

---

## Return to “EUROPE”

Doru Cristian TODORESCU\*

**Abstract:** *Despite the restriction imposed, the Western democracy model remained an attraction for central-eastern European people during the communist period. Throughout the Central and the East of the continent, in the aftermath of collapsing the communism, regimes and political system, economic orientations and foreign policy options have been changed. The enthusiasm of the Eastern European citizens towards the return to „Europe” was very high at the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century.*

**Key Words:** *European Union, Central-Eastern Europe, integration process, after-Cold War.*

**C**OLLAPSING THE COMMUNIST REGIMES in Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the ninth decade of the twentieth century meant, for the countries entering in the sphere of Soviet domination at the end of the Second World War, a return to the European democratic values. The process was not an easy one, since the decades of Communism had put their mark not only on the internal and external political life of each country, but also on the mentalities, lifestyles, the options and the way of being of hundreds of millions of people in the Eastern half of the European continent. Therefore, despite the restriction imposed, the Western democracy model remained an attraction for central-eastern European people during the communist era. However, even whether the events from 1989 gave the chance of returning to that model, the success of achieving the desired democratic regime depended on several factors.

---

\* Doru Cristian Todorescu is Associate Lecturer at the Department of International Studies and Contemporary History, Babes-Bolyai University.

First of all were internal factors, which meant the way in which every communist country perceived the values of Western democracy and the manner in which authorities in these countries managed the internal crisis. (Pușcaș and Sălăgean 2010: 91). Throughout the Central and the East of the continent, in the aftermath of collapsing the communism, regimes and political system, economic orientations and foreign policy options have been changed. In this paper, we will focus our concern on changes in the foreign policy options which have made since 1990, in these countries.

At the beginning, it is worth noting that it is not in our intention to carry out an exhaustive analysis of Central and Eastern European diplomatic initiatives in the aftermath of 1989.

Our approach is intended to be directed mainly towards the younger generation, which was not contemporary with the events that took place at the end of the 20th century. This is an analytical and essayistic approach, by which we intend to bring into attention the essential options for the further evolutions of the continent.

Since 1985 the Cold War had known its terminal phase, and diplomacy had become the main field of action. The United States President, George Bush, rushed the collapse of totalitarian regimes in Europe. On the one hand, he maintained a permanent dialogue with Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, from whom he obtained the promise that the Red Army would not intervene in cases of domestic changes in Eastern Europe. On the other hand, he supported morally, politically and financially the opposition in this region. Finally, the so-called “John Paul II effect” had a decisive role in promoting democratic values in Eastern Europe (Pușcaș and Sălăgean 2010: 92). The 1985-1991 period saw a dense and rhythm of unmatched diplomatic life. The result of diplomatic efforts in the second half of the nine decade of the twentieth century was surprising for contemporaries of that era. The crucial point in East-West relations was the meeting in Malta on 2nd to 3rd of December 1989 between George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev. And as history has shown, the meeting in Malta marked the establishment of chose, honest and trustful relations between the United States of America and the Soviet Union. (Vlad 2006: 657-668). Thus the consequences of the new Soviet-American relations were essential for the

## *Return to "Europe"*

internal and external policy decision of the other countries and European institutional structures.

It is already well known that in the period after removing of the communist regime, the Central and Eastern European states have expressed their intention to become part of the Western political, economic and security structures. However, while the Soviet Union still existed, the European Community was more reluctant in adopting measures for a fast integration into European political and security structures. The focus of the West was especially on the way in which the economic and political reforms were implemented in those countries, especially on how the transition to democracy was been carried out. On the other hand, the enthusiasm of the Eastern European citizens towards the return to „Europe“, which they were forced to abandon since 1945, was very high at the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century. All states liberated by communism have expressed their desire to become part of the European Community. During its progress, the European integration process has also accompanied by a special interest in the academia. From this interest resulted, at that time, both a literature dedicated to the history of European countries or the dynamics of integration, and a theoretical debate in which new paradigms were developed and created. (Alexandrescu 2010: 43)

Changes in foreign policy priorities were not just on the „Eastern“ side. Meanwhile, Western European countries have had to adopt not only national foreign policy strategies, but also a single European strategy for former communist Europe. The process was the more necessary as the last decade of the twentieth century brought, after the unification of Germany, the change of actors and power relations in Central and Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union disappeared at the end of 1991. Czechoslovakia was split into two new states, and Yugoslavia disintegrated as a result of an internal war that lasted almost a decade. Instead of all those states, new ones appeared, with their own internal problems, with options and interests, more or less adapted to the realities existing in the last years of the twentieth century.

Regarding the situation on the continent, changes on the European politic landscape after 1989 led to a process of rethinking the structure of the European Community toward a political union and economic and monetary union. At the legal basis for the new continental structures was the Maastricht

Treaty. The Treaty re-launched the European construction, the most important objective being the completion of the Single Market, achieving the freedom of movement of services, persons and capital throughout the European Union. (Ivan 2014: 97). ). In the same time, the Maastricht Treaty established a Common Foreign and Security Policy for the EU. The European Political Cooperation was replaced by the CFSP, which established the second pillar of a three-pillared Union. The CFSP should have saved the common values, the fundamental interests and the independence of the organisation. Its security and its member states would have been strengthened in all ways. At the same time, this second pillar had as mission to preserve peace and strengthen international security, to promote international cooperation, to develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. (Bindi 2010: 26-27)

The accession process would take place as each country applying for membership fulfilled the economic and political conditions and obligations imposed by decision-making structures at European level. These were natural requests, in conditions in which since 1950 the degree of European integration has increased both in terms of geographic boundaries, and in terms of the development of common policies and institutional structures. Thus, from an economic community of six members, it was reached a political union comprising nearly 30 countries. (Bărbulescu 2005: 67). The criteria for the European Union membership had become more complex and stringent. At the Copenhagen European Council, aspiring members were expected to ensure the stability of democratic institutions, to govern by the rule of law, to have a functioning market economy, and to comply with all membership obligations. Two years later, in December 1995, the Madrid European Council added to the Copenhagen Criteria the desideratum that candidate countries should have adjusted their administrative structures so that the necessary conditions for integration would be created. The Copenhagen Criteria were thought to promote stability and prosperity through Europe and to contribute to the constant and peaceful integration of the continent. Accession negotiations challenged the candidate countries to meet the provisions included in the 31 chapters of the *acquis communautaire*, while benefiting from the European Union financial assistance aimed at supporting the accession process. At the

## Return to "Europe"

Luxembourg Summit in December 1997, the European Council decided that the candidate countries would have to incorporate the *acquis* into their national legislations and to apply it. The European Union kept its commitment to the irreversible enlargement process and concluded the accession talks with the first ten candidate countries at the December 2002 Summit in Copenhagen. The ten nations (of which eight were former communist countries) had to pass and implement reforms that would ensure market economy conditions, support competition, and would generate change in all areas of activity. In 2004, the European Union concluded the accession negotiations with Bulgaria and Romania, tentatively (that time) scheduled to join the Union in 2007. (Marine 2011: 72-73)

As far as we are concerned, retrospectively, more than ten years after the accession of the last former communist states to the European Union, we can say that the whole process represented the reunification of the peoples of the continent into a constitutional framework that would facilitate their joint development under conditions of peace and stability. Joint Action across Europe involved an effort by Europeans to achieve good cooperation, identify common interests and especially to rid the fears that have marked the relations between the countries. And the experience gained by the Member States, as well as the successive enlargements have caused permanent adjustments and changes to the Community institutional framework, as well as to the decision-making procedures with the positive impact on the subsequent developments at both national and continental level. (Sălăgean and Todorescu 2010: 34). And even during the crisis and conflicts that have taken place on the continent, this supra-national system – the European Union – has proven to have a long way before it develops and becomes an entity that meets the expectations of each partner. And, the Franco-German initiative since the beginning of the Cold War proved to be a success.

---

### References

Alexandrescu Mihai, "Tratatul de la Lisabona din perspectiva abordării neofuncționaliste", în: Vasile Pușcaș, Marcela Sălăgean (coord), *România și Uniunea Europeană post-Tratatul de la Lisabona*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Eikon, 2010.

## Doru Cristian Todorescu

Bărbulescu Iordan, *Uniunea europeană de la economic la politic*, București, Ed. Tritonic, 2005.

Bindi Federica, "European Union Foreign Policy: A Historical Overview", in: *The Foreign Policy of the European Union. Assessing Europe's Role in the World*, (federica Bindi editor), Brookings Institutions Press, Washington D.C., 2010.

Ivan Adrian, *Statele Unite ale Europei. Uniunea Europeană între interguvernamentalism și supranaționalism*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura CA Publishing, 2014.

Marine Cristina I., *European Union Enlargement and the Redefining of Transatlanticism*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Eikon, 2011.

Pușcaș Vasile, Sălăgean Marcela, "The internal and international contest of the 1989 events in Romania. Consequences", in: *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, Tom XLVIII, Nr.1-2, București, Editura Academiei Române, 2010.

Sălăgean Marcela, Doru Cristian Todorescu, "Evoluția instituțională a Uniunii Europene și dezvoltarea capacității administrative a Statelor Membre", în: Vasile Pușcaș, Marcela Sălăgean (coord), *România și Uniunea Europeană post-Tratatul de la Lisabona*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Eikon, 2010.

Vlad Constantin, *Diplomația secolului XX*, Fundația Europeană Titulescu, București, 2006, a se vedea subcapitolul "Diplomația la nivel înalt și încheierea Războiului Rece".