

# The Concept of a Wider Europe: Problems and Prospects

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*Remarks at a Conference „Euiliding Wider Europe“  
Vilnius, 30th November 2002*

There can hardly be any doubt with reference to the notion of "Wider Europe" that this is exactly the concept which urges us to once again turn to the prospects of the West-East relationship. These prospects can only be presented through the; analysis of the present state (status quo) of this relationship. We maintain that it could be defined by the following:

1. In general, in the international politics there have practically disappeared the distinctive value signposts of the dividing line between the West (EU) and the countries of East Europe (Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus is an exception) and the distinct criteria of the effectiveness of current policy. International policy on a broader scale has become unpredictable, or, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, we are living in a "global turmoil".
2. One of the possible tools for analysing the relationship concerned may be the term of "circular interaction". The essence of this interaction is the creation of an increasingly strong field of interdependence where both interaction partners lack clearly defined long-term political goals. It looks like the latter is based on the strategy of deterrence which consists from two interrelated components; intimidation and enticement. For example, all through the process of resolving the issue of Russian transit through the territory of Lithuania, the EU was constantly subjected to threats that a resolution of the issue in a way found unacceptable by Russia would in essence undermine the relations between both sides? At the same time it was lured with promises that a favourable resolution of that problem was offering almost boundless prospects for the further improvement of these relations. No valid arguments were presented, though, as its is known an eclectic and ambiguous decision was taken, which results in a whole range of complicated technical and political problems for the EU, Russia and Lithuania.

On the other hand, there is the decision of Brussels to deny the Belarus dictator the entrance visa. This decision seems to have also been based on the desire to intimidate the official Minsk, without taking any regard of the unpredictability of consequences.

3. It seems that the essence of the strategy of deterrence is the need to conceal the actually existing differences in the value orientation and interests of both sides, and to maintain at any costs the semblance of positive development in these relations. As it is evidenced by only the seemingly constructive resolution of the transit issue, such a strategy fails to eliminate the fundamental ambiguity of the relationship on both sides and gives rise to a number of unexpected consequences which will surface in this case as well when it becomes necessary to present a resolution of this problem which will have to be clear, definite and not likely to threaten the Schengen area.
4. An outcome in such a situation could be seen in three possible principal development models in the relationship between the EU and East Europe:
  - a) continuance of the "circular interaction";
  - b) "neighbourhood", i.e. a model based on the clearly recognised and openly stated differences in the value attitudes and long-term pragmatic interests of both sides. At the same time, attempts are being made to implement several political conditions: effectual ptotection and defence of human rights, creation of favourable conditions for the development of civil society; elimination of the existing potential sources for conflict, e.g. by legally establishing the borders of Russia and CIS.
  - c) "integration" ("thinking about the unthinkable"), i.e. the mode! envisioning the prospects of the EU and East Europe integration, however distant it may be, though a question naturally emerges here whether such a prospect could be

envisioned at all. We believe that it ought to be contemplated at least because today East Europe still finds itself in the turmoil of geopolitical self-determination, therefore to discard in advance an integration prospect would immediately narrow the field of discussion on this issue.

The implementation of the second or the third model is conditioned by a necessary prerequisite: to restore in a modern way, i.e. not within the context of the Iron Curtain, the dividing lines between the EU and the countries of the East European region. The essence of such restoration is inherent in the need to clearly state the existing value orientation and interest differences between both regions. Nevertheless, it is evident already now that the prospects for the implementation of these models depend upon the EU political will and the character of changes underway in East Europe.

5. The current relationship between the EU and East Europe is based on the assumption that the democratisation processes in that region are irreversible. This might be proved by the abundance of transformations in the countries concerned (except Belarus). However, attempts to view these changes as irreversible seem to be too hasty. It becomes especially evident upon analysing the tendencies of civil society development in those countries.
6. There is an increasing number of indications that make it possible to conclude that the post-communist transformation processes in East Europe are not resulting in the formation of open civil societies based on democratic principles. It is more likely that in the course of these processes, the buds of an authentic civil society are suppressed by way of marginalising them. I.e. clientelistic instrumental democracies are emerging and simulative societies controlled by the authorities are being formed, which enable to create and sustain the semblance of democratisation of those countries. The intensity level of this civil society suppression process is not equal in all countries.
7. Thus, in particular:
  - a) Russia. At the present time there are no social-political forces in the country which could be able to exert any real influence on the decisions of the President concerning the country's internal and foreign policy. Such situation is a fertile ground for the expression of voluntarism and prevents from finding an answer to the question — who are you, Mr. Putin?
  - b) Ukraine. Despite the complicated internal political situation, the prospects for the civil society formation in Ukraine look far better. A favourable factor is the controversial geopolitical orientation of the country's society, which also means that the major part of the society maintains pro-Western attitudes. The existence of this tendency and its deliberate furtherance implies that Ukraine might turn towards the integration with the West.
  - c) Moldova. It is probably the most backward country in Europe today, governed by pro-Moscow political forces. On the other hand, an extensive and effective response of the society towards the further Russification of the country shows that Moldova's prospects on the way towards European integration could not be evaluated exclusively upon the results of the elections. It could be reasonably assumed that the integration potential of the country is far greater than it is commonly believed. However, its realisation is precluded by a number of political reasons and, first of all, the unresolved question of the Transnistria (Transdnestr - Padnestrje) region.
  - d) Belarus. The most substantial factors that hinder the development of the relationship between the international security community and Belarus are the following: the existent dictatorial authoritarian regime and still uncertain statehood prospects of this country. A potential Belarus-Russian Union should not be regarded as analogous to the European Union projects, as the former Union will not be based on a freely expressed political will, but rather on voluntaristic agreements between the governing elites. The unpredictable response of the

Belarussians towards the formation of such a union might turn into a serious political problem for the EU.

8. This theoretical and empirical analysis indicates that a further development of the relationship between the EU and East Europe is still not predictable, as so far there is no express political will on the part of the EU, nor any reliable answer concerning the direction of the transformation processes in East Europe. Within this context, the summarised models of the relationship development could take the following shapes:
  - a) the currently existing "circular model" and its further implementation might imply that the relations between the EU and East European region would be developed without a clear political purpose, based exclusively on instantaneous pragmatic benefit. These relations would also be founded mainly on the personal links between the heads of the states and made completely dependent upon random changes in the political situation.
  - b) The implementation of the "neighbourhood" model would necessitate the elaboration of a detailed "road map". The preparation of such a plan of action ought to be based on the awareness that there exist two different political-legal areas in Europe, which upon certain conditions could be approximated. Paradoxically, that would enable to return to the "pragmatic" policy, based on the clearly defined national long-term interests. It would pave the way for a new *status quo* in the EU-East Europe relationship, though that would preclude the possibility of considering the third, perhaps, the most positive scenario.
  - c) The implementation of an integration model is, first of all, a decisive political step on the part of the EU that fundamentally changes the prospects of the EU-East Europe relationship and emphasises the regulatory principle, primarily in the relations between the EU and the Russian Federation. Russia could be offered a strategic partnership based on the provision of integration, while the other three countries could be presented with an integration prospect built on the current logic of the EU enlargement.
9. It ought to be repeatedly emphasised that there are emerging three possible models in the development of the relationship between the EU and East Europe. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the indispensable condition for a successful development of relations between the EU and the countries of East Europe is the strengthening of civil society in those countries. Encouragement of this tendency ought to become one of the political priorities of the EU.

At the same time, it is necessary to stress that new type societies are forming in the East European countries, where the establishment of civil society is highly doubtful and problematic, in other words, to offer integration prospects for those countries would be a risky step, without which, however, it is difficult to imagine the contribution of the international security community in strengthening the civil society in the region concerned and in enhancing its role in the choice of those countries of their geopolitical orientation.