

*Bogdan Góralczyk**

The EU Accession and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Central and Eastern European Countries

The 1989/1990 events which took place in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), created a fundamentally new environment in terms of international politics and security. For the first time all of the countries in the region began independently to define their foreign policy and security options, and almost all of them, from the start, declared the necessity of reintegrating themselves with the West, while adopting its values and political practices. In practical terms, it was pressure for admission into the major Western institutions (especially NATO and the European Union) which constituted the driving force behind Central and Eastern Europe's quest for reintegration. Immediately following the change of the system the former Soviet Bloc countries (now known and treated as the "new democracies") came to the conclusion that NATO was the only trustworthy and credible organisation capable of taking decisive and effective measures to ensure the peace and security of Europe. This view was soon to be confirmed by the success of the IFOR and SFOR operations in Bosnia. At the same time, the elites within those same „new democracies” concluded that joining the EU would be the only chance for the former Communist states to modernise themselves and enter the system of Western values.

The link between “European” and “Euro-Atlantic” integration has been obvious and natural to all of the candidates from the CEE. As an example, just to quote Bronisław Geremek, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs: *“Though membership in the European Union and particularly in the Western European Union, which is the European foundation of NATO, is a goal in itself, it is one which must be closely linked to the vigorous pursuit of the fastest and most effective manner of formal integration with NATO. The speed of advancement on*

* Dr **Bogdan Góralczyk**: Warsaw University Centre for Europe; journalist of *“Polityka”* weekly and other titles; in 1991-1998 high ranking diplomat in Polish Embassy in Budapest.

*these twin fronts may (and no doubt will) differ, but NATO and Union membership are interlocking vessels”.*¹

No wonder then, that one can find confirmation of this new strategy in almost every major political statement coming from the politicians of the CEE region in the 1990s, regardless of the nature of governing coalitions, the composition of local cabinets or the personalities of current Prime or Ministers of Foreign Affairs. This would lead one to the conclusion that within the political scope of almost every post-Communist country, membership in Western institutions has emerged as a national priority and strategic goal. Just a few examples to illustrate this thesis:

The first Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs following the change of the system, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, known as the “father” of independent Polish policy, had already in the 1990s emphasised the necessity of maintaining and intensifying Poland’s adherence to European and Euro-Atlantic institutions, placing this objective at the top of the list of national priorities.² Some years later, another Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dariusz Rosati reiterated the importance of the above goal, thus confirming that Polish foreign policy is a policy of continuation and continuity.³

The same situation presents itself in the case of Hungary. In practically any of the official documents concerning foreign policy issues, published by the first cabinet following the change of the system, there can be found a clear statement, according to which the government consider it its key task to effect Hungary’s integration with Europe.⁴ A few years later, Laszlo Kovacs, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the new coalition, wrote: “*We have already achieved a measure of integration with the Euro-Atlantic institutions. The EU and NATO states consider us first-rate candidates for partnership*”.⁵

In time many others came to express the same opinion. Milan Kucan, the Slovene President, stated the following at the meeting of the Slovene diplomatic

¹ *Speech by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Bronisław Geremek, at Meeting with Diplomatic Corps, Warsaw, 12 November 1997, duplicated document.*

² *Statement by Mr Krzysztof Skubiszewski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, Warsaw, 29 April 1993 on “Poland’s Foreign Policy in 1993” in: “Materials and Documents” of PAI Press, vol. 2, no. 5, May 1993, p.131.*

³ *Exposé by Mr. Dariusz Rosati, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, Warsaw, 9 May 1996 in: “Materials and Documents” of PAI Press, vol. 5, no. 5-6, p.1097-1098. This was also directly confirmed by Rosati’s successor, Bronisław Geremek, who said: “Meeting you today, I am conscious of a certain difference between my situation and the majority of my colleagues in the new government. It is the fact that in the foreign policy field and its main objectives and directions, I do not foresee any profound, fundamental changes (...). So, in the sphere of strategic choice, Polish foreign policy will be a policy of continuation”. (Speech by Minister..., op.cit.).*

⁴ *Hungary’s Relations with the European Communities, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Budapest 1994.*

⁵ *L.Kovács, Magyar Külpolitika: törekvések és eredmények (Hungarian Foreign Policy: Aspirations and Results), “Külpolitika” (Foreign Policy), vol.1, no. 1 1995, p.8.*

corps in early 1997: “Membership in the EU and NATO as well as in the OECD is of vital interest to Slovenia. (...) Slovenia has no other practical alternative as regards the EU and NATO. To a large extent then, the task of procuring Slovene membership in these organisations equals that of creating an independent Slovene state”.⁶

And the final example, as citing the words of the former Lithuanian Prime Minister, Povilas Gylys: “European integration has not only become an objective of Lithuanian foreign policy, but also a priority within the scope of our internal affairs. (...) Membership in the EU is the most important item on our agenda, with the approval of all of the major political elements within the Lithuanian Parliament”.⁷

1. CEE · the neglected region which needs modernisation and security

Declarations and statements notwithstanding, it is not easy to attain the goals described above. The situation that the CEE countries find themselves in, is a complicated one. According to one of the most prominent Western researchers of the CEE, the Hungarian-born George Schöpflin, for centuries the countries of the region constituted a belt – like territorial divide between the Western Balance-of-Power system and the Eastern tradition of the centralisation and concentration of power.⁸ As such, CEE can be treated as a region qualified by a political and socio-cultural heritage altogether different from that of Western Europe, whom it wants to join.

The British historian Norman Davies, yet another prominent expert as concerns CEE, also writes: “Eastern Europe is no less European for being poor, or underdeveloped, or ruled by tyrants. In many ways, thanks to its deprivations, it has become more European, more attached to the values which affluent Westerners can take for granted. Nor can Eastern Europe be rejected because it is different. (...) A country like Poland might be very different from Germany or from Britain; but the Polish experience is much closer to that of Ireland or of Spain than many Western European countries are to each other”.⁹ Davies is absolutely right when writing: “For the best part of 2000 years European history has frequently been confused with the heritage of Western civilisation.

⁶ “Slovenia Weekly”, 29.03.1997, p.12.

⁷ Povilas Gylys, *Lithuania's Integration into the Western Political, Economic and Defensive Structures*, “West Ost Journal”, vol. 29, no. 5-6 1996, p.1.

⁸ G.Schöpflin, *Politics in Eastern Europe*, Blackwell, Oxford-Cambridge 1993, p.11.

⁹ N.Davies, *Europe. A History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York 1996, p.28.

Indeed, the impression has been created that everything Western is civilised, and everything civilised is Western".¹⁰

Culturally then, CEE does not seem to be very far distant from the region which it aspires to join. What complicate the case are rather its economic characteristics and bearings as compared to the EC. Due in large part to major economic mismanagement and consequent degradation of the system during the Communist era compounded by the underdevelopment of previous centuries (as George Schöpflin extensively argues), the *per capita* GDP of the region represented in the mid 90s less than 30% of the EU average.¹¹ The GDP levels of Greece and Portugal, the less developed EU members, are approximately 20 to 45% higher than that of the Czech Republic, one of CEE's richest countries.¹²

Under such circumstances, joining the EU constitutes an enormous effort as well as a great challenge for the governments as well as the societies of CEE nations. It is also, evidently, a long-term process of adjustment to Western criteria and Western institutions, paralleled by the necessity to guarantee a stable and increasing level of economic growth, which after all is a prerequisite for joining the more economically advanced Western Europe.

What complicates the case even more is the already well-documented, clearly visible phenomenon that the change of the system in Central and Eastern Europe was brought into life at the price of violent socio-economic transformations during the early 1990s. According to one penetrative study of the so-called Visegrad group (including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) as well as the whole of the CEE region:

- the GDP levels in CEE countries fell by 20-25% in the period between 1989 and 1993;
- industrial output declined by 30-35% in Visegrad states and by 50-52% in Romania and Bulgaria;
- agricultural production declined by 30-43% in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia;
- investment levels plunged by 14-20% in Visegrad states, 40% in Bulgaria and 60-65% in Romania;
- after more than four decades double-digit unemployment appeared;
- consumer prices rose abruptly;

¹⁰ Ibidem, p.19.

¹¹ From announcement of the European Commission on July 16, 1997 presenting a positive opinion regarding Poland as a prospective EU member to the European Parliament. "Rzeczpospolita", 17.07.1997.

¹² *Eastern and Central Europe*, Final Report for European Commission, prepared by B.Gorzela, B. Jałowicki, A. Kukliński, L. Zienkowski, Brussels-Luxembourg 1995, p.13.

- each of the countries of the region underwent a rather abrupt decline in real wages.¹³

The crisis thus described is in many ways more profound than the Great Depression of the 1930s. Moreover it happened in the former real socialism countries where, according to the Hungarian economist János Kornai, the premature welfare state had originally been established.¹⁴ Until the early 1990s a relatively reliable widespread security net existed in CEE, only to be dismantled due to the impediments of systemic transformation, a lack of resources and finally the recession resulting from the measures accompanying the transformation. It is due to these factors affecting CEE after the change of the system, that the region was, and still is one of deep social tension and frustration. The lack of security thus made itself felt on both the social and the geopolitical levels. The political leaders of all the countries of the region, regardless of political philosophy and convictions, realised that the only chance that they had of reinstating relative security lay in modernisation and democratisation as well as in domestic and market reforms, as prerequisites for European and Euro Atlantic integration.

But the speeding up of modernisation endeavours also creates a grey zone in terms of security, similar to the sort of vacuum which emerged after the dismantling of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. It was at that point that the organisation's former member states were faced with the dilemma of whether to reintegrate themselves with Moscow, as some parts of the former USSR are trying to do (the Belorussian example), or to sue for union with the democratic West. The latter is the choice which most of them opted for, realising (warned by their bitter historical experience) that the liquidation of this grey zone is the best guarantee against keeping any possible Russian political forces from returning to the path of political expansion. The CEE states were also quick to realise that the expansion of NATO would probably constitute the best sort of barrier against Moscow's efforts to recreate its sphere of influence in CEE.

Since the collapse of the Cold War order and after several years of experience in systemic reorganisation, it has become obvious that the new European security order will be greatly affected by the success or the failure of democratic and market reforms in CEE. One has to agree with a penetrative Western study: *"The management of economic competition among the NATO allies, and the successful transition to the market economy and multi-party democracy in*

¹³ E.Ehrlich, *Present Conditions and Prospects in Central and Eastern Europe*, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute for World Economics, Working Papers, no. 73, Budapest, November 1996, p.7.

¹⁴ J.Kornai, *Vergődés és remény (Perturbations and hope)*, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest 1996, p.250.

*the former member states of the Warsaw Pact are the basic building blocks of the new European security architecture”.*¹⁵

The question which remains is of whether Russia and the Ukraine will become fully democratic states operating within the framework of the region as well as the entire European security structure. Moreover no one has yet come up with the answer to another vital question, namely: is the transformation of Russia and the Ukraine to be a success as well? This lack of certainty concerning the future of the former Soviet states is another crucial factor in the geostrategic calculations of all the CEE countries. This remains important especially since some of them, e.g. Hungary and Poland border on the EU to the west while sharing their eastern border with former Soviet Union states currently undergoing the taxing and exigent process of transformation. Having such different realities in their immediate neighbourhood these states need to create some sort of a security system for themselves.

2. Differentiation

Reforms undertaken in the CEE countries brought about a sudden differentiation of individual post-communist states, which already a few years after the change of the system cannot be treated as belonging to the same category. One can discern and specify several division and fault lines between the former Communist Bloc states.

The first is a historical division between the former Soviet Union, where real Socialism has existed for seven decades, and its satellites states, where the system was imposed from the outside, and dominated for a period of more than four decades. Among the latter, the Baltic States, independent between the First and Second World wars, and incorporated into the Soviet Union only in the early 1940s, form a category of their own.

The second division line is deeper and has historical and cultural connotations. This is the division between the domains of the Eastern and Western Catholic Church and its culture (Rome vs. Byzantine). Along this fault-line, one may consider the western states: the Ukraine, the Baltic states, Slovenia and Croatia, while all the rest of the former Soviet Union republics along with Bulgaria, Romania, the former Yugoslav states and Albania are in the eastern belt.¹⁶

The third division is a new one, emerging in the 1990s and resulting directly from the speed of the advancement of reforms and the level of adjustment in

¹⁵ J.Sperling, E.Kirchner, *Recasting the European Order (Security architectures and economic co-operation)*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1997, p.16.

¹⁶ About this “Eastern Boundary of Western Civilisation” see rich argumentation in: Samuel P.Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon and Schuster, New York 1996, p.157-163, and especially a map on p.159.

terms of compatibility with Western institutions. One would need automatically to exclude former East Germany from this group, because it constitutes an entirely new category of state due to its reintegration with West Germany. Through the reunification of Germany, East Germany had come to be a Western state in the full meaning of such. Next come the leaders of transformation. According to economic results confirmed by statistical data, as well as the progress of democratisation, privatisation, law harmonisation and many other factors, this is also not a monolithic but a differentiated group containing the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, in other words the so-called Central Europe. Close to them in many respects, are the Baltic States with Estonia as a clear leader. The other categories include the Balkans and the former Soviet Union states, which can be treated as Eastern Europe.

Keeping the above considerations in mind, one can try to specify the following categories of states from the perspective of European and Euro-Atlantic integration:

1. Central Europe, including the recent case of Slovakia, performing quite well economically, while still experiencing many impediments to integration due to the political situation on the domestic arena.

2. The Baltic States – well advanced in economic reforms and highly advanced in transformation procedures and structural reforms, with a heavy baggage of being part of the former Soviet Union.

3. The Balkans, with Romania and Bulgaria having introduced some misguiding, unproductive reforms in the early 90's, which made necessary a violent transition of power halfway through the decade in both countries, and consequently placed the weeding-out of Post-Communist elements at the top of the agenda. Among the former Yugoslav territories, Croatia is a leader in many respects, but it is not as advanced in reforms as the neighbouring Slovenia. To compound the problem Croatia suffers the cost of its involvement in the bloody Yugoslav wars. And finally Albania, plunged into a state of anarchy and chaos in early 1997.

4. The former Soviet Union can be treated in many ways as a single category with the obvious exception of the Baltic States and the Ukraine, which constitute a specifically unique category of their own. The Russian Federation is another such unique unit.

3. NATO enlargement: the first steps towards integration – integration as a political decision

There are many arguments supporting the imperative of NATO enlargement. From the CEE perspective, the enlargement of NATO will result, among other things, in:

- the expansion of the security area and the creation of the conditions necessary for the exportation of Western values to NATO's neighbours;
- an increase in NATO's capacity to act on behalf of the principles of security and stability in the entire Euro-Atlantic region. Moreover an increase in NATO's ability to conduct peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the UN or OSCE;
- an acceleration and fortification of democratic reforms and the modernisation of the underdeveloped economic and technological infrastructures of the CEE states;
- the prevention of ethnic or territorial disputes, which may result in the disintegration of nations;
- the promotion of friendly relations among neighbouring countries, as confirmed by the palliation of the conflicts between Slovakia and Hungary, Hungary and Romania, Romania and the Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania, Germany and the Czech Republic, Italy and Slovenia;
- the prevention of the renationalisation of defence policies, further complementing the process of EU expansion.¹⁷

There are many arguments in favour of NATO expansion on the Western side as well. According to U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Lawrence Summers, an expanded NATO would:

- foster democratic stability along Russia's western border;
- help preserve European security, a vital prerequisite to business;
- provide the security required for the creation of wealth, extending it from the West into the East of Europe;
- ensure that the region's robust economic growth of the mid 90's can continue, reaffirm active U.S. engagement in Europe after the Cold War;
- provide the opportunity to build a broader Europe, united for the first time in history by the practices of democracy and free markets;
- encourage CEE countries to settle old disputes.¹⁸

As far as Euro-Atlantic integration is concerned, the crucial decisions came in early 1997, when the U.S. administration proposed an elaborate strategy of NATO enlargement. According to the estimates brought forth, only an enlarged NATO could establish a zone of stability on the European continent. CEE membership in NATO seems to be the core of this new strategy. Following her accession to the office of U.S. Secretary of State in early 1997, Madeleine Albright argued: "*Just the prospect of NATO enlargement has given Central and Eastern Europe greater stability than it has ever seen this century*". She also

¹⁷ *Catalogue of Arguments for Polish Membership in NATO*, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, January 9, 1997, duplicated document.

¹⁸ *Summers on Economic Benefits of NATO Expansion*, "Wireless File", U.S. Embassy, Budapest, April 14, 1997.

added: *“Now that democracy’s frontier has moved to Europe’s farthest reaches, what logic would dictate that we freeze NATO’s eastern edges where they presently lie, along the line where the Red Army stopped in the Spring of 1945? (...) Old thinking (...) would create a permanent source of tension and insecurity in the heart of Europe”*.¹⁹

Just two months later her arguments for the enlargement of NATO became much more elaborate, sophisticated and direct. Appearing on April 23 before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Albright declared that the *“enlargement of NATO is the fundamental goal of our policy. It is to build, for the first time, a peaceful, democratic and undivided transatlantic community. It is to extend eastward the peace and prosperity that Western Europe has enjoyed for the last 50 years. In this way, America will gain strong new partners in security and trade”*.

Albright also specified the U.S. interests in the process of NATO enlargement: *“first, to protect against Europe’s next war, to end conflicts that arose in Central Europe where two world wars have begun in the XX century; second, to defend Europe’s gains toward democracy, peace and integration; third, to right the wrongs of the past, of 1945 decisions and the Cold War era, without which there would be a creation of permanent injustice, mocking a half century of sacrifices on both sides of the Iron Curtain”*.

The Secretary of State also mentioned, that: *“There are only two possible alternatives to this overall strategy (of NATO enlargement – B.G.). We could freeze Europe’s Cold War division. Or we could create a lowest common denominator NATO that includes everyone and imposes obligations on no one”*. Both of these alternatives, according to Albright, are *“unacceptable”*.

Madeleine Albright has also touched upon the sensitive question of the relationship with Russia during the process of the enlargement of NATO. She argued that *„It might be said, rightly or wrongly, that we blocked the aspirations of NATO’s would be allies solely because Russia objected. Confidence would crumble in Central Europe, leading to a search for security by other means, including arms build-ups and increased tensions between neighbours. The worst elements in Russia would be encouraged, secure in their view that Europe can be divided into new spheres of influence and that confrontation with the West pays off. That is why President Clinton’s administration came to the following conclusions: first, NATO enlargement will go forward with no delay; second, no European nation will be excluded from consideration; third, NATO’s new members will enjoy the full benefits of membership; fourth, the new NATO-Russia Joint Council will be a forum for consultation, co-operation and, where possible, joint action. It will have no power to dilute, delay or block NATO*

¹⁹ M.Albright, *Enlarging NATO: Why bigger is better*, “The Economist”, 15.02.1997.

*decisions, nor will it supplant NATO's North Atlantic Council. It will remain significant only to the extent Russia uses it constructively. Finally, NATO will continue to evolve, but its core function of collective defence will be maintained and enhanced, and the qualities that have made it the most successful alliance in history will be preserved".*²⁰

The U.S. strategy of the extension of NATO was clearly defined during the same hearings of the Senate Arms Service Committee on April 23, 1997 by Secretary of Defence, William Cohen. According to him, the „*enlargement of NATO is part of the transformation of the European security architecture, and necessary to provide stability for the new democracies of Europe, further a European integration committed to Western values, promote a multilateral (not a nationalistic) defence concept, solidify democratic and economic reforms in a transatlantic institution, and associate new members in NATO's efforts, throughout Europe and even beyond, to meet tomorrow's security challenges*".

Cohen also clearly specified a new role for NATO in the new Europe, several years after the collapse of the Cold War order. According to his description of the current situation on the European continent, prior to the decision in favour of NATO's enlargement: "*NATO is a unified force for stability, prosperity and freedom. Local conflicts, internal political and economic instability, the re-emergence of ethnic, religious and other historic grievances, terrorism, and the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, all contribute to the potential for insecurity and instability which would threaten our vital interests. So too would the creation of a security vacuum in Central and Eastern Europe in which nations would lack a sense of a secure place in Western security arrangements and be driven to the denationalisation of foreign and defence policies, rather than the establishment of close and co operative security relationships with the rest of Europe*".

This description and assessment of the situation led the American administration to the historical decision of enlarging NATO, which according to the elaboration given by Secretary Cohen: "*is designed to expand the community of market democracies, and to shape the European environment to establish the conditions for security and stability. By responding to the Central and Eastern European desire for inclusion in NATO, we are not just affirming their position as part of a broad Euro-Atlantic community. We are serving our own security interests. The U.S. and all of NATO's current members share and have declared an interest in the sovereignty and stability of the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. We now have a historic opportunity to protect that interest and to engage those Europeans in co-operative security. NATO enlargement is not*

²⁰ *Albright at the Senate Armed Services Committee on NATO, "Wireless File", U.S. Embassy, Budapest, April 24, 1997.*

*aimed at Russia, nor will it benefit only those initially chosen. An enlarged NATO can do for all Europe what is already done for Western Europe: strengthen the emerging democracies, create the conditions for prosperity, prevent local rivalries, diminish the incentives for competing arms build-ups and destabilising national policies, and, most fundamentally, foster co-operation in protecting common security interests”.*²¹

The determination of the Clinton administration had by mid-1997 brought forth a framework for the construction of a new security order on the European continent. The crucial decisions concerning of the future of the European security system had been made:

- On May 27, in Paris, Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Co-operation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation was signed, creating mechanisms for consultation and co-operation between Russia and the Alliance. Both sides thus agreed not to consider each other as adversaries, and expressed their determination *“to give concrete substance to their shared commitment to build a stable, peaceful, and undivided Europe”.*²²
- During the Madrid Summit on July 8, the NATO-Ukraine Charter was signed, placing the co-operation of the two onto a more substantive level and offering a new potential for the strengthening of their relationship.
- Prior to the Madrid Summit, a new institution, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) was established, in Sintra (Portugal), while Partnership for Peace (PFP) programmes were elaborated and extended.
- Finally, during the Madrid Summit three CEE countries: Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were the first post-communist states and former Warsaw Treaty Organisation member states to be invited to begin accession talks with NATO.²³

Thus, the process of NATO enlargement as well as the construction of new security architecture in Europe has been started. Three candidates from CEE were selected. Because the process remains open to new members, other aspiring members have a chance to be active in the EAPC and PFP programmes. Simultaneously, the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the NATO-Ukraine Charter reflects – in the words of the Madrid Declaration – *“commitment to build together a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area on the principles of democracy and co-operative security (...) NATO, Russia and the*

²¹ *Cohen Testimony on NATO Enlargement, „Wireless File”, U.S. Embassy, Budapest, April 24, 1997.*

²² Text of the Founding Act, as well as the statements by the Presidents Clinton, Chirac and Yeltsin, *“Wireless File”, U.S. Embassy, Budapest, May 28, 1997.*

²³ *Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Co-operation, July 8, 1997, “Wireless File”, U.S. Embassy, Budapest, July 9 1997.*

Ukraine will consult, co-operate and, when appropriate, act together to address challenges to security in Europe”.

Thus, in 1997 the outlines of the new security infrastructure for Europe have already been designed. This new infrastructure seems to rest upon the following pillars:

- the enlargement of the following Euro-Atlantic institutions: NATO, the EU, the Western European Union, the Organisation of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe;
- partnership between NATO, Russia and the Ukraine;
- the principle “to promote stability through co-operation”;
- keeping the enlargement of NATO and the EU an open-ended processes by involving in their joint activities the countries that have not qualified in the first round of the enlargement process.

The leaders of the three candidate states selected to NATO, Prime Minister Gyula Horn of Hungary, President Vaclav Klaus of the Czech Republic, and President Aleksander Kwaœniewski of Poland, issued a joint statement immediately after the announcement of the NATO decision, describing it as “*a historic decision paving the way to a more stable and secure Europe*”. In their opinion the invitation extended in Madrid is “*recognition of the tremendous efforts undertaken by our societies following the changes in 1989/1990*”. The presidents also expressed:

- readiness to assume all the rights, duties, and responsibilities associated with membership in the Alliance;
- determination to intensify the political and military co-operation of the three countries;
- hope, that the parliaments of the sixteen NATO nations will complete ratification procedures in time to enable them to join the Alliance by its 50th anniversary;
- “*firm belief, that NATO will gradually invite other European democracies that wish to join it and meet the criteria for membership*”.²⁴

The real meaning of the Madrid decisions can be summarized in the words of the special political declaration issued by the Hungarian Parliament: “*The decision of the summit meeting on the enlargement of the Alliance is of historic importance. It opens a new chapter in the relations between CEE countries and NATO, promotes democratic development in the region, fosters security and stability in Europe, and furthers the creation of unity on the continent*”.²⁵

The question of why exactly it was these three candidates that were chosen, was briefly elaborated in one of the speeches by Czech Prime Minister, Vaclav

²⁴ „Népszabadság”, July 9, 1997.

²⁵ A special issue on Hungary and NATO of “*The Hungarian Observer*”, no. 3-4 1997, p.11.

Klaus. According to him: *“Taking into account the degree of systemic transformation and the rapid progress in establishing a free society, based on a pluralistic parliamentary democracy and on a market economy, achieved in the three invited countries, I would dare to argue that the choice was rational and just”*.²⁶

²⁶ V.Klaus, *Churchill and NATO Enlargement to the East*, Speech given at the Churchill Symposium 1997, Zurich, Switzerland 18 September 1997, duplicated document.

Table 1.

Views in CEC on eventual NATO membership obligations (yes or no in per cent)					
	Bulgaria	Czech Republi c	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Sending own troops abroad	26/61	43/49	26/28	55/35	33/59
Stationing NATO Forces on own territories	22/66	30/63	35/58	56/34	26/68
NATO manoeuvres on own territory	27/59	33/59	28/66	45/45	23/70
NATO air forces over own territories	23/62	26/67	35/58	41/46	17/75
Expanding armed forces budget	18/69	8/85	9/85	23/67	7/86

Source: *Magyar Hirlap*, March 6 1996. Data from special U.S. study prepared by the United States Information Agency.

4. CEE membership in the EU – long distance expansion

One of the major arguments put forth by the CEE countries in favour of joining NATO, addressed the danger of their marginalisation as well as neglect and derailment from the process of modernisation. In the words of the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Bronisław Geremek: *“A Poland closed in its own shell, uneasy with foreigners, fearful of new ideas, technologies or products, would not be able to meet new challenges”*.²⁷

It is not difficult to find the same kind of argumentation in political statements coming from other politicians in CEE countries. According to one of the most elaborate statements, one made by Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, László Kovács: *“The economic transition in CEE has proved more difficult than people had expected. Radical reforms, radical economic reforms, and in some cases unwar-ranted delay in instituting reforms, have caused social tensions that prepare the way for populist, extremist groups and parties that pose a threat to the newly established democracy. So soon after the great ideological divide and political barriers have been removed, the prospect of a new division emerges. This is the*

²⁷ *NATO and Poland*, A Special Supplement to *“The Warsaw Voice”*, 06.06.1997, p.6.

*divide between a secure, stable and prosperous Western Europe, and an unpredictable CEE, lacking in security, stability and prosperity. It was dramatically and tragically proved by events in Yugoslavia that the security and stability of Europe are indivisible. Lack of stability in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe, will have a negative impact on the stability of Western and Northern Europe as well”.*²⁸

Now, when the process of NATO enlargement seems to be on the right track, CEE countries will concentrate more and more on EU enlargement processes. Once again, as one could have guessed, some Central European states are to be the leaders of the process. This was confirmed by the European Commission decision of July 16, 1997, giving a positive statement regarding prospective EU membership in the European Parliament to five CEE countries: Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia and Slovenia. In accordance with this statement, individual negotiations are expected to commence sometime in early 1998. Thus, the process of EU enlargement has already practically been inaugurated.

As in the case of NATO, the determination of the candidates from CEE is obvious. In their opinion, EU membership will finally help to erase the stark political and military lines dividing the European continent. The end of the Cold War order did not bring immediate change; on the contrary, Europe remains divided along levels of local economic development, the level of per capita GDP, the stability of democratic institutions, law implementation requirements, etc.

Quoting from Polish „National Strategy for Integration” (the first ever such document prepared by a CEE country): *“Membership in the EU is the strategic aim of Poland. Integration with the Union will help to accelerate economic growth, modernise the economy and the legal system, and eliminate the technological gap between our country and other European countries. National interests explain the Polish determination to become a member of the Union”.*²⁹

After the European Commission’s decision concerning CEE candidates to the EU was made public, the representatives of the countries chosen, keeping their respective strategic options in mind, began to press for the acceleration of the process. Immediately, they turned toward the fundamental „technical” questions concerning the future of European integration. First of all, they raised the following issues:

- when will the enlargement (or enlargements) take place;
- how, under what conditions, will the accession proceed;
- why is enlargement vital not only to the newcomers but also to the present members of the EU and to the EU itself;

²⁸ L.Kovács, *Preventing a New Division in Europe*, Address at the Central European University, Budapest, September 13 1997, duplicated document.

²⁹ *National Strategy for Integration*, “*Yearbook of Polish European Studies*”, vol. 1 1997, p.182.

- what kind of a European Union will it be that accepts the candidate countries as new full members?³⁰

From the candidates' perspective, the first two issues are crucial, while from the EU perspective, no doubt, the last point is the most important one. Half measures in the final *communiqué* of the 1996/7 Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) once again proved that for the EU the process of enlargement is not the only thing on the agenda, but that the EU is also confronting another fundamental concern - how to harmonise the expansion of EU functions and powers, while at the same time maintaining national control in areas marked out by the principle of subsidiarity. Having enlargement in mind, the EU – in the words of one Western assessment – “*would enforce the streamlining of decision-making*” and must be ready for “*significant institutional changes*”, which might well involve: “*reducing the number of Commissioners; altering the system of six-monthly presidencies; amending the weighted voting system giving smaller states*

a disproportionate influence over decision-making; and relying more on majority voting”. Even prior to the enlargement “*the EU will need to establish common policies in economics, finance, and social and environmental policy*”.³¹

Thus, even prior to the initiation of the process of extending the EU into CEE, it is obvious that all European countries are standing before an important strategic task: CEE countries in their drive toward modernisation, need to be reformed mainly through their own effort but with substantial Western European (financial and economic) support, while the EU members states need to reform their institutional framework, at the same time heeding not to neglect the process of enlargement, because without enlargement Europe as a continent will remain divided and lacking in security. Both of these parallel processes are highly complicated, extremely challenging for the participants, and, as such, time-consuming. The enlargement

of the EU is a process much more complicated than the extension of NATO; the latter is to a large extent the result of a political decision, supported by determination and will, while the former requires the mutual adjustment of two different realities surviving upon a continent divided by the legacy of the Cold War era.

The following statement appeared in the final recommendations of the European Commission's position as regards Poland's candidacy to the EU:

*“If Poland continues its efforts on transposition of the *acquis communautaire* –*

³⁰ Head of the Hungarian Task Force on Integration Strategy A. Inotai, *Prospects for Joining the European Union*, “*Foreign Policy*”, Special Issue on “*Hungary Towards European Integration*”, vol. 3 1997, p.40.

³¹ *The Politics of the New Europe (Atlantic to Urals)* ed. I. Budge, K. Newton et al, Longman, London-New York 1997, p.51.

*relating particularly to the single market – and intensifies work on its implementation, it should, within a medium term, become fully capable of full participation in the single market. Special effort and investment will be necessary in order to implement the provisions of the acquis in sectors such as agriculture, environmental protection, and transport. Effective application and enforcement of the acquis communautaire will also call for further administrative reforms”.*³²

In response, the Polish government, like the other candidates chosen, confirmed that there is a necessity for further adaptive projects, while at the same time clearly expressing its determination to become a full member of the EU as soon as possible. In the words of the official “Position of the Government” paper: *“the Government (of Poland) is fully aware of the vast body of work which yet has to be completed in association with future EU membership. The Government views an analysis of the strategy applied herewith and its modification so as to make possible Poland’s rapid accession to the EU as an imperative”.*³³

Now, when the process of NATO enlargement has de facto already started, some CEE countries – and especially those already elected to become a part of NATO – will pay more and more attention to EU enlargement, because, in their assumption, without membership in the EU they cannot be treated as full members of the New European order, i.e. as active participants in the new European institutional framework. Only through the possession of membership in NATO, the EU and other European institutions can they perform as standard European states.

5. Conclusions

The dramatic changes of 1989/90, the end of the Cold War order, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the fragmentation of the Soviet Union, the emergence of a united Germany and the tragic events in the former Yugoslavia have brought with them a new, comprehensive definition of security on the European continent. Cold War conceptions of security had been defined primarily, if not exclusively according to military terms, while the “New European” security order encompasses at least four mutually constitutive elements: the political-military, the economic, the social, and the environmental.

The creation of an all-European new security infrastructure has been ranked on the agenda. During the process, the military dimension of security has been transformed into a co-operative game. The civil war on the territories of the

³² In: *Position of the Government of the Republic of Poland Regarding the Commission’s Opinion on Poland’s Application for Membership of the European Union*, Warsaw, October 1997, in this volume of “*Yearbook of Polish European Studies*”, s.268.

³³ *Ibid.*

former Yugoslavia has dramatically demonstrated that security in Europe is indivisible. Slowly, the political elites in Europe realised, that the security of the entire continent, that of Western Europe included, cannot be ensured without stability in the CEE region. Thus European security became linked with the process of marketisation and democratisation in the transitional societies of CEE. Several years after the change of the system it is already clear, that the transformation of the former Soviet Bloc is a highly complicated and difficult process, foregoing any sort of generalisations. The forces of political division, fragmentation and conflict are strong especially in the Balkans and in the territories of the former Soviet Union. And all throughout the post-communist zone, differentiation between individual countries is becoming more and more visible. Countries have begun increasingly to vary in terms of economic development, ethnic and religious composition, advancement of reforms and the respective stages of transformation. The political history and cultural tradition of those states have invariably led to the diversity of political patterns and outcomes, even if the challenges facing all of them are the same.

*“Democracy”, as George Schöpflin argues, “requires a set of values from both rulers and ruled that involve self-limitation, compromise, bargaining, reciprocity, feedback and the like, which post-Communist states and societies cannot be expected to acquire overnight”.*³⁴ Post-Communist transformation is then a process of learning – on both sides. The Eastern side needs to acquire new values, and adjust itself to a new, democratic way of life, while the Western side need realise that without successful transformations in CEE there is no possibility of shaping a new European security system and securing prospects for peace and stability in Europe. Thus, the co-operation of the formerly divided continent is a crucial issue on the agenda. And the logical result of such co-operation is a process of the eastward extension of Western institutions, especially of NATO and the EU. Even more importantly, only the enlargement of Euro-Atlantic structures will contribute to the stabilisation and development of the CEE region. In fact, the current discussions concerning the new European security order are primarily discussions on the future of CEE. Among other important aspects of this process, is the crucial role of transatlantic co-operation, since all Europeans, CEE included, need further American presence on their continent,

a fact definitely confirmed on the territories of the former Yugoslavia.

The majority of the new democracies in CEE wish to join the Euro-Atlantic institutions. The level of the preparedness of individual countries varies for different reasons, as mentioned above. Therefore the dates of their accession will

³⁴ G.Schöpflin, op.cit., p.258.

also differ³⁵, as confirmed by 1997 events, when the first three candidates were selected for membership in NATO, while the European Commission gave a positive hint to five CEE countries. The fact, that three of them, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, are in both groups confirms that, first, there is a real difference in the level of preparedness for membership in Western institutions amongst the CEE countries, while – second and even more importantly – exactly because of this difference the process of the enlargement of the Euro-Atlantic institutions should be an open-ended one; every CEE country should be given the chance to join. If not, the threat of a new division could emerge on the horizon, and new division lines could lead to renewed security challenges. Naturally, the joining of transatlantic institutions by all of the CEE states will not offer an automatic and immediate solution to all the problems on the continent. Nonetheless it is probably the most promising way to fulfil short- and long-term tasks³⁶, to answer new challenges and harmonise the interests of all European states in the challenging era of globalisation. Only a stable and united Europe can be a competitive partner on the global arena.³⁷ Thus, the interests of the former “East” and former “West” in the “new Europe” – even if viewed from different perspectives and according to different calculations – are the same.

³⁵ L.Kovács, *Hungary's Contribution to European Security in: Facts, Figures and Trends on Hungary's Road to NATO Membership*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesman's Office, Budapest, October 1997, p.9.

³⁶ State Secretary and Head of the Secretariat for Integration F.Somogyi, *Euro-Atlantic Integration: Continuity and Consensus in Hungarian Foreign Policy*, “*Foreign Affairs*”, Special Issue..., op.cit., p.6.

³⁷ A.Inotai, *Miért újszerű az Európai Unió keleti kibővítése? (Why Eastward Enlargement of the EU Is Something New?)*, “*Európai Tükör*” (*European Mirror*), Hungarian Task Force on Integration Strategy, no. 3, June 1997, p.11.