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The Eastern Dimension of European Integration: Paving the Way to Europe

Abstract. Recently, Ukraine, among other post-Soviet countries, celebrated its 20th anniversary of independence. It is a relatively short period concerning the history of our civilization. However, this timeframe is crucial following the global financial crises, “Arab spring,” and other current turbulent events, where it is clear that we live in a changing world. Ukraine, as well as some of its neighbors, is looking for its strategic place on the geopolitical chessboard. Ukraine’s foreign policy course to join the European Union (EU) was to ensure formation of a stable democracy to replace the Soviet-style holdover institutions with institutions that uphold European values, transferring European norms and standards to Ukraine and other countries in the wider Europe. On the contrary, European integration continues as an attractive slogan for official meetings rather than the basis for consolidation of society, ensuring democratic changes, and implementing economic reforms. This is a case not only for Ukraine, but also for the majority of post-Soviet countries.

This article analyzes the European integration processes, in which Ukraine and other countries of the region belong. Benefits and shortcomings for the EU, Russia, and their neighbors depend on the success or failure of these countries to join euro integration efforts under the “Eastern Neighborhood Policy” (ENP). Special attention is given to very sensitive issues, such as the competitive struggle for Ukraine and the region as a whole from quite opposing viewpoints: European and Eurasian. In addition, a specific vision, as well as recommendations for required actions and decisions, are proposed to facilitate the consolidation and European development of the EU eastern neighbors.

Key words: EU, Europe, European integration, European neighborhood policy, Eastern partnership, post-soviet space, Ukraine, Russia, USSR.

The Unavoidable, Unexpected Independence

In the mid 1980s, no one could have imagined that in 1991 the Soviet Union would no longer exist – one of the two superpower trend-setters in the international system of the postwar for over fifty years. In coming to power, Mikhail Gorbachev announced a policy of reconstruction, democratization, and transparency (glasnost). Titles with 'loud' slogans, and extraordinary foreign policy initiatives of the Soviet leader filled the front pages of the most popular leading newspapers and magazines throughout the country.

Only 2-3 years into Gorbachev's term (who became lovingly referred to as "Gorby"), he seemed rather helmsman - that is, progressive, democratic, and able to think strategically. However, it turned out that the course he proclaimed was in reality nothing more than a 'soap bubble,' which only added steam to the 'boiler,' overheated by ridiculous economic, international, and humanitarian policies of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Finally, the 'boiler' began to crack from all sides.

The first explosion was the Nagorno-Karabakh struggle in 1987, where protest rallies, starvation, organized massacre, and manslaughter of civilians occurred. The Communist Party and state apparatus of the USSR, Azerbaijan SSR, and Armenian SSR were completely unprepared for such a development. The leadership failed to offer its citizens (Azerbaijanis and Armenians) a compromise solution, which could have prevented the terrible consequences that resulted from the escalation of the conflict. In fact, a number of Soviet citizens died, and more than 200,000 refugees in the two Soviet republics were forced in 1988 to leave their homes in their native land. This provided clear evidence that the state-power, known as the Soviet Union, was weak.

Conflicts followed. For example, on April 9, 1989, paratroopers, using rubber batons and entrenching tools, dispersed peaceful demonstrators in the central square of Tbilisi, Georgia. The contingent killed many and wounded hundreds of Georgians. These peaceful demonstrations started as actions to protect the integrity of Georgia, but were not specifically against the Soviet Union.

In June of the following year, authorities lost control of the situation in the second largest city of the Kyrgyz SSR – Osh. As a result of these clashes between Uzbek and Kyrgyz citizens, over ten thousand people were killed. The confrontation was also increasing in Transnistria. There were active attempts by the Moldovan elite to gain closer ties with Romania, with the intent of ensuring maximum autonomy from Moscow and, as a result, to gain independence. At the same time, their opponents in Transnistria supported the preservation of the Soviet Union and traditional ties with Ukraine and Russia.

However, the most threatening dynamics at the time were the disintegration processes in the Baltic republics – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. These countries, although formally part of the

USSR, managed to preserve their independent identities. Against the backdrop of inter-ethnic conflicts in the Transcaucasian and Central Asian republics, the Baltic States started legal actions called the “parade of sovereignties,” aimed at restoring their independence. The Parliament of the Estonian SSR adopted the first Declaration of Sovereignty on November 16, 1988. On November 28, 1989, the Declaration of State Sovereignty was adopted in Latvia. On March 11, 1990, the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania adopted the Act of Restoring the Lithuanian State, and in May, signed the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Lithuania.

At the same time, the most radical processes were occurring in Georgia, ending on March 9th, 1990, when the Georgian Parliament confirmed the denunciation of the Union treaty of 1922. This decision, de facto paved the way for Baltic States’ independence. Other republics of the Soviet Union quickly realized the opportunity, and tired of the agony that had long ensued, they soon followed.

On June 12, 1990, the first Congress of Deputies of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) adopted the Declaration on State Sovereignty of the RSFSR. Unlike the decisions taken in the Baltic republics and Georgia, the nature of the Russian declaration was diametrically opposite, because it dealt with the intention to “create a democratic state in a renewed USSR.

Thus, the fate of the Soviet Union was in the hands of the second most powerful (behind Russia) and most deeply integrated of the Soviet republics — Ukraine. On July 16, 1990, Ukraine adopted a Declaration of State Sovereignty. If the proposed Russian document was approved in Ukraine, the Soviet superpower could continue to exist in one form or another. However, in the first convocation by a majority (239 deputies consisting of representatives from the Communist Party), the Verkhovna Rada (the Parliament) of Ukraine supported a document proclaiming Ukraine’s independence.

Additionally, on July 27, 1990, Belarus adopted the Declaration of State Sovereignty. The content of this document reflected intentions similar to those of the Baltic republics, Georgia, and Ukraine. However, it did take into account the opinion of Moscow, containing a proposal “to proceed to the development of the Treaty of Union of Sovereign Socialist States.” Furthermore, each Central Asian republic approved their own declarations, similar in content.

Subsequent attempts to preserve the Soviet state, even in the ‘softest’ of forms, by the first - and ultimately the last - Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev, were unsuccessful.

From the end of 1990 to the beginning of 1991, the KGB (Soviet State Security Committee) prepared an extensive analysis of the political situation. This analysis was sent to the heads of Supreme Councils in each republic, not to the heads of each Republican Communist Party. A well-known Ukrainian historian has noted that the message addressed the fact that “the Galician region was being used for nationalistic expansion to the east of Ukraine;” other messages encouraged

republic leaders to direct the process by “joining the councils” of non-communist parties and political movements (V. Vyatrovych, 2011, p.384).

However, the recommendations by the KGB were ignored. The GKChP (State Committee of Emergency), was formed on August 19th, 1991 by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, V. Pavlov; Minister for Internal Affairs, B. Pugo; Chairman of the KGB, V. Kryuchkov; and Minister of Defense, D. Yazov, among others. This committee played the role of the ‘red handkerchiefs’ for all the Republics’ elites without exception, and especially for Boris Yeltsin, who was rapidly gaining political influence in Moscow. The goal of this brief activity of was to save the Union State, which still existed de jure, as the ‘swan song’ of the great and powerful USSR. Not long after, following the failure of the putsch, the remaining republics that had not yet formally decided to denunciate the Soviet Union or declare independence, finally did so.

On December 8th, 1991, in Belovezhskaya Pushcha, Belarus, the leaders of the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Belarus (Leonid Kravchuk, Boris Yeltsin, and Stanislav Shushkevych) concluded an agreement on the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This organization aimed to provide a civilized ‘divorce’ of the former Soviet republics through a resolution regarding economic, humanitarian, and other such issues, each discussed during the meeting. With a bit of historical irony, the three republics that formed the Soviet Union in 1922 were now the same republics announcing the termination of its existence. The rest of the newly independent states, with the exception of the Baltic States and Georgia, joined the CIS on December 21, 1991, by signing a corresponding declaration for the CIS in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Thus, the disintegration processes that began with inter-ethnic clashes in 1987, consummated in late 1991, finally ended with the complete collapse of the Soviet Union and the formation of fifteen independent states. As a result, without detriment to other objective factors that led to this finale, it should be noted that Ukraine played a key role in these processes from a legal point of view. Ukraine, which was the second most powerful state in the USSR, decided in favor of full independence, preferring not to participate in the transformation of the Soviet state, as desired by Russia and several other republics, whether from a strictly centralized, confederative, or any other quasi-democratic model.

Association and integration *via* partnership and cooperation

Having witnessed the disappearance of the Warsaw Bloc and the Soviet Union from the world political map, the European Community (the predecessor of today's European Union [EU]) faced a difficult choice rather unexpectedly in the early 1990s: which model of relations would it use with its new Eastern neighbors? At the same time, each state of the former socialist camp, and each state formed on the territory of the former Soviet Union, needed to define its own foreign policy priorities and models for internal development.

Most countries in Central and Eastern Europe, including Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania immediately declared intentions to acquire full membership into the EU and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to ensure implementation of internal democratic reforms, including the rule of law, freedom of press and assembly, and transforming their economies to market principles. Correspondingly, in the early 1990s, the European Community concluded an association agreement with each of these countries.

On the other hand, the remaining twelve newly independent states formed from the former Soviet Union, selected different paths concerning foreign policy objectives and principles of domestic policies.

For example, Russia's primary goal was to ensure its recognition by the international community as the successor of the Soviet Union, to include execution on property and other assets, debt settlements, and strengthening its influence on the territory of the newly formed CIS. On the other hand, Ukraine, for example, needed to deal with complex issues, including the establishment of democratic institutions, the division of the Black Sea fleet, the elimination of consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, and determining the fate of its nuclear weapons arsenals.

In addition to the regulation of similar sensitive issues as faced in Ukraine, Belarus was trying to implement its declared intention to become a nuclear-free zone and a neutral state. Due to the escalation of the conflict in Transnistria, a rather specific security situation emerged, while in Georgia, the disintegration processes continued.

New security threats also escalated between Armenia and Azerbaijan concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh province. Complex processes of state formation, including the struggle for territorial integrity, occurred in other republics in Central Asia, such as Tajikistan. All of this continued against a background of deep financial and economic crises in the newly independent states, compounded by their lack of diplomatic services, military, and key government institutions, the collapse of traditional economic ties, difficulties in establishing a legal base of cooperation amongst themselves and with other countries, and an overall vacuum of national legislation.

Could the Russian Federation have expressed its European pursuits in the early 1990s? Theoretically, yes. However, in practice, Moscow was solving quite different issues occurring on its territory: the parades of sovereignties, launched by the Baltic republics in the late 1980s, in which each autonomous republic or region in Russia now considered its duty to declare sovereignty, adopt a constitution, or even its own laws. Therefore, for Russia, it was about the basic survival of the Russian state and its Russian-speaking citizens. It was also threatened by very intense fighting in Chechnya, where tens of thousands died on both sides of the conflict.

In Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, and Georgia, was there a significant basis to declare membership into the EU as a priority of foreign policy, as had occurred in Poland? Was there reason to think Armenia or Azerbaijan could turn in the direction of Europe? Again, theoretically,

these questions can be answered in the affirmative, as all of these countries meet the geographical criteria for EU membership. Furthermore, by some parameters, most of these countries had better economic indicators than Bulgaria or Romania, both of whom joined the EU. This goal was not declared, however, due to rather ordinary, practical reasons: within these countries, there was very little knowledge about Western Europe, no experts in the field of European integration, and no resources to start the integration processes or cultural communications with Europe.

Apart from Russia, which inherited one of the world's best diplomatic schools from the Soviet Union, only Ukraine and Belarus had limited experience with international relations. Diplomatic services were immediately created from nothing in these countries. As an example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the entire USSR consisted of only 50 diplomats (as of 1990). The problems faced by the newly independent states were not simply routine in nature; they were concerned primarily with the process transformation from a totalitarian to a post-totalitarian government, and strengthening their status both in the region, and subsequently in the world.

In addition, at this time, neither the European Community, the United States, nor Canada could offer the institutional philosophy of technical assistance, even though they were especially interested in the democratization of the newly independent states. Funds were spent primarily for routing issues as opposed to the creation of European-style democratic institutions of public administration, able to eventually implement legislation to meet European norms and standards. The American ideologist and statesman Zbigniew Brzezinski noted that in Washington, there was little consideration as to the creation of an extensive program of political and socio-economic transformation, able to reliably unite Russia with Europe (Brzezinski, 2007, pp. 66-67).

Was this improvidence or inattention? There is still no response to this question. An historic opportunity for the quick entry of Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova - and possibly Russia - to the European 'civilization space' was lost.

If this opportunity had been realized for Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, potentially the most developed countries emerging from the breakup of the USSR, then the history of the European continent in general, and the European Union in particular, would be quite different. Despite the difficulties that would have predictably occurred through convergence of the newly independent states with Brussels, the EU's strength in the international system and its economic power would differ significantly from the current status. These countries would add value to the Brussels organization.

After the Soviet collapse, Russia quickly recovered and became central in generating initiatives for developing the Eurasian integration structure. In 1994, after a short period of liberal-democratic development under President Shushkevych, Belarus came under the authoritarian model of Lukashenko's governance. The adoption of a new constitution gave the president

practically unlimited powers, subsequently closing the Belarussian 'European window of opportunity' for a long 17 years.

Ukraine, by approving in 1993 the Law of Ukraine on "The Basic Directions of Ukraine's Foreign Policy," determined for itself that "membership in the European Union is a perspective (*emphasis by the author*) to Ukrainian foreign policy" (H. Melnychuk, 2007, p. 11). Accession to the EU was not a priority for Ukraine. In addition, "the geographically close states, along with some neighboring states" were defined as "a bridge between Ukraine and West Europe" (*ibid.*). As a result of the events of 1989-1992, Moldova lost control over part of its territory, and was stripped of significant parts of its economic potential. In this context, it is difficult to disagree with Melnychuk, who argues: "in the political circles of European countries was formed the opinion, that Moldova is completely under Moscow's influence, unable to create independent decisions, and unable to be a self-sufficient actor in the international scene" (*ibid.*). This statement is somewhat true for other countries, who were also members/founders of the CIS.¹ It seems that in the early 1990s, Moscow benefited from the geopolitical game in such sensitive areas as the inviolability of frontiers *via* the right to self-determination. As a result, almost all conflicts that arose in the former USSR regarding inter-ethnic issues, or other such matters, were moved into the category of 'frozen', becoming sort of 'location point' of Russia. Moreover, in 2008, the examples of South Ossetia and Abkhazia provided evidence of what was occurring with regards to the principle of 'inviolability of frontiers'. If any of the CIS countries proved too independent from Russia's position, specifically by trying to absorb territory which Russia considered its own, or declaring to join organizations such as NATO and/or the EU, then Russia applied pressure.² As a result, understanding the significant conceptual differences in foreign policy and internal development between the CIS and other countries of the former socialist bloc, the EU passed a decision to build relations with its eastern neighbors.

The Europeans for the first time used the formula of consistency and differentiation with its external partners. Although not clearly expressed in the documents, in the author's view, the essence of the formula is as follows:

- those countries that desire, and have the potential, to be a member of the European family of nations should encourage this process through the appropriate mechanisms, including an Association Agreement and additional preparations for membership;
- those who are undecided, do not desire, or cannot participate in the processes of European integration, should be satisfied with the narrow framework of

¹ Ukraine is a co-founder of CIS, but never became a full member, because it did not sign its Statute.

² The research in this article does not include early prerequisites, the course, and consequences of the five-day war that occurred in Georgia, beginning on August 8, 2008.

partnership and cooperation, which does not foresee any political commitments from the Europeans concerning their potential integration prospects.

Unlike the states that had declared their intention to join the EU, the CIS countries were offered Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) to establish a framework for relations with the EU over the next ten years, with the possibility of automatic extension.

What is the key difference between association agreements and PCAs?

The primary difference between these two agreements concerns the political goal. In the association agreements, in one form or another, it was recognized or specifically fixed that the purpose of the agreement was preparation for and/or accession to the EU. As an alternative, the PCA included provisions which only defined a framework for political dialogue, without a specific direction for integration, and identified democratic principles that both parties should respect. The fact that Belarus and Turkmenistan did not sign a PCA is evidence that issues of democratic reform and human rights were fundamental to the EU as early as the 1990s.

Another significant contrast between the Association Agreement and a PCA relates to trade. The PCA established preferential assistance in trade and economic relations, and contained only implications on the possibility for parties to establish a free trade area following “progress on economic reforms” and admission to the WTO (S. Kamyshev, 2010, p. 608).³ On the other hand, the Association Agreement provided for the “gradual establishment of a free trade regime.”⁴

Other elements between these agreements were similar. Nevertheless, these two key differences provided for internal development and the creation of foreign policy priorities in the Central European and Baltic States, policies not pursued by the state participants/founders of the CIS.

The evolution of EU policy towards post-Soviet countries

During the 1990s, the EU rushed from one extreme to another, trying first to develop a universal model for dealing with post-Soviet countries, before finally settling on an approach addressing each country individually.

This is confirmed by the signing of typical framework agreements with the Central European and Baltic countries, as compared to the PCAs with the CIS countries. However, in 1994 it became

³ See, for example, Article 4 and 5 of the PCA with Ukraine.

⁴ See, for example, Article 7 of the Europe Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, as compared to that of the Republic of Poland, [<http://wits.worldbank.org/GPTAD/PDF/archive/EC-Poland.pdf>].

clear that there was no universal model of relations with the remaining 12 countries of the former USSR.

The first warning came with the collapse of democracy in Belarus. After Belarus, the authoritarian regimes in Turkmenistan and other Central Asian countries were established. As a result, the ratification of the PCA with these countries was initially delayed; some not occurring until only recently.

In addition, the CIS countries were influenced not only by Moscow and Brussels, but also by Beijing, Ankara, and Washington. This caused disorientation in choosing a model for internal development and foreign policy.

Realizing that this situation required adaptation and development of new policy approaches, the EU gradually started to produce a variety of policies and strategies for individual regions and CIS countries. In the late 1990s to the early 2000s, three clusters of EU relations with its eastern neighbors appeared:

- 1) the Russian Federation;
- 2) the Eastern Partnership: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine;
- 3) Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

In the early 2000s, during the development of a new concept of EU relations with its Eastern partners, a program promised by the European Commission under the title "Wider Europe, New Neighborhood" (later evolving into the European Neighborhood Policy [ENP]), it became clear that Russia radically changed since the early 1990s. The most recent period of "concentration," headed by the powerful President Putin, was near completion: a great geopolitical energy game had developed, the financial crisis of the late 1990s was in the past, and lying ahead was the promise of multi-level diplomacy, not just diplomatic battles. However, attempts to extend the new EU neighborhood policy to Moscow failed. Russia had no intention to sit at the table with its smaller brothers and sisters in front of European negotiators. Likewise, Russia refused to take any unilateral commitments from Brussels, deeming them unimportant in scope and ambition.

Russia, unlike Ukraine, managed to assimilate only 55% of the resources provided by EU grant funding under TACIS, exceeding the norm, by "using" 107% of its TACIS allocation. This amounted to over 2.7 billion Euros, or about half the budget of the entire program. Taking into account this positive experience, the Russians quietly agreed to participate in programs of border neighborhood and other projects implemented within the framework of the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), ignoring the ENP directly.

Instead, the political relations between Russia and the EU developed bilaterally. Institutionally, the parties began to develop a strategic partnership within the four common spaces, to include:

- 1) a common economic space;
- 2) a common space of freedom, security, and justice;
- 3) a common space of security; and
- 4) a common space in education, science, and culture.

It is worth noting that the initiative for such a format came from Moscow, and not from Brussels. In May 2005, during the regular Russia - EU Summit, the road maps were approved for the four common spaces, which fixed the common goals of Russia - EU relations and the respective Action Plan required for achievement of these goals. On May 25, 2010, during the Russia - EU summit held in Rostov-on-Don and again from May 31 - June 1, representatives announced the launch of the "Partnership for the Modernization of Welfare for its Citizens." Later, in December 2010, the parties agreed on a working plan for this partnership. The list of measures contained in this plan is impressive: joint launching of satellites, an extensive energy dialogue, increased dialogue in areas such as agriculture, industry, health, small and medium enterprises, etc. In contrast to this, although widely advertised, the EU - Ukraine Association Agenda signed in 2009 paled in comparison to the agreements between the EU and Russia.

In general, based on content of the documents that have already been, or are preparing to be, signed between Russia and the EU, the author concludes that the strategic partnership between these two key regional and global players has gradually acquired a new quality. Russia, like a sponge, is trying to take advantage of all available assets in the EU's "best practices" (technology, know-how, etc.), while attracting maximum investments. Thus, Moscow is able to avoid the acquisition of obligations that would have affected the Russian identity in terms of governance, the transposition of European norms and standards in its legislation, the respect for common European values, etc.

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) became, on the one hand, the policy designed to strengthen the ENP. It was also a response to Ukraine's calls to the EU during the first decade of the 21st century regarding the need to develop a separate EU strategy for Ukraine, along with the prospect of Ukrainian membership into the EU.

It should be recalled that in the late 1990s the EU had a similar experience towards Ukraine and Russia. This strategy that was developed individually, not taking into account the desires of Kyiv, operated for five years, concluding with the bilateral Ukraine – EU Action Plan in February 2005. However, Brussels quickly dominated the regional approach by developing priorities related to the development of relations with eastern neighbors. As a result, Ukraine found itself in 'one specific basket,' together with a states that had comparatively weak starting points for integration into the EU, or countries that did not even propose the goal of EU membership.

Since the establishment of the Eastern Partnership, it has become clear that this policy has no significant value added for Ukraine, because its key initiatives were already implemented into EU – Ukraine relations. In particular, this applies to the association agreements and visa-free travel regime for Ukrainian citizens. This explains the lack of euphoria in Kyiv in response to the launching of this policy.

But the reality of the Eastern Partnership for those partner countries who have declared their ambitions to join the European Union (Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) is that this policy is the only possibility, and perhaps the last chance, for each to make progress in implementing its ‘euro tasks.’ For the remaining countries, it is an opportunity to receive technical assistance, support policy dialogue, and have an opportunity for rare visits to civilized European forums.

However, the second summit of the Eastern Partnership, held in Warsaw on 29-30th of September 2011, showed that on the eastern front, the EU actually is at a crossroads. In recent times, Ukraine was the model of democracy, human rights, and rule of law for the rest of the former Soviet Union countries. There were hopes that Belarus would gradually become more European. But on this occasion, Ukraine had come to defend itself from being blamed as descending from the ‘rails’ of democratic development. Furthermore, a chair with the nameplate “Belarus” was conspicuously vacant. It became clear that no strategy existed regarding the tactical steps to improve the Eastern Partnership.

In addition, the host of the event, the Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, at the end of the summit was unable to avoid annoying official Kyiv topics of democracy and justice. In response to questions from the media, he stated, “the Summit of the ‘Eastern Partnership’ does not leave any illusions about European standards - first and foremost concerning protection of human rights. And there is no doubt that we place these values on top when discussing the European perspectives of our partners.”⁵

Despite the specific agenda established by the Summit Declaration, there were obvious setbacks. First, not a single leader of the EU partner countries signed the Declaration on the situation in Belarus. Therefore, it is difficult to predict if the next Eastern Partnership summit will occur. If it does, it is even more difficult to determine the format and agenda.

The EU's relations with the Central Asian CIS countries are more ambiguous in terms of balancing the economic interests of the EU and the need for these countries to adopt democratic norms and standards consistent with the respect for common values of the EU.

The EU is challenged with the fact that in this region, there are Asia-specific democracies that are developing which have nothing in common with the European version. Since 1995, the EU has produced a single strategy for these countries. It was first developed by a Communique from the European Commission dated October 10, 1995 “Towards a European Union Strategy for Relations

⁵ Taken from the Ukrainska Pravda report (<http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2011/09/30/6630057/>).

with the Independent States of Central Asia.”⁶ The EU’s main goal in the region was to maintain stability through:

- 1.) the evolution of representative democratic bodies;
- 2.) the reduction of the basis for conflict; and
- 3.) support for economic reforms.

However, Brussels was explicitly interested in increasing its role in decision-making concerning the energy and mining sectors, as a prerequisite to improve its own economic security.

After the EU enlargement in 2004, the Central Asian region has become much closer to Brussels. However, the TACIS program for technical assistance was no longer an appropriate tool to encourage permanent partnerships between the EU and Central Asia.

In 2007, a new policy document for this region was adopted, namely “The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for the New Partnership.” The purpose of this document was to improve relations with Central Asian countries in all areas of cooperation, including strengthening of political dialogue, cooperation on human rights, education, the rule of law, energy, transport, border management, and more. To achieve these goals, a new financial instrument, the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), replaced the TACIS.

The budget planned for the achievement of the objectives of the strategy within the framework of the DCI is 16.897 billion Euros for 2007-2012. This is a large sum compared to funds appropriated for the implementation of the Eastern Partnership.

During the implementation of strategy, when the EU was faced with the problem of stability of energy supplies from Russia, the EU went to unprecedented steps in establishing relations with Turkmenistan. On September 12, 2011, the EU Council adopted a mandate to negotiate with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan to build the Caspian pipeline that will transport natural gas to Europe. Commenting on this perhaps important event for the EU, EU Energy Commissioner Oettinger stated, “Europe is now speaking with one voice. The trans-Caspian pipeline is a major project in the Southern Corridor to bring new sources of gas to Europe. We have the intention of achieving this as soon as possible.”⁷

Disappointing realistic conclusions

⁶ COM/95/206 FINAL, [<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:51995DC0206:EN:NOT>]

⁷ European Commission Press - Release, EU starts negotiations on Caspian pipeline to bring gas to Europe, Brussels, 12 September 2011, [<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/11/1023&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>].

Twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it is clear that the gap between the EU and former Soviet Union countries is not decreasing, but rather expanding. There are several reasons for this, originating from not only the newly independent states and the Soviet consciousness of their leaders, but also from Brussels and the inefficient solutions adopted following the poor strategic thinking of European leaders.

As a result, a new environment has formed on the European continent. First, the favorable historic moment for building a truly united Europe is lost. In the early 1990s, in the wake of democratic euphoria, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova were at least encouraged to define EU membership as part of strategic goals. The relations between Russia and the EU had to be built on strategic partnerships in all possible directions. This would have determined European style frameworks of development for these countries, and for all of Europe. Why was this not done? It is unlikely that there is a single answer to this question. However, the following response has surfaced. This difficult situation occurred because of the lack of complete certainty that the former USSR would not re-emerge, perhaps in some 'soft' form. Objectively analyzed, there were good reasons for such thinking; the creation of the CIS is one prominent example.

Second, ideological political parties have not played any significant role in the political life of the CIS countries. In the parliaments of most countries, with the exception of Moldova, there is no true ideological party that, as a result of its program, has won the trust of voters, able to provide an increase in the quality of life by implementing European norms and standards, or demonstrating respect for common values of the EU. In the registers, hundreds of party titles can be found as "democratic," "liberal," "European," "national," etc. However, it is in name only. For example, only one program, from the political party "UDAR of Vitaliy Klychko," contains clear goals for Ukraine to join the EU and NATO.⁸ This political party has a chance to reach the Verkhovna Rada (the Parliament) of Ukraine. In fact, the lack of political power, based not on the personal perceptions of leaders, but rather on the lack of a clear set of ideas and visions, has caused CIS-citizens to be deprived of real choices for models of development in their countries.

Third, the EU has defined a program that is too protracted for relations with its Eastern partners. During the search of optimal variants, Moscow grew stronger and started the geopolitical game for strategic advantage. It now has a much stronger influence than Brussels, Berlin, Paris, or London in these countries. The essence of this Russian game is to take full control of the post-Soviet countries, and play 'first violin' in any geopolitical or geo-economical 'game' in the region and in the world. The Russian interest is clear. In this way, it has acted as all former and current hegemony. According to recent research by the Center of National Interest (Washington, D.C., USA), one of the fundamental elements of Russian national interests is defined as "the supporting of Russian influence in the former Soviet Union, and the prevention of any dominance therein by

⁸ The full name of the political party is "UDAR (Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform) Vitalya Klytschka".

other rival states or alliances” (G. Allison, R. D. Blackwill, et. al., 2011). One of the dark sides of such a course of events is the implementation of quasi-democracy models of governance, based on distorted old ideologies as opposed to implementation of European standards and best practices of governance within the former Soviet Union. It is also important to realize that the failure of the EU to prevent such developments does not play in favor of Ukraine, but instead in favor of other countries of the Eastern Partnership/CIS and Europe.

Fourth, for the last 20 years the EU has had limited resources to implement a coherent and ambitious policy in relation to its eastern neighbors. Other distractors included wars in the Balkan region, global financial crisis, institutional problems, the lack of a common vision regarding its own course of development through the key ambitions of European political figures, several extensions granted, etc. And this is not an exhaustive list of factors that have significantly weakened Brussels' approach towards the former USSR.

Now is the proper time to change the philosophy of relations between the West and East. The mission of Brussels is to help create an alternative ideology and options for program development in CIS countries. Citizens of CIS countries will choose the most appropriate one for themselves.

Fifth, it has recently become fashionable among European politicians to say that the 'key' to getting a membership perspective for Ukraine, as an example, lies within Ukraine itself, and not elsewhere in Europe or in the world. It should be understood that this is an excessively simplistic approach, and we should not pay attention to the fact that in Ukraine, as in other countries of Eastern Partnership (and likewise in Russia), there is no stable pro-European majority amongst the population. More importantly, there are no strong pro-European politicians, nor significant pro-European political parties that can form viable governments. These are the primary reasons for the rather limited success of the Eastern dimension of the EU's foreign policy. The fault for this lies not only in Brussels, Washington, and other major capitals of the EU member-states, but also in the post-Soviet history of the countries of the former USSR.

No matter how unattractive or even dangerous the political economy lies on the east from the EU, much work still needs to be done, constantly, consistently, and in jointly. The results of very unsuccessful practices over the past 20 years following the Cold War must be reexamined, and the lessons learned taken to heart. A burdensome and exigent time has come for Brussels, Kyiv, Moscow and other key capitals.

What should be done with all of this?

There is a pressing need to increase the dynamics of building a strategic partnership between the EU and Russia, to conclude the association agreements with the countries of the Eastern Partnership, and to facilitate deeper cooperation with Central Asia. Cooperation and interaction between the West and East should take place at all levels: from the president and prime minister,

to the various factions in parliaments, to individual members of parliament, to NGOs, businesses, etc. While the issues of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law should be considered, they should not be an obstacle to relations in general, as has occurred particularly in Belarus. We must bear in mind that between white and black, there are many other colors of the rainbow. Finally, an extensive pan-European dialogue should be established for building a truly economically developed, politically united, diverse humanitarian, institutionally stable, secure, and democratically united Europe.

Is this a difficult task? Certainly, it is. The time for new leadership and new approaches is here - this European restart requires efforts on the part of all involved.

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