

The shaping of Eastern Europe  
Alternative priorities and outcomes  
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NATO DEFENSE COLLEGE FOUNDATION

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# THE SHAPING OF EASTERN EUROPE

## ALTERNATIVE PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES

*Conference organised by the*  
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ODED ERAN

## MEMBERSHIP MINUS AND "QUASI ARTICLE-5": THE REAL ASSOCIATION MECHANISMS

I am not sure whether I had the pleasure to be invited here because of my Ukraine – Russian – Rumanian – Moldova roots or because of the fact that I negotiated our agreements with the European Union or, last but not least, because of our role in the dialogue between NATO and the Mediterranean countries.

I would like to start by saying that I have strong doubts about the direct link between democracy and economic performance. Just have a look at India, a democracy with incredible economic growth. However, it is very likely that those who earn their \$400 per day would never see a ballot box in their lives. China, with four times the pro-capita income of India, is not a democracy – they would never even accuse themselves to be a democracy. So I am not sure what the link between economic growth and democratic systems is.

The rise of unemployment both within and outside Europe is a worrying phenomenon and may well go together with political developments endangering democracy. However, mapping upcoming risks in the region, I would not be sure that Eastern Europe is the storm centre. Separatists and isolationists movements grow also in countries with far better economic performance, as for example in Great Britain, France and Germany. Those movements are abusing democracy and it is not easy to say what is the danger, whether Eastern Europe or – in the longer run – more entrenched members of Centre-Europe.

I would like to submit to you a short list of things that could be done. The European Union suffers from a serious deficit in public relations, both internally and externally. Explanations and narratives are lacking, with concrete repercussions in the single member states. If British citizens are not aware of the fact that they are better off being inside the Union – and I hope this is not the case, but it could be the case, given missing information- then, they will vote accordingly, i.e. for get-

ting out. Indeed, parliamentary elections a couple of weeks ago, gave space to Euro-sceptic parties. In the end it got just one seat, but that results out of the British majoritarian system and should not be misleading. The party got much more votes than expected and the anti-Europe movement is growing fast.

Another big issue, often underestimated, is anti-Semitism and racism, more generally. Despite a monitoring body, the European Union does not concretely address the problem, nor does it treat it as a major threat. To that end, the appointment of a dedicated commissioner is essential, as it already exists for almost every aspect of European politics.

Moving on with longstanding critical aspects of the European Union, the democratic deficit is still an open issue. The strengthening of the European Parliament is an ongoing process, which, however develops at the expenses of other institutions, especially the Commission and maybe in the coming future at the expenses of national parliaments. Although essential to strengthen the democratic aspect of the Union, a long, difficult and complicated process is therefore to be expected.

As an external observer, I would also come to the issue on enlargement. It makes sense to me that Europe looks at the Mediterranean and central Asia as its strategic environment. However, I do not think Europe disposes of the adequate set of tools, or a toolbox – as it may be called. You are caught into the dilemma of having a natural strategic environment around you, to which you are looking with interest, while you are or were developing your institutional policies to distance this very environment from the European region, like the EMP or the Union for the Mediterranean. The association agreements, for instance, are all but bringing countries closer. Both the European Union and NATO have to rethink their approach.

The case of Turkey, for example, is enlightening. The country went through the whole process you asked them to do, army included. However, you are not going to accept it as a member now, and not in the foreseeable future. Tunisia, on the other hand, is a perfect example of a country which successfully overcame riots and protests with a democratic approach. The financial support which has been provided helped, but it is not sufficient to guarantee that the Tunisian people will stick to the European system of values.

What I call a “membership minus” solution would be an accessible, concrete approach to solve at least part of the problems listed so far. A similar process already exists, to some extent, but it needs to be further institutionalized under the framework of a wider policy. Concretely, it would mean that countries who have adopted the *Acquis Communautaire* in specific fields, would be allowed to participate to

the policy shaping process in that field. Tunisia, for instance, could participate to the meetings of the agricultural council. This way it would feel as owner of the process which influences and impacts its interests, without the need to formally vote. We are not seeking membership at all costs. And not in all institutions. However, we do want to be part and parcel of the European process and the influence zone of the European Union.

As far as NATO is concerned, I believe an alternative to art. 5 of the Charter has to be found, since it does not cover legally the Ukrainian case, while it should not become an excuse to exempt NATO from defending this country. This weekend, in Camp David, the Gulf Countries discussed some sort of art. 5, yet without any formal legal basis, just framed under multilateral relationships. Those countries, my country, can contribute to security in the region, without expecting NATO to rescue them from any danger. In other words, we do not need an art.5 in our bilateral relations with NATO. But, we would like to participate in almost all the activities that the alliance is running right now or is willing to open in the foreseeable future.