

CONTEMPORARY GEOPOLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN EUROPE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROCESS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

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Abstract: Since the collapse of bipolar system European integration remains a leading factor of geopolitical changes in Europe. They occur mainly in Central Europe. These transformations have a huge impact on the relations between states, considering the compliance or contradiction to their interests. There is also observed a big influence of these transformations on international security, what requires our serious attention.

Key words: Geopolitical transformations, Europe, European integration, Central Europe

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THE PROBLEMS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S TRANSFORMATION

An analysis of Europe's perspectives in the context of anticipated transformations in the international alignment of forces should cover both the strictly understood defence initiatives and capabilities of the European Union (EU) and the political and economic stabilization it can provide on the continent, including the promotion of relevant social attitudes and awareness, which indirectly strengthen security. If the former aspect relates mainly to the deepened institutional reform, the latter depends on the expansion of the EU's territorial range. In this sense, the enlargements should be deemed an investment in European stability, as they contributed to a revitalization of the EU, even if it was mainly the new members that gained the greatest benefits while the old ones became sometimes tired of the enlargement processes.¹

After the accession of Bulgaria and Romania (1 January 2007)² the prevailing approach has been a reserved and a moderate pace for future enlargements. There is also agreement that the convergence criteria should be more strict and future enlargements accompanied by a deepened reform inside the

¹ J. Bradley, G. Petrakos, I. Traistaru, *Integration, Growth and Cohesion in an Enlarged European Union*. Springer, New York 2005; *The Future of Europe: Integration and Enlargement*. F. Cameron (Ed.), Routledge, London 2004.

² For more on this issue see: J. Stańczyk, *Bulgaria and Romania – towards integration with the European Union*. [In:] *New Europe. Report on transformation*. Fifth Edition. Coordinator of the Report Prof. Dariusz K. Rosati. XVI Economic Forum, Krynica-Zdrój, Poland, 6-10 September, 2006. Eastern Institute. Foundation Institute for Eastern Studies. Warsaw 2006, pp. 53-58.

EU. This approach moreover promotes forms of cooperation with selected countries, in particular non-European states, other than the actual membership.³

The queue for membership currently includes Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Turkey. The negotiations with the former Yugoslavia states can be opened on the condition that they will fully cooperate with the United Nations war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. This clearly testifies to the political character of this enlargement, which will be the price the EU must pay for the stabilization of the Balkans and guarantees of its own security.⁴

The matter of Ukraine's membership remains unsettled for the time being, because of objections raised mainly by France. The situation was not helped by the European Parliament's vast majority vote of January 2005 in favour of Ukraine's accession to the European Union. This may be a sign of weakness of the EU's eastern policy, as opposed to the strategies for the Mediterranean region (the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership launched in 1995 in Barcelona).⁵

Another issue is the inevitable significance of Russia as a partner of the European Union. The EU-Russia summits are held regularly with the aim to reach agreements on cooperation programmes, in particular for the areas neighbouring the EU and Russia. New EU Member States are much concerned about any deference to Russia demonstrated by the old members, which is doubtlessly due to their dependence on Russian gas supplies.⁶ In 2006 Russia reduced its gas supplies to the Western Europe twice, which pointed to the insufficiencies in European energy security and the need for a diversification of raw resource and energy supply sources.⁷

These are not the only security shortages of the European Union. It should be remembered that the EU is neither a classical political and military alliance nor a state, although the political integration processes are often described as a straightforward simulation of state structures and institutions (including the common foreign, security, and defence policies). According to Jan Zielonka, "the EU is becoming something like a neo-Medieval empire with a polycentric system of government, divided sovereignty, vague borders, multiple overlapping jurisdictions and outstanding cultural and economic diversity".⁸ Additionally, the European Union seems to have stopped at a crossroads due to both the enlargement eastwards and the rejection of the draft Constitutional Treaty. Without having a defined government centre but led by a multi-level management system (with overlapping competencies of various national and

³ *European Union Foreign and Security Policy. Towards a Neighbourhood Strategy*. R. Dannreuther (Ed.), Routledge, London 2004.

⁴ For more on this issue see: J. Stańczyk, *The Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro) – disputes about the past and the future*. [In:] *New Europe. Report on transformation*. Fifth Edition. Coordinator of the Report Prof. Dariusz K. Rosati. XVI Economic Forum, Krynica-Zdrój, Poland, 6-10 September, 2006. Eastern Institute. Foundation Institute for Eastern Studies. Warsaw 2006, pp. 58-64.

⁵ *The EU's Mediterranean and Middle East Policy. Creating an Area of Dialogue, Cooperation and Change*, http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/med_middleeast/intro/index.html [online].

⁶ Cf. *Eurostat and International Energy Outlook 2007*. Washington, April 2007.

⁷ *Green Paper – Towards a European Strategy for the Security of Energy Supply. Technical Document*. European Commission. The Hague, January 2004; *Study on Energy Supply Security and Geopolitics. Final Report*. Institute for International Relations, The Hague, January 2004.

⁸ J. Zielonka, *Europe as Empire. The Nature of the Enlarged European Union*. Oxford University Press 2006, s.v.

supranational institutions), vexed by divergent positions of the Member States and constant modifications of its external borders, the EU is exposed to a lack of unity and identity.⁹ It may be true that the power of Europe lies in its diversified unity yet this insufficient homogeneity sometimes poses significant problems. It must also be acknowledged that the enlargements, despite their unquestionable political and symbolic value, have transformed the EU in a way that necessitates a more precise definition of its identity.¹⁰

In this context, the efforts to agree on a common foreign and security policy, defence policy, or the establishment of joint military units as a surrogate for a European army are not actually equivalent to the capacity to guarantee security. Of course it would be unreasonable to deny such facts as the Common Foreign and Security Policy (1992), European Security and Defence Policy, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (1999), EU Military Committee and EU Military Staff, or the initial police and military operations of the EU in the Balkans and in Congo (2004).¹¹ However, Europe still lacks an effective decision-making centre for foreign and security policy matters, while the enlargements make things ever more complex. New Member States have always different priorities in this area, particularly towards the key partners of the European Union, i.e. the USA and Russia.¹² As a consequence, European foreign policy is maintained by other international institutions, such as NATO, the OSCE or the UN, together with more or less formal ad hoc coalitions.¹³

As anticipated, the enlargements of the European Union to come will be conditioned mainly by geopolitical reasons and undertaken with a strategic view to ensuring stabilization and security, initially under the convergence processes enforced on the candidate states. In this context, the list of potential EU members includes not only Turkey or Ukraine but also Georgia or Moldova, and in the long-term perspective also Russia or Israel and Lebanon.¹⁴ However, cultural and religious differences, reinforced by divergent positions towards the democracy or free-market values, are bound to hinder any agreements on a common European identity, which alone could give the EU an effective instrument to ensure security and in general carry on with successful interstate policies. In this way, the proposals of a hard core of the European Union to be established by the most influential members lose much of their astonishing character. Although such proposals will continue to raise controversy and thus criticism among Member States, it seems inevitable that the growing diversity of the European Union will require new methods of management in the future.¹⁵

⁹ *EU Law and the Welfare State: In Search of Solidarity*. G. De Burca (Ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005.

¹⁰ For more on this issue see: J. Stańczyk, *The perspectives of European security – the problem of unity and identity*. [In:] *Poland and Ukraine in the European Security Processes*. Editors Wojciech Gizicki, Andrzej Podraza. The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. Lublin 2008, pp. 130-150.

¹¹ For more on this issue see: A. Missiroli, *CFSP and ESDP after Enlargement*. EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris 2004.

¹² H. Grabbe, *The Constellations of Europe: How Enlargement Will Transform the EU*. Centre for European Reform, London 2004.

¹³ Cf. *Towards Complementarity of European Security Institutions. Achieving Complementarity between NATO, EU, OSCE and the Council of Europe*. Report of the Warsaw Reflection Group, January 31 – February 1, 2005, Warsaw 2005.

¹⁴ J. Zielonka, *Europe as Empire. The Nature of the Enlarged European Union*. Oxford University Press 2006.

¹⁵ *Governing Europe*. J. Hayward, A. Menon (Eds.), Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003; *Europe's Foreign and Security Policy. The Institutionalization of Cooperation*. M.E. Smith (Ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000.

It should be noted that even today the European Union, with its thriving bureaucracy, displays growing difficulty in decision-making processes and financial system irregularities, which prevent it from establishing a different quality in the management of security matters, more capable than that of NATO. Nothing more than an imitation of NATO, weakened by the absence of the USA, lurks behind the proposals to establish a common European defence structure without US participation. An increase in anti-American attitudes within the European Union is now a fact, which springs not only from cultural differences but also from divergent interests. The USA is a global actor in the global arena. The Americans do not limit their way of thinking to the borders of their state. The Europeans do think and act in this respect in a regional perspective.¹⁶

The EU's neighbourhood policy and protection of the external borders clearly manifest Europe's regional range. European activities focus mainly on internal affairs, as testified to by the enhancements gradually introduced to the Schengen Agreement, cooperation for the protection of the EU's external borders (with the new Member States opposing the establishment of the joint border guard unit) and the establishment of the FRONTEX Agency in Warsaw. This cooperation has been stepped up in connection with the measures to combat terrorism.¹⁷

An assessment of the EU's abilities to ensure security is bound to encompass its regional and integrative character. Therefore, the main sphere of its activities consists of further geographical extension and deepened cooperation, to date almost exclusively in non-military areas. Of course, this involves security matters as well, even if only indirectly. The integration processes, including aid programmes for sub-regional cooperation with the closest neighbouring state,¹⁸ constitute the EU's tool to counter conflicts and prevent new threats.¹⁹ These measures concentrate on the following sub-regions: the Balkans, the Mediterranean, the Baltic and Black Sea regions and Eastern Europe (which, according to the European Commission, covers Russia, Eastern European states, together with Central Asia and the Caucasus). The European Union puts its efforts into influencing these areas by offering certain incentives under its aid programmes for states to liberalize economic exchange and trade, undertake democratization processes and reforms, and respect human rights and freedoms, among other goals²⁰ and by fostering an enhanced intercultural dialogue.²¹ A top priority in security matters is given to conflict management via early warning and preventive diplomacy measures.²²

¹⁶ *The Role of Regions and Sub-national Actors in Europe*. S. Weatherill, U. Bernitz (Eds.), Hart, Oxford 2005.

¹⁷ *The Hague Programme: Ten Priorities for the Next Five Years. The Partnership for European Renewal in the Field of Freedom, Security and Justice*.

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/news/information_dossiers/the_hague_priorities/doc_2005_184_en.pdf [online].

¹⁸ For more on this issue see: J. Stańczyk, *Regional Cooperation in Trans-border Aspect*. [In:] *Chosen Problems of Political Geography in Central Europe*. Ed. by Jan Wendt and Alexandru Ilies.

Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego 2001, pp. 79-83.

¹⁹ *Communication from the Commission on Conflict Prevention*. European Commission, Brussels 11 April 2001, COM (2001) 211 final, p. 7.

²⁰ TACIS Regional Cooperation: Strategic Considerations 2002-2006 and Indicative Programme 2002-2003.

²¹ European Commission (European Aid Cooperation Office DG), *Action Programme for the Dialogue between Cultures and Civilisations*. "Euromed Report", 29 April 2002, No. 45.

²² *EU Crises Response Capability. Institutions and Progress for Conflict Prevention and Management*. "International Crises Group Issues Report", No. 2, Brussels, 16 June 2001, p. 26; European Commission check-list for roots causes of conflict, http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cpcm/cp/list.htm [online].

THE PROBLEMS OF CENTRAL EUROPE COUNTRIES IN TRANSITION

Among the perspectives of geopolitical transformations in Europe, the issue of Central European security requires separate consideration due to its specific character (a diversified unity, infiltration of Eastern and Western European features, its position in the policies of the global powers)²³ and the significance role of the process of change of the international alignment of forces in Europe in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Some have argued that as a result of the transformational processes and enlargements of NATO and the EU the role of this region or at least its geopolitical significance has diminished,²⁴ yet we still have some institutions of the new regionalism in Central Europe, such as the Visegrad Group or the Central European Initiative. Of course, the success of their activities is debatable, including their cooperation in relation to both the Euro-Atlantic issues (positions towards the EU and the USA) and eastern matters (towards Russia and Ukraine). Therefore, the criterion of interests takes priority over the criterion of geographical location.²⁵ The interests vary especially in terms of the position towards the role of the United States in the global arena, with Poland standing out among the states of this region. However, it cannot be said to be the only consistently pro-American state in Europe as, besides the United Kingdom, we could also name Ireland and Italy. Apart from historical and cultural ties, these sentiments are substantially grounded precisely in shared political, economic, and security interests.²⁶

The "old" and "new" members of the Euro-Atlantic structures have divided over issues of security.²⁷ It is in Central Europe that the dissonance between the political and economic choice of the European Union and orientation of defence strategies towards NATO and the USA is particularly sharp. This is the decisive factor in the lack of support for the European Security and Defence Policy, withdrawn by this region in favour of a sustained position for NATO. Obviously, this is also a problem of identity, which affects European unity. Central European countries declare their decided support for the American military presence in Europe, supported the US intervention in Iraq, entered into negotiations with the USA over the deployment of US military installations in their territories, support the anti-missile shield project, and acknowledge the significance of energy security in the context of a possible breakdown in relations with Russia. At the same time, they are unwilling to refuse the benefits of their membership in the European Union and reject an "either-or" alternative between positive relations with the European Union and the United States. They deem unfortunate the declaration of the division into the "old" and "new" Europe.²⁸

²³ For more on this issue see: J. Stańczyk, *Central Europe – Defining Criteria and Characteristics of the Region*. "The Polish Foreign Affairs Digest", Vol. 2, No. 2 (3). Warszawa 2002, pp. 171-188.

²⁴ R. Kuźniar, *Niepewny świat 2005 roku*. [In:] *Rocznik Polskiej Polityki Zagranicznej, 2006*. Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, Warszawa 2006, p. 36.

²⁵ For more on this issue see: J. Stańczyk, *The Changes in Security's Area of Central and Eastern Europe*. [In:] "Revista Romana de Geografie Politica" ["Romanian Review on Political Geography"]. Volum coordonat de dr. Jan Wendt. Universitatea din Oradea. Anul VI, no. 1-2, 2004, pp. 73-82.

²⁶ *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, *International and Transnational Factors*. J. Zielonka, A. Pravda (Eds.), Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001.

²⁷ *Old Europe, New Europe and the Transatlantic Security Agenda*. K. Longhurst, M. Zaborowski (Eds.), Routledge, London 2005.

²⁸ F.S. Larrabee, *Danger and Opportunity in Eastern Europe*. "Foreign Affairs" No. 4, November-December 2006, pp. 10-11.

Since the goals of membership in NATO and the EU were reached, Central European countries are free to enter into new agreements in the coming years, both on regional and Euro-Atlantic policy matters, in line with their respective interests. Among such novel relations, particular attention is paid to the political rapprochement between Poland and Ukraine.²⁹ Its symbolic expression is the joint military unit in the Kosovo peace-keeping operation or the shared hosting of the European Football Championship Euro 2012. In the long-term perspective, Poland's support to Ukraine's efforts to join the Euro-Atlantic structures is as important. Ukraine's participation in these structures may contribute substantially to increased stability and security in Europe, due to the geopolitical position of this state and its resources.³⁰

An obvious hindrance in Central European cooperation in the economic, political, and security dimensions is the recent revival of Russia as an active international actor whose interests differ from those of Central European countries.³¹ Russia aims to maintain Ukraine under its influence and prevent the pro-Western orientation of Georgia and Moldova. The measures employed feature, in particular, economic pressure, especially energy blackmail. In this situation, the anxiety over the intensified contacts between Russia and Germany is well justified, even if these take place in the economic and political sphere. Poland's protest against the North European Gas Pipeline under the Baltic Sea, which would directly connect Russia and Germany, springs from a fear of a potential blockage of gas supplies to Central European countries that would leave Western Europe intact.³²

Central European countries entrust their security to NATO. Therefore, the rise in anti-American attitudes in Europe and the questioning of the leading position of the USA in NATO become a substantial concern, all the more so given that the main culprits are the leading members of the European Union, i.e. France and Germany. Added to Russia's regaining its influence in Europe, as supported precisely by France and Germany, this may result in weakening the position of NATO as the guarantor of security in Central Europe. This is so because the above developments are accompanied by a standstill in the construction of the EU's common foreign and security policy.³³

From the point of view of security in Central Europe, key importance is attributed to the strengthening of the multilateral structures of cooperation, in particular the European Union and NATO, together with supporting the system reform processes (democratization and economic liberalization) in Eastern European countries. Moreover, it is essential that the trans-Atlantic ties with the United States be maintained and further developed.

These processes, which were wrote in this article, have strong dynamic and therefore there is a difficulty to anticipating their development and

²⁹ K. Wolczuk, R. Wolczuk, *Poland and Ukraine: A Strategic Partnership in a Changing Europe?* Royal Institute of International Affairs, London 2002.

³⁰ S.W. Garnett, *Keystone in the Arch: Ukraine in the Emerging Security Environment of Central and Eastern Europe*. Washington 1997; M. Pietraś, *Ukraina i NATO w pozimnowojennym środowisku bezpieczeństwa*. "Sprawy Międzynarodowe", 2006, No. 4, pp. 43-61.

³¹ D. Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals*. Yale University Press, New Haven 2001.

³² For more on this issue see: J. Stańczyk, *The Determinants and Directions of the Polish Security Policy*. [In:] *Transformation in Central European Security Environment*. International Visegrad Fund. National Defence University. Warsaw 2002 r., pp. 111-132.

³³ A.Z. Kamiński, *Lad światowy: anatomia zagrożeń (perspektywa Europy Środkowej)*. "Sprawy Międzynarodowe" 2007, No. 1, pp. 29-30.

implications. Taking place currently geopolitical transformations are very complicated. They depend on the activities of various international institutions. However, a condition to their understanding still remains knowledge of the national interests.

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