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East European Countries after the Breakup of Communism and the Ongoing Challenge of European Integration

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Introduction

The status of Europe and East Asia in the transition of world order can be analyzed under different aspects. One of the most important criteria distinguishing the different strategies of European and East Asian countries is the attitude towards regional integration versus cooperation. While Europe simultaneously tries to deepen and enlarge the area of integration, East Asian countries try to preserve their national sovereignty and focus on bilateral and multilateral models of cooperation. Rather than comparing the strategies applied in Eastern Asia and Europe, this article clearly focuses on the aspects determining Europe's importance and position in the changing political and economical environment and its ability to find a common position agreeable to all European countries. This common position refers to the internal European Union's sphere on the one hand and to international problems on the other hand. The capability to speak with one voice has already been very difficult in the old, pre-enlargement Europe, but today, after the accession of ten Central and Eastern European countries it is nearly impossible in most political areas. This conclusion can be drawn based upon different political, military or economic topics. This article states that one important point is that the integration of these Eastern countries, now members of the European Union, is not completed at all. This ongoing integration is not only an internal challenge for the former transition countries, but an obstacle for the European integration as a whole. The EU as a non-integrated and - according to most criteria - very heterogeneous international actor suffers from these integration deficits as a whole. An ongoing integration redirects funds, fragments political and economic elites and introduces selection criteria that can counteract integration. This influences Europe's position in the world order and determines the fate of the integration process as well as Europe's importance in the international competition of regional actors.

Transition and Democratization

The transition to democracy after the breakup of communist systems in Eastern Europe differed categorically from all regime changes in European history. The lack of a consistent transition theory and the missing experience with the transformation of communist systems, economies and societies turned the whole transition process into an experiment. Obviously, there existed a dilemma of simultaneity, which meant the need of a holistic reform in nearly all political, economical, societal, social and governmental spheres in the former communist countries. As not one of these countries wanted to preserve the existing socialist system, there could be only one option for the future: opening towards the West and the political and economic system represented by the Western, or more precisely the West-European, countries. This scope of the simultaneous economic and political transformation attempted in Eastern Europe was unprecedented, even if dual transformations were under way in many parts of the Third World at the same time. "Many Asian, African, and Latin American states intervened extensively in their economies (short of attempting central planning and total control) and most of these began to move toward economic liberalization during the 1980s. Some are launching or seeking to consolidate political openings from noncommunist authoritarian political systems."¹ The experiences with transitions from authoritarian systems in Southern Europe, for example in Greece, Spain and Portugal, or South America² couldn't be used as a guideline for a successful political, social and economic transition leading to a democratic consolidation. So the transformation of communist systems and societies lacked of guiding examples and convincing theories, and many scientists thought it would be an impossible task. One and probably the best known example was an essay written by Jon Elster, entitled "The Necessity and Impossibility of Simultaneous Economic and Political Reform" where the author came to the conclusion, that a simultaneous transformation in the political and economic sphere is impossible.

Nevertheless, a process of de-legitimization of the communist systems and elites and the urge towards democracy, personal and collective freedom and free market economy initiated a wave of democratization in Eastern Europe. This democratization

had not only an internal dimension, but an external, too. The breakup of the integrating ties with the former partners in the Eastern bloc required a new integration strategy, namely the integration in the European Community/Union. Consequently, democratization in East European countries meant from an early stage of transition on at the same time the preparation for a European integration at some point in time. If integration has to be analyzed, democratization as its grounding must be studied, too. Democratization in Eastern Europe can be described with the aid of a Multilevel Model of Democratic Consolidation as presented by Wolfgang Merkel, drawing on some systematic considerations developed by Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan.³

In the first level, named the *constitutional consolidation*, democratic institutions, a system of checks and balances, an electoral system and democratic procedures are established in the transition country. The considered starting point is the constitutional foundation of the democratic system. The norms and principles laid down in the constitution "provide the informal patterns of behavior for social and political contestation, which were developed or negotiated during the transition process."⁴ There are several aspects influencing and characterizing this first step of democratic consolidation like elites' behavior and their adherence to democratic rules in the susceptible transition period. Former communist elites have to comply with democratic thinking before democracy is established, thus providing the legitimacy of this process and leading to the future constitutions' formal legitimacy. Several other aspects of legitimacy, constitution making, and theoretical or empirical perspectives influence the further consolidation of democracy in this context. Needless to say, there are some theoretical issues and they vary from country to country and the governmental system (parliamentary, presidential or semi-presidential), but in sum they don't affect the process of democratization itself.

Merkel defines the *representative consolidation* as the second level of consolidation, criticizing that this aspect was neglected in almost all concepts of democratic consolidation. Merkel rightly introduces the level of *representative consolidation*, highlighting the importance of procedural elements like party system, elite formation or interest groups. These different functional representations of interest constitute formal or informal actors in the political system and they determine how the norms and structures of the consolidation process at the first level are to be completed. Thus, this topic refers largely to the type and method of legislative recruitment under

1 Nelson, J. M. 1993. The Politics of Economic Transformation. Is Third World Experience Relevant in Eastern Europe? *World Politics*, 45(3), 433-463.

2 O'Donnell, G., Schmitter, P. C., & Whitehead L. (Eds.) 1986a. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe*. Baltimore ; O'Donnell, G. & Schmitter, P. C. (Eds.) 1986. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about uncertain Democracies*. Baltimore.

3 Merkel, W. 1998. The Consolidation of Post-Autocratic Democracies: A Multi-level Model. *Democratization*,

4 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

democratic procedures, while the transition from first to second level is diffuse due to the fact that institutional change influences and determines the setup of the second level's configuration. Moreover, *representative consolidation* will not come to an end with the democratic consolidation because it seems to be a much longer process in the context of those countries' integration into supranational organizations like the European Union. In addition, this level of consolidation is negatively correlated with the degree of political, social, and economic fragmentation and economic backwardness. Fragmented systems tend to perform a slower consolidation, because low professionalized political (often former communist) elites try to preserve their position in the party system. But, as Merkel states, parties alone "cannot guarantee the intermediation of interests between state and society. The territorial representation must be complemented by the functional representation of organized interests. It is exactly this level of intermediary structures, however, that is chronically underdeveloped in post-authoritarian societies."⁵ Even more, in former communist societies and countries, where the political elites are to a large extent identical with the economic elites, the *representative consolidation* should address the network-building in the economic sphere, too. Since there was in Eastern Europe no influential domestic class of private proprietors or an economic elite that was independent from party-politics, the level of the *representative consolidation* should additionally cover the emergence of representative economic interest groups and their positioning in the political system and the society. Now, more than twenty years after the beginning of the democratic consolidation, a considerably large part of the former political, communist, and state- and party-oriented elite has changed allegiance and nowadays represent the spearhead of an economic, private, and profit-oriented class.⁶ In terms of *representative consolidation* this level of democratic consolidation has to be extended into the stage of supranational integration in order to cover structural changes in the post-democratization era, too. But in the latter case the focus has to be set on the changes in democratic representation and the reproduction of elite groups within the political and economic system. A real *representative* and *behavioral consolidation* can only be achieved when this process of consolidation does not consolidate a single elite, which is covering political and economic sphere at the same time and excluding other groups from access to economic possibilities, but implements fair and transparent processes of selection, accession and elite alteration.

5 Ibid., p. 53.

6 Eyal, G., Széleányi, I., & Townsley, E. (Eds.) 2000. *Making Capitalism Without Capitalists: Class Formation and Elites Struggles in Post-Communist Central Europe*. London, New York: Verso.

The behavior of the actors at the third level is affected by the link between the previous two levels. Merkel named this third level the *behavioral consolidation* and describes the emergence of possible veto players. "The stability of a political system depends greatly on whether the social and political elites follow the constitutional rules and accept the legitimacy of the new democratic system. If the political leaders and powerful elites (military, capital, large landowners) do not perceive their own interests sufficiently protected, they will not accept the legitimacy of the new democratic system."⁷ These examples match to the experiences made in Latin America and Southeast Asia, especially in South Korea, Thailand or the Philippines, where military interventions shaped post-autocratic behaviors. In Eastern Europe military, capital or large landowners played no role as veto player. The most remarkable groups were the former communist elite and the elite that arose with their help, forming nowadays powerful economic actors like the *oligarchs* in Russia and Bulgaria. The *barons* in Romania and *tycoons* in Slovenia are the same phenomenon with different names and represent a lesser threat to the consolidation process than in Russia. Merkel discusses the degree of democratic consolidation in all East European countries.⁸ At the same time it is insufficient to demand only acceptance of and adjustment to democratic rules and structures of these elites. Today we have empirical evidence that some of these East European elites as well as the populace consolidated their behavior to democratic norms, misusing them for their own purposes. For example, if the ruling parties have especially close relationships with managerial elites from the public sector, they have multiple mechanisms to convert their control into competitive advantages in the electoral and distributional process.

The fourth and last level depends on the successfully implemented first three levels and is defined as the *democratic consolidation of the political culture*. This level describes the emergence of a citizenship culture and a civil society which has internalized democratic standards, values and procedures and the support for democracy. The implementation and strengthening of this level can last for generations, but it is crucial for a functioning and stable democracy. The legacies of the past are obvious, even if they should not be overestimated for the consolidation of the democratic system and institutional framework. The legacies are much more important for the way of establishing relations and socio-economic dependences in

7 Merkel, W. Op.cit., p. 56.

8 Merkel, W. 2010. Plausible Theory, Unexpected Results: The Rapid Democratic Consolidation in Central and Eastern Europe. In: Best, H., & Weninger, A. (Eds.), *Landmark 1989 Central and Eastern European Societies Twenty Years after the System Change* (pp. 7-26). Münster: LIT-Verlag.

the consolidated systems. Regardless of whether one draws on the concept of the determining communist legacy or the liberalization approach⁹ for the transformation period itself, the influences of the legacies on the political culture and elites behavior is only partly shaped by the structure of constraints and incentives of the democratic and market oriented system. It is not based on an institutional and behavioral imitation of Western democratic standards, but rather an adaption of and an accommodation to the new rules embedding them into the countries' political culture. In this environment a type of clientelism effect can arise, that has through a defective political culture negative effects on the different stages of democratic consolidation and can lead to a de-consolidation or even a roll back of democratic consolidation. "However, in the long run democracy needs for its consolidation the passive obedience and active support of the citizens, otherwise it runs the risk of degenerating into some sort of *defective democracy* where the executive hollows out important checks and balances of the democratic and constitutional political order."¹⁰

Eastern Europe's Integration and Beyond

But what does this mean for the EU-Integration of the East European countries? The transition to a democracy has not been carried out for solely systemic purposes, but from the very beginning it aimed at the countries' integration into the West-European political and economic structures, the European Community and later the European Union. The European Community strongly supported the democratization of the East-European countries and initiated a gradual and asymmetric enlargement strategy. It backed the countries' political and administrative institutions in developing new democratic structures, introducing adequate internal procedures and a market economy in order to make them compliant with Community's setting. This was the precondition for accession negotiations, and the candidate countries were required to adopt the Union's *acquis communautaire*. This focused on the creation of a general institutional framework supporting the functioning of EU policies as a prerequisite for enlargement and successful integration. In the theoretical model mentioned before the

9 Crawford, B. & Lijphart, A. 1995. Explaining Political and Economic Change in Post-Communist Eastern Europe: Old Legacies New Institutions, Hegemonic Norms, and International Pressure. *Comparative Political Studies*, 28(2), 171-199 ; Cirtautas, A. M. & Schimmelfennig, F. 2010. Europeanisation Before and After Accession: Conditionality, Legacies and Compliance. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 62(3), 421-441.

10 Merkel, W. Op.cit., p. 57.

so-called *enlargement acquis* applied to the first and second level, and partly to the third. Nevertheless, the simultaneous democratization and integration turned out to be conflicting logics, because "the principles and norms that dominated enlargement-most notably inevitability, speed, efficiency, and expertise-constrained democratic politics in the applicant countries and limited their EU accession to a narrow sphere of elites and experts."¹¹ In this phase the European demand for compatible institution-building and transposition of EU regulations and norms often competed with the internal post-communist elite's struggle for an institutional design complying with their own needs. While the constitutional consolidation had been completed early, the representative consolidation was partly finished, but continued to be in a state of flux. The stage of the behavioral consolidation created some powerful economic elites as veto powers, trying to monopolize political and economic activity. These influential groups of players, the above mentioned *oligarchs*, *barons* or *tycoons* can be found at local and central levels as well as on high-level.¹² These actors, even if they were far from being influential like the Russian oligarchs, competed in institutional design especially in Bulgaria and Romania but in other Central Eastern European and Baltic countries, too. Many scholars expected with regard to economy that the transformation will fail because the old elites remaining in power will hang on to communist legacy and will thwart economic competition.¹³ But now, more than twenty years after the collapse of communism it is obvious, that many of the old elites took part in the transformation, be it as politicians, be it as new entrepreneurs. The dilemma of simultaneity of the transformations was soon complemented with the requirements of integration. All these partly concurrent, partly complementary demands led to relatively weak state institutions, especially in the two mentioned Balkan countries and thus to the emergence of powerful informal networks within the state as well as non-state networks. These networks took over some of the state's functions and built a system of exclusive networks with strong ties privileging the early winners from the post-communist elites in the renegotiation of the new rules.¹⁴ These groups

11 Raik, K. 2004. EU Accession of Central and Eastern European Countries: Democracy and Integration as Conflicting Logics. *East European Politics and Societies*, 18(4), 567-594.

12 Bezlov, T. & Gounev, P. 2012. Organised Crime, corruption and public bodies. In: Gounev, P. & Ruggiero, V. (Eds.). *Corruption and Organized Crime in Europe: Illegal partnerships*. London, New York: Routledge, 32-54.

13 Sznajder Lee, A. 2011. After the Party, the After-Parties? The Effects of Communist Successor Parties on Economic Reform in Central and Eastern Europe. *Europe Asia Studies*, 63(9), 1697-1718.

14 Dimitrova, A. L. 2010. The New Member States of the EU in the Aftermath of Enlargement: Do New European Rules Remain Empty Shells? *Journal of European Public Policy*, (17)1, 137-148.

could benefit from the opportunities provided by the privatization of state enterprises. They even managed to transfer their influential position into the democratic and free market system by using their extensive internal knowledge and network ties. Leaving ideological dead weight behind them, they built up a strictly market and profit-oriented pressure or even veto group, influencing European integration as well as the socio-economic consolidation of their countries. "However, it does not require a great leap of the imagination to assume that networks which have come together to take advantage of state assets would attempt subsequently to capture the distribution of EU funds. Institutionalization of the rules promoted by the EU has the potential to become the next arena for contestation for post-communist entrepreneurs, especially when the institutions involved have distributive implications."¹⁵

In the pre-accession stage the Union encouraged and supported democratization and compliance with European standards in the East European countries and had a significant impact in the policy dimension. "Most studies confirm that this impact is due to the EU's conditionality and that the incentive of membership [...] also trumped domestic costs"¹⁶ This was done to support the strategy of transferring formal rules into the countries' set of rules and to institutionalize them. But these rules were mainly institutional rules and, as Hammond and Butler concluded, "considering institutional rules alone provides an inadequate guide to the behavior of any system. Instead, the changes in the preference profile are a critical element of the story about the influence of institutions on policy change."¹⁷ In transition countries this preference profile depends on the behavioral consolidation, the consolidation of the political culture and how the new rules are institutionalized. In this process formal rules are supported by informal rules and informal rules emerge from a daily application of formal rules. Here we find that institutionalization depends on the cooperation of administrations and political elites, because if formal and informal rules do not align, it is impossible that a real institutionalization comes into being.¹⁸ Institutionalization alone provides the key *de jure* foundations of governance compatible with EU-standards, but does

not lead automatically to structures and behaviors which ensure consolidation, integration and a persistent adaption to the behaviors of the EU. As for the Eastern and Central European countries' pre-accession stage this means that in cases where the incentive of membership has been the only motivation for a transposition of rules the consolidation process remained vulnerable for a potential backsliding. Or, the norms and structures remained only empty shells after transposition which has in fact been the case much more frequently. The adopted formal rules remained rules-on-the-books rather than rules-in-use and did not affect the behavior of the actors. And this has negative implications for the third level, the behavioral consolidation. In a worst-case-scenario – that is, if the structural adaption is only conditionality-induced – governments can reverse inconvenient institutional changes and political or legal norms after accession. Here the consolidation process faces an external short-term incentive that can be replaced after accession, if veto groups are strong enough or don't adapt to new structures. The extreme position of a major backsliding cannot be observed in the East European countries, as many scholars found out.¹⁹ Nevertheless, we have empirical evidence for at least a partial backsliding after accession and fulfilled conditionality. One example is the civil service sector, where cases of reform backsliding after integration in the Union are well known. They can be observed in Slovakia, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia. Hungary combined elements of reform continuation and reform backsliding.²⁰ Other examples, referring to the first and second level of the consolidation model, concern systemic re-adjustments or violations of national and/or European laws. This can be observed in Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania and Slovakia especially in the field of minority protection. For example, over the last years the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) analyzed the situation of national, religious and ethnic minorities, too, and observed partial backsliding.²¹ Recently Hungary came on the watch list, when the Hungarian parliament passed a new constitution and several laws as for instance a new media

15 Ibid., p. 144

16 Sedelmeier, U. 2006. Europeanisation in new member and candidate states. *Living Reviews in European Governance*, 1(3), 3-34 ; Schimmelfennig, F. & Sedelmeier, U. 2005. *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press ; Sedelmeier, U. 2012. Is Europeanisation through Conditionality Sustainable? Lock-in of Institutional Change after EU Accession. *West European Politics*, 35(1), 20-38.

17 Hammond, T. H. & Butler, C. K. 2003. Some Complex Answers to the Simple Question 'Do Institutions Matter?' Policy Choice and Policy Change in Presidential and Parliamentary Systems. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 15(2), 145-200.

18 Dimitrova, A. L. 2010 op.cit., p.144

19 Sedelmeier, U. 2012. Op. cit. ; Petersheim, M.-J. 2012 "The European Union and Consolidating Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe". *Journal of European Integration*, 34(1), 75-91. ; Levitz, P. & Pop-Eleches, G. 2010. "Why No Backsliding? The European Union's Impact on Democracy and Governance Before and After Accession". *Comparative Political Studies*, 43(4), 457-485.

20 Mayer-Sahling, J.-H. 2011. "The Durability of EU Civil Service Policy in Central and Eastern Europe after Accession". *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, 24(2), 231-260.

21 Schweltnus, G., Balázs, L., & Mikalayeva L. 2009. "It ain't over when it's over: The adoption and sustainability of minority protection rules in new EU member states". In: Frank Schimmelfennig F. & Trauner F. (Eds). "Post-accession compliance in the EU's new member states, *European Integration online Papers (EIoP)*", 13(2), Art. 24, <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2009-024a.htm>.

law or the reorganization of electoral districts. The Hungarian government has been accused of disabling democratic mechanisms which would lead to the country's multiple disintegration. Another example is the Romanian case, where the government restricted unlawfully the independence of constitutional court and attacked the judiciary in 2012. These are attempts to partially readjust the political system, which can be necessary due to changing environment in some cases whereas in other cases it means a step towards European disintegration.

Where the influence of democratic institutions on policy and behavioral change is too small, the incentive of partial disintegration can be high for some elites. This is a good example for another meaning of integration: European integration does not only mean a countries' integration into the European Union as an international actor by institutional change. Integration also has an internal denomination leading to a self-integrated society. The integration of polarized societies like the Hungarian, Latvian, Slovakian or Romanian into a European society needs a lot of special efforts to be completed. Therefore, this kind of constructivism focuses only on the structural level, the legal and institutional compliance, and is partly misleading, because it does not address production and reproduction of social practice, social action and the complexity of power concentration especially in the former communist countries. As mentioned before, accession-conditionality can lead to transposition of rules or laws into empty shells, existing simply on paper. Even if most transpositions led to accepted rules and rules-in-use, some permutations of European rules partly simulated compliance and compatibility. Here, the political actors transposed the requested European standards to accomplish membership in the EU, but ignored them in real life using parallel informal rules instead. This method clearly hampers further post-accession integration, goes on the account of veto actors and is related to rules and institutions which have distributive implications.²² This aspect brings up another key point regarding the post-accession compliance and ongoing integration not only in European structures and administration, but – and primarily – in a societal integration and a behavioral adaptation to European standards on all political and administrative levels. While we can observe top elites' mostly democratic, urbanized, biased and prestigious behavior, mid- and low-level administration still suffers from the existence of exclusionary networks, hampering deeper integration.

Missing progress in judicial reform, corruption and organized crime are the most severe and most often mentioned problem areas. Thus, after the first Eastern

22 Dimitrova, A. L. 2010 op.cit.

enlargement in 2004, the Union's integration strategy considered the problems of pre-accession conformity, post-accession transposition and possible backsliding or insignificance of European rules. As an outcome, the European Union established the so called Cooperation and Verification Mechanism.²³ This mechanism monitors those problematic policy areas which are seen as an obstacle for a successful integration. The decision of the EU's commission defines as scope of monitoring Romania's progress:

- “(1) Ensure a more transparent, and efficient judicial process notably by enhancing the capacity and accountability of the Superior Council of Magistracy. Report and monitor the impact of the new civil and penal procedures codes.
- (2) Establish, as foreseen, an integrity agency with responsibilities for verifying assets, incompatibilities and potential conflicts of interest, and for issuing mandatory decisions on the basis of which dissuasive sanctions can be taken.
- (3) Building on progress already made, continue to conduct professional, non-partisan investigations into allegations of high-level corruption.
- (4) Take further measures to prevent and fight against corruption, in particular within the local government.”²⁴

Concerning Bulgaria, the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism contains in addition the fight against organized crime, which until today is a serious problem constraining effective integration and enforcement of European standards on all political, administrative and social levels.²⁵ By admitting Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 and establishing the above mentioned mechanism, the Union acknowledged Eastern Europe's multi-speed integration on the one hand and an obstructed integration of Europe on the other hand as well. All those monitored problems are the direct outcome of the incomplete democratic consolidation, the powerful informal networks and veto-players and the unfavorable integration conditionality conducted by the EU.

23 Vachudova, M. A. & Spendzharova, A. 2012. “The EU's Cooperation and Verification Mechanism: Fighting Corruption in Bulgaria and Romania after EU Accession. Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies (Ed.)”. *European Policy Analysis*. March (1), 1-18.

24 C(2006)6569. Commission decision of 13/XII/2006 establishing a mechanism for cooperation and verification of progress in Romania to address specific benchmarks in the areas of judicial reform and the fight against corruption. European Commission (Ed.). Bruxelles.

25 C(2006)6570. Commission decision of 13/XI/2006 establishing a mechanism for cooperation and verification of progress in Bulgaria to address specific benchmarks in the areas of judicial reform and the fight against corruption and organised crime. European Commission (Ed.). Bruxelles.

While the first Eastern enlargement widely relied upon the incentive of membership as a guiding principle, in the case of Romania and Bulgaria the motivation for adaptation to EU-standards was purged early after, because some Western politicians promised membership before the countries reached the necessary integration level.

There are some areas of policy, behavior and economy affected, but the sometimes vast corruption and the weak or even missing will to fight it together with problematic judicial practice are the most severe obstructions to the integration progress. The Union's Commission declared regarding the Romanian case in January 2013: "One of the major concerns over the summer was the clear evidence of pressure on judicial institutions and lack of respect for the independence of the judiciary. This remains a major source of concern. The Commission received numerous reports of intimidation or harassment against individuals working in key judicial and anti-corruption institutions, including personal threats against judges and their families, and media campaigns amounting to harassment. Unfortunately, the Commission's recommendation has not been fully implemented. Politically motivated attacks on the judiciary have not ended. A critical point is the acceptance of judicial decisions: this requires the whole of the political class to form a consensus to refrain from discrediting judicial decisions, undermining the credibility of magistrates or putting pressure on them."²⁶ These judicial weaknesses are partly structural, since the Romanian legal system has features which make it vulnerable to abuse. The Commission's criticism sounds similar in the Bulgarian case, where it states: "Weaknesses in judicial and investigative practice, in particular in relation to cases involving high-level corruption and serious organised crime, have been highlighted by the Commission since 2008."²⁷ These examples show how the integration process is restrained by incomplete democratic and behavioral consolidation enabling some elites and veto players to pursue their own interests and to act as competitors towards administration's and state's goals. Achieving their countries' membership was essential for those networks, because membership guaranteed access to distributive institutions allowing them to participate in the consumption of EU-funds. A deeper integration and Europeanization is not their first choice, because this would mean a limitation to their access to power and economic distribution.

This combination of relatively weak administration, powerful elite networks

26 COM(2013) 47. Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: On Progress in Romania under the Co-operation and Verification Mechanism. European Commission (Ed.). Bruxelles.

27 COM(2012) 411. Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: On Progress in Bulgaria under the Co-operation and Verification Mechanism. European Commission (Ed.). Bruxelles.

with direct access to state funds facilitates corruption on all political levels and in all societal spheres. Of course, corruption is not only an East European phenomenon, and we can find corruption on different levels and different dimensions in all countries of the European Union. There are different measurement tools available that inform about corruption, corruption perception or control of corruption. Examples are the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, the Bribe Payers Index, the Open Budget Index, Financial Secrecy Index or the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators, covering different aspects related with a country's democratic consolidation. All these tools give an insight into a country's or a society's susceptibility to corruption but not to its socio-political effects. The decisive topic that enables to tell apart corruption in Eastern Europe from the one in the Western hemisphere is its socio-political function. While in Western Europe corruption is based on social structures mostly and is primarily embedded in societal environment, corruption in Eastern Europe seems to be predominantly an administrative and political one affecting system stability and ability to perform. This substantially affects administrative capacity and workflow, efficiency of law enforcement and the improvement of business environment, as all published European Commission's monitoring reports clarify with regards to Romania and Bulgaria.²⁸ Moreover this undermines people's trust in political and administrative elites, and subsequently has a negative impact on the stability of the system and its ability for a deeper integration in the EU. In addition, the evident politicization of judiciary, parliament, civil service, law-enforcement bodies and such negatively impacts the consolidation of the political culture. This type of corruption combines interests at various socio-economic levels. Striking examples are the "buying electoral votes to rig elections, corrupting law-enforcement bodies to escape prosecution, corrupting aimed at securing political protection over white collar and organised crime. Thus, controlling administrative corruption is not possible without curbing political corruption."²⁹ One prominent example of this high-level corruption is the case of the former Romanian Prime Minister Năstase, who was imprisoned in 2012.

28 Ibid., ; COM(2013) 47. Op.cit.

29 CSD 2012. Corruption and Anti-corruption in Bulgaria (2011-2012). Ed. Center for the Study of Democracy. Policy Brief No. 35, June 2012.

Conclusion

Partial and incomplete democratic consolidation in conjunction with a parallel roll-out of European rules into countries with still inadequate levels of democracy and behaviors is not the best pre-condition for a fast, successful, and deeper integration. This general framework favors an institutionalized form of corruption and the then resulting corruption-orientated network-building endangers those countries' internal consolidation and European integration, too. Greece, that also has an obviously high tendency towards corruption, is a good example for this kind of threat the European integration faces and which is induced by powerful networks connected with corruption. However, intensified reforms in socio-political and societal spheres are substantial for a deeper European integration and should be connected with some kind of integration incentive like the common currency and social policy.

The still incomplete integration of most East and Central European countries gives reason to the conclusion that in a multi-speed Europe these countries are still facing multiple dilemmas. On the one hand, political and economic transformation and transposition of rules and laws are more or less completed. On the other hand, the adaption of the societies and behaviors to those rules is still in progress, so that integration did not end but began with the countries' accession to the European Union. Integration is still going on and seems to be a long lasting development. Thus, Europe's status in the world order is determined, inter alia, by its ability to constitute something like an integrated organism and not only a cooperating organization. Informal network, powerful veto players, weak administrations, vast corruption that is effective in socio-political sphere and is affecting administration, electoral and distributional structures are seriously endangering Europe's ability to react on internal and external challenges. If Europe's strategy of integration should be successful versus the Asian strategy of partial and target-oriented cooperation, the focus cannot be only on adoption of political and administrative structures and rules, but has to turn its attention on the quality of socio-political structures, behaviors and the rules-in-use, and not only the rules-on-the-books. Otherwise the still open question of financial integration as the next and possibly most important and irrevocable step will fail in practice, even if all new member countries are obliged to join the European Monetary Union. Further, these considerations highlight the necessity of a convincing transformation, democratization and integration theory, covering not only political, economic and administrative scopes, but also social, behavioral, sociological, societal, and the informal spheres in order to facilitate the integration of heterogeneous

countries. The outcomes of the European integration process and the theoretical findings can also be a substantial experience for other regions cooperating and integrating in economic spheres and eventually in the political one. Europe's ability to overcome all these integration dilemmas and obstacles will be decisive in search for the best regional strategy.

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Multilateral Cooperation and Regional Integration in East Asia: for cooperative integration or membership game?¹

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Introduction

Multilateral cooperation in international relations has become a diplomatic remark in East Asia, as much as the regional cooperation that suffered a certain level of uncertainty despite various efforts to establish an international regime. After the Cold War ended in 1991, expectations for multilateralism in East Asia has gradually increased in anticipation of regional security and prosperity.

Contrary to expectations, the future of multilateral cooperation in East Asia is not positive for dynamic international relations among major actors such as the U.S., China, Russia, and Japan. As a member of the G2, China has challenged the regional US dominated East Asia order that has been the status quo since the end of World War II. Japan faces a complicated situation due to domestic and international affairs. Facing hegemonic America and challenging China, Japan underwent a long-term economic depression for more than two decades. Japan has to pursue two simultaneous policy goals economic recovery and military expansion to seek a way to compensate for the national status in the region. Korea has sought an appropriate role in the process of the establishment a new U.S. and China dominated regional order.

Multilateral cooperation in international relations is regarded as a morally advanced institution since it is based on democratic rule among nation states such as equal representative rights contrary to the verdict of traditional realists. European states created the European Union that the East Asian states regard as an ideal institutional development and a model case. Multilateral cooperation in East Asia is a new challenge for regional peace and security that simply reflects the different policy goals for each participant, despite the shared vision for a multilateral regime on a superficial level. A multilateral regime in East Asia could be a shared effort for peace and prosperity in the region.

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