The emerging new borders in Europe: new dilemmas and scenarios

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Abstract

The contemporary scene of borders and border space in Europe is composed of a series of parameters: (a) the eastward enlargement of the European Union; (b) the European Neighbourhood Policy launched by the European Union's new strategy; and (c) the 9/11 terrorist attack, which, imperatively, addressed the issue of security. These developments have triggered a discussion concerning the future borders of European Union. What are Europe's borders and where do they end? How far should the European Union's borders extend following the next round of enlargement? What is the European Union's approach with regard to its external surroundings? What is considered to be European and what is not? All the above are merely questions that are brought to the fore, initiating a series of dilemmas and syllogisms. The present article attempts firstly to examine the political and economic geography responsible for synthesizing the new image of borders in Europe in general, and in Southeastern Europe after 1989 in particular. Moreover, the European Neighbourhood Policy is analysed, whilst at the same time the main dilemmas and concerns regarding the future of the European Union are considered.

Keywords: borders, European Neighbourhood Policy, Enlargement

JEL Classification: F, O.

Introduction

Up until the era of Ludwig XIV, borders in Europe meant something only for soldiers and princes at times of war. It is worth noting that none of the treaties signed by Ludwig XIV contained the term borders or any similar meaning (Febvre, 1973). Both the French and American Revolutions that followed later added the element of popular dominion within the territorial boundaries of the nation. This resulted in borders no longer being zones, but strictly defined lines that divided nation-states with a great extent of internal cohesion.

The Cold War period divided Europe into the "West" and the "East". Within this outline, Western Europe was associated with "Europe" and European institutions such as the European Community, the European Council and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), were associated with the term of "the free world". On the other hand, Eastern Europe was related to "non-free Eurasian Europe" (Wallace, 2002). It is within this prism of thought that ideology was linked with specific institutions. Thus, at the time when Europe was identified with the term "European Union", it was only natural for European values equally to interact with the values of the European Union itself. Of course, despite the fact that the borders between east and the west were arbitrarily imposed, neglecting all historical and cultural among between nations, they remained fixed and non-negotiable.

The contemporary image of the European borders comprises a series of parameters that practically shape the environment of border space. The first parameter deals with European enlargement to the east and resulted in gradually eliminating the European Union borders in the interior, while making external borders even firmer. The Schengen Treaty acknowledges this policy significantly by horizontally imposing an integrated system against other third party countries. It is not an accident that the Schengen Treaty has become the symbol of the abolition of the discrimination towards many of the former Eastern Bloc countries, which the European Union employs in the alarming event of mass migration.

The second major twist of events is associated with the new strategy of proximity deployed by the European Union in relation to its exterior. The actual strategy, so far, expresses the official response of the European Union in the way that it perceives its position and its future with regard to its surroundings. However, this initiative, which is one directly affecting cross-border policies, has raised a series of ongoing discussions regarding the broader relationships of the European Union with its milieu. It should be pointed out at this stage that the relationships taken on by the European Union with candidate countries, as in the cases of Turkey and Croatia, are much more different with the potential candidate countries of the Western Balkans. Similarly, there are different norms to which the relationship of the European Union with countries such as Norway and Switzerland conform, and vastly different norms with countries that are mentioned in the European Policy of Proximity, such as Russia and the Ukraine. It is evident that the European Union does not communicate with the same dialect with all its neighbours.

The third parameter is an exogenous one and associated with the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This event prompted a new parameter, namely that of security, onto the new scene. Consequently, pleas for more strictly controlled borders increased dramatically. Undoubtedly, there are few empirical findings that verify that strictly controlled borders are capable of limiting terrorism, crime, smuggling or illegal migration are. What is most important with this concept is for someone to be able to find the "right" side of the borders (Zienlonka, 2002).

All the above developments have managed to revive a discussion with respect to the nature and characteristics of the European Union borders. What are, and where, do the borders of the European Union end? How far European should borders stretch to following the nest enlargement? What is Europe's current position in relation to its surrounding? What is considered as European and what is not? All these are merely few of the questions that have come to the surface which have generated a series of concerns and dilemmas.

Article 237 of the Treaty of Rome states that any country in Europe is eligible to apply to become a member of the Community. Accession criteria were also set up without making any reference to aspects of history, civilization or geography. It is, however, indicative that Morocco's request for accession had been turned down due to cultural and geographical reasons, rather the formal criteria for accession. This brought a range of accusations against racism and colonialism. On the other side, however, the designation of the "physical European borders" based on history, geography and civilization is an extremely difficult issue that remains open (Zienlonka, 2002).

The present paper examines the political and economic geography of the new scene of borders after 1989. In the next section, basic political and economic characteristics of Southeastern Europe after 1989 will be analysed in order to take a closer look into the peculiarities of this geographic unity. The European Proximity Policy is analysed and assessed in the third section, before the paper finishes with an analysis related to the concerns and dilemmas of the European Union of the future, plus conclusions.

European Borders After 1989

The political and economic reform that took place in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 fostered new expectations for an integrated Europe in which borders would no longer pose impenetrable dividing lines, but would be "bridges" of communication and collaboration. The eloquence behind this view of a borderless Europe is, however, to a great extent, disorientating for a various reasons. First, the discussion alone is one that concerns the European Union and not Europe itself. Furthermore, the economic obstacles within the European borders have not yet been completely abolished while at the same time its external borders have been further strengthened and become more complex (Anderson and Bort, 2002; van Hutoum, 2003). The question, therefore, is whether or not we live in a time where borders in Europe are abolished, changed or just being reformed.

The process of transition that followed the fall of the Eastern Bloc regimes has sparked a discussion in relation to cross-border policies. Within this context, border regions once considered as "cul-de-sac" regions in communication and exchange were turned into "contact zones" with neighbouring regions (Dimitrov et al., 2002; Resmini, 2002). In order for this sort of discussion to be understood, one need only mention that border space in these transition countries accounts for 66% of their area and 58% of the total population (CEC, 2001).

The accession of ten new countries into the European Union in 2004 brought a new political and economic geography to the fore in Europe. The European Union's borders changed while at the same time both the political and economic space broadened further. The geographic conditions for several regional borders had changed rather dramatically through this new European structure. The exterior borders of the "old" European Union had been turned into interior borders, while the exterior borders of the "new" European Union now shifted to the east (Petrakos and Topaloglou, 2008).

A series of studies shed some light on the interaction at the cross-border level of with the geographical coordinates of the cross-border regions. Along this line, the relationship between economy and geography appears to be strong and regenerated. Although border areas acquire a perimetric character under a national market framework, their geographical position on a European scale can be corroborated as a crucial factor for their developmental outlook. In an attempt to simulate this assumption in view of the recent enlargement, many remote border regions from the national markets of the new Member States have positioned themselves rather closely to the centre of an integrated European market.

One could argue that there are two new types of border regions - central and perimetric border regions - emerging at a European level.

The central border regions are those that benefit from greater access to markets and promising development outlooks because of favourable geographic conditions (Niebuhr and Stiller, 2002). Empirical findings among newly accessed member states show that the western border regions adjacent to the 15 developed EU countries exhibit higher development performances (Petrakos, 2001; Petrakos et al., 2004). Moreover, it seems that not all border regions benefit the same from the process of integration, which is, in fact, at the level of border regions identified with being correlated with issues of geography, initial conditions and transport costs (Limao and Venables, 2001). Border areas with close proximity to the European economic centre are expected to gain important benefits as well as attract activities of a higher functional order (Petrakos and Brada, 1989). Proximity will favour the diffusion and flow of "intangible goods" such as information, social and organizational models, and cultural osmosis. On the other hand, perimetric regions with weak economic structures, poor infrastructure and inadequate local resources are expected to downgrade even further.

A series of recent studies argue that a greater demand as a result of the large market effect will favour border regions of the transition countries with apt access to the EU market. Border regions possessing such characteristics are expected to improve their appeal by becoming gradually a pole of attraction for investment, apart from the existing capital cities and large urban centres (Deichman and Henderson, 2000; Altomonte and Resmini, 2002; Fazekas, 2003).

What is more, facts at hand regarding the border areas of transition countries exhibit an extraordinary irregularity with respect to socio-economic situation and competitiveness. Yet, a brief assessment of the economic indices and the overall development dynamics signify that there is a new dividing line evolving among countries in Southeastern and Central Europe. What is observed, in other words, is that the geographical characteristics of every country affect the development potentials and the efficiency of functional policies (Petrakos, 2002). What, though, was the political background for Europe after 1989? The answer to such a question cannot be excluded from an envisaged European Union in which economic integration outweighs political integration. In other words, the tug-of-war between policies and market tilts in favour of the latter. Furthermore, it asserted in the leading economic thought that market self-regulation has, more or less, advanced into an axiom (Petrakos, 2000b) and into an idiomorphic obsession. Development policies along the border areas, therefore, are placed within a framework where neoclassical types of approaches seem to have preceded. As a result, the issues concerning the reduction of peripheral inequalities are no longer the focal point of European policies.

The New Scene in Southeastern Europe after 1989

Following the collapse of the central planning regimes, Southeast Europe emerged into the bibliography as a distinct peripheral entity just as in Central Europe and the Baltic states, for instance. In spite of the fact that Eastern Europe was perceived as a solid and uniform geopolitical and economic space in opposition to the West the during the period of the Cold War, the dramatic changes after 1989 spurred the unique characteristics and the different origins of its actual peripheral entities.

In an attempt to outline the basic parameters that portray Southeastern Europe after 1989 and distinguish it from other East European peripheral patterns, the following aspects can be highlighted. Firstly, the phenomena of unreasonable nationalism, minority discrepancies, splinter movements and war conflicts, as well as the civil war anguish that followed, took place almost solely in Southeastern Europe and the Caucasus. The consequences of such events drastically determined the economic milieu of these countries that had experienced the turmoil of events, and also affected the countries adjacent to them by undermining their potential for development (Petrakos, 2000b). In the meantime, the transition countries in Central Europe, as well as the countries in the Baltic, all managed to overcome the drawback of violent conflicts safely. The above factors had a negative impact on attracting direct foreign investment (EBRD, 1998; Bitzenis, 2001). As a result, Southeastern Europe is making efforts to compete within the European economic arena with countries suffering with the burden of racial divisions and conflicts.

Secondly, the incorporation of Southeastern European countries into an open economic environment through "shock therapy", something that eventually prevailed as a logic of economic and political reform, caused, in a great many cases, traumatic experiences and both social and productive distress (Petrakos and Totev, 2000). Also, the standards of development fall short to a great extent to those of other transitional countries, while the high dependency upon the primary sector of production and employment appear reminiscent of pre-capitalist and long-gone economic structures.

Thirdly, Southeastern Europe's great distance from the European economic centre, its weak urban population and productive system, small market size and the unfavourable initial conditions make its incorporation into the European edifice rather awkward (Cohen, 1998; Kratke, 1999; Petrakos, 2002).

Fourthly, in reference to investment and trade flows, Southeastern Europe can, undoubtedly, be described as an area of low investment appeal. If the bulk of the global direct investment (which is extremely low) in Eastern Europe is taken into account, then investments that finally reach Southeastern Europe are sub-multiple.

Trade exchanges on the other hand are confined to intra-industry type of relationships mainly with the EU, while trade exchanges among transition countries remain at very low levels. Also, trade deficits and the dependence on exports from both very few and problematic sectors are just some of the negative characteristics of the transition countries of Southeastern Europe (Jackson and Petrakos, 2000). The issue of proximity of these countries to Greece has, to a certain degree, yielded an inter-industry character and expertise that, under different circumstances, would have been much more openly exposed to competition (Panteladis, 2002).

It is apparent from the above analysis that a new dividing line with greater inequalities than those observed within the EU is emerging between Central and Southeastern Europe. The process of transition from one stage of European integration to the next creates a dipolar effect, which, in fact, determines the conditions for integration within the new spectrum of reality. Undoubtedly, the role of geography in this milieu is a rather decisive one, without undermining, however, the historical, cultural or social elements. The opening of the

borders, nevertheless, provides the opportunity for resumption for a particular space that has remained segmented into smaller markets, and grants Southeastern Europe favourable conditions for economic accumulation, economies of scale and expertise. New dynamic trends are expected to emerge in trade, investments and in enterprise networks in the context of the newly fragmented labour in Europe.

The role of processed, effective and concrete policies could certainly have acquired a significant position. Policies on behalf of Southeastern European countries targeting issues of democratization, transparency, abolition of trade obstacles and the investment in human recourses could all contribute in a constructive way. What is more, enhancement policies from the European Union or other international organizations that aim to improve industrial, transport and communication infrastructures would no doubt support the developmental efforts made by the transition countries of Southeastern Europe. Nevertheless, the majority of studies perceive a notion of instability in investment policies, as well as in the political scene in the transition countries of Southeastern Europe. These studies detect the ineffectiveness of European enhancement policies that allocate economic support based mainly on population criteria and not according to real needs (Kotios and Petrakos, 2000). It remains, as yet, uncertain as to the extent to which effective policies would radically change the course of development of countries with unfavourable initial and geographic conditions. Kotios and Petrakos (2000) also argue that:
"… centricity in the newly developing European economic space offers major advantages which affect the course, performance and the level of economic development regardless of the implementation or not proper transition policies".

European Neighboring Policy

The European Neighbouring Policy (ENP) is somehow representative of the EU's response to the new situation, which emerged following the latest enlargement process in 2004 and the accession of the ten new Member States. At present, there are 16 new countries with a population of about 400 million people in the EU's external borders with a GDP less than 10% of that of the EU. These new borders stretch to a distance of 5,100 kilometres covering the southeastern and northern girth of the 2004 European policies and external affairs.

The ENP in continental Europe refers to Russia, the Ukraine, Belarus and Moldavia. In the Mediterranean, the ENP refers to all non-Member States of the EU but are partners of the European Agreement (otherwise known as the Barcelona Process), with the exception of Turkey, which is at the pre-accession stage. The European Commission proposed for the countries of the Northern Caucasus - Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia - to be placed under the ENP's schemes. The Commission has adopted separate action plans involving all these countries, which form a joint responsibility on the basis of shared values.

Let us start from the beginning. In March 2003, the European Commission published a paper entitled "Wider Europe Neighbourhood: A new framework for the relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours" (CEC, 2003a), which described the ENP's basic principles. In October 2003, the European Council approved the initiative and requested the Commission to proceed with the proposal. The Commission came up with a new paper: "Paving the way for a New Neighbourhood

Instrument" (CEC, 2003a) providing feedback to the ongoing discussion with new elements, which formed the basis for a series of EU manuscripts and reports. In May 2004, the Commission released a strategic manuscript related to the ENP (CEC, 2004a), which marked the start of discussions with every country and an assessment account, which followed the submission of reports for every accession candidate. In November 2004, the Commission submitted two proposals. The first referred to the implementation of the action plans with every country (CEC, 2004a) and the second referred to the introduction of a European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (CEC, 2004b).

The action plans, which are accountable within the ENP framework, describe specific values, objectives and priorities spanning a period of no less than three years with the purpose of being renewed after mutual agreement. One could argue that the action plans operate with respect to the criteria set out at the Copenhagen summit of 1993, which refer to the EU candidate states. It is worth noting that the actual plans cover a 25-page long list of assurances dealing with different fields and aspects such as politics, collaboration, economic reforms, energy, transport, environment, human rights and cross-border cooperation. It should be pointed out, however, that through this liberal outline of action plans, which is based on the free movement of production coefficients, the actual free labour movement is absent (Emerson, 2004; Emerson and Noutceva, 2005).

Action plans will be funded by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) with an approximate cost of 13 billion euros for the period 2007-2013. The existing subsidiary means, which promote the national, interregional and cross-border cooperation, involve: INTERREG, which, for the time being, is not capable of supporting actions outside the EU's borders; PHARE CBC, which focuses upon supporting the collaboration among accession candidate countries as well as EU member states; MEDA, which supports the inter-Mediterranean cooperation (the Barcelona Process); and TACIS CBC, which supports cross-border actions with Russia, the Ukraine, Belarus and Moldavia. All the above programmes have their own set of application rules, which are often different from each other. The ENPI aims to achieve cohesion and simplification of the procedures through the action plans so that all the above programmes are realized one after the other (CEC, 2004a).

Despite the clarity of the stated aims, the ENPI's distribution of resources remains vague. The uncertainty behind the future of the Community's budget, and the pressure among groups with opposable interests, is intensifying a misty scene even more (Jones and Emerson, 2005).

Furthermore, the heightened sense of bureaucracy in the management of programmes - preparation, advance evaluations, reports, intermediate evaluation, new reports, late evaluations, for instance - have all created a vicious circle that often creates anti-economies of scale, rather than evaluating synergies and economies of scale.

Officially, the ENP aims to create a wellbeing zone and a "ring of friends" zone with whom the EU can develop close and peaceful relationships, without creating any dividing lines (CEC, 2003a). The "ring of friends" intends to provide, amongst others, security in the EU. In this logic, it could be said that it is aiming for a "fortified" Europe. The 9/11 events have brought new facts to the

foreground as the issue of security and a potential terrorist attack has managed to occupy an important place on the agenda of discussions related to the EU's external milieu (Emerson et al., 2005). For this reason, the issue of security has surpassed that of enhancing cross-border social and cultural flows in the actual discussion.

According to Emerson (2004), the EU aims to obscure the "in/out" dividing line, with the intention to maintain the developments that occur within its neighbourhood. Achieving stability comprises a major parameter adopted by the ENP and one that is defined by the set or rules behind human rights and minority issues, equity, apt governance, promotion of market economy and sustainable socio-economic development (CEC, 2003b). Johansson and Nogues (2004) argue that the EU aims to create a zone of stability in its surroundings on the one hand and evading any further enlargements along the way on the other. More to the point, the countries with which the ENP is concerned are excluded from any type of accession or pre-accession procedures.

Let us now consider the ENP's view on various key people inside the EU. Romano Prodi, former President of the European Commission, delivered an important address on 5 December 2005 titled: "Policies of Approach in the enlarged Europe, as key for stability". He addressed three political questions in a diplomatic, yet rhetorical, fashion: a) what should we offer to our neighbours? b) what sort of expectations should we lead them to? and c) where does Europe end? Without providing any answers to any of these questions, Prodi went on to map out the content that the EU approach policy should adopt with respect to its direct surroundings. He further suggested that such a policy ought to be: appealing, in terms of rewards; motivating, in the sense of having measures that will focus upon issues of wellbeing, stability and security; dynamic, with mutual agreements that will be monitored and renewed; based on respective "Copenhagen criteria for proximity" for bordering countries; and clear that it will neither imply promises for accession nor would rule it out. Prodi highlighted that he envisaged this approach as one of sharing everything, but allowing institutions open grounds for any new potential forms of cooperation.

On 20 January 2006, the European Commissioner for External Relations, Ferrero Waldner, characterized the ENP as the latest edition of the "democratization toolbox", within the framework of a "strategic idealism" - that of the EU - by defining it as a carrot-and-stick strategy. For the rather sensitive issue of migration, the commissioner pointed out that migrants were welcomed as long as they complied with economic needs, and highlighted that this would, in turn, block the flow of illegal migration.

In a speech on 3 February 2006, Danita Hubner, the EU Commissioner, pointed out that the lack of reform in the Community's institutions would not be the Achilles heel of the enlargement process. Nevertheless, she argued that the Union had to keep its doors open to European countries that were not yet members. She raised two questions: what kind of Europe do we want; and what kind of Europe do we prefer? In answering these two questions, she underlined the perplexity underlying both these concepts. Consequently, the European Union is, at times, defined as a political entity based on institutions and regulations, while also being seen as a socio-political conception in accordance with its geography, history and culture. In the first case, Europe is perceived as a "project", whereas in the second case, it is seen as an "idea" (Agnew, 2005).

Apart from the standpoints of the European Commission and its commissioners, the ENP becomes an object of a different interpretation and approach among the EU Member States. Emerson and Noutcheva (2005), in an attempt to register these different views and the parameters that affect them, stress the following categories: geographical preferences: northerners prefer northerners, southerners prefer southerners; partiality of former colonial countries: France and Spain towards countries in the Maghreb, Austria towards the Balkans; partiality from former dependent countries: Baltic countries and Central European countries towards Russia; partiality from the Second World War: Germany towards Israel and Russia; alternative European aspirations: an integrated democratic Europe or a strong Europe; and alternative global perspectives: the New Atlantic Europe or the old de Gaulle Europe.

The above argument makes it apparent that the ENP's driving force is composed of a mix of vital concerns and interests that make up the several resultant complex approaches in the niches of the EU. It is a fact that the ENP has raised an ongoing discussion not only among the scientific community but also in the areas of the EU's politicians and technocrats, who tackle crucial such questions where does Europe end, or what is the role of borders in the European Union of the future?

Dilemmas and Scenarios for Europe's Future

In today's Europe, not all seem to agree or understand what exactly Europe serves or to where it is heading. What is needed is a fresh concession for the new, contemporary European essence. It is for this reason that "Plan D" was created. The focal point of this plan involves the discussion between citizens for the future of Europe, which will be carried out during the self-examination period".

The above text is a statement by the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, during the inauguration of the Debate Europe forum site on 25 January 2007. The actual statement reveals clearly the dilemmas and concerns of the European Union with respect to its scope and direction. In the context of this debate, questions such as "what is the future of the European Union and that of Europe?" and "what is European and what not"? form the heart of the scientific and political discussion in Europe and also of that of the actual communities it contains.

Anderson (2006), in an attempt to codify the existing answers to the above matter, lists five different points of view in relation to the future of the EU: the "Europe of nations"; the "federal Europe"; the "Europe of regions"; the "neo-medieval"; and the "Empire-Europe". The first three scenarios are more or less familiar, whereas the last two scenarios have made their way into the literature only in recent years. In practice, the EU being a composite and complex organization contains elements from all five scenarios.

The first three scenarios are directed mainly towards Europe's inner profile and either overlook or render limited consideration to its external relations. In fact, in the case of the regional policy so far, the EU has seemed to be acting as an integrated nation, attempting to homogenize its space by bringing the less developed areas such as those in Portugal, Greece and Ireland closer to the

European average. In the EU 25, however, such policies of intervention are not considered "realistic".

Up until 1980, the discussion on the future of the European Union focused on the so called "democratic dilemma" (Newman, 1996, 2002). The basic response to this question dealt with the spatial level of democratic image (federal, nation-state or region), which would have secured in the best possible way the values of democracy and the representation of citizens. This discussion placed more emphasis upon the spatial levels and a lesser degree upon fundamental practices, since it was verified later that it had led to a "zero sum game". In other words, the strengthening of one level would automatically have meant the shrinking of the other (Anderson and Goodman, 1995; Goodman, 1997).

What is the future, however, for the nation-state inside the European Union? In contemporary times, there are many of those who view the nation-state as an anachronistic institution far too small to succeed against global competition and far too big to big for a cultural identify for citizen participation. According to this theory, the state loses power from above (EU) and from below (regions). In reality, however, nation-states continue to maintain a major part of their authority while projections for the death of the nation-state do not seem valid, at least for the near future (Anderson, 2006). In the EU, in particular, sceptics argue that the economic union of independent states at the most utmost case could inhibit vital aspects of the European integration.

On the other hand, the "EU-federation" notion represents the very opposite pole from that of the European Union of nation-states. If this scenario is compared with that of the USA, then one may observe some stirring inconsistencies that deal with a rigid legal framework and strict spatial hierarchies. These simplified inspections have phased the discussion on the future of Europe in some countries, with the most distinctive case being that of Great Britain.

The conception of a "Europe of regions" appeared in the 1980s. It turned out, however, to be a mix of differentiated regions without any integrated geographic, political, administrative and cultural characteristics. The argument for a "Europe of regions" seemed to have underestimated the cohesion and the potential autonomy of most of these regions while it underestimated the persistent importance of the state. Moreover, this theory offered grounds for neoliberal approaches, which further weakened state intervention (Anderson, 2006).

The "neo-medieval scenario" contains elements of decentralization, but focuses upon the fragmentation of supremacy among local, national and European institutions, and of the indistinct borders of the EU's interior. Hedley Bull (1997), from the very start, supported the view that the pressure exerted towards the state (from above and below) actually weakens and diffuses supremacy, rather than transferring it. He also described "neo-medievalism" as a discrete stage that is not restricted to quantitative changes, as it is for example in the case of the increase in Member States, but places emphasis on the qualitative changes related to the nature of policies. While every selected stage expresses different spatial levels, the social and political practices operate simultaneously among different levels. This theory, in contrast to the zero sum game logic, could be

characterized as a positive "sum game". In other words, the greater the democracy at one level, the strengthening of democracy on all other levels (Painter, 2002).

The "empire Europe" scenario incorporates elements from medieval and national models through which borders could be precisely defined. This particular scenario is inspired from the federal envisagement but without postulating strict institutional adjustments. Also, the structure of the empire is based upon "centre-periphery" logic with district hierarchies and notions for expansion. Anderson (2006) argues that this kind of scenario fits, metaphorically, into the European Union reality, which is constantly being enlarged, and relates to the criteria of Weaver (1997)'s homocentric circles of gradual hierarchies.

There are many who claim that a "post-Westphalian" type of world order is underway, with the state losing many of its traditional functions (Scott, 2005). Jessop (2002) argues that the growth of spatial levels through and above the state, and the potential of their joint representation, have allowed the appearance of "economies of scale policies", which have resulted in the reassessment of the traditional Westphalian state. All these developments have brought new forms of inter-state, inter-regional and cross-border interactions to the surface, which have not yet been shaped institutionally. The result is the old coexisting with the new (Hettne, 1999).

Zielonka (2002) argues that the European Union is everything but a classical state of "Westphalian specifications" because it has no type or relevant governance, territorial supremacy, army or any integrated foreign policy. Consequently, it lacks internal cohesion and cultural identity. These views convey interpretations made by Kant, who foresaw the domination of global morals that dealt with the fate of a greater community of people, that of the "cosmopolitan city", as he so called it.

Zielonka (2002) studies borders through a dialectic relationship between a totally "fixed border line" (absolute boundary line) form the one side and that of the "*vague border*" on the other. In an attempt to examine the future of the EU, Zielonka, suggests two potential models: the "neo-Westphalian Super State" and the "neo-Medieval empire". In the first case, the borders are strictly defined and they outline a homogenous socioeconomic and cultural reality by exhibiting also a hierarchical and unitary authoritarian system. In the second case, however, borders are unstable and engulf various cultural models; there is also a coexistence of socio-economic models in which the region and the various networks play a major role at a local level. According to this perspective, the strict definition of a border line in space loses much of its traditional symbolism.

Of course, there are others in the scientific community who do not share any of the above interpretations. They claim that the EU will, sooner or later, gain the characteristics of a nation. Hassner (2002), for instance, claims that there is "nostalgia to the roots and walls", as a response to "neo-nomadism", which attempts to go beyond borders and territoriality. There is also the speculation that the EU's borders will become less "territorial-natural" and visible but more complex in the future. Anderson and Bort (2002) argue that the preservation of territorial supremacy and closed borders in the EU have set up the conditions for democracy and security.

Along the same logic, Wallace (2002) cannot imagine a contemporary nation without clearly defined borders. Consequently, he considers the mapping of dividing lines to be inevitable, a thought that is contradictory to those who support the scenario of unclear border zones. According to the logic adopted by Wallace, the answer to "what is Europe?" depends on "where you are". In this sense, Europe is a mobile set of myths, images and perceptions - positive or negative - which is incorporated into national histories. The assertion made by Wallace is that borders are those that join social systems together in a rather predictable manner. These types of approaches come closer to Rousseau's line of thought, which claims that internal cohesion is what defines a political unit and the actual mapping of boundaries in which privacy; cultural homogeneity and military balance are all ensured.

What is rather interesting is that these two different approaches do not possess any explicit ideological accounts, but seem, rather, to penetrate the prism of political perceptions. For example, the concept for strictly defined borders is one that is found not only in old nationalistic voices but also in left-wing groups who see that workers' income is put at stake through the uncontrollable entry of foreign hands. On the other hand, the abolition of obstacles to borders is not only supported by many on the neoliberal side, but is also accepted in areas with totally opposite political views.

What defines the content and the limits of the European element? Said (1978) argues that the idea of what is European and what is not comes close to Aristotle's division between Greeks and Barbarians. In this context, the self-called Europeans consider themselves to be the successors of the ancient Greeks, while the culture of the ancient Persians is attributed to the people in the east (Agnew, 2003). In fact, the widespread of ancient Greek and Roman manuscripts after the sixteenth century, along with the development of historiography, contributed somehow to the cultural definition of Europe as an idea based on Christianity and also the primacy of this idea against the rest of the world (Agnew, 1995).

In more contemporary times, what is Europe and what is not continues to be a rhetorical question. In the civil war in the former Yugoslavia, the issue of "European identity" formed one of the basic issues behind the opposite sides. The discussion of post-Cold War Russia has a great deal to do with whether this country is defined as European or Eurasian. The possibility of Turkey's accession in the EU has sparked a series of counteractions on the extent to which it belongs culturally or geographically in Europe. The question of whether Europe tries to close or enlarge its borders to a greater extent towards the outside world is still, therefore, an issue that remains open.

Conclusions

The present article has attempted to outline the new scene of borders in Europe. Within this context, the basic aspects of the political and economic geography that affect policy-making at the borders were examined. The process of transition of the central planning economies, EU enlargement, and the attempted European integration constitute the three fold in which new opportunities and new threats are shaped for

border regions. Throughout these processes the role of the geographic factor seems to be quite significant.

It all seems that, in the typology of the EU borders, two new types of border regions have made their appearance following enlargement: the central and the perimetric border zones. In this theory, accessibility and centricity is not defined at a national level but rather refers to an enlarged European space. Consequently, western border zones of central European countries, such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, enjoy very favourable conditions of centricity. In contrast, when the distance of border zones such as those in Southeastern Europe is over 1,000 kilometres away from the major economic centres of the EU, their incorporation within the integrated European space cannot be anything but problematic.

Border zones with positive initial conditions, important human resources, adequate infrastructure and consistent policies defined by stability and continuity have an increased likelihood of benefiting from the new border scene. Experience, in addition, has shown that investments are directed towards firm institutional, administrative and organized markets. Challenges as well as opportunities are expected to rise to the surface and into the urban border system due to the pressures from competition released from the integrated economic space. National urban systems that are characterized by introverted organization, low levels of networking and concentrated along one-dimensional development axes comprise, therefore, a rather dangerous mix of facts for the urban collection close to the borders.

The ENP's objectives involve the development of a "ring of friends", which will share common values that will allow for the achievement of political stability, cooperation and elimination of the obstacles of economic interaction at a national, regional and border level. However, the accomplishment of such goals remains uncertain if one considers that, up until now, several aspects underlying the ENP policy remain vague and the criteria involved rather weak. One should consider the fact that the final outlook of neighbouring countries is not the feature of full membership of the EU but more of an alternative type of relationship. How attractive can the expected benefits be so that ENP countries can proceed into making drastic economic and political adjustments? Furthermore, to what extent is the ENP able to counterbalance the negative impacts from the Schengen Treaty? Sceptics appear to be in an easy position in providing answers to all these questions.

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