

The 'Eastern Partnership' and an Extension of Japan's Diplomatic Horizon

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Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon,

First of all, I'd like to thank the Polish Embassy in Tokyo, which has kindly offered me the opportunity to make a presentation on the 'Eastern Partnership' and Japan today. As a scholar who has been researching the international politics of Wider Europe, focusing on the region between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, I would be honored if my study could make some contribution to the peace and prosperity of the people of that region.

Today I will mention four points: the importance of the 'Eastern Partnership' from a geo-political point of view, Japan's involvement in the 'Eastern Partnership', problems which the 'Eastern Partnership' is confronting, and the Foreign Policy of the Noda Government and the 'Eastern Partnership'.

1. Importance of the 'Eastern Partnership' from a geo-political point of view

The first point which I'd like to emphasize on the 'Eastern Partnership' is that it has the possibility of causing a radical transformation of geo-politics in Wider Europe, which will contribute to peace and prosperity not only in the region, but also in Eurasia and around the world.

The region between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea which the Eastern Partnership targets is called 'the other Europe', and it has not attracted much attention, even in Europe. But it has always been a focal point of world politics. The First World War, the Second World War, and the Cold War, all these important events had their origin in the international politics of this region, and it was the East European Revolution of 1989 that ended the Cold War.

All of this comes from the fact that this region is situated in geo-politics "between the powers", and big powers have always engaged in a struggle for power over the area. The Eastern European Revolution and the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 led the region into a 'vacuum of power', and the tug of war between the EU,

NATO and the US on the one hand, and Russia on the other, started over this 'vacuum of power', and it was almost filled by the EU and NATO by the spring of 2004. However, when EU and NATO enlargements towards the east were approaching around 2002~2003, the tug of war between them intensified around the new vacuum of power in the Western New Independent States - Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova - and the Southern Caucasus - Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan.

What happened in such a situation was the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003 and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004. When the NATO Bucharest summit in April 2008 declared that Ukraine and Georgia would become members of NATO, the tension between Georgia and Russia abruptly increased and resulted in the War in Georgia in August 2008.

The Eastern Partnership focuses precisely on this region with the main goal of creating the conditions necessary to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and the countries in the region. That's why I emphasize the important role which the Eastern Partnership plays in the peace and prosperity of Wider Europe, and even of the world.

2. Japan and the Eastern Partnership

So, what should Japan's relationship be with the Eastern Partnership?

Japanese foreign policy has been promoted on the basis of three pillars, namely, the Japan-US alliance, international cooperation - most notably under the auspices of the United Nations - and good neighborhood relations in Asia-Pacific region. However, taking into consideration increased globalization and the Japanese state's objective to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council, it is natural that Japan should extend its diplomatic horizon from the restricted Asia-Pacific region to the world.

Among the other three regions - Africa, Latin America and Europe - strengthening relations with Europe is essential, as the EU plays an important role in the world, shares common values with Japan, and attaches greater importance to soft power rather than hard power, just like Japan does. Above all, the recent intensification of relations between Europe and Asia makes it necessary to strengthen the relations between Japan and Europe. The more Japan becomes involved with Europe, the more Japan's voice will be heard in Asia as well. Strengthening relations with Europe may increase both Japan's opportunities to consult with the EU on its security policy in the Asia-Pacific region and Japan's

ability to maneuver in relations with the big powers of the Asia-Pacific region.

In addition, Japan's involvement in the area between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea would be welcomed by the countries of the region. This is partly because Japan has no disputed issues with those countries, and the peoples there are, in general, Japanophilic, and partly because Japan would be able to contribute to the multilateral diplomacy of the countries in the region politically and economically. They aim to diversify their foreign relations in order to reduce their dependency on their traditional neighbor states, and they need reliable additional partners.

Japan would be an ideal partner for them, as it has high quality technology and its own model of democratization and economic development based on its traditional culture and spirit. These are just what the countries in the region want to realize. Furthermore, Japan is ready to embark on relations of cooperation with the Eastern Partnership, as Japan has extended its own diplomatic horizon from Asia-Pacific to the area, as seen in 'Central Asia + Japan', 'GUAM + Japan', V4 + Japan, BSEC Sectoral Dialogue Partner, and its involvement in Balkan reconstruction cooperation. Therefore, we can conclude that it would be ideal for Japan to promote its cooperative involvement with the Eastern partnership.

3. Problems which the 'Eastern Partnership' is confronting

However, needless to say, this does not imply that the Partnership does not have any problems. As Polish experts discuss the results, prospects and vision of the Eastern Partnership, I'd like to concentrate on three issues which the Partnership confronts. The first important problem is whether the conditionality effects concerning democratization and reforms will be realized within the Eastern Partnership as well, just as the Baltic and Central Eastern European states implemented the conditionality imposed by the EU and succeeded in democratization and creating a market economy. I suppose that there are three obstacles to accomplishing conditionality. They are a lack of clear future prospects of EU accession, Russia as an alternative to EU accession, and the declining attractiveness of the EU as a result of its serious economic crisis.

Concerning the first obstacle, the Eastern Partnership has never promised EU accession to the Partnership member states, while the EU clearly promised accession to the Baltic and Central East European states, and even to the Western Balkan states through the Stabilization and Association Agreement introduced in 1999, if they accomplish the conditionality imposed by the EU. That's why the Baltic and Central East European states could overcome all difficulties and

accomplish regime transformation successfully.

The second obstacle for the realization of conditionality within the Eastern Partnership is that the Partnership members have the possibility of strengthening cooperation with Russia as an alternative to access to the EU, in contrast to the Baltic and Central East European states, which had no other option but accession to the EU and NATO. Thus, by playing the Russian card, authoritarian regimes in the Eastern Partnership member states may attempt to take the teeth out of reforms by approaching Russia, which has insisted on developing its own 'sovereign democracy'. Indeed the member states of the Eastern Partnership are exposed to pressure from both the EU and Russia, but, at the same time, they also have the opportunity to promote negotiation with both the EU and Russia in a way that is favorable for them by playing the EU and Russian cards against each other.

The third obstacle is that, if the EU's serious economic crisis deprives the EU of its 'magnet effects', its conditionality effects could no longer be expected.

The second issue which the Eastern Partnership faces is competition between the East and the South within the EU over the European Neighborhood Policy: ENP. Southern EU members have accentuated the Union for the Mediterranean, while eastern and Scandinavian EU members have highlighted the Eastern Partnership. In particular, these two groups have competed over the distribution of the ENPI. The Arab Spring might change the distribution ratio of the ENPI between East and South favourably for the South, as President Sarkozy has already demanded increase in the ENPI for the Union for the Mediterranean.

In addition, even the rift between the Central and Eastern European states has been accentuated over the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy created in 2007. In order to avoid dualism between the two policies, Article 14 of the Prague Summit joint declaration stipulates "complementarity with regional initiatives between the European Union and relevant partner countries, in particular the Black Sea Synergy, will be ensured." Indeed, a division of labor between the two has been established, with the Black Sea Synergy mainly promoting cooperation within the Black Sea area, and the Eastern Partnership strengthening relations between the EU and partner countries. However, a senior person in the BSEC still complained openly at a symposium at the end of 2011: "Taking into consideration that the dualism between the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership has not yet been resolved, the Eastern Partnership should have been proposed in an integrated form with the Black Sea Synergy."

The third problem of the Eastern Partnership is that Russia and Turkey are not

included in it. It has some advantages. Firstly, in comparison with the BSEC, which is composed of 12 states, the Eastern Partnership is composed of only six member states, and this number is appropriate for an institution to work effectively. It should also be emphasized that the main objectives of the five members - except for Belarus - are approximately the same, and they want access to the EU and NATO, even though some members do not want to become members of NATO.

Secondly, unlike the GUAM, the Eastern Partnership includes Armenia. This makes it possible to avoid the isolation of Armenia, and that makes the Eastern Partnership a place to discuss the security of the South Caucasus region.

However, Russia has expressed strong concerns about the Eastern partnership, and has also expressed its desire to participate in energy projects in the Eastern Partnership. The EU's answer to the Russian request can be found in Article 12 of the Prague Summit joint declaration, which permits participation of third parties in the projects and meetings of the Eastern Partnership, although it includes a clause which makes it possible to exclude an obstructing party.

Would-be Russian president Putin proposed the creation of the Eurasian Union this October, and Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia signed the agreement on the Eurasia Economic Union this November. However, the Eurasian Union and a single economic space are said not to be compatible with the Eastern Partnership, just as the Customs Union, which came into existence in January 2011, is not compatible with the DCFTA (Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area) of the EU. Ukraine has almost completed negotiations with the EU on the Accession Agreement and the DCFTA, but it faces polemics with the EU over the Timosenko trial. Which way will Ukraine go between the DCFTA and Eurasian Union, and between the EU and Russia? It stands at a crossroad.

We cannot overlook the fact that Turkey refused to be included in the Eastern Partnership, insisting that Turkey would deal only with the EU through membership negotiations and that it would accept nothing else. If the EU does not admit its accession, Turkey might intensify its approach to Russia. Thus, in order to keep stability in the region, Turkey's accession to the EU appears to be indispensable. On this point, there is the possibility of a triangle of cooperation among the EU, Turkey and Japan.

4. Foreign Policy of the Noda Government and the 'Eastern Partnership

Finally, I'd like to make some comments about the Noda Government and the Eastern Partnership. As an international political scientist, I appreciate the foreign

policy of the Noda Government. Firstly, the alliance with the US - which temporarily rang some alarm bells - is being restored by Japan having stood in line with the US on the security issue in the South China Sea, and by Japan having expressed its intention to participate in the TPP, which the US has taken the initiative in promoting. The restoration of the Japan-US alliance has also contributed to the recovery of the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific region.

Secondly, within the framework of the 'ASEAN + 6', Japan can keep good relations with China as well, and doing so will make it possible to avoid an unfavorable scenario for Japan in which only the US and China together exclusively determine the nature of international relations in the Asia-Pacific area without consulting with Japan.

Thirdly, by expressing its will to have the Japan Self-Defense Forces participate in U.N. peacekeeping operations in South Sudan, Japan increases the possibility of extending its diplomatic horizon from the Asia-Pacific region to Africa. This is natural for Japan, which aims to assume responsibility for international security as a would-be permanent member of the UN Security Council. If it does so, Japan will not be able to be indifferent to security in the western part of Eurasia, as that area certainly influences the security of the eastern part, including Japan. Thus, Japan's next foreign policy objective following the Central Asia+Japan, GUAM+Japan, V4+Japan, etc. should be cooperation within the Eastern Partnership.

Thank you for your attention.