

Of Neighbors and Distant Cousins: A Venusian View on Eastern Europe

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If your neighbor whispers caution, and the distant cousin screams encouragement, who should we trust to know where the fire is burning?

A Venusian analyst observing the war in Ukraine through the lens of a telescope would note a perplexing asymmetry:

- The countries that surround Ukraine, those who share borders, minorities, economic ties, and cultural memory, are, with few exceptions, the least zealous in supporting its current course.
- Conversely, those farthest removed, insulated by oceans and ideology, are its loudest advocates.

The Near:

- Setting aside Belarus, a staunch opponent, Hungary, Slovakia, Turkey, Serbia, and probably Romania, sooner or later, all approach or are likely to soon approach the conflict with caution, restraint, or quiet dissent.
- Moldova's alignment is split: while its government supports its neighbor, its two autonomous regions, Gagauzia and Transnistria, oppose that stance. Even the central government's position owes more to expatriate pressure than domestic unity.
- Poland is the lone vocal regional champion, motivated by long-standing but ambiguous hostility and deep entanglement in NATO's eastern flank.

The Far Far Away:

- The United Kingdom (2,000 km)
- Portugal (3,000 km)
- Canada (6,000 km)
- Japan (8,000 km)
- Australia (12,000 km)
- New Zealand (17,000 km)

as well as most of western Europe, and, presiding over them all, the United States, at 8,000 km, the chief orchestrator, primary funder, and strategic sponsor of the conflict. No actor has contributed more weapons, advisors, or dollars. No other voice has defined the terms so emphatically.

Such is the geometry of power: distance liberates ideology; proximity enforces realism.

The Lesson:

The question is not who is righteous and who is ghoulish, which belongs to theology.

The question is rather:

Who best understands the texture of this war?

When seven or eight of your nine neighbors urge caution, it may be time to update your compass.

Or, as the Venusian observer might put it:

“Those who smell the smoke are quicker to reach for water.”