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# GLOBAL AND REGIONAL SUBJECTIVITY OF THE EU AND THE CASE OF UKRAINE IN RELATIONS WITH THE NATO, THE USA AND RUSSIA

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The EU, with four G8 members out of eight and two constant UN Security Council members out of five, is the largest integrative community in the world with a perspective of federalization. It is doomed to play a super-active role in the process of constructing a multi-polar world by being one of its leaders. In this respect the EU tends to be a global player in order to fulfil such a mission successfully. At the same time, it is not accidental, that the question 'are Europeans ready for global tasks?' is still more than acute for the European community of political experts nowadays. The EU's global subjectivity has been put to test by the EU-USA, the EU-NATO, and the EU-Russia relations. At the same time, with its Neighbourhood Policy and Common Foreign and Security Policy the European Union itself has made a huge impact on the pan-European and Euro-Atlantic relations especially after the last enlargement. In a capacity of undisputed center of power at least in Europe, the EU appears to be an even more dramatic contributor to the international situation in Central and Eastern Europe, including the Danube region, than, let us say, the NATO. For example, it is the EU and not the NATO, that drew the new borders in Eastern Europe in the course of the May 1, 2004 enlargement, closing the borders between the new EU members and the new EU neighbours, including the Ukraine.

Either within the context of EU Neighbourhood policy or outside it the Ukraine can be a test for the EU on its way to the global activity. As a result of the recent EU enlargement with its territorial restrictions due to the uncertain roots of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration, the Ukraine has appeared in the middle of a 'gray zone' arising on the East of the European Union. Such 'gray zones' are products of the dissolution of the previous centers of power where 'vacuum of power' appeared and made them objects of the unfinished competition of the old and new global powers for the geopolitical domination over such zones.

For the EU, the NATO and Russia the issue of the 'gray' neighborhood in Europe is not just a simple term. The international space between the enlarged EU

and NATO, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other, attracts serious interest, concern and involvement on the part of the USA as well, even when geographically the US seems to be far away from Central and Eastern Europe. Of course, there is not only the issue of common borders, but a larger scope of problems which are currently under consideration in Kiev, Brussels, Moscow and Washington, especially when the geographical factor plays almost no role for the White House, but political motivation and global national interests are all the more important. Each of the actors has its own vision of the future developments in countries like Belarus, Moldova, the Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In this respect, the EU is able to intervene as an equal global and regional player into the practical discourse and geopolitical tensions over Western NIS and especially the Ukraine. Such tensions, when the EU prefers to remain in the shadow, develop primarily between the NATO and the USA on the one hand, and Russia, on the other. At the same time, some more active geopolitical efforts on the part of the EU could give opportunity for more dialogue, rather than just a passive support in the form of the great powers' unilateral monologues about such 'gray zone'. On the one hand, the EU, despite all its recent criticism towards the US, is interested in continuing strategic partnership with America and relies on it within the NATO (especially when there is no serious alternative for NATO in Europe and the transformation of the Euro-Atlantic collective security architecture into just a European one is far from the reality). On the other hand, the EU is also interested to have the goodwill of and stable political and economic relations with Russia, especially in the face of the acute energy situation at the EU market. (Energy Charter). When the geopolitical future of Ukraine is concerned the EU—caught up between the USA, the NATO and Russia—shows almost no geopolitical ambitions that might contradict the policy of the NATO.

Of course, we find big differences in the concrete mechanisms related to geopolitical ambitions of any single country and international unit, like the EU or the NATO. Contrarily to the USA and Russia, the EU and the NATO do have a potential ability and capacity to integrate new territories and states in them and by doing this, to fill the 'vacuum of power.' The Ukraine can be—at least in theory—part of the EU and the NATO as an independent and sovereign state, but can not be part of the USA or Russia. At this point we should emphasise another important issue: the Western allies have more chances for successfully in integrating the

Ukraine, because here we have the EU and NATO on the same side, while Russia is only trying to propose its mechanism of re-integration into a kind of ‘mini’-CIS: a Single Economic Space. Meanwhile, it is more or less evident, that NATO, as one of the integrative mechanisms of the West, shows considerably more geopolitical ambitions and appetite, than the EU.

The EU and NATO appeared to be in the vanguard of the international processes, which are shaping the future of Europe. At the same time, tactical approaches to the EU’s and NATO’s Eastern borders and towards the Ukraine have a slightly different meaning in both Brussels’ headquarters. The NATO and the EU are generally accepted in the Ukraine, and not only as a homogenous West, that is true from the conceptual point of view (even if the NATO has mainly military and the EU economic priorities). At the same time, there is a key difference between the NATO and the EU relations with the Ukraine: the NATO, focusing on military and geopolitical issues is more pro-Ukrainian because of the global US position on the one hand, and the Russian factor on the other. There is no USA in the EU, so the EU is more selfish and less pro-Ukrainian because of its own high-standard economic interests and Russian dependence on energy and common military neighborhood. What is more, the issue of the Ukraine in relations between the USA and the EU itself have become part of a contradictory never-ending story on European Eurocentrism and European Atlantism (though, it also resembles the case of Turkey in the relations between NATO, the USA and the EEC/EU).

Anyway, with this difference in mind and from a tactical point of view, we can say that it is easier for the Ukraine to get a full NATO membership than to join the EU. At the same time NATO membership may be seen as a key step for the Ukraine on the way to the EU and may facilitate the process. European integration is sometimes seen as a continuation and integral part of Euro-Atlantic integration. It is both true and not true at the same time. It is ‘Yes’ for some Central and Eastern European countries, which became NATO members first and then members of the EU and ‘No’ for Turkey, which became a NATO member a number of decades ago and has desperately been waiting for EU membership for almost the same period of time. Of course, there were different international situations—‘Cold War’ and ‘Post-Cold War’ periods—when the decisions on the NATO and EU enlargements were taken. But still, the two organizations are so close to each other and basically co-operate as a single instrument, so for the outsiders there is almost no conceptual

difference between tactical membership in the EU and membership in the NATO on the way to the strategic aim—to be part of the democratic and stable Europe.

Of course, there is an institutional difference for those European countries that are members of NATO, but not members of the EU, and *visa versa*, but no actual difference for those who are outside both organizations. Even for the neutral Austria or Sweden, for example, there is no urgent need to be part of NATO: NATO will remain ignorant of any military threat to these countries. They already are inside NATO's zone of responsibility. For the Ukraine this could also be the solution: to remain neutral, but to continue its way to the EU by building Europe within its frontiers. But today, when it is much more realistic to aspire to join the NATO within the next 4 or 5 years than to join the EU even within the next 15-20 years, it is important for the Ukraine to take this crucial step into the democratic European space by means of NATO membership which also requires not only military, but also political obligations to develop democracy and market economy.

This is why the question of the Ukraine's NATO membership can be negotiated and realized much than the Ukraine's EU membership. This is also the reason why the issue of Ukraine's NATO membership is so painful for Russia from several points of view, but the most painful fact is, that the Ukraine may join the NATO and get out of the Russian zone of influence. Russia is more flexible and relaxed when talking about Ukraine and the EU, because there is no reason to panic. The EU does not open itself up for Ukraine institutionally either now, or in the foreseeable future. It would also be interesting to see Russian foreign policy towards the Ukraine the moment, when the issue of its membership in the EU is seriously brought up.

Of course, the EU is more complicated as a single unit than the NATO. Here is another important aspect of the comparison between the integrative abilities of the EU and the NATO: What is it actually that makes the NATO objectively more flexible in its strategy of enlargement? Talking about the NATO enlargement, we stress basically the 'widening' of the Alliance. At the same time, the issue of the EU enlargement touches upon the painful issue of not only 'widening', but also 'deepening' the integration. As far as we know, the EU faces more acute problems in this respect than the NATO. This is why the question of potential new members, or even the preparatory stage of negotiations and work poses so many problems to the EU members. The EU's internal problems and its complicated decision-making mechanism manifested themselves in the failed story of the EU Constitution.

Current problems inside the EU, which go well beyond the discourse on the Constitution, show that the future membership of the Ukraine in the EU is a big question not only for political reasons or a geopolitical choice of ‘widening’, but because of the specific parameters of ‘deepening’: i.e. economic, financial, market, labour, social and foreign policy complications. The perspective of the next round of EU enlargement with some Balkan states and Turkey is also far from being solved. At the same time it is also clear, that covering more European space by future rounds of enlargement implemented at any price is obviously not a top priority for the EU.

The opposite approach has been applied by NATO since the middle of the 20th century, when the idea to cover as much geopolitical space as possible at any price prevailed over the necessary criteria of membership. The case of an unstable South Caucasus and Georgia is more than instructive, because NATO is not in favour of new members, which have unsolved national or international military and territorial disputes. At the same time, the reason for including Georgia in the NATO—what the US is pushing almost on the edge of hysteria now—seems to be the same as it was in the case of Turkey and Greece back in 1952: the level of democracy and military instability on the territory of the potential candidate is nothing compared to the geopolitical aim. In theory it was the communist threat to Turkey and Greece that made the US protect the democracies neighboring the USSR by including them into the NATO in the early 1950s. The situation changed to Russian threat to Georgian independence in early 2000. In practice, the US achieved the same objective both in the middle of the 20th century and in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: to push Russia out of the Wider Black Sea region by stretching the NATO zone of responsibility as far as the Caspian Sea. In this sense, the NATO does not fear the dangerous challenge presented by the unstable region. It was in these conditions that Russia’s Chief of Staff Yuriy Balyevskiy openly proclaimed in October 2006, that NATO is the cause of the worsening relations between Russia and Georgia, explaining the source of the bilateral crisis, which put both sides on the edge of the war in autumn 2006. The EU showed a different approach to the issue of enlargement during the period of EEC. Turkey is still outside the EU and Greece was admitted as a member only when the political situation was ready for democracy in this Balkan country in the early 1980s.

Of course, once again we must point out, that NATO is basically a military block, while the EU is more economy oriented, and the interests of a military organization, may not necessarily coincide with the interests of an economic union. Anyway, we are coming to the key question: Is it possible to be a global power without clear geopolitical ambitions? The answer is probably 'yes', taking into consideration, that the EU may play a leading role in Europe without the need to immediately integrate such European countries as the Ukraine, into this organization, especially, when European integration as a process is much wider than just EU membership. In this respect, the EU still has a lot of potential and capacity to extend stability and democracy across Europe, including Russia, the Ukraine and other New Independent States. The key issues in this context are civil society building, establishing rule of law and strengthening market economy in a wider European zone. By developing its neighbourhood policy, the EU is interested in sharing with its non-EU neighbours agendas that could also be considered as an expression of the EU's geopolitical interest and even ambition in the Eastern European dimension. The same is true for the interest the EU has in making the visa requirements easier and more flexible for the Ukraine in the near future, and in establishing a free trade zone there, what will become possible when the Ukraine obtains WTO membership. The suggestion that the EU's neighbourhood policy could be treated as a geopolitical ambition of the EU seems to be confirmed by the fact, that it meets some obstacles and opposition from another EU neighbour—the Russian Federation. In the centre of the EU's geopolitical ambition we find concentration of will, wish, decisions, challenges and risks, which meet nearly the same level of opposition from the other side.

The EU–Russia relations with the Western NIS in between of them are characterised by certain geopolitical tensions between the United Europe and Russia, even though they are less dramatic than the relations between Russia and the NATO. The European integration, which is in the core of the process, has no global political aims, but to spread European values in Europe. The strength of European values oriented on democracy is to be introduced also in the Ukraine, now that the Ukraine has constitutionally proclaimed itself a democratic country. The issue of democratic values is painful for the Russian Federation, which is subject of criticism coming from the European Commission and the European parliament. When the issue of democracy is high on the agenda of the EU–Russian dialogue

about the so-called Russian 'near abroad', the hottest and most controversial topic is the evaluation of the Presidential or Parliamentary elections in Western NIS. As far as common democratic values are concerned, the EU is interested in incorporating the post-Soviet space into a democratic European chain, but refuses to act more aggressively and propose institutional membership so as not to worsen relations with Russia. In this situation the EU faces some geopolitical restrictions when trying to deal with the Russian sphere of influence.

At the same time, the EU has recently extended its borders as far as the Black Sea by the institutional membership of Bulgaria and Romania in January 2007. Both countries shook off the political influence of Russia in 1990s, which restricted the chances of co-operation between the EU and Russia. In the field of regional security the EU and Russia have developed similar approaches: both centers of power are interested in keeping the Baltic-Black Sea region in a state of stability, especially now that the EU has a common border with Russia in the Baltic region and strong energy dependence. The future Novorossiisk-Burgas-Aleksandropolis oil route and the Northern Baltic gas pipeline between Russia and Germany will only strengthen this connection.

The most evident regional problem and source of conflict is the situation in Moldova and Transnistria. The EU and Russia have different approaches to the issue of Transnistria. At the same time, both Brussels and Moscow are interested in a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Chisinau and Tiraspol, though Brussels is basically concerned with the protection of its boundaries in South-Eastern Europe, while Russia is playing a long-term geopolitical game in the post-Soviet space. Concerning this issue the foreign policy of Romania towards Moldova may be crucial in defining future EU-Russian relations in the Wider Black Sea and neighboring regions. Anyway, the geopolitical appearance of the EU on the Black Sea shores makes the EU as a new regional player with a mission to stabilise and this should be received positively in the interest of security conditions in the region.

In this respect the EU may play a new stabilizing role in the region in order to escape tensions between the center-powers, i.e. the USA and Russia and keep the local conflicts within the Wider Black Sea region, or at least in 'frozen' conditions. Here Russia may play on the EU-US contradictions, including the NATO dilemmas, dependency of the EU on Russian energy and the more than cautious attitude of the EU towards inviting the Black Sea Newly Independent States in the Russian sphere

of influence into the United Europe. Russia may use the passive Black Sea dimension of the EU policy in regional deterrence by banning American penetration into the Wider Black Sea region.

At the same time, the rapprochement of the EU and Russia has another factor in the background. The interdependence of Russia and the EU based on Russian oil and gas and the EU's financial possibilities to buy Russian energy makes the two sides important partners for a long-term. The Ukraine plays a key role in connecting Russian gas with the European market. The gas transit crisis between Russia and the Ukraine late 2005-early 2006 was looked upon as a serious threat for the energy security in Europe. The EU was shocked by the temporal instability in the gas supply and showed deep concern about its energy security. The idea of possible diversification of energy dependence on Russia does not seem a feasible, especially when it is quite hard to find alternative sources in a situation, when energy consumption is expected to be constantly increasing in the future. In this case the EU is interested in having a stable transit of Russian gas via the territory of Ukraine in the future. Obviously, the EU intends to negotiate pragmatically with Russia directly, taking non-economic interests on the back stage of relations with Russia and other NIS. The lack of geopolitical ambitions on the front of economic pragmatism may lead to a most unpleasant scenario for the Ukraine namely, that the EU promises Russia not to give the Ukraine membership perspectives, not to intervene into Russian-Ukrainian relations and to 'close eyes' to the deficiencies of democracy in the Ukraine. In its turn, Russia can guarantee the stability of the Russian gas transit via the territory of Ukraine. A weakening of the EU's 'democratic pressure' to push democratic reforms in the Ukraine, may create the perfect external conditions for strengthening the non-democratic elements of any Ukrainian regime, which, under this scenario, become untouchable for the EU and Russia inside the Ukraine; Ukraine should side with Russian international interests. In this scheme the EU will strengthen its energy security and will not be bothered by Ukrainian claims for membership any more. Russia will keep the Ukraine in its sphere of influence going as far as sharing and privatizing Ukrainian gas and oil transport systems, non-democratic Ukrainian regimes will do its business under cover on a pragmatic basis both with the EU and Russia. Such a scenario is not very favourable for the democratically oriented Ukrainian society and Ukrainian Euro-optimists, who are not interested in having a Ukraine that is just a passive object of



pragmatic negotiations between the EU and Russia ready to sacrifice freedom and democracy for the material stability of post-Soviet oligarchs and the energy security of the EU at any price. At the same time, such a scenario has a strong potential to become more realistic in near future.

The relationship between Russia and the EU in the field of energy security on a broad scale will also test the EU's ability to act as a global player, because the issue of Russian gas and oil touches upon a lot more than energy itself. The need to create a stable European energy security architecture in Europe including Russia and other NIS will have an increasing influence on the political, economic and military equilibrium of the whole Trans-Atlantic area. The process of 'enlarging' and especially 'deepening' of the EU in the forthcoming years, the dividing line between 'old' and 'new' Europe as well as the future role of the USA and Russia in Europe is highly dependent on the common approach of the EU to the issue of ensuring European energy security. In this sense, more attention should be paid to the risk that the EU has to face for not being able to maintain the common approach to the future of energy security. Energy ambitions of some EU leaders, namely Germany, may create complications in identifying the EU's common foreign and security policy towards the outsiders: Russia, the Ukraine and the USA. This is why the European Commission published a Green Paper on 8th March 2006 on developing a common, coherent European Energy Policy, which aims at developing a common approach for all EU members. The unresolved instability of the European energy market may weaken the EU's regional and global positions, because it is quite problematic to pursue the balance of power with Russia and the USA on the one hand, and defend European positions on regional and global levels, on the other hand. When Russia (as well as USA) is acting as a single player with the adopted strategy and tactics, the EU—which 'is not one, it is many'—is far from having homogeneity in decision making, especially in foreign policy. The famous EU democratic collegiality towards any acute international agenda may not work in a situation, when there are clashes of interests within the EU between particular EU members as a result of specific national interests in the energy sector. At this stage, EU members prefer to depart from the EU level of collegiality with its restrictions on egoistic (in a positive, natural meaning) national interests to the bilateral level to conclude deals, especially with non-EU members. Consequently, the common power of the EU decreases on the international level, and sometimes crises occur

in the internal relations while the positions of a concrete EU country may be strengthened separately both inside and outside EU.

The recently developed energy relations between Russia and Germany are an excellent example for the above-mentioned case. The close 'energy' relations between Germany and Russia on the issue of creating a new, direct gas pipeline in the Baltic region obviously without Ukrainian involvement, worries Poland, three Baltic states and Sweden as well. The further rapprochement of Russia and Germany (which has been quite steady in the last 6-7 years) in the frame of the Shtokman deposit and the strengthened energy tandem of Germany and France established in October 2006, may deepen dissatisfaction within the EU with the line 'Old Europe'-'New Europe', which became evident some time ago in the course of the disputes on the role of the US in Europe and in the world as a whole. As a result, the close relations between Germany, France and Russia, especially in the energy field, will provoke the US and its 'New' European supporters to destabilize the rapprochement of the three.

The 'New Europe' which is in favour for the American political and military presence on the European continent will be interested in supporting all American initiatives to counter-balance the 'Old Europe'-Russian initiatives. The Ukraine will also be interested in developing its relations with the USA in order to strengthen its chances to join NATO, especially when the political situation in the country will be in favor of NATO membership and when the EU, basically led by Germany and France, will prefer to sacrifice the Ukrainian anticipations to become an EU member in favour of stable energy relations with Russia thus guaranteeing that the Ukraine remains in the Russian sphere of influence. Turkey will also be interested in having the USA as deeply involved in the Black Sea region as possible to counter-balance Russia and the EU, especially after the anti-Turkish manifestations of France, directed against a potential EU and current NATO member.

Anyway, the EU has taken the challenge in order to strengthen its positions as a global power some time ago and by means of enlargement and wider integration has asserted itself as a powerful attracting pole for the international community. The lack of a global strategy is a natural factor for the international organization, which consists of 25 strategies. At the same time, it is not a problem, but rather an opportunity for the EU to be one of the leaders of the world, which is full of clashes. It may be against principles of the common foreign and security policy

of the EU, but it is involved into a global and regional competition together with other global powers. The Ukraine may be seen as a kind of a geopolitical puzzle by the EU, because—by being in between Russia, on the one side, the NATO and the US, on the other—strongly contributes to the geopolitical subjectivity of the EU. By concentrating on the Ukraine, the EU may intervene in the global competition between the USA and Russia. Paradoxically, the EU is already involved regardless of whether it is active in the integrative initiatives in the Ukraine or remains passive, refraining from any constructive political step in relations with Kiev. In the first case, the EU supports the Western dimension of Ukrainian foreign policy by opening the perspective of EU membership to the country, helps the US push the NATO agenda for the Ukraine and assists the country's breakaway from the political orbit of Moscow. In the second case, the EU silently ignores the Western aspirations of the Ukraine and strengthens the ties between Kiev and Moscow on a bilateral level. The global agenda is also in hands of Brussels, which is responsible for the scenario the EU chooses.

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