Security Dimension in the EU Enlargement

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Abstract

The chapter attempts to present the case for EU enlargement for reasons of security, using an adapted use of the Karl Deutsch concept of "community of security", as well as a dose of realism. The author also argues that EU enlargement has something to do with the perception of a Russian threat as well as to balancing a possible German hegemony.

Reference

IS THERE A SECURITY DIMENSION IN THE EU ENLARGEMENT TO CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE?¹

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Is there a security dimension in the European Union (EU) enlargement to the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs)? When beginning this research I was convinced that this was the case and that a great deal of literature would be available on the subject. After all, the authoritative text on EU action vis-à-vis Eastern countries is entitled “Agenda 2000: For a Stronger and Wider Union”.² Yet this document is a disappointment—as are most official publications on the subject by the EU or its member states. As an example, of the 149 pages in Agenda 2000, less than one is devoted to the dialectic link between security and enlargement to the East.³ The absence of reflection on the subject also becomes apparent when browsing the Internet site where all official texts published over the last 10 years can be found.⁴

Generally speaking, scientific studies on enlargement have the same flaw. A mere two pages of Alan Mayhew’s exhaustive work cover the advantages and disadvantages of enlargement to the East.⁵ This is all the more astonishing as the author assures us that the security advantages are, at the very least, as important as the economic benefits: “... the security benefits of accession of the associated countries are often considered to be more important than the economic benefits”, and that he himself believes that “... in reality the two go together”.⁶

In his book that is now considered a classic, Richard Baldwin makes the same comment, to the effect that the issue of security is the “... driving force behind Eastern nations’ desire to join and incumbents’ desires to have them”.⁷ Yet the author does not include any additional analysis in his 234-page book beyond a

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¹ Translated from the French by Lisa Godin-Roger, University of Geneva.
³ European Commission, op. cit., Agenda 2000, p. 36.
⁶ Ibid., p. 195.
reminder that these notions of security "are intrinsically vague, since they are based on fear of future developments". 8

The purpose of this study is to compensate for this lack of discussion, thus this chapter has two objectives. First, to present for the first time a synthetic and conceptual view of the elements that point to the need for EU enlargement for strategic reasons. Second, to counter the point of view favoring enlargement by systematically calling into question each of the arguments used to support this position and determining whether they are valid.

A “Community of Security”

The main argument put forth by advocates of the EU’s enlargement to CEECs is based on the concept of a “community of security” which is an adaptation of the cybernetic theory developed by Karl Deutsch in the late 1950s. 9

Surprisingly, the European Commission (EC) makes use of this very expression in Agenda 2000, 10 a report which acts as its main theoretical document as well as its main plan of action in undertakings with the CEECs. A number of scholars make a conscious effort to adapt Karl Deutsch’s theory to EU enlargement. 11

The reasoning goes roughly as follows: the EU is certainly not a military alliance and its common foreign and security policy lacks coherence. The EU system, nevertheless, facilitates a maximal level of security which is often greater than that of a military alliance, creating different kinds of ties among its participating populations. Within such a community, based on the compatibility of the core values of its members, the use of violent means to enforce one’s interests has become unthinkable. By creating a partly supranational Europe, the founders of the union hoped to transcend traditional national rivalries to create new types of economic, political, social and cultural relationships that would eliminate any possibility of war among Western European nations. 12

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8 Ibid.


10 European Commission, op. cit., Agenda 2000, p. 36.


They suggest that, *mutatis mutandis*, EU enlargement to the CEECs will prove just as rewarding. The solidarity that exists and the ties formed are such that it will soon become clear to the CEECs that any disadvantages arising from conflict situations are greatly outweighed by the resulting advantages. Through membership in the EU, the CEECs strengthen security among themselves and on the *European* continent as a whole. The EU also provides an environment for improving relations between its new members. Access to the single market, to structural funds, will reduce social differences between individual regions. This could bring the accession candidates economically closer and contain migration due to misery. And while enlargement will bring problems of organized crime closer to the EU framework, it will also provide the tools needed to work on this security problem. Issues linked to migration could be eased by the EU too, although it is risky to consider migration as a security problem unto itself.

EU membership, the founders maintain, will also boost the position of pro-Western supporters, to the detriment of nationalist, reactionary, and isolationist contingents. As it is generally held that pro-Western forces are the likeliest candidates to bring prosperity and democracy, the logical extension is that a weakening of nationalist causes will necessarily generate enhanced peace and security.

In addition, EU membership offers the best means of resolving minority population difficulties, which continue to envenom CEEC societies. Two troublesome situations can be resolved through EU membership:

- Problems related to minorities in Eastern countries will be alleviated by the simple fact that the EU aims to remove as many borders as possible between member states and their respective social groups.\(^\text{13}\) In that way the Hungarian minority in Slovakia will feel less confined when physical (checkpoints), technical and fiscal frontiers have been done away with between the two countries. Greater freedom of movement of goods, services, capital and individuals attached to the adoption of a single currency will promote the inception of a sense of European citizenship. This will greatly help minority populations struggling to escape the grip of the state.

- In its premembership period the EU had already applied pressure to applicant states to enforce the Council of Europe’s Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms—such as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities,\(^\text{14}\) and other international United Nations (UN) and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) documents. Therefore, the union refused to begin membership negotiations with


Slovakia and Romania,\textsuperscript{15} being dissatisfied with their treatment of minorities. This pressure had a positive effect on Latvia and would also have had on Slovakia and Romania, at least from a legal standpoint. Once they become members of the EU, the CEECs will be under increasing pressure to enforce human rights and minority treatment. The new provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty follow these lines, as a qualified majority may suspend membership of any state that flouts these rules.\textsuperscript{16}

An idealistic dimension, verging on naïveté, is inherent in the very concept of a "community of security". This has already been pointed out by many political analysts, in particular Alan Milward.\textsuperscript{17} The absence of international conflicts in Europe was certainly more of an offshoot of the Cold War, which required greater unity in the Western camp, and of the concept of nuclear deterents (Mutual Assured Destruction) whose purpose was to forestall individual cases of war from escalating to global destruction. However, this did not prevent the outbreak of terrible colonial wars and tragic minority conflicts, as seen in the Basque Country, Corsica, Cyprus and Northern Ireland.

There are no bloody conflicts currently underway in CEECs that are candidates for EU accession. It is not clear how membership enlargement of the EU would help spread peace in that region as peace is already firmly established. Strengthening pro-Western forces does not seem a necessity either, as they already have a firm grip on the reigns of power. Even former Communists pursue the same pro-Western policies as the Social-Democratic and Conservative parties. On the other hand, EU membership is likely to have a resounding effect on populations of small farmers and the most disadvantaged social classes who might find justification for their anti-Western feelings in the EU’s rejection of their applications.

Following the same line of reasoning, it would be equally difficult to imagine how EU enlargement to Serbia, Montenegro and Albania could possibly bring peace and security to these nations if the underlying causes of conflict remain.

\textbf{The Issue of Germany}

The issue of Germany is thornier. Many scholars have debated the subject but it is notably absent from official discourse coming from either Western or Eastern


\textsuperscript{16} Treaty on European Union, Title 1, Art. 7.2. Note that, first, the Council should act by unanimity in order to determine the existence of a serious and persistent breach of the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights, etc. (Art. 7.1), without taking into account however the vote of the Member State in question (Art. 7.4).

Europe. There is clearly an underlying problem but it is considered politically incorrect for the government to air the matter.

The main points of the argument follow the theory of Karl Deutsch. The CEECs, above all those that fell under the sway of the Third Reich, must at all costs avoid German dominion today as memories of the past are too painful. As a result, by joining the EU the CEECs can continue to benefit from the advantages of dealing with Germany (economic investment and tourism) while avoiding too much political, cultural and military dependence.\footnote{Robert M. Herzog and Timothy J. Smith, \textit{Germany and the EU: Competing Visions for Central Europe?}, paper presented at the Fourth Biennial ECSA Meeting, Charleston, 11–14 May 1995, 18 pp. See also Hyde-Price, op. cit., pp. 4–9.}

Through EU membership these states have greater potential to benefit from channels other than those offered by Bonn. They may also participate in peaceful coalitions with other member nations, thus sidestepping unilateral and asymmetrical dependence on Germany.\footnote{Henning Tewes, “Between deepening and widening: role conflict in Germany’s enlargement policy”, in \textit{West European Politics}, Vol. 21, No. 2, April 1998, pp. 117–133.}

It should be mentioned that German leaders were the first to develop this type of reasoning. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, they became sensitized to the risk of strategic destabilization posed by German reunification.\footnote{See the list of references in Michael Baun, \textit{Germany and EU Enlargement into Eastern Europe}, paper presented at the Fifth Biennial ECSA Conference, Seattle, 28 May–1 June 1997, pp. 31–32.} With the memory of the past weighing heavily on them, and conscious of the risk incurred by the presence of a German colossus in \textit{Mitteleuropa}, they concluded that enlargement to the Eastern European countries was a prerequisite for deepening the EU, and conversely, deepening was necessary to clear the way for enlargement.

Thus there is consensus, at least within the academic community, that the German question is an underlying element in the reflection process of EU enlargement to the East. Notwithstanding this recognition, the argumentation is rarely explicit in official discourse as no one wants a head-on confrontation with Germany.

Mention should be made of the unwholesome element of the discourse, arising from the German factor more often than not being considered taboo in official texts dealing with EU enlargement to the East. This shows an attempt to hide a shameful fact: the disproportionate importance Germany has in this relationship.

From this perspective, the question can be legitimately raised as to whether German influence will fade after the EU enlarges to the CEECs. For example, certain EU countries, following France’s lead, have often alluded to the fact that Germany might be using the EU as a cover for imperialist tendencies. As Miroslav Jovanovic puts it: France has realized that in an enlarged union, its economic and political clout would be reduced, whereas Germany’s would be much greater. The fact that it
was German leaders who developed the reasoning that enlargement to the East would constitute a safety net for their own imperialist tendencies, should only urge us on to greater caution.\textsuperscript{21} In the end, writes Jovanovic, it is possible that Germany would like some of the Eastern countries to enter the EU because they tend to view union matters with a "German mindset".\textsuperscript{22}

**Reducing the Russian Threat**

Russia’s role as a key player is a dominant theme of Eastern and Central European intellectual discourse. In official texts the allusion is merely implicit. The argument that is developed generally goes as follows: passing reference is made to the suffering endured during the Soviet era, while maintaining that it was due more to Russian than Communist imperialism. Although the countries (the Baltic States, Poland, Romania, and so on) were victims of Russian colonialism before 1945, it is emphasized that this was an existing threat and not limited to the Stalinist period.\textsuperscript{23}

The reasoning used to justify EU enlargement to the East is often paradoxical. On one hand the threat is made of an upsurge of imperialism in Greater Russia (see the comments of Vladimir Jirinovski or certain other Communist leaders), and on the other, the image is raised of Russia’s instability or economic deterioration (President Boris Yeltsin, the economic crisis, the mafia), leaving the door wide open to all kinds of excess.\textsuperscript{24} Whether too strong or too weak, Russia is perceived to be a danger. In any case, joining the EU would act as a bulwark against Russia’s instability and provide added security for the European continent as a whole.

How would EU enlargement reduce the Russian threat? To start with, imperialist Russia would be dissuaded from taking action against any former Iron Curtain country because it would henceforth mean locking horns with Western countries as a whole. Russia would even avoid pressuring these countries for fear of bringing not only the wrath of Western Europe’s military, but its political and economic ire as well. Russia, in the throes of economic depression and mafia-driven turmoil, would no longer seek to export its woes to Eastern Europe when realizing that these countries are firmly buttressed by a prosperous and virtuous Europe.

Mention is also made of improving the fate of Russian or Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic States. It is posited that Baltic membership in the EU might help attenuate Russian antagonism. The reasoning is that by joining the EU the Baltic States would be obliged to adopt Western norms regarding protection of human rights and so-called “ethnic” minorities. Consequently, this would offer

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Morass and Leitgeb, op. cit., p. 39.
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Russia the best possible guarantee that its former nationals would be treated well. This would somewhat reduce the pressure Moscow puts on the Baltic States, with all the risks of instability that accompany the policy.

In this manner, CEECs' membership in the EU would have not only the advantage of dissuading Russia from intervening once again in internal affairs, and avoid “exporting” Russian problems, but would additionally reduce pressure on the Baltic States through the imposition of a “Western notion” of human rights for the Russian-speaking population.

The argument concerning the danger of a Greater Russian imperialism is unfounded as this attitude has not been apparent during the last 10 years. Consequently, if Russia does not adopt a menacing stance, it is difficult to justify enlargement to the East for this reason.

As for the contrary argument that it is Russia’s very weakness that constitutes a danger for European security, it is difficult to imagine how EU enlargement could have the slightest impact on Russia’s economic deterioration, mafia or civil wars.

The argument put forth concerning Russian minorities in the Baltic States is also a double-edged sword. In fact, by admitting these states the EU runs the major risk of importing a formidable minority problem for which it will share responsibility. The probability of friction between the EU and Russia will thus increase in the event that the Baltic States become members, since even if the latter had adopted mollifying legislation beforehand vis-à-vis the Russian minorities, the problem will not have miraculously disappeared. If the EU grants the CEECs membership, it assumes responsibility for any problems that may arise with Russia, a nation which remains the main European nuclear power and where democracy is not yet deeply ingrained.

**NATO and the United States**

One interesting fact stands out: the EU’s enlargement to the East is never put into opposition with the problems of NATO’s future and an American presence on the European continent. On the contrary, in official speeches the thesis is generally put forward that CEECs' membership in the EU can only strengthen NATO and help maintain the presence of American troops in Europe. For instance, in Agenda 2000 the EC states that “the enlargement of the European Union must therefore aim to make an additional stabilizing impact complementary to that made by the enlargement of NATO”.

The reasoning follows that the EU and NATO are organizations that complement each other on a global level. They contain the same core states of the European pillar, which, broadly speaking, follow the same security objectives as those of the West. Consequently, EU enlargement to countries that are already part of NATO

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(the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary) can only prove mutually beneficial. NATO’s economic and social pillar will be reinforced and it will have a more consistent political and cultural make-up, with a greater amount of shared values.\textsuperscript{26} The EU will also benefit because as members of NATO these countries are automatically pro-Western.

The double enlargement of the EU and NATO will also prove advantageous to the United States. American forces will be more likely to stay on and become involved if a crisis arises in Europe if they feel that by doing so they will be helping countries belonging to the EU—that is countries sharing their Western values. Plainly speaking and without diplomatic flourishes: the United States will be less reluctant to commit and Washington will run less of a risk of internal opposition when dealing with countries that have adopted the community \textit{acquis}, particularly in the areas of human rights and democracy, than when dealing with a country like Turkey that continues to flout it with impunity.

Mention should also be made of the Baltic States, which are currently being strongly dissuaded by Russia from joining NATO. EU membership would be a welcome means for them to enter the most important economic bloc of the world. Moreover, EU member status gives them privileged access to the Western European Union (with observer status) and thus a boost into the NATO system, without officially joining and thereby antagonizing Russia.

Nonetheless, the idea of EU and NATO enlargement being complementary seems somewhat naive. It is generally intimated that there will be no conflict of interest between the US and other Western countries. However, when Washington dictated NATO enlargement, showing little consideration for its Western European partners, it became clear that Americans and Western Europeans do not always share the same strategic interests. In other words, it may very well be that Washington is in no great hurry to see EU enlargement to the East—additional delays will help increase and solidify its influence in Central and Eastern Europe through NATO and other bilateral military agreements.

The question can also be raised as to whether the United States is really more interested in intervening on behalf of an Eastern country just because it is part of the EU. For example, if the American public did not grasp the differences between Lithuania and Latvia and did not wish to see its armed forces killed for the sake of Vilna or Riga, it is doubtful that the EU member status of these states would change its mind.

\textsuperscript{26} Wohlfeld, op. cit., p. 47.
The EU as a World Power

There is a realistic argument supporting EU enlargement to the East that the EC has also adopted: “Enlargement . . . will increase Europe’s weight in the world.”27 The reasoning is that if the EU opened its doors to more states and populations, sources of instability would disappear in equal proportion and the strategic vacuum between Russia and Western Europe would be filled.

This suggests that real security on the European continent can come only from a strong European Union. This reasoning obviously finds favor with those who want the EU to be not merely a European area, but rather a European power. By extending eastward, the EU speaks on behalf of the European continent as a whole (with the exception of countries such as Switzerland and Norway that have voluntarily made themselves satellites of other EU countries) and thus has a deterrent power that is all the stronger in relation to potentially hostile powers on other continents.

It cannot be denied that some member nations of the EU and the EC are trying to transform the EU into a superpower by means of enlargement to the East. However, this desire is apparently far from being shared by the small EU states or by those without international ambitions.

The most important question is whether this desire for grandeur will bring greater security to Western European nations or Europe as a whole. An analysis of Agenda 2000 shows that the EC has been caught in its own trap. It offers more arguments elaborating the dangers of EU enlargement to far-flung Russia, the Balkans and the Middle East, than arguments in favor of enlargement.28 Following this thinking, if the EU decided to enlarge to the East, its direct neighbors would be exclusively unstable ones, suffering from a weak democratic system or lacking one altogether. These countries would have to contend with a collapsing Russia, conflicts in the Caucasus and the Middle East, and a rise in Muslim fundamentalism. This is far from reassuring, especially since the EC itself bemoans the EU’s weakness and lack of coherence in foreign policy and defense. It is true that the EC would like the enlargement to create an overflow effect that would cause the union to activate its political dimension, but nothing indicates that this would be the case.

Moreover, after initially wanting to take on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia as a solo performance in order to be considered a truly global player,29 the EU had its ineptitude and failure exposed to public scrutiny, and the danger of the EC’s policy became evident—thus reinforcing US presence on the European continent.

Furthermore, the option of limited enlargement may create new sources of unrest. After initially being promised full membership, the “have nots” could well be “let

27 European Commission, op. cit., Agenda 2000, p. 36.
28 Ibid.
down by the EU". In other words, limiting enlargement to selected countries could lead to the creation of new borders in Europe. The insecurity felt by countries left on the sidelines could grow, especially if they were denied NATO membership as well. They might undergo what has been called "dual rejection shock".

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to systematically and conceptually present the case for EU enlargement to the East for reasons of security and strategy. This exercise appeared useful as, contrary to the initial assumption, such a study had never been undertaken.

In addition, an endeavor has been made to go beyond a simple exercise in conceptualization in order to question the implicit theories underlying the argumentation favoring EU enlargement for strategic purposes. In this manner it has been shown that the theoretical driving force was taken, explicitly or implicitly, from the cybernetic approach of Karl Deutsch and his concept—although it was of course adapted to the notion of a "community of security".

I deliberately played a provocative role, challenging this theoretical paradigm by means of empirical arguments, adding a healthy dose of realism, it is true. My general conclusion is that strategic reasoning is certainly one of the motives for EU enlargement to the East, and that the roles of Russia and Germany, minority problems, US-NATO relations, and the EU's ambition to be an international power, are all core issues.

Nonetheless, following a dialectic chain of reasoning, it became clear that none of the arguments upheld by advocates of EU enlargement to the East is convincing enough to create a momentum to support the CEECs. In the final analysis, although there are undeniably strategic arguments promoting EU enlargement to the East, for the time being none seems to be sufficiently convincing.

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