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“Near Abroad” vs.

An integration contest between Russia and the EU?

“New Neighbours”



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Cooperation or Integration?

The Neighbourhood Policies of the EU and Russia

In Europe's new geopolitical order, conflicts of interest are increasingly arising between the European Union and Russia. Besides the Southern Caucasus, the three countries – Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, and Belarus—forming the broad “belt” between the two regional powers are a key issue in this context. Will the Europe of the future be founded on two “integration communities”: the EU and an organisation of states grouped around Russia? How are the countries concerned—the “states in between”—positioning themselves? And which specific policy options could lead to deeper cooperation, instead of conflicts, between Russia and the EU and encourage a cooperative approach towards their shared neighbours? These issues were explored, with particular reference to Ukraine and the Transnistria conflict in Moldova, at the seventh Potsdam Spring Dialogues 2005. The event was organised by the Development and Peace Foundation (SEF), Bonn, in cooperation with the Renner Institute, Vienna, and the foreign policy quarterly WeltTrends, Potsdam, and took place from 14-16 April 2005.

State Secretary Clemens Appel, Head of the Brandenburg State Chancellery, opened the Potsdam Spring Dialogues by quoting Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende's comment about EU-Russian relations: what is needed is “quality rather than speed”. In line with this principle, he called for a measured approach towards Russia and the “countries in between”. “It is not yet clear where the journey is leading”, said Dr Hannes Swoboda, MEP, Vice-President of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament and a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, in his opening speech, summing up the current state of transition in Europe.

For the benefit of Europe

According to Swoboda, the driving forces behind the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) are economic interests, the desire to expand democracy and prosperity, and the need to guarantee internal and external security. However, a further motivating factor is “lessening the appeal of EU accession for Europe's neighbours”. He made it clear that “the ENP is meant to benefit Europe, not undermine Russia”. Understandably, both Russia and the EU are keen to maintain their spheres of influence, but this must be achieved without coercion. The ENP therefore simply offers an opportunity to the partner countries. The EU is open to a joint EU-Russian

policy on the “states in between”—based on democracy, human rights, economic development and securing the energy supply. Swoboda's position was nevertheless unequivocal: Ukraine and the Balkan countries cannot be permanently excluded from joining the EU.

“Building walls is not an option today”

In his contribution, Vladimir I. Seregin, Head of the EU Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Moscow, endorsed the previous speaker's view that geopolitical developments in Europe cannot be a zero sum game. In a rapidly changing world facing transnational threats: “Virtual walls cannot be used as an instrument of protection any more”. Every country must have the freedom to select the appropriate



The European Neighbourhood Policy – an opportunity for partner countries.
Hannes Swoboda



Division into spheres of influence unacceptable.
Vladimir I. Seregin

level of closeness in its relations with both regional powers. A division into spheres of influence is also unacceptable because these are sovereign states – and therefore subjects, not objects. Seregin cautioned that it is erroneous and counterproductive to act as if only two options are available to the post-Soviet countries: “Back into dark Russia or into the light of the EU”. He underlined the importance of good relations between the CIS states and Russia, citing a list of economic data to demonstrate the intensity of their economic links.

Seregin described the bilateral relations between Russia and the EU as a “strategic partnership” involving close cooperation, although not EU membership for Russia. The task now is to forge a common understanding, which he summed up as “not you and us, but we”. Concluding his speech, Seregin voiced his hope that the new EU Member States could become

important “new channels of creating relations with Russia”. Swoboda vehemently disagreed: at present, at least, these channels tend to be “blocked”.

A journey into the unknown

In the ensuing discussion, chaired by Dr Michèle Roth, Executive Director of the Development and Peace Foundation, the EU’s “journey into the unknown” proved to be an extremely contentious issue. A particular criticism was the lack of transparency in the accession criteria. Russian political scientist Dr Irina Kobrinskaya underlined this point, declaring: “Georgia is far more European than Turkey”. In response, Swoboda commented that Europe’s borders are difficult to define: “We need several rings within Europe”. The ENP is a starting point—it is a policy for countries which cannot join the EU in the foreseeable future.

How important is the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)? And what is the best way of dealing with the “frozen” conflicts in the region? These issues also proved contentious. Russia expert Dr Heinz Timmermann voiced his surprise at President Putin’s recent statement that the CIS was created to allow a “civilised divorce” between the Soviet republics. Seregin qualified this: Putin’s statement had been very emotional. “Anyone wishing to utilise the CIS as an instrument for cooperation can do so”. Nonetheless, the prevailing impression among participants was that Russia’s influence in the CIS region is waning, while the EU is expanding and gaining power.

Although negotiations with Russia are essential to resolve the “frozen conflicts”, in Swoboda’s view, “it takes two to tango”. He criticised the country’s failure to honour agreements, e.g. on troop withdrawal from the Caucasus. Dr Eckhart Stratenschulte, Director of the European Academy Berlin, rejected the option of negotiations with Russia on issues such as the Transnistria conflict. The ENP is a bilateral process involving sovereign partners. Moldovan Ambassador Dr Igor Corman reinforced this point. His criticism was that the Republic of Moldova is still being treated as an object, not a subject, by Moscow: “Russia is an important partner, but we are an independent country, not Russia’s backyard”. Seregin asked the conference to consider that Transnistria’s Russian-speaking population trusts no one but Russia to guarantee stability. But of course Russia does not regard Moldova as its own backyard.

Should the partnership with Russia be purely interest-driven, or are shared values important as well? Responding to this question from Dr Timmermann, Swoboda concluded that shared values are essential to some extent. However, even Europe and the USA uphold different values in some respects.

Ukraine After the

A Victory on Points for Europe?

Presidential Elections

The presidential elections in Ukraine clearly revealed the country's inner turmoil over its orientation towards East or West and the wrangling between Russia and the EU over the country. Ukraine's opposition was ultimately successful—with Europe's support—in forcing a re-run of the run-off election, culminating in the victory of the pro-Western candidate Viktor Yushchenko. What were the key features of the "Orange Revolution", and which factors influenced developments in Ukraine? Was this the first round in an "integration conflict", with the EU scoring a victory on points? And which foreign policy options are still available to Ukraine in future?

"The fact that everyone wanted a peaceful solution to the conflict in Ukraine was the key", said Dr Erich Fröschl, Chair of the Academy for International Politics at the Renner Institute, Vienna, opening the panel discussion. The EU, Russia and the USA had all endorsed a moderate approach, which boded well for events in Ukraine. But was it really a victory on points for Europe? In his introduc-

tion, Dr Andrzej Byrt, the Polish Ambassador in Berlin, answered this question as follows: The "Orange Revolution" was a victory not for Europe but for democracy and the Ukrainian people—a victory in keeping with the tradition of European values. He described the changed behaviour of the people as the absolutely critical factor. Their courage in voicing their opinion was a clear success for the democratic opening of Ukraine. The media, with their new openness, also played a positive role. Other important factors ensuring the peaceful progress of the revolution were former President Leonid Kuchma's renunciation of violence, and a new kind of external influence: an influence which brought the politicians to the negotiating table. Support from EU politicians played a role

which would have been impossible before EU enlargement, explained the Ambassador. Admittedly, the "Orange Revolution" would still have taken place without Poland, but Alexander Kwasniewski's excellent personal relationship with many politicians in the EU's eastern neighbours proved extremely helpful.

A contest between two development models

According to Byrt, the biggest challenge facing the new Ukrainian President is to prevent an East-West division of the country. Western Ukrainians have a long tradition of travel and trade with the West and have felt the lure of democracy. The task now is to make freedom to travel and easier conditions of trade accessible to all citizens. "The chance to take control of one's own life is more persuasive than any ideology". Despite the enlarged EU's consolidation problems, Byrt therefore called for rapid measures to bring Ukraine closer to the EU.

In the ensuing panel discussion, Dr Oleksandr Sushko, Director of the Center for Peace, Conversion and Foreign Policy of Ukraine in Kyiv, emphasised that the "Orange Revolution" was "a revolution against a corrupt, not an authoritarian regime". In this respect, it differed from the earlier uprisings against Communist regimes. Nor was it an integration contest between the EU and Russia, but a contest between two development models: "The voters opted in favour



"A victory for democracy".
Andrzej Byrt



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A revolution against corruption and election-rigging.
Oleksandr Suhsko, Arkady Moshes (l. to r.)

the Yushchenko regime. In Moshes' view, the pragmatic solution is a possibility in light of the failure of Russian policy in Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan: "Putin has to face reality." Most Russians are also in favour of good relations with Ukraine.

"You can't impose democracy"

The election-oriented actions of the Ukrainian Government, previously criticised by Sushko, were welcomed by Rudolf Edlinger, former Federal Minister and President of the Austrian-Ukrainian Society in Vienna. According to Edlinger, there is not a single Western government which is not election-oriented; after all, this is a key element of democracy. The first revolution in 1991 led to an independent Ukraine but failed to fulfil hopes that Kuchma would deliver democracy. Today, in the wake of the "Orange Revolution", Ukraine is at a crossroads: will the new government match up to its self-imposed claims? Will the forthcoming parliamentary elections be conducted fairly? And will it be possible to root out corruption and win the powerful figures of the old oligarchy over to democracy? "You cannot impose democracy; democracy is a life form", said Edlinger.

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"Ukraine is at a crossroads".
Rudolf Edlinger

of the European model". The "Orange Revolution" showed that the post-Soviet model leaves "no space for constructive development any more". According to Sushko, this was reflected in the fact that despite positive economic trends, the Ukrainians had been discontented and had little faith in the government. The main difficulty for the current Ukrainian regime, in Sushko's view, is that it must now honour the often very emotional pledges made during the election campaign. EU support is essential to promote Ukraine's economic consolidation. The EU-Ukraine Action Plan negotiated under Kuchma is not enough. Sushko concluded with the words: "The post-soviet space doesn't exist any more. There is a vacuum and this vacuum should be filled by European policies."

"Facing reality"

The "Orange Revolution" has completely changed the basis of relations by challenging official Moscow, according to Dr Arkady Moshes, Head of the Russia and EU Programme at the Finnish Institute for International

Affairs, Helsinki. Ukraine has opted for a relationship of integration with the EU and a relationship of cooperation with Russia. According to Moshes, this means that Russia can no longer play the "big brother" role. This recognition caused panic in Moscow, but "panic, as we know, is not a good counsellor".

Moshes identified only two options for Russian policy in future: a rollback with an attempt to ensure that Yushchenko loses the forthcoming parliamentary elections, with Russia perhaps playing the separatist card in Eastern Ukraine, or a return to pragmatism, which would mean cooperating with



Demonstrating for a better life.
Protesters in Kyiv on 21 November 2004

In the plenary discussion, several participants took up his question concerning the position of the old oligarchy and elite. “The oligarchs have lost their connection to the government,” answered Sushko. “Now they are just big businessmen”. Some members of the old political elite have remained in post. At present, a genuine opposition does not exist, merely “a group of revanchists”. Kuchma had been surrounded by “servants”, whereas Yushchenko has to deal with self-confident politicians who are not easy to manage. Moshes added that the old elite had supported Yushchenko in the past. “Why shouldn’t they do so again now?” Many of them have remained in post, which means that well-qualified people are already available to the administrative apparatus—but it also means that “old habits”, such as corruption and nepotism, are likely to persist. Sushko underlined the importance of judicial reform and anti-corruption measures in enhancing the credibility of the new regime. In Ukraine, political stability will depend not on the government or the President but on the establishment of new institutions which will be less dependent on individuals.

Ukraine as a link to Russia?

Besides Ukraine’s domestic prospects, its foreign policy outlook was also discussed. Sofia Moreira de Sousa, Senior Officer in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Unit, Council of the European Union, Brussels, observed that perceptions of Ukraine have



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shifted: it is no longer viewed as an object but as a subject with the capacity for self-determination. The most surprising aspect is the strength of its civil society. The Action Plan that had already been agreed is now taking on a completely new significance. But the EU also has its own expectations of Ukraine: for example, that it will maintain good relations with all its neighbours and thus help strengthen the EU’s relations with Russia.

Is the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) an appropriate instrument for shaping future relations with Ukraine? This remained a contentious issue.

Dr Hermann Clement from Osteuropa-Institut München echoed Sushko’s call for massive support for Ukraine’s economic modernisation, but pointed out that the ENP is not a suitable mechanism to facilitate this process, since it is an exclusion policy. However, EU membership for Ukraine based on the Copenhagen criteria would overstretch the EU’s capacities. Clement therefore called for “convergence criteria for the economic level as well”. Vasily Astrov from the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies warned about powerful renationali-

sation tendencies in the Ukrainian economy. Sushko contradicted this impression: there is an expectation among the Ukrainian people that at least some of the “bad guys” will be punished, but this process is not remotely comparable with the Yukos trial. In Ukraine, these trials are unlikely to end in prison sentences or the smashing of business empires.

Was the revolution in Ukraine a unique event, or can similar developments be anticipated in other countries in the region? “People stood up for a better life, not against a bad life” was Moshes’ answer to this question. The level of socio-cultural development and the highly organised nature of the opposition did much to ensure the non-violent nature of the revolution. Attempts to imitate Ukraine in neighbouring countries, where these conditions are absent, are doomed to failure. Nonetheless, the situation in Ukraine will have an impact on its neighbours.

“Russia overestimates its attractiveness”

Interview with Dr. Arkady Moshes

Head of the Russia-EU Programme at the Finnish Institute for International Affairs, Helsinki

SEF NEWS: How do you assess the initial reactions on the Russian side to the regime change in Ukraine?

Moshes: There were two sorts of reactions. One was the general public reaction, which was positive. The official reactions were more, I guess, difficult and manifold, if you like. Obviously Russia had to admit defeat. After the policy that it conducted in Ukraine had not helped the then Prime Minister to win, having demonstrated all the readiness to recognise and legitimise the victory of Yanukovich, no matter what the outcome of the election would be, Russia really cornered itself. On the surface, the officials have recovered; now it looks like they have demonstrated the willingness to cooperate with the regime. As for the trends beneath the surface, I can definitely see the risk of Russia being willing to go back to the

policy of interference with the Ukrainian internal political process. There is obviously a group of people who would like to roll the film back to show that the triumph of Yushchenko was just a historical accident and nothing else, and to continue to play the zero sum games in order to keep the highest possible degree of influence of Russian policies in Ukraine.

SEF NEWS: You said during the conference that Putin had to face reality: for the Eastern European region, the Russian policy of the last 18 months has failed. What specifically were his mistakes?

Moshes: I think one of the biggest mistakes was conceptional. It was Russia's self-assessment or self-perception as a country powerful enough and ready to be able to get things done and be attractive for its neighbours. So it

shows the failure to understand the nuances and to really feel what is going on in the countries Russia is trying to influence. On the implementation side, it was obviously the ignorance or negligence of politics, and the focus on what we call political or electoral technologists. These people think that basically once you control television and pour a lot of money, then you win. No! This is ignoring politics. Basically, there is enormous self-esteem and an overestimation of its own power and attractiveness; furthermore, an inclination to work with leaders and an ignorance of the potential of the civil society in the countries. So when countries of the region have a choice whether they would like to be part of the zone of prosperity or whether they would like to stay inside the zone that is not, the common-sense choice is obvious.

SEF NEWS: One of the views expressed during the conference was that it is not Russia which is the main obstacle to a settlement in Transnistria, but the quality of the Moldovan Government. What is your position on that?

Moshes: I generally agree with that position. I would actually go a bit further or maybe change the angle. It is not the quality of governance as such, it is the Moldovan state as a



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“Ignorance about political processes”.
Arkady Moshes

"A dictatorship in the heart of Europe".
Aged woman protesting against
Belarus' president.

whole. You know, a weak state cannot have a terrific government and governance. That's why my recipe is to concentrate on aiming to prove that this state can offer social protection. These people need to get the prospect of a better life, less corrupt, more prosperous. Once this is established, the appeal of reunification will look much stronger. We have to follow the efforts to resolve the status of Kosovo. That is what the people in Transnistria, the leaders, will immediately use for their own purposes. Because once Kosovo is independent, the claims of the Transnistrian leadership that they need independence will have a much firmer basis.

SEF NEWS: We did not talk much about Belarus during the conference. What kind of policy could or should the EU conduct in this case?

Moshes: In my view, the European Union had more opportunities to conduct a carrot-and-stick policy a

year ago. Frankly, up to now the Union's policy towards Belarus is neither carrots nor sticks. The Union doesn't feel that there is any urgency regarding Belarus. The state is stable, trade runs smoothly, no minority problems, they don't ask for assistance, they don't ask for money—so why bother? To tolerate a dictatorship in the centre of Europe is a bad thing, and what the EU does is to tolerate it everywhere but in words: there is no shortage of rhetoric on the dictatorship in Belarus, but very little action. What the Union should do is get tougher where it can get tougher and become more open to the civil society in Belarus. It has to work again to encourage the appeal of Europe in Belarus, which compared to Ukraine

is on a much more lower level. The EU should make Belarus a constant item of its dialogue with Russia. This question should be raised at every summit. When the Russians answer the question how they assess the situation in Belarus by saying: "Well, we are fine. It's our partner", the Union should constantly repeat: "That is where we disagree." But now the Union doesn't want to do that, because it is afraid of Russia's reaction. It should go further than saying Lukashenko is a bad guy.



The Forgotten Conflict

Transnistria: A Challenge for Europe?

on Europe's Margins

Peace, security and stability in neighbour regions are among the primary goals of the European Neighbourhood Policy. However, the EU reaches its limits when it comes to the “frozen” conflict in the breakaway region of Transnistria in the Republic of Moldova. Once Romania accedes to the EU in 2007, Moldova will become one of the EU’s immediate neighbours – and the conflict will move higher up the EU’s agenda. Russian and Ukrainian interests in this region play a crucial role. What might be possible solutions to the Transnistria conflict? Which role could, and should, the EU play in this context, and what would be the implications for its relations with Russia and Ukraine? These were controversial issues in the discussions at the Potsdam Spring Dialogues.

of federation—the most that it accepts is asymmetrical autonomy—and the Transnistrian leadership’s failure to honour agreements. Admittedly, the latter has signalled its willingness to negotiate, but in reality, its principle interest is in maintaining the status quo. Hanne emphasised that closer cooperation between Russia and the EU is essential to reach a solution: “Neither Russia nor the EU has a clear strategy on Moldova”. However, the Russians’ demand for synchronicity between the solution to the conflict and troop withdrawal is unlikely to be accepted by the other parties. Ultimately, Russia is unwilling to engage in closer cooperation on security issues unless the EU and the USA offer some incentives. “There will have to be carrots besides the sticks”. Hanne called for the EU to present practical proposals for a police mission, but in his view, there is no need for a larger peacekeeping force.

“The Transnistria conflict is one of the main problems facing Moldova”, said panel chairperson Dr Annelie Ute Gabanyi, Senior Research Associate at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin. It is a “proxy conflict” on the territory of the former Soviet Union, by which Russia had attempted to avoid a troop withdrawal. In his introduction, Gottfried Hanne, Political Officer in

the OSCE Mission to Moldova, also described the conflict as not inter-ethnic; in his view, it is a conflict between different political elites. Since Moldova’s President Voronin refused to sign the Russians’ Kozak Memorandum in November 2003, the situation has reached a stalemate. Obstacles impeding progress towards a workable solution include the Moldovan Government’s rejection of any form

Transnistria: a “proxy conflict”.
Oazu Nantoi, Annelie Ute Gabanyi, Gottfried Hanne (l. to r.)



The Transnistria conflict

Democratisation, demilitarisation and decriminalisation

According to Oazu Nantoi, Program Director for Conflict Management at the Institute for Public Policy in Chisinau, the interests of organised crime are a major cause of the conflict. The Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov is merely a puppet of Russia and international crime. The rigid censorship in Transnistria is also making it more difficult to achieve a peaceful settlement, Nantoi continued. Propaganda feeds the anti-democratic movements. However, the main obstacle to a solution is the Moldovan Government's incompetence and its failure to develop a coherent strategy for the conflict's resolution. In Nantoi's view, the "3D" strategy—democratisation, demilitarisation and decriminalisation—developed by civil society groups looks very promising. This aims to establish a decentralised but unitary state of Moldova, as most Moldovans and Transnistrians oppose separate legal status for the region.

Dr Ernst Piehl, a member of the Executive Committee of the European Movement in Brussels, voiced his unequivocal support for the 3D strategy. He also drew attention to the positive signals from the EU. Compared with before, there is now a far greater focus on the problems facing Moldova, and in Piehl's view, this is partly due to the events in Ukraine. Besides the Council of Europe's activities, the appointment

of an European Union Special Representative for Moldova sent out a clear signal. The EU's neglect of the conflict was due to its concentration on enlargement but also, not least, to misplaced consideration for its strategic partner Russia. Piehl called for the Transnistria issue to be included on the agenda for negotiations with Moscow. In the medium term, the Republic of Moldova should also not be denied the prospect of accession.

"The failure of the West"

"The EU will damage itself if it continues to turn a blind eye", warned Elisabeth Schroedter, MEP, a member of the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Cooperation Committee. She described the Transnistria conflict as a "failure on the part of the West". It is in the EU's interest to minimise the potential threats—an explosive mixture of drug, human and arms trafficking—emanating from Transnistria, which is virtually a lawless region. Hanne contradicted her, pointing out that there is still no firm evidence of drug, human and arms trafficking in Transnistria, but merely well-founded suspicions. The introduction of border monitoring by the international community would be extremely helpful in establishing the facts. Hanne also rejected Schroedter's position that Moldova cannot develop

Moldova (area: 33,700 sq. km, population: 4.2 million), formerly a constituent republic of the Soviet Union, is one of the poorest countries in Europe. Since Moldovan independence in 1991, the conflict in the breakaway province of Transnistria has impeded the development of this south-east European country. Transnistria, a region lying to the east of the river Dniester with a Slavic majority population (ethnic Ukrainians and Russians), broke away from the Moldovan state, whose history and culture are predominantly Romanian, when the Soviet Union disintegrated. Today, it has a quasi-state structure but is not recognised internationally. The situation is exacerbated by the ongoing presence of Russian troops stationed in Transnistria. The threat of state failure has greatly encouraged the proliferation of organised crime, especially drug, human and arms trafficking. In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has forged closer links with the European Union, and in February 2005, the two partners signed the Moldova Action Plan, agreed under the European Neighbourhood Policy.





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Russia an obstacle.
Elisabeth Schroedter

economically as long as Transnistria's open borders encourage a flourishing shadow economy. According to Hanne, with appropriate governance, Moldova could develop economically and politically under the current conditions. It is no coincidence that Moldova does not monitor the internal borders with Transnistria. Moldovans, Ukrainians and Russians all benefit from the business opportunities afforded by the open border, notably lower customs duties.

Unlike the other panellists, Schroedter regarded Russia as the major obstacle to a conflict settlement. According to Schroedter, Russia has no intention of abandoning a key military base, and the West has failed to pursue the conventional disarmament process. She called for Russia to honour its troop-withdrawal commitments made at the OSCE's Istanbul Summit in 1999.

Incentives for Russia?

The different perspectives on Russia's role also became apparent during the ensuing discussion. Hanne explained that the Russian military base in Transnistria no longer has any military or strategic significance; this is merely a symbolic issue which can be resolved through negotiations. At this point, Graeme P. Herd, Professor of Civil-Military Relations at the College of International and Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, took up the issue of how the EU can play a proactive role in bringing Russia to the negotiating table on the Transnistria issue. Dr Petr Kratochvíl, Deputy Director of the Institute of International Relations in Prague, also raised the issue of EU incentives for Russia. Schroedter—without giving specific examples—claimed that there are many possible incentives, but the Council and the Commission have failed to consider them. Gabanyi was critical, however: “Why are we always making concessions to Russia without



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Positive signals from the EU.
Ernst Piehl

asking for anything in return?” Former Ambassador Dr Hans Arnold added: “The EU is currently in its most difficult phase. Although it is essential to discuss how the EU can contribute to a solution, we cannot ignore the American factor”. He drew attention to NATO's enlargement and the presence of US troops in the Caucasus, which is hardly conducive to confidence-building with Russia.

Litmus test for the EU

On the future status of the crisis-torn province, all participants in the discussion agreed that “the door to independence” must remain shut: a peaceful solution can only be achieved within a unitary state. Professor Richard G. Whitman, Head of the European Programme at Chatham House in London, asked how much influence Romania—soon to join the EU—exerts in the conflict. Piehl and Gabanyi both agreed that this influence is limited but could increase after Romania's accession. Given the lack of other actors, the problems in Transnistria will thus become a kind of litmus test of the “European Union's problem-solving abilities”, summed up Eckhart Stratenschulte from the European Academy Berlin.

Russia is more

Interview with Sofia Moreira de Sousa

Eastern Europe and Central Asia Unit, Council of the European Union, Brussels

than a “normal third country”

SEF NEWS: How do you assess the EU’s initial reactions to the regime change in Ukraine?

Moreira de Sousa: There was a discussion among the Member States in Brussels and they realised that there was a role for the EU to play. Not necessarily in the mediation of this process, but to facilitate this mediation. The main concern was to avoid the use of violence and the second, very important, issue was to find a solution to be incorporated into the framework of the Ukrainian legislation and which was acceptable to all the involved parties. The question was not who would be in power, but what the EU could do to support a democratically elected government.

SEF NEWS: During the conference, you mentioned that Ukraine could play the role of a mediator between the European Union and Russia. Could you explain that?

Moreira de Sousa: Many things have changed as a result of the new political situation in Ukraine. First of all, the “Orange Revolution” re-established Ukraine on the international political map. This suddenly became apparent because Ukraine was in all the media, in all the newspapers in every single European country. There was this great awareness among the public in all the

Member States who were following the events in the country and supporting the people on the streets. Another issue is the principle underlying our policy—we have relations with Russia and we have relations with Ukraine—and we would like our friends to be friends. Sometimes, when you have a misunderstanding with one friend, it is good to have the other one helping you deliver the message. This is what I meant when I mentioned that Ukraine has long and close historical and economic ties with Russia. The whole idea is more like a channel of communication that could help. It’s not the main reason why I think the EU and Ukraine should cooperate, but I think that this is added value that Ukraine can and should bring into the EU.

SEF NEWS: In your presentation you remarked that if we talk about an enhanced partnership between the EU and Russia, we should consider

that before any enhancement there has to be the spirit for “a real partnership”. So what can be done on both sides to promote this?

Moreira de Sousa: Well, we have a partnership. Russia is a strategic partner of the EU. Formally, we have enough framework agreements for our relationship. However, in reality, by partnership we mean that both parties can sit down at the table and discuss common issues. They might not agree, but at least they discuss them. So far, the EU has had some problems with Russia. Our main difficulty is being able to put issues on the agenda. When I refer to an enhanced partnership, I mean that you are able to cooperate much more than with a normal third country with whom you have a simple cooperation relationship. This is getting slightly better now. Years ago, it was not possible to discuss things like Moldova, Transnistria, Belarus or even Ukraine with Russia. At the same time, there is the understanding that we cannot push it too much. We had EU enlargement and this has had various impacts on Russia in terms of its economy, culture and society.



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“Putting difficult issues on the agenda”.
Sofia Moreira de Sousa

From Conflicts of Interest

Challenges in the Geopolitical Buffer Zone

to Deeper Partnership

EU enlargement and the European Neighbourhood Policy for the “countries in between” have changed the framework for EU-Russian relations.

Despite their closer geographical proximity, there is an increasing tendency to think in competitive terms. In this situation, how should the EU shape its neighbourly relations with the Eastern European countries and Russia?

How effective are the existing strategies?

And how are the “shared neighbours” positioning themselves?

These issues were discussed in the closing session of the Potsdam Spring Dialogues 2005.

Opening the final day of the conference, Dr Raimund Krämer, managing editor of the journal *WeltTrends*, drew attention to three terms—“space”, “actors” and “interests”—which had constantly taken on new meanings throughout the debate. In her lead-in speech, Dr Irina Kobrinskaya, Executive Director of the Foundation for Prospective Studies and Initiatives in Moscow, also emphasised the importance of precisely defined terminology. A clear distinction must be drawn between problems relating to the EU’s policy towards Russia, and—as a separate category—those solely concerning

the EU’s new neighbours in Eastern Europe. This makes it clear which side is striving for the integration of the “buffer zone” countries. At present, it looks as if Russia cannot and Europe does not want this. “Why”, asked Kobrinskaya, “should there be any integration conflicts if the EU does not want to admit any more new members anyway?” The main problem is still the lack of a joint EU-Russian cooperation strategy. The two sides’ views on this issue are clearly asymmetrical: for Russia, the key priority is the economy, whereas the EU focusses on security and values. Before any common

approaches can be developed, Russia must learn that shared values are not just “the gilt on the gingerbread”. Until this learning process is complete, “ignoring each other may become the *modus vivendi*”.

Enhancing Russia’s appeal

According to Kobrinskaya, Russia forfeited its influence over its immediate neighbours mainly due to its lack of appeal. The logical consequence must therefore be to enhance its attractiveness again—through democratisation, the rule of law and a focus on Western values. However, this requires a massive shift in the mentality of the ruling elite.

Dr Inna Pidluska, President of the Europe XXI Foundation in Kyiv, also took up the value debate. A democratic and politically stable Russia under the rule of law is an essential partner in Ukraine’s further development. However, Ukraine’s strategic objective is still EU accession. Other integration strategies, such as the “single economic area”, are “not very pragmatic, but very political”. Like Kobrinskaya, she regarded the free-trade area, but not customs or monetary union, as the only realistic element. From her own perspective, Pidluska continued, the European Neighbourhood Policy is still in its infancy. As the next step, a



Shared values not just “the gilt on the gingerbread”. Raimund Krämer, Irina Kobrinskaya, Arjen Berkvens (l. to r.)

“Ukraine is not just a passive recipient”.
Sofia Moreira de Sousa,
Inna Pidluska (l. to r.)

clear priority list must be established for this cooperation. In this context, Ukraine is not simply a passive recipient; it can certainly make contributions of its own.

Widening before deepening

Sofia Moreira de Sousa from the Council of the European Union viewed the development of EU-Russian relations in fundamentally positive terms. “Ignoring each other” is no longer an option, and a division into separate spheres of influence would be a very dangerous approach. The only remaining possibilities are deepening and enlarging the partnership. Moreira de Sousa vehemently rejected the earlier argument that the EU is acting over-cautiously due to its fear of Russia. The reality is that the EU respects Russia as an important actor in international relations.

Arjen Berkvens, Director of the Alfred Mozer Foundation, Amsterdam, criticised the lack of an EU strategy on Eastern Europe: “In the case of Ukraine, the EU had to be pushed on the dance floor and then decided to play a rather passive role”. “Which instruments are available to the EU if the European Neighbourhood Policy rules out the prospect of accession?” he asked sceptically. “No membership” means no carrots or sticks. Berkvens therefore called for Eastern Europe—unlike the Mediterranean countries—to be granted the prospect of accession. “Widening Europe is more important than deepening it”.



The plenary discussion initially focussed on the possible strategic over-extension of the EU. Dr Lutz Kleinwächter, chairperson of the WeltTrends Society of Friends, called for consideration to be given to alternatives to full EU membership. Gabanyi recommended offering “the prospect of a prospect” of membership. The EU can only demand major efforts from these countries if it does not reject the possibility of accession outright. Moreira de Sousa was critical; she questioned whether the prospect of accession is the only instrument available in the EU’s foreign policy arsenal. She reminded the conference that the EU will always have neighbours. Peter W. Schulze, a lecturer at the University of Göttingen, criticised the debate about the new neighbours’ possible accession to the EU as premature. It is far more important to discuss which strategies must be pursued until then.

From visions to actions

Summing up in his “political outlook”, Dr Heinz Timmermann, a freelance researcher at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), concluded that all three actors—the EU, Russia and the “countries in between”—are striving for internal consolidation and are seeking a new identity. This explains why mutual

relations are still undergoing a constant process of change. In light of the rapid transformation of Europe’s geopolitical order, conflicts of interest are inevitable but not insurmountable.

In Ukraine, the task now is to fulfil the high expectations after the revolution and prevent a reversion to the old system of oligarchy. Good relations with Russia are crucially important for Ukraine, due to the two countries’ economic and cultural links. For Russia, military intervention is no longer an option, for it does not wish to forfeit the West as its partner in the modernisation process. What is worrying, however, is that Russia’s own failing power is being explained in terms of anti-Western conspiracy theories which leave no room for any self-criticism, according to Timmermann. The major challenge facing the EU is to empower the countries in the geopolitical “buffer zone” to pursue independent policies which open the way for closer relations with the EU without jeopardising their close links with Russia. According to Timmermann, it is not enough to adopt a “wait and see” approach: “The great visions underlying the European Neighbourhood Policy must be implemented through resolute action”.

The Development and Peace Foundation

Policy Responses to Globalisation

The Development and Peace Foundation was founded in 1986 on the initiative of Willy Brandt and in collaboration with Minister-President Dr Johannes Rau, who later became President of the Federal Republic of Germany. A cross-party and non-profit-making organisation, the Foundation argues for a new political order in a world increasingly marked by globalisation. The Foundation's work is based on three principles: global responsibility, cross-party and cross-cultural dialogue, and an interdisciplinary approach to understanding interdependences.

The Foundation's leading personalities are guarantors of this orientation. The Board of Trustees, appointed by the four donor states, i.e. North Rhine-Westphalia, Berlin, Brandenburg and Saxony, is chaired by Minister-President Peer Steinbrück. The deputy chairmen are Minister-President Professor Georg Milbradt, Minister-President Matthias Platzeck and Governing Mayor Klaus Wowereit. The Executive Committee includes its chairman, former State Secretary Volker Kähne and his deputies, former State Secretary Dr Klaus Dieter Leister and Professor Franz Nuscheler. The Foundation's Advisory Board is chaired by Professor Dieter Senghaas. The Foundation's acting executive director is Dr Michèle Roth.



New Publication

Policy Paper 23

Tobias Debiel, Stephan Klingebiel, Andreas Mehler, Ulrich Schneckener
Between Ignorance and Intervention
Strategies and Dilemmas of External Actors in Fragile States

The failure and collapse of statehood has become a key peace and development policy issue at the start of the 21st century. External actors face fundamental problems when statehood collapses at national and local level. Against this background, how can state institutions which enjoy some measure of legitimacy be promoted viably? Which approach should be adopted to non-state and sub-state structures? This Policy Paper attempts to provide initial answers to these questions. The authors consider the complex reality of weak statehood in affected countries and appraise previous strategies of coping with the problem. Above all, they focus on basic dilemmas facing external actors in fragile states and on possible ways of dealing with them.

SEF-Policy Paper 23, January 2005, 12 pp., € 2,50