

The Expanding Universe of Europe

Michael Borshchevsky
Victor Yaroshenko

In the eyes of the creators of Herald of Europe, an important theme for this magazine is the enlargement of the European Union and the issues that this raises for the future of the European identity.

The discussion of enlargement prompts the question – Are the existing members, and the accession states, motivated purely by economic, political, or other motives of self interest? Or are they fulfilling a destiny determined by the geographical position and historical experience of the European entity?

We do not believe that, by accepting new members into its ranks, the European Union is motivated simply by economic and geopolitical interests. Nor are the existing members giving some kind of reward to those states. Rather, the European Union is confirming and upholding the very moral basis of its unity.

The peoples of the accession States have earned the right to become members of the European Union through their long history of suffering, especially during the 20th Century. During their history all the accession countries that have now joined the EU (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and also Cyprus and Malta) have paid a price that is counted in the vast toll of human lives sacrificed for the freedom of Europe.

This is the major argument in favour of the enlargement of Europe. It is supported by the length of time these states have existed as European nations and by their major contribution to the culture, economy and spiritual history of Europe.

Their role in defending the very existence of Christian Europe and giving it security during the last two thousand years has been invaluable. There was a moment in time when the future peoples of these countries stopped the Mongol invasion at the borders of Eastern Europe. The expansion of the Ottoman Empire was also held at bay by the struggle with its eastern European neighbours.

During the 20th Century, the territories of these countries served as a frontline in two World Wars. Then for nearly half a century they were an arena of confrontation between Western democracies and Soviet totalitarianism – a minefield, a potential theatre of nuclear war, and a buffer zone absorbing all the waves of global confrontation. These countries, subordinated but not subjugated, were fighting the Communist empire from within. (One has only to remember the Hungarian uprising in 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968 and the events of 1957 and 1970 in Poland). It was not only the American shield that gave Western Europe its opportunities for transformation, unity and free development; it was also provided by

the unstoppable magnetism, the attraction it held for the countries of Eastern Europe.

The fulfilment of this destiny however presents new problems.

Geographically, Europe has not changed. Politically, Europe has moved eastwards, right up to the borders with Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. This puts onto the agenda a set of difficult questions of interaction with these countries and the prospects for their European integration. Without such integration this advance to the East only serves to increase the pressure at the borders between continents and presages future problems.

The enlargement of Europe is an enlargement of the influence of European values: democracy, freedom, human rights, tolerance and diversity. It also calls into question the relationship between European and Euro-Atlantic values, including those of North America, such as a deep democratic tradition, individualism, local self-governance, and religious pluralism.

However, these moral and spiritual issues should not overshadow the real day-to-day challenges faced by the negotiators.

There are also mundane, practical problems resulting from the enlargement of the European Union. Most of them are similar in nature to those encountered, in one way or another, by all countries that have joined the EU at a later stage than the original six. Problems of applying new laws and regulations, developing trade relations and especially finding their own place within the economic infrastructure and the labour market. There will also be conflicts between regional development and the need for structural reform. Each country has to position itself both in the European and world markets. It has to determine its pricing policies. To what extent are they subject to pan-European standards and regulations and to what extent are they to be based on specific interests in the market and groups of influence within their own country. Countries have to adapt to a vast body of legislation regulating trade, banking, workers' rights, students, young people and pensioners.

Is the EU at risk of being divided into "age zones" where some regions will have a high concentration of education and science, or industry and production while others have an agrarian workforce or a high concentration of pensioners? At the present stage, perhaps the most important task for each new Member State is to find its role and place in the EU and to identify the pros et cons of integration. In doing so it should take account not only into its own interests, but also into its contribution to the future development of the Union as a whole. Inevitably there will be many conflicting interests to be taken into account in resolving these problems.

One key issue is to what extent the people of these countries will be involved as opposed to the political elite.

The need for strategic re-thinking of their role in the EU will confront the new Member States, and particularly their citizens with the question: to what extent do the commonly accepted "European values" coincide or conflict with their national values, way of life, cultural and religious traditions. (This question is especially acute in the case of Turkey and explains why there is a heated debate on the question of Turkey's eligibility for membership of the EU).

What is 'Europeanism' and what is to be Europe's current and, more particularly, future role in a world where global development will bring about an increasingly dramatic reduction in Europe's economic, demographic and military importance? Looking at the internal situations within the new Members of the Union, it is difficult to judge whether public opinion, or indeed the political elites who initiated and negotiated European membership, can provide an answer to this question.

The actual decision on joining the EU is historic to a much larger extent than it might appear from the viewpoint of today's problems. Experience has shown that where the European route has been chosen with the approval of society as a whole, that in itself serves as a powerful factor for economic growth and political development. One of the main positive benefits for the new members of the EU is that membership automatically provides powerful blocking systems against the possible restoration of any form of autocratic regime or dictatorship in those countries during the difficult epoch of reforms and beyond. Citizens of those countries are gaining freedom and democracy in the European sense of those words, guaranteed by European standards of political life.

There are however threats to the pursuit of this unity from internal and external pressures.

The current enlargement is taking place during one of the most difficult and dramatic times since the Second World War. Questions concerning the wholeness of Europe and Euro-Atlantic worlds are at issue, together with questions on the adequacy of universal European values. It is no coincidence that a strongly manifested discord appeared between its members on issues of relations with the rest of the world and primarily with the USA.

Not without difficulty, Europe is moving towards some sort of unity on important issues concerning global policy, the fight against terrorism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the situation in Iraq, participation in the anti-terrorist coalition, internal policies on migration and Islamic culture.

However, the populism of European governments, the dependence on weak consensuses of public opinion in many countries, the very structures of political

machinery are limiting Europe's ability to form a united view on global policy, putting at risk its ability to retain its position of importance on the world stage.

This remains an unanswered question for the future, how far these inhibiting forces will lead to the erosion of moves to European unity. Against a backdrop of provocative actions by terrorist cells and groups, Islamic fundamentalist and anti-globalist ideologists, who are propagating the seizure of Europe, the risks are great.

Values and attitudes

What do we mean when we speak of the essence of Europe and European values?

For example – what is Europe? How is it interpreted today by politicians and artists, businessmen and clerics, the military and, most important of all, by school children, students and young people from the 50 or so countries that make up Europe – not just the 15 plus 10, EU Members?

What meaning does Europe hold for people in USA and Asia, in Muslim and Buddhist countries, in Africa and Latin America? Which values do they accept and which do they reject? How is Europe seen by Europe's citizens, as opposed to the views of the bureaucrats of Brussels? Do they think of themselves as European or, perhaps increasingly, as Scottish, Bavarian or Catalan?

How does the drive for European unity co-exist with the trend towards independence for regions, cities, districts and subcultures?

Last but not least, what about the invisible Europe, unseen by the prosperous political Europe and unreported on the Euronews? That non-Europe that is growing within European cities – the Arab, Asian, African, Chinese, Albanian, Kurdish and Turkish Europe?

Movements and change

Europe rich and poor, growing and withering.

The competitive ability of Europe with its social economies against the backdrop of a dynamic but poor and rigidly cruel world.

Tolerance and claustrophobia, dynamism and conservatism which might be more truthfully called ostracism. Tolerance has become the religious and social norm. And yet alongside it is an obnoxious and arrogant rejection of anything alien, even to the point where the seeds of a new Fascism are beginning to sprout.

Nazism – is it the past or the future? Hooligans, anti-globalists, Euro-Islamists, million-strong masses of new Brownshirts and Reds, is it all a malady or a Carnival?

To what extent are the maladies of Russia the maladies of Europe and vice versa?

What would be the fate of Europe if, at its borders, new regimes were to appear, regimes that negated European values and freedoms?

Young people – what kind of Europe is chosen by those who do not take part in elections and referendums? Who are the people that would like to bury the “liberal-humanist project”?

Hot spots of Europe – the Balkans and the Caucasus. Separatists... The single labour market and the difficulties of its application. Ecological problems, conflicts between global and regional and corporate interests. The ecological crisis as a crisis of mistrust.

How does the enthusiasm of European bureaucrats relate to the real self-perception of Europeans from different countries, towns and regions?

How do old Europe and new Europe inter-relate? What messages do the new Member States of the EU and those that remain outside its borders whisper into the ear of their European neighbours - Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and Serbia? Unloved, uncomfortable, dangerous, not sufficiently European, yet similar and familiar like old friends.

What is “European Security”, in this new reality of a larger Europe and a larger world? In London, Palestinians and Jews, Russians and Chechens, Serbs and Albanians live together peacefully. Why do they kill each other back in their homelands?

Islamic Europe – a new reality and a new challenge, even though a look into the past shows that this is not the first time this has happened in Europe.

Herald of Europe – the new pan-European magazine in English – is not a translation of the Russian edition of the Herald of Europe (Vestnik Evropy) nor is it an English language version.

It is principally a new project designed for readers from Europe and elsewhere, to examine aspects of the development of Europe and its role in the world. The range of opinions represented in the magazine may well be opposing and even contradictory.

We envisage the magazine as a forum for the discussion of European politics, culture and development.

As our reader will see, the first issue consists, largely but not solely, of materials by British and Russian contributors. On one hand, this might be seen as a coincidence; on the other hand, we would like to see it as having deliberate significance.

Britain and Russia recently marked 450 years of diplomatic relations between their two countries. Both States have long traditions but their histories have been

markedly different. An interesting common feature is that both have been Imperial powers on the world stage but, in relation to Europe, both Britain and Russia have seen themselves as outsiders. That is, perhaps, why the British and Russian analysis of Europeanism and everything that exists in the space between Britain and Russia is characterised by a certain distance, sometimes a cold and jealous estrangement, sometimes a passionate drive for closeness to the point of merger.

Our magazine is being launched as a predominantly British-Russian publication, but we hope that from issue to issue it will be enriched by contributions from countries, possibly not even European, East and West of Britain and Russia.

We see Herald of Europe as a magazine for open and honest discussion of the very essence of Europe, its role in the world and European values. To a certain extent these values have become universal and global.

On the other hand it is tempting to see Europe “from the side-lines”, embroiled in the contradiction and danger, that every new generation and new century brings.

Today the world, and even “cosy Europe”, are facing new challenges and new crises. To see these, to grasp, identify and describe them are all aspirations of this magazine.

Nikolai Karamzin, the great Russian historian and educator, formulated with the very name of his magazine a completely new historic aim – that of Europe. He saw Europe as a unified cultural space, at a time when no-one else saw it in that way.

He published a notice in the newspaper the Moscow Journal:

“From the forthcoming January of 1802 I intend to publish a Journal under the name the Herald of Europe that will be the quintessence of twelve of the best English, French and German journals. Literature and Politics will make up the major part of it”.

This task seemed naively simple. But Karamzin was joining together something that had never been joined before and moreover, something that (at the time of the Napoleonic Era) involved antagonism, confrontation, and conflict.

We are launching our magazine on the threshold of the newly enlarged fellowship, a European Union of 25 countries, on the brink of adopting a new European Constitution; this is, without doubt, an event of major historical importance the full significance of which we have yet to comprehend.

The creation of the world's largest economy, with a population of 500 million and vast combined resources offers immense possibilities. At the same time it has correspondingly large problems and contradictions.

We will try to pinpoint these issues. We should also bear in mind that these 25 countries do not represent the whole of Europe.

We see our magazine as having world-wide appeal in the humble belief that an honest, bold, and unfettered view of Europe and from Europe might be interesting to people in other parts of the world.

We are not concerned about being politically correct.

We would like to become a publication that provokes – not violence, alienation, cynicism or confrontation, – but reflection and the formulation of new meanings and new values.