischem Masochismus in eine steigende Inflation und eine schrumpfende Wirtschaftstätigkeit stürzen.

Ambrose Evans-Pritchard schreibt im Telegraph: "Klar ist, dass die westliche Sanktionspolitik die schlechteste aller Welten ist. Wir erleiden einen Energieschock, der Russlands Kriegseinnahmen weiter in die Höhe treibt... Die Angst vor einem Aufstand der Gilets Jaunes in ganz Europa ist allgegenwärtig, und es besteht der Verdacht, dass eine wankelmütige Öffentlichkeit den Lebenshaltungskostenschock nicht tolerieren wird, sobald die Schrecken der Ukraine nicht mehr auf den Fernsehbildschirmen zu sehen sind".

Auch dieses paradoxe Verhalten kann man vielleicht Kissingers Besessenheit von der Macht des Geldes und seiner Vergesslichkeit gegenüber anderen wichtigen Faktoren zuschreiben.

All dies hat dazu geführt, dass sich in einigen NATO-Hauptstädten ein gewisses Unbehagen über den Verlauf des Ukraine-Konflikts in den Korridoren der Macht eingeschlichen hat: Die NATO wird nicht eingreifen, sie wird keine Flugverbotszone einrichten, und sie hat Zelenskys neue Bitte um zusätzliche militärische Ausrüstung entschieden ignoriert. Vordergründig spiegelt dies die "selbstlose" Geste des Westens wider, einen Atomkrieg zu vermeiden. In Wirklichkeit aber kann die Entwicklung neuer Waffen die Geopolitik im Handumdrehen verändern (z. B. Russlands intelligente Hyperschall-Bunkerbombe Kinzhal). Tatsache ist, dass sich die NATO in der Ukraine militärisch nicht gegen Russland durchsetzen kann.

Es scheint, als hätte das Pentagon - vorerst - den Krieg mit dem Außenministerium gewonnen und damit begonnen, das "Narrativ zu korrigieren".

Stellen Sie diese beiden US-Erzählungen einander gegenüber:

Das Außenministerium signalisierte am Montag, dass die USA Zelensky von Zugeständnissen an Russland im Gegenzug für einen Waffenstillstand abraten. Der Sprecher "machte sehr deutlich, dass er für eine diplomatische Lösung offen ist, die die Kernprinzipien des Krieges des Kremls gegen die Ukraine nicht gefährdet. Auf die Frage, was er damit meine, sagte Price, dass der Krieg "größer" sei als Russland und die Ukraine. "Der entscheidende Punkt ist, dass hier Prinzipien auf dem Spiel stehen, die überall anwendbar sind". Price sagte, Putin versuche, "Kernprinzipien" zu verletzen.

Doch das Pentagon habe in seinem Kampf mit dem Außenministerium und dem Kongress, um eine Konfrontation mit Russland zu verhindern, "zwei Bomben der Wahrheit abgeworfen": "Russlands Verhalten in dem brutalen Krieg erzählt eine andere Geschichte als die weithin akzeptierte Ansicht, dass Putin darauf aus ist, die Ukraine zu zerstören und der Zivilbevölkerung maximalen Schaden zuzufügen - und es offenbart den strategischen Balanceakt des russischen Führers", berichtete Newsweek in einem Artikel mit dem Titel "Putins Bomber könnten die Ukraine verwüsten, aber er hält sich zurück. Here's Why."

Man zitiert einen ungenannten Analysten der Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) des Pentagons mit den Worten: "Das Herz von Kiew ist kaum berührt worden. Und fast alle der Langstreckenangriffe waren auf militärische Ziele gerichtet. Ein pensionierter Offizier der US-Luftwaffe, der jetzt als Analyst für einen Auftragnehmer des Pentagon arbeitet, fügte hinzu: "Wir müssen das tatsächliche Verhalten Russlands verstehen. Wenn wir uns nur einreden, dass Russland wahllos bombardiert oder dass es nicht mehr Schaden anrichtet, weil

sein Personal der Aufgabe nicht gewachsen ist oder weil es technisch ungeschickt ist, dann sehen wir den wahren Konflikt nicht".

Die zweite "Wahrheitsbombe" untergräbt Bidens dramatische Warnung vor einem chemischen Angriff unter falscher Flagge direkt. Reuters berichtete: "Die Vereinigten Staaten haben noch keine konkreten Hinweise auf einen bevorstehenden russischen Angriff mit chemischen oder biologischen Waffen in der Ukraine gesehen, aber sie beobachten die Informationsströme genau, sagte ein hochrangiger US-Verteidigungsbeamter."

Biden positioniert sich in der Mitte, indem er sagt, dass "Putin ein Kriegsverbrecher ist", aber auch, dass es keinen NATO-Kampf mit Russland geben wird. "Das einzige Endspiel", so ein hoher Regierungsbeamter auf einer privaten Veranstaltung Anfang des Monats, "ist das Ende des Putin-Regimes. Bis dahin, solange Putin bleibt, wird [Russland] ein Pariastaat sein, der nie wieder in die Gemeinschaft der Nationen aufgenommen wird. China hat sich gewaltig geirrt, als es glaubte, Putin käme damit durch".

Das ist die Quintessenz: Man lässt zu, dass das Gemetzel in der Ukraine weitergeht; man lehnt sich zurück und sieht zu, wie die "heldenhaften Ukrainer Russland ausbluten lassen"; man tut genug, um den Konflikt aufrechtzuerhalten (indem man einige Waffen liefert), aber nicht genug, um ihn zu eskalieren; und man spielt den heroischen Kampf für die Demokratie, um die öffentliche Meinung zufriedenzustellen.

Der Punkt ist, dass es so nicht funktioniert. Putin könnte alle in DC überraschen, indem er die Ukraine verlässt, sobald Russlands Militäroperation abgeschlossen ist. (Wenn Putin von der Ukraine spricht, schließt er übrigens gewöhnlich den von Stalin hinzugefügten westlichen Teil als ukrainisch aus).

Und mit China klappt es auch nicht. Blinken sagte zur Rechtfertigung der neuen Sanktionen, die letzte Woche gegen China verhängt wurden: "Wir sind dem Schutz der Menschenrechte in der ganzen Welt verpflichtet und werden weiterhin alle diplomatischen und wirtschaftlichen Maßnahmen nutzen, um die Rechenschaftspflicht zu fördern".

Die Sanktionen wurden verhängt, weil China es versäumt hatte, sich von Putin loszusagen. Genau das. Die verwendete Sprache der Rechenschaftspflicht und (der Sühne) kann jedoch nur als Ausdruck einer wachen zeitgenössischen Kultur verstanden werden. Es genügt, einen Aspekt der chinesischen Kultur als politisch unkorrekt darzustellen (als rassistisch, repressiv, frauenfeindlich, rassistisch oder beleidigend), und schon ist sie politisch unkorrekt. Und das bedeutet, dass jeder Aspekt von der Verwaltung nach Belieben als sanktionswürdig angeführt werden kann.

Das Problem ist wieder die Weigerung des Westens, "andere" auf dem Schachbrett zu akzeptieren. Was kann China tun, außer mit den Schultern zu zucken angesichts dieses Unsinns?

Biden hat in seiner Rede am Runden Tisch - wieder einmal - eine neue Weltordnung vorausgesagt; er deutete an, dass eine große Neuordnung bevorstehe.

Vielleicht steht aber auch ein "Re-set Reckoning" einer anderen Ordnung bevor, bei dem vieles wieder so wird, wie es bis vor kurzem tatsächlich funktioniert hat. Politik und Geopolitik befinden sich in jedem Augenblick in einer Metamorphose.

Alstair CROOKE
Ehemaliger britischer Diplomat, Gründer und Direktor des Conflicts Forum in Beirut.

Die Ansichten der einzelnen Autoren geben nicht unbedingt die der Strategic Culture Foundation wieder.

++++

strategic-culture.org

Geo-Politics Is Metamorphosing at Every Moment

Alastair Crooke
34-43 Minuten

March 28, 2022

Whilst Europe and the U.S. never have been more closely aligned, the 'West' paradoxically has also never been more alone.

Very occasionally, a single anecdote can almost completely summate a moment in history. And this one did: In 2005, Zbig Brzezinski, the architect of Afghanistan as quagmire to the Soviet Union, and the author of *The Grand Chessboard* (which embedded the Mackinder dictum of 'he who controls the Asian heartland controls the world' into U.S. foreign policy), sat down in

Washington with Alexander Dugin, Russian political philosopher and advocate for a 'heartland' cultural and geo-political renaissance.

Brzezinski had already written in his book that, absent Ukraine, Russia would never become the heartland power; but with it, Russia can and would. The meeting had been set with a photo-prop of a chessboard placed between Brzezinski and Dugin (to promote Brzezinski's book). This arrangement with a chessboard prompted Dugin to ask whether Brzezinski considered Chess to be a game meant for two: "No, Zbig shot back: It is a game for one. Once a chess piece is moved; you turn the board around, and you move the other side's chess pieces. There is 'no other' in this game", Brzezinski insisted.

Of course, the single-handed chess game was implicit in Mackinder's doctrine: 'He who controls the heartland' dictum was a message to the Anglo powers to never allow a united heartland. (This, of course, is precisely what is evolving at every moment).

And on Monday, Biden channelled Brzezinski out loud, whilst addressing the Business Roundtable in the U.S. His remarks came toward the end of his brief speech where he talked about Russia's invasion of Ukraine and America's economic future:

"I think this presents us with some significant opportunities to make some real changes. You know, we are at an inflection point, I believe, in the world economy: [and] not just the world economy – in the world [which] occurs every three or four generations. As one of my, as the one of the top military people said to me in a secure meeting the other day, 60 million people died between 1900 and 1946; and since then we established a liberal world order and that hadn't happened in a long while. A lot of people died, but nowhere near the chaos. And now's the time when things are shifting. We're going, there's gonna be a new world order out there; and we've got to lead it and we've got to unite the rest of the free world in doing it."

Again there is no 'other' at the board. When the moves are made, the board is turned around 180º to play from the other side.

The point here is that the carefully deliberated counter-attack on this Brzezinski zeitgeist was formally launched in Beijing with the joint-declaration that neither Russia nor China accept for America to play chess alone with no others at the board. This represents the defining issue of this coming era: The opening-up of geo-politics. It is an issue for which the excluded 'others' are prepared to go to war (they see no choice).

A second chess-player has stepped forward and insists to play – Russia. And a third stands ready: China. Others are silently lining up to witness how the first

engagement in this geo-political war fares. It seems from Biden's comments quoted above that the U.S. intends to use sanctions, and the full unprecedented extent of U.S. treasury measures, against Brzezinski dissidents. Russia is to be made an example of that which awaits any challengers demanding a seat at the board.

But it is an approach that is fundamentally flawed. It stems from Kissinger's celebrated dictum that 'he who controls money controls the world'. It was wrong from the 'get go': It was always 'he who controls food, energy (human as well as fossil) *and money* can control the world. But Kissinger just ignored the first two required conditions – and the last has imprinted itself on the Washington mental circuits.

And here is the paradox: When Brzezinski wrote his book, it was a very different era. Today, whilst Europe and the U.S. never have been more closely aligned, the 'West' paradoxically has also never been more alone. Opposition to Russia may have seemed at the outset a slam dunk global unifier: That world opinion would so robustly oppose Moscow's attack, that China would pay a high political price for failing to jump onto the anti-Russia bandwagon. But that is not how it is working out.

"While the U.S. rhetoric pillories Russia for "war crimes" and the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, et al", former Indian Ambassador Bhadrakumar notes, "the world capitals view this as a confrontation between America and Russia. Outside of the western camp, the world community refuses to impose sanctions against Russia or even to demonise that country".

The Islamabad Declaration issued on Wednesday after the 45th meeting of the foreign ministers of the fifty-seven member *Organisation of Islamic Conference* refused to endorse sanctions against Russia. Not a single country in the African continent or West Asian, Central Asia, South and Southeast Asian region has imposed sanctions against Russia".

There may well be a further factor at play here: For when these latter states hear phrases such as the 'Ukrainians, through their heroism, have won the right to enter our "club of values"', they scent a whiff of debilitated 'white' Europe clutching at the life-rafts.

The reality is that the sanctions to which Biden referred in his speech have already failed. Russia has not defaulted; the Moscow stock exchange is open; the Rouble is on the rebound; their current account is in rude good health and Russia is selling energy at windfall prices (even after discount).

In short, trade 'will be diverted', not destroyed (the benefit of being an exporter of goods almost fully produced locally – ie. a fortress economy).

The second oddity in Biden's policy is that whilst Clausewitzian doctrine (to which Russia broadly adheres) argues for the dismantling of 'the enemy's centre of gravity, to achieve victory', in this case presumably, the western control of the global reserve currency and payments systems. Today, however, it is Europe and the U.S. that have been dismantling it themselves: and further locking themselves into soaring inflation and contracting economic activity, in some unexplained fit of moral masochism.

As Ambrose Evans-Pritchard notes in the *Telegraph*, "What is clear is that western sanctions policy is the worst of all worlds. We are suffering an energy shock that is further inflating Russia's war-fighting revenues … There is a pervasive fear of a *gilets jaunes* uprising across Europe, a suspicion that a fickle public will not tolerate the cost-of-living shock once the horrors of Ukraine lose their novelty on TV screens".

Again, perhaps we can attribute this paradoxical behaviour to Kissinger's obsession with the power of money, and his forgetfulness of other major factors.

All of this has led to a certain unease creeping into the corridors of power in some NATO capitals over the course that the Ukraine conflict is taking: NATO will not intervene; it will not implement a no-fly zone; and has pointedly ignored Zelensky's new plea for additional military equipment. Ostensibly, this reflects the 'selfless' gesture by the West to avoid a nuclear war. In reality, however, the development of new weaponry can transform geopolitics in a moment (for example, Russia's *Kinzhal* hypersonic smart bunker-buster). The fact is that across the board, NATO cannot prevail militarily against Russia in Ukraine.

It seems the Pentagon has – for now – won in the war with State Department and has begun the process of 'correcting the narrative'.

Contrast these two U.S. narratives:

The State Department on Monday signalled that U.S. is discouraging Zelensky from making concessions to Russia in return for a ceasefire. The spokesman "made it very clear that he is open to a diplomatic solution that does not compromise the core principles at the heart of the Kremlin's war against Ukraine. When asked to elaborate on his point, Price said that the war is "bigger" than Russia and Ukraine. "The key point is that there are principles that are at stake here that have universal applicability everywhere". Price said Putin was trying to violate "core principles".

But, the Pentagon "drop[ed] two truth bombs" in its battle with State and Congress to prevent confrontation with Russia: "Russia's conduct in the brutal

war tells a different story than the widely accepted view that Putin is intent on demolishing Ukraine and inflicting maximum civilian damage—and it reveals the Russian leader's strategic balancing act", reported Newsweek in an article entitled, *"Putin's Bombers Could Devastate Ukraine But He's Holding Back. Here's Why."*

One quotes an unnamed analyst at the Pentagon's *Defense Intelligence Agency* (DIA) saying, "The heart of Kyiv has barely been touched. And almost all of the long-range strikes have been aimed at military targets. A retired U.S. Air Force officer now working as an analyst for a Pentagon contractor, added: "We need to understand Russia's actual conduct. If we merely convince ourselves that Russia is bombing indiscriminately, or [that] it is failing to inflict more harm because its personnel are not up to the task or because it is technically inept, then we are not seeing the real conflict"".

The second 'truth bomb' directly undermines Biden's dramatic warning about a false flag chemical attack. *Reuters* reported: "The United States has not yet seen any concrete indications of an imminent Russian chemical or biological weapons attack in Ukraine but is closely monitoring streams of intelligence for them, a senior U.S. defence official said."

Biden is positioned in the middle, saying 'Putin's a war criminal', but also that there will be no NATO fight with Russia. "The only end game now," a senior administration official said at a private event earlier this month, "is the end of Putin regime. Until then, all the time Putin stays, [Russia] will be a pariah state that will never be welcomed back into the community of nations. China has made a huge error in thinking Putin will get away with it".

There it is – the bottom line: Allow the carnage in Ukraine to continue; sit back and watch the 'heroic Ukrainians bleed Russia dry'; do enough to sustain the conflict (by providing some weapons), but not enough to escalate it; and play it as the heroic struggle for democracy, in order to satisfy public opinion.

The point is that it isn't working out that way. Putin may surprise all in DC by exiting Ukraine when Russia's military operation is complete. (When Putin speaks of Ukraine, by the way, he usually discounts the western part added on by Stalin as Ukrainian).

And it isn't working out with China. Blinken said in justification of new sanctions imposed on China last week: "We are committed to defending human rights around the world and will continue to use all diplomatic and economic measures to promote accountability".

The sanctions were imposed because China had failed to repudiate Putin. Just that. The language of accountability and (of atonement) used however, can be

understood only as an expression of woke contemporary culture. It is enough to present some aspect of Chinese culture as politically incorrect (as racist, repressive, misogynist, supremacist or offensive), and immediately it becomes politically incorrect. And that means that any aspect of it can be adduced at will by the Administration as meriting sanctioning.

The problem again reverts to the West's refusal to accept 'others' at the chessboard. What can China do, but shrug at such nonsense.

Biden, in his speech to the Roundtable, fore-staged – yet again – a new world order; he suggested that a Great Re-set is coming.

But maybe a 'Re-set Reckoning' of a different order is on the cards; one that will return many things to that which, until relatively recently, had actually worked. Politics and geo-politics are metamorphosing at every moment.

Geo-Politics Is Metamorphosing at Every Moment

Whilst Europe and the U.S. never have been more closely aligned, the 'West' paradoxically has also never been more alone.

Very occasionally, a single anecdote can almost completely summate a moment in history. And this one did: In 2005, Zbig Brzezinski, the architect of Afghanistan as quagmire to the Soviet Union, and the author of *The Grand Chessboard* (which embedded the Mackinder dictum of 'he who controls the Asian heartland controls the world' into U.S. foreign policy), sat down in Washington with Alexander Dugin, Russian political philosopher and advocate for a 'heartland' cultural and geo-political renaissance.

Brzezinski had already written in his book that, absent Ukraine, Russia would never become the heartland power; but with it, Russia can and would. The meeting had been set with a photo-prop of a chessboard placed between Brzezinski and Dugin (to promote Brzezinski's book). This arrangement with a chessboard prompted Dugin to ask whether Brzezinski considered Chess to be a game meant for two: "No, Zbig shot back: It is a game for one. Once a chess piece is moved; you turn the board around, and you move the other side's chess pieces. There is 'no other' in this game", Brzezinski insisted.

Of course, the single-handed chess game was implicit in Mackinder's doctrine: 'He who controls the heartland' dictum was a message to the Anglo powers to never allow a united heartland. (This, of course, is precisely what is evolving at every moment).

And on Monday, Biden channelled Brzezinski out loud, whilst addressing the Business Roundtable in the U.S. His remarks came toward the end of his brief speech where he talked about Russia's invasion of Ukraine and America's economic future:

"I think this presents us with some significant opportunities to make some real changes. You know, we are at an inflection point, I believe, in the world economy: [and] not just the world economy – in the world [which] occurs every three or four generations. As one of my, as the one of the top military people said to me in a secure meeting the other day, 60 million people died between 1900 and 1946; and since then we established a liberal world order and that hadn't happened in a long while. A lot of people died, but nowhere near the chaos. And now's the time when things are shifting. We're going, there's gonna be a new world order out there; and we've got to lead it and we've got to unite the rest of the free world in doing it."

Again there is no 'other' at the board. When the moves are made, the board is turned around 180º to play from the other side.

The point here is that the carefully deliberated counter-attack on this Brzezinski zeitgeist was formally launched in Beijing with the joint-declaration that neither Russia nor China accept for America to play chess alone with no others at the board. This represents the defining issue of this coming era: The opening-up of geo-politics. It is an issue for which the excluded 'others' are prepared to go to war (they see no choice).

A second chess-player has stepped forward and insists to play – Russia. And a third stands ready: China. Others are silently lining up to witness how the first engagement in this geo-political war fares. It seems from Biden's comments quoted above that the U.S. intends to use sanctions, and the full unprecedented extent of U.S. treasury measures, against Brzezinski dissidents. Russia is to be made an example of that which awaits any challengers demanding a seat at the board.

But it is an approach that is fundamentally flawed. It stems from Kissinger's celebrated dictum that 'he who controls money controls the world'. It was wrong from the 'get go': It was always 'he who controls food, energy (human as well as fossil) *and money* can control the world. But Kissinger just ignored the first two required conditions – and the last has imprinted itself on the Washington mental circuits.

And here is the paradox: When Brzezinski wrote his book, it was a very different era. Today, whilst Europe and the U.S. never have been more closely aligned, the 'West' paradoxically has also never been more alone. Opposition to Russia may have seemed at the outset a slam dunk global unifier: That world opinion would so robustly oppose Moscow's attack, that China would pay a high political price for failing to jump onto the anti-Russia bandwagon. But that is not how it is working out.

"While the U.S. rhetoric pillories Russia for "war crimes" and the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, et al", former Indian Ambassador Bhadrakumar notes, "the world capitals view this as a confrontation between America and Russia. Outside of the western camp, the world community refuses to impose sanctions against Russia or even to demonise that country".

The Islamabad Declaration issued on Wednesday after the 45th meeting of the foreign ministers of the fifty-seven member *Organisation of Islamic Conference* refused to endorse sanctions against Russia. Not a single country in the African continent or West Asian, Central Asia, South and Southeast Asian region has imposed sanctions against Russia".

There may well be a further factor at play here: For when these latter states hear phrases such as the 'Ukrainians, through their heroism, have won the right to enter our "club of values"', they scent a whiff of debilitated 'white' Europe clutching at the life-rafts.

The reality is that the sanctions to which Biden referred in his speech have already failed. Russia has not defaulted; the Moscow stock exchange is open; the Rouble is on the rebound; their current account is in rude good health and Russia is selling energy at windfall prices (even after discount).

In short, trade 'will be diverted', not destroyed (the benefit of being an exporter of goods almost fully produced locally – ie. a fortress economy).

The second oddity in Biden's policy is that whilst Clausewitzian doctrine (to which Russia broadly adheres) argues for the dismantling of 'the enemy's centre of gravity, to achieve victory', in this case presumably, the western control of the global reserve currency and payments systems. Today, however, it is Europe and the U.S. that have been dismantling it themselves: and further locking themselves into soaring inflation and contracting economic activity, in some unexplained fit of moral masochism.

As Ambrose Evans-Pritchard notes in the *Telegraph*, "What is clear is that western sanctions policy is the worst of all worlds. We are suffering an energy shock that is further inflating Russia's war-fighting revenues … There is a pervasive fear of a *gilets jaunes* uprising across Europe, a suspicion that a fickle public will not tolerate the cost-of-living shock once the horrors of Ukraine lose their novelty on TV screens".

Again, perhaps we can attribute this paradoxical behaviour to Kissinger's obsession with the power of money, and his forgetfulness of other major factors.

All of this has led to a certain unease creeping into the corridors of power in some NATO capitals over the course that the Ukraine conflict is taking: NATO

will not intervene; it will not implement a no-fly zone; and has pointedly ignored Zelensky's new plea for additional military equipment. Ostensibly, this reflects the 'selfless' gesture by the West to avoid a nuclear war. In reality, however, the development of new weaponry can transform geopolitics in a moment (for example, Russia's *Kinzhal* hypersonic smart bunker-buster). The fact is that across the board, NATO cannot prevail militarily against Russia in Ukraine.

It seems the Pentagon has – for now – won in the war with State Department and has begun the process of 'correcting the narrative'.

Contrast these two U.S. narratives:

The State Department on Monday signalled that U.S. is discouraging Zelensky from making concessions to Russia in return for a ceasefire. The spokesman "made it very clear that he is open to a diplomatic solution that does not compromise the core principles at the heart of the Kremlin's war against Ukraine. When asked to elaborate on his point, Price said that the war is "bigger" than Russia and Ukraine. "The key point is that there are principles that are at stake here that have universal applicability everywhere". Price said Putin was trying to violate "core principles".

But, the Pentagon "drop[ed] two truth bombs" in its battle with State and Congress to prevent confrontation with Russia: "Russia's conduct in the brutal war tells a different story than the widely accepted view that Putin is intent on demolishing Ukraine and inflicting maximum civilian damage—and it reveals the Russian leader's strategic balancing act", reported Newsweek in an article entitled, *"Putin's Bombers Could Devastate Ukraine But He's Holding Back. Here's Why."*

One quotes an unnamed analyst at the Pentagon's *Defense Intelligence Agency* (DIA) saying, "The heart of Kyiv has barely been touched. And almost all of the long-range strikes have been aimed at military targets. A retired U.S. Air Force officer now working as an analyst for a Pentagon contractor, added: "We need to understand Russia's actual conduct. If we merely convince ourselves that Russia is bombing indiscriminately, or [that] it is failing to inflict more harm because its personnel are not up to the task or because it is technically inept, then we are not seeing the real conflict"".

The second 'truth bomb' directly undermines Biden's dramatic warning about a false flag chemical attack. *Reuters* reported: "The United States has not yet seen any concrete indications of an imminent Russian chemical or biological weapons attack in Ukraine but is closely monitoring streams of intelligence for them, a senior U.S. defence official said."

Biden is positioned in the middle, saying 'Putin's a war criminal', but also that there will be no NATO fight with Russia. "The only end game now," a senior administration official said at a private event earlier this month, "is the end of Putin regime. Until then, all the time Putin stays, [Russia] will be a pariah state that will never be welcomed back into the community of nations. China has made a huge error in thinking Putin will get away with it".

There it is – the bottom line: Allow the carnage in Ukraine to continue; sit back and watch the 'heroic Ukrainians bleed Russia dry'; do enough to sustain the conflict (by providing some weapons), but not enough to escalate it; and play it as the heroic struggle for democracy, in order to satisfy public opinion.

The point is that it isn't working out that way. Putin may surprise all in DC by exiting Ukraine when Russia's military operation is complete. (When Putin speaks of Ukraine, by the way, he usually discounts the western part added on by Stalin as Ukrainian).

And it isn't working out with China. Blinken said in justification of new sanctions imposed on China last week: "We are committed to defending human rights around the world and will continue to use all diplomatic and economic measures to promote accountability".

The sanctions were imposed because China had failed to repudiate Putin. Just that. The language of accountability and (of atonement) used however, can be understood only as an expression of woke contemporary culture. It is enough to present some aspect of Chinese culture as politically incorrect (as racist, repressive, misogynist, supremacist or offensive), and immediately it becomes politically incorrect. And that means that any aspect of it can be adduced at will by the Administration as meriting sanctioning.

The problem again reverts to the West's refusal to accept 'others' at the chessboard. What can China do, but shrug at such nonsense.

Biden, in his speech to the Roundtable, fore-staged – yet again – a new world order; he suggested that a Great Re-set is coming.

But maybe a 'Re-set Reckoning' of a different order is on the cards; one that will return many things to that which, until relatively recently, had actually worked. Politics and geo-politics are metamorphosing at every moment.

Whilst Europe and the U.S. never have been more closely aligned, the 'West' paradoxically has also never been more alone.

Very occasionally, a single anecdote can almost completely summate a moment in history. And this one did: In 2005, Zbig Brzezinski, the architect of Afghanistan as quagmire to the Soviet Union, and the author of *The Grand Chessboard* (which embedded the Mackinder dictum of 'he who controls the

Asian heartland controls the world' into U.S. foreign policy), sat down in Washington with Alexander Dugin, Russian political philosopher and advocate for a 'heartland' cultural and geo-political renaissance.

Brzezinski had already written in his book that, absent Ukraine, Russia would never become the heartland power; but with it, Russia can and would. The meeting had been set with a photo-prop of a chessboard placed between Brzezinski and Dugin (to promote Brzezinski's book). This arrangement with a chessboard prompted Dugin to ask whether Brzezinski considered Chess to be a game meant for two: "No, Zbig shot back: It is a game for one. Once a chess piece is moved; you turn the board around, and you move the other side's chess pieces. There is 'no other' in this game", Brzezinski insisted.

Of course, the single-handed chess game was implicit in Mackinder's doctrine: 'He who controls the heartland' dictum was a message to the Anglo powers to never allow a united heartland. (This, of course, is precisely what is evolving at every moment).

And on Monday, Biden channelled Brzezinski out loud, whilst addressing the Business Roundtable in the U.S. His remarks came toward the end of his brief speech where he talked about Russia's invasion of Ukraine and America's economic future:

"I think this presents us with some significant opportunities to make some real changes. You know, we are at an inflection point, I believe, in the world economy: [and] not just the world economy – in the world [which] occurs every three or four generations. As one of my, as the one of the top military people said to me in a secure meeting the other day, 60 million people died between 1900 and 1946; and since then we established a liberal world order and that hadn't happened in a long while. A lot of people died, but nowhere near the chaos. And now's the time when things are shifting. We're going, there's gonna be a new world order out there; and we've got to lead it and we've got to unite the rest of the free world in doing it."

Again there is no 'other' at the board. When the moves are made, the board is turned around 180º to play from the other side.

The point here is that the carefully deliberated counter-attack on this Brzezinski zeitgeist was formally launched in Beijing with the joint-declaration that neither Russia nor China accept for America to play chess alone with no others at the board. This represents the defining issue of this coming era: The opening-up of geo-politics. It is an issue for which the excluded 'others' are prepared to go to war (they see no choice).

A second chess-player has stepped forward and insists to play – Russia. And a third stands ready: China. Others are silently lining up to witness how the first engagement in this geo-political war fares. It seems from Biden's comments quoted above that the U.S. intends to use sanctions, and the full unprecedented extent of U.S. treasury measures, against Brzezinski dissidents. Russia is to be made an example of that which awaits any challengers demanding a seat at the board.

But it is an approach that is fundamentally flawed. It stems from Kissinger's celebrated dictum that 'he who controls money controls the world'. It was wrong from the 'get go': It was always 'he who controls food, energy (human as well as fossil) *and money* can control the world. But Kissinger just ignored the first two required conditions – and the last has imprinted itself on the Washington mental circuits.

And here is the paradox: When Brzezinski wrote his book, it was a very different era. Today, whilst Europe and the U.S. never have been more closely aligned, the 'West' paradoxically has also never been more alone. Opposition to Russia may have seemed at the outset a slam dunk global unifier: That world opinion would so robustly oppose Moscow's attack, that China would pay a high political price for failing to jump onto the anti-Russia bandwagon. But that is not how it is working out.

"While the U.S. rhetoric pillories Russia for "war crimes" and the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, et al", former Indian Ambassador Bhadrakumar notes, "the world capitals view this as a confrontation between America and Russia. Outside of the western camp, the world community refuses to impose sanctions against Russia or even to demonise that country".

The Islamabad Declaration issued on Wednesday after the 45th meeting of the foreign ministers of the fifty-seven member *Organisation of Islamic Conference* refused to endorse sanctions against Russia. Not a single country in the African continent or West Asian, Central Asia, South and Southeast Asian region has imposed sanctions against Russia".

There may well be a further factor at play here: For when these latter states hear phrases such as the 'Ukrainians, through their heroism, have won the right to enter our "club of values"', they scent a whiff of debilitated 'white' Europe clutching at the life-rafts.

The reality is that the sanctions to which Biden referred in his speech have already failed. Russia has not defaulted; the Moscow stock exchange is open; the Rouble is on the rebound; their current account is in rude good health and Russia is selling energy at windfall prices (even after discount).

In short, trade 'will be diverted', not destroyed (the benefit of being an exporter of goods almost fully produced locally – ie. a fortress economy).

The second oddity in Biden's policy is that whilst Clausewitzian doctrine (to which Russia broadly adheres) argues for the dismantling of 'the enemy's centre of gravity, to achieve victory', in this case presumably, the western control of the global reserve currency and payments systems. Today, however, it is Europe and the U.S. that have been dismantling it themselves: and further locking themselves into soaring inflation and contracting economic activity, in some unexplained fit of moral masochism.

As Ambrose Evans-Pritchard notes in the *Telegraph*, "What is clear is that western sanctions policy is the worst of all worlds. We are suffering an energy shock that is further inflating Russia's war-fighting revenues … There is a pervasive fear of a *gilets jaunes* uprising across Europe, a suspicion that a fickle public will not tolerate the cost-of-living shock once the horrors of Ukraine lose their novelty on TV screens".

Again, perhaps we can attribute this paradoxical behaviour to Kissinger's obsession with the power of money, and his forgetfulness of other major factors.

All of this has led to a certain unease creeping into the corridors of power in some NATO capitals over the course that the Ukraine conflict is taking: NATO will not intervene; it will not implement a no-fly zone; and has pointedly ignored Zelensky's new plea for additional military equipment. Ostensibly, this reflects the 'selfless' gesture by the West to avoid a nuclear war. In reality, however, the development of new weaponry can transform geopolitics in a moment (for example, Russia's *Kinzhal* hypersonic smart bunker-buster). The fact is that across the board, NATO cannot prevail militarily against Russia in Ukraine.

It seems the Pentagon has – for now – won in the war with State Department and has begun the process of 'correcting the narrative'.

Contrast these two U.S. narratives:

The State Department on Monday signalled that U.S. is discouraging Zelensky from making concessions to Russia in return for a ceasefire. The spokesman "made it very clear that he is open to a diplomatic solution that does not compromise the core principles at the heart of the Kremlin's war against Ukraine. When asked to elaborate on his point, Price said that the war is "bigger" than Russia and Ukraine. "The key point is that there are principles that are at stake here that have universal applicability everywhere". Price said Putin was trying to violate "core principles".

But, the Pentagon "drop[ed] two truth bombs" in its battle with State and Congress to prevent confrontation with Russia: "Russia's conduct in the brutal war tells a different story than the widely accepted view that Putin is intent on demolishing Ukraine and inflicting maximum civilian damage—and it reveals the Russian leader's strategic balancing act", reported Newsweek in an article entitled, *"Putin's Bombers Could Devastate Ukraine But He's Holding Back. Here's Why."*

One quotes an unnamed analyst at the Pentagon's *Defense Intelligence Agency* (DIA) saying, "The heart of Kyiv has barely been touched. And almost all of the long-range strikes have been aimed at military targets. A retired U.S. Air Force officer now working as an analyst for a Pentagon contractor, added: "We need to understand Russia's actual conduct. If we merely convince ourselves that Russia is bombing indiscriminately, or [that] it is failing to inflict more harm because its personnel are not up to the task or because it is technically inept, then we are not seeing the real conflict"".

The second 'truth bomb' directly undermines Biden's dramatic warning about a false flag chemical attack. *Reuters* reported: "The United States has not yet seen any concrete indications of an imminent Russian chemical or biological weapons attack in Ukraine but is closely monitoring streams of intelligence for them, a senior U.S. defence official said."

Biden is positioned in the middle, saying 'Putin's a war criminal', but also that there will be no NATO fight with Russia. "The only end game now," a senior administration official said at a private event earlier this month, "is the end of Putin regime. Until then, all the time Putin stays, [Russia] will be a pariah state that will never be welcomed back into the community of nations. China has made a huge error in thinking Putin will get away with it".

There it is – the bottom line: Allow the carnage in Ukraine to continue; sit back and watch the 'heroic Ukrainians bleed Russia dry'; do enough to sustain the conflict (by providing some weapons), but not enough to escalate it; and play it as the heroic struggle for democracy, in order to satisfy public opinion.

The point is that it isn't working out that way. Putin may surprise all in DC by exiting Ukraine when Russia's military operation is complete. (When Putin speaks of Ukraine, by the way, he usually discounts the western part added on by Stalin as Ukrainian).

And it isn't working out with China. Blinken said in justification of new sanctions imposed on China last week: "We are committed to defending human rights around the world and will continue to use all diplomatic and economic measures to promote accountability".

The sanctions were imposed because China had failed to repudiate Putin. Just that. The language of accountability and (of atonement) used however, can be understood only as an expression of woke contemporary culture. It is enough to present some aspect of Chinese culture as politically incorrect (as racist, repressive, misogynist, supremacist or offensive), and immediately it becomes politically incorrect. And that means that any aspect of it can be adduced at will by the Administration as meriting sanctioning.

The problem again reverts to the West's refusal to accept 'others' at the chessboard. What can China do, but shrug at such nonsense.

Biden, in his speech to the Roundtable, fore-staged – yet again – a new world order; he suggested that a Great Re-set is coming.

But maybe a 'Re-set Reckoning' of a different order is on the cards; one that will return many things to that which, until relatively recently, had actually worked. Politics and geo-politics are metamorphosing at every moment.

The views of individual contributors do not necessarily represent those of the Strategic Culture Foundation.

Alastair Crooke

Former British diplomat, founder and director of the Beirut-based Conflicts Forum.

individual contributors do not necessarily represent those of the Strategic Culture Foundation.