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Explaining the European Gap: Western Arrogance and Eastern Stubbornness

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“Europe is a series of technical measures necessary for international cooperation.”

Ralf Dahrendorf

Abstract

Most East European countries are now members of the EU, but observers sometimes doubt if they are accepted as equal partners. East European political elite have questioned if they are treated equally within the organization and West European elite have reacted evasively if not offensively. Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall the time has come to look back on the emotional-political side of European integration measures. This contribution parts from the fact that the European integration after 1945 has been organized according to Western ideas. This paper will outline the main ideas of Western-led integration, ideas that proved to some extent conflictive to Eastern ideas. Those ideas have also brought certain consequences with it, such as the implicit conviction of the Western superiority. This has led to mutual misunderstandings and minority feelings on the “other”, the East European EU member side. This constellation has affected EU integration politics, in particular in the context of Eastern European EU accession. In general, the paper focuses on both Western and Eastern European mental states using examples of the leading political elite and resulting European integration politics. It concludes that the state of the art of integration is East European skepticism on integration concepts and common (foreign) policies. Twenty years after the beginning of the reintegration of Europe we can observe mistrust and also disintegration tendencies between West and East.

Introduction

In 2009, most European countries are formally part of the imagined European landscape, embodied by the organization of the European Union. However, questions rise on the degree of integration and Europeanization – both of Western and Eastern European members. Integration quality is not only a question of political statements and the realization of core freedoms of individual European citizens. It is also a question of how political elite understand European politics and European Union integration. In this context we for example observe an “offensive” understanding of the European Union within selected Western European elite leading to a European Constitution and a possible denationalization of the single member states. East European countries in general have had a more “defensive” approach to those issues. Most recently in spring 2009, the “dynamic” future-oriented French EU presidency and the following Czech presidency that was rather technical oriented to problem-solving have been examples for such understandings. These presidencies have been good examples of different Europe concepts that are existent among EU political elite. I took this fact as a parting point to look closer on the influence of different understandings of Europe, and the mental maps both persisting within the Western and Eastern European political elite.

Interestingly, there are few open statements and even less publications on the apparent different Western understandings of the “East” and vice-versa. This not only concerns the public. More importantly different understandings of each other and of the European integration project are existent among the political elite, but have been largely ignored.¹ Because of this research gap, the following thoughts intend to stimulate discussion and further research.² I hold that ideas of European integration have been different and that political elite sentiments of Western superiority (that also have been historically relevant) are persistent among the Western political elite and also transfer to EU politics. The question is how different ideas on Europe and sentiments of superiority have influenced the integration of Europe after 1989, and which reactions they have provoked within the East and West European political elite. For this purpose, I focus on important hallmarks of the European

¹ Compare for example with the research on democratization and Europeanization, e.g. the works of Geoffrey Pridham (2005, *Designing Democracy: EU Enlargement and Regime Change in Post-Communist Europe*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan) or Schimmelfennig, Frank et al. (2005): *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

² The anniversary-publication of the German journal “Osteuropa” (February–March 2009) includes some contributions that mention the cultural and political gaps between Western and Eastern states.

integration process: 1989 and the time around the East European accession of 2004 whereby political elite ideas on how the integration process should be managed are in the foreground.

The paper will be structured along the following line of arguments: On the Western side the unification of Europe has been organized according to Western ideas of integration. Among them has been a technical focus on European integration – as only this way proved to be successful. Vis-à-vis Eastern Europe the Western-driven European integration project strengthened ideas of Western “superiority”, i.e. the need for Western European leadership. Western democratic political and capitalist economic systems were thought and proved superior to the Soviet Union-shaped political and economic systems in Eastern Europe. Such thoughts went hand in hand with implicit ideas of Eastern backwardness and fragility, both political and economical. This attitude has influenced Western behavior toward the East until today. In Eastern Europe, especially in East Central Europe, the wish of integrating into Western organizations and to accept democracy and capitalism was historically rooted and filled the vacuum that had emerged after the collapse of the Soviet system. The emotional connotation to “Europe” was strongly linked to democratic procedures and economic welfare. Such, Eastern Europe accepted a technical-oriented integration process. But soon, reluctance toward Western accession criteria and East European integration skepticism, based also on negative economic externalities of the transformation process, revealed that the underlying Eastern European mental maps were not only supporting Europe. They could be an obstructive factor which strength had been underestimated.

This paper will first give a short summary of the Western-driven European integration concept of Europe and the position of Eastern Europe. It will then concentrate on the post-1989 integration situation which did much to conceal real attitudes in Western and Eastern Europe. In a second step, I focus on the 2009 situation including pre and post-2004 accession discussions on Eastern European capabilities and skepticism. On the grounds of brief mental mappings the paper assumes that different mental maps are in place. Among others they determine that cooperation forms within quasi supranational structures are understood differently, lead to misunderstandings, and diverging political concepts on Europe. The contribution concentrates on East Central European countries, in particular the Czech Republic and Poland, and the two Western European countries that have driven European integration: France and Germany.

Different Realities of European Integration

Historical consciousness and mental states have their roots far beyond the end of the Second World War. However, the bases for the current integration project, and maybe also of the integration dilemma have been laid after 1945. Here, it is important to consider that for the West the year 1945 was a zero point – more than for the Eastern European countries where one empire followed the next, and recent history has been seen much more in the context of the Second World War.³ After the end of the war, the European political elite initiated different approaches to create European organizations both supported by West and East European states. However, Western reluctance and politics of the Soviet Union and the subsequent Sovietization of East European countries prevented Eastern Europe to fully participate. Instead, they were mostly forced to integrate within Soviet Union-based organizations. European integration in its original, liberal democracy-based sense was reduced to some core states in Western Europe. Initially, six Western countries engaged in deeper economic and later also political integration. Western political elite founded political, economic and security organizations, such as the Council of Europe, the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC; later the OECD) or the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The latter turned out to become the most important organization, first evolving to the European Economic Community (EEC), then to the European Community and the EU.⁴ As political and defense integration failed, European integration focused on economic issues. Ralf Dahrendorf argues that this was a success, because economic integration was not connected to emotions, but understood as a technical issue. And economic integration had a clear objective, such as the common market and the single market.⁵ This can also be said for the first Eastern EU enlargement that had largely “degenerated” to a technical issue for the West, but was very important on a psychological-emotional level for the East.

In spite of the “mechanization” of Europe, integration had been a national project from the beginning for Western European countries. According to the founding myths the European integration was driven by France and Germany. Their national interest supported the European project. So, they would bring certain political questions (e.g. the containment of

³ Alexander Smolar (2009) “Die Mauer in den Köpfen. Die Erinnerungskultur spaltet Europa.” *Osteuropa*, Vol. 59, No. 2-3, 2009, 369-380.

⁴ Find a good summary of a Western integrationist view on the European integration process and its (technical) shortcomings in Plattner, Marc F. (2003) “Competing Goals, Conflicting Perspectives” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 42f.

⁵ Dahrendorf, Ralf (2003) “The Challenge for Democracy” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 105f.

Germany from the French side) and economic problems on a European level.⁶ Here, national leadership has to be seen in context with a European dimension. In the course of the integration process a European layer evolved that most time concealed national realities of West European member states. This formal layer and French-German leadership was accepted by a Western-Europe dominated Union. This concept worked especially well in the realm of economic integration from where national and emotional issues were de-connected. In the field of political integration it was more difficult. Even if Western (i.e. French and German) political elite emphasized an over-national oriented goal formally after 1945. Such, French President Francois Mitterand stated that “Europe is our future” in spite of having no mayor political institutional achievements to present (such as a federalization of Europe). What indeed was achieved in the political field was the consolidation of democracy of South European countries via their EC admission. Then, the turn came also to East Central European countries and the Baltic countries. As state socialism collapsed, capitalism and democracy were rapidly introduced in Eastern Europe, and the participation of those countries in the integration project was a first-hand success for the political European project. This added to Western self-confidence and to the conviction to continue with the Western way in order to unify the continent.⁷ Beyond the possible influences of the focus on technical handling another thing was rather neglected in the integration process of Eastern Europe. It was the fact that in Western Europe national interest was often “disguised” as European interest. So, the European dimension stood in the foreground while French or German leadership was trying to sell national politics as European. Additionally, as this way of integration had been successful, it was hardly thought upon whether there would be an acceptance-problem by the new Eastern members and whether they would be ready to play according to the established rules of the game.

⁶ Western scholars have put forward that a reduced capacity of the French-German tandem to offer acceptable leadership has influenced the integrative capacity of Europe. See Hayward, Jack (2008) *Leaderless Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁷ For example in the historical speech of former German chancellor Helmut Kohl:
www.lsg.musin.de/Geschichte/Material/Quellen/vertraege-nach-45/Kohl_10_Punkte_Rede.htm.

Eastern Mental States after 1989

East European countries⁸ were free to jump on the European integration wagon after the disintegration of their political and economic systems and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. Interestingly, in Western Europe the year 1989 has to become mainly seen as a rupture, expressed by the term “fall of the Berlin Wall”, while in Eastern Europe the year 1989 is much more connected to historical uprisings against communism and seen as a gradual process of freeing itself from Empire with the goal of European reintegration. In the West the return to Europe of Eastern European countries has been understood as an adaptation to the West, to its liberal model of democracy, later named Europeanization.⁹ In Eastern Europe, the view is widespread that it was a historical-rooted process that would have also been achieved without pressure from the West as democratic and dissent traditions were well in place. Europeanization was a genuine Western term meaning the adaptation of political mechanisms associated with liberal democracies, the democratization of former communist political systems. It was a term associated to technical adaptation. What was important for Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic for example was the reintegration into the cultural, political and economic space of the “core Europe” that was Western Europe, not so much the technical-abstract aspects of this process. Therefore, we can also describe the post-1989 situation as euphoria, because a generalized-emotional view on Europe prevailed. It was also due to the fact that after the political turn of 1989 dissident Eastern political elite were able to occupy important power positions for a short time: For them the return to the European heart-land was not a question to be asked. For East Central European leaders such as Václav Havel the integration into the Western model of Europe signified a “civilization project”. And, the proposed integration model was the only realizable and desirable at that moment. This included to formally leave out ideology-based thinking connected to socialism and nationalism.¹⁰

The first East European countries that joined “Europe” were ready to adapt to the already existing model that promised economic welfare and stable, democratic political structures. As East European countries were in the position of solicitants after 1989 with their political

⁸ In this text I focus on East Central European countries, namely Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia, which were among the first Eastern enlargement group.

⁹ As expressed by the mainstream Western research on the Europeanization of East Central Europe. For example Bideleux, Robert (2001) “Europeanisation and the Limits to Democratisation in East Central Europe,” in Pridham, Geoffrey and Attila Ágh (eds.) (2001) *Prospects for Democratic Consolidation in East-Central Europe*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 25-53.

¹⁰ Interview with Václav Havel http://www.zeit.de/2001/06/200106_havel_delors.xml?page=2.

systems up-side-down, only few East Europeans bothered to propose future visions for the European project (such as Václav Havel).¹¹ Right after 1989 a window of opportunity had opened up, and beyond the euphoria, a pragmatic approach prevailed. Although East European states had to accept the existing organizational framework, the EU for their part had to accept East European state traditions and values. They would play again a bigger role as the more idealistic Eastern politicians-dissidents were soon replaced by political technocrats. Those mainly looked at the economic benefits of integration and that the technical aspects were fulfilled more or less. The perspective of becoming a member of the European Union disciplined and unified the political elite.¹² In some countries, namely the Czech Republic and Poland skeptic views were already voiced in the aftermath of 1989.¹³ The Czech Prime Minister (and later President) Václav Klaus emphasized the importance of the nation state, and warned from a hasty and little reflected integration. In Poland, governments after 1989 were characterized by a pragmatic EU approach that included skepticism toward deeper integration and the development of federal EU structures.¹⁴ In the view of critical elite Europeanization de facto was incorporating Western norms that were “disguised” as European. Such statements can be read as following: the technical integration into Europe had outgrown their goal and was outreaching to Eastern value codes, e.g. understandings of the nation and the state. This “emotional” aspect was not accepted by much of the Eastern elite.

However, the integration of Eastern European countries into Europe was of rather technical nature, and focused on economic and administrative issues, less on political questions (such as the influence of nationalist-based thinking or clientelistic structures in politics). The West (and with it the EU) did not question the re-emerging “traditional” value codes suppressed by the Soviet period and the 1989 political developments. Those were mainly values attached to the nation and their greatness, but also to religion. The fact that the national factor had long been ignored became important in the context of EU integration. Namely in Poland this factor shattered EU-politics. And it is worth to mention that this factor was discovered long before

¹¹ Here, it is also worth to point at the fact that the „German question“, i.e. the reunification of Western and Eastern Germany and its geopolitical implications evoked reluctance, and even fear beyond both Germanies.

¹² Gallina, Nicole (2008) *“Political Elites in East Central Europe”*, Leverkusen: Budrich, p.84f.

¹³ Harmsen, Robert and Mennon Spiering (eds.) (2004) “Euroskepticism: Party Politics, National Identity and European Integration,” *Special Issue of European Studies*, Vol. 20.

¹⁴ The accession negotiations that started in March 1998 politicized the Polish elite and resulted in a first debate on the benefits of the EU. EU criticism of insufficient Polish progress in implementing the *acquis* reinforced skeptic attitudes and led to an EU-induced political elite dissensus. Significant skeptic forces emerged, and political discussions on membership had the tendency to turn into ideological confrontations between right-wing and communist-successor parties.

the conservative Polish government of 2006/2007. Historical myths and interpretations of history and the historical “sandwich” position of Poland between Russia and Germany became important. Notably, those were negative experiences that resulted in the frequent loss of state sovereignty during history. They were put forward as a reason for strong patriotic feelings and the need for decisive foreign policy. Additionally, communism had contributed to the suppression of religious and national sentiments. The re-propagating of patriotic values was understood as a necessary component of an independent EU member Poland.¹⁵ After the transition to democracy, those sentiments had become more and more pronounced. On the one hand such “anti-politics” could be understood as to distinguish oneself from the EU (and the West, as the EU was much perceived as a Western-influenced organization). On the other hand the framework of the EU seemed as a base for self-confident policy-making.

West European Attitudes toward Integration of the East

Top political leaders of Western European countries welcomed the reintegration of Eastern European countries into Europe after 1989 and urged that “Europe has to grow together” (German ex-chancellor Helmut Kohl). Here, we also can talk of 1989 euphoria or optimism. But for the Western elite it was more because their system had “won” the Cold War and proved its political, economic (and also moral) superiority. The Western political elite were ready to take in their poorer Eastern neighbors, but under the condition of their guidance. This also meant to concentrate on economic integration first, and on the technical aspects of a common Europe. Initially, Western elite also had reservations to prospects of enlargement, because it implicated institutional adjustment, and included much more complicated political aspects of integration.¹⁶ However, issues of political importance, such as the deepening question of Europe were first left out from the enlargement process (i.e. the question what would be the end of the integration of Europe, for example a federal pan-European state?). Still, the deepening debate was much more virulent in the West. Eastern European political elite debate has concentrated much more on the widening of Europe and associated aspects that also have included political issues of intra-organizational power.

¹⁵ Gnauck, Gerhard (2005) “Staatsinstinkt oder nationaler Komplex? Was Europa von Polens neuem Präsidenten zu erwarten hat.” *Osteuropa*, Vol 55, No 11, 9-20.

¹⁶ Sedelmeier, Ulrich (2005): “Eastern Enlargement: Towards a European EU?”, in: Wallace, Helen/Wallace, William/Pollack, Mark (eds.): *Policy-Making in the European Union*, 5. ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 402-428.

For the West enlargement of the EU first meant the fulfillment of the 1993 Copenhagen Criteria, then secondly the incorporation of the EU regulation (*the acquis communautaire*). The first aspect indeed was a political conditionality, but a very mechanized one excluding delicate questions. The fulfillment of the first enabled to quickly shift from democratic conditionality to *acquis* (=technical) conditionality. The question of democratic conditionality and value incorporation had been solved quickly, and now the Western EU members regarded the accession process as a technical, bureaucratic process. This included policy harmonization in terms of institutional procedures and institutional restructuring short “Europeanization”. Subsequently, the Western elite somewhat forgot that the first Eastern accession concentrated on East Central European states with a democratic tradition which enabled them to establish democratic political systems by their own.¹⁷ On the one hand the West ignored Eastern democratic traditions, but on the other hand they also generously looked over past failed democratic experiences (and the reasons for it). In this respect, critique on Eastern values that might counteract EU visions and liberal democratic norms was little in the first years. This fact was also due to the political support of integrating the Eastern neighbors.¹⁸ Generally, mitigation characterized the first years after the collapse of the Soviet system: Western political elite were far from questioning their value systems, integration concepts and politics, but also accepted Eastern shortcomings (maybe only later recognized in their full scope). The East European elite accepted the requirements for accession, but did not alter their value and conduct codes.

The will of the political elite to unify Europe was strong on both sides, although integration became step-by-step a rather technical issue, left to the “bureaucrats”. This bureaucratization of Europe was much more important on the Western side. The Western elite delegated the integration of Eastern European states to a great part to the European Commission. Here, the Commission can be also understood as a prolonged part of the West, the Western elite to manage EU integration. In this sense the Western EU members had set up a formal, economic-oriented catalogue to “discipline” their East European neighbors before joining. And a bureaucracy, or exaggeratedly a “technical monster”, in the form of the European Commission guided Eastern European political elite and their administrative staff through the accession process. The enlargement project was put in the hand of a technical institution that watched over the fulfillment of the existing EU-regulation, the *acquis*. Integration was

¹⁷ Ágh, Attila (1998) *The Politics of Central Europe*, London: Sage.

¹⁸ Support was strong in Germany: http://www.zeit.de/reden/deutsche_aussenpolitik/200328_schaeuble.

realized as a means of restructuring with the bureaucratic features of stabilization or routinezation. In this bureaucratic-technical process the Eastern applicants had to cope with bureaucratic and technical shortcomings.¹⁹ But from a Western perspective developments were positive, in spite of some critique on the implementation of the *acquis*. It is important to note that the then Commission statements revealed certain mistrust of the capability to adapt Western integration guidelines and policy processes.²⁰ Among the positive assessed criteria were elections, the establishment of governments, and the evolution of East European party systems.²¹ In the wake of EU accession, formal procedures seemed to work, and the consolidation of the East European political and economic systems developed in line with the established formal EU criteria.

In the eve of the 2004 Eastern enlargement, the applicant countries were far more “Europeanized” in the sense of the rapidity and the profoundness of the process, than old member states. The desire of East European countries to join the EU, combined with the intrusiveness of the rules attached to membership, allowed the EU an unprecedented technical influence in restructuring domestic institutions and the entire range of public policies.²² However, with this concentration on the administrative-formal side of the accession process the Western political elite neglected the political factors. There are at least two important political factors that have been neglected when negotiating with Eastern Europe: cultural and historical traditions and underlying values codes of daily politics. Those aspects should have been part of the integration process. It was an implicit assumption (and maybe strong hope) that the East would adapt to the “superior” system and leave their old value codex and belief system aside, at best those would have adapted automatically to the new circumstances. The concentration on technical issues should have covered and depowered political mentalities. Yet the de-politization of the Eastern EU enlargement process was a fact that was not sufficiently analyzed for its potential dangers and seen as an asset, as the best possible way to include Eastern Europe. It was an excuse for not having to look too deeply into the Eastern subject. Also, this broad consensus impeded critics’ from speaking out loudly, and reluctants were cautious to identify themselves. With the European integration on track it could also be

¹⁹ <http://www.zeit.de/1996/26/europa.txt.19960621.xml>

²⁰ So, the “forerunner” Czech Republic had “problems” with the EU requirements for administrative reforms (that in 2009 still were not implemented).

²¹ See the reports in http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/key_documents/reports_2003_en.htm.

²² See above Schimmelfennig, Frank et al. (2005), p.1f. This volume is just an example for a widespread view of Western researchers on the benefits of EU regulation and norms adaptation.

expected that the political consequences of the “mechanization” would be outweighed by the benefits.

Eastern Mental States in 2009

To come to an understanding of the mental states twenty years after the revolution of 1989, the time period around the accession of East European countries to the EU in 2004 is quite important. As the accession negotiations between the European Commission and the applicant states in Eastern Europe went on, political implications of the integration project became more openly pronounced. In the East, the antagonism of recently regained state sovereignty and participation within a supranational project surfaced one and then. As those issues were not a part of the negotiation process there was an evident gap that could be filled in politically by Eastern political elite. Notably, in the Czech Republic Václav Klaus used his ODS-conservative party chairmanship for spreading Euroskepticism (e.g. with a manifesto on Euroskepticism). When he became state president in 2003, he intensified critical EU rhetoric.²³ In the light of EU accession, skepticism on the political elite level was mentioned loudly for the first time, being both policy- and national interest-based. Discontent of certain elite transferred to political party skepticism, such as to the conservative ODS in the Czech Republic. In Poland, on a political elite level, the right-wing oriented political elite has had certain reservations against the supranational vision of the (according to them, apparently German-dominated) European Union. As early as 1997, the Euroskeptic Polish Peasant Party PSL was elected to the Polish Parliament. In Poland, as in the Czech Republic the elite in general supported membership, but certain elite and political parties politicized on popular fears (Germanization, loss of national sovereignty). On the eve of accession, the Polish *Samoobrona* Party became one of Poland’s most popular parties as it satisfied the elite (and evidently citizen’s need) for boundary-drawing. It conducted street blockades and called for public resistance to prevent the subjugation of Poland to a superior European will.

The more Eastern Europe engaged with the EU, the more political EU issues became important on the domestic scene. The concentration on political aspects can also be understood as a sort of compensating the hard-understandable technical procedures associated with

²³ Details in Coustaury, Annabelle (2005): “L’ODS et l’Europe,” *Études du CEFRES n° 7*, Prague: Centre français de recherche en sciences sociales. See also the website of Klaus: “Mám strach o Evropu,” 15 March 2005, <http://www.klaus.cz/klaus2/asp/clanek.asp?id=dEKHQkpYstjx>; on the European Constitution: “Před debatou o Euroústavě,” 13 June 2007, <http://www.klaus.cz/klaus2/asp/clanek.asp?id=jcGemB95dZjR>.

the EU. Skepticism in Poland or the Czech Republic was to a large extent policy-based, concentrating on policies attached to identity and national questions (for example agricultural policy). This increased the role of EU issues within political elite quarrels. Oppositional elites used EU affairs to criticize governing elites, particularly when the regular EU reports on the progress of each candidate country were released. As the EU accession grew nearer, skepticism became more openly national interest-based.²⁴ Skepticism also reached another (international) level as it was attached to discussion on the political structure of the EU. Slowly, skepticism did first cover widening-debates, later also deepening-debates of the EU. Disruptions with Poland were especially important. First, in the pre-accession stage when EU-Treaties, namely the 2001 adopted Nice-treaty, were renegotiated. Then, Poland and the Czech Republic loudly argued against a revision of the voting rights that would have given “big” members (France and Germany) a voting advantage over the new Eastern members. Former Polish President Alexander Kwaśniewski (1995-2005) agreed with Czech President Václav Klaus that the new members should have the same rights as the old members, i.e., that the old voting weights should also apply to the new members. The treaty was attached to denationalization and the loss of national competences in favor of old members.²⁵ The treaty discussion was not only seen as necessary in the context of the widening of Europe, but it was also seen as a question of deepening Europe. A similar situation occurred with the debate on a possible EU Constitution. Here, a reluctant view on political EU issues concerning deepening had already spread in the political elite, especially in the right-wing elite. The then The 2006/2007 governing Polish right-wing PiS rejected the EU Constitution and demanded a referendum on it. Moreover, EU policies were suspected of being instrumentalized in order to recolonize the country within a supranational body. Thus, the government strongly objected internationalist (and nationalist) motives of old European Union members and was little willing to support the Europeanization process with its levelling tendencies.²⁶

²⁴ Szczerbiak, Aleks (2004) “Polish Euroscepticism in the Run-up to EU Accession,” *European Union Studies*, Vol 20, 247-268.

²⁵ Jan Rokita, a politician of the liberal conservative party Civic Platform PO, invented the slogan, “Nice or Death” in 2003, claiming the same voting rights for the new ECE members within the EU vote distribution system. <http://www.warsawvoice.pl/view/3562/> *Warsaw Voice*, 25 September 2003.

²⁶ Polish Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński, delivered a speech in October 2006 that underlined the Polish perspective: “Unia Europejska nie może być zdominowana przez jedno państwo.” [“The European Union cannot be dominated by one single state”] He continued “Między naszymi krajami powinny obowiązywać stosunki partnerskie, a Niemcy działają niestety trochę na zasadzie: kto silniejszy, ten lepszy,” i.e., in spite of the need for friendly relations, the Germans stick to the dictum who is stronger is better. Interview with Jarosław Kaczyński “Wyjątkowa zbrodnia na demokracji,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 6 October 2006.

One characteristic of the current thinking on Europe in the East is a controversial view on deepening-initiatives and the future of a supranational EU. The perspective of subordinating under supranational institutions has negative connotation in the East. It is opposed to regained political power and national self-determination. Generally, emerging Euroskeptic tendencies within political parties and single Euroskeptic politicians reflect the concerns of both the political elite and citizens with the political elite rapidly adapting to such needs.²⁷ Here, we might assume some indirect political effects of the Western-led EU integration. The Eastern experience in the accession process was that of a mechanized process with political issues largely left out. When it came to political issues, namely EU-treaty renegotiation, the Eastern countries were not taken for full members. This policy could have been also perceived as Eastern Europe is good enough for the West when it comes to implement technical requirements, but not for politics. Here, Eastern Europeans would not understand why they should be skipped, as they also wanted to be included politically, and consequently claimed their rights as future EU powers.

The neglected political-emotional aspects of Eastern Europe were to become important after the technical aspects of integration were well on track. Unfortunately, they did not work productively. Politics of skepticism resulted in obstructing the vote on a reformed EU Constitution Treaty in Poland in June 2007. Additionally, Polish political elite were offended as their achievements for Eastern democracy and merits of fighting communism were not valued sufficiently by the West. This attitude can be understood as an outcome of failed EU integration politics and misunderstandings between West and East. In Poland, the outcome of the “mechanized” EU integration process and failed communication of EU integration policy is a “negative politicization”. National value-politics are emphasized as in contrast to EU formalism and rationality that are perceived to have no emotional aspects.²⁸ In this logic, domestic problems became more important after the EU accession and EU issues were instrumentalized nationally, such as the never-ending ratification process of the Lisbon treaty in the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic was also in the light of attention as the prominent EU skeptic Václav Klaus was re-elected as president in early 2008, and openly obstructed Czech preparations to the EU presidency and the presidency in 2009 itself. In this respect we could argue that the post-1989 technical Europeanization process overlapped Eastern political

²⁷ Taggart, Paul and Aleks Szczerbiak (2008) *Opposing Europe. The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁸ Also the current liberal conservative PO-led government does “fight” for Polish national interests, namely when it comes to perceived German or Russian expansionism. Examples are the planned Russian-German gas pipeline avoiding Polish territory and the 2008 war in Georgia.

elite willingness to stick to nationalist concepts, and slowed down radicalism. But this policy was not sustainable: once Eastern Europe was guaranteed accession, the doors were open for a re-nationalization. The observable fact are nationalist tendencies in all Eastern European countries.

Western Mental states in 2009

For the Western political elite it has always been important to keep control over EU integration processes and integration policy in general. This has been not only important in the context of integrating the East, considered a widening of the organization, but also in the light of deepening the organization, i.e. enhancing its integration quality. The problem of the Western-led EU integration process actually has always been that technical integration worked rather well. For example, economic integration that was perceived as a technical matter was achieved to a high degree. Concerning integration measures that are connected to political-emotional aspects, success has been much more difficult. Such, the EU has not only faced an enlarging the organization, but hand in hand with it went the reform of political structures and the possible conception of a supranational structure including East and West. Here, a decisive feature of the Western political elite (namely France and Germany) has been to they see a positive side in integrating into supranational structures. Officially, Western elite support initiatives such the European Constitution, even if those ideas might not be fully supported by the citizenry. This gap between integrationist, European identity thoughts and ideas of national identity of the political elite and citizenry have been largely discussed for the Western European situation.²⁹ In general the Western political elite are more open than the respective citizenry what has been showed several times, e.g. when French and Dutch citizens rejected a Constitution for Europe in 2005. Also, the Irish vote on the Lisbon Treaty was negative.³⁰ In practice each member is eager to defend the own national “rights”. The majority of the established elite, however, do not think explicitly in national terms when it comes to theoretical integration proposals. Western elite try to maintain a façade of a denationalized West in the realm of EU politics. As a consequence, Western European political elite are more open for all-European, integrationist initiatives. But they might also less understand others that do not think as liberal on those issues. So, for the elite mental state

²⁹ For example again in Fuchs, Dieter et al. (2009): *Eurocepticism. Images of Europe among Mass Publics and Political Elites*. Opladen&Farmington Hills, MI: Barbara Budrich Publishers.

³⁰ Haller, Max (2009) *Die Europäische Union als Elitenprozess. Das Ende eines Traums?* Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

we not only can say that there is a gap between Western and Eastern elite (and society), but also, and this is different to Eastern societies, that the Western elite has alienated from their own societies. Here, they might think over their “elitist” projects that run against the will of both Western societies and Eastern mental states.

But concerning Western attitudes toward the East after the enlargement in 2004, Western elite feelings have been connected to disillusion. This has to do on the one hand with the East obstructing organizational reforms, but also on the other hand with a tending disempowerment in a bigger organization. Here, Western elite relations toward the East have been little conceptualized. Similar to Eastern European EU countries we can observe the evolvement of a different attitude toward the East in the light of EU accession. During the accession negotiations Western critique became more explicit and “personal”.³¹ Big members such as France or Germany took it for granted to assume leadership positions and to “guide” other smaller, Eastern members within the Union. This did not explicitly meant at “eating them up”, but to make sure that the enlargement was under Western control. The West would also have expected more cooperation or junior following of senior member proposals, e.g. when it came to the discussion of treaty-revisions or the Constitution-debate. As we have seen this expectation was misunderstood and the new Eastern members were not ready to cede their recent gained national sovereignty and their voting rights within the EU to the old members. For them, ceding rights to the EU would have meant ceding rights to Western national states. For the West this would have implicated not only more power, but also more stability and more decision-making capacity within the organization.

In the post-1989 political landscape few thought of the important emotional side of the integration project when the technical problems of accession prevailed. Even if the emotions were connected to the (nation)state and identity in the East, it was much more recommendable to focus on Europe and European integration. Much more recommendable even, it was to concentrate on technical issues, and not to think much on the quadrature of the circle how to reconcile European with Eastern national interests (as this issue had already proved very complicated in Western Europe). With the focus on technical aspects it was also implicitly

³¹ The media reports of big newspapers in Western Europe were criticizing the democracy-capability of East Central Europe or the current discussion of the Czech EU Presidency in the British, French and German press. Those media views mostly reflected the attitudes of top political elite (for example in http://www.zeit.de/2004/26/01__leit_2_26).

assumed that political decisions would be made in line with national interests,³² but not talked too loudly upon (or only in the very few cases when it seemed of very political benefit to do so). In the course of the 2004 Eastern enlargement it became ultimately clear for the Western elite that something new had stepped into the realities of European integration. Eastern Europe not only existed physically, but their beliefs proved also important. And their understanding of European integration could negatively influence politics. The obstructive influence of European integration went hand in hand with ideas on backwardness. In various instances before and after the accession Western political elite played off the card of “old” (and better) and “new” (inexperienced, attached to nationalism) Europe. Ideas of backwardness have been most pronounced among the biggest and most important EU members, namely France, Germany and Great Britain. The former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder for instance revealed that for him Eastern European countries stick to old-fashioned values and out-dated policy-concepts. So he characterized the Polish government elite by following a „nationalist, anti-German and anti-Russian policy“. Additionally, the French president Nicolas Sarkozy commented several times negatively on the Czech capabilities for assuming the 2009 EU presidency (e.g. “The Czechs won’t make it”). Subsequently, the French and the Czech side accused each other of obstructing Europe (this was garnished by anti-EU comments of Czech President Klaus).³³ In general, those events gave a negative picture of Eastern democratic and European achievements and reinforced Western elite understandings of the incapable and chaotic East. But the Western political elite could not fully conceal that they were prone to the same nationalist argumentation as Eastern Europeans. Examples are the projected German-Russian gas-pipeline excluding Poland or French attempts to relocate French car companies to France (among others from the Czech Republic).³⁴ Those quarrels shed a light on different understanding of each other, not only in the context of bilateral national politicizing, but also of different understanding of making politics within an international organization.

³² See Dahrendorf, Ralf (2003) “Making Sense of the EU: The Challenge for Democracy” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 101-114.

³³ The Czech Republic repeatedly delayed the ratification of the Lisbon treaty which also needed the signature of the Czech president (see the various reports in *Radio Prague*, www.radio.cz/en). For the Western elite, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy openly obstructed Czech initiatives for EU crisis summits. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/86261008-f750-11dd-81f7-000077b07658.html>. Interestingly, the Eastern coverage of big Western European media followed the critical Western political elite line. For example the overall-critical BCC coverage on the Czech Presidency: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7792317.stm.

³⁴ Gerhard Schröder on the pipeline and Poland <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,390182,00.html>.

Consequences for European Cooperation

The above considerations imply a different understanding of (international) cooperation in West and East. Multilateral cooperation within the EU is indeed of different quality than any other multilateral cooperation within an international organization. Here, we can identify diverging approaches in East and West that can be explained both by underlying mental maps and by understandings of the “other”.

In Eastern Europe the need for close economic cooperation was easily accepted, as those countries have to offer both (still) cheap labor and comparative cost benefits. The need of political integration is a more difficult issue. In the debates on EU treaty revision and a possible Constitution a very gap opened between Western and Eastern thoughts on international structures and common policies. Within Eastern Europe, political cooperation is accepted, but political integration that signifies a loss of autonomy and sovereignty is not.³⁵ In Western Europe, the political elite and the public have accepted the official rhetoric of a (politically) united Europe. They stick to this rhetoric even if “realpolitik” remains as nation-based as ever (and is wrapped into the EU-compatible term intergovernmental). In Eastern Europe both political elite and public were not conditioned according to the unifying-Europe-paradigms. In contrary to Western Europe, both political elite and public stick far more to the nation-paradigm. This thinking is especially relevant in Poland where incentives from outside to undermine the country’s autonomy are resisted heavily both from the political elite and the citizens. To some extent it is also spread among the Czech political elite and public.

Closely connected to the submission of a supranational Europe-idea are different concepts of sovereignty. Two aspects are very relevant in this context. It is the loss of internal and external sovereignty. External sovereignty can be mainly understood as the possibility to influence European decision-making (as the discussions around the Nice treaty and the Lisbon treaty have underlined). East European states are ready to cede some external sovereignty if their equality is guaranteed such as Western countries. Internal sovereignty is to a great extent linked to decision-autonomy in the field of foreign policy. Here, limits to autonomy are not accepted. Poland can be an example here with its special partnership with Ukraine.³⁶ Different conceptions of sovereignty are also the reason why Eastern European countries rather engage in “national”-oriented initiatives, such as the Eastern dimension of EU-

³⁵ E.g. discussions on the Nice and Lisbon Treaty in Poland and on the Lisbon Treaty in the Czech Republic.

³⁶ Poland has repeatedly made initiatives for an Eastern Partnership including Ukraine. This aspect was also a focus of the Czech Presidency (See for instance in *Radio Prague*, 24 March 2009).

cooperation (for instance Polish-Ukrainian cooperation). Western elite are eager to defend their core competences concerning internal sovereignty, but maybe they are more ready to find a common stance in foreign policy matters than the Eastern side.

As a matter of different foreign policy understandings tensions have risen among EU countries. Examples have been the relations to Russia or the Bush-governed US. The relationship toward the Bush-governed US has been quite different. It was opposing and almost aggressive on the Western side, cooperative and friendly on the Eastern side. Here, the US-East European relationship has been often misunderstood. This relationship has emotional (as the US are perceived the winners of the Cold War) and practical considerations: The US are the only power that capable of guaranteeing peace and stability in the world. The position of a superpower is much more accepted in Eastern Europe. In light of this relationship it is again necessary to underline the importance of the old-new Europe discussion that was provoked by a 2003 statement of the then US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. The denomination of Eastern European countries as “new” Europe did much to improve their self-confidence.³⁷ The debate that generated the terms “old” (for Western) and “new” (for Eastern Europe) was telling, because it revealed much of the Western-superiority thinking and Eastern mistrust. The West emphasized its non-dependence on the US, while the East did not trust the EU and rather relied on the overall strength of the US. Some months later, this was most explicitly expressed by Poland’s and the Czech Republic’s willingness to host an US missile defense shield.³⁸ Behind these statements stood also the fear that West European countries would not help their Eastern neighbors in the case of aggression against their territories. The French President Jacques Chirac used this incident to blame the “new” Europe for not having the same positions as “old Europe”. In reality, both East and West connected their respective terms to their modernity. For France and Germany “old Europe” was positively connected with an united stance toward outer problems, and a confirmation of their moral integrity and seniority. In contrary, “new” Europe has been characterized by chaos, and not foreseeable politics. In Eastern Europe the terms have been connotated contrarily. In the end, both “new” Europe (the East) and “old” Europe (the West) interpreted the terms as “modern”. Interestingly, the statement of Rumsfeld just revealed the already existing implicit and explicit ideas on the “new” Europe and the Europeanness of Eastern member countries (and vice-versa).

³⁷ news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2687403.stm.

³⁸ See the latest developments under: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/opinion/obama-push-central-europe-missile-shield/article-180994>.

The Remaining Gap

Emotional and historical-cultural-based understandings of the other have played a role in the rapprochement process of Western and Eastern Europe. In general, Eastern European countries have been understood as being culturally influenced by the Soviet Union in recent history. This understanding worked as a layer and concealed much of the liberal and experience and democratic strive existent in the region. Hereby, the Western European states largely ignored cultural and political traditions of Eastern Europe that also made the turn of 1989 and the subsequent political developments probable. Among important factors that were not sufficiently acknowledged by the Western elite were Eastern political dissidents and the political implications of their actions, the fact of a Polish Pope and the strong worker movement *Solidarność* in Poland, and a remaining mobilization capability of formally Sovietized cultures (expressed in the Hungarian uprising of 1956 or the Czech Prague Spring of 1968 for example). As a part of this ignorance it was easy for the West to be convinced on having to offer the only and right way of European integration, and not to question Western ideas on (economic, political etc.) superiority. Here, a problem might have been that the Western countries assumed too much its integration paths to be the right and only way of European development. Additionally, the West did not have to face a similar political and economic challenge as the East European political and economic transformation. The post-1989 period of European integration and daily politics has revealed an integration gap in the sense that an explicit recognition of the “other” after 1989 has not been achieved in Western Europe. Eastern EU countries are still perceived as backward and not fully committed to the European integration project, sticking to their “national” agendas.

Here, we could ask Western elite questions beyond the perceived or not perceived Eastern European backward and nationalist character: (a) was this accepted from the beginning, and European integration had been managed technically around it to look over this fact? (b) had this fact been realized only afterwards? - and therefore we could find this a major misconception of the accession procedure and mutual cooperation? Accession procedures formally assumed the democratic ripeness of the de-Sovietizing states in Eastern Europe with the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria and concentrated on the technical-formal capabilities. Here, Western elite chose the “easy way”. Historical and political traditions of the East were ignored as there was no current necessity to count with those forces on a political level. In this regard, we can also suspect that the Western elite projected their daily,

shortsighted political needs to a European level and made no long-term considerations on institutional implications of Eastern European value and conduct codes (as they also counted on their institutional strength that would outweigh the new members). When the technical side of the integration process was well on track, however, the importance of the “technical” layer stepped back to some part, and political issues became more relevant. It was then when on both sides underlying images and conduct codes started to reappear.

Looking back on the way the European integration between West and East has been managed there is also another implication (that in fact might reinforce the suspicion of backwardness and narrow-mindedness). The above way of processing European integration might have led to the ignorance of a window of opportunity to pressure East European political elite and citizens for real efforts concerning the incorporation of democratic values and procedures. Because in spite of all the democratic experience and formal commitment to the liberal democratic Western system it cannot be ignored that there are major shortcomings. Important are value codes and clientelistic structures originating in the old political-economic system. They cause that there are problems with basic requirements for democratic political systems such as responsibility, communication, and transparency. What has been not achieved with the integration of the East into a Western shaped Europe is a major old-elite disempowerment to pave the way for new thinking and new political procedures. The fact that much of the old elite continues in office hinders democratic policy-making on the domestic scene, and with the view on Europe makes it difficult for new ideas to take root, in particular the idea of a supranational Europe. On the political decision-making level, East European political elite did not develop a vision for a common European future and preferred “traditional” nationalist-based visions. In line with their mental patterns, East European elite realized European integration as a means to draw a line against history, i.e. to get rid of the Soviet past (and threat) and to show cultural and emotional commitment to Europe, i.e. to the West. But this did not mean that they fully incorporated the values and goals of European integration, in particular the de-nationalization of their societies.

The technical aspect that has much facilitated integration has impeded organizational development in the long-term. The fact that the integration project concentrated on technical, economic tasks has not helped to overcome different mental maps in both East and West. The common market and to some extent also the common currency have been de-connected from emotional policy-making. In Eastern Europe, economic cooperation is still seen as a very

asset, but the political aspect of integration is not fully accepted. Even for Western countries it is difficult to “sell” political integration measures, or even a political fusion (examples have been Great Britain and Ireland, also Denmark). Political integration measures have been achieved, but they have left a negative aftertaste. It seems that political integration measures have been too quick, complicated and contrary to historical understandings, of the East European state (but also of some Western European states) and therefore mistrusted by the Eastern part. When it comes to political cooperation that concerns national sovereignty and autonomy, Eastern European political elite and society are reluctant. Eastern European states even bloc integration proposals that step away from nation-based political concepts and opt for a nation-based (foreign) policy concept. Political elite members, and also citizens, mistrust or reject further political integration measures as they are perceived of not accepting their sovereignty and own policy-concepts. Instead, the political elite might favor alternatives outside EU structures. Those “alternative”, i.e. conservative and traditional cooperation structures in the field of foreign relations, are also a very important a means to get the affirmation those states do not get from Western elite. The need for acceptance is (still) very big within Eastern political elite. We should not forget that it is only twenty years that the Eastern European national elites have regained their independence and that they are emotionally, culturally and politically not ready to cede their rights to an over-Europe. Moreover, for some political elite it is imperial in structure (here again we have to refer to Václav Klaus and his comparison of the EU to the Soviet Union). Rejecting integration measures is not only due to political populist reasons, but also to true convictions that national identity might be lost. In this regard, the EU accession process had turned thoughts away from the fact that Eastern Europe would face an integration dilemma. Either it was to give up a part of their recently attained sovereignty or to insist on political autonomy.

In the East, political elite use much national-based politics for political mobilization and conceptualization both against other societies and cultures, after 1989 also against a European society or the EU. The former idea of the French and German founding fathers to overcome national (Western European) rivalries is a goal that is not easy understood by the East. Eastern European rivalries dominate the political agenda in some member countries (Hungary, Slovakia) and in most of the candidate countries, and the EU has shown that it is able to function even with those Western members where nationalized conflicts are relevant (Cyprus, Spain, Great Britain). In the EU-context, Eastern political elite do not see a fundamental contradiction with European politics. More, such policy-making is explicitly undertook to

underline competence and moral right to keep control of policies considered emotional, i.e. connected to identity and nation. Nationalized politics suit the emotions more of both elite and public in contrary to the sterile “Europeanization” politics and are an important self-affirmative, especially for boundary-drawing and canalizing social discontent, and also because of the suppression of national sentiments during the times of the Soviet Union.

Maybe Western elite have failed in their effort to adapt their European model to the East. While the West wanted to be technically Europeanized, the East also wanted emotionally to be Europeanized. Connected to the emotional Europeanization was the issue of national interest. Accession had been in the very interest of Eastern Europe and seen as a emotional goal, supplementary to re-establishing democratic national states after 1989. However, as integration went on, emotions that had been placed into the European project detached from it. On the one hand accession had been achieved, on the other hand Europe was more and more equalized with a “technical” project. The Western map that concentrated on technical mapping was only formally adapted of the East. While the West wanted to be technically Europeanized, the East preferred an emotional map of Europe, i.e. to be emotionally Europeanized. Connected to the emotional Europeanization was the issue of national interest. Accession had been in the very interest of Eastern Europe and seen as a emotional goal (achieved with formal instruments). It was supplementary to the reestablishment of democratic national states after 1989.

However, as integration went on, emotions that had been placed into the European project detached from it. On the one hand accession had been achieved, on the other hand Europe was more and more equalized with a de-emotionalized project dominated by Western elite that differed much from Eastern elite in the way they understood and politicized on Europe. National argumentation by the East has been seen as an emotional counterbalance to it, understandable and more closer to political reality. As this method worked both to get the emotional side of Europe back and to provoke reactions on the Western side, it became stronger, was put forward more openly and more readily questioned methods and goals of the so far not contested European integration project. To put it simple: As Eastern Europe could not get emotions from Europe, in a form of “immune reaction” they got it from themselves. As a consequence national-based arguments became stronger, were put forward more openly and more readily questioned methods and goals of the so far not contested European

integration project. The proof has been a current sharp (re-)nationalization of societies in Eastern Europe.

In this context it is important to restate that East European understandings of cooperation have not been “reformed”. Integration concepts that are not in line of historical nation state understandings are problematic. In Eastern Europe, integration must be seen in a historical context. Reframing Europe means explicitly and automatically reframing the nation. This thinking is more implicit in Western Europe where integration is understood as disconnecting from national-understood history. On the Eastern European side there is an inadequate commitment to disengage from nation-based concepts and an over-defense against perceived “imperial” politics from bigger Western states, sometimes perceived as attempts to remodel East European nations under the guidance of a new Western-influenced superpower.

Maybe we can see re-nationalization as an indirect effect of the Western-led Europeanization process. Simplified, an chaotic and “incapable” East stood vs. an organized and capable West. For the West, a mental map of a backward Eastern Europe that is nationalist and reform-immune, intending to undermine already achieved integration achievements, has been suitable and played the ball back. The implicit concept of Western superiority was tolerated as long as membership had not been achieved and as long as the Eastern agenda-setting priority was evident. The West did not recognize that afterwards, the Eastern members assumed (and required) equal treatment and respect for their national-oriented policy-making. The result of this ignorance was the proposal of ambitious future integration tasks which some of the Eastern EU members obstructed. Here, the leadership-argument has been a powerful tool in Western elite hands in order to manage European issues (also the late 2000s economic crisis has been an example for such ambitions). But, the non-respect of East European mental states provoked misunderstandings on both sides, a sentiment that the East was the cultural backyard (within Western elites) and minority feelings (on the Eastern side).

In sum, a current mental map of Europe would include a combination of Western superiority that is not ready to discuss different concepts on Europe on the one hand and Eastern defense reactions in the form of reluctance and even stubbornness on the other hand. Those maps would be based on European ideas of technically feasible (West) and the emotional desirable (East). The outcome of such as (dynamic) setting based on a formal integration drive on one side and on resistance on the other side would be mutual misunderstanding and disintegration.

Twenty years after 1989 we can even say that the European integration has to some extent (re-)enforced feelings of Western superiority and Eastern minority complexes. As a result of Eastern blocking negative view of Europeanness in the sense of one “overall-Europeanizing” political bloc might even emerge. The current, formally unified Europe has so far not closed the gap between Western and Eastern Europe. In 2009 we can state that twenty years after the start of European re-integration we maybe have not achieved much.