The Marking of the Spheres of Influence and the New Security Alliances in Eastern Europe during the World War II

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Abstract: The politics of the spheres of influence is not peculiar to XXth century even though it surfaced during that time, reaching the maximum level during the World War II. In fact, history provides us with numerous examples of this policy being effective starting the age of Antiquity and continuing till Modern even Contemporary times. It is important to note that "the main reason serving as cover for the policy of influence areas resides in the national security interests and, in this case, it led to "worldwide vital areas serving for the security and prosperity of the Great Powers". Specialized literature further develops the notion *sphere of influence* and defines it as being the state's action radius extended beyond its own borders. To Central and Eastern Europe, this concept was often subjected to internal and external pressure thus leading towards its permanent modification, the consequences being utterly detrimental to the states in that region. The process aggravated before the World War II on the occasion of Soviet-German Pact dated on 23rd August 1939.

Keywords: diplomatic act; secret diplomacy; World War II

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of history, diplomacy has shown a permanent intertwining between the field of advertising, international relations and other more or less known practices, excepting the initiated ones. Not to be confused, both the official diplomacy and the secret diplomacy represent sides of the same policy, tending to ensure the satisfaction of the interests of the states in question, its methods differing, of course, on the circumstances and purposes of the actions (Duculescu, 1986, p. 12).

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The question where the confidential character of a "diplomatic act" stops and where the "secret diplomacy" begins, which in this case led to the emergence of spheres of influence or interest, represents and seems to have been for a long time a controversial and particularly present-day topic. This principle is definitely not new to history and it is not limited to the scale of Europe. On the contrary, it has been validated everywhere in the world at different times and in different cultural areas, being more of an accessory the great powers have always endowed with.

Over the past 75 years since the end of World War II, the rich specialized literature has generously provided enough pros and cons regarding the conflicts between the three Great Powers, its authors being undoubtedly prisoners of cultural subjectivity, at least. Many papers bring to the attention of the general and specialized public new terms, such as: ***cold war, containement policy, ideological warfare, Finishization or Sovietization (communization) of Eastern Europe.*** Moreover, the historiography of the subject in question alongside with the emergence and exercise of the spheres of influence in Central and Eastern Europe registered a growing opinion trend, namely the reconsideration of certain subjects, otherwise well known, thus benefiting from new interpretations and data in the new context.

Conflicts of interests, before and after the end of World War II, have been analyzed by historians in an attempt to find out the root causes which led to the "division of Europe" and the outbreak of the Cold War. The interest in the politics of the spheres of influence, pursued by the Allied and Associated Powers during the last World War (the communization of Central and South-Eastern Europe) is justified by the desire for providing with an explanation as close as possible to the historical truth of the main causes which led to the establishment of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe.

The present study is not intended to be an exhaustive one, on the contrary, based on the awareness of given possibilities at that time, it would be more prudent to limit our attention to the controversial and real aspects of interest for this geo-cultural area, the context being broader and largely influenced by the historiography of the World War II. The great interest enjoyed worldwide by World War II analysts led to impressive results, thus materializing in an exceptional bibliography thanks to historians, politicians, military diplomats, economists and journalists.

In this respect, specialized institutions, such as "National Archives Washington DC", "University of Washington Press", "Cambridge University Press", "Public Record Office", "Hoover Institute on War", Revolution and Peace (Archives) hold merit for

editing and publishing thousands of documents, official or not, thus providing a more accurate picture of the decisions taken by the Big Three during World War II and during the Cold War.

Among the many documents published by these institutions, those worth mentioning are the following: transcripts of government meetings, inter-government meetings, official or informal press statements, war diaries, as well as memoirs of the main actors of the international political scene during this period.

From the impressive list of works, there are to be enumerated: *Dictionary of the Twentieth Century History (1990-1991) London, 1992; Dictionnaire Encyclopedique d'Histoire, M.Mourre, Bardas, Paris, 1993; World Encyclopedia of Peace, Oxford, New York, 1986.* An important contribution is credited to authors, such as: Andre Fontaine, *Cold War History*; Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*; D.F.Hatchet, *Spheres of Influence*; Lynn E.Davis, *The Cold War Begins: Soviet-American Conflict Over Eastern Europe* or J. Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941-1947*, New York, 1972. With respect to Romanian historiography, there are a few prominent representatives: Gh. Buzatu, *Din istoria sectreta a celui de al doilea razboi Mondial*; Adrian Pop, *Sovietizarea Romaniei*; Nicolae Baciu, *Agonia Romaniei*, *Yalta si crucificarea Romaniei.* Additionaly, the studies of historians such as C-tin Hlihor, Cr. Troncota or M. Chiritoiu had a special impact on the elucidation of some aspects related to the Sovietization of Romania.

2. Objectives

The author's desire is to harmonize the points of view and, of course, to build a more accurate picture of the historical fact based on a careful evaluation and analysis of the accessed information. Since biographies and memoirs usually undergo subjective interpretation, due to the need of justifying important decisions, taken either for preserving the electoral capital, either because history is namely written by the winners who want to make sure their popularity is well kept among the public opinion, a historian must always be objective in rendering the facts *sine ira et studio*.

Fortunately, the passing of such a long period of time gave the possibility for in-depth study of the conflicts and convergence of interests among the Allied and Associated Powers while never preventing contemporaries of events from advancing views and predictions as objective as the opinions expressed in the press by the well-known journalist and international relations analyst, Walter Lippemann.

Nevertheless, trying to judge the facts "a posteriori", using the advantages of the present time and contemporary standards in political and military decisions, is unlikely to be fair and productive in the end. Consequently, one must take into account the way of thinking, the acting of political leaders and the value of taken decisions in the light of the information held by these politicians so rightfully called "responsible legislators of the postwar world."

3. Contents

The politics of the spheres of influence is not peculiar to XXth century even though it surfaced during that time, reaching the maximum level during the World War II. In fact, history provides us with numerous examples of this policy being effective starting the age of Antiquity and continuing till Modern even Contemporary times. „The main motivation serving as cover for the politics of the spheres of influence is that of national security interests and this case proves that vital areas around the world serve for the security and prosperity of the great powers" (Bogdan & Preda, 1993, p. 16).

Nowadays, according to the definition, a sphere of influence generally represents, "a geographical area in which a great power, relying primarily on the superiority of its armed forces and the threat to use them, imposes its right to intervene in the internal and foreign policy of the states in the area" (Bogdan & Preda, 1993, p. 26). Naturally, the course of international events caused these terms (spheres of influence or interest) to acquire new connotations, different meanings and interpretations others than what is considered to be unanimous and recognized nowadays.

For instance, the **Encyclopedia Britannica** (1910) gives the following explanation of the term *sphere of influence*: "an agreement between two countries through which each party commits to abstain itself from interfering or exerting pressure / influence over the territories which the contracting parties agreed to belong to the other party's operations" (Bogdan & Preda, 1993, p. 29). Another interpretation, found in **Dictionarul Diplomatic Roman,** summarizes that "a sphere of influence represents an area of the globe over which a state, generally a great power, claims to have sometimes, based on an agreement with another power, a right to protect its interests in the area or to exert political and economic influence in the area" (Dictionar Diplomatic Roman, 1967).

However, A. Schumann draws distinction between the two notions, *spheres of influence and spheres of interest*, in **Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences**, but his

views focus exclusively on Africa: "in general terms, a sphere of influence can be defined as a backward territory over which an outside power claims hegemony in order to transform it into a protectorate colony in order to obtain exclusive economic privileges for its citizens without taking responsibility for local administration" (Bogdan & Preda, 1993, p. 36).

The *sphere of influence* implies mainly political interests, while the *sphere of interest* refers to economic interests only. Specialized literature advances also the notion of Machtsphare (sphere of power) - defined as the range of power of a state which extends beyond its borders. Regarding the history of the World War II and especially the Cold War period, the notion of *spheres of influence* can be characterized as "an area generally used to designate the spheres of influence of the two superpowers, U.S. and the U.S.S.R" (eg. the United States is entitled to have its own an area of influence in Latin America, while the U.S.S.R. resorts to a similar claim over the neighboring Central and Eastern European states). As far as concerned, these spheres of influence represent a diplomatic concept which allows the recognition of each power over a geo-political area, literally a "vorland".

Obviously, the boundaries of such an area are flexible, susceptible to erosion or expansion over time and are rarely officially accepted, the term being definitively enshrined in the Cold War diplomacy, especially for Europe.Like any other controversial term, international security as well as national security have both been and still are susceptible to different interpretations, this fact making us to advance or adhere to one point of view or another, if not universally valid, at least relevant enough to Central and South-Eastern Europe.

According to M.E. Ionescu, the concept of security represents "the right or capacity of an actor, in terms of power, to defend his own fundamental values and to support their projection in the international arena" (Ionescu, 1993, p. 12). Security is equivalent to the existence of an instrument, usually the army, capable of overcoming the inherent difficulties encountered during the enforcement of these "national imperatives", its strength ultimately depending on the cohesion of a state. Security is not limited to armed security only, instead it has multiple values such as economic, political, social and sometimes ecological.

For Central and Eastern Europe, this concept of security was often been subjected to internal and external pressures, thus leading to its permanent modification and disastrous consequences for the states in the area. The phenomenon was particularly obvious during World War II, but the first signs showed up once with the signing of

the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact on 23rd August 1939, an agreement delimiting the spheres of influence in Europe between Germany and the USSR.

This type of politics, realpolitik, seems to have been continued by the Big Three on a much larger scale, both during the war and the peace negotiations for the establishment of the new post-war order. Before the capitulation of Germany (9th May 1945), the fate of Eastern Europe has already been decided by the victors through trilateral agreements, contrary to the expectations of the international public opinion, meaning at the negotiating table during the peace conference.

Practically, the hegemony of Germany was replaced with the one of the Soviet Union, as the Red Army advanced towards the Western part of the continent. The reasons caused by the haste of the victory over Germany, in the Second World War and the occupation of the Eastern European states, correlated with the policy of the *fait accompli,* led to the recognition of the Soviet Union's supremacy in the area. The Western partners of the Great Alliance acknowledged de facto the new state of affairs established in the area while the possible remaining points would be recognized as the war for the Soviet power unfolded favorably. At Yalta, on February 1945 and at Postdam, on July 1945, the Anglo-American allies took note of a situation already foreseen, at least in part long before. This successive hegemony (Ionescu, 1993, p. 28) established over Central and Eastern Europe represents, without doubt, a change in the balance of power between European states or those with interests in Europe.

As for the states of Central and South-Eastern Europe, their transformation, by the Great Powers, from a subject to an object of international relations was not done passively. Poland, Greece and Yugoslavia opposed resistance to German aggression through armed struggle. Same thing occured against the Soviet expansionism because of countries such as Poland, Romania and Finland.

The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire led to the emergence of several „national states" with important ethnic minorities. These national minorities proved to be an important source of instability and their attempts to conclude alliances and agreements for peace and status quo purposes, as enforced by the Versailles Peace Treaty after the First World War, would not prevent the rise of conflicting interests and the degradation of international relations for the Central and European states. The situation was significantly aggravated by the Great Powers through brutal interference in the internal affairs of the area (Baciu, 1990, p. 19), thus increasing

the feeling of insecurity between the states in the region, a feeling already intensely undermined from within (Constantin, 1995, p. 42).

As legal successors to the agreements and to the Paris Peace Conference held in 1919 -event which formerly enshrined the disintegration of the European imperial order guaranteed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Russian Empire, German Empire and the Ottoman Empire - the new states unconditionally adhered to Wilsonian principles, known for reformulating new priorities in the post-war international relations.

Participatory democracy, acknowledged for promoting human rights, property rights or political rights in Western Europe, was genuinely a unique experience for most of the Eastern European people. Unfortunately, the absence of historical models of pluralism and adequate governing led the various political parties, founded at the beginning of the century and especially after the First World War, to utter failure in gaining the support of the electorate so that the democratic structures, mandated by the victorious allies in Poland, Bulgaria, Albania and Yugoslavia, became seriously compromised. However, in Romania and Hungary, the parliamentary democracy started showing signs of confusion right from the beginning, their subsequent evolution heading them to the establishment of authoritarian regimes (Fischer, 1996, p. 18).

The British considered the Soviets' claims in Eastern Europe to be oppourtune and justified in comparison with the American view which was rather nuanced on establishing a sustainable and fair post-war climate by founding the United Nations with the purpose of rightfully regulate post-war international relations, as opposed to the League of Nations' demeanour. In fact, the Great Britain's representatives found it natural for the Russians to take advantage of the present situation due to the possibility of gaining a series of lost territories in the last war.

According to the British Prime Minister's vision, Europe's post-war organization would undoubtedly be based on an inevitable Soviet-British condominium, doubled by the separation of the spheres of influence, while any other differences between the two protective powers of Europe would be solved through bilateral agreements lessened by the American lack of interest in these areas. Both the British and the American way of acting would ensure the first step for Romania and for the other European Southern-Eastern countries towards the gliding into the Soviet area of influence beyond any geopolitical and strategically important Anglo-American objective.

To the United States, the State Department's view was based on the assumption that "the United States should have entered the war not only to save England, but to prevent it from repeating the mistakes made after the First World War" (Hatchet, 1991, p. 160). Benefiting directly from the current international order, installed at the end of the Great War, the United States concluded in the summer of 1940 that „Britain was no longer strong enough to maintain the healthy climate formerly cultivated for material development and evolution of a decent social order. The Russian-German and Japanese spheres of influence had already divided the world and, if these would become permanent, the future of America as a liberal democracy was endangered" (Gardner, 1996, p. 101).

Conclusions

The United States had instead a much more idealistic perception of the world, declaring itself, at least in principle, as determined opponents against the spheres of influence because of them fueling nothing but instability in terms of international politics and economy, facts which could not have prevented a potential new crisis, similar to the one from the '30s.

"It's our hope," says the American historian, Barton. J. Bearnstein, in his *American Foreign Policy and the Origins of the Cold War* – not only for our own well-being, but also for the interest and the prosperity of the whole world, that transactions and trade be made freer than they have ever been in history" (Winkler, 1996, p. 49). The unfavourable attitude of the White House towards Central and Eastern Europe, in the wider context of relations and international post-war world reorganization was apparently due to the President's decision, F.D. Roosevelt, who stated quite frequently that: "I do not want the United States to have the post-war burden of reconstituting France, Italy and the Balkans. This is not our natural task at a distance of 3,500 miles or more. It is definitely a British task in which the British are far more vitally interested than we are" (Baciu, 1990, p. 165).

Both London and Washington mutually agreed that "the Soviet Union must have a glacis, a buffer zone, made up of the Central and Eastern European states, neighboring with the Soviet Union to the West, whose foreign policy must not harm USSR's security interests" (Constantiniu, 1997, p. 5). In principle, those states – according to American foreign policy –could retain their independence and benefit from a democratic regime while their foreign policy has to be subordinated in the

future to the requirements of the U.R.S.S. by adopting a non-hostile attitude towards the Soviet state.

The international relations historians admit that this policy of concessions granted to the USSR in Central and Eastern Europe, called *Finlandization*, has its origins in the attitude of Western states towards the Russian-Finnish war of 1940 when Finland was left to fend for itself against Soviet Union's military aggression, despite Finland beingat that time a full member of the League of Nations. It is no less true that Anglo-American allies, fully aware of the Red Army's importance on the front, accepted offering many concessions to the Soviet Union during their negotiations in recognition of the latter's efforts in the victory over Germany and its allies.

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