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# REFLECTIONS ON SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF EUROPEAN UNION ENLARGEMENT

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**Summary:** Poland and other Central European countries are re-integrating into the prevailing world system, which implies joining the important institutions of the system: the EU and its actual security guarantor – NATO. For the Poles, EU membership has become a manifestation of Poland's self-determination. The security awareness of Poland and of the other would-be EU members will make the EU more sensitive to security issues. The present enlargement will change the frontier of stability, security, economic development and political democracy. Security implications of involving the Russian Federation in a co-operation are obvious and important. The EU and NATO enlargements will make great power rivalries in Central Europe irrelevant. However, security is not just an external aspect of the EU existence. The origins of the European integration are closely related to the idea of rational involvement of national ambitions within Europe: the more inclusive the European integration, the more secure Europe and the world.

The systemic nature of change in Poland is the essence of the reforms that have been in progress since 1989: the re-establishment of the market economy, the development of political democracy, the implementation of universally shared values, the rebuilding of the general pattern of societal relations. The European Union (EU) enlargement is possible just in so far as the systemic change in the aspiring countries enables them to re-integrate into the predominant world system.<sup>1</sup> Logically, a Central European country that is re-integrating into this system has to join important institutions of the system: the EU and its actual security guarantor – the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The EU and NATO

memberships are thus both the indispensable and the most important institutional aspects of Poland's re-integration into the world system.

Until 1989, Poland was a dependent country.<sup>2</sup> For the Poles, EU membership has become a manifestation of Poland's self-determination in the widest possible sense. For, what would be the significance of self-determination of a nation if this nation were not able to exercise this right to enhance its security? The security awareness of Poland and of the other would-be EU members will also make the EU more sensitive to security issues. This explains the Polish attitude towards NATO. Let us suppose that Poland does not intend to join the military alliance to which the majority of the EU members belong: How could one then explain such an awkward inconsistency? Deciding for neutrality in the very heart of Europe under the Great Powers' "guarantees"? Would it not amount to living under a new protectorate? The idea of a neutral Poland was briefly popular in Poland in 1956, but was rejected as non-feasible, not just because of the then Soviet domination, but also because the Czechoslovak experiment of 1968 confirmed the significance of both the Soviet domination and the Yalta positions of the West.

As the enlargement of the EU will reinforce identification of the new members with NATO, the EU enlargement will have a constructive impact on NATO. Interoperability of minds will inevitably be enriched through the EU enlargement, thereby making NATO more efficient, for it is a *sine qua non* of military interoperability.<sup>3</sup>

The involvement through NATO of the United States (US) in European affairs binds the US and Europe closer together. No European member of NATO is able to replace the US as the prevalent armed force in NATO, let alone as the most powerful state in the world system in terms of economy, technology, etc. The Atlantic link is important to Europeans, but the US needs Europe as well. The NATO enlargement will bring more countries together, broaden their co-operation in general, and reinforce a tendency in both the US and Europe towards enhanced economic co-operation (free trade). Similarly, the EU enlargement will reinforce the American exposure and sensitivity to EU security issues. In the long run it may prove to be one of the most important implications of the NATO enlargement for the EU.

The present enlargement of NATO and of the EU will also change the frontier of stability, security, economic development and political democracy in Europe. Since 1989, citizens of Poland's eastern neighbouring countries have been visiting Poland extensively, going to markets in towns and villages, meeting local people, speaking a variety of languages, and getting involved in business. It is important that its eastern neighbours continue to be attracted by Poland, their prospective EU neighbour. This is a form of integration. Poland does not want to prevent them from coming and trading, but it is also determined to enforce the EU standards and is not prepared to tolerate crime.<sup>4</sup>

The Poles are not joining the EU in order to dissolve their nationhood in the hypothetical political and cultural EU melting pot. The Poles, however, are not afraid to expose themselves to external influences, hoping to learn from others and to modernise, while simultaneously contributing to the common European heritage. Security is, of course, a premise for adopting such an open position. The Poles are a security-conscious people and will certainly make sure that security considerations are not absent from the enlarged EU.

It is significant that the arguments for the EU and NATO enlargements are positive, not negative, i.e. that new members are not joining the structures to build a bastion against the others, but to upgrade co-operation and security among similar developing societies. A successful EU enlargement will also serve as an example of co-operation and will send an unprecedented political message to the rest of the world. Inevitably, such a message has security overtones.

Implications of the EU enlargement for the developments in the Russian Federation are clear. I am very optimistic, and we all want the Russian Federation to succeed, if only because such a success is also in our own interest. Of course, the position of the Russian Federation is more difficult than that of Poland, the Czech Republic, or Hungary. It has to go through the painful process of decomposition of the super-power status and the adjustment to a regional (indeed, a bi-regional) power status. The Russians will, sooner or later, openly reject and condemn their own imperialist past, redefine their national awareness in non-imperial terms, and learn how to be a good neighbour to the once-Russian and/or Soviet-dominated countries (Ukraine

seems to be a litmus test in this respect). The Russian Federation will also have to reduce the centripetal and centrifugal forces in operation within the Federation. The case of Chechnya has shown that it is not easy to reconcile the internationally recognised willingness of the central government to maintain the territorial integrity of the Federation with the necessity to recognise the equally important right of self-determination to each and every nation of the Federation. Finally, the Russian Federation will have to build democratic institutions from scratch.

The Russian Federation is sailing in the same direction as its neighbours – it is integrating into the predominant world system. However, the Russian Federation is not in the same boat with other independent countries. The crews should not bar each other. Each and every country defines its own pace of change, as it chooses its allies. One can remain optimistic, but it will take generations for the Russian Federation to catch up

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with the Euro-Atlantic standards. In the meantime, the enlarged EU should be helping to move the frontier of peace, economic development and political democracy further to the East – by fruitfully co-operating with the Russian Federation. This would include measures such as EU support for

structural reform in the Russian Federation. Security implications of involving the Russian Federation in such a co-operation are obvious and important. Poland is eager to play a constructive role in this co-operation. Indeed, Poland has already embarked on such a road to establishing good neighbourly relations, and the enlargement is precisely the factor that is going to improve relations. The prosperity and democracy in Central Europe will have an impact on the Russian Federation and the remaining neighbours of the new members of the EU. The moving frontier of peace, economic development and political democracy will result in upgrading security in the region.

The EU and NATO enlargements will make great power rivalries in Central Europe irrelevant. Historically, the temptations to dominate the region led to conflicts. The EU enlargement will make ethnic conflicts impossible within

and/or between the new EU member states with substantial national minorities,<sup>5</sup> and will help to enforce the European standards on minority protection.<sup>6</sup>

The new members may be eager to demonstrate their identification with the EU in a particularly strong way. This may reinforce a balanced tendency within the EU towards centralisation (deepening), implying further institutionalisation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), or strengthening the Western European Union (WEU). The European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) as well as the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) may provide a necessary link between NATO and the EU/WEU. Since the ESDI is to be formed within NATO, it will not impinge upon the transatlantic link. The CJTF, using NATO assets and working in full harmony with NATO, may engage the European allies in an even closer co-operation, including non-EU/non-NATO countries, members of the Euro-Atlantic Political Co-operation (EAPC). In such a way, without creating European forces and antagonising overseas allies, the EU could play a more significant role in the defence of the continent, which is no longer trapped by Cold War divisions. The EU enlargement will lead to integration of the capabilities of the European defence industry and the resulting regulation will exert its impact on the security domain. Additionally, taken as a whole, new members of the EU will probably follow the mainstream NATO position as far as it provides for, and allows, the American presence in Europe.

New members may be inclined to regard any centralising tendency with respect to the Third Pillar of the EU as a tool to accelerate the modernisation of justice and home affairs administration in their respective countries. On the other hand, the new members may be unwilling to support, once they become full members of the EU, the necessary EU fund allocations if such allocations were to divert funds from the tasks they may consider more urgent. Nevertheless, new member states will have to be very strict in enforcing EU border regulations, thereby contributing to international security.

New or old, all the members of the EU should remember that the origins of the European integration were closely related to security. Security is not just an external aspect of the existence of the European Union. It is also a premise for a rational involvement of national ambitions in Europe.



## Notes

\* The brief notes presented here are largely this author's own views on Poland's membership of the EU and security implications of the EU enlargement. Further information is available at the Polish Embassy in London (fax: ++44 171 3234018, tel.: ++44 171 5804324), and on the Embassy's Home Page (<http://www.poland-embassy.org.uk>), which is also linked to pertinent institutions in Poland.

<sup>1</sup> The conceptualisation of the change in question reflects the initial stage of the research involved. The most frequently used concepts are change (structural, etc.), evolution, liberalisation, reform (basic, structural, etc.), revolution (bloodless, self-restrained, velvet, etc.), and transformation (systemic, etc.), the latter being the most widespread one. Since 1989, I have been applying the concept of re-integration into the [predominant] world system as the term, which encapsulates various and different types of processes and phenomena involved, and which has the necessary operational potential. See, e.g., Ryszard Stemplowski, "Przemiany ustrojowe w Polsce a jej polityka zagraniczna. Tezy do dyskusji w Komisji Spraw Zagranicznych Obywatelskiego Komitetu Parlamentarnego", 30 pazdziernika 1989 r. (The Systemic Change in Poland and Her Foreign Policy. Paper presented to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the "Solidarity" Parliamentary Caucus in the Chamber of Deputies of the Republic of Poland, 30 October 1989, published as a working paper by the East European Research Group (Warsaw); Ryszard Stemplowski, *Towards Comparative History of Eastern Europe and Latin America (20th Century)*, *Estudios Latinoamericanos*, vol. 14 (1992), I Parte, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Poland lost its independence in 1795 (the pre-maturely democratic and weak Polish State gave way to the Austrian/Prussian/Russian absolutist expansionist pressures), and, numerous uprisings notwithstanding, it regained it only in 1918. After the German and the Soviet aggressions of September 1939, the Polish Government resided in France (1939-1940) and London (1940-1945). Poland was occupied by the Germans and the Soviets; the Polish State was driven underground. As a result of the Teheran and Yalta agreements, which Churchill and Roosevelt concluded with Stalin, Poland - an ally of Britain and the US (bearing in mind that some 400,000 Polish soldiers were fighting in the East and West in co-operation with the British, American and Soviet commands, and the Home Army was active underground in Poland), and a country that lost 6 million of its citizens (including millions of the Polish Jews killed by the Nazis) - was pushed into the Soviet bloc. The semi-colonial status was eased after Stalin's death (1953), and was largely a result of "the Polish October" (1956). However, it was only the "Solidarity" (cr. 1980) that put an end to Poland's dependent position within the Soviet sphere of influence (the Round Table compromise, parliamentary elections and the creation of the first non-communist government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki in 1989).

<sup>3</sup> Again, Poland's re-integration progress will strengthen the essential common denominator upon which to build a security community of interests.

<sup>4</sup> In this respect, the Polish Government has already started to implement, step by step, the EU border control requirements. Although Poland is going to reorganise the prevailing arrangements with Belarus, Lithuania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, and Ukraine, it is a declared and sincere intention of Poland to encourage tourism and trade across the border. Only crime will be severely limited. It is not surprising, therefore, that it is the criminals that are the staunchest protesters against those new requirements. Since the present Polish arrangements with the EU countries are satisfactory both for Poland and the EU countries, there is no reason why third countries should not be satisfied with the EU controls on the would-be EU borders of Poland, provided that



proper agreements are concluded, – specifically, one on re-admission. Poland is offering its non-EU neighbours similar regulations to the ones it has with the EU countries, and very much hopes to improve the present EU border arrangements before they are fully enforced on the present Polish border.

<sup>5</sup> Minorities in Poland account for less than two per cent of the total population of Poland; one third of persons belonging to minorities are related to an EU member country (Germany).

<sup>6</sup> The Baltic countries have very substantial Russian minorities.

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*This selection is based upon an extensive bibliography by J. Wijaszka and E. Halicka, Polish Embassy, London*

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