

Club of Three/ Ameurus Conference, Warsaw 3-4 February 2006
THE FRONTIERS OF EUROPE
Janusz Bugajski, CSIS

As both an American and a European, with multiple identities but not a split personality, let me briefly offer three trans-Atlantic thoughts about Europe's future contours. I will try to tackle some of the questions raised in the agenda outline.

What is Europe? When officials speak about Europe, they are invariably referring primarily if not exclusively to the countries of the European Union. But Europe is bigger than its parts and for the term to have both meaning and impact it must encompass the European part of the NATO alliance, including Turkey, all the neutrals and small states, and all the EU and NATO aspirants that have been accepted as actual or potential candidates. The latter includes 13 countries and aspiring states in South Eastern and Central-Eastern Europe that are not thus far members either of the EU or NATO. Turkish membership would not only help expand Europe's identity but it would serve its security and economic interests, and promote modernization, democratization, and engagement in the Middle East. It would also help undercut the specter of Christian-Islamic polarization and conflict.

European identity cannot be limited to a select few by a select few, otherwise it becomes nationalist and exclusive rather than internationalist and inclusive and a few countries may dominate the agenda of the entire continent. One important way in which Europe can become more coherent and institutionally complete is for NATO and EU membership in Europe to fully overlap so that the two most significant organizations in the northern hemisphere can better complement each other. The prospect of membership is itself the most effective foreign policy tool for both organizations, in terms of engendering domestic democratic reform.

American Perspectives on a Wider Europe: In general, there are two major streams in U.S. foreign policy approaches toward Europe – the alliance builders and the alliance disaggregators. The “divide and rule” strategy of “disaggregation” favored by some policy analysts involves dealing selectively with European partners, favoring some states over others, promoting or taking advantage of political disputes between the European allies, rewarding the most loyal capitals, and undermining any emerging common EU foreign and security policy. But such an approach is counter-productive and ultimately self-damaging. It could actually increase Euro-Gaullist or isolationist trends in the EU, limit the number and effectiveness of America's European partners, and further weaken an institution that can effectively complement American strategy in various parts of the globe – not necessarily militarily, but ideologically, economically, culturally, and in other ways.

For the alliance builders in Washington, it is in U.S. national interests to have a coherent and united European ally that can cooperate and complement America's political authority, economic strength, and military power in dealing with global and regional

crises. In the optimum scenario, a bigger EU and a Wider Europe would actually buttress the Union's security capabilities and reinforce the trans-Atlantic connection. Conversely, a more Atlanticist and open EU may encourage a more multilateralist U.S. policy at least on issues of primary concern to both sides of the Atlantic.

Europe's Future: The challenge over the coming decade is for Europe not only to define its identity and its interests, but also its ultimate size and institutional scope. In particular, both the EU and NATO, as well as the U.S., need a more effective and consequential Eastern Dimension for which many of the CEE countries and new members have been vigorously pushing. The CEE countries have sought to prevent any lasting divisions between themselves and the rest of Eastern Europe. Barriers to political, economic, and security integration involving Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, and beyond would damage inter-state relations, encourage Russian state revanchism, and potentially destabilize a wider region.

Similarly, the exclusion of the remaining Balkan states from both the EU and NATO could precipitate a new phase of crisis and conflict among states that emerged from the former Yugoslavia and their immediate neighbors such as Albania. And this could once again severely challenge EU and Alliance peace-making and reconstruction capabilities. Ultimately, it would prove more expensive to preserve the peace than to pursue integration more intensively.

Each CEE country has supported the further eastern enlargement of both NATO and the EU in order to promote the reform process among neighbors, to build productive market economies, and to ensure security in countries that remain prone to instability and outside domination. The new EU and NATO members have also injected a dose of realism about Russia and President Putin's expansionist and restorationist ambitions in Eastern Europe. Russia does not realistically see itself as either an EU or NATO member, but defines itself as "Eurasian" and co-equal to both multi-national organizations. Unfortunately, some of the older EU states seem willing to sacrifice the security and self-confidence of their near allies in CEE, as exemplified in ongoing disputes over energy supplies, in order to appease the Kremlin in the forlorn hope that Russia will move in a democratic direction and become a reliable long-term ally.

In sum, the future of European expansion remains uncertain. Much depends not only on the domestic reform process among aspirants and the European commitment of the countries concerned, but on a common European vision, leadership consensus, and political will power on both sides of the Atlantic. And in this I continue to have serious doubts.