

# A Wider Atlantic

## further integration of the Greater Middle East and Russia in the framework of Euro-Atlantic Structures

By Lyubomir Ivanov

The aim of this brief comment is not so much to make predictions for the future but rather share some thoughts and hopefully provoke discussion about the ongoing process of change and development brought about by the forces of globalization in the last fifteen-twenty years. While the evolution and transformation of the Euro-Atlantic structures during this period is well known, the prospects for the possible integration of Russia and the Greater Middle East (GME) in both EU and NATO are something new that ought to be examined seriously, and then in the right time frame. Indeed, what seems and is impossible today may be quite possible -- even inevitable -- tomorrow.

A starting point for any such analysis would be the experience of the democratic transformation of CEE. In a few words, this lesson is that no CEE nation regrets its Euro-Atlantic choice, what is regretted is the delays in choice and reforms. An early start brings early results, better wellbeing and lower social price; delays and hesitant reforms result in lost time and paying the high price twice.

Right now one can see the different stages of this process of Euro-Atlantic integration in the case of various CEE countries. Most of them are already in NATO and EU, which, by the way, seemed quite impossible yesterday. The Western Balkans are already scheduled for NATO, and Turkey for EU; that is de-

ecided in principle but the relevant countries are not yet ready, and the process would take several more years. Countries like Ukraine and Georgia are at fairly initial stages, their membership is obviously impossible today but we may already safely presume that it will be quite inevitable tomorrow.

One of the main challenges facing NATO today is the globalization of threats, which entails globalization of the Alliance responsibilities. Naturally, 26 nations cannot simply assume the role of global policeman. That would be neither desirable nor possible. Nevertheless, the 26 increasingly undertake missions in countries like Afghanistan that are remote yet key for the world security. There is a growing demand for NATO services; first, because no comparable security alliance exists or may be expected to appear; and secondly, because today's peace enforcement and peace keeping missions are as a rule multinational, and NATO possesses unique expertise and mechanisms, making the Alliance the best tool for planning, implementing and leading such multinational missions. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that NATO involvement and partnership is increasingly sought in Africa (Darfur) and the Middle East (Gulf countries, training mission in Iraq, possible post-conflict peace keeping in Palestine). One should never forget the lesson of Rwanda, where there was nobody to intervene and stop the genocide, or the lesson of Bosnia, where the delayed intervention made it possible for a full scale civil war to develop resulting in tens of thousands more people killed and hundreds of thousands displaced.

At the same time, the fact is that the 26 have insufficient military capability to back such global responsibilities, despite the progress in national defense

sector reforms, and in NATO transformation. Whether it's a NATO coalition or EU mission, it still draws from the same pool, the combined military capabilities of the 26. This deficit is coupled with the deficit of political credibility to act on behalf of the international community; indeed, it is desirable to have the participation and support of more than 26 nations, preferably mandated by the UN Security Council. This political deficit is further exacerbated by shrinking public support, eroded by vigorous anti-globalist and anti-American propaganda, and hardly opposed by national or Allied public diplomacy effort.

This discrepancy between existing needs and available means is dealt with, at least partially, by way of ongoing NATO enlargement and development of partnerships that help expand the joint capabilities. Let us remember that even early European missions of the Alliance, such as Bosnia and Kosovo, benefited from troop contributions by Russia, Ukraine, other PfP partners, even countries from Latin America, Africa and the Middle East. On the agenda is the development of PfP-like partnerships in the South Mediterranean and the Greater Middle East, building upon the NATO Mediterranean dialogue, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, Gulf Cooperation Council partnership, and even the establishment of global partnerships with Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

While NATO has no decision or declared intention at this stage of inviting any such global partners to join the Alliance, partnerships could naturally pave the way to membership, especially having in mind that countries like Japan or Australia could easily meet the membership criteria, certainly in much less time than CEE has needed.

When we assess the place of Russia vis-a-vis NATO, that country obviously has the capabilities for a substantial and valuable contribution to NATO-led missions. This has already been demonstrated in Bosnia and Kosovo. Russia also has the advantage of an institutionalized partnership by way of the NATO-Russia Council. That framework could be enhanced but nevertheless falls short of

membership, as it does not provide Russia with a say in NATO's decision making. Russian membership in NATO is presently out of the question. It is certainly unrealistic today. The idea of some Russian analysts that the Alliance missed an opportunity to invite Russia in the 1990s is based on a serious lack of understanding of the nature of NATO and its enlargement process. Such an invitation was quite impossible as Russia was not ready for NATO membership in the 1990s. Russia is not ready today either, and it is an axiom that no country may join the Alliance unless it meets NATO standards. Furthermore, unlike Ukraine or Georgia, Russia has not even decided to join NATO. However, I expect such a decision on the Russian side sooner rather than later, and the progress of Ukraine on the road to NATO would have a major impact on the evolution of Russia's intentions. After that, it would be a matter of having the relevant reforms done and criteria met, relying of course on the Alliance guidance and support.

The more diverse region of GME is likely to follow several individual models of democratic transformation and integration with NATO, very much like the diversity of CEE, where certain countries started as producers of security from the very beginning, while others underwent the whole road of a country in military conflict becoming the object of an Allied mission and internationally supported nation building, and eventually joining NATO. There is no doubt, however, that like in the case of CEE, NATO and NATO integration is to play a crucial role in both national and regional democratic development.

In the epoch of globalization, the logic of EU-style integration apparently dictates that each country should seek participation in some similar project of regional integration. Speaking of Russia and the GME, it is quite obvious that for geographical, historical and economic reasons, their natural integration partners would be the other republics of the former Soviet Union, the East European countries, and the South European countries in the first place, and the rest of the West European countries in the sec-



Dr. Ivanov (right) meets with Jabar Manda, Deputy Minister of Defense of Iraqi Kurdistan. Atlantic Club of Bulgaria

ond place. And immediately the problem is that most of these potential integration partners are already in the EU or on their way to join. So the question is, where will Russia and the GME integrate?

It is unrealistic for Russia or the GME to form their own integration centers separately from EU, as they lack the necessary human, political and economic potential for that. Having no partners left for such projects either, both Russia and the GME face no alternative but to join the EU itself. This idea might seem bizarre and grossly unrealistic; indeed, the EU accession is a much more sophisticated process, much more difficult to achieve than NATO membership. It is also true that presently there is very little enthusiasm in EU to think about further enlargements after Turkey and Ukraine. Still, most of what is reality today seemed equally unrealistic fifteen years ago, and the pace of world change, if anything, is accelerating. After all, if Turkey could progress towards EU accession, why not Morocco or Russia? Does anyone believe that the natural permanent border of EU might be that between Kiev and Moscow?

While the NATO enlargement process goes in parallel with (and generally preceding and facilitating) EU enlargement in Eurasia and potentially Africa, in other world regions it would probably have to have other economic and political integration companions. In Latin America for instance, the Atlantic integration of countries like Mexico or Chile may benefit from their US-sponsored NAFTA/AFTA integration. □

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*Jabar Y. Manda*

*Deputy Minister of Defense of Iraqi Kurdistan*

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On occasion of the celebration of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organized Atlantic movement in Central and Eastern Europe.