

European and Atlantic Integration: Shared Values, Shared Destiny

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I remember first meeting the President of Lithuania when I was the Director of Soviet Affairs in the Department of State. This was at the time when Soviet troops were on the streets of Vilnius seeking to prevent the Lithuanian people from recovering their freedom. He was introduced as Valdas Adamkus, a civil servant and an active member of the Lithuanian diaspora. So fast promotions do happen to the right people.

Of course, even for someone as capable as President Adamkus, those kind of promotions also depend on the right circumstances. Sitting in my office not even ten years ago, it was impossible to foresee then the kind of changes that would make it possible for me to call him “Mr. President” today.

As foreign policy analysts, we are trained to think in terms of the most likely scenarios. Dramatic changes like the collapse of the Soviet empire rarely happen, so at any given moment, we always consider some other outcome - some variation of muddling through - as more likely. Fortunately, we are sometimes wrong: Great changes do, in fact, happen.

I make this point not to dwell on the past, but to chasten our thinking about the future. Although it may seem that on any given day, dramatic change is unlikely, we can, nonetheless, be confident that, through patient effort and enduring commitment to our values of freedom, democracy, free markets and human rights, great changes will happen.

This is the perspective I would like to bring to bear on the topic of European and Atlantic integration. We can be sure that our ordinary, day-to-day efforts will in fact produce extraordinary and lasting change.

I am pleased that the theme of this conference is integration as the basis for stability and security in Europe, because this is a perfect reflection of America’s own policy for both Europe in general and the Baltic region in particular. As a number of senior U.S. officials have already said many times, United States’ policy toward the Baltic region can be summed up in three words - “champion of integration.”

Integration is a concept used to mean many things. In a very simple sense, we use it to refer to increasing the membership of key institutions - particularly NATO and the European Union.

This is a central part of our policy, because President Clinton’s overarching goal is to create a Europe that is truly undivided, democratic and at peace for the first time in history. Opening the doors of these institutions - and keeping them open - is an essential step in building the new Europe.

This opening of doors is a large part, but by no means the only part, of what the upcoming Washington NATO Summit will be about. There, we will be celebrating the admission of the first three countries to join NATO since the end of the Cold War. Like the Baltic states, these are countries that were cut off from mainstream Europe by Soviet troops and had communist systems imposed upon them against their will. Their joining NATO is a sign to all of us that the process of change, the process of creating the new undivided Europe, is well under way.

I want to underscore that the admission of these three new members to NATO is the beginning, not the end, of the enlargement process. As NATO’s leaders said in

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Madrid, "The Alliance will continue to welcome new members in a position to further the principles of the Washington Treaty and contribute to security in the Euro-Atlantic area."

NATO, and the United States in particular, will stand by this commitment. As President Clinton said at the signing of the U.S.-Baltic Charter in January, "NATO's door is and will remain open to every partner nation, and America is determined to create the conditions under which Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia will one day walk through that door."

Integration, however, means a great deal more than just expanding membership. Just as important is the building of closer ties with countries outside these institutions. While membership in NATO will of course remain a special privilege, our goal is to do as much as we can to minimize the differences between members and non-members of the Alliance. We want to create a cooperative security network in which all the countries of Europe and North America can work together to address the security challenges of today and the challenges of the next century.

Through the Partnership for Peace, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, and numerous other bilateral and regional efforts, we are striving to build the closest possible working cooperation among all the states of the Euro-Atlantic region. This commitment will only be strengthened by the admission of new members to NATO.

Precisely because NATO is a successful alliance, the real challenges to security in Europe will likely occur outside NATO territory. Although NATO will remain the "instrument of choice" for facing the challenges to European security into the next century, it will depend increasingly upon the efforts of non-NATO states as well as of Alliance members to overcome such transnational challenges as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, international terrorism, and regional instability of the kind we have seen in the Balkans. This is why it is in NATO's interests as much as that of the Partner states to build such close security cooperation across the entire Euro-Atlantic community.

By working together, we will not only be dealing with the real challenges to security that exist on the Continent, we will also be paving the way for the further enlargement of the Alliance when that step will contribute to the overall security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area.

A further, vital part of our concept of integration is shaping a creative, active and enduring engagement with Russia and Ukraine. We are committed to doing all we can to see that Russia and Ukraine are brought more fully into the transatlantic community.

The foundations for NATO's increased partnership with these countries, the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the NATO-Ukraine Charter, are an integral part of our vision for a stable, democratic and united Europe.

President Clinton, of course, just concluded his Summit in Moscow, so I will leave it to those who were with him there to discuss the details of his meetings and the progress that was made, and the problems that are there.

Let me simply say that our fundamental goal remains for Russia to be a stable, democratic and market-oriented partner, at peace with its neighbors and committed to integration into regional and global economic and political institutions. The best thing for the United States, the best thing for the Baltic states, and, I believe, the best thing for Russia is for Russia to be an integral part of the new Europe we are building.

In this regard, I should note that we applaud Lithuania's efforts to build a strong and positive relationship with Russia. We commend both countries for resolving the

border demarcation issue and for establishing a productive means of handling the delicate question of Kaliningrad.

Although it may seem difficult, given this region's painful history with Russia, the new reality is that the Baltic states and Russia must now see each other as partners in building stable democracies, increasing regional trade, attracting investment, and cleaning up the environment.

As Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott said at the meeting of the U.S.-Baltic Partnership Commission in July, "If Russia can come to see the Baltic states not as a pathway inward for invading armies or as a buffer against imaginary enemies, but rather as a gateway outward to the new Europe of which it seeks to be an increasingly active part, then everyone will benefit - your countries, mine, Russia, and the Euro-Atlantic community as a whole. We will all be safer and more secure."

Likewise, the Baltic states themselves need to look beyond the past to see Russia in a new light. This involves taking steps to build a more inclusive society at home, including rejection of attitudes and opinions which are harmful to minorities.

In the U.S.-Baltic Charter, the U.S. pledged to work with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania through the OSCE to help approve and implement legislation to provide all residents, including members of the ethnic Russian communities, with the same benefits and opportunities as others. I should say that the OSCE is the only standard the U.S. recognizes in this area. There will be no "moving of the "goalposts" - in either direction.

Beyond the Baltic Charter, and also of great importance, are the efforts we are making to build regional cooperation under the rubric of the Northeast European Initiative (NEI). Key to this effort is the work being done to foster greater cross-border cooperation with local and regional governments and businesses in Northwest Russia.

Together with other countries in the region, including Germany, Poland, Denmark and other Nordic countries, we want to try to nourish political and business contacts with Northwest Russia. The kinds of economic and environmental cooperation we expect to take root can hopefully serve as the catalyst for future economic coordination and competition, in place of past confrontation.

In short, it is our hope that the Baltic states will see themselves as part of the larger market, defined not only by the geographic limits of the Baltic region, but by Northeast Europe in general, and that they will work to build support for this concept of broader regional integration with Northwest Russia.

This brings me to my final point, which is that beyond questions of membership and partnership, integration is really about converging systems and common values.

Because when we talk about "integration," what we really mean is that all of our countries - all the countries of the Euro-Atlantic area - should become part of a larger community, one that is dedicated to the values of freedom, democracy, human rights, free markets, and the rule of law.

To the extent that societies fully reflect these values - whether it be Russia, Lithuania, the United States, or Norway - then we have an inherent interest in working together, in being at peace with one another, in fostering trade and economic growth, and in helping others to share these same benefits.

This is what we mean when we talk about increasing the space in Europe that is democratic, prosperous and secure - the area where wars simply do not happen. This is our vision of Euro-Atlantic integration.