A STRATEGICALLY AUTONOMOUS AND STRONGER EUROPEAN UNION FOR THE FUTURE

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Abstract

The historical reversal in geopolitics and, as a result, in the development of the world economy in recent years must quickly be reflected in the functioning of the European Union. Today's world is increasingly in conflict between two rival systems of government. It is a conflict between a democratic system that builds an open society that protects the freedom of the individual and an authoritarian (or autocratic) system that creates a closed society in which individuals serve rulers. The aim of the article is to analyze the deteriorating situation and formulate the necessary priorities that will make the European Union more resilient and autonomous in relation to authoritarian regimes. A more actionable European Union will be able to return to addressing global challenges such as pandemics, climate change and the need to maintain global institutions. The European Union should accelerate its enlargement in Europe. It must also overcome the energy crisis and the decline or slowdown in its own economic performance. It will also be up to the Czech Republic to try to find an agreement during its presidency on the implementation of steps leading to the strengthening of an autonomous EU. European citizens want a stronger and more determined European Union, and it will be up to the EU institutions and the Member States to commit themselves to and implement at least some of the outcomes of the Conference on the Future of the European Union.

Keywords

European Union, Rival Political Regimes, Strategic Autonomy, Enlargement of the EU, Presidency of the Czech Republic in the Council of the EU, Wider Europe

I. Introduction

The aim of the article is to point out the number one priority, which is caused by the circumstances of the war in Ukraine and has geopolitical implications into the distant future. The European Union is forced to abandon the partnership policy it has applied towards authoritarian regimes such as Russia and China and replace it with strategic autonomy in relation to these systemic rivals. The article suggests ways to achieve this in the unity of all European countries respecting the same democratic values.

The fall of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe paved the way for an end to the Cold War and bipolarity. Related to this was the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc's structures, such as the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the Warsaw Pact, as well as some states (the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia). The European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance have become an important element of security and stability in Europe. Membership in them has become an attractive goal for almost all European countries, which many have already achieved and many are still striving for. After losing the superpower status previously held by the Soviet Union, Russia did not accept the situation and began to seek to restore its role as the world's leading power (Veselý, 2020).

In regimes with weakened democracies or directly in authoritarian regimes, where any political opposition is criminalized, such as in Russia or Belarus, there is a lack of corrective to correct the mistakes made by these regimes (Kribbe, 2020). It is then very problematic for democratic states to continue cooperating with authoritarian countries, or to build partnerships with them. Cooperation

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relations with such regimes either cannot be maintained at all or need only be developed with great caution. The threat of strong fragmentation and competition between systems of rules, political authority and economic exchange is becoming real. We could no longer speak of a global order based on unifying rules, but of unstable multipolarity with conflict potential at the boundaries of individual blocs. Cooperation and coordination would then be replaced by a policy of building walls, national protectionism and self-sufficiency. Earlier efforts to cooperate can be quickly replaced by rivalries of opposing systems.

II. The Current Crisis in Europe and the Need for Strategic Autonomy

The 20s bring with them crises that we thought no longer belonged to our century. First a pandemic, then a war in the Eastern Europe, as a source of energy crisis and economic slowdown accompanied by double-digit inflation. And even the foreseeable ones, such as the fight against ongoing climate change, cannot be underestimated. These are challenges that force the European Union institutions to take a high degree of responsibility for incorporating them into the future development strategy. The role of the current triad, made up of France, Czechia and Sweden, is crucial in this context.

As the pandemic subsided, the war in Ukraine became a major crisis in the history of the European Union. This crisis is at the same time a security, humanitarian, and subsequently energy and economic crisis. This is happening at a time when European countries are still facing the consequences of the greatest health threat to civilization in the last hundred years. The greatest success of the European integration process, i. e. peace in Europe based on respect for territorial borders, the rule of law, human rights and democratic sovereignty, has been unprecedentedly undermined by the aggression of the Russian Federation towards Ukraine. Even the Balkan wars in the 1990s were not such a major threat to Europe as a whole compared to the current conflict, which has been turning into a Cold War and a new installation of the Iron Curtain for a long time. The defense of the invaded state against the aggressor is provoked with the need to protect a secure and democratic Europe, built for seventy-seven years.

The concept of strategic autonomy is not new. It was born in the field of defence industry and, for a long time, it was reduced to issues of defence and security. The new situation in which Europe finds itself in 10´s of the 21st century (the occupation of Crimea in 2014 and its annexation to Russia, as well as the policy of the Trump government in the USA) is a strong signal that the European Union must urgently significantly strengthen its foreign political and security dimension and be prepared to act assertively towards their partners and rivals. At first, the debate was limited for some time to a clash between those for whom strategic autonomy was a means of regaining political space vis-à-vis the United States. It soon became clear that strategic autonomy should be applied and extended to new entities of an economic and technological nature, as revealed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Eastern Europe. However, the security dimension remains dominant.

Assertiveness is precisely the ability to express one's thoughts and feelings openly in a way that does not violate the rights of other countries. It is sincere communication that will give the European Union confidence and, as a result, respect. Key in this definition is non-violation of another person's rights, which distinguishes assertiveness from aggression. The EU Council came closest to defining strategic autonomy in its conclusions of November 2016. This is where the expression "the ability to act autonomously when necessary and with partners whenever possible" comes from (European Union External Action, 2020).

Strategic autonomy is more important than ever because the world has changed. If the European Union wants to be able to act as a global player, it must be autonomous. So what are the factors that make this concept more relevant than ever?

The first is that Europe's weight in the world is dwindling. Thirty years ago, the EU accounted for a quarter of the world's wealth. We are not expected to account for more than 11 % of the world's GNP in 20 years, far behind China, which will double, less than 14 % for the United States

and at the same level as India. The next two decades will be crucial as China uses them to become the first global power before confronting itself with new demographic constraints that will slow its rise. It could be replaced in its leadership position by India. It can be stated that if the EU countries do not act together now, they will become irrelevant. From this point of view, strategic autonomy is a process of political survival. In such a context, our traditional alliances remain absolutely essential.

The second factor relates to the transformation of economic interdependence, in which the Europeans have invested heavily, especially through the defense of multilateralism. Today, Europe is in a situation where economic interdependence is becoming very politically conflictual. The Covid-19 crisis has exposed the fundamentally asymmetric nature of Europe's interdependence and vulnerability.

Another important reason is the shift in global focus on Asia, especially in US politics. This trend did not start with the Trump administration, but earlier, during the Obama administration. In conflicts such as Nagorno-Karabakh, Libya and Syria, we are witnessing the exclusion of Europe from conflict resolution in favor of Russia and Turkey. In addition, Europe today on its periphery is confronted with a number of conflicts or tensions in the Sahel, Libya and the Eastern Mediterranean. In these three cases, Europe must act even more and alone, because these problems do not primarily concern the United States. That is why the EU needs to fill many capabilities and gaps and be present and active in areas where European interests are at stake.

Europeans still perceive risks differently. Now, despite the broad consensus, things are becoming more complicated when it comes to defining the concrete consequences of this orientation and the level of strategic autonomy it entails. You can be more or less autonomous, depending on what issues and with which actors. Not all European countries see the problems from the same perspective, because they do not share the same history or the same geography. And as a result, they do not have the same strategic perception. And it's not just about Hungary. Although EU Member States generally agree to face the same risks, perceptions of these risks are necessarily differentiated. In the east, south or southeast, the perception of threats and dangers is not the same. From this point of view, the Strategic Compass, which is currently being prepared, will be very important, as it aims to harmonize the perception of threats and risks. As the country holding the EU presidency, the Czechia can play an important role in this.

However, the framework we need to define cannot be an expression of the preferences of the most powerful states. Because no state in Europe has the right to educate others about defining Europe's threats and interests. This shows that there is not only cooperation but also solidarity that helps each other to address the full range of threats. When talking about problems, it is also about the Union's relationship with NATO and especially with the United States. However, the positions are not as far apart as it might seem. The need for a common EU foreign and security policy is no longer denied or downplayed. At the same time, no one questions the fundamental nature of the transatlantic relationship, and no one advocates the development of fully autonomous European forces outside NATO, which remain the only viable framework for ensuring Europe's territorial defense.

Since the Warsaw and Brussels Declarations of July 2016 and July 2018, EU-NATO cooperation has reached "unprecedented levels", as confirmed in the London Declaration of the Allied Leaders of December 2019. Europeans and Americans will work closely together. Only a more capable, and thus more autonomous, Europe can work meaningfully with the US administration. Therefore, consolidation of the European pillar in defense and security is needed. And the pace at which it develops will be at the heart of the debate on strategic autonomy. Some want to go further than others because they see it as a political goal that implies much stronger mobilization. Moreover, as far as the Atlantic Alliance is concerned, it can only really work if it acts as an evolving relationship between consensual and equal partners. That is why that European strategic autonomy is fully compatible with and even a condition for a stronger transatlantic link. If the relationship between its members is static or unbalanced; it ends up generating blame on both sides. On the American side, there are complaints that Europeans are not making enough effort to defend themselves.

On the European side, some may fear that the price paid for this guarantee may be too high in terms of diplomatic and military autonomy. They may argue that, in exchange for the military protection they offer Europe, the United States is demanding the acquisition of American military equipment, for example. This will weaken the creation of a military industrial base in Europe. Work on strategic autonomy begins first in Europe. If the EU wants to remain somewhat credible in the world, if it wants to develop its industrial base, it must necessarily develop the European defense industry, which is part of the European industrial base.

Strategic autonomy is not limited to security and defense. It covers a wide range of issues, including trade, finance and investment. While in the area of trade, the EU is already partly strategically autonomous in terms of finance and investment, this is not the case yet. The international role of the euro must be developed so that we are not forced to break our own laws under the weight of secondary sanctions and to ensure a much better level playing field with China in terms of investment standards. That is why the transatlantic dialogue on China is very useful.

For all these issues, the EU tools are being re-evaluated to make them more effective. This is a big change in international politics. We now have a foreign investment screening mechanism, enhanced trading tools, a useful 5G toolkit and better subsidized investment screening next year. All these tools help to build our political autonomy. This development was accelerated by the Covid-19 crisis, as it showed how a problem such as health can become a geopolitical problem. As such, neither masks nor antibiotics are strategic products. However, if they are produced by a very small number of countries that prove to be potential strategic rivals, they become strategic products. And what applies to a medical device also applies to precious metals, the production or conversion of which is controlled by some states. Europe therefore needs to diversify its sources of supply and provide incentives for companies wishing to relocate.

Another problem where strategic autonomy is at stake is data. We have achieved a lot through GDPR. However, the challenge will be industry and business data for which there are no satisfactory international regulations. Europe cannot leave its data to market participants alone or have it confiscated from states whose protection of freedoms is not an absolute priority. There is a real European model in the area that must prevail. Achieving strategic autonomy is a long-term process aimed at ensuring that Europeans increasingly take control of themselves to defend European interests and values in an increasingly complicated world.

III. Wider Europe Concept and Partnership for Enlargement

Russia's war on Ukraine puts the entire future European order at risk. It is already forcing a profound reconsideration of the EU's and its neighbours' interests. To address this, the EU needs to devise a new approach to its neighbourhood, similar to the way in which it has rapidly enhanced its security and economic policies to respond to the threat. The European Council held a strategic discussion on the European Union's relations with its partners in Europe. It discussed the proposal to launch a European political community. The aim is to offer a platform for political coordination for European countries across the continent. It could concern all European countries with whom the EU has close relations.

Therefore in recent weeks, the concept of *Wider Europe* has been taking shape (European Council, 2022), which should become a platform for debate on defense, security, energy and other topics that are of interest to European states, regardless of whether they are already members of the European Union or not. The Wider Europe programme aims to help the EU become a stronger geopolitical actor in its eastern neighbourhood. To achieve this goal, the programme supports EU decision-makers' work on a unified policy towards Russia, and develops consistent strategies to defend the EU's interests and values in the Wider Europe region. The programme focuses on post-Soviet states, the Western Balkans, and Turkey.

The EU should establish a Partnership for Enlargement that offers Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Western Balkans states concrete steps towards deeper integration – and a pathway to eventual membership. This new partnership should include three 'pillars': single market integration and the reconstruction of Ukraine; a reinforced commitment to energy security and climate transition; and stronger political cooperation in security matters (Lang and Buras, 2022).

The first pillar of the new Partnership for Enlargement would offer the Balkans countries and the three post-soviet associated states a new model to participate in the European single market. This would resemble the functioning of the European Economic Area (EEA), of which Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein are members alongside the EU member states. It would not, however, be an identical arrangement, due to the completely different nature of the countries under consideration.

As part of the new framework of the Partnership for Enlargement, the EU should immediately launch negotiations on accession to the single market under this new model. This would constitute an expression of the EU's strategic response to the European ambitions of its eastern neighbours, address the need for stability in these countries, and strengthen their socio-economic resilience. Full participation in the single market in terms of the states accepting and taking part in the 'four freedoms' of people, goods, services, and capital would go beyond the framework of the current association agreements. The latter assume trade liberalisation and open up prospects for access to the single market in only 14 selected areas. The Partnership for Enlargement form of single market membership would provide the greatest possible integration with the EU in economic terms below the accession threshold. It would give participating countries the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the single market, but without the right to formally co-shape the integration agenda. It would help address the political problem within the EU of a lack of consensus on admitting new members.

Such a concrete goal is achievable within the next decade. Exact timings would depend, of course, on the individual progress of each country; and the adjustments they would need to undergo would be far-reaching. But this model of single-market participation would give a new dynamic to EU politics, which association agreements and the current enlargement policy currently fail to guarantee.

There is no doubt that, after the end of hostilities, the EU and other international institutions will have to provide significant support to Ukraine to rebuild its economy and infrastructure. A clear perspective of full accession to the single market would therefore also promote the most effective possible use of the expected large-scale funding and support to reconstruct the country's economy. To supplement this, the EU should establish a special fund, which could draw on the experience of the bloc's NextGenerationEU reconstruction fund and be based on common borrowing. It could be complemented by loans from the World Bank and support from the International Monetary Fund to ensure the liquidity of the recovering Ukrainian state. The disbursement of resources from such a fund – irrespective of their amount – would be an integral part of the new EU strategy towards Ukraine. Disbursement should be based on national integration plans to be drawn up by the partner countries. These plans would serve reconstruction and modernisation purposes and support the objective of the Partnership for Enlargement states joining the European single market under the first pillar model as soon as possible, as the first step towards future membership of the EU.

The second pillar of the Enlargement Partnership would concern energy security and the green transition. As part of stabilising its neighbourhood and supporting its pro-European neighbours, the EU should draw up the European Partnership for Enlargement in such a way that it helps partnership states strengthen their energy, economic, and political resilience. It should also integrate them as closely as possible into the EU's climate policy and action.

In recent years, Russia has continually tried to use its position as a major energy supplier to post-Soviet countries to make future sales conditional on their foreign policy orientation. In response, countries in the region have tried to improve their energy infrastructure, diversify their gas imports, and undertake domestic reforms to improve the position of their energy sectors. Reforms include

introducing important elements of EU energy market regulations such as the liberalisation of energy imports, unbundling transit operations, or price deregulations.

At the same time, the countries of the EU's eastern neighbourhood face the challenge of transforming their energy systems and entire economies in the face of global and EU decarbonisation-orientated transition processes. In these countries, the share of renewable energy in electricity generation is low, the risk of energy poverty is high, and energy efficiency is weak, alongside other unfavourable conditions. They are already coming under pressure to more quickly develop a climate-orientated, sustainable energy economy: international commitments, such as those made under the Paris Climate Agreement are one factor, as are financial markets' increasing coolness towards fossil-fuel investments and growing interest in renewables. The second pillar of the Partnership for Enlargement should thus give strategic importance to deepening cooperation on energy and climate policyEuropean policymakers should understand this as a core policy issue that has knock-on effects in many other important areas. After all, effective climate and energy policies not only support the security and resilience of partner countries, but also contain the potential for technological innovation, open up integration into the single market and energy market, create opportunities for trade and investment, and drive reforms in the economy as well as in government. Climate and energy policy also not only concerns the energy and industry sectors, but affects other aspects of economic, public, and private life; it impacts on transport, construction and housing, and agriculture, as well as public procurement practices, consumer behaviour, social policy, and more. Given that the EU's immediate neighbourhood faces challenges, especially in terms of carbon leakage, how much the union can assist states here to adapt will be an important test of how effective it is at pursuing its broader foreign policy efforts. The EU could help address this by extending the European Green Deal.

The climate and energy domain poses a number of challenges that demand the EU adopt an integrated approach, recognising and handling trade-offs and conflicting objectives. In anticipation of this, the EU, firstly, should seek to ensure that its climate policy aims to provide greater security of supply, especially for the countries to its east. This means that its policy should not impact negatively on these countries' energy security during the decarbonisation transition process. Secondly, in the context of the green transition, the EU should define more ambitious carbon reduction targets for the Partnership for Enlargement countries as compared to the hitherto existing plans, while offering them additional financial support to help them go further.

All these actions can help significantly deepen the EU's cooperation with its immediate neighbours on energy and climate policy. However, the EU should treat these areas as a cross-cutting issue of strategic importance for European security, economies, and societies. The most far-reaching goal would be to bring Partnership for Enlargement countries to a position where they meet, or come very close to meeting, the core objectives of the EU energy-climate policy: that is, significantly improving their energy security, sustainability, and competitiveness. In particular, the aim of a reinforced energy and climate policy under the Partnership for Enlargement should be to bring states as close as possible to the objectives of the European Green Deal, particularly in aspects of energy security. Of course, partner countries would not have full access to EU funding.

The key purpose of the Enlargement Partnership is to respond to the radically changed geopolitical situation, which is addressed by the third pillar focused on security and political cooperation. This situation offers little prospect of a return to a collective European security system. Regardless of how and when the war in Ukraine ends, Russia will remain a threat to the EU. It is impossible to envisage a restoration of trust in relations with Vladimir Putin's regime or its ilk that would allow the creation of a lasting framework for a security order based on common principles. The countries within the Partnership for Enlargement in particular (and Ukraine above all) will be vulnerable to Russia's attempts to subjugate, destabilise, and bring them into its sphere of influence. Other possible threats should not be overlooked either. They include China's infiltration into, and the bolstering of, its influence in the Balkans and eastern Europe, as well as Turkey's

aspirations to play a more active role in the Balkans especially. All of these actions will not only threaten the stability of these countries but also pose a serious risk to the interests of the EU.

If the Partnership for Enlargement is to have its intended effect – paving the way to the eventual EU accession of new members and preventing permanent destabilisation of the EU's immediate neighbourhood – it also needs to play a role in the area of security. For the EU to gain a geopolitical identity and build its sovereignty, and given that these ambitions are now more important than ever, then its contribution to the security of eastern Europe and the Balkans will be the most important test of its ability to achieve these goals. In the case of Ukraine in particular, any plans for integration or cooperation with the EU will only be feasible if the country manages not only to defend itself against current Russian aggression, but also to build a deterrent capacity that minimises the likelihood of a similar war in the future. The EU as a whole, and its member states on a bilateral basis, should be ready to provide Ukraine with lasting support in this respect, especially in a situation where neither NATO membership nor any security guarantees from the West will be a realistic solution in the foreseeable future.

Existing ideas for new forms of cooperation and support, may now receive more attention. Under the European Peace Facility (EPF), the EU has been funding significant military support to Ukraine since the start of the war. By mid-April 2022, the EU had released three tranches worth a total of €1.5 billion. It is worth considering making such assistance permanent under the EPF, with the amount of such a permanent fund for Ukraine (and other eastern European countries) to be politically determined. The fund should finance supplies of arms and military equipment to Ukraine, respectively to other Partnership for Enlargement countries that require such support. The committee overseeing and managing the EPF, which includes representatives of the member states, could incorporate representatives of the EU's partner countries as permanent observers.

It is of utmost importance that the EU engage in a planned and long-term manner in strengthening the security of its neighbours. Within the framework of the Partnership for Enlargement, a number of project proposals developed by the European Council on Foreign Relations could be implemented as part of a proposed Eastern Partnership Security Compact.

No less important would be actions that the EU could take in agreement with partner countries, within the framework of its competences. The war has demonstrated the crucial importance of logistics centres, infrastructure, and military mobility in supporting Ukraine to defend itself. In this context, it is worth considering involving partner countries in relevant permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) projects that would promote greater infrastructure coherence among EU and Partnership for Enlargement countries. Before the war, Ukraine had already started negotiations for inclusion in PESCO projects. This possibility exists, but has so far required intensive negotiations.

Furthermore, the EU should set up a strategic forum, which would provide a format for regular high-level meetings between representatives of the EU and the countries participating in the Partnership for Enlargement. These could take place, for example, when the annual reports of the EU's new security strategy, the Strategic Compass, are presented, in which the neighbouring countries play a key role. Such a forum could be defined as a Security Council of the EU and the Partnership for Enlargement states, and could comprise foreign and defence ministers. Within this framework, representatives could discuss major challenges, risks, and the state of cooperation.

A more ambitious relationship as envisaged under the new partnership also requires stronger political ties. Just as accession to the single market will require integration in the areas of law, economic policy, and the internal market, there will also need to be greater cooperation and coordination in foreign and security policy. Partnership for Enlargement countries should become more deeply embedded in the EU's political framework; without, of course, being involved in the decision-making process until they are full members. A first step would be to invite the heads of state and government of the Partnership for Enlargement countries to the European Council every two years.

Foreign and security policy issues would need to receive a prominent place in the Partnership for Enlargement framework. The existing EU agreements with potential partners stipulate that they are to align themselves closely with or adhere to the CFSP. Whereas associated countries from eastern Europe and Western Balkans states with stabilisation and association agreements have various mechanisms for deepened consultation and cooperation with regard to EU foreign and security policies, candidate countries are expected to follow EU sanctions and declarations – an objective which is not easily achieved, as seen, for example, with the case of Serbia during the war in Ukraine. Therefore, it is worth considering asking Partnership for Enlargement countries to enhance their commitment by following such measures consistently.

IV. Conclusion

During the second half of the 20th century, the dominance of European states in international relations ended definitively. The bipolar division of the world between the superpowers could be replaced by a persistent bifurcation, where individual actors in international relations will be able to resist each other and protect their autonomy but will not be able to subjugate each other. It is one of the four scenarios published by the American political scientist J. N. Rosenau (1990), which today appears to be the most likely.

Therefore, is an increasingly urgent need to find a broader platform for the cooperation of all European countries, regardless of whether they are members of the European Union or not. One of the rational outcomes could be the E40 concept that Middelaar (2022) came up with. The name is chosen based on the highway[1] that leads from Calais, France, through Belgium, Germany and Poland to Ukraine, and on the other hand, based on the roughly 40 countries it should cover. This forty includes the EU27 plus the Balkans, Great Britain, Switzerland, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and possibly others. An essential part of the EU's response to the transformed geopolitical situation will be to rewrite its neighbourhood and enlargement policies. The EU cannot today allow itself to continue with business as usual in this area. But neither can it make empty promises and delude others with the prospect of fast-track membership that is impossible to fulfil.

Geopolitically vulnerable countries that aspire to join the EU – the three newly associated countries and Western Balkans states – need to be anchored much more firmly and tangibly in the 'European family'. The urgent task is to provide a concrete offer for them. This, however, needs to proceed without scrapping enlargement policy, which is still a key instrument for the EU's foreign policy and allows the union to influence and stabilise its environment on the basis of its own values and principles. Any offer the EU makes to its European partners in the coming months should therefore not be an alternative to enlargement. The goal of the EU's revised policy should be to build a strongly integrated community of all European countries that share common values and principles.

The EU therefore needs a new strategic project in the form of the Partnership for Enlargement. The core of this proposal is not a revised enlargement methodology, nor past ideas of creating a "multi-speed union" or "concentric circles". It envisages the EU taking concrete action to anchor in the 'European family' those countries that wish to move closer to the union. In this way, they will be able to find a permanent place within it. This means involving these countries in stronger cooperation right now, while at the same time intensifying the pressure for them to comply with the fundamental principles of the EU: the rule of law, democracy, and human rights as indispensable preconditions for their full integration with the EU.

Only a combination of three elements – a strategic decision in favor of the enlarged EU, an increased commitment to support the countries of the Enlargement Partnership and a firm attitude to principles

[1] The E40 international road is the longest European road with a length of more than 8,000 kilometers. It starts in Calais (France) and continues through Belgium, Germany, Poland, Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. It then ends in the city of Ridder in eastern Kazakhstan near the border with China.

and values – will enable the real realization of the aspirations of the candidate countries for the European future and the fulfillment of the interests of the EU itself.

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