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**THE «OTHER EUROPE» SINCE THE END OF THE COLD WAR:  
SCOPE, SPECIFICITY, PERSPECTIVES**

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*The paper analyses the evolution of the post-communist Europe, in particular its main features, its regional diversification (Central Europe, South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe), as well its future in the context of the relations with the EU.*

**Key words:** *Central Europe, South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, European Union.*

The First World War and the Paris Peace Conference led to the emergence of several new states on the map of Europe. Such situation was due to the collapse of three empires – the tsarist Russia, the Austro-Hungary and the Second German Reich. Most of these countries, together with the Balkan states, which had been previously part of the Ottoman empire, were relatively small, undeveloped, unstable and subject to the pressure of the neighbouring great powers – Soviet Union and Germany. This hostile external context favoured the proposals of regional cooperation within this new region, called *Intermarum* in Poland or Central Europe in Czechoslovakia [17, 14]. These projects failed to be realized because of both weakness of the new states and the politico-strategic differences dividing them. There was even agreement on the geographical scope of the new region, which was to include, according to some concepts, all the nations living between the North Cape (Norway) and Cape Matapan (Greece), i. e. Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Finns, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, Serbo-Croats, Slovenes, Romanians, Bulgarians, Albanians, Greeks and Turks [4, 46].

In August 1939, within the so called Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, USSR and Nazi Germany divided their future spheres of influence in Central Europe, which led to the beginning of the Second World War. For six years, the region became the «bloodlands» devastated by the totalitarian regimes [18]. After 1945 it largely fell under the domination of the Soviet Union, even if the fate of individual countries considerably differed (the Baltic states were incorporated into the USSR, Poland became a satellite country, Yugoslavia quickly left the Soviet bloc, but remained a communist country etc). The «other Europe» [16] reappeared on the political map of Europe at the end of the eighties with the end of the communist bloc, however there is no unanimity neither on its borders, nor even on its name. If the term «Eastern Europe» does not denote the entire region, like before 1989, some alternative notions (Central Europe, Central and Eastern Europe or even East-Central Europe) compete for primacy [10].

***Geographical scope***

The Western border of the «other Europe» largely goes along the former «iron curtain», which is due to several factors, such as history, politics and economy. For more than 40 years two parts of Europe were separated between «East» and «West». The «Eastern European» countries were authoritarian communist regimes and belonged for most of them to the Warsaw Pact and the CMEC, while the «Western European» countries were, at least since the middle of the '70, democratic, free market states, belonging to the Western institutions (EEC / EU, NATO, EFTA, OECD) [5, 1057–1136]. This was also the case of two buffer states, Austria and Finland, which despite having to respect the geopolitical interests of Soviet Union, could internally develop according to the Western model [14]. It should be noted that since the Cold War Greece is no longer considered to be a part of the Balkans, but Western (or Southern) Europe [21, 263–303]. Also after the «Autumn of the Nations» the fate of the region was largely determined by its past, as the major challenge the countries of the region had to face was the political and economic burden of the communist era. As the Soviet bloc structures were dismantled, most of the above-mentioned states tried also to join the Western structures, in particular EU and NATO.

The Eastern border of the «other Europe» is more difficult to define, mainly because of the ambiguity of the Eastern border of Europe itself. As this issue is out of scope of the present paper, we will assume that «other Europe» includes Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova [7], but not Russia, which is by its size and geographical location very different from the other countries of the region; it is moreover the former metropolis which dominated the region and currently aims at reconstructing its zone of influence. We will also exclude from the analysis the South Caucasus states, as there is no unanimity on the question whether they belong to Europe [3] or to Asia [12]. (For the same reason I will exclude from the analysis Turkey and Cyprus.)

The «other Europe» is internally considerably diversified [15], which partially explains the already mentioned lack of coherent terminology. Basically it can be divided into three main parts. In Central Europe, aka the new member states (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the Baltic states, Slovenia, in a lesser way Romania and Bulgaria), after the fall of the communism, the power went to the pro-European democrats, who with the help of the Western institutions introduced ambitious political and economic reforms which led the accession of the countries to NATO (1999–2004) and EU (2004–2007). In South-Eastern Europe, aka the Western Balkans (former Yugoslavian republics with the exception of Slovenia; Albania), on the other hand, the power went to nationalists and/or populist who in most of the cases were unwilling to engage in a process of reforms, but drew their new independent states into the Balkan wars. This tragedy as well as the geographical position of the South

Eastern European countries, which are located almost inside the enlarged EU, forced the latter to seek the way to stabilize the region and to offer all the countries (including Kosovo, which remains unrecognized by some EU member states) the membership perspective, albeit at a much slower pace than in case of Central Europe. In the new Eastern Europe known as the CIS states (Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova) situation was still different, as the former communists stayed in power. The three countries remained in the sphere of influence of Russia, which was due to the strong ties between the former Soviet Republics, absence of coherent policy of reforms and finally the disinterest of the EU states in the region, in particular the lack of the membership perspective [1]. Despite political changes in the region (progressive integration of Belarus with Russia, two democratic revolutions in Ukraine), this division of the «other Europe» remains relatively stable. For last ten years only Croatia entered EU and NATO, while two other Balkan states (Albania and Montenegro) joined the Alliance.

### *Main features*

The postcommunist part of Europe has several distinctive features. Almost thirty years after the fall of the Soviet bloc it remains considerably poorer than its Western neighbours. In 2016 the average GDP per capita in Western Europe was 35 thousand USD, while in its Eastern part – 8,6 thousand USD [24]. Such situation is due in particular to the less favourable business environment. In the former non-communist countries, the average Corruption Perception Index amounts to 73 (0 – full corruption, 100 – no corruption), while in the «other Europe» only to 47 [22]. Contrary to Western Europe neither of the countries of the region can be considered a full democracy. Most of the Central European countries are «flawed» democracies, while in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe hybrid and authoritarian regimes play an important role [20]. Finally the societies in the Eastern part of the continent are more traditional and closed than in the Western countries. Their inhabitants are more likely to regard their culture as superior to others and consider the religion as a key element of the national identity. They are also less accepting of Muslims and Jews, same-sex marriage, and legal abortion [13]. There are however some exceptions. This concern in particular the Greeks who «align more with Central and Eastern Europe than West» [11].

The international position of the countries of the region is also relatively weak, which is due to their limited economic and demographic potential (the countries of the «other Europe» account for some 178 million inhabitants, while those of Western Europe – for more than 420 million [24] and their only partial engagement in the main structures of cooperation in Europe. In the EU Council the voting power of the 11 post-communist member states, measured by the Banzhaf power index, is of only 20,4 % [9]. These countries are also dependent on the EU financial transfers, which

furtherly weakens their position. Besides they are more vulnerable to the Russian threat, as proven by Russia's cyberattack against Estonia (2007), its aggression against Ukraine (2014) and the Russian sponsored failed coup in Montenegro (2016) [2].

### *Perspectives*

The future of the post-communist countries depends largely on their relations with the EU. In case of the Central European countries, despite having achieved the EU membership, they risk to become the second class members both because of the internal developments in some countries (authoritarian tendencies in Poland and in Hungary in particular) [19] and of the «multiple speed Europe» concept promoted in particular by France. The South-Eastern European countries will be progressively incorporated into the European Union, but probably without getting a quick access to the Schengen area or the euro zone, like it is already the case of Romania and Bulgaria. In case of Eastern European countries, the EU has successfully implemented the main components of the Eastern Partnership (association agreement, DCFTA, visa free regime) in its relations with Ukraine and Moldova (the case of Belarus is very different because of the internal situation in that country). This could be followed by the development of the sectorial integration between the EU and the EaP countries [8], which could give them a status similar to the European Economic Area members. They will not be granted however the candidate (or potential candidate) status.

Because of the existing similarities and complimentary interests, it would seem natural for the Central European, South Eastern European and Eastern European countries to develop regional cooperation. Such an idea attracted in particular a lot of interest from Ukraine after 2014, since it was perceived as an opportunity to obtain support against Russia and as an alternative to NATO membership, which was so difficult to achieve [6]. In fact, such an idea seems difficult to realize, because any major regional project transgressing the borders of the EU and NATO would be perceived as a potential threat for their integrity, i. e. an initiative playing the game of Russia. This is one of the reasons why Poland abandoned the concept of Intermarium, favoring the Three Seas Initiative, which is a strictly intra-EU project.

### **Анотація**

*У статті проаналізовано еволюцію посткомуністичної Європи, зокрема її основні риси, регіональну диверсифікацію (Центральна Європа, Південно-Східна Європа, Східна Європа), а також її майбутнє у контексті відносин з ЄС.*

**Ключові слова:** *Центральна Європа, Південно-Східна Європа, Східна Європа, Європейський Союз.*

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