

**ACCESSION OF UKRAINE TO THE EUROPEAN UNION  
IN PERSPECTIVE OF WESTERN EUROPE**

**1. Why Ukraine?**

In the context of considerations related to a possible further extension of the European Union, the question of Ukraine's accession turns up ever more frequently. As a matter of fact, this phenomenon has deep and justifiable reasons.

Ukraine is, in the geopolitical sense, one of the strategic key countries in Eastern Europe, and has been regarded, for long, as a country with which it would be extremely beneficial, from the point of view of the European Union, to establish fruitful relations.

Both its geographical position and the direct neighbourhood of the Russian Federation, of no small importance as it is, as well as the undeniable potential of this country seem only to confirm this thesis, which also finds a reflection in some publications on this subject<sup>1</sup>.

Considerations concerning the strengthening of ties between The European Union and Ukraine have become particularly justified in the face of the occurrences of the orange revolution. Irrespective of the fact that due to wasting many chances the fruits of this revolution are far from original expectations, a sort of noticeable determination of the Ukrainians to be a nation based on European values appears to be continuing. In fact, the orange revolution played a significant role in building up civic consciousness amid the Ukrainians. Owing to this spontaneous rising the society which remained for decades in the Soviet zone of influence, is endeavouring with much more courage now to regain its national identity.

It is impossible to disregard the fact that the Ukrainian pro-European tendencies started to take shape right from the moment of gaining independence by that country.

Notwithstanding certain modifications of the Ukrainian standpoint concerning its accession to the European Union, it may be generally maintained that starting from the times of President Leonid Kuczma Ukraine has been leaning towards integration with Western Europe.

The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed in June 1994 which entered into force 4 years later, could only be a confirmation of aspirations to achieve an ever increasing integration of both subjects of international relations.

Another problem lies with the fact that in the face of talks held on the subject of strengthening the ties between the European Union and Ukraine, the latter gladly remains at the stage of declarations and finds it difficult to introduce processes which may bring it closer to accession.

What is important, the pro-European tendencies should find their sources not only in Ukrainian elite circles. Nor should they be the domain of Polish circles which, to a certain extent, feel responsible for the “Europeization” of Ukraine due to the previous engagement of Poland in the talks of the “Round Table” and the orange revolution itself.

The integration of Ukraine with the European Union, or more broadly speaking, with West Europe, lies in fact in the interest of the latter.

The geopolitical aspects mentioned above appear alone to constitute sufficient premises for undertaking active steps leading to unification.

Paradoxically, Ukraine also creates for the European Union the possibility of consolidating its position in negotiations with Russia, not only by the fact admitting to its circle countries which belonged, still a short time ago, to the Soviet zone of influence, but also due to marking its presence in a distinct way on the territory which until recently was a part of the USSR.

Although earlier, the admission of the Baltic states as members of the European Union constituted a similar precedent, nevertheless Ukraine has always been treated differently by the Russians, having been a part of historical Russia and being felt as a territory genuinely great-Russian.

## 2. The Policy of the European Union towards Ukraine and the relations with the Russian Federation.

Notwithstanding the premises for strengthening the ties between Western Europe and Ukraine which are quite evident, the policy of the European Union towards that country appears to be extremely balanced and devoid of explicit and binding gestures.

As an example of this state of things may be mentioned, for instance, the communiqué of the European Commission for the Council and the European Parliament dated 11 March 2003, under the title “Wide Europe - Neighbourhood: new frames for the relations with our Eastern and Southern neighbours”<sup>iii</sup>. The work concerning this concept lasted for several months. In this document the Union, in the face of rising aspirations of consecutive countries, decided to define more precisely the limitations of integration. This concept was directed

however to two completely different areas: the South Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Autonomy, Syria and Tunisia) as well as the European post-Soviet countries (Byelorussia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine). These visible geographical, ethnic and political differences of the areas indicated in the communiqué made it more difficult to coordinate the actions aiming at strengthening the ties with the aforementioned countries.

A separate problem is created by a kind of unwillingness of the UE member countries being net payers towards further extending the European Union. Among other things this is exactly the reason why the position of the EU towards the problem of integration with Ukraine does not bear an unambiguous pro-unification character. It is being talked rather about a certain rapprochement and creating something like a free trade zone and common performance of a policy of good neighbourhood?<sup>iii</sup>.

Even though in March 2007 negotiations were started on the subject of a new treaty on cooperation between the European Union and Ukraine, since the present agreement expires in 2008, it is difficult, however, to speak about a significant breakthrough. It is true that among the negotiated areas of cooperation emerge such questions as free trade zone, energy cooperation, non-visa travelling, scholarships for Ukrainian youths and grants for the development of infrastructure<sup>iv</sup>, however the matter for discussion still seems to be only the rapprochement of both subjects of international law and not their consolidation.

The reasons of this state of things are not related directly with Ukraine itself but have a much larger context. Irrespective of the Ukrainian expectations the European Union should be consequent in building the best possible relations with the Russian Federation which does not give up its world power aspirations and continues to consider Ukraine as belonging to its zone of influence. Thus, it becomes necessary to carry out a policy of skilful balance between the Ukrainian expectations and Russian doubts.

### 3. Borders of Europe

The next problem the European Union itself has to cope with is undoubtedly the determination of borders beyond which it would not like to expand. It is worth considering if the European Union should be treated as a structure containing countries culturally identical or it should be seen as an economic union of countries with quite often very different ethnic and cultural roots nevertheless looking for a common macroeconomic denominator.

The disputes concerning this matter are almost non stop carried on in the European Union.

Supporters of the European Union concept of a community of countries culturally identical emphasize difficulties connected with the coordination of structures and thereby with common activities on the international arena taken by a formation that is a mosaic of such diversified elements.

It is worth pointing out that the origin of the European Union is a community based on economic relations started already with records in the content of the Treaty of Paris of 1951 that brought the European Coal and Steel Community into being. The European Union, irrespective of making attempts, has not formed mechanisms and structures in itself for carrying out the coherent foreign policy yet. The realistic estimation of the efficiency of the European Union activity shows in a clear way that economic issues are decided in it in the most effective way.

If the European Union is today, first of all, an economic community, it is unreasonable to shut it for new members, all the more, if the country membership of such geopolitical importance as Ukraine comes into play.

#### 4. The Future of Ukraine

Irrespective of the Ukrainian striving for unification, a lot of things show that the European Union in the nearest future is not going to determine the clear-cut time of a possible accession of Ukraine to its structures.

The situation is more complicated due to the inland political situation of Ukraine that is tortured by interminable disputes of the governing elites as well as the declining, also formally, position of president Wiktor Juszczenko, who is regarded as the most pro-European Ukrainian politician by the West.

Irrespective of the current difficulties connected with the constitutional transformation in Ukraine, it should be stated firmly that the appearance of the independent Ukraine is one of the most important events in the post-war history of Europe.

The European Union, first of all, should use the importance of this event by the active striving for tightening the cooperation with it.

On the other hand, the European Union can not, however, neglect not less important relations with the Russian Federation, which in the significant way have an influence on the

relation with Ukraine, because the relationship between these two post-Russian countries are still powerful and important.

At the end of his book “Ukraine is not Russia”, a former president of Ukraine, Leonid Kuczma, on the other hand, perceived very equivocally in Ukraine and in the world, allows himself for the personal declaration concerning the integration with Europe: “Our ground is not even as we would like it to be. [...] However, I perfectly remember how in days of the youth it was enough for me to conquer the sand slope and immediately there appeared the cross of the distant Orthodox church and then it was easier to go. Up till now we have not seen the clear landmark. Maybe we have already seen. Maybe Europe is our main sign-post”<sup>v</sup>.

Zbigniew Brzeziński, the former adviser of the USA president, Jimmy Carter, stated some time ago that “Ukraine will choose Europe and between the year 2005 and 2006 it will become a serious candidate for full membership in NATO and the European Union”.

It is in fact. However, the history of the further integration process of Ukraine with the European Union will create people interested themselves taking into consideration all arguments for and against of such a solution.

President Wiktor Juszczenko seems to share the opinion of professor Brzeziński: “The future of Europe is not possible without Ukraine. Our path to the European Union will be hard, but not necessary long. [...] The European Union membership is a strategic aim. There will be no Byzantine politics in all directions, but only in one: European. [...] I see my country in the Union within 15 years and talks about the European Union Association I would like to start after 2007”<sup>vi</sup>.

A new minister of the Ukrainian Foreign Office, Arsenij Jaceniuk, expresses a similar opinion stating that it is necessary to carry on the integration with the European Union and to have definite decisions in the new treaty with the European Union. Moreover, the Ukrainian aim by itself is not Europe, but European values<sup>vii</sup>.

In June 2006 foreign affairs committee of the European Parliament accepted the report concerning negotiations of the European Union with Ukraine. In its content there is, among others, a statement that current negotiations should result in signing the Treaty of Accession and in the long term the European Union membership for Ukraine. However, it is not the European Parliament that makes the final decision on negotiations with potential partners, but the governments of the European Union countries (whose decision of January 2007 on starting the negotiations about the membership for Ukraine was negative). It seems then that nowadays the only concession of the European Union towards Ukraine could be it entering into the duty-free trade zone<sup>viii</sup>.

However, it is indicated that Ukraine due to geopolitical reasons is to some extent condemned to balancing between the European Union and Russia<sup>ix</sup> in the same way as the European Union policy towards Ukraine should take into consideration the direct neighbourhood of more influential Ukrainian neighbour. Striving for dislocation of the centre of gravity in any direction could be very unfavourable. A separate problem is the determination of the place, in which this centre of gravity is in fact. It is a task for both the European Union leaders and the present authorities of Ukraine.

*The article was finished in August 2007.*

## Summary

The article is an attempt to show Ukraine as a significant partner in the relations with the European Union. The author presents the reasons why the European Union should aim at expanding for next countries. In conclusions there is an opinion, according to which, it is difficult to expect the meaningful acceleration of the striving for unification between the European Union and Ukraine considering the maintenance of proper relations with the Russian Federation.

## A note on the author

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