

take a chance on continued integration; yet it is clear that in the globalizing world, a failure in the process of European integration would most probably mean the gradual marginalization of Europe as a leading actor of international relations.

- 5 Although the article focuses on the future of integration processes in Europe, what occurred after the Eastern enlargement of the European Union might also interest readers in other parts of the world, especially in the regions attempting their own regional integration, including North America, Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

The Eastern Enlargement of the EU

- 6 The fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the bipolar order considerably affected the process of European integration. One of the most fundamental challenges was the disappearance of the Eastern Bloc, as the danger of the Soviet aggression served for many years as a uniting factor for the Western community. The next challenge was the unification of Germany, as it was clear for many European countries that the future role and position of the united German state would be stronger and more significant than that of Cold War-era Western Germany. At the same time, the European Union, officially established by the Treaty of Maastricht on 1 November 1993, had to answer broader questions about its international aspirations and role in global affairs, including the future shape of its relations with the U.S. and the newly established Russian Federation.
- 7 Yet one of the crucial challenges to the future of the continent was the response to the transformation of East-Central Europe and the aspirations of countries in the region to join the European Union. In fact, the eastern part of the continent had been almost completely excluded from any initiatives of European integration for almost 50 years, as East-Central Europe remained part of the Eastern Bloc dominated by the USSR. The radically different economic and social systems of Eastern Europe were a source of its comparative poverty, as well as political incompatibility with the countries of the Western part of the continent. This situation had caused difficulties and mutual distrust in relations between the two halves of Europe belonging to different Cold War politico-military blocs (NATO and the Warsaw Pact). The suspicions and misperceptions between the Eastern and the Western part of the continent have remained a serious political factor in European integration following the collapse of the bipolar order and it would have been naïve to expect their quick disappearance.
- 8 It was clear that the European Union could not afford to open its door to countries that were unprepared or unable to prove the efficiency of their democratic systems. On the other hand, the problem for the EU was that clear perspectives for the membership served as incentives for the new democracies in East-Central Europe to continue their difficult and socially disruptive reforms, the successful results of which became crucial for the stability of the whole continent. The answer was the Copenhagen criteria, defined at the meeting of the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993. These rules set general requirements for establishing effective democratic institutions, respect for human and minority rights, and appropriate mechanisms for guaranteeing a market economy.[1] Upon meeting the criteria, the first group of candidates was able to open the accession negotiations in 1998. Ten new members that joined the European Union on 1 May 2004 completed these negotiations in 2002.
- 9 Together with the enlargement in 2004, the EU-15 became the EU-25; after Romanian and Bulgarian accession on 1 January 2007, the union became the EU-27. [2] The enlargement from 15 to 27 member states was the biggest in the history of European integration process increasing the number of the EU inhabitants from about 380 to 485 million. The new members were small and medium-sized countries (with Poland as the biggest and the most populous of the new entrants); however, each of the new members has gained the same rights as existing members of the EU. The Eastern enlargement has been the biggest challenge in the history of European integration, not only because of the number of new member states joining the European Union simultaneously, but primarily because of differences in the level of the gross national product (GNP) between the old and the new members of the EU. A comparison of GNP per capita shows that the richest new members have not exceeded 40% of the average EU-15 level and much greater asymmetry is revealed by the comparison with the wealthiest members of the old union.[3]
- 10 In fact, previous enlargement rounds, such as the one in 1973, to include the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Denmark, and the one in 1995, to include Sweden, Finland, and Austria, were accessions of states comparable in economic development and wealth. Only the membership of Greece in 1981 and Spain and Portugal in 1986 involved enlargements of countries, which were much poorer at the moment of their accession than the average member of the community. This raised a question of solidarity between the rich and the poorer members, and required additional financial participation of the wealthiest member states to support political and economic reforms in the new member countries. Although the old member countries reacted with hesitation, they finally agreed to such assistance, being aware that it would support democratic reforms on the Continent and help to eliminate threats of

- 49 Yet despite the problems with the coordination of the European Union's foreign policy and the political ambitions of some leading countries, it is clear that only the Union as a whole, with its common economic and political potential, is able to play a serious role on the global scene. EU foreign policy will always be the result of internal political games, yet the first experience after the Eastern enlargement has confirmed that a common position trumps the single voices, even those of the strongest countries of the EU. Thus, the principle of solidarity among the members of the European Union remains a core value of the Community. It requires the continuing integration of Europe and the development of a common European foreign policy, which can only advance the regional globality of Europe.

Conclusions

- 50 The impact of the Eastern enlargement on internal and external relations of the European Union has not been as "catastrophic" as it was sometimes feared before enlargement. The increase from 15 to 27 member countries, as well as the considerable economic asymmetry between old and new member countries, have created some management problems for the EU, but they have not paralyzed it.
- 51 The Lisbon Treaty, which the enlarged European Union has finally been able to ratify, is bound to improve the decision-making mechanisms in the EU as well as the coherence of its internal and external policies. However, the Treaty is only a first move in a direction that has not yet been precisely defined. The European Union must now focus on strengthening its current institutions and instruments. The new members have quickly learned the Union's rules and procedures and to put political compromise before majority of votes. Thus, the consensus principle has retained its core value in the EU.
- 52 The social consequences of the enlargement have appeared less serious than feared in the Western part of Europe. The immigration of workers from the new member states has been limited. Yet in the current economic crisis, even the limited inflow of foreign workers remains a sensitive social point for many of the old members. The Eastern enlargement has contributed to debates in the European Union about the financial perspectives of the Community and the reluctance of the biggest net-contributors to cover additional costs of further EU activities.
- 53 Although the Eastern enlargement has not caused the European Union to fail, it will take a long time to optimize cooperation among the 27 member states. With the ratification of the Lisbon treaty, the EU has avoided the dangerous debate over the concept of a "multi-speed" integration, which would allow the most developed members to tighten their cooperation irrespective of the will of others to join in. This concept would break European solidarity, concentrate the cooperation among the leading states of the EU, and marginalize the new members as the weakest countries of the Union.
- 54 Considering the European integration within the framework of globality, the ongoing integration seems to be a clear manifestation of growing regional globalization. The case of Europe exemplifies the elimination of barriers and establishment of new governance practices in line with advanced regional globality. The value of the integration process is the prospect of a new regional identity based on reconciliation among the European nations. The Eastern enlargement has opened the way to a real unification of the continent. After the experience of two World Wars on its territory, it behooves Europe not to lose this chance. Thus, solidarity between the old and new members remains the key to a successful future of the Community. Europe's relatively high regional globality invites comparison with other world regional globalities.
- 55 Finally, the Eastern enlargement has improved the international position of the EU. Only an integrated European Union equipped with effective decision-making mechanisms and a cohesive foreign policy can play a great international role. However, the road towards a strong foreign policy for the EU is still long and difficult, as illustrated by the rifts in the members' opinions about Europe's best position vis-à-vis the United States and Russia.

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Notes

[1] See "Presidency Conclusions," Copenhagen European Council, 21-22 June 1993 (accessed 15 March 2010).

[2] The Eastern enlargement comprised Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia,

Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia as the East-Central European countries that joined the EU in 2004. Two other countries of the broader East-Central Europe – Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007. The enlargement of 2004 also comprised Malta and Cyprus as the countries of Southern Europe.

[3] See Tito Boeri, Herbert Brücker, “Eastern Enlargement and EU-Labour Markets: Perceptions, Challenges and Opportunities,” *World Economics* 2001. Vol. 2, No. 1 (Jan/Mar), table 1, p. 18 (accessed 15 March 2010).

[4] “The Treaty of Nice” signed on 26 February 2001 (accessed 15 March 2010; corrected 14 April 2014).

[5] See Paul Taylor, *The End of European Integration: Anti-europeanism Examined*. 2008. London and New York: Routledge, chapter 1 (*The waxings and wanings of European integration*), p. 8-23.

[6] *Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe* signed 29 October 2004 (accessed 15 March 2010).

[7] *Treaty of Lisbon* signed 13 December 2007 (accessed 15 March 2010).

[8] See for example “Lisbon Treaty Overcomes Final Hurdles In Its Way.” *The Wall Street Journal*, 4 Nov. 2009 (accessed 15 March 2010).

[9] Bela Plechanovova, “Decision-Making in the EU Council after the First Eastern Enlargement: The Relevance of the Empirical Findings for the Voting Rules.” International workshop *Distribution of power and voting procedures in the European Union*, Natolin European Centre, Warsaw, October 12-13, 2007 (accessed 15 March 2010).

[10] See Paul Taylor, *The End of European Integration: Anti-europeanism Examined*, *op. cit.* chapter 3 (*The anti-Europeans*), p. 50-69.

[11] See “Poland” on the German Federal Foreign Office website (accessed 15 March 2010).

[12] See a detailed analysis concerning the evolution of the Polish support for European integration in Elzbieta Skotnicka-Illasiewicz, “5 Years of Poland’s Membership of the European Union in the Social Context,” The Office of the Committee for European Integration, Warsaw 2009, p. 41-48 (accessed 15 March 2010; corrected 14 April 2014).

[13] Piotr Maciej Kaczynski, “The Fifth Enlargement of the EU, Five Years On: The Case of Poland and the Czech Republic.” IFRI Brussels, November 2008 (*Europe Visions* 2), p. 9 (accessed 15 March 2010).

[14] Tito Boeri, Herbert Brücker, “Eastern Enlargement and EU-Labour Markets: Perceptions, Challenges and Opportunities,” *op. cit.*, p.1, 7, 14-15.

[15] Peder J. Pedersen, Mariola Pytlikova, “EU Enlargement: Migration flows from Central and Eastern Europe into the Nordic countries – exploiting a natural experiment.” Working Papers 08-29, University of Aarhus, Department of Economics, p. 4-5 (accessed 15 March 2010).

[16] See Anne Herm “Recent migration trends: citizens of EU-27 Member States become ever more mobile while EU remains attractive to non-EU citizens.” Eurostat, *Statistics in focus* 98/2008 (accessed 15 March 2010).

[17] See for example Bozena Klos, “Migracje zarobkowe Polaków do Unii Europejskiej,” *Biuro Analiz Sejmowych, Infos* nr. 2, 23 października 2006 (accessed 15 March 2010).

[18] See Rainer Münz, “East-West Migration After European Union Enlargement” (accessed 15 March 2010).

[19] Jarko Fidrmuc, Gabriel Moser, Wolfgang Pointner, et.al., “EU Enlargement to the East: Effects on the EU-15 in General and on Austria in Particular,” Oesterreichische Nationalbank, *Focus on Transition* 1/2002 (accessed 15 March 2010; corrected 14 April 2014).

[20] See for example “New EU economic plan to disadvantage of Poland?” *thenews.pl*, 03.03.2010 (accessed 15 March 2010).

[21] The European Constitution changed the rules of Qualified Majority Voting focusing not on the previous number of votes allocated to each country but on the

“double majority” of countries representing the majority of the population in the EU and, in fact, stressing the role of the strongest members of the EU.

[22] Piotr Maciej Kaczynski, “The Fifth Enlargement of the EU, Five Years On: The Case of Poland and the Czech Republic,” op. cit, p. 3-4, 15.

[23] Dirk Leuffen, “[Breaking the Camel’s Back? Eastern Enlargement and EU Governance.](#)” ECPR Paper Number 853, Center for Comparative and International Studies, ETH Zurich, p. 6 (accessed 15 March 2010).

[24] See “[Polish-Swedish Proposal](#)” (accessed 15 March 2010). Compare the comment of Grzegorz Gromadzki, “[Eastern Partnership – Commentary.](#)” *Policy Brief*. Batory Foundation, Warsaw, October 2008 (accessed 15 March 2010; corrected 14 April 2014).

[25] Wolf Schäfer, “[From the End of European History to the Globality of World Regions: A Research Perspective.](#)” *Globality Studies Journal* 2006, No. 1, June 5, 2006, p. 1 (accessed 15 March 2010).

[26] See Paul Taylor, *The End of European Integration: Anti-europeanism examined*, op. cit. chapter 7 (*European values: why bother?*), p. 135-146.

[27] For further details about the CFSP, see “[Foreign and Security Policy.](#)” Europa: Gateway to the European Union (accessed 15 March 2010).

[28] For further details, see “[EU Common Security and Defence Policy.](#)” Council of the European Union (accessed 15 March 2010).

[29] See the initial Polish and Czech reactions to president Obama’s decision to change the concept of the anti-missile shield project, for example “[Mixed Reactions in Europe to the U.S. Missile Defense U-Turn.](#)” *Time.com* (accessed 15 March 2010).

[30] Graham Timmins, “German-Russian Bilateral Relations and the EU Policy on Russia: Reconciling the Two-Level Game?” p. 169-172, in Jackie Gower, Graham Timmins (eds.). 2007. *Russia and Europe in the Twenty-First Century: An Uneasy Partnership*, London and New York: Anthem Press.

[31] See Ingmar Oldberg, “Russia’s Great Power Ambitions and Policy Under Putin,” p. 22-23, in Roger E. Kanet (ed.). 2007. *Russia: Re-Emerging Great Power*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.