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Introduction: The Grand Redesign

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It took the dust raised by the fall of the Berlin wall a rather long time to settle—for good reasons. The end of communism as a system of oppressive government and a powerful ideology; the demise of its standard bearer, the Soviet Union, resulting in the collapse of its global glacis, of its outer empire in eastern Europe, and then of the historical Russian *derzhava*; and last but not least, the end of the cold war, a 40-year-long military standoff, the most intense in history, coupled with the collapse of Soviet and Russian military might—all of these events had come so unexpectedly that, by definition, no one could have been prepared for them. In response to these dramatic changes, the principal western European military and political institutions, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union, took a generally cautious line, which could be explained by the predilections of multilateral bureaucracies. The western governments, for their part (with the natural exception of the former German Democratic Republic), shied away from resolute steps toward the liberated east and focused instead on reforming the winning west.

There was nothing like what had followed the end of World War II in Europe. No Marshall Plan was immediately proposed and no integration of former adversaries occurred; but no major crises erupted, and those which did, as in the Balkans, were very nasty but also rather peripheral, so that they could be contained. The cold war was succeeded not by a new era but by a

historical pause, an interlude characteristically named the post-cold war, because people on both sides of the former divide were not sure what they were stepping into. The Berlin wall was quietly dismantled, but much of the military and mental infrastructure of the confrontation which had led to its construction essentially survived. Bold wise people were nowhere to be seen. Instead, caution became the watchword in the west; at times, it was interpreted as egotism and indecisiveness by those who aspired to join western institutions, and as a proof of ulterior motives by those who held no such aspirations.

Now, a dozen years later, the interlude may finally be over. The beginning of the first decade of the new century is witnessing the deepening of the EU integration process, as evidenced by both the surprisingly smooth introduction of the euro and the efforts to develop a common foreign and defense policy twinned with a European security and defense identity. The EU is working on its constitution in order to be able to take in the first batch of members from central and eastern Europe by the mid-2000s. NATO, which was in fact enlarged in 1999, is formally preparing for a second and much bigger intake of former Warsaw Pact-Baltic countries. At the same time, however, as Anatol Lieven describes in the concluding chapter, NATO is seriously questioning its own future in a profoundly altered strategic environment.

On the face of it, Europe has already become EU-centric economically, and in the field of security, NATO-centric. The former Warsaw Pact-Council for Mutual Economic Assistance member countries are being absorbed into the new system, while others, including Russia and Ukraine, are looking for ways and means to associate themselves with it. The real importance of the September 2001 decision by Russian president Vladimir Putin to side with the United States and the west in the fight against international terrorism has been Moscow's unilateral withdrawal from competition with Washington in the fields of geopolitics and nuclear weapons. Based on a correct reading by Putin of Russia's domestic needs, this decision is backed by compelling and powerful economic interests and is unlikely to be reversed by Putin or his successors. There may be ups and downs in U.S.-Russian relations, but the rivalry is finally over.

There was no grand conference following the end of the cold war. Yet a settlement of sorts has been achieved. The "new west" is enthusiastically joining the old one, which reluctantly welcomes it—on certain conditions. A greater, or at least wider, Europe is emerging, consisting of EU and NATO

members and their associates or partners. Yet these gains for prosperity and security can only be consolidated and made permanent through a fundamental redesign of both premier European and transatlantic institutions and the establishment of solid relations between these institutions and the countries in the geographical Europe that are unlikely, for the foreseeable future, to become part of the integrated unit. A failure to undertake either one of these tasks could halt the positive trends and release some of the demons of Europe's past.

This book treats the enlargement of European and Atlantic institutions as an equivalent of the postconfrontational settlement. It addresses the implications of the dual enlargement of the EU and NATO for all those concerned: the candidates, the core members, and the countries left out. The authors of the chapters come from all three groups of countries and offer their insights into the current Europewide processes from very different angles. The focus is very much on the EU and NATO. Although a more inclusive forum, whose membership has also been expanding since the fall of the iron curtain—namely, the Council of Europe—is mentioned only in passing, its role as the norm-setting and monitoring organization promoting European values is not negligible, as Russia's experience in Chechnya demonstrates.

The book, as its title suggests, focuses on a major part of this agenda, with the notable exception of the challenges related to the Balkans and Turkey. Dealing with the Albanian question and encouraging Serbia's progressive transformation will be anything but easy. "Fitting Turkey in" is only slightly less complicated than performing a similar feat with regard to Russia. Similarly, the book does not tackle the Mediterranean dimension, although Cyprus and Turkey bring the EU into direct proximity to the Middle East. The southern Caucasus and central Asia are just over the horizon, despite their new importance linked to the fight against international terrorism and the yearnings of at least one country, Georgia, to join both NATO and the EU. Even then, however, the subject of the present study is vast by any measure.

Great Expectations, Great Fears

It may now look as if the great expectations of 1989 and 1990 are at long last being realized. When the Yalta system was cheerfully dumped into the

sea off the coast of Malta by George H. W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev, the vision of a “Europe whole and free” first moved within reach. Various politicians gave it different names, from the European confederation to a European peace order to a common European home. To all of them, however, the end of history prophesied by Francis Fukuyama seemed near. Freedom, democracy, and the market were deemed destined to prevail, releasing the energies which, it was believed, would soon make the former communist-ruled countries both liberal and prosperous. In many cases, these visions turned out to be mirages created by the flying dust of the Berlin wall.

The great expectations were mixed with great fears, of course. Once left alone by Moscow to fend for themselves, the eastern European communist regimes were giving way easily. Only in Romania was there significant blood-letting. Beyond the outer ring of the Soviet sphere of dominance, however, real trouble was looming. Empires had rarely left the historical scene without a battle, and what usually emerged in their wake was the chaos of ethnic strife. At the turn of the 1990s, the pitch of ethnic tension had been rising in both Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union itself, and violent conflicts were already erupting. The Balkan imbroglio was serious enough, but most people at the time viewed it as a preview for what could happen in the USSR. Never before had a nuclear superpower gone down, and its approaching breakup into independent and potentially hostile parts was being watched with great anxiety, even awe. And until virtually the eleventh hour—which was probably November 1991—no one could guarantee the ratification by the Soviet military, which had suddenly found itself without a master, of what to so many outsiders was already a verdict of history.

The immediate fears were only partially borne out by actual developments. There were violent conflicts and immense dislocations, but no civil war erupted. The Soviet communist elite, mellowed by the corruptible stagnation of the Brezhnevite era, was content, as the Russian quip at the time went, to “swap power for property.” The military top brass, out of spite for Gorbachev, switched their allegiance to his rival Boris Yeltsin, in return for the promise of a free hand *within* the defense establishment. The liberal advisors to Yeltsin, who worshipped the invisible hand of the market and dreamed of “rejoining the west,” were only glad to let go those republics which wished to go and to push away those which were still undecided. The deal rested on the inviolability of the existing, and often totally arbitrarily drawn, inter-republican borders, which at the same time were left fully transparent, creating the fiction of a continuing “common space” and thus

successfully cushioning the populace from the shock of separation. The unity of command of the nuclear forces was successfully maintained, as was the security of the weapons themselves, and Washington and Moscow together leaned on the republics hard enough to ensure that no nuclear proliferation occurred.

Yugoslavia, of course, fared far worse. It is a sad irony indeed that only a decade before the country had been considered a potential candidate for membership in the European Economic Community. Where the Russians were the tired imperialists, the Serbs saw themselves as the aggrieved party and became violently aggressive. In Croatia, unlike in Ukraine, the presence of ethnic minorities fueled nationalism instead of inspiring moderation. The tragedy of Bosnia finally awakened Europe and the United States to the challenges of post-cold war settlement, but the immediate concern of the west was to contain the crisis so as to avoid its spillover beyond the former Yugoslavia. The European Union soon found itself unready and unwilling to get fully involved on the ground. It preferred to wait until the United States finally decided to enter the fray and impose peace on the warring parties. Still, the image of Sarajevo being slowly and methodically destroyed made the picture of jubilation atop the Berlin wall look dated and distant. Fukuyama was out, and Samuel Huntington was in.

Self-Selection

Actually, the first former communist state to join with the west was East Germany. With the prospect of Soviet military intervention removed by Gorbachev, the jubilant people of East Berlin, Leipzig, and Dresden soon replaced the slogan *wir sind das Volk* with *wir sind ein Volk*. Such was the overwhelming will of the people in the east that it helped set the agenda, and the timetable, in Bonn. There was little that the Four Powers could do other than ratify the will of the German nation. The German Democratic Republic's lightning-like absorption into the German Federal Republic in October 1990 was actually the first case of EU and NATO enlargement across the iron curtain.

Once the curtain was opened, the differences among the former communist-ruled countries became stark. Cold war Eastern Europe was suddenly no more, replaced by central Europe (Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia), the Baltic states, southeastern Europe (Roma-

nia, Bulgaria, Moldova, Albania, and the states of the former Yugoslavia), and finally the new eastern Europe (Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia). The countries of the southern Caucasus were barely visible on the far edge of that picture, and the republics of central Asia, dismissively and half-derogatorily referred to as the “stans,” were decidedly beyond it. The defining criterion was not so much per capita gross domestic product or standard of living as it was the political, economic, and societal culture—a culture that, as Alexander Motyl puts it in chapter 2 to follow, promised very different roads leading out of communism.

Even the East German *Länder*, a special case by all counts, found it hard to deal with the legacy of different varieties of totalitarian rule preceded by a long stretch of authoritarian rule. The rehabilitation of the former German Democratic Republic, which has been costing German taxpayers about \$50 billion a year since reunification, should serve as both a test case and a warning for all three groups of countries that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet system.

The first group, once known as the Visegrad countries, quickly went beyond the option of forming a community *next to* the west, in the form of a NATO-bis or a central European economic unit. Instead, their elites set the goal of integration *into* the west, quickly achieved a domestic consensus, and started to work towards the goal. The second group ostensibly proclaimed the same goal, but was distracted and held back by their own demons of the past, ranging from ethnic hatred to political parochialism, and essentially marked time. The third group first had to seriously tackle their Soviet (and in Russia’s case, imperial) legacy before they could secure any lasting results.

This self-differentiation had a major effect on the policies of the western countries. The first group, aided by its lobbyists within the western community, worked hard to make the west open up its institutions to the new arrivals. They zeroed in on NATO as the essential western club of the cold war (which was still very much on their minds), and the one where obtaining membership required mainly political action, not the much more difficult economic transformation. This was the right calculation, even though not all first-group countries were admitted to NATO in the first wave of candidates. The admission to NATO of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic was the first breach that the former easterners succeeded in making in the walls of the western fortress. A new eastern march has emerged.

The second group tried to make the west pay attention by highlighting their problems. They pointed to the example of Yugoslavia, arguing that the

best way to ensure that other countries did not follow that path would be to include them within the western community. The west listened with sympathy; but as William Wallace and Heather Grabbe point out in chapters 3 and 4, respectively, it was essentially unimpressed by these pleas, demanding real domestic progress in the applicant countries. Yet NATO and the EU had to get involved directly in the Balkans, in particular by assuming responsibility for Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, which have become *de facto* western protectorates. Even the nominally sovereign nations of Macedonia and Serbia-Montenegro are actually leaning on the EU as its client states. Thus a *glacis* or, better, an area of long-term responsibility is being formed by and for the west in the Balkans. At best, this is Europe's new frontier, a kind of wild southeast to be pacified and helped along towards prosperity; at worst, it is a buffer zone between the "civilized world" and its restive southeastern neighbors.

The third group exhibited the widest range of difficulties in the process of postcommunist transformation. Apart from the economic, political, and economic problems, all more fundamental than in either of the two previous groups, there came up the issue of identity. As Leonid Zaiko demonstrates in chapter 5, the Belarusians were faced with the challenge of building a national identity in a society which was perhaps the least nationalistic anywhere in the former Soviet empire. By the late 1990s, they ended up with an identity built around the figure of a neo-Soviet populist dictator who made this former "assembly line of USSR industry" into a place *very* different from all neighboring countries—east, west, north, or south. The Ukrainians, endowed with a strong nationalistic current, by contrast, faced up to the need to keep their country from breaking into several parts. In chapter 6, James Sherr depicts the sophisticated and so far successful balancing act being played by Kiev, for which "the east" and "the west" are both foreign *and* domestic policy notions.

The Russians spent much of the 1990s exiting from their empire. Though this departure is by no means over, they have gone through a number of stages, getting ever closer to the reality of their country's new position. Gone is the hope of becoming a fellow democratic superpower alongside the United States. Also gone is the attempt to fashion Russia as a first-order pole in a multipolar world, which would constrain American power. Finally, Russia the European country enters. This latest self-image is likely to stay. But the question is, What does it actually mean? Will this "Europeanness" resemble the picture of a prerevolutionary Russia, a continental empire with

an arguably western facade, or will it mean modernity coupled with genuine western values? The former would mean Russia's further alienation from Europe; the latter, Russia fundamentally transforming itself.

So far, Russia has been, at best, *drifting* towards Europe. Over time, it has become much more aware of the intricacies of the EU. In 1994, it concluded a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the Union, aimed at creating a free-trade area. In 2001, an idea of a European economic space that would *include* Russia was first floated. In more practical terms, an energy partnership is being actively promoted. As a result of the EU's enlargement, the share of Europe in Russia's foreign trade will rise from the current 40 to about 50 percent. The Kremlin's public relations team has promoted a new slogan, "Russia—to Europe, together with Ukraine and Belarus." As Alexander Sergounin argues in chapter 7, the more immediate and compelling problem, however, is how to prevent the Kaliningrad Region from becoming a disaster area for Russia and a "black hole" inside the EU territory. Even though this "exclave" (or enclave) is a natural place for launching various EU–Russian cooperative projects, the immediate focus is the more contentious issues of communications and visas.

Before Kaliningrad demonstrated that EU enlargement can actually bite, Moscow had been considering the expanding EU as an alternative to NATO's extension to the east. Russia's post-1991 relations with NATO had been largely contentious. From the start, Moscow demanded exclusiveness and status to compensate for its growing weakness.

Unlike the former Warsaw Pact countries and ex-Soviet republics, Russia raised the problem of how to treat a former adversary. Immediately after the breakup of the USSR, some viewed this problem in terms of an alternative between "doing another Versailles" and proposing a new Marshall Plan. In fact, neither had a chance of becoming a reality. On the one hand, Russia of course was treated far more generously than post-1919 Germany. On the other hand, it was neither militarily defeated nor occupied by foreign forces, as Germany had been after 1945 to ensure a clean slate and enable a deep transformation. And there was no immediate common threat from a third party of a caliber which would have united the former cold war adversaries. The fight against international terrorism forms too narrow a basis for security integration. The new NATO–Russia Council, inaugurated in 2002, faces a difficult task to promote inclusivity and participation. Having ceased to be a threat to the west, Russia to this day has not become a place of opportunity.

Changes at the Core

It was the first post-cold war enlargement of the west—that is, the reunification of Germany in the fall of 1990—that pushed the process of European integration. The 1992 Treaty of Maastricht with its promise of a common currency, realized ten years later, had its roots in the perceived need to embed a united Germany within a more integrated Europe. The challenge of taking in new members from the traditionally poor, for decades communist-ruled part of Europe was also different, in both scale and kind, from the previous cases of European Community and European Union expansion. Thus, a slogan was born: “Deepen before you widen.” Thus the promises of accession made in 1998–2000 to the 12 nations of central and eastern Europe and Turkey stimulated the internal reform of the EU; for it was felt, correctly, that the current structure and *modus operandi* could not be sustained when EU membership grew to 27 or 28.

The commitment to expansion made the EU *as a unit* come to grips with relations with the EU’s “near abroad,” that is, the left-outs—from the Balkans to the Commonwealth of Independent States to north Africa. The drafting of EU policy papers on Russia (1999) and Ukraine (2000) was a reflection of the Union’s expanding field of vision as it prepared for its forthcoming geographical enlargement. This need to act as a Union rather than as a group of sovereign nation-states has also strengthened the incentive for a common EU foreign, security, and defense policy.

NATO started changing, timidly at first, after its 1990 London declaration. The founding of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1991, which coincided with the formal dissolution of the USSR, became a step towards a politicization of the hitherto essentially military Alliance. The 1994 offer of a Partnership for Peace expanded that role through a range of programs promoting defense reform in the two dozen eastern partner countries. The decision to invite the central European countries to join did not involve serious changes within NATO, but it clearly underlined the fact that the Alliance’s mission had changed.

While political caution and bureaucratic conservatism still formally kept NATO wedded to its traditional collective defense function, this function was becoming less and less relevant. NATO leaders recognized this reality in approving the Combined Joint Task Force project, which allowed for non-NATO participation. NATO-led peace operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia involved military contingents from a number of

countries which aspired to NATO membership, but also from those which did not.

The NATO applicant queue is long, and expanding to, say, 30 members will have serious implications, which are not only related to decision-making arrangements, military capabilities, and compatibility. A much wider NATO would be less a defense bloc than a collective security mechanism. The accession of Romania and a new joint forum with Russia are highly indicative of NATO's evolution. At the same time, the rise of the far right in western Europe makes the old NATO function of preventing a renationalization of defense and security much more relevant than at the height of the cold war.

In the 1990s, NATO was enlarged in another way as well. The European Union singularly failed as the principal provider of security in the Balkans. After initial U.S. hesitation, NATO went beyond its former region and also beyond defense. It first became a peace enforcer in Bosnia, and then it waged an air campaign against Yugoslavia over Kosovo, where it continued as a security force on the ground. It also intervened in Macedonia to stave off the crisis there. This expansion of NATO's mission and region of operation, codified in its 1999 Strategic Concept, has given it a prime responsibility as a crisis manager in the loosely defined Euro-Atlantic area.

Both the deepening of the western institutions and their widening have contributed to differentiation within the EU and NATO. At some level, within the EU there is a hard core consisting essentially of Germany, France, and the Benelux countries, with concentric circles around it: the western partial opt-outs, like the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Sweden, with Italy on the borderline between the core and the first circle; the poorer southern European countries; the new arrivals from central Europe; the candidates; and the more distant associates like Ukraine and Russia. At another level, there is a dynamic balance between the nation-state and the supranational union, with the former not necessarily continuing to surrender its powers to the latter.

Essentially, the EU's core needs to decide what it wants to be internally (in terms of the Union's constitution) and internationally (what kind of a global player it wants to be). What is the right balance between the supranational and the national? How much of a single player will the EU be, and how much an assembly of individual and still partially sovereign players? Very important, in the post-September 11 situation, is the big question of the availability of the political will to make much-needed, if painful, changes.

The Demise of the Alternatives

Between them, the European Union and NATO are so preeminent in economic, political, security, and defense matters as to exclude any alternatives. Few nations considered investing in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as the overarching European security institution. No United Nations–type European security council came into being. Finally, Russia, as the chief promoter of the idea, lost faith in the organization as a result of its criticism of the Chechen war. The OSCE, whose membership includes the whole of Europe as well as central Asia and the Caucasus, must look for a different, and smaller, niche. It can successfully function as a continentwide assembly, a human rights monitor, and a facilitator of democracy.

Nor did any credible alternative emerge at the regional level. The short-lived idea of a central European grouping has already been mentioned. The Baltic states, curiously, refuse to be counted as a group, with the Estonians, as Zaneta Ozolina points out, calling themselves Nordic, and the Lithuanians, central European. Further to the east, the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States has remained a loose post-imperial arrangement rather than becoming an integrationist organization. Whether in the economic area (the Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Community) or in the field of security (the Collective Security Treaty), its record has been less than impressive. However, the rival groupings such as GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) and the regional forums, such as the Central Asian Union, are even less viable, with interaction there being skin-deep.

Within the traditional west, neutrality is definitely passé. The accession of Austria, Sweden, and Finland to the European Union in 1995 makes them subject to a common foreign, security, and defense policy. It is not unthinkable that some of these countries may join NATO before 2010. Within the same time frame, Norway (a founding member of NATO) may overcome its lingering doubts and finally decide to accede to the EU. This would leave Switzerland as the only surviving neutral country on the continent, but the 2002 Swiss vote to apply for United Nations membership demonstrates the general trend.

As a result, not only does the west enlarge, but the east gradually disappears—as an *alternative*. There are many divisions and fault lines, to be sure, but no competition between “the west and the rest” within Europe. This

development is of historical importance. The former center is now “east of the west”—its moving frontier—and “the rest” is essentially a periphery.

Politically, the postcommunist, and especially post-Soviet regimes, are often imitations of democracy, but they all are aware of the implications of being placed too close to the west. Serbia’s Slobodan Milosevic lost power as the electorate became emboldened by the promise of a better—“European”—future. Belarus’s Alexander Lukashenko feels exposed due to a common border with a NATO country. Actually, Lukashenko is hardly the worst post-Soviet dictator; his chief problem is that Belarus is located in eastern Europe, not central Asia.

It is interesting that it is the EU portion of Europe that is being seen by ethnic Russians in the Baltic states and part of the population of Kaliningrad as the prime vehicle for the positive change to which they aspire. The future “EuroRussians” in Estonia and Latvia in particular expect the EU to work as a great equalizer, allowing them to improve their chances vis-à-vis the dominant majorities. This hope may have been one of the factors which so far have guaranteed the remarkably nonviolent interethnic relations in the Baltic countries. The positive effect may not be exhausted with the inclusion of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in the EU.

The demonstration effect of Baltic EU membership on Russia—and to some extent on Belarus—should not be underestimated. To the extent that they are successful, the hundreds of thousands of EuroRussians will act as another powerful argument for a deeper economic transformation of Russia itself. In more general terms, the gap between central Europe and the Baltic states on the one hand and the new eastern Europe of Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia on the other can cut both ways. It is likely to stimulate the feeling of exclusion, and lead to alienation, despair, and the rise of anti-western attitudes among both elites and publics. At the same time, the success of the former inmates of the same “socialist camp” could increase pressure for reform and modernization.

Common Space, Uneven Terrain

All this raises the need to rethink the concept of “the west,” which in its present form is a product of the cold war confrontation between communism and the free world. As a result of the east drawing closer to the west, something like “the north” is slowly emerging, which is a more relevant

concept in the context of the early twenty-first century. This new large space will include North America and the whole of Europe (i.e., with Russia). This community is only partly institutionalized (NATO, the EU, the North American Free Trade Agreement) and is not to be confused with the anti-terrorist coalition. The issue of Russian membership in NATO, discussed in chapter 8 by Karl-Heinz Kamp, is not and will not be the order of the day. Rather, the salient feature of the new arrangement could be the absence of traditional great-power competition among its informal members. This in turn can serve as a basis for creating a zone of stable peace spanning the northern third or quarter of the globe.

The new space of the north, however, is highly uneven. The authors of this volume analyze the many problems of the candidates for NATO and EU membership, and the implications of the western enlargement for the left-outs. The rise of parochial economic interests in many of the candidate countries and the resultant political backlash against modernization and globalization, are all too evident—but natural—as Christopher Bobinski and Charles King demonstrate in chapters 10 and 11, respectively. Even in the new NATO armies, certain Warsaw Pact habits die hard. To deal successfully with these issues will be a leadership test for the new elites in the “new west.”

The enormity of the task of reforming Russia—and Ukraine, for that matter—is daunting. Russia’s medium-term objective should be to achieve compatibility with the European Union. On the issue of entry into the World Trade Organization, those who regard themselves as competitive are pitted against sure losers, and the battle is real and hard-fought. In chapter 12, Vladimir Baranovsky describes the changing Russian attitudes towards both the EU and NATO. The more forward-looking Russian leaders boast of having read Ludwig Ehrhardt’s books, but few even among them give enough thought to the fact that without Konrad Adenauer’s *Westbindung* there would not have been Ehrhardt’s *Wirtschaftswunder*. At the other end of the spectrum, even as the Russian president is withdrawing from geopolitical and strategic competition with the west, the Russian Orthodox Church is fighting fierce battles against “encroachments” by the Vatican into its “canonical territory,” Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia proper. In this fight, the Moscow patriarchate is using its enhanced influence in the councils of the Russian state.

This is, however, not the whole story. The opening to the east and south-east heightens tension which is already there within the mature western

countries. Fear of immigrants—who will compete for jobs, drive wages down, and eventually bring their families and thus change the very complexion of European societies—is very powerful. As Joerg Haider in Austria, Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, and others across the continent have demonstrated, this fear can strike at the very foundation of the European Union. The backlash reaches beyond “fortress Europe”; unless checked, it could send things back to the kind of divisions and tensions which prevailed before 1945. This counterattack probably will not succeed, but the notion that “history is not bunk” applies to the affluent west as much as to the destitute east.

The real problem is the unwillingness to tackle the difficult issues. The near-paralysis of political will in western Europe, which contrasts so starkly with America’s post–September 11 strong resolve, is not only hindering the EU from exercising a more active international role; it may have consequences closer to home. In this day and age, most of these difficult issues revolve around attitudes towards the Muslim world—both on Europe’s fringes and within the EU itself. It should be made clear that what is needed is big-picture thinking. Yet much of the political discussion in the “old west” is still dominated by the parochial issues of pensions and welfare benefits. The opening to the east will not “save” western Europe, to be sure. But it could at least make it think big.