

# Security for a Wider Europe

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As we meet here in Vilnius in between the NATO Summit in Prague and the European Council in Copenhagen, it is only appropriate that we reflect on the significance of what has happened as well as on the issues that lies ahead.

It's less than ten years ago that I had reason CD talk about "the Baltic litmus test" for the new Europe that started to emerge. We had seen the collapse both of the outer Soviet empire and of the Soviet Union itself- but it was still very uncertain where we were really heading.

My thesis was that the situation of the three Baltic nations of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia constituted a litmus test for relations between Russia and the rest of Europe, and that these relations were of key importance for the creation of new European order of peace and prosperity.

Historically, this had been the role of this region. Historically part of the fracture zone between different spheres of influence, religions beliefs and natural interests in Europe, any tremors of any significant change in Europe has been noticed here before they have been noticed elsewhere, and much too often the region has had to suffer the consequences of its position between Russia and other major European powers.

The modern drama of this region takes its beginning with the collusion between Hitler and Stalin in August of 1939.

The Western powers had been refusing to give Stalin a free hand in the Baltic region, and accordingly talks between them and Moscow on a common front against Nazi Germany had collapsed. But Hitler had no such qualms. The division of Eastern Europe and the Baltic region was easily agreed, paving the way for the beginning of the Second World War, the ending of the independence of the three-Baltic countries and the horrible tragedies that were to follow as deportations, genocide and war swept over these countries.

At the end of the Second World War, Soviet power along the Baltic coast reached the outskirts of the city of Luebeck, sealed and secured by a massive military presence in the hearth of Germany. Beyond the Iron Curtain that descended - from Stettin to Trieste, according to the words of Winston Churchill - the sterile structures of the socialists systems laid waste to nations, societies and cultures during no less than half a century.

At the end of the day, the Soviet system, after having destroyed so much, destroyed itself as well. It had repressed the creative freedom necessary in order to rejuvenate any society or economy. Stagnation lead to decay, and decay paved die way for the destruction that carne.

It was then that the people of Lithuania saw its possibility of regaining its freedom. Sajudis wrote itself into the history of not only this nation, bur of Europe itself, during the dramatic years in the later part of the 1980's The name of Vytautas Landsbergis belongs to the historic names of that historic period of transition.

It was here that the communist ideologies had to confront the fact that the socialist system not in anyway had solved the nationalities issue, as it had claimed, but on the contrary had aggravated. And it was here that the attempt to use outright force to turn events back, and meet the demands for change, failed during the dramatic days of January 1991.

As wholeheartedly as we then welcomed the restoration of the independence of Lithuania and other countries, as concerned had we the duty to be concerning the future stability of Europe. In the Balkans, we had just seen the brute force and open brutality of nationalism running amok, and history had taught us that a Europe without an organizing principle accepted by all its main powers was likely to fall back into instability, disorder and, at the end of the day, even war.

The task some of us started to discuss during those years was the creation of a federation of nation states, encompassing virtually all of Europe to the West of Russia and the Ukraine, for its security anchored in the alliance across the Atlantic, and for its future also dependent on an increasingly close cooperation with Russia.

This, then, was our vision a decade ago. And now, in between Prague and Copenhagen meetings, we are perhaps half the way towards the realization of that vision, and thus to a true new order of peace and prosperity in Europe.

Then, not many were prepared to speak about the three Baltic countries as members of either the evolving European Union or a NATO that was struggling to find its new *raison d'etre*. And there were certainly reasons for Washington to view the priority to its relations to Moscow, as well as for key European countries to view the prospects of the fragile, reborn states along the shores of the Baltic with a certain amount of scepticism.

It was then that I talked about "the Baltic litmus test". In all simplicity it said that we would not succeed with what we were trying to do in Europe as a whole - Russia included - if we did not succeed in securing the position of the three Baltic states.

If they were left in a grey zone of uncertainty, there was an obvious risk that history would repeat itself, that new speculations and manoeuvres at some point would be invited and that there would have been left a room for future forces of revanchism. This could, at some point, lead to situations that were bound to destabilize large parts of Europe and to endanger not the least the possibilities for a good relationship with the emerging new democratic Russia.

The later point is worth stressing, since it was not always fully understood. For reasons very well anchored in the history of Lithuania and the other Baltic countries, many here saw and see security as first and foremost a security against Russia. But from the wider European as well as Atlantic view, it is also a question of security with Russia - without there being any contradiction between the two.

Had there been a grey area of uncertainty left between Russia and the European and Atlantic structures of integration, this would have risked creating a less open and tolerant climate in these countries, at the same time as it would have risked creating an incentive for manoeuvres by possible reactionaries and revanchists in Russia, and the combination of these two developments risking the creation of a zone of instability and uncertainty that would have seriously impaired also the relationship between the West and Russia.

Today, these debates are behind us. That they were won, against those that cautioned that taking the Baltic nations into either NATO or the European Union would be too risky, is dependent primarily on the efforts of internal reform undertaken in your own countries.

By proving your democratic maturity, as well your commitment to coherent reform policies, and - particularly in the case of Latvia and Estonia - conforming with high European standards as set by the OSCE for the protection of minorities, you proved your credentials in a way that lead the doubters and the detractors to gradually fade away.

Today, Lithuania has been invited to become a member of NATO, and is on the verge of completing its negotiations for accession to the European Union.

After ratification in a large number of countries, not the least Lithuania itself, by May 1st of 2004, you will fully join the then 25 members of the European Union and the then 26 members of the North Atlantic Alliance. In June 2004, you will be electing your members of the European Parliament.

Then, we are perhaps half of the way towards our vision of a Europe free and whole, democratic and dynamic. Now, we have every reason to discuss the tasks that lie ahead of us in Europe itself.

Security issues now are fundamentally different from security issues in the past.

In the past, we sought to prevent war through military deterrence, while in the future we seek to secure peace through economic and political integration within and between our different states.

We are no longer threatened primarily by the armies of occupation, but by the forces of strife and conflict that might arise out of the multitude of nations, traditions and historical interpretations throughout Europe.

Thus, to promote the processes of integration, and to build the structures that bridge the possible conflicts, within and across the borders of Europe, remains an ongoing obligation for all of us.

We have to recognize that the threat we have to deal with is our past and ourselves. Europe has not been a continent of harmony - but a continent of conflict. To contain and to overcome all the sources of conflict coming out of our past is a task for generations.

Although NATO will be vital element of these our efforts, our main instrument for this historical task is and will remain the European Union.

During next year, we will all be involved in the discussions concerning the first true constitutional treaty - de facto constitution - of the vast federation of nation states of Europe, trying to reconcile the sometimes conflicting demands of efficiency and legitimacy of our new democratic structures of integration.

And during the years to come, the zone covered by the common currency of the Euro will gradually expand-Sweden will hold its referendum on joining the Euro on September 14 next year - as

will the zone covered by the Schengen agreement on complete freedom of movement. The intention is also to achieve a very significant integration of the financial markets of Europe. Together, these measures will bring the economies and societies of all of our countries significantly closer together, thus promoting both peace and prosperity.

Although there are remaining issues of concern in this more northerly or central part of Europe - Vilnius is sometimes claimed to be the geographical center of Europe - most of the difficult security challenges that we will have to face are in the more southern and south-eastern direction.

From Bihac in Bosnia in the northwest to Basra on the Persian Gulf in the southeast, we face a number of challenges issues related to the post-Ottoman order of this part of Europe. From the issue of Kosovo to the issue of Kurdistan, issues of integration or disintegration will once more test our political wisdom and our determination and bring questions of war or peace to the forefront of our deliberations.

In between the issues of Kosovo and Kurdistan lies now the issue of Cyprus. Bitterly divided by the conflict of 1974, it now faces the crucial question whether it can be brought together again as part of the wider process of European integration. The Secretary-General of the United Nations have asked the Greeks Cypriots as well as the Turk Cypriots to give their comments to his detailed peace plan as of the evening of today, thus making it possible to evaluate whether it will be possible to move forward with overcoming the divisions of this island.

If that is the case-or if that is not the case-will have vast ramifications for the situation in the entire area of the Eastern Mediterranean, stretching from the conflicts of the Balkans to the uncertainties of Mesopotamia. And it will influence our possibilities of overcoming present or potential similar conflicts in that wider and highly complex area, including the future of Iraq.

The "green line" that divides Nicosia might seem far away from a Vilnius still celebrating the invitation to join NATO. But I believe it is important that we recognize the nature of the threats to our instability that are still there in Europe, the complexity of the solutions that might be necessary and the pivotal role that our processes of integration - European and Atlantic, often acting in concert with Russia - can and must play in overcoming them.

If we are successful in Cyprus, it will increase our possibilities to move forward with the outstanding issues in the region to the south of Slovenia and to the north of Greece. Here, the absence of war is securing by a large presence of forces under and in cooperation with NATO, but as key issues of the conflicts of the past are still open, we have to understand that all the issues of the region are potentially still open, thus undermining the possibilities of even a true process of integration. The steps now taken between Serbia and Montenegro to forge a new relationship are positive although still uncertain, and on the issue of Kosovo there is as of yet not even the possibility of a dialogue between Belgrade and Pnshtina.

Beyond in geographic terms, but before in chronological terms, comes the important issue of Turkey, now the subject of an intense debate throughout Europe. In the past few weeks, we have had a past President of France saying that Turkey could never be a member of the European Union, while the present President of France has expressed his hope that one day it will. We see similar divisions in most countries.

Already today, Turkey has an economy on a level with countries that are almost certain to be members of the European Union within the next few years. That cannot be the issue. But the country is certainly different from other candidate countries in three significant respects.

It is different in possible being as large as the presently largest member country by the time a membership can take place, in being an independent strategic actor of significance in crucial region and not the least in representing a cultural and religious heritage different from the one in most of our other countries.

I belong to those that believe that it is important primarily for the peace and stability of Europe and our more immediate neighborhood in the south and the southeast that we continue to encourage the modernization of Turkey and the building of a truly secular democratic states, certainly not renouncing its Muslim heritage, but instead becoming a beacon for those that will take up the cause of modernization and democracy in other Muslim states, be they in our more direct vicinity, or be they further afar.

So far, we are not in the "clash of civilization" that Samuel Huntington talked about. But neither do have we the right to overlook the dangers of us sliding into such a situation, not of neglecting to do whatever we can to prevent this from happening. Our task must be to spread the lessons of ethnic and national integration, of open democracy and of the secular rule of the law to more and more countries.

For the European Union, the coming issues of enlargement are thus defined. Every European nation that is a democracy and fulfils the criteria has the right to become member of the European Union. There are no exceptions.

But membership will be increasingly demanding. And that has consequences. I do not belong to those that believe that it is likely that Russia in the foreseeable future will be prepared to accept to share sovereignty over key aspects of domestic as well as foreign affairs in the way that membership of the EU entails.

Whether the Ukraine will be prepared to do it will be up to the political system of the Ukraine itself in the years to come to answer. In the even longer perspective, the same might apply for Belarus and Moldova, although the present regime of Belarus, and the difficult situation of Moldova, puts them well beyond any considerations of this sort.

For NATO, the issues of enlargement are both easier and more difficult. Its integration is far less demanding than that of the European Union, making a process of enlargement far easier and far faster. But the flip side of this is the risk that enlargement will quickly take the Alliance into more and more challenging regions.

Just to take two examples:

It seems difficult to consider a membership of the Ukraine in NATO without seriously considering a membership of Russia, and it seems difficult to contemplate a membership of Russia without contemplating all aspects of the challenges of safeguarding key borders in Central Asia, Siberia and the Pacific area.

And it seems equally difficult to consider the membership of Georgia and Azerbaijan in NATO without being ready to assume a more direct responsibility for the numerous present and potential conflicts of the area between the Black and the Caspian Seas and between Russia on the one hand and Turkey and Iran on the other.

I'm not saying that it can never be done. But I'm stressing that it raises issues even more challenging than those of the two rounds of enlargement of the Atlantic Alliance we have seen so far.

While the issues are discussed over the years ahead, we should move forward with cooperation and integration in this part of Europe.

The issue of the future of Kaliningrad is obviously of particular importance, with the authorities of the Russian Federation having the key responsibility for improving the future economic prospects of the region, but with us ready to give the help we can give.

I also believe we will have reason to address a series of important and complex energy issues — gas, oil, transport infrastructure, nuclear - far more seriously than we have done so far.

And I do hope that the upcoming 300th anniversary of St. Petersburg will both serve to promote further economic reforms in that important part of Russia and to highlight the new possibilities that the enlargement not the least of the European Union —with a million Russian nationals becoming citizens of the Union —opens up for the promotion of trade and other economic links.

It has been a dramatic and profoundly important decade. I do believe that we all-Russia, I he United States, the countries of the European Union, and not the least the Baltic countries themselves - have passed that "litmus test" that we were somewhat uncertain of during those years.

That is a truly tremendous achievement. But the tasks that lie ahead of us are no less important.

We are only half the way towards that new order of peace and security that we have a sacred duty to future generations to create.