

COMMON EUROPEAN HOME VISION REVISITED

‘Return to Europe’ as an Anticommunist and Transformational Device

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Abstract

The social representation of Europe as a common project driving unification of East and West proved the most powerful tool used in the post-Helsinki Europe to bridge the divisions of the Cold War and subvert the Communist takeover of Eastern Europe. It was endowed with historical legitimacy despite historical evidence in its favor being rather ambiguous, and was used by both Western and Eastern Europe to advance their policies in a combination of self-interest and identity discourse. It was not identical in the West and the East, however, and this article explores these differences.

Keywords

Return to Europe, EU enlargement, Helsinki, European identity.

Writing as the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, Francis Fukuyama famously announced the “End of History.¹” No ideology, he argued, would dispute the supremacy of liberalism from there on. Western democratic capitalism had proved itself superior to all its historical rivals and all other competitive ideologies have gradually reached bankruptcy. A new world consumer class was evolving, granting justice to those who had always been skeptical towards Socialism. In that context, Winston Churchill’s famous saying that socialism can work only in Heaven where they do not need it or in Hell where they already have it was suddenly remembered. After the fall of the Wall, despite strong controversy around Fukuyama’s argument, nobody doubted, however, that he is right in

one point, that the driving force behind transformation of postcommunist Europe must be liberal ideology, because it was the only one left standing. The implicit assumption was that ideology, despite recent evidence of its widespread failure as a persuasive agent even when enforced with the strongest hand ever -- that of totalitarian Communism- is behind political and social change. On quite a different line, I argue in this paper that an important idea guiding the anticommunist resistance and then the subsequent transition to capitalism and democracy was the concept of a common European *identity*, which should lead in the end to the reunification of the continent into one political construction. The original idea came from Western Europe and did not include Eastern Europe at all. It was however imported in Eastern Europe and refashioned as an anticommunist device beginning with the seventies. Centered on identity, rather than ideology, the idea evolved in the hands of very talented East European intellectuals such as Milan Kundera to reach the proportions of a social representation, one widely held by citizens of the region, inspiring and legitimating their anticommunist resistance. Their allies in the West recuperated it in its new shape and used it as a device to prompt liberalization of East European political regimes. The advantage of an identity discourse over an ideological one is formidable. Ideology is perceived as a choice, while identity is perceived as a given. Pleading to a 'return to Europe' was no longer, after a common identity was proclaimed, an ideological gesture, but an act of restoring the nature. Those opposed to an Eastern Europe similar to, and united with Western Europe, were therefore opposing nature and history, going against the organic order of things with their dogmatic and blind ideology. In this dispute the opponents of the idea were singled out as 'the ideologues', as proponents of Europe considered them to be above ideology. *To become European again meant simply to revert to the ways of Western Europe, seen not as the embodiment of an alternative ideology, but as a given of European identity. The step forward became, in this rhetoric of returning, a step back.* History and national mythologies were revived and required to contribute to the social representation of Europe as a whole, or East belongs with West. Perhaps this was the reflection of a genuinely deep collective belief that all Europe belongs together, but it became the dominant discourse also because the European identity was a less contentious card to

play for Eastern dissidents and West European leaders both than the cause of freedom and democracy.

The idea of a common Europe proved a remarkable success seeing the 2004 and 2007 enlargements to ten postcommunist states, and the EU's commitment to continue enlarging to the Balkans. But it has also become clear that a common idea on what Europe stands for does not exist. This showed on the occasion of the Iraqi crisis, leading to the division between a so-called 'new' from a so-called 'old' Europe. With the elections for the European Parliament of this year, when turnout in former postcommunist countries was under 20%, it became clear that once the project accomplished the myth risks being unraveled fast. This paper explores the traits of this social representation, its historical roots and the changes it experienced along the years through various encounters with successes and failures, as well as different uses in the West and East.

An Europe divided by Communism

Eastern Europe has traditionally been divided into spheres of influence, a mere reflection of the Western European competition among powers, with rivalry outmatching cooperation, and differences prevailing over commonalities. The unification of Western Europe starting with the treaty of Rome and the common fate imposed by Communists on the whole of Eastern Europe led to the idea of two halves of Europe, overstating the internal cohesion of the two parts. The fathers of the unification had little initial thought for the eastern part of the continent, trying to solve the heritage of the Second World War in their own half. There is no reference to Eastern Europe in the speeches of Jean Monnet, for instance. However, Robert Schuman noted in passing in 1963: "We must build the united Europe not only in the interest of the free nations, but also in order to be able to admit the peoples of Eastern Europe into this community if, freed from the constraints under which they live, they want to join and seek our moral support. We owe them the example of a unified, fraternal Europe. Every step we take along this road will mean a new opportunity for them. They need our help with the transformation they have

to achieve. It is our duty to be prepared." Konrad Adenauer also stated "we should also look eastwards when we think of Europe. They must be given the opportunity to accede".

The devil came out of box only following the Helsinki Accords of 1975. Proclaimed as a victory by the Soviet diplomacy at the time, Helsinki brought together the whole of Europe in what proved to be a hard to disperse again union. Of the 35 signatories of the convention, two- Canada and US- were Western, not European countries. The rest, including the divided Germany were countries of the continent, united for the first time under the same political principles. The civil rights portion of the agreement provided the basis for the work of Human Rights Watch, as it made respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms official pan-European ideology. Many experts credit the Helsinki process with helping to bring about the fall of autocratic communism in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe. West Europeans still believe that it was this peaceful approach, not the Ronald Reagan tough push, which deserves more credit for the fall of communism. And indeed the Soviets, when praising the security part of the agreements, such as the respect for sovereignty, the refraining from the use of force or threat of force and the noninterference in internal affairs had little idea how powerful the other part was, that concerning respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the equality of peoples and the right to self-determination. Not only did Western governments, the international media, and human rights organizations such as Helsinki Watch and Charter 77 apply constant pressure to the Soviet-bloc nations to free their dissidents, permit more freedom, and open their countries to international human rights standards, but the unprecedented agreement that *similar principles apply in both Eastern and Western Europe* proved in itself a very powerful tool. What followed was imitation in the East of various Western forms of civil society peaceful organization. Europe provided a niche for East European dissidents to escape the Cold War framework; it offered a new and more subversive form of legitimacy to their opposition to Communism. As the Polish dissident Adam Michnik put it,

‘For us, Europeans from behind the Iron Curtain, the idea of Europe was simply a rejection of the Communist project. It symbolised freedom instead of servitude, creativity instead of obedience and fear, colourfulness and pluralism instead of

greyness and uniformity, human rights instead of the principle that people are property of the state, open borders and legality instead of barbed wire, the Berlin Wall and preventive censorship'².

It seemed for a while that the Soviets could tame the idea for their own purpose. In Mikhail Gorbachev famous *Perestroika* manifesto (1987) he showed himself the main promoter of the idea. Offering a definition, Gorbachev would naturally also set the boundaries of the project. In his words:

‘Europe is indeed a common home where geography and history have closely interwoven the destinies of dozens of countries and nations. Of course, each of them has its own problem, and each wants to live its own life, to follow its own traditions. Therefore, developing the metaphor, one may say: the home is common, that is true, but each family has its own apartment, and there are different entrances too. The concept of a 'common European home' suggests above all a degree of integrity, even if its states belong to different social systems and opposing military-political alliances. One can mention a number of objective circumstances which create the need for a pan-European policy’

And he went on to enumerate disarmament, the environment and development as areas of cooperation. But very soon it turned out that it was out of his, or anybody’s hands. Central European intellectuals and their Western allies gave the most powerful shape of the concept by turning it explicitly into an anti-Soviet, indeed an anti-Russian concept. In the paradigmatic writing on this theme, Milan Kundera’s famous essay *The Tragedy of Central Europe*, Communism is already seen as ‘Asian’. By contrast, ‘European’ meant democratic and liberal. The reunification of Germany opened the door to the reunification of the whole of Europe and it was wrapped up as such at the time, in order to alleviate fears of German nationalism. As Joshka Fisher put it: ‘For fifty years the division of Europe cut right through Germany and Berlin, and on the eastern side of the Wall and barbed wire an indispensable part of Europe, without which European integration could never be completed, waited for its chance to take part in the European unification process’³. The reunification of Germany was indeed celebrated across the continent as a symbolic *reunification of Europe*.. Unleashed, the devil was not easily put back in the

box. History was outrunning Western leaders as well as Gorbachev. There is a striking note of panic in the joint letter of Kohl and Mitterand to the Irish EU presidency in early 1990, as they started to fear fall of the wall might in fact disrupt the process of Western unification. ‘In the light of far-reaching changes in Europe and in view of the completion of the single market and the realisation of economic and monetary union, we consider it necessary to accelerate the political construction of the Europe of the Twelve’, they wrote. ‘We believe that it is time "to transform relations as a whole among the member states into a European Union ... and invest this union with the necessary means of action", as envisaged by the Single Act’⁴. Later, Jacques Delors, EU’s most influential president to-date, would criticize sharply European leadership at the time, claiming that leaders did not live up to history those days: ‘La chute du communisme n'a pas inspiré les Etats membres autant que l'Histoire le demandait (...).’⁵. This was not true for many other Western politicians, perhaps not so high ranked, but bolder than the mentioned pair. For instance, unlike any other parliament in Europe, the European Parliament refused, even during the Cold War, to let drop the subject of a divided Europe and pleaded for a common European future where peoples could determine their future freely and democratically. And already in the first free and fair elections in Eastern Europe the idea of a ‘return to Europe’ was the main winning device. As four politicians who emerged of these elections -the presidents of the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary- put it in a common manifesto later on :

‘A part of Europe was, for several decades, artificially kept in isolation from the outside world. Values, which were then taking shape in democratic Europe, only survived in our countries at the risk of state persecution. ... The prospect of joining the European Union has, from the very beginning, been the engine of democratization and transformation which has taken place in our countries. A "Return to Europe" was what our citizens voted for in the first free elections’⁶.

Even that late, liberals such as Vaclav Havel still objected to the inclusion of Russia in Europe or the European Union. In a speech pleading for giving up the cold war stereotypes of the good West and the bad East, Havel nevertheless puts an Eastern border between Europe and Russia”

‘ Russia is a huge Euro-Asian power that will always play a very specific role in world politics. It is true that a part of Russia lies in Europe and that Russia's spiritual wealth has always had a pronounced influence on the rest of Europe and vice versa. But this does not mean that Russia should simply be included in the region that we call the West. ... A somewhat desperate effort to integrate everybody at all costs could finally lead to nothing but confusion and ruin. The true path to peace is the path of discussion, on a footing of equality, among clearly delimited and identifiable entities within the multipolar world of today. Or were blurred borders - that is, an uncertainty as to where entities began and where they ended - not the most frequent cause of wars in the past?’⁷

In the battle of ideas Milan Kundera's rallying of Europe against Asia proved far more powerful than Gorbachev's design for a loose Europe including the Soviet Union. Kundera's idea had a formidable mobilizing potential, but it also unavoidably triggered exclusion and simplifying stereotypes, as both Timothy Garton Ash and Maria Todorova showed at the time. Some of the stereotypes, as Havel explained in his usual generous manner, lasted until it was high time to give them up:

‘Soviet rule, both in the USSR and in all the satellite countries, was characterised by both spiritual and physical oppression, callousness, ignorance, empty monumentalism and a general state of backwardness, boastfully presented as progress. These qualities contrasted so manifestly with the culture and the prosperity of the democratic West that it inevitably led us to perceive the West as good and the East as evil. The term "West" thus became, both unwittingly and knowingly, a synonym for advancement, culture, freedom and decency; "East", on the other hand, a synonym for underdevelopment, callous authoritarianism and omnipresent nonsense. Needless to say, this hidden perception of Western superiority and Eastern inferiority - even though it can be historically explained a hundred times over by the contrast between the circumstances in the West and everything that came from Moscow, that is, from the East - is

untenable in the long run, nor does it constitute a good starting point for a new arrangement of the world. No single geographical and cultural territory must be considered a priori better than any other once and for all, or as a matter of principle. ‘

The process that Havel describes in this speech explains the power of the ‘return to Europe’ discourse. Kundera and the adepts of this idea geographically grounded the abstract Communism/Liberal ideological dichotomy in the geography of the continent. To be free meant to be European, to be Communist was Asian, therefore non-European. After the passing of Communism, it was rather difficult to revert from this simplified form to the more complex reality. And indeed the Central European identity eroded fast after it lost its main opponent, the Soviet Union, as shown in the mixed record of the so-called Vishegrad agreement after 1989. However, it was precisely what made EU’s strong initial attraction, the identification with Europe, was later revealed as an important source of misunderstandings and reciprocal disillusionment⁸.

The public itself mirrored in the early nineties the view of the elites. World Values Survey 1995 showed that pro-European attitudes were strongly linked with anticommunism and right-wing ideology. In the same time, however, surveys showed how interlinked the attitude towards NATO and the EU were, as the public perceived them as only faces of one and unique ‘West’, and would have been in great trouble to distinguish between ‘Europe’ and the ‘West’⁹. Indeed, as in the above quoted speech of Havel, they refused this distinction. And here the two social representations of united Europe differed in the East from the West.

After the Fall

Europe was not prepared for such a hasty demise of Communism and for the claim of Eastern liberated countries to be ‘reintegrated’. Following Kohl and Mitterand’s appeals Europe used the first two years of the postcommunist transition to advance its own project. The Treaty of Maastricht was signed as if the fall of the wall had never happened. But frantic advocacy by Vishegrad countries and the Yugoslav tragedy pushed Europe towards the East. As Jacques Rupnik, noted, there were two options on the table. The

first would have been an enlargement to the whole region, but through a long intermediate phase in order to allow Eastern Europe to catch up. The second option was to pursue enlargement as in the previous cases, on a country-by-country merit basis, and enlarge only when a country was fully ready. This meant a postponement of the whole process and therefore found Europe more inclined to select it¹⁰.

Central Europeans had found in Vishegrad a powerful tool to advance European enlargement as a regional cause, which made it a more powerful cause than a purely national one would have been. But it was competition rather than cooperation which dominated most of the first decade of transition, once Europe decided for the country-by-country approach. In a way, it was Europe which killed the myth of Central Europe. In the same time, Western leaders started to replace the terminology, gradually substituting 'Europe' for 'the European Union'. Only few Eastern leaders followed this direction, and the in the East 'Europe' kept is broader meaning. In the West, it has been effaced from the media soon after the liberation of the Eastern part of the continent, to be replaced by the highly technical language of enlargement. The documents adopted by the Essen Summit of the European Union in December 1994, contained essential decisions on the prospective Eastern enlargement of the EU. The June 1993 Copenhagen Summit had already declared that the EU shares, as a common objective of the Associated Countries and the Union, the wish of the former to become full members of the EU. However this statement remained fairly unspecified. The Essen Summit made an important further step to institutionalise this idea. First, it restated the Union's readiness to co-opt new members "if the latter wish so and if their conditions are mature". In both legal and political terms the EU had committed itself to an Eastern enlargement in a foreseeable future. Not to a limitless openness embracing all post-communist countries: post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav countries were not listed. Only the Vishegrád countries plus Bulgaria and Romania were taken into account at the time. The three tiny Baltic states and Slovenia were later added to the Essen list. It all remained a fairly distant perspective, stripped of any unification rhetoric as in Communist times.

This was perhaps done not to stir opposition to enlargement, but it fed many fears a soft curtain dividing rich Europe from poor Europe would replace the Iron Curtain of ideology. So surfaced the idea that the two halves of Europe were not merely a

Communist creation, but preceded Communism, and the fear that Eastern Europe will become second ranked Europe. The region had its advocates in the passionate works of intellectuals such as Claudio Magris or Jacques Rupnik. It was difficult not to doubt, when in Western Europe the use of the terms 'European Union' and 'Europe' had become perfect synonyms. Claudio Magris, in his famous book *Danube*, had already invoked this "other Europe", the one from behind the Iron Curtain. He believed that Europe does not only mean Western Europe -France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and so on, but also the so called 'other Europe', Eastern and Central Europe, which was not only forgotten, but was causing fear and dislike. Of course, the Soviet domination was the first reason for such a division, for this dislike, or at least for the feeling of distance from East-Central Europe, but a part of the responsibility is borne by Western prejudice, denying or ignoring this fundamental contribution of the region to European civilization¹¹. One east European politician put it clearly: 'Automatically, German unification came to life, because everybody knew that the German nation is one nation wanting one state and only one. The same idea did not seem to be so natural when talking about European unification. However, from the first second we said and the government in 1990 also said, that we would like to be full members of the European Union, but the answer was not unambiguous. We also know that there was some hesitation concerning our wishes, but later the strategic decision was made saying that we could be a member of the European Union. Of course we know this is not an easy process. This idea of European unification is not ripe enough. It is not in the air, not in every politician's head, or in the heads of the public'¹².

Despite the reservations felt in many member states, enlargement progressed, also helped by the successful transitions of Central European states. On legitimacy as well as self-interest grounds European Commission leaders as well as Germany remained committed to the project. Both Jacques Delors and Joschka Fisher present the enlargement as the only choice and argue that while it is unavoidable to extend it also to the Balkans if needs not hinder the deepening of the Union.

'I would like to make clear from the outset that, contrary to unfounded claims that those who favour an effective Community model would prefer to concentrate on

deepening the Union rather than enlarging it. Believe me, this ritual opposition between "widening" and "deepening" is not the key issue. In reality, we have no choice. Our brethren to the East, though separated from us by historical decree, are culturally, geographically and spiritually just as European as ourselves. It is our imperative duty to open our arms to them, at the dawn of the 21st century¹³.

Fisher puts it even more soberly:

‘Following the collapse of the Soviet empire the EU had to open up to the east, otherwise the very idea of European integration would have undermined itself and eventually self-destructed. Why? A glance at the former Yugoslavia shows us the consequences, even if they would not always and everywhere have been so extreme. An EU restricted to Western Europe would forever have had to deal with a divided system in Europe: in Western Europe integration, in Eastern Europe the old system of balance with its continued national orientation, constraints of coalition, traditional interest-led politics and the permanent danger of nationalist ideologies and confrontations. A divided system of states in Europe without an overarching order would in the long term make Europe a continent of uncertainty, and in the medium term these traditional lines of conflict would shift from Eastern Europe into the EU again. If that happened Germany in particular would be the big loser. The geopolitical reality after 1989 left no serious alternative to the eastward enlargement of the European institutions, and this has never been truer than now in the age of globalization...[we must never lose sight of the historic dimension of eastern enlargement. For this is a unique opportunity to unite our continent, wracked by war for centuries, in peace, security, democracy and prosperity. Enlargement is a supreme national interest, especially for Germany.’¹⁴

The renewed enthusiasm for Eastern Europe followed a period of oblivion, in which difficulties of the Eastern transitions featured largely in the Western media. As the most advanced countries became ready to join it also became clear that the discontinuity of the pan-European rhetoric had been a serious mistake. It allowed the counter-rhetoric of right wing anti-immigrant parties to set in, so the publics asked to approve of

enlargement in 2004 were quite different from the enthusiastic publics of the early nineties, when the social representation of a united continent was nearly similar in the East and the West. The efforts of Delors and Fischer must be seen as attempts to persuade a Western constituency whose enthusiasm has meanwhile considerably cooled. These attempts are however founded on self-interest, not the myth of unification. Also the European commissioner for enlargement, Gunther Verheugen, in his final speech to the European Parliament, showed that it was the Eastern determination to copy the West, not a given 'identity' which mattered for the success of process.

'Today's decision concerns the millions of people who paved the way for a free and united Europe with courage and determination. The peoples who have earned their place amongst us. The millions of people who for many years have shouldered the hard and far-reaching reforms needed to build modern western societies. We are talking about the Hungarians, who in the summer of 1989 opened their borders. About the Czechs, who allowed East German refugees into Prague. About the Poles, whose indomitable desire for freedom and democracy triggered the start to change in Europe. About the Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians, who have regained their national identity. About the Slovenians who, after the collapse of Yugoslavia, resolutely set course for Europe. About the Slovaks, who have unflagging confidence in their future in the European family'¹⁵.

Verheugen gives a glimpse on how enlargement actually worked as a transformation strategy. *By imitation*, so in the same way that the idea of ‘return to Europe’ had previously worked as an anticommunist device. East must become as West, this time not just in the broad lines, but also in detail. There was no ‘return’ as such, but an adoption without reservation of the *acquis communautaire*, the massive EU common legislation, and compulsory for the new entrants, who did not benefit from the possibility of some old members to opt out. The technical character of Europe repelled especially the old dissidents, who had a vision of their own. In the words of Adam Michnik, mirrored by the Prime Minister of Slovakia, one of the dissidents who made a political career:

‘Is the new, united Europe born from the spirit of philosophy or the spirit of economics? From Aristotle and Plato, or Schroeder (or better Kohl) and Van den Broek? If the new Europe is to be uniquely the product of economy and Brussels’ bureaucracy, will its labyrinths created at the beginning of the new century put into practice Kafka’s labyrinths from the beginnings of the last century?’¹⁶

‘Today, in our talk about the European Union we stress European directives, talk about regulations, prepare a far-reaching institutional reform. But if our project is to be strong, it would have to rely on something different than just these aspects, however important they are. European Union of the future is not a matter of regulations, it is a matter of our creativity. Europe will still be defined by its vision¹⁷’.

A vision, but which one? At the Prague NATO summit in 2002 Vaclav Havel again emerged as a spokesperson for the region, expressing the fear that Europe is not answering properly to its historical mission. As it was shown a year later in the Iraqi crisis, the vision of Europe and especially Europe’s role in the world differed in important points from East to West. The ‘old’ Europeans wanted to continue integration and concentrate more on the deepening of the Union than on the outside world. The newcomers were closer to the vision of Tony Blair and many European conservatives,

who wanted a larger, but not a deeper Europe. The newcomers also wanted a common foreign policy of Europe, but not the one hard-core European countries wanted. They differed sharply from the West on issues such as relations with United States, the role of NATO, and the future borders of Europe. New Europe dreads a common foreign policy which would look as an appendix of the Western immigration policy. The 'selfishness' of Europe generated strong criticism from Havel, who was later defending Europe strongly during the campaign for the accession referendum.

“The fall of communism has presented our continent with a unique opportunity to unite on that foundation and to become – for the first time in a very long time, if not in history – a stabilizing force in the world today.

[during the time of the great supranational empires or alliances in history] it was a deep and generally shared feeling that those values carried with them moral obligations. This, I fear, is precisely what is critically lacking in the Europe of today...

To put it more succinctly: Europe today lacks an ethos; it lacks imagination, it lacks generosity, it lacks the ability to see beyond the horizon of its own particular interests, be they partisan or otherwise, and to resist pressure from various lobbying groups. There is no real identification in Europe with the meaning and purpose of integration. Europe does not appear to have achieved a genuine and profound sense of responsibility for itself as a whole, and thus for the future of all those who live in it.¹⁸

The Iraqi crisis generated a real split in the opinion of elites in the two Europes. It also brought to the surface a conflict which has managed to remain hidden for most of the transition, that between leftist Westerners, whose vision of international politics was actually close to Gorbachev's and the neutral original Helsinki spirit, and the Eastern liberals, who were in favor of strong promotion of democracy and Western values, therefore siding with the Americans. A German newspaper accused Michnik, Havel and Hungarian former dissident Gyorgy Konrad or being too supportive of pro-imperialistic Americans, thus setting in motion a polemic which exposed further the very different

understandings of the world in the two Europes. Michnik defended the ‘new Europe’ view with vigor:

‘A German journalist published an article in the paper *Die Tageszeitung* in which he claimed that Vaclav Havel, Adam Michnik, and George Konrad, Europe’s long-standing moral authorities, had suddenly become indiscriminating admirers of America. Still, we are all the wiser for our history. We remember Munich in 1938, which paved the way for Hitler while enjoying the enthusiastic approval of the war’s opponents. We remember Yalta, whose original goal was to prevent war but which led Stalin into our countries. After all, the reasoning of the proponents of the 1938 Munich agreement seemed sound. People wanted peace, not war. They were happy when Chamberlain read the declaration he signed with Hitler and said: “For the second time in our history, a British prime minister has returned from Germany bringing peace with honor. I believe it is peace for our time.” It was Sept. 30, 1938. A year later World War II broke out. This is why we are at odds with today’s pacifists: We will not peacefully pave the way for those who committed the crimes of Sept. 11 and their allies¹⁹.

The second major difference is on the crucial question on where should Europe end. Despite expectations that newcomers will behave selfishly and close the door after them, the contrary occurred. Newcomers do not want to become the external border zones of Europe. From various reasons, from Slovakia to Lithuania, they call for an even larger Europe, thus threatening even more the prospect of deeper integration.

‘We should not stop where we are. No matter how grand a project this enlargement is, it would fall short of creating a truly united Europe if we leave Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia behind. Not only they would suffer, not only they might be thrown back into the turmoil of hatred and nationalism. We would all suffer; we would all bear the costs. It is in our interest to provide these countries with a clear European perspective. Even if today their own voice is still too fragile to put their democracies on solid

foundations, even if they need an additional momentum to push more vigorously for their own reforms²⁰.

In the last decade the transition countries bordering united Europe seemed to enjoy an advantage over more distant countries, resulted from the proximity of a development model: will this go on? Is the power of Europe to emulate transformation by imitation exhausted? Indeed Europe, or at least some of its member states, seems more wary than glad of this power. It has set in motion something of a crusade, only this time the infidels are more enthusiastic than the crusaders. One powerful argument invoked against further enlargement is that promises given too early, such as to Turkey, will return to haunt EU as pressures to accept a country before it is really European-like. The other argument against further 'rolling' enlargement is that Europe will lose in cohesion what it gained in territory; that the 'digestion' of the newcomers will prove long and painful, hindering closer integration of the hard European core²¹. If Europe were just a common market, it would run no danger over these matters. As it has ambitioned more than that, it is perhaps the time to separate myth from reality. Social representations are hard to dismantle. The social representation of Europe as a common project driving unification of East and West proved the most powerful tool used in the post-Helsinki Europe to bridge the divisions of the Cold War and subvert the Communist takeover of Eastern Europe. It was endowed with historical legitimacy despite historical evidence in its favor being rather ambiguous, and was used by both Western and Eastern Europe to advance their policies in a combination of self-interest and identity discourse. It was not identical in the West and the East, however. The general Eastern vision is for Europe to continue enlargement to the East, something EU is not prepared to do. Of course these different visions can be bridged: Europe is about compromise. But how far can core members pursue a common vision which is less and less their own, in a context which has changed considerably from the times the whole project was designed, without losing all interest in it? Publics in Ireland, France and Netherlands seem already to perceive that they were left behind. The idea of reuniting Europe proved remarkably strong, but the resulting Europe is likely to be quite different from the original design of the founding

fathers. This might cause some disappointment, but it would just be the unavoidable disappointment that history travelled at a different pace than we did.

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5 Source: <http://www.notre-europe.asso.fr/pages/delorsmiracle.htm>

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8 see Jacques Rupnik (2003) 'De l'élargissement de l'Europe à l'unification de l'Europe' in *Pouvoirs*, Paris: Seuil, 106: 2003, p 42

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10 *Idem* note 20, p 43-46

11 Claudio Magris, *Danubio*, Garzanti 1986; quotation after the American edition, *Danube. Journey through the Landscape, History and Culture of Central Europe*, New York, 1989

12 Speech by Janos Martonyi, Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1999

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- 14 'From Confederacy to Federation - Thoughts on the finality of European integration' Speech by Joschka Fischer at the Humboldt University in Berlin, 12 May 2000
- 15 Günter Verheugen Member of the European Commission – Responsible for Enlargement: 'Let us not hesitate in seizing this opportunity' speech in EP-Plenary session Strasbourg, 9 April 2003
- 16 Speech by Adam Michnik Erasmus Prize 2001
- 17 Speech of the Prime Minister of Slovak Republic. Mikulas Dzurinda at the Fiftieth Anniversary of the EPP-ED Group in Strasbourg, 1.7.2003
- 18 Vaclav Havel, "The New York Review of Books" – Volume XL, Number 19, November 18, 1993 'How Europe Could Fail', p. 3
- 19 Adam Michnik, 2003 World Press Review (VOL. 50, No. 6) 'We, the Traitors'
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- 21 see Jan Zielonka (1998) Explaining Euro-paralysis London: Macmillan.