



Geopolitics can best be understood as the application of Sir Isaac Newton's Laws of Motion to international relations. These laws "explain the relationship between a physical object [a state] and the forces acting upon it [other states]," writes Joseph E Fallon.

NATO's enlargement and Moscow's response to that enlargement in the Black Sea region is a case in point.

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Russia claims in 1990 the West promised Soviet President Gorbachev in exchange for German reunification NATO would not be enlarged.

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Twenty years later, German news magazine, Spiegel, confirmed Russia's allegation. "After speaking with many of those involved and examining previously classified British and German documents in detail, SPIEGEL has concluded that there was no doubt that the West did everything it could to give the Soviets the impression that NATO membership was out of the question for countries like Poland, Hungary or Czechoslovakia."

This was corroborated by The National Security Archive in Washington, DC.

In 1999, Russia was weak, only three-quarters the size of the Soviet Union, and strategically vulnerable. That year, NATO began a 20-year eastward expansion to Russia's borders, incorporating former Warsaw Pact countries as well as three former Soviet republics, "bringing St. Petersburg within a hundred miles of a NATO country."

Then, in 2004, the EU initiated a separate decade long expansion to the borders of Russia.

EU expansion economically integrated into the West former Warsaw Pact and Soviet republics that had been politically and militarily incorporated into NATO.

Both expansions, however, were not limited to Russia's western border. NATO and EU extended their influence across the southern border of Russia with "partnership" programs with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the five former Soviet republics of Central Asia.

These expansions sought to encircle Russia isolating Moscow economically, politically, militarily, and strategically.

Following Newton's First Law, "An object at rest remains at rest, and an object in motion remains in motion at constant speed and in a straight line unless acted on by an unbalanced force", NATO and EU expansions continued covertly through "color revolutions" in Ukraine and Georgia which toppled pro-Russian governments that had declined to join the Western alliances.

The first "color revolution" was the 2003 "Rose Revolution" in Georgia. It was the template for subsequent anti-Russian "revolutions" -- the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine 2004, the "Tulip Revolution" in Kyrgyzstan 2005, and Ukraine again in 2014 with the "maidan revolution" also known as "Orange Revolution II".

In his study on Ukraine's 2014 "Orange Revolution II", Professor John Mearsheimer, University of Chicago, wrote: "On February 21,[2014] the government and the opposition struck a deal that

allowed Yanukovich to stay in power until new elections were held. But it immediately fell apart, and Yanukovich fled to Russia the next day. The new government in Kiev was pro-Western and anti-Russian to the core, and it contained four high-ranking members who could legitimately be labeled neofascists. Although the full extent of U.S. involvement has not yet come to light, it is clear that Washington backed the coup."

A hostile government in Ukraine poses a security threat to Moscow and NATO and EU know this. Russia's "defining characteristic [is] its indefensibility. No mountain ranges or bodies of water protected its western borders." Ukraine is a strategic prize for NATO offering NATO forces "a flat route straight to Moscow."

To justify NATO and EU expansions and instigation of "color revolutions", Russia was cast as a perpetual threat to the West. The logic of this rhetoric led to a public proposal to abolish Russia, itself.

The source of this proposal, former U.S. presidential advisor, the late Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, lent credence to the belief in Moscow that the proposal was a U.S. foreign policy objective. Dr. Brzezinski stated, "Failure to widen NATO...could reignite dormant Russian political aspirations in Central Europe". To eliminate that threat, he proposed Russia be abolished; replaced with a loose confederation "composed of a European Russia, a Siberian Republic, and a Far Eastern Republic...A sovereign Ukraine is a critically important component of such a policy..."

Encirclement and proposed partition were only feasible as long as Russia was weak. "Improvements in Russia's military forces over the last decade have reduced the once-gaping qualitative and technological gaps between Russia and NATO. These improvements come while Russia is expanding its forces in the West, maintaining more high-readiness forces, and gaining valuable combat experience in Ukraine and Syria."

Regaining military strength, Moscow responded to Western encirclement with a counter encirclement reflecting Newton's Third Law of Motion: Action & Reaction. "Whenever one object [the West] exerts a force on a second object [Russia], the second object exerts an equal and opposite force on the first."

The application of Newton's Third Law is most apparent in the Black Sea region. Russia and

NATO vie for control of this geographical entity because it represents the "soft underbelly" of each.

According to NATO Review, "whoever controls or dominates the Black Sea can easily project power to the European continent, mainly in the Balkans and Central Europe, but also in the Eastern Mediterranean as well as the South Caucasus and the northern Middle East."

The Black Sea, whose name means "The Inhospitable Sea", is an array of ports, shipping lanes, and global trade routes.

It is also rich in oil and gas reserves. "The northwestern portion holds estimated reserves of 495.7 bcm of natural gas and 50.4 million tons of oil and condensate. The Prykerchenska zone holds about 321.2 bcm of gas and 126.8 million tons of oil and condensate, and the continental slope has an estimated 766.6 bcm of gas and 232.6 million tons of oil and condensate."

This led littoral states to claim Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) in the Black Sea to exploit its natural resources.

As a consequence of Ukraine's 2014 "Orange Revolution II", which overthrew a pro-Russian government then sought membership in NATO, Russia seized Crimea and the adjacent maritime zone, which is three times larger the peninsula. This gives Moscow, and denies Kiev, and NATO and EU, access to oil and gas reserves estimated in the trillions of dollars.

This is one of several "frozen conflicts" in the Black Sea region between Russia and three of her neighbors – Ukraine and Georgia, which seek membership in NATO, and Moldova, where "NATO provides tailored support for Moldova's defence reform and modernisation efforts."

Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow's geopolitical position in the Black Sea region was secure. All the littoral countries but Turkey were members of the Warsaw Pact. Now Russia is bordered by Black Sea countries that are either members of NATO or are seeking to become members.

To counter NATO expansion, which threatens Russia's exposed heartland, Moscow created a buffer zone by, in addition to seizing Crimea, supporting secessionists in eastern Ukraine and the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia, and Transnistria from Moldova.Â

In doing so, Moscow responded to Dr. Brzezinski's call for partitioning Russia with an "equal and opposite force" – partition of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

Moscow's buffer zone established "strategic depth" that defends Russia's vulnerable heartland from "a quick, preemptive attack or...a methodical offensive...[by enabling Russian troops to] withdraw into its own territory, absorb an initial thrust, and allow the subsequent offensive to culminate short of its goal and far from its source of power."

Adding Moscow's overseas base in Latakia, Syria to the strategic scope of this buffer zone, and it is not Russia's soft underbelly that is exposed but NATO's.

Creation of a buffer zone in the Black Sea region also affords added security for the operations of Moscow's gas pipelines, which extend from Russia to Turkey where they connect to pipelines running west and north to supply the energy needs of Europe.Â

For Russia, control of the Black Sea is critical for its national security, territorial integrity, and economic growth.

For these reasons, the U.S., NATO, and EU seek to weaken Moscow's influence in the region. To do so Washington and Brussels imposed economic sanctions on Russia in 2014 citing as justification Moscow's annexation of Crimea.

Sanctions by the EU are questionable. It imposed sanctions as punishment for the secession of Crimea from Ukraine and incorporation into Russia. Yet EU actively supported the secession of Montenegro from Serbia and incorporation into NATO.Â

Furthermore, economic sanctions, a policy tool that has been compared to "siege warfare", is being applied by Brussels to a militarily stronger power on which the EU depends for its energy needs.

While sanctions imposed by Washington in 2014 have increased in number and have widened in scope with justifications going beyond Russian activities in the Black Sea region.

In April 2021, President Biden further expanded U.S. sanctions signing "an executive order authorizing the U.S. government to impose sanctions on any area of the Russian economy...[for] alleged malign actions."

Historically, economic sanctions often fail to achieve their stated political objective. This is the case with Russia. [N]o matter how dependent the target country is on its trade with the state[s] attempting an economic power play, the government under pressure can usually turn to other partners." This is what Moscow did.

Applying Newton's Third law of "an equal and opposite force" to economic sanctions by Washington and Brussels, Moscow pivoted Russia's economy to China as a new export market.

The economic and strategic benefits derived from this "pivot" poses a threat to the Black Sea region, and that threat comes from China, not Russia.

While EU projects a united front against Russia, it has none against China as Beijing subverts the EU from within.

First, "It is estimated that state-backed Chinese investors own at least 10 percent of all equity in ports in Europe, with deals inked in Greece, Spain, Italy, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium."

If Moscow had the financial means, would the EU allow Russia to own equity in EU ports?

All Chinese investors serve as espionage agents for the Chinese Communist Party. Article 7 of

the 2017 National Intelligence Law mandates "any organization or citizen shall support, assist and cooperate with the state intelligence work in accordance with the law."

Despite Article 7, the EU allows Chinese individuals and companies to invest in the EU economy including strategic sectors such as transportation and energy.

Second, China has successfully split the EU. In 2012, Beijing created the China-CEEC (Central and Eastern European Countries) summit, "16 + 1", and negotiates agreements with them separately from the rest of the EU.

Under this "divide and rule", China negotiated bilateral agreements on the Belt Road Initiative with 17 EU member states allowing it to establish a presence in the Black Sea region.

"When it comes to Balkan and the Black Sea states in particular, the relative underdevelopment of these countries compared to western EU members is seen as an opportunity for China. If the EU is unable or unwilling to provide development funds, China can fill the void."

Chinese financing comes with strings attached. "Any country that becomes fully integrated with the Belt and Road, is expected to align itself with China on a wide range of political and economic standards."

This was demonstrated in 2017 when in March "Hungary prevented the EU from adding its name to a joint letter expressing concern about a report of lawyers in China being illegally detained and tortured" and, three months later, in June "Greece blocked the unanimous adoption of a joint EU statement on human rights in China...By coincidence, both Hungary and Greece have been recipients of large-scale Chinese investments over recent years."

In addition to financial agreements, China is also subverting the EU through covert means. As the joint 2018 report, "Authoritarian Advance" by Global Public Policy Institute and the Mercator Institute for China Studies, documents:

"China commands a comprehensive and flexible influencing toolset, ranging from the overt to the covert, primarily deployed across three arenas: political and economic elites, media and public opinion, and civil society and academia....The effects of this asymmetric political relationship are beginning to show within Europe. European states increasingly tend to adjust their policies in fits of "preemptive obedience" to curry favor with the Chinese side. Political elites within the European Union (EU) and in the European neighborhood have started to embrace Chinese rhetoric and interests, including where they contradict national and/or European interest...Beijing also benefits from the 'services' of willing enablers among European political and professional classes who are happy to promote Chinese values and interests."

Noteworthy is Beijing's focus on Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Black Sea region. "Chinese commentators quietly acknowledge that Beijing's efforts in Central-Eastern Europe inherently challenge the interests of the EU, Russia, and occasionally even the United States."

Like the eastward expansion of NATO and the EU to Russia's borders, China's subordination of the EU follows Newton's First Law of Motion: Inertia. "An object...in motion remains in motion at constant speed and in a straight line unless acted on by an unbalanced force."

In response, NATO and the EU needs to follow Newton's Third law of Motion "Whenever one object [China] exerts a force on a second object [NATO/EU], the second object exerts an equal and opposite force on the first."

That "equal and opposite force" is a negotiated settlement with Russia. At the very least, such a settlement would include no NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia. Both countries would be unaligned as is Moldova. And the EU would end sanctions on Russia.

Ending sanctions would place Brussels at odds with Washington, but it would remove incentives for Russia to remain aligned with China, which is more important. Tensions exist between Moscow and Beijing. Russia supported China on Hong Kong, but China refuses to back Russia on Crimea and Ukraine.

As the 2020 analysis by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, "There is no (new) China-Russia alliance", observed: "China and Russia have built a working relationship based on realpolitik and a convergence of interests. They will continue along that path—until their

interests no longer align."

A negotiated settlement with Russia that establishes a working economic relationship between Moscow and Brussels would give the EU an opportunity to roll back Beijing's influence in the Black Sea region and the rest of Europe.

If tensions between NATO and Russia over Ukraine lead to war, the only winner will be China. If NATO defeats Russia, it would be a Pyrrhic victory. War would seriously disrupt, if not upend, the economies of the EU allowing Beijing to exploit its economic power and "influencing toolset" to increase China's influence throughout the Black Sea region and beyond. This would advance Beijing's ultimate objective of turning the EU, third largest economy in the world, into a "satellite economy" of China.

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