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Europe's Eastern March

One of the major developments in Europe following the end of the Cold War has been the slow but clear movement of European and Atlantic institutions eastwards. As a result, what came to be known, between World Wars I and II as *Zwischeneuropa*, i.e. lands lying between Germany and Russia, and what then for forty years constituted the Soviet sphere of influence is becoming progressively more and more affiliated with the West. Eventually, the more successful countries in the region are likely to join the new West, while others may have to wait for a very long time or even stay for the foreseeable future outside of the expanded boundaries of either the European Union or NATO.

This prospect raises several questions:

- What is the effect of EU enlargement on the Union itself and on the internal developments in the region?

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- What is the effect of NATO enlargement and the alliance's new role on the European security environment?
- What is the impact of regional developments (political and economic instability, conflicts, etc.) on the prospects for "One Europe"?
- Where does it all leave Ukraine, Belarus and Russia?

The enthusiasts of *EU enlargement* envisage the Union expanding from 15 to 28 countries, embracing the entire Central Europe and the Baltic States. First admissions will probably happen already in the medium-term future. For the ruling classes in the aspirant countries the dream of "joining Europe" is their principal economic, social and foreign policy guide. For the bulk of the population, this is seen as almost a passport to instant stability, orderliness and above all prosperity. In view of the wide gap existing across the former Iron Curtain, however, this optimism has to be moderated before it produces a backlash. Central Europe and the Baltics need to take a closer look at East Germany and draw lessons from the hardships of transition. Clearly, no other former Communist country could expect the level of financial and other support the German federal government is giving the new *Länder*.

It is likely that at the time it formally expands, the European Union will become more diversified internally. Internal reform of the Union is in fact a *sine qua non* condition for its enlargement. The future enlarged EU will probably resemble a Russian *matryoshka doll* with the Euroland at its core, other wealthy Western members keeping a distance from the core, and a host of relatively poor Eastern countries positioned on the periphery. There will be different degrees of integration, depending, on one hand, on the nations' willingness to pool their sovereignty, and, on the other hand, their economic development status. As far as the former Communist countries are concerned, accession to the EU will decidedly facilitate their economic development – at a certain social cost (just think of Polish farmers), but the gulf separating them from the richer Western societies will remain very significant for a long time. The variable-geometry EU will be marked by very serious inequalities.

Not all aspirants will be able to join in the medium term. For some (e.g., Romania), the shock may be quite severe, throwing some people into despair and reawakening some old phobias and nightmares, threatening significant regression. Lastly, for some countries (like Moldova) an EU membership is well beyond the horizon for the currently active generations. The problems of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia will be discussed separately.

Thus, the European Union will come to some countries well before it comes to others, but even in the first case the result will be a more internally

diverse Union. Ironically, the area which used to be the *West of the East* will become not so much the West as the *East of the West*. Of course, they will still be looked upon with envy by the less advanced candidates.

NATO enlargement is also intimately connected with the new vision of the alliance. One is still unclear whether it will evolve into a security community specializing on maintaining peace, stability and justice in and around Europe, however defined, or will go global, intervening wherever the interests of the West are affected, or yet restore to some degree its former mission of “keeping the Russians out”, albeit this time from a line drawn much farther to the east. The logic of the enlargement inclines in this last direction, and could help shape the alliance’s priorities in the future.

A NATO membership for the Baltic States will be a big step to the restoration of a security divide between the Western alliance – represented on the ground by Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – and the Russian-Belarusian bloc, which will be consolidated in the process. This will turn Kaliningrad into a military/naval outpost *par excellence*, precariously positioned behind the new dividing line. Ironically, the challenge to Kaliningrad in the case of EU enlargement is even more serious, if less hostile.

Although institutionally NATO enlargement is less complicated than the enlargement of the European Union, it also creates serious problems. Integration of Polish, Czech and Hungarian forces into the NATO structures requires substantial investments and, more importantly, radical changes in the very culture of their defense establishments. The problems in Romania and Bulgaria could be at least as serious, resulting in a cumulative effect on the alliance as a whole.

The difficulties of transition breed both long-term *domestic instabilities* and acute conflicts. Estonia and Latvia, while successful economically and in terms of foreign policy affiliation, run the risk of becoming cleft societies, with just under a third of their resident population *de facto* alienated from the state. This situation is unlikely to change soon and should be regarded as a major potential source of internal instability for the countries concerned.

Further to the south, *the future of Belarus* is uncertain. For the time being, it will continue as an independent state, and its union with Russia is more of an alliance than a merger. However, authoritarian regimes are not necessarily stable, and Alexander Lukashenko has found it difficult to reach out even to his moderate opponents. As to the radical opposition, it matches the authorities in its unwillingness to compromise on anything. While the bulk of the Belarusian population remains politically passive, a further deteriora-

tion of the economic situation can breed widespread discontent. There is a danger: should the regime in Minsk become shaky, this will invite outside meddling. Since the radical nationalists in Belarus are inherently anti-Russian, their empowerment would be regarded as a capital threat by the Russian government, which will see no choice but massive interference – right at NATO’s doorstep.

In the early 1990s, the Kremlin’s restraint helped avert a potentially disastrous crisis over *Crimea*. Currently, the issue of Russian autonomy on the peninsula is practically dead. However, this is not the end to problems in Crimea. There is a possibility of a triangular conflict involving the Ukrainian authorities, the Russian majority, and the Crimean Tatar minority, whose number is growing, but whose social, material and civil conditions remain miserable. A conflict over property rights, lost largely to the Russians when the Tatars were banished to Central Asia in 1944, and power sharing, is simmering. If it blows over, it will almost certainly involve Russia, Turkey and the West – on opposite sides.

The *conflict in the neighboring Moldova*, though frozen in 1992, is by no means resolved. Despite international mediation efforts, Chisinau and Tiraspol are far apart on the issue of a common state in Moldova. Meanwhile, the Transdniestrian quasi-state is reputed to be a regional “black hole”, a safe haven for criminals, illicit arms traders, and smugglers. There are powerful vested interests who would be prepared to go to great lengths, including provoking fresh confrontation, in order to protect their sources of income. Incidentally, Romania’s future membership in NATO

Moldova is very far away from joining integrated Europe’s structures. It is, however, a comparatively easy case when compared to Ukraine and Russia (Belarus was discussed above).

Ukraine is evidently the most difficult case among the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. True, it has managed to survive through its first decade since gaining independence without a major crisis, within or on its borders, which is close to a miracle. It has also become more cohesive internally, confounding the alarmists who predicted that the country would simply fall apart. Yet, the pace of its economic transformation is even slower than Russia’s. The formation of democratic institutions is equally slow. Corruption is endemic. In a way, Ukraine is among the most *Soviet* of the successor states.

The best that can be hoped for is that it continues to muddle through, avoiding the proverbial “collapse” (which must have come long time ago, and with which the Ukrainians have been coping all this time).

Ukraine's independence from Russia is likely to be preserved – this is an article of faith among all Ukrainian elites, for whom independence means, first and foremost, independence from Russia. And anyway, Russia would be simply unable to bail Ukraine out, even if asked to. This points to an independent, semi-democratic, economically messy, non-aligned future for Ukraine. Despite its Western orientation, there is virtually no chance of Ukrainian membership in either the EU or NATO in the foreseeable future.

Lastly, *Russia*. At the beginning of the 1990s it ceased to be a self-contained and largely self-sustained entity. As it struggles to find its new place and role in the world, it cannot avoid addressing the issue of identity. Russia's "Europeanness" has always been somewhat special (and non-existent, in the eyes of some), but, all things considered, she cannot find another larger identity, should she look for it, than Europe. The simple fact is that there is no longer a "Eurasia", an empire into which to withdraw. At the very end of the 20th century, Russia has entered the world, and the world has entered Russia. Both are final.

Of course, Russia would not be able to join either the EU or NATO for two or three generations, even if it wanted to (which is not clear). Its problem is different from most of its neighbours to the West. For Russia, to become more European is a domestic political, economic, legal and societal proposition, not a foreign policy goal. This is fully consonant with its avowed national agenda, which is not seriously disputed by any serious political forces. As far as foreign policy exigencies are concerned, Russia will see its interest in becoming *compatible* with the European Union. To do otherwise would carry a serious disadvantage. Thus, even for Russia the long-term outlook points basically in the same direction.

Europe's eastern march will be more difficult than imagined by the dreamers of a common European home ten years ago, or by the enlargement enthusiasts today. It is more risky, with the enlargement of the Western institutions not only contributing, but sometimes also detracting from stability and security in Central and Eastern Europe. Needless to say, this enlargement can be a source of inspiration, but also of despair, and occasionally can be perceived as a challenge or even a threat. This means that the countries in the region, in the West and Russia would do well to focus on some of the problems listed above. Even where solutions will be elusive, management is required, allowing all participants to move along, rather than get stuck in familiar rivalry and confrontation.



Resumé:**Dmitri Trenin:** *Európsky pochod na východ*

Najdôležitejšou vývojovou tendenciou v Európe v období po skončení studenej vojny je pozvoľný, ale jednoznačný pohyb euroatlantických inštitúcií smerom na východ. Krajiny ležiace medzi Nemeckom a Ruskom, známe z obdobia medzi dvoma svetovými vojnami ako *Zwischeneuropa*, štyridsať uplynulých rokov sféra sovietskeho vplyvu, sa definitívne priklonili k Západu. Úspešnejšie krajiny tohto regiónu sa pripoja k novodobému Západu skôr, kým ostatné budú musieť čakať veľmi dlhú dobu, poprípade ostať v dohľadnej dobe mimo expandovaných hraníc EÚ či NATO.

Tento uhol pohľadu prináša nasledovné otázky:

- Aký efekt bude mať rozširovanie na Úniu samotnú a interný vývoj v regióne?
- Aký dopad bude mať rozširovanie Aliancie a jej nová úloha v prostredí európskej bezpečnosti?
- Aký bude dôsledok regionálneho vývoja (politická a ekonomická nestabilita, konflikty a pod.) v zmysle „jednej Európy“?
- Kam posunie tento vývoj Ukrajinu, Bielorusko a Rusko?

Ašpirujúce krajiny predpokladajú, že členstvo v EÚ a NATO bude pre ne znamenať v prvom rade stabilitu a prosperitu. Skôr, ako by dôsledky približovania namiesto očakávaného prospechu mali negatívny dopad na budúcnosť spomínaných krajín, bolo by dobré, aby analyzovali proces transformácie, ktorou prešlo bývalé Východné Nemecko. Prirodzene, žiadna východoeurópska krajina nemôže rátať s takou mierou podpory, akú poskytnú novým spolkovým krajinám nemecká spolková vláda.

Conditio sine qua non rozšírenia EÚ je v prvom rade vnútorná reforma, ktorá z ruskej perspektívy bude pripomínať matriošku s bohatšími krajinami „Eurolandu“ v srdci útvaru a chudobnejšími krajinami bývalého východného bloku na jeho periférii. Pravdepodobný je i vznik rôznych stupňov integrácie, v závislosti od ochoty jednotlivých krajín postúpiť časť svojej suverenity, ako aj od ich ekonomickej spôsobilosti.

Rozširovanie Severoatlantickej aliancie je tiež spojené s novou víziou Aliancie. Stále ešte nie je definitívne ujasnené, či sa bude zaoberať udržiavaním mieru, stability a spravodlivosti v európskom bezpečnostnom priestore, alebo globálne obhajovať záujmy Západu kdekoľvek vo svete. Členstvo v NATO je inštitucionálne menej komplikované, ale takisto vyžaduje podstatné investície a tiež radikálne zmeny v samotnej podstate obranných mechanizmov jednotlivých krajín.

Problémy pri transformácii spomínaných krajín majú charakter dlhodobej domácej nestability, ako aj akútnych konfliktov. Estónsko a Lotyšsko, ekono-

micky úspešné, so správne orientovanou zahraničnou politikou, podstupujú riziko rozpoltenej spoločnosti, pretože temer tretina obyvateľstva s trvalým bydliskom na ich teritóriu je de facto, v zmysle štátnej príslušnosti, cudzincami. Táto situácia sa pravdepodobne v dohľadnom čase nezmení a ostane zdrojom potenciálnej vnútornej nestability v spomínaných krajinách. Budúcnosť Bieloruska je takisto neistá. Predbežne bude ďalej existovať ako nezávislý štát, jeho Únia s Ruskom je viac alianciou ako fúziou. Nekompromisné autoritárske režimy tiež nie sú nevyhnutne stabilné a Alexander Lukašenko mal problémy komunikovať aj s umiernenou opozíciou, nieto s radikálmi, ktorí ostro kritizovali jeho neschopnosť prísť na akýkoľvek kompromis. Väčšina bieloruskej populácie ostáva politicky pasívna, ale očakávané ekonomické zhoršenie istotne prinesie nepokoje v širších vrstvách obyvateľstva. Posilnenie protimoskovskej bieloruskej opozície by bolo zo strany ruskej vlády považované za kardinálne ohrozenie. Iným potenciálnym konfliktom je trojuholníkový konflikt medzi ukrajinskými autoritami, ruskou majoritou a krymskou tatárskou menšinou, ktorá sa neustále zväčšuje. Spor o majetkové práva je založený na historickej situácii, ktorá pretrváva od roku 1944, keď boli Tatári vyhnaní do Strednej Ázie. V prípade, že by konflikt prepukol do väčších rozmerov, postihne Rusko, ale aj Turecko a Západ. Problematický vývoj je tiež charakteristický pre Moldavsko, Ukrajinu a Rusko. Moldavsko ako „transdnesterský“ kvázištát je čiernou dierou, ktorá poskytuje útočisko kriminálnikom, obchodníkom so zbraňami a pašerákom.

Ukrajina je napriek čiastočným riešeniam najzložitejší prípad. Prvých desať rokov od svojho osamostatnenia síce prežila bez väčšieho konfliktu v rámci svojich hraníc alebo v ich tesnej blízkosti, ale ekonomická transformácia krajiny prebieha ešte pomalšie ako v Rusku. Podobne pomaly napreduje budovanie demokratických inštitúcií. Najpozitívnejšou alternatívou budúceho vývoja je balansovanie na pokraji kolapsu a v prvom rade nezávislosť od Ruskej federácie.

Rusko nebude schopné zapojiť sa do európskych a transatlantických štruktúr ešte niekoľko generácií, aj keby chcelo. Problémy Ruska sa líšia od problémov ostatných krajín. Cieľ stať sa politicky, ekonomicky, právne a sociálne „európskejšou“ krajinou je v prvom rade cieľom vnútropolitickým, a nie metou zahraničnej politiky štátu. Cieľom zahraničnej politiky Ruska je stať sa krajinou kompatibilnou s krajinami EÚ. Východoeurópsky pochod EÚ bude rozhodne náročnejší, ako bolo teoreticky naplánované, a, paradoxne, krajiny Západu budú zrejme miestami v krajinách Východu spôsobovať svojimi aktivitami nestabilitu a deštrukciu, ba dokonca aj hrozbu. To znamená, že krajiny inkriminovaného regiónu budú musieť vyvinúť spôsob riešenia konfliktov, ktorý bude pre všetky krajiny progresívny, a nebudú stavať jednotlivé štáty oproti ostatným do pozície rivalov.*

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