Ελληνική Εταιρεία Γεωγραφικών Μελετών
«Ο Στράβων»

International relations: Some actual observations

Washington NATO summit produced no opening, no signal for a negotiated settlement of the war in Ukraine. I read hiatus and uneasiness. The proclamations of Ukraine s victory do not sound convincing. Now it comes to India, Brazil and the Pope not to relent. A real peace summit worth of its name is required.

The West, for all streamlining that has been occurring, at the expense mainly of European nations, Germany in particular, will not be able to claim victory. The “global South”, around the Eurasian Heartland, reinforced with China, Iran, and an oscillating India, has broken free from North America, Europe and their allies in the Pacific.

Be reminded that Zbigniew Brzezinski, in his testamental book entitled “Strategic Vision” (2012), calls for a Wider West to include Russia, departing from his previous theses about con-federalization of Russia, outlined in his “Grand Chessboard”. Wisdom comes late. Even under Trump, peace in Ukraine will be hard to achieve: NATO accession designs will be abandoned, EU will not, only to follow excruciatingly slow and lengthy pace. Yet, the main impediment for a peace deal refers to the territorial clauses, unless Russia gives up claims for outright transfer of sovereignty over Donbas, Cherson and Zaporizyia. A confederation within a revamped Ukraine, in a new constitutional structure, would be reasonable. Crimea is a different case.

The European Union will not lose its geo-economic attraction, though its geopolitical clout has been visibly shrinking. It will always be a magnet for outsiders, including the bemoaning Britons.

The prospect of a Trump victory in November, will force France and Germany to heal real and imaginary discord and to close ranks for all the major problems both a weakened President Macron and an uncertain Chancellor Scholz are facing. Re- appointment of Mrs Von der Leyen has the merit of continuity, and hardly anything else. The new High Representative Kalja Kalas, a modest choice for the post, will need experienced sherpas to carry out her mandate. There is no alternative for the EU other than working as close as possible with the next American President and to also pursue the path towards the much talked about strategic autonomy for Europe, an uphill and arduous undertaking.

Against the clamours and the concerns for a slippery slope to a WW III, European and American citizens seem not to be ready to fatalistically accept the prospect of a nuclear catastrophe, designed or by neglect. They will oppose.

Closer home, in the labyrinth of the Western Balkans the best conceivable path of action is to keep unresolved problems just unresolved and not to look for solution recipes which will have the adverse effect. Conservative treatment methods are in order. This applies to RNM, to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and for that matter to the heavily Romanian-speaking Republic of Moldova. The witch hunt to discover Russian involvement by using magnifying glass does not pay. Instead, it would be reasonable and stabilizing to proceed in a sustained manner with the accession process of Serbia to the EU. The three Eastern Balkan EU members, Romania-Bulgaria-Greece are onboard for this issue.

Turkey is the elephant in the room for many matters that have to do with Southeast Europe, EastMed, Near East, Caucasus and beyond. This Republic, still in financial dire straits, ponders at this juncture to mend ties with Damascus and get out of the Syrian quagmire she herself has created. Fifty years after she invaded Cyprus under a false pretext, Turkey would be well advised not to harbour fresh designs against Greece or Cyprus.

In the meantime, Israel will have to make hard choices; a two (or three) fronts war, this time with Hezbollah, no matter past successes, would be a complex and difficult campaign which will strain in excess the resources of the Jewish state.

Stravon of Amaseia,
Attica, 15 July 2024