

An Enlarged Europe and Its Neighbourhood Policy: the Eastern Dimension

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Introduction

In a sense, this is a “historical” publication. It contains the results of a research project devoted to the question of the “new neighbours” on the eastern border of the newly enlarged EU.

Furthermore, it reflects a break in the research tradition of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs. Whereas earlier, since 1992, when the institute was established, research on security issues was funded by the international foundations and countries that had enjoyed prosperity and democracy since the end of the Second World War, this year for the first time the research project was funded by the Latvian government, mainly the Ministry of Defence with further support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In other words, the Latvian taxpayer.

This reflects, of course, Latvia’s new standing in international affairs as a member state of the EU and NATO. It also reflects a need for thoughtful analysis carried out by independent NGO’s, which can help Latvia formulate foreign policy, while, at the same time, extend NGO links in the international community. Links have been well established in the Trans-Atlantic community, especially in the EU, where the institute is now a full member of, for example, the Trans-European Political Association (TEPSA). But now the need arises for bolstering contacts to the East, especially in the countries that now find themselves between the EU and Russia, now called the “in-between” countries.

Of course, they are not new neighbours to Latvia, but what is new, is the political aspect of finding themselves in a situation as described above. Just as research activity was needed on the Baltic and Central Eastern European countries before they became members of the EU and NATO, the same now holds true for the “in-between” countries.

We hope that the first results will be useful and of interest both for policy makers and the general public interested in international issues

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The EU and NATO, Their Policies Toward Neighbouring Countries, Especially Countries of Central Europe, the South Caucasus, and the Russian Federation

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Introduction:

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991 both the European Union (EU or the Union) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO or the Alliance) realized that the neighbourhood around them had changed and that the previous practices and policies were no longer adequate to the new situation. Both organisations developed new policies toward countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the former USSR, created programmes to assist and cooperate with those countries, and eventually welcomed many of those countries into their fold. In a nutshell, these activities – although not identical – by both organisations could be described as constructive engagement. The EU started its Phare programme in 1989 and decided to offer the possibility of membership to CEE countries at the European Council meeting in Copenhagen in 1993. NATO opted for opening its gates to new members in January 1994. In 1997 both organisations took the decisive step toward enlargement and offered the candidate countries of their choice a detailed accession plan.

In July 1997 NATO invited the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to begin membership negotiations and these countries joined the Alliance in 1999. The second round of invitations was extended to 7 countries, including the three Baltic States, at NATO's Prague summit in November 2002. In March 2004 NATO welcomed these countries into its ranks, thus increasing its membership to 26 countries. Since NATO has an open-door policy that allows any European country able to abide by the principles of the Washington Treaty and contribute to security in the Euro-Atlantic area to become a member of the

Alliance, and a tradition of acting promptly once a decision is made, further enlargement is a distinct possibility; the timing of the next enlargement and the likely candidates for membership, however, cannot be predicted.

The EU extended the first invitations to CEE countries to join the Union in December 1997 and the second set of invitations – two years later. Owing to a more complicated accession process, the EU was able to admit the first and the second set of invitees – altogether ten countries, including Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – as bona fide members of the Union all at the same time in spring 2004. In early summer 2004 voters elected members of the European Parliament, which is now much larger than ever before. In late summer 2004 a new and enlarged Commission, under the leadership of José Manuel Barroso, began to be formed; the process was completed in November. In view of all these changes and the necessity to ensure that the Union functions and flourishes as an entity of 25 states, it will be several years before the EU admits new members, even if accession negotiations with Bulgaria and Romania are advanced. A date for starting the accession process with Turkey remains to be set.

During the period of enlargement, both the EU and NATO recognized that it would be mutually advantageous to coordinate foreign and security policy, as well as improve the modes of cooperation. The EU outlined a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) while NATO formulated its European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) which both organisations discussed and endorsed in December 2002 through the EU-NATO Declaration on ESDP. All the while both organisations were coping with various challenges related to becoming truly global players. They saw that sometimes their views diverged and sometimes – coincided, and that they were perceived as or acted as competitors. Furthermore, differences were also evident within the EU, especially between the old EU member states and the countries about to join the Union. The differences dissipated in the aftermath of the Islamic terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States. Eventually the differences resurfaced; they were exacerbated by Washington's intent to wage a war in Iraq and gather as many supporters for this endeavour as possible.

All of these factors have had a profound influence on the Union's and the Alliance's neighbourhood – it has also undergone changes, especially as some of the neighbouring countries have become EU and NATO members – as well as on the policies of both organisations toward the neighbouring countries individually and as a whole. Nonetheless, the prevailing attitude of both the EU and NATO toward their neighbours can continue to be summed up by the policy of constructive engagement.

This paper will briefly survey the development of the neighbourhood policy of the EU and the comparable partnership policy of NATO, particularly as these policies affect Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine and the South Caucasian countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The emphasis will be on developments in the 21st century. After an examination of the policies and their application in the different countries, suggestions will be made about ways to make those policies more effective. Some opportunities for the new members of EU and NATO to make an impact for positive change in countries neighbouring the Alliance and the Union will also be noted.

Part One: The EU Neighbourhood Policy

The EU neighbourhood policy has developed first and foremost through evolution. In a very broad sense, the EU, even in its previous incarnations, has always had policies directed toward the neighbouring countries. They have developed out of the necessity to interact with countries bordering the member states of the Union and to react to major developments in the neighbourhood. These policies have also been profoundly influenced by the Union's decisions to expand its membership. In the past decade, the policies can be characterized by a desire to avoid creating new divisions in Europe while, at the same time, maintaining a distinction between the EU and the rest of Europe. The formulation of a coherent policy toward EU neighbours gained momentum especially after the collapse of the relationships under the Warsaw Pact and the demise of the Soviet Union. The EU, wishing to lend a hand in the economic reforms and democratization processes resulting from the momentous changes, established Phare (Pologne/Hongrie: Assistance pour la Restructuration Économique or Poland/Hungary Assistance for Restructuring of the Economy) in 1989. As the name indicates, its function was to help Poland and Hungary; subsequently, its scope came to include other Central and East European countries – since 1992, also the Baltic States. Tacis (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States) was conceived in 1990 to help the Soviet Union. Since its founding in July 1991 and following the break-up of the USSR in December 1991, Tacis has been providing grant finance for political, economic, and social reforms to the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Thus, the acronyms have become inaccurate since they no longer accurately reflect the actual breadth of the programmes.

As many of the countries formerly ruled – directly or indirectly – by the Soviet Union regained their independence and sought membership of the EU, the Union responded without delay to the new situation in various ways. Diplomatic recognition of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania by the EU was granted in August 1991, less than a week after independence was actually regained. New programmes and accords were offered. In terms of the neighbourhood, of particular importance to the Baltic States was the Northern Dimension, an EU concept whose principal author was Finland. It allowed them to interact with the Union's member states and other countries around the Baltic Sea in common programmes and develop common policies. First recognized as an EU concept at the Luxembourg European Council in December 1997, the Northern Dimension has greatly expanded its scope of activities since its inception and is now a well-established EU programme.¹ The EU also responded by drafting Agenda 2000, which sets forth the Union's vision of the future and includes programmes to assist countries aspiring to become EU members. Ten countries joined the EU in May 2004 and Bulgaria and Romania will follow soon. The EU borders moved further to the East

¹ For more information about the development and activities of the Northern Dimension policy, see <http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/north_dim/index.htm>.

and the South. These developments led to a fundamental reassessment of the nature of the European Union and the formulation of new policies; hence the codification of the Union through a Constitutional Treaty and a coherent and comprehensive foreign policy known as Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The documents came about also as a consequence of the changing perception of the Union's role in the world, an aspect emphasized by EU leaders especially since the beginning of the new century. In December 2002 the European Commission's President, Romano Prodi, urged the Union to assume its role as a global player, adding that one of the first steps to be taken in this direction would be the development of a substantive proximity or neighbourhood policy:

We need to institute a new and inclusive regional approach that would help keep and promote peace and foster stability and security throughout the continent, ultimately promoting the emergence of better global governance.²

In March 2003 the EU Commission presented its Communication on Wider Europe; it laid the foundation for the current EU neighbourhood policy which is now called European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The notions of the ENP have been developed in the Commission's Strategy Paper and applied in the Country Reports of 12 May 2004. The most up-to-date document on the ENP is the European Commission's *Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council laying down general provisions establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument* of 29 September 2004. The ENP concepts have been reinforced, albeit indirectly, in the Draft Constitutional Treaty, presented for consideration in July 2003; this document was signed by leaders of EU member countries in Rome on 29 October 2004. Thus, in autumn 2004, the ENP can be described as a developing process, rather than a finished product or firmly established tradition. Certain guiding principles have been agreed upon and certain procedures have been started, but their potential impact can only be estimated.

A: EU Neighbourhood Policy – general observations

The EU neighbourhood policy is logically a component of the Union's foreign policy and its external relations and is the responsibility of the European Commission. Yet, it has been considered to be principally the domain of Commissioner on Enlargement, rather than the Commissioner on External Relations or the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy.³ Nonetheless, both the Commissioner on External Relations and the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy are also interested in the Union's neighbouring countries; they have supported projects and research and helped draft policy related to the countries neighbouring the EU. Thus, there has been both overlap in terms of subject matter and cooperation in terms of action,

² For the full text of Romano Prodi's speech, delivered to the Sixth World Conference of the European Community Studies Association, Brussels, 5 and 6 December 2002, see <<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/02/619&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&uiLanguage=en>>.

³ It is relevant to note that implementation of the neighbourhood policy is not listed among the responsibilities of the Union's Minister of Foreign Affairs in the EU Constitutional Treaty, Part I, Article 27.

specific projects and general policy coordination; this is amply demonstrated in the respective websites.⁴

Since the 1990's the European Union's policy toward its neighbours has tended to be characterized by four elements of which the first two are:

- ▶ an effort to integrate them into the EU processes and eventually into the EU itself;
- ▶ where integration proves to be the inappropriate approach, the EU aims to ensure stable relations with those neighbours and stability at the EU borders.

These elements have been analyzed by Hiski Haukala and Arkady Moshes in their study *Beyond „Big Bang“: The Challenges of EU's Neighbourhood Policy in the East*.⁵ I would like to add two elements, which I see as at least equally important:

- ▶ improvisation – lacking a precise vision of where it is heading, but keenly aware of the changes within and without, the EU has become adept at improvising and taking things as they come.
- ▶ inclusion – wishing to maintain as many options open as possible and aware of its own changing and expanding membership, as well as its growing desire to become a global player, the EU considers a vaster rather than a narrower area as its neighbourhood; this area includes countries of Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus, Eastern Europe and Western Europe.

A map of the EU neighbourhood has been published by the ENP website⁶; the neighbourhood comprises all the regions in various shades of grey while the territory covered by EU member states is shown in charcoal:



⁴ For the European Neighbourhood Policy, see <http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/index_en.htm>. For External Relations, see <http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/news/patten/welcome_message.htm> and for High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, see <http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cfsp/intro/index.htm> and <http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cfsp/intro/index.htm>.

⁵ Hiski Haukala and Arkady Moshes, *Beyond „Big Bang“: The Challenges of EU's Neighbourhood Policy in the East* for the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 31 March 2004.

⁶ See Internet <http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/overview_en.htm>.

As the map suggests, the neighbourhood is diverse and vast; furthermore, the situation of each individual country and its relations to the EU are different and vary considerably. In Western Europe there are the countries of the European Economic Area (labelled C and not included in the ENP) – Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland – which can be described as democratic, stable, prosperous and embodying traditional European values and culture.⁷ They could meet EU membership requirements and join the Union without delay. This cannot be said for the EU's neighbours to the South and the East (labelled A and B). These countries are not perceived as potential candidates for Union membership especially because of the major challenges they face in areas such as modernization, democratic legislation and practices, fully-functioning and stable governments and institutions, welfare, fight against crime and corruption, secure borders, as well as internal or regional conflicts. In a nutshell, the ENP was created to address those countries. Currently the ENP covers: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia; and the participants in the Barcelona process: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, and the Palestinian Authority. Regarding Russia, the EU and the Russian Federation have developed a strategic partnership based on the concepts of four common spaces as defined at the St. Petersburg summit in 2003; funding for the implementation of these concepts will come from the financial instruments which support the ENP. Not covered by the ENP are Bulgaria, Romania because of the accession negotiations in progress and Turkey because of the imminence of the start of accession negotiations; in the map they are labelled D. The Western Balkan countries (labelled E) have a special status in that they have the prospect of joining the Union provided they fulfil the membership criteria stipulated by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993; this was decided by the European Council meetings in Feira in June 2000 and Thessaloniki in June 2003. The framework for the Western Balkan countries' relations with the EU is the Stabilisation and Association process.

B: Policy vision of the European Neighbourhood Policy emanating from the main EU documents

The principal documents concerning the European Neighbourhood Policy, in chronological order, are: the EU Constitutional Treaty of July 2003⁸; *Report on 'Wider Europe - Neighbourhood': A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours* (Napolitano Report), adopted by the European Parliament on 20 November 2003⁹; and the *European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper* adopted

⁷ The EEA brings together the EFTA countries and the EU under a single roof. The Agreement on the European Economic Area, dating from December 1993, includes also other countries which have subsequently become EU members; for the full text, see <<http://europa.eu.int/comm/competition/international/3a01en.html>>. For more information about the EEA, see <http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/eea/gac.htm>.

⁸ For the full text of the Constitutional Treaty in different languages, see <http://europa.eu.int/futurum/constitution/index_en.htm>. The text in English is also available under <http://europa.eu.int/futurum/documents/offtext/doc180703_en.pdf>; in this section of the paper, subsequent quotations from EU Constitutional Treaty come from this source and will not be separately footnoted.

⁹ For the full text of the Report on 'Wider Europe', see <<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//NONSGML%2BREPORT%2BA5-2003-0378%2B0%2BDOC%2BPDF%2BV0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=3&NAV=S&LSTD OC=Y>>.

by the European Commission on 12 May 2004¹⁰. Of the three, the most important is the *Strategy Paper*, especially since it deals with the neighbourhood policy in a much more comprehensive and conceptual manner than the other two documents. Since the Strategy Paper can be considered as the elaboration of the *Report on Wider Europe-Neighbourhood*, our discussion will focus on the *Strategy Paper* and the Constitutional Treaty that preceded it.

B-1: The EU Constitutional Treaty

Although on 18 June 2004, the Heads of State or Government of the 25 Member States unanimously adopted the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe and then met in Rome on 29 October 2004 to sign the final text of the document, the Treaty cannot enter into force until it is ratified by each of the member states. Ratification is detailed by each country's legal documents and traditions. In most member states the endorsement will come from the parliament, though some states plan to hold a referendum. The Treaty comes into effect only after it has been ratified by all 25 member states and the ratification instruments have been officially lodged. This process could take about two years. Thus, what the Treaty has to say about the neighbourhood policy is more a reflection of what may be anticipated regarding the implementation of that policy, rather than the policy itself, which continues to evolve.

The Constitutional Treaty does not have a special chapter on the Union's policy toward its neighbours. However, provision for external action by the EU, including the Common Foreign and Security Policy and neighbourhood policy, is made in both Part I and Part III of the Treaty. Preceded by a Preamble, Part I can be characterised as the „constitutional” part of the Treaty. In 59 Articles it sets what the Union is, its objectives and values, tasks and institutions, and how it legislates. Of importance to the neighbourhood policy is the fact that Article 1, which deals with the Establishment of the Union, states in its second point the following: “The Union shall be open to all European States which respect its values and are committed to promoting them together.” This is a declaration of principle. The values are discussed later in the text, but there is no definition of a European State, nor specification of Europe's borders. The Common Foreign and Security Policy is briefly treated in Part I, Article 15, more extensively in Part I, Articles 39 and 40, and in detail in Part III, Articles 195-214.

The first allusion to a neighbourhood policy appears in Part I, Article 56; it consists of the following two points:

1. The Union shall develop a special relationship with neighbouring States, aiming to establish an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterised by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation.
2. For this purpose, the Union may conclude and implement specific agreements with the countries concerned in accordance with Article III-227. These agreements may contain reciprocal rights and obligations as well as the

possibility of undertaking activities jointly. Their implementation will be the subject of periodic consultation.

The next references – mostly indirect – to the neighbourhood policy are found in Part III of the Constitutional Treaty. (Part II presents the text of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Part IV contains what are known as General and Final Provisions, such as repeal of earlier treaties, entry into force and possibility of amending the Constitutional Treaty.) Part III deals with the various policy areas in which the Union operates and outlines operational procedures. A very substantial policy area is external relations (Articles 193-231). All of the areas are organised thematically in chapters and sections and the titles shed light on the subject matter covered; they are more or less self-explanatory. In order to provide a concise general overview of the parts of the Constitutional Treaty that deal with different matters related to the ENP, below is a list of the relevant chapters:

- Chapter IV: Cooperation with Third Countries and Humanitarian Aid
 - Section 1: Development Cooperation (Articles 218-220)
 - Section 2: Economic, Financial and Technical Cooperation with Third Countries (Articles 221- 222)
 - Section 3: Humanitarian Aid (Article 223)
- Chapter V: Restrictive Measures (Article 224)¹¹
- Chapter VI: International Agreements (Articles 225-228)
- Chapter VII: The Union's Relations with International Organisations and Third Countries and Union Delegations (Articles 229-230)
- Chapter VIII: Implementation of the Solidarity Clause (Chapter 231)

Other sections also touch upon issues related to a neighbourhood policy; good examples are Articles 145 and 146 (Part III) on Trans-European Networks, Articles 166-169 (Part III) on Policies on Border Checks, Asylum and Immigration, and Articles 186-192 (Part III) on the Association of Overseas Countries and Territories. All of these Articles tend to focus on procedure and implementation and say very little about the rationale, especially concerning the ENP. What is also noteworthy is that the ENP related issues are not treated alongside the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) matters discussed in Chapter II, but rather in the context of Cooperation with Third Countries and Humanitarian Aid. Article 218 (Part III) states that “Union development cooperation policy shall have as its primary objective the reduction and, in the long term, the eradication of poverty.” Taken at face value, the numerous but scanty references listed above suggest that the ENP focuses primarily on economic development cooperation with the neighbouring countries. This misperception is corrected in Article 219 (Part III); the second point makes the link with the CFSP and suggests that the ENP has other dimensions:

1. European laws or framework laws shall establish the measures necessary for the implementation of development cooperation policy, which may relate to

¹⁰ For the full text of the Strategy Paper, see < http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/strategy/Strategy_Paper_EN.pdf>.

¹¹ Restrictive measures and Article 224 refer to procedures to be taken when the EU decides that it is necessary to interrupt economic and financial relations with third countries and others.

multiannual cooperation programmes with developing countries or programmes with a thematic approach.

2. The Union may conclude with third countries and competent international organisations any agreement helping to achieve the objectives referred to in Article III-193. Such agreements shall be negotiated and concluded in accordance with Article III-227. [...]
3. The European Investment Bank shall contribute, under the terms laid down in its Statute, to the implementation of the measures referred to in paragraph 1.

But Article 193 (Part III), containing a list of CFSP guidelines, is very general and provides only indirectly an underpinning for the neighbourhood policy:

1. The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by, and designed to advance in the wider world, the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, equality and solidarity, and for international law in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

The Union shall seek to develop relations and build partnerships with third countries, and international, regional or global organisations, which share these values. It shall promote multilateral solutions to common problems, in particular in the framework of the United Nations.¹²

At first glance the vague references to an EU policy toward its neighbours are disconcerting. The explanation for this situation stems from three factors: a constitutional treaty is not a policy paper; the EU Draft Constitutional Treaty was essentially completed in summer 2003, well before the main policy and research papers about the ENP had been published and discussed; while the Convention was working on the drafting of the Constitutional Treaty, it could not deal with all the topics, including the neighbourhood policy, considered at that time by the Commission or the European Council. Seen in this light, the indirect references in the Constitutional Treaty are understandable and should not to be dismissed, since they will have to be observed fully once the Constitutional Treaty is ratified.

¹² Article 193 (Part III) continues with two more points: 2. The Union shall define and pursue common policies and actions, and shall work for a high degree of cooperation in all fields of international relations, in order to: (a) safeguard the common values, fundamental interests, security, independence and integrity of the Union; (b) consolidate and support democracy, the rule of law, human rights and international law; (c) preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security, in conformity with the principles of the United Nations Charter; (d) foster the sustainable economic, social and environmental development of developing countries, with the primary aim of eradicating poverty; (e) encourage the integration of all countries into the world economy, including through the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade; (f) help develop international measures to preserve and improve the quality of the environment and the sustainable management of global natural resources, in order to ensure sustainable development; (g) assist populations, countries and regions confronting natural or man-made disasters; (h) promote an international system based on stronger multilateral cooperation and good global governance. 3. The Union shall respect the principles and pursue the objectives listed in paragraphs 1 and 2 in the development and implementation of the different areas of the Union's external action covered by this Title and the external aspects of its other policies. The Union shall ensure consistency between the different areas of its external action and between these and its other policies. The Council of Ministers and the Commission, assisted by the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs, shall ensure that consistency and shall cooperate to that effect.

B-2: European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper

Impetus for drafting a neighbourhood policy came from a joint letter addressed to the Council by Commissioner for External Relations Chris Patten and High Representative Javier Solana in August 2002.¹³ A kind of ground-breaking event was the adoption by the European Parliament on 20 November 2003 of the Report on '*Wider Europe - Neighbourhood*': *A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*, which was first disseminated by the European Commission in March 2003.¹⁴ This report provides the rationale for an EU neighbourhood policy, elaborated in the Commission's *European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper* (henceforth also referred to as Strategy Paper) of 12 May 2004 and refined in the Commission's *Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council laying down general provisions establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument* (henceforth also referred to as ENPI Proposal) of 29 September 2004).¹⁵ At present, the Strategy Paper and the ENPI Proposal are the chief documents on the subject, whereas the best source of up-to-date news, reports, and policy papers regarding the ENP is the Commission's informative website.¹⁶

In the official descriptions of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) the altruistic goals are listed first and include the following: share the benefits of EU enlargement in terms of stability, security, and well-being with the neighbours; prevent the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged Union and the neighbouring countries; and offer them the opportunity to take part in various EU activities, through greater political, security, economic and cultural cooperation. Nonetheless, it is clear that the rationale behind the ENP is rooted in the Union's desire to enhance its own security, especially via improved cooperation with stable, well-governed and economically thriving neighbouring countries. As stated in the European Security Strategy, endorsed by the European Council in December 2003, the Union's task is to

make a particular contribution to stability and good governance in our immediate neighbourhood [and] to promote a ring of well-governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations.¹⁷

While offering a "privileged relationship" to the EU neighbours, the ENP is not synonymous with potential membership of the Union. That relationship is to be built upon

mutual commitment to common values principally within the fields of the rule of law, good governance, the respect for human rights, including minority rights, the

¹³ For the full text, see http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/_0130163334_001_en.pdf.

¹⁴ For the full text, see < <http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//NONSGML%2BREPORT%2BA5-2003-0378%2B0%2BDOC%2BPDF%2BV0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=3&NAV=S&LSTDOC=Y>>.

¹⁵ For the full text of the ENPI Proposal, see <http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/getdoc_en.pdf>

¹⁶ See <http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/policy_en.htm>.

¹⁷ The quotation comes from the Strategy Paper; see < http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/strategy/Strategy_Paper_EN.pdf>.

promotion of good neighbourly relations, and the principles of market economy and sustainable development. Commitment will also be sought to certain essential aspects of the EU's external action, including, in particular, the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as abidance by international law and efforts to achieve conflict resolution.¹⁸

The proposed method includes three principal elements. The EU and each neighbouring country define together a set of priorities for the joint drafting of an Action Plan. Though each Action Plan will be different and tailor-made to reflect the relationship between the Union and each country, it will focus on commitments to specific actions reinforcing adherence to common values or CFSP objectives and commitments to actions bringing the partner countries closer to the EU. More specifically, the Action Plan may incorporate the following priorities: political dialogue and reform; trade and preparatory measures for gradually obtaining a stake in the EU's Internal Market; justice and home affairs; energy; transport; environment; information society; research and innovation; education and training; and regional cooperation.¹⁹ The Strategy Paper emphasizes that the ENP is a "joint ownership" project; consequently the Union "does not seek to impose priorities or conditions on its partners" and the success of the Action Plan depends on the recognition by both sides of the mutual interest in addressing the priorities.²⁰ Financial assistance and loans are provided to the participating countries.

¹⁸ The quotation comes from the Strategy Paper; see < http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/strategy/Strategy_Paper_EN.pdf>

¹⁹ According to the ENPI proposal, the actual list is much longer: (a) promoting political dialogue and reform; (b) promoting legislative and regulatory approximation in all relevant areas and in particular to encourage the progressive participation of partner countries in the internal market and the intensification of trade; (c) strengthening of national institutions and bodies responsible for the elaboration and the effective implementation of policies in areas covered in association agreements, partnership and cooperation agreement and other future comparable agreements; (d) promoting sustainable development; (e) promoting environmental protection and good management of natural resources; (f) supporting policies aimed at poverty reduction; (g) supporting policies to promote social development and gender equality, employment and social protection including social dialogues, and respect for trade union rights and core labour standards; (h) supporting policies to promote health, education and training; (i) promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms and supporting the democratisation process, including through electoral observation and assistance; (j) fostering the development of civil society; (k) promoting the development of a market economy, including measures to support the private sector, encourage investment and promote global trade; (l) promoting cooperation in the energy, telecommunication and transport sectors including on interconnections, the networks and their operations, the security and safety of international transport and energy operations, renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and clean transport; (m) providing support to actions aimed at increasing food safety for the citizens, in particular in the sanitary and phyto-sanitary domains; (n) ensuring efficient and secure border management; (o) promoting cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs, including on issues such as asylum and migration and the fight against and prevention of terrorism and organised crime, including its financing, money laundering and tax fraud; (p) supporting administrative cooperation to improve transparency and the exchange of information in the area of taxation in order to combat tax avoidance and evasion; (q) promoting participation in Community research and innovation activities; (r) promoting cooperation between the Member States and partner countries in higher education and mobility of teachers, researchers and students; (s) promoting understanding between cultures, people-to-people contacts, cooperation between civil societies and exchanges of young people; (t) supporting participation of partner countries in Community programmes and agencies; (u) supporting cross-border cooperation to promote sustainable economic, social and environmental development in border regions; (v) promoting regional cooperation and integration; (w) providing support in post-crisis situations, including support to refugees and displaced persons, and assisting in conflict prevention and disaster preparedness; (x) encouraging communication and promoting exchange among the partners on the measures and activities financed under the programmes; (y) addressing common thematic challenges in fields of mutual concern and any other objectives consistent with the scope of this Regulation.

See <http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/getdoc_en.pdf>.

²⁰ Ibid.

The second element is the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (known also as PCA or Association Agreement); owing to a specified time-frame, the PCA must be renewed periodically. The PCA would provide the bodies to monitor the progress of the fulfilment of the priorities agreed upon in the Action Plan. The Commission prepares periodic reports on what has been achieved by each country; on the basis of the assessment of progress, the Union, together with the partner country, decide on the modification and renewal of the Action Plan. Sufficient progress may open up the possibility for the next level of bilateral relations: European Neighbourhood Agreement; this is envisaged as the third element.

A Commission Task Force on Wide Europe, in close cooperation with the Secretary General, High Representatives for the CFSP, the Presidency and the member states coordinate the process. The Task Force reports to the Commissioner on Enlargement.

Up to now, this ambitious project used the existing tools for financing. A major boost in finances is expected from the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument. On 11 October 2004 the Commission submitted its *Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament laying down a general provision establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument*. This Instrument is expected to focus on four general objectives:

- ▶ promote sustainable development in regions on both sides of the EU borders;
- ▶ work together through joint actions to address common challenges in fields, such as environment, public health, and the fight against organised crime;
- ▶ ensure efficient and secure common borders through joint actions;
- ▶ promote local cross-border "people-to-people" type actions.²¹

B-3: The European Neighbourhood Policy toward seven countries neighbouring the Union

When I was planning this study, I had intended to provide in this section an assessment of the practical application and impact of the ENP on seven countries of the former USSR that are now considered as neighbouring the European Union. Subsequent research has shown, however, that it is still too early to try to evaluate the ENP's impact in any kind of general sense even on a what might be considered a region on account of its common history. The principal obstacle to any kind of assessment arises from two inter-related factors:

- ▶ the ENP is still developing and has not fully defined itself or its parameters vis-à-vis other initiatives and policies;
- ▶ the ENP has adopted many procedures and policies that existed before it was formulated, such as the Action Plan and the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and there is considerable overlapping with earlier EU initiatives.

²¹ See <http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/strategy/Strategy_Paper_EN.pdf>. Footnote 18 lists the specific objectives.

Among the unanswered questions are: where does the ENP start and where do the other programmes end? Another question, previously unexpected, is about who is in charge of the ENP. The question arose probably in July 2004 and was not officially cleared up even in early November. The ENP website contains a number of references to Commissioner Janez Potocnik, who in the homepage opened on 16 July 2004, is identified as “Member of the European Commission, Enlargement”.²² The website address, however, is that of the Commission. But the Commission’s website, on a different home page, presented Günter Verheugen as “Member of the European Commission, Enlargement”; in his welcoming remarks he says: “I have been responsible for Enlargement of the EU within the European Commission since 1999 and since 2003 my responsibilities have been extended to the European Neighbourhood Policy.”²³ A partial explanation for the seeming duplication stems from the fact that Potocnik served as Verheugen’s “shadow”, after it was decided that each of the about-to-be admitted EU member states could have a “shadow” commissioner for several months in the Commission until the new Commission is formed. To add to the confusion, Potocnik was nominated by Slovenia for membership in the new Commission on 28 July 2004 and the Commission’s President designate José Manuel Barroso named Potocnik as Commissioner designate for science and research, an offer that Potocnik accepted on 12 August 2004.²⁴ This situation will surely be sorted out after Barroso introduces a Commission which in its entirety meets the approval of the European Parliament. A new Commission, including a new Commissioner on enlargement, is expected to be in place in November 2004.

More time will be required to resolve the questions regarding the ENP. The very complex situation becomes evident after comparing ENP documents and reports with the available information about the countries participating in the ENP.

In spite of some of the confusion about the ENP, a few general observations can be made about some aspects of the EU’s approach to the neighbouring countries. Certain procedures and instruments, mentioned in the discussion about the ENP, are already in place and have been working reasonably well in nearly all of the countries for several years. The most conspicuous example is the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The following table provides a cursory overview of EU activities in seven of its neighbouring countries and suggests that substantial groundwork has been done and experience gained to make it possible for the ENP to take off in the not so distant future.

EU Agreements and Programmes with Seven Neighbouring Countries (October 2004)

Country	Agreements and Programmes					
	PCA ²⁵ in force since	Common Strategy ²⁶ since	Tacis CSP ²⁷ 2002-6	NIP/IP ²⁸ 2004-6	ENP affiliation	ENP Country Report ²⁹
Armenia	July 1999	--	yes	yes	June 2004	--
Azerbaijan	July 1999	--	yes	yes	June 2004	--
Belarus	not in force	--	2005-6	2005-6	none	--
Georgia	July 1999	--	2003-6	yes	June 2004	--
Moldova	July 1998	--	yes	2002-3	envisaged	May 2004
Russia	Dec. 1997	June 1999	yes	yes	none or remote	--
Ukraine	March 1998	Dec. 1999	yes	yes	envisaged	May 2004

At the same time, the table also shows graphically the differences between the countries seen as potential participants in the ENP. Considering the formalised cooperation reflected in the categories in the table, **Belarus** is clearly at the bottom. The problems stem overwhelmingly from the country’s dictatorial leader Aleksandr Lukashenka and the undemocratic policies of his government. The result has been near-isolation of Belarus by international organisations, greatly reduced economic relations with countries to the North and West, and stern criticism from Western democracies and organisations championing human and civil rights. If in the early 1990s the attitude in the West was to give Belarus a chance and assist it to overcome its problems, then after Lukashenka came to power, the ties with many international organisations and Western democracies withered. Thus, there have also been difficulties in expanding EU relations with Belarus. In March 1995 a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the Union and Belarus was signed, but it is still not in force; the Interim agreement is also not in force. Recently, the EU resumed the policy of constructive engagement in the hope that it might promote some positive changes. As a result, a Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme for Belarus for 2005 and 2006 were adopted by the European Commission on

²⁵ All of the information in columns 2-4 of this table comes from the EU’s relations with Eastern Europe and Central Asia; see < http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ceeca/index.htm >.

²⁶ For the full texts of the agreements, containing overall policy guidelines for activities of the Union with both countries, see < http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ceeca/com_strat/russia_99.pdf > and < http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ceeca/com_strat/ukraine_99.pdf >.

²⁷ To explain the abbreviations of this and the next column, CSP is Country Strategy Paper, IP is Indicative Programme (also called NIP – National Indicative Programme). Both concepts are inter-related and are essential to the functioning of TACIS assistance to individual countries; they serve as strategic framework within which EU assistance is made available.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ On 12 May 2004 the European Commission released the first European Neighbourhood Policy Country Reports. They assess EU relations with and the situation in Jordan, Israel, Morocco, Tunisia, Moldova and Ukraine so as to help assess the directions of further cooperation with each country under the ENP. For these and related publications, see < http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/document_en.htm >.

²² See Potocnik’s homepage <http://europa.eu.int/comm/commissioners/potocnik/index_en.htm>.

²³ See Verheugen’s homepage,

< http://europa.eu.int/comm/commissioners/verheugen/index_en.htm >. In his welcoming message to the ENP site, Verheugen is identified simply as „Commissioner”; see

< http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/index_en.htm >.

²⁴ For more detailed information; see http://europa.eu.int/comm/commissioners/potocnik/press_releases_en.htm.

28 May 2004.³⁰ It is the very first CSP for Belarus and builds on the National Indicative Programme for 2000-2003 that was adopted in February 2001. Nonetheless, the attitude of the EU remains firm: assistance and closer relations depend on fundamental political and economic changes. On 13 September 2004, prior to the referendum that would permit Lukashenka to become the president of Belarus for a third term, the General Affairs and External Relations Council of the Council of the European Union reiterated:

its hope that Belarus will take its rightful place among European democratic countries. In this case, the EU would be able to further develop the relations between the EU and Belarus, including in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy. If, however, the Parliamentary elections and the announced referendum do not take place under free and fair conditions, this cannot remain without its consequences for the relations.³¹

Ukraine's efforts in the 1990's to create a viable and democratic statehood were also regarded with sympathy and supported by the West. It was a big country with big problems, but potentially also a big market and a useful ally. Despite its unresolved problems, Ukraine continues to be viewed by the EU as "a key neighbour and strategic partner, which is also a major player in regional and global security."³² This perception accounts for the special status of Ukraine vis-à-vis the Union. It is demonstrated, inter alia, by the annual EU-Ukraine summits since 2000³³ and signalled in other ways, such as the EU's clear interest in Ukraine's becoming a priority partner country in the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Union's careful attention to the implementation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. All this, however, does not mean the Union is blind to Ukraine's problems and faults, which range from a heavily indebted economy to disregard for human and civil rights. Furthermore, if a few years ago Kiev expressed ambitions that Ukraine join both the European Union and NATO, then more recently Kiev has strived to ensure the goodwill and generosity of Russia. The Ukrainian leaders' effort to ingratiate themselves with Moscow has raised questions about Ukraine's political orientation. These factors may have influenced the content of the EU Presidency's declaration in September 2004 to the Ukrainian authorities: the authors call for full respect for media freedom and the rights of both candidates and voters in the presidential elections in October, but they also affirm the Union's support for what the EU would welcome: "Ukraine's pursuit of democratisation and economic reform, [...] European aspirations [...] and] pro-European choice."³⁴

Much less attention has been devoted by the EU to **Moldova**. A small but divided country, Moldova is facing thorny political, military, territorial, ethnic and economic

problems. Former Soviet, now Russian, troops are still on its territory, despite Moscow's commitment five years ago to withdraw them. The economy needs to be restructured. President Vladimir Voronin has made it clear that Moldova cannot be expected to resolve such problems without the goodwill and genuine help from its neighbours and friends, and he is seeking help from Western democracies and international organisations. The EU is responding by plans for making a greater input into Moldova than heretofore. This is the message from the conclusions of the General Affairs and External Relations Council of the Council of the European Union which met on 14 June 2004 in Luxembourg:

The Council reaffirms the importance the European Union attaches to the Republic of Moldova as a neighbour and partner. The EU wishes Moldova to develop into a strong and stable country with close links to the Union on the basis of common values of democracy, rule of law, human rights including freedom of the media, as well as common interests, as set out in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). [...] The ENP, including the EU-Moldova Action Plan currently under negotiation, is a strong signal of the EU's determination to continue to step up its engagement with Moldova and to assist the country towards a significant degree of economic integration and a deepening of political co-operation. The Council wants the Action Plan to become a solid platform for moving ahead on this path to the benefit of both sides and in line with shared strategic priorities.³⁵

Though the EU has emphasized the individual approach in its relations with different countries, this has not prevented it from taking a regional and parallel approach, when that seemed appropriate. This is evident in the cases of **Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia**, occasionally also referred to as the countries of the South Caucasus. Here are some recent examples of a regional and parallel approach: EU Commission President Romano Prodi visited Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia from 16 to 19 September 2004; EU Commissioner Janez Potocnik visited all three countries in July 2004; three meetings – 6th meeting of the EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council, 6th meeting of the EU-Armenia Cooperation Council, and 6th meeting of the EU-Georgia Cooperation Council were held in Brussels on 14 September 2004. There is also the European Commission's Delegation to Georgia and Armenia, opened in November 1999 in Yerevan and headed by Torben Holtze.³⁶ On 14 June 2004, the General Affairs and External Relations Council of the Council of the European Union decided to include Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the European Neighbourhood Policy.³⁷ Though country reports have not been prepared in this connection, there is the Gahrton Report on the EU and South Caucasus³⁸ which clearly shows that these countries suffer from long-standing and serious regional conflicts, as well as political, economic, ethnic, and territorial problems. The problems are recognized by the EU and the EU wants to contribute to their resolution. As a result,

³⁰ See http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/belarus/csp/csp05_06.pdf.

³¹ For the full text, see < http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/gena/81896.pdf>.

³² From the introduction to EU Presidency's declaration (29 September 2004) of concern for freedom of the press and observance of democratic electoral practices in Ukraine; for the full text, see < http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ukraine/intro/p04_110.htm>.

³³ For more information about the summits, see

< http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ukraine/intro/sum.htm>.

³⁴ See footnote 32.

³⁵ For the full text, which also addresses such problems as Transnistria, troop withdrawal, border management, crime, see < http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/gena/80951.pdf>.

³⁶ Most of this information is provided in either the Armenian or the Georgian section of the delegation's homepage; see <<http://www.delgeo.cec.eu.int/en/index.html>>.

³⁷ For the full report of the GAERC meeting of 14 June 2004 in Luxembourg, see < <http://www.delgeo.cec.eu.int/en/press/Council%20decision%20on%20the%20Inclusion%20of%20Georgia,%20Armenia%20and%20Azerbaijan%20in%20the%20ENP.pdf>>

³⁸ See < http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/news/patten/speech04_98.htm>.

it appears Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia could anticipate an invitation to draw up an ENP Action Plan in the not so distant future.

Where does **Russia** stand in all this? It is by far the biggest and most powerful neighbour of the Union and recognition of this fact is amply reflected in agreements that are in place and the frequent contacts between the EU and Russia. The institutional framework for contacts, largely set forth in the PCA, includes

- ▶ two summits each year,
- ▶ a Cooperation Council that was upgraded to the Permanent Cooperation Council at the St. Petersburg Summit in May 2003,
- ▶ Cooperation Committee (of senior level officials) with 9 sub-committees,
- ▶ Parliamentary Cooperation Committee,
- ▶ frequent opportunities for political dialogue, such as in the various configurations of the so-called troika format (EU Presidency, CFSP High Representative/Council Secretariat, future presidency and Commission); for example, the CFSP working group troikas meet with their Russian counterparts twice a year while the troika of the Political and Security Committee meets with the Russian Ambassador to the EU on a monthly basis.³⁹

Of particular significance for the future relations of the Union and Russia may be the EU/Russia Action Plan on the Common Spaces, which was welcomed by both sides at the St. Petersburg Summit in May 2003; currently, it is being refined. To reinforce cooperation, it proposes to create in the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement four “common spaces”: a common economic space; a common space of freedom, security and justice; a space of cooperation in the field of external security; as well as a space of research and education, including cultural aspects.⁴⁰ Regarding the common economic space, it was agreed to broaden the concept of the Common European Economic Space (CEES), and to pay special attention to energy, investments, transport (including satellite navigation), and environment (with a specific reference to the Kyoto Protocol, which Russia endorsed in October 2004). The common space of freedom, security and justice involves enhanced cooperation in the field of Justice and Home Affairs, border management and migration issues, and facilitation of travel and contacts across the continent. Regarding the common space of external security, the St. Petersburg summit acknowledged several international security challenges and responsibilities; expressed a wish to seek a joint approach in the field of crisis management; welcomed practical cooperation on the European Security and Defence Policy; and reaffirmed the common commitment to strengthen the disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation regimes. Last, but not least, the EU and Russia agreed to expand cooperation so as to create a space of research and education.

³⁹ For an extensive summary of joint EU-Russia activities, see <http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/russia/intro/index.htm>.

⁴⁰ For a more detailed information, see <http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/russia/intro/index.htm>.

In view of the existing wide-ranging contacts and the plans to elaborate and expand them via the EU/Russia Action Plan on the Common Spaces, it is understandable that the ENP is not being proposed to Russia. The question that could be raised is how the ENP might affect on the one hand the EU-Russia and the EU-neighbourhood relationships, and on the other hand, the EU-neighbourhood-Russia relationships. If the ENP is successful, it will strengthen the relationship between the EU and the countries that Moscow still tends to perceive as its “near abroad”; conversely, Moscow’s influence upon those countries might weaken and the relations between Russia and the EU neighbouring countries might come under new strains. If this is the case, then Russia’s attitude toward ENP may come to resemble its attitude toward the Baltic States’ membership of the Union. Initially Russia appeared to support EU enlargement to include Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, but when their membership became imminent, Russia found objections, such as the alleged abuse of the human rights of the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia and Latvia, and the alleged hindrance by Lithuania of the transit of passengers and goods between Kaliningrad and Russia. These objections prompted Moscow to demand that the Protocol to PCA, regarding the extension of the existing PCA to apply also to the ten new EU member states as of 1 May 2004, allow Russia to deal with and have a say regarding each of the new EU member states. The EU rejected this demand. After heated rhetoric, the PCA Protocol was signed on 27 April 2004 and endorsed by the Duma on 21 October 2004. All this would suggest that Moscow will continue to defend jealously what it considers to be its realm of influence, even if it endorses the European Neighbourhood Policy in principle.

Part Two: NATO’s Euro-Atlantic Partnership

A: General Observations

NATO does not have anything that is designated as its neighbourhood policy and there is no equivalent to the European Union’s ENP. However, the Alliance’s Euro-Atlantic Partnership (EAP) can be considered as something roughly comparable to the European Neighbourhood Policy. Both concepts were created to respond to the fundamentally changed situation in the region once dominated or ruled by Soviet Union as a way to ensure security in Europe and possibly beyond.

The differences between the ENP and EAP stem from the fundamentally different nature and the development of the Union and the Alliance. The EU has evolved gradually from a modest European Coal and Steel Community of 6 countries in 1951 to a multi-focus, ambitious international organisation of 25 countries that wishes to be a global player. NATO was founded in April 1949 as a Euro-Atlantic collective defence organisation of 12 West European and North American countries; its main task during the Cold War era was to safeguard the political order of Western Europe. Thus, from its inception, NATO was not an organisation characterised by a single geographical area but rather by common security interests; this is still true today. As a function of those interests NATO

has become a global player. Not striving to become a guarantor of global security or a global policeman, NATO seeks a broad international approach to security challenges.⁴¹

The choice of NATO members and partners derives in part from the Alliance's changing perception of its *raison d'être*. This is reflected most succinctly in the new strategic concept advanced in 1999. Replacing the 1991 precursor, the new concept is dualistic: it espouses both collective defence, which had been heretofore the Alliance's principal task, and collective security or peace-support.

Between 1991 and 2004, NATO admitted 10 new members from Eastern Europe. All the newcomers had to meet criteria similar to the EU's Copenhagen criteria, as well as demonstrate their readiness and ability to contribute NATO's missions and initiatives. In the case of Bulgaria and Romania, which are continuing accession negotiations with the EU, it is clear that NATO welcomed them into its ranks more on the basis of what these countries could provide in the military and security realm rather than on perfect fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria. NATO is maintaining an open-door policy toward new members. Albania, Croatia and Macedonia, having begun the Membership Action Plan (MAP), are mentioned as potential members.

Looking at the geographical scattering of the 26 NATO members and 20 partners, it is clear that NATO is represented not only in Europe and North America but also in the Middle East and Central Asia. The list of partners, at first glance, appears very disparate. It includes: five stable and prospering democracies in Western and Northern Europe: Austria, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland; Albania, Croatia and Macedonia from the Balkans; and 11 countries that once were part of the Soviet Union: Armenia; Austria; Azerbaijan; Belarus; Georgia; Kazakhstan; Kirghiz Republic; Moldova; Russia; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan; Ukraine; Uzbekistan. Several countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro, are preparing to become Partners.

B: Application of the PfP to seven Partners

For countries that are not NATO members, the Alliance offers the possibility to become a Partner. The status of Partner may or may not signify that future membership of NATO is contemplated. The forum for political dialogue between NATO members and partners is the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC).⁴² The military and operational wing is

⁴¹ The question of a "global NATO" was analysed in speech delivered by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer on 29 October 2004; see <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2004/s041029a.htm>.

⁴² The EAPC was set up in 1997 to replace the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), established in 1991. For the full text of the *Basic Document of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council* of 30 May 1997, see <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b970530a.htm>.

the Partnership for Peace (PfP), established in 1994.⁴³ All 20 Partners take part in the PfP. There are currently six main cooperation mechanisms under the PfP:

- ▶ Individual Partnership Plans providing the foundation of cooperation between individual Partners and NATO;
- ▶ Individual Partnership Action Plans for countries wishing to deepen their relationship with NATO;
- ▶ Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism (PAP-T);
- ▶ Partnership Action Plan on Defence Institution Building;
- ▶ Membership Action Plan (MAP) for countries aspiring to NATO membership;
- ▶ and the PfP Planning and Review Process to promote interoperability.⁴⁴

Like the EU, NATO has accorded a special status to Russia and Ukraine. Stemming from the view that the cooperation of both countries is critical for a comprehensive system of European security, this status is attested by the special agreements in force, as well as the summits and regular meetings among top leaders. It is also underscored by the choice of words used in official reports and documents.

NATO-Russia relations started formally in 1991 at the inaugural session of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), precursor of the EAPC. Russia joined the PfP in 1994 and in the intervening decade the partnership has been vastly upgraded despite the ups and downs in NATO-Russia relations. The problems come mostly from residual mutual mistrust lingering from the Cold War era – Russia still voices objections to NATO's enlargement which is perceived as a threat; Moscow still tries to impose its will and interests on shaping world security order and maintain its authority in countries formerly part of the USSR – this is particularly evident in Moldova and Georgia. Nonetheless, Russia has participated actively in some of NATO's peace-keeping operations. Though cooperation was good in Bosnia and Herzegovina, serious difficulties arose over Kosovo and led to a deterioration of NATO-Russia relations. The mending of relations began slowly in 1999. After 11 September 2001 Russia declared its solidarity with the efforts to combat terrorism. A joint declaration, entitled *NATO-Russia Relations: A New Quality*, was endorsed in Reykjavik on 14 May 2002. The real signal that relations had normalized was the Rome Declaration of 28 May 2002, which created the NATO-Russia Council (NRC).⁴⁵ Relations between Moscow and NATO can continue at the current level indefinitely, since the likelihood of the next possible step upward – NATO offering Russia the MAP and Moscow's acceptance of it – seems very remote even though the idea of Russia's membership of NATO has been occasionally bandied among politicians from both sides.

⁴³ For the full text of the *Partnership for Peace: Framework Document* of 10-11 January 1994, see <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c940110b.htm>.

⁴⁴ See Susan Pond, "Understanding the PfP Tool Kit, *NATO Review*, Spring 2004 at <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/issue1/english/art2.>

⁴⁵ Intended as a much enhanced mechanism for consultation, consensus-building, cooperation, joint decision and joint action on a wide range of security issues in the Euro-Atlantic region, the NRC replaces the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC), created by the "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russia Federation" of 27 May 1997. See NATO's website <http://www.nato.int/issues/nrc/index.html>.

Ukraine's membership of NATO was seriously advocated by the country's leaders in the 1990s and found resonance in Brussels. Having joined the NACC in 1991 and the PfP in 1994, NATO-Ukraine relations were upgraded following recommendations by President Leonid Kuchma: a Ukrainian PfP Individual Partnership Programme was established in 1995 and the *NATO-Ukraine Charter on a Distinctive Partnership* was signed in 1997. Ukraine took an active part in PfP activities and hosted some PfP exercises on its territory. Furthermore, Ukrainian forces served in IFOR, SFOR and KFOR missions. In the meanwhile, little progress was made in tackling the country's internal problems. More recently, President Kuchma has been currying favour with Moscow and leaving relations with NATO on the proverbial backburner. If Viktor Yanukovich succeeds Leonid Kuchma as Ukraine's president, then Ukraine will look to Moscow for political guidance and relations with NATO will not accelerate. On the course of development of NATO-Ukraine relations, the Alliance's Summit Communiqué of June 2004 took a diplomatically critical view:

We welcome Ukraine's determination to pursue full Euro-Atlantic integration. In this context, we reaffirm the necessity to achieve consistent and measurable progress in democratic reform. [...] We are determined to support Ukraine in these efforts, while noting that a further strengthening of our relationship will require stronger evidence of Ukraine's commitment to comprehensive reform [...].⁴⁶

Despite the even more serious deficits in democracy in **Belarus**, the Alliance's leaders have been remarkably reticent about the problems and let others, such as the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, criticize the autocratic government of Aleksandr Lukashenka. Clearly NATO does not condone the situation in Belarus and Minsk is aware of the critical attitude. Yet both sides have opted for pragmatism and focus on what can be achieved by small steps, without much publicity. Since 1993 Belarus has participated actively in NATO's Science Programme. In 1996 Belarus joined the PfP; under an Individual Partnership Programme, Minsk has gradually expanded the scope of its interaction with NATO. Relations between NATO and Belarus will probably remain at the current low level as long as Lukashenka remains in power and the planned Russia-Belarus union has not been completed.

Relations between NATO and **Moldova**, however, are beginning to accelerate and NATO has not hesitated to express encouragement and provide assistance. Moldova signed the PfP Framework Document on 16 March 1994 and to the limits of the possible has participated in NATO activities. In the early 1990s Moldova was beset by internal strife owing to separatist efforts to uncouple Transnistria from Moldova and the intervention of Russian troops. Though the separatists remain adamant, the situation throughout the country has stabilized somewhat. Governments have changed and Constitutional amendments were adopted in 2000 enabling the country to become a parliamentary democracy. The OSCE and other international organisations are involved in helping Moldova resolve its problems and put pressure on Russia to finish withdrawing its troops. Despite Moldova's

⁴⁶ See <<http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2004/p04-096e.htm>>. The chronology was compiled mostly from the *NATO Handbook*; see <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/hb030401.htm>.

growing Euro-Atlantic orientation and international approach to problem solving, much remains to be done before its relations with NATO can be upgraded. This is implied in the Istanbul Summit Communiqué which reiterates NATO's commitment to partnership with Moldova and encourages it "to make use of Partnership instruments to take forward its aspirations of promoting stability in the region as a Partner of this Alliance."⁴⁷

Regarding **Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia**, the Communiqué sends a mixed signal on the Caucasus. Stating that NATO will "put special focus on engaging with [its] Partners in the strategically important regions of the Caucasus and Central Asia," the Communiqué goes on to "welcome the decision by Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan to develop Individual Partnership Action Plans with NATO. This constitutes a significant step in these countries' efforts to develop closer Partnership relations with the Alliance. We welcome the commitment of the new government of Georgia to reform."⁴⁸ Absent from this enumeration is Armenia. This formulation, however, should not be seen as suggesting that Armenia is strategically unimportant. It simply reflects the different degrees of each country's commitment to partnership with and eventual membership of NATO. After its "Rose Revolution", Georgia announced a Euro-Atlantic orientation and its leaders have worked hard to gain support for Georgia's admission into NATO and the EU. Thus, on 29 October 2004, only a few months after the Istanbul Communiqué, the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPIP) of Georgia was approved by NATO. Azerbaijan, a PfP member since 1994, established in 1997 a Government Commission for Cooperation with NATO and is working toward an Individual Partnership Action Plan. Membership of NATO is not a clearly enunciated goal.⁴⁹ In September 2003 the aspirations for the IPIP suffered as setback due to the resurfacing of long-standing animosities between Azerbaijanis and Armenians. Somewhat paradoxically, Armenia and Azerbaijan seek NATO affiliation because each feels threatened by the other owing to inimical relations in the past and the unresolved conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh although in the NATO context they must cooperate.⁵⁰

Armenia's attitude toward NATO has been ambivalent. Having joined PfP in 1994, Armenia has taken part in many PfP activities. At the same time, Yerevan has tried to heed Moscow's wishes. In November 2002, Defence Minister Serge Sarkisian said that he opposed a hasty decision to raise the issue of Armenia's membership of NATO and added: "While increasing contacts with NATO, Armenia will reinforce Russia's presence in the country by developing favourable conditions for Russian military bases on the republic's territory."⁵¹ A year later Armenia was considering joining the Individual Partnership

⁴⁷ For the Communiqué of 28 June 2004, see <<http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2004/p04-096e.htm>>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ According to Azerbaijan's Ambassador to NATO, Mir-Hamza Efendiyev, "Since regaining its independence integration to the Euro-Atlantic political, security and economic institutes is one of the main foreign policy priorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan. NATO-Azerbaijan Partnership [...] has its particular role in this regard. "Azerbaijan seeks an "integrational partnership and intensified bilateral dialogue with the Alliance [...]. See <<http://www.nato.int/pfp/azerbaijan/homepage.htm>>.

⁵⁰ In September 2004 Azeri officials objected to the participation of Armenian soldiers in NATO's Cooperative Best Effort-2004 military exercise; the exercise, involving altogether about 1000 soldiers from 20 NATO member and partner countries, had to be cancelled. For an analysis of the incident, see Vladimir Socor's article, "Azerbaijan's NATO Aspirations Suffer a Self-Inflicted Setback," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 15 September 2004.

⁵¹ AFP, 27 November 2002.

Action Plan and in 2004 it was planning to appoint an Ambassador specifically to NATO and a military representative. Consequently, if NATO-Armenia relations are to grow, Yerevan has to set a firm course for the future.

Part Three: Conclusion

After NATO and the EU welcomed new members into their fold in spring 2004, there has been an abundance of interest in the consequences of enlargement of both organisations and in new ways of relating to the non-member countries next-door or nearby. The EU published in 2004 its European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy, a sort of hybrid of new and old procedures and mechanisms, while NATO has continued to elaborate its Euro-Atlantic Partnership by including new initiatives and adding new elements to the Partnership for Peace programme. Both the ENP and EAP seek to enhance security for the member states by assisting the neighbouring or partner countries to make wide-ranging changes and reforms so as to broaden the overall area of security. Hence, a couple of suggestions:

- ▶ Since participation in these programmes requires difficult and costly changes from the neighbour/partner, commensurate rewards should be in sight. NATO does not rule out membership for PfP participants; however, the Union, states that participation in the ENP is not to be linked with future membership, a point of view that should be reconsidered.
- ▶ NATO continues to reiterate a desire to work together with other organisations, especially the EU. Possibilities of cooperation on the ENP and EAP should be considered, so as to avoid overlapping – especially in non-military areas – and make the ENP and EAP more effective. Coordination in the further development of both programmes would also be useful.

New members of the EU and NATO have indicated strong interest in both the EAP and the ENP. They wish to contribute to the success of both programmes. Through their contribution, the new members also want to repay, albeit indirectly, for the assistance that they received while preparing for EU and NATO membership. Their principal asset is their experience and expertise in making the transition; utilized properly, this asset could benefit not only the recipient but also the donor since such assistance tends to generate recognition. At the same time, any assistance should be coordinated both with the recipient and the other providers of assistance so as not to weaken the success of the overall endeavour and prevent duplication of effort and wasted resources. Thus, for the new members of EU and NATO these programmes offer both opportunities and challenges on the road to a more secure continent.

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Russia's Policy Towards Europe's "New Neighbours": in Pursuit of Partnership or Domination?

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The European Union has recently launched Europe's Neighbourhood Policy towards the neighbouring countries, which includes the territory of the former Soviet Union. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, hence, have become those post-Soviet countries targeted by this newly established European external strategy. However, these former Soviet republics essentially bring together the interest and influence of several actors - the European Union, Russia and the United States. Russia's interests and activities especially have become an important factor in the prospective developments in the post-Soviet area. The post-Soviet countries, which, apart from the Baltic States, have joined the Commonwealth of Independent States, are considered in Russia as a zone of its strategic interests. As a result, Europe's "new neighbourhood" policy may, in effect, encounter Russia's "near abroad" policy in the region.

Hence, several issues must be raised pertaining to Russia's potential approach towards the prospective "neighbours" of the European Union. First, what is the general character of and major tendencies within Russia-EU relationship and how may Russia's leadership view the involvement of outside actors in the countries of the former Soviet Union? Second, what have been the key priorities and determinants of Russian strategy towards the "near abroad" to date? What are Russia's "near abroad" major policy directions and particular means regarding such countries as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine? Has Russian political leadership been consistent in its policy options concerning those states? This article endeavours to address these issues and eventually explicate the character, patterns and instruments of Russia's policy towards Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine within the wider framework of Russia's foreign policy thinking and making in general, and in the context of its relations with the European Union in particular.

Complexity of Russia's relations with the European Union

Russia's relations with the European Union have remained rather complex and somewhat ambiguous throughout the recent decade. The ambiguity on the Russian side stems from the presence of several trends in Russian foreign policy thinking. Russia's foreign policy has represented throughout the last decade an amalgamation of various and frequently incompatible and contradictory political and economic considerations. The latest conceptual documents, such as the Foreign Policy Concept and Security Concept, both elaborated and accepted in 2000, as well as Vladimir Putin's foreign policy pronouncements and activities, reveal an increasing "economisation" of Russia's foreign policy. In this regard, the major goal of Russian foreign policy apparently becomes the contribution to Russia's domestic economic growth and enhancement of its relative international economic standing. As Sergei Karaganov, the chairman of the influential Council for Foreign and Defence Policy and deputy director of the Institute of Europe at the Russian Academy of Sciences, pointed out on the new priorities of Russia's new Foreign Policy Concept: "The new concept is largely designed to ensure support for Russian economy, Russian businesses, private investments into the economy, and the like. It is more economically directed."¹ Russia's President Vladimir Putin underlined this in an address to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in January 2001, when he indicated that Russia's foreign policy "must enable us to concentrate efforts and resources as far as possible on addressing the social and economic tasks of the state."² The partnership, intensive economic interaction and close links between Russia and the European Union have become an important means in advancing this objective. The European Union has become Russia's major economic partner. The enlarged EU accounts for more than 50% of Russia's trade turnover. The European Union countries are major Russian energy consumers as well as foreign investors in Russia's economy.³ As a result, Russian leadership perceives the European Union as a major global economic powerhouse and important strategic partner of "key significance."⁴

The perceptions of Russian elites, however, simultaneously have been permeated with visions of Russia's "superpower" status in the world.⁵ In this regard, the notion of the political role of the European Union in the global affairs and Russian foreign policy calculations has remained rather perplexing and contradictory. The perceptions among Russian elites have ranged from the EU as a prospective principal strategic partner and

¹ *Segodnya*, 11 July 2000.

² Quoted in Dov Lynch, *Russia faces Europe*, Chaillot Papers of Institute for Security Studies, Paris, No. 60 (2003), 11.

³ "The EU Relations with Russia: Economics and Trade," updated May 2004; available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/russia/intro/eco_trade.htm

⁴ See, *Kontseptsiya vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 2000; printed in *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, No.8 (August 2000); *Medium-term Strategy for Development of Relations between the Russian Federation and the European Union (2000-2010): Russia's response to Common Strategy of the European Union*, 1999; available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/russia/russian_medium_term_strategy/index.htm

⁵ Konstantin Khudoley, "Russia and the European Union: New opportunities, new challenges," in Arkady Moshes, ed., *Rethinking the Respective Strategies of Russia and the European Union*, Special Finnish Institute of International Affairs-Carnegie Moscow Center Report (2003), 10.

ally in the process of pursuing a multi-polar world to the EU as a politically fragmented and irrelevant actor in the international arena. Furthermore, as the European Union institutions and country representatives have continuously expressed certain criticism over the violation of human rights, especially in Chechnya, and raised objections to the restrictions on free media and businesses in Russia, a more conservative and nationalist segment of the Russian political elite increasingly perceives Europe as a potential political rival rather than a partner. The critical attitude of the European Union towards Russia could be strengthened by the accession of a number of East European countries, traditionally revealing reservations and misgivings about Russia's domestic and global aspirations and activities. According to Sergei Karaganov, the criticism over Russia's domestic developments may lead to tensions in Russia-EU relations: "Considering its history and geographical location, Russia should not give up its longing to accept traditional European values. But when someone demands that we immediately accept the values that contemporary Europe has worked out over the last few decades, when it was developing in greenhouse conditions under the shelter of the United States, this is either thoughtlessness or dangerous hypocrisy."⁶ Karaganov, who considers himself a "pro-European", expresses a clear disapproval of such a European approach and anticipates a complicating mutual relationship. The disagreements over the status of and transit to Russia's Kaliningrad region, encircled by the EU member states, may additionally contribute to the misunderstandings between Russia and the European Union. Thus, notwithstanding the intensifying trade relations and institutional networks contributing to the mutual interdependence, the underlying world-views on various issues have remained diverging and sources for competition and tension are present.⁷ Even in the sphere of economics, strong disagreements occasionally appear between Russia and the European Union. For instance, during the Russian-German summit in October 2003, Russian President Vladimir Putin referred to the EU requirements to abandon domestic subsidies for energy resources and divide Gazprom's natural monopoly in order to obtain the Union's support for Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization as "arms twisting." Putin stressed assertively that, "we [Russia] consider this position as 'twisting of arms', but Russia's 'arms' are increasingly stronger. They will not be twisted even by such a powerful partner as European Union."⁸ The size of trade quotas and tariffs could also eventually become a problematical issue in Russian-EU relationship.

In this context, the intention of the enlarged European Union to launch a more active external policy towards the countries of the former Soviet Union receives an ambivalent response from the Russian leadership. The Russian political elite has revealed clear reservations about a more active EU policy, although some experts, such as Dov Lynch, arrived at conclusions that Russia under Putin has been willing to accept the international involvement in the former Soviet Union.⁹ Actually, Lynch himself indicated

⁶ Sergei Karaganov, "The perils of pressuring Russia." *World Security Network*, 27 February 2004; available at: http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/showArticle3.cfm?article_id=9050&topicID=58

⁷ Hiski Haukkala, "A problematic 'strategic partnership'," in Dov Lynch, ed., *EU-Russian security dimensions*, Occasional Papers of Institute for Security Studies, Paris, No. 46 (July 2003), 18.

⁸ Quoted in Alexander Barinov et al., *Chetyre goda s Putinyim* (Moscow: Vremya, 2004), 32.

⁹ Lynch, *Russia faces Europe*, 96.

that the survey of the representatives of the Russian government in late 2002 regarding possible EU involvement in Moldova revealed views ranging from an absolute rejection to a precautionary “maybe.”¹⁰ The survey points to the enduring attached importance for Russian elites to Russia’s influence in the former Soviet countries, which in the Russian political discourse have been conferred the resonant and emotive term of the “near abroad.” Indicatively, the Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Avdeyev clearly demonstrated the continuous presence of cautiousness and concerns on Russia’s side regarding “cultural-religious, economic and demographic expansion by neighbouring states to Russian territory.”¹¹ Thus, an active policy of the European Union towards the post-Soviet countries may be effectively perceived somewhat as an encroachment on Russian national interests in the area, where maintaining its influence would be seen essential in order to remain a global political player.¹²

Evolution of Russia’s approach to the “near abroad”

The term of the “near abroad” was used for first time by Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev in his first official statement after the break up of the Soviet Union published in *Izvestiya* on 2 January 1992. He referred to the neighbouring countries of Russia as, “something that could probably be called the ‘near abroad’.”¹³ It was not surprising that a consensus over the importance of the “near abroad,” which essentially referred to the former Soviet republics, with its strong demographic, linguistic, cultural, political, strategic and economic connotation that resonated powerfully among Russian elites and public, began to emerge as one of the state preferences in the foreign policy domain as early as 1992.¹⁴

Progressively more henceforth, the Russian political elites were referring to the “near abroad” as a “natural sphere of Russian interests and influence” or “national security zone,” in which Russia bore “special responsibilities.”¹⁵ In August 1992 Yeltsin’s foreign policy advisor Andranik Migranian put it plainly, that “Russia should declare to the world

¹⁰ Lynch, *Russia faces Europe*, 89.

¹¹ Quoted in Hiski Haukkala, *A Hole in the Wall? Dimensionalism and the EU’s “New Neighbourhood Policy”*, Working Paper of Finnish Institute of International Affairs, No. 41 (2003), 16.

¹² Hiski Haukkala and Arkady Moshes, *Beyond “Big Bang”: The Challenges of the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy in the East*, Report of Finnish Institute of International Affairs, No. 9 (2004), 19; Yegor Feklitchev, “Russia’s European Policy in the Light of Eastern Enlargement.” *Europe 2020*, 5 February 2004; available at: http://www.europe2020.org/en/section_voisin/050204.htm

¹³ *Izvestiya*, 2 January 1992.

¹⁴ Alvin Z. Rubinstein, “The Transformation of Russian Foreign Policy,” in Karen Dawisha, ed., *The International Dimension of Post-Communist Transitions in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), 45.

¹⁵ Karen Dawisha, “Russian Foreign Policy in the Near Abroad and Beyond,” *Current History*, Vol. 95 (October 1996), 331; Mark Webber, *The International Politics of Russia and the Successor States* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 100.

that the entire geopolitical space of the former USSR is a space of its vital interests.” In order to justify Russia’s legitimate rights in the post-Soviet environment, Migranian and Evgeny Ambartsumov, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Joint Committee on International Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations drew a parallel with the Monroe doctrine of the United States, introduced at the beginning of the 19th century and defining the Western Hemisphere as a zone of U.S. interests.¹⁶ The importance of the “near abroad” in Russia’s foreign policy considerations was further revealed by the Russian official documents and the so-called “Kozyrev doctrine,” whose main idea was that, “countries of the CIS and the Baltics...[constitute] a region where the vital interests of Russia are concentrated... We should not withdraw from those regions which have been the sphere of Russia’s interests for centuries.”¹⁷

Notwithstanding the apparent broad consensus behind the necessity for Russia’s active policy in the post-Soviet area, it remained uncertain throughout the 1990s concerning the means that could and should be resorted to in order to achieve the foreign policy priorities in the “near abroad.” On the one hand, the Russian government and political elites made assertive pronouncements, which sometimes unmistakably were supported by forceful activities, as in cases of Moldova and Georgia, when Russia’s militaries largely took the initiative in their own hands to support regional separatist forces in these countries. On the other hand, the “protection” of the Russian-speaking population was manifested mostly in rhetoric and integration processes within the CIS space remained largely on paper. The concealed reluctance of the Russian political leadership till the very end of the 1990s to facilitate actively the unification of Russia with Belarus exposed an unwillingness on Russia’s side to support the assertive integration rhetoric with a strong political will, substantial expenses and the risk of alienating the Western democracies. The Russia’s “near abroad” policy somewhat became an amalgamation of frequently contradictory pronouncements and stances largely determined by the exigencies of the domestic “political football” rather than consistently followed and implemented foreign policy objective.¹⁸

The “near abroad” or the area of the former Soviet Union has apparently been given revived attention during Vladimir Putin’s presidency, especially after the parliamentary elections in Russia in December 2003. Russia’s parliamentary elections revealed clearly the increasing leaning in Russian society towards the “patriotic” rhetoric and respective political forces. *The Washington Times* pointed out that, “the parliamentary elections, in which strongly nationalist parties were among the big winners, have raised new concerns that Russia under Mr. Putin has embraced a sharp-elbowed new approach to the country’s ‘near abroad’.”¹⁹

¹⁶ *Izvestiya*, 7 August 1992, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 4 August 1992.

¹⁷ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 January 1994.

¹⁸ Indicatively, though somewhat surprisingly, Boris Yeltsin failed even to mention in his memoirs the former Soviet republics, integration of the CIS, a potential union with Belarus or the support for the Russian-speaking populations outside Russia, while writing extensively on Russia’s place in the world and his personal relations with the Western leaders; see, Boris Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000).

¹⁹ *The Washington Times*, 8 February 2004.

The enduring nostalgia among Russian society and elites toward the Soviet Union as a global great power and disappointment of Yeltsin's "westernisation" project have become important domestic factors, contributing to a more pro-active Russian policy towards the neighbouring post-Soviet countries. The somewhat transforming approach of the political leadership was revealed by Putin's announcement during the meeting with his election campaign agents in February 2004 that the break-up of the Soviet Union was a national tragedy of enormous size. Moreover, Vladimir Putin has repeatedly stated the imperative to restore Russia as a global great power. Thus, the increasingly assertive policy pronouncements, adopted by Russia's political leadership, have established a rhetorical framework for a somewhat modified Russia's foreign policy orientation. Putin's "entrapment" in great power rhetoric has expectedly led to the necessity to formulate and implement an assertive policy concerning Russia's alleged "zone of special responsibilities." Putin's apparently growing reliance on the representatives of military and enforcement segments within the political leadership has unequivocally strengthened this tendency.

Russia's "near abroad" policy domains and instruments

Throughout the latest decade, the major directions and issues of Russia's "near abroad" policy, including towards Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, have been predominantly pertaining to the political and military domain, the humanitarian concerns regarding the Russian-speaking population in the neighbouring countries, and economic interaction. In each of these policy areas, Russia's political leadership has had several policy instruments at its disposal for potential exploitation with the aim to maintain or increase Russia's influence in the region. The security concerns and presence of the Russian military, a considerable number of the Russian-speaking population or Russia's citizens in the former Soviet republics, and importance of access to the transit routes for Russia and dependence of many "near abroad" countries, in turn, on the latter's energy supplies generated both enduring interests and substantial leverage for Russia to pursue a pro-active policy in the post-Soviet area.

Russia's security concerns and military presence: peacekeeping and military bases

Russia's security concerns and policy directions have apparently been dominated throughout the 1990s by traditional geopolitical imperatives. The official concepts and doctrines had evidently stressed the importance of geopolitical dictates and Russia's ambition for influence in its former inner empire.²⁰ Although the official rhetoric has

²⁰ Mark Galeotti, *The Age of Anxiety: Security and Politics in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia* (London: Longman, 1995), 4; Jakub M. Godzimirski, *Russian Security Policy Objectives in the Baltic Sea and the Barents Area* (Oslo: Den Norske Atlanterhavskomite, 1998), 4.

been somewhat altered in the early 2000s towards economic priorities, several indications have pinpointed to the continuity and even intensification of the previously identifiable assertive trend in Russian foreign and defence policy thinking and making. One of the major symptoms of Russia's geopolitical approach has been the long-standing reluctance to withdraw the Russian military from the "near abroad" countries. Russia has retained a considerable military presence in the former Soviet republics, especially Moldova and Georgia, either directly in terms of military bases or under the pretext of peacekeeping in the region. According to the OSCE Istanbul decisions in 1999, repeated in 2002, Russia was required to withdraw unconditionally its personnel as well as arms and equipment stockpiles from Moldova and Georgia. Although the requirements were reiterated in the ensuing years, Russia managed to overlook these international stipulations and hold its troops, evidently to exploit the "military card" in both interstate and intrastate relations with and within these countries.

The factor of the long-term Russian military presence has been vital in Moldova's fragmentation and lingering Russia's influence in the region. After the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russia's 14th Army, stationed in the country, apparently encouraged and supported the breakaway Transdnistria region in its conflict with Moldova's central authorities in 1992 by the transfer of its personnel and weaponry to the region's pro-Russian paramilitaries. Afterwards, in accordance with the armistice agreement, Russia retained its military presence in the country in the form of peacekeeping forces and revealed a continuous reluctance to withdraw from Moldova.²¹ On 17 November 1995 the Duma of the Russian Federation declared Transdnistria a "zone of special strategic interest for Russia." In the early 2000s, according to the Russian military, Russia's peacekeeping forces in Moldova under the name of the Operational Group of Russian Forces, effectively successor of Russia's 14th Army, consisted of 1,300 soldiers. Moreover, massive Russian arms and equipment stocks remained located in the Transdnistria region. In July 2004, the European Court for Human Rights plainly concluded that, "the Russian authorities contributed both militarily and politically to the creation of a separatist regime in Transdnistria, part of the territory of Moldova. Russia continued to provide military, political and economic support to the separatist regime, thus enabling it to survive [and] strengthening it... The Russian army [is] still stationed in Moldovan territory, in breach of the undertakings to withdraw [it] completely, given by Russia at the OSCE summits in 1999 and 2002... Transdnistria remained under the effective authority, or at the very least under the decisive influence of Russia, and survived by virtue of the military, economic, financial, and political support that Russia gave it."²²

Notwithstanding the international criticism and OSCE requirements for the troop and military equipment withdrawal, the Russian leadership has attempted to ensure a permanent Russian military presence in Moldova. Concurrently, the Russian leadership

²¹ Lynch, *Russia faces Europe*, 98.

²² European Court of Human Rights, *Case of Ilascu and others v. Moldova and Russia* (application No.48787/99).

demonstrated an inclination to restrain a potential involvement of the external actors, such as the European Union, as an active international presence could reduce, to a large extent, Russia's influence in Transnistria, in particular and Moldova, in general. In 2003, the European Union revealed its readiness to launch a more pro-active policy in an attempt to achieve a settlement in Moldova. Accordingly, the Wider Europe Communication declared, that "The EU should take a more active role to facilitate settlement of the disputes over Transnistria... Greater EU involvement in crisis management in response to specific regional threats would be a tangible demonstration of the EU's willingness to assume a greater share of the burden of conflict resolution in the neighbouring countries. Once settlement has been reached, EU civil and crisis management capabilities could also be engaged in post-conflict internal security arrangements."²³ This pinpoints to an increasing awareness and interest of the leaders of the European Union to make a contribution to the resolution of political predicament near its prospective borders.

In order to maintain the political initiative and maintain its military contingent the Russian government proposed a settlement to the enduring impasse in Moldova.²⁴ Russia has reached an agreement with the OSCE in support for the so-called "federalization" project. Russia's backed "federalization" settlement would envisage Moldova becoming a federative republic with substantial rights provided to the Transnistria region as a "state-territorial" unit. Such a settlement could prospectively increase Russia's direct influence on Moldova's political decision-making process as "federalization" would provide a political voice for pro-Russia's Transnistrian elite and internal stability would be guaranteed by Russia's military presence in the country.²⁵ In November 2003 both the Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin and Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov agreed to sign the Memorandum on Federal State of Moldova. Allegedly, however, following the suggestions from American diplomatic representatives, Voronin postponed the signature of the document and prolonged the consultations on the principles of the prospective settlement. Moldova's political conundrum remains to be solved yet, and Russia demonstrates undoubtedly determination to play its role there.

Russia has also exploited the "military card" in Georgia. Apparently Russia supported Abkhaz separatists during the 1992-1993 military conflict, which resulted in de facto independence of Abkhazia. Russia maintains a military base in the city of Gudauta in Abkhazia and also provides around 3,000 Russian troops, stationed in Abkhazia as a part of a peacekeeping force formally provided by the Commonwealth of Independent States. Moreover, Russia's law enforcement units maintain control over the transit corridor

²³ Communication from Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, *Wider Europe-Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*, 11 March 2003; available at: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf

²⁴ Nicu Popescu, "Moldova's European Policy Options," *Eurojournal.org*, February 2004; available at eurojournal.org/files/popescu2.pdf

²⁵ More in detail on "federalization" of Moldova as Russia's attempt to strengthen its influence in the country, see, Vladimir Socor, "Russian-led, OSCE-mandated peacekeeping: a precedent on its way in Moldova?" Institute for Advanced Strategic & Political Studies Policy Briefings *Geostrategic Perspectives on Eurasia*, No. 58 (5 April 2004).

from South Ossetia in Georgia to North Ossetia in Russia. The Georgian authorities already under the leadership of Eduard Shevardnadze demonstrated on various occasions a determination to remove the Russian military presence in the country, but only insignificant progress was achieved and relations between Georgia and Russia remained complicated.

The new President of Georgia, Mikhail Saakashvili, has demonstrated a strong determination to ensure the territorial integrity of Georgia and achieve the withdrawal of Russian military units from the country. These policy objectives, however, have encountered a certain reluctance, not to say resistance, from Russia's side. Although Russia demonstrated self-restraint in the Adjarian conflict during the tensions in the spring of 2004, a much more assertive stance was taken by Russia's political and, especially, military leadership in the escalating conflict between Georgian and South Ossetian authorities in the summer 2004. In May 2004, during the assembly of the influential Russia's Foreign and Defence Policy Council, one of the participants plainly revealed the apparently widely shared view on the necessity for Russia to implement an active and assertive policy in the region: "NATO will quietly swallow Georgia and other post-Soviet countries if Russia does not "eat" them first. And this is so, despite Georgia being a great deal less Western than Russian."²⁶ After the Georgian leadership showed its determination to renew control over the country's breakaway region, the Russian military clearly expressed their support for the South Ossetian authorities. The representatives of the Russian military establishment, including the Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov, advocated the exploitation of Russia's military presence in the region to restrain Georgian "encroachment" on Ossetian autonomy. Characteristically, in July 2004, the pro-Russian Transnistrian leadership publicly promised and eventually provided volunteers and arms to South Ossetian authorities in order to support this break-away Georgian region against Georgia.

The Russian-speaking population and Russian citizens

The status of the Russian-speaking population in the former Soviet republics became one of the most resonant and sensitive concerns for Russian society and political elite throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. The term Russian-speaking population has been conventionally applied to the people who had indicated the Russian language as their first language of communication. Russia termed the Russian-speaking population in the "near abroad" countries as its "compatriots" (*sootchestvenniki*), who, according to the 1997 unpublished Concept of Russian Policy towards Compatriots, were defined as "individuals living abroad who are historically, culturally and spiritually linked to Russia, and who wish to preserve these links, irrespective of their civic or ethnic affiliation."

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, an estimated 25 million ethnic Russians remained beyond the borders of the Russian Federation in the Baltic and newly independent states.

²⁶ *Rosbalt News*, 4 May 2004.

The status of these ethnic Russians and the Russian-speaking population, in general, in the “near abroad” acquired a strong resonance within the Russian public. Opinion polls in Russia increasingly revealed a hardening attitude towards placing the issue of Russian-speaking communities as a top priority of Russia’s foreign policy. For instance, results of one of these public polls in the 1990s indicated that between two thirds and three fourths of respondents favoured re-unification with those territories in the adjoining countries where ethnic Russians constituted a majority.²⁷

The “protection of compatriots” expectedly developed into one of the major, if not central, elements of Russia’s “near abroad” policy. Hence, due to its public sentiment, the concerns about and proposed policies towards the Russian-speaking population in the post-Soviet countries eventually began to occupy an important place in domestic political power struggles during the 1990s. President Boris Yeltsin in the context of growing domestic economic and political tensions repeatedly borrowed from and resorted to the rhetoric of his opponents, primarily communists, in order to deprive them of the means to utilize this emotive issue for gaining further political support. The Military Doctrine, adopted in November 1993, indicated that Russia would reserve the right to use military force if its military facilities located abroad attacked, military blocs harmful to Russian security interests expanded or the rights of Russian citizens in other countries were violated.²⁸ This document outlined the general tone of the prospective Russian stances and pronouncements regarding the Russian-speaking population in the “near abroad” throughout Yeltsin’s presidency.

The necessity to “protect compatriots” has also been repeatedly expressed during the presidency of Vladimir Putin. Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister Eleonora Mitrofanova, who has been given responsibility for the issues of protecting the rights of Russians abroad underlined that, “when analysing our compatriots’ situation, we take into account the Russian community’s history, the age of democracy in the country and the opinions of the Russians themselves. In this connection, we believe that the situation in the post-Soviet space, where Russian roots have at least a century-long history, is more difficult than it is in other foreign countries... Russians have various problems regarding their rights...”²⁹ She stressed that the situation with the rights of Russian-speaking population in the “near abroad” ranged from favourable, as in Belarus, to rather unfavourable, such as in Latvia and Estonia as well as other countries of the former Soviet Union.

Without downplaying the validity of the Russian motivation to support the Russian speaking-population in the CIS and Baltic countries given the lack of practical assistance, the assertive rhetoric seemed to be more underlining the instrumentality of the issue rather than genuine concerns and a willingness to improve the situation of the allegedly

²⁷ Elena Jurado, *Russian ‘Homeland Nationalism’ and the Baltic States: Explaining Russia’s Policy towards the Diaspora 1991-1997*; unpublished Master Thesis, Oxford University, 1998, 98.

²⁸ *Voennaya doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 1993; printed in *Rossiiskiy Vesti*, 18 November 1993.

²⁹ *Interfax*, 31 December 2003.

discriminated Russian-speaking population, Russian citizens or Russian language. This issue apparently could be occasionally utilized to distract public attention from domestic problems, obtain economic or political concessions or pressurize internationally the governments of the respective countries. The “compatriots card” has also been evoked in Russia’s interaction with Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia.

Although the conflict in Moldova has been principally understood in terms of a clash of elites rather than a communal confrontation, the ethnic component has been unequivocally present and politically relevant in the intrastate and interstate relations.³⁰ The authorities of the breakaway Transdnistria region, controlled by the Russian-speaking elites, ensured a total domination of the Russian language in the public domain despite the fact that ethnic Russians and Ukrainians comprised slightly more than half of the Transdnistria’s 650,000 population. Indicatively, in July 2004, Transdnistrian authorities issued a decree leading to the closure of the last remaining Latin-script Moldovan schools. The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Rolf Ekeus described the situation as “linguistic cleansing.”³¹ In this context, Russia’s continuous support for the Transdnistrian authorities and the recent “federalization” project could have been interpreted as a means to strengthen the positions of the Russian-speaking community in Moldova and eventually Russia’s influence in the internal affairs of this country.

In Georgia, the leaders of all three breakaway regions, Adjara, South Ossetia and Abkhazia affiliated themselves with Russia. In November 2003, during the “Rose Revolution” in Tbilisi, South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoyev publicly allied himself with Russia and reiterated the previously declared interest in making the region part of the Russian Federation. Although Russia’s Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov declared that Russia recognized the territorial integrity of Georgia, the Russian political and, especially, military leadership has expressed on various occasions their support for Russian citizens in Ossetia and Abkhazia. This was especially demonstrated during the growing tension between South Ossetian and Georgian authorities in 2004.

After the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia and Ukraine wrangled over the division of the Black Sea fleet, payment of gas debts, and especially the rights of Crimea’s ethnic Russian majority. The alleged humanitarian concerns of the Russian political elites have been closely intermingled with territorial claims against Ukraine regarding the predominantly Russian language dominated Crimea. As early as 1992, the Russian Supreme Soviet resolution demanded a review of the constitutionality of the 1954 decision to transfer Crimea to Ukraine followed by another resolution declaring the transfer as illegal. Later, Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov openly claimed Russia’s rights to the Crimean port of Sevastopol.³² The urgency and tensions around the status

³⁰ Lynch, *Russia faces Europe*, 87-88.

³¹ Vladimir Socor, “And, Finally, ‘Linguistic Cleansing’: Latin Script Banned in a European Land” *The Wall Street Journal*, August 13-16, 2004.

³² Mette Skak, *Back in the USSR*, Working Paper of Danish Institute of International Affairs, No. 7 (2000), 4.

of the Russian-speaking population in Crimea as well as territorial issues decreased by the early 2000s in the context of improving Russian-Ukrainian relations. Nevertheless, the presence of diverging views was clearly revealed in October 2003 when Russian workers began the construction of a dam in the legally disputed Tuzla island, which was identified by some Russian officials as a part of what now is the Russian mainland. The ensuing tension between Russia and Ukraine led the popular opposition politician and presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko to conclude that “We have hit the lowest level of our relations... Tuzla symbolizes a fundamental crisis in our relations. We have never discussed so actively the possibility of an armed conflict even when we were dividing the Black Sea fleet.”³³

Economic interests and statecraft: Russia’s gas and oil diplomacy

Economic priorities, considerations and means represent an integral and important part of Russia’s “near abroad” policy. Among various economic interests, especially the business orientations and activities of the energy complex have become a key factor in determining Russia’s geo-economic concerns and objectives. As the energy sector accounts for a considerable proportion of Russia’s industrial production output and gross domestic product, and generates extensive and vital budgetary and foreign currency revenues, the Russian government has been supportive of the economic concerns of the energy complex. Russia, if necessary, has applied political measures to achieve its economic interests. Concomitantly, the Russian political leadership has readily exploited the gas and oil leverage through “gas and oil diplomacy” to advance political goals in the former Soviet republics.

Although the economic motivation apparently has not become a primary determinant of Russia’s relations with Moldova and Georgia, several aspects must have influenced Russia’s considerations and policy towards these countries. Russia has economic interests in Moldova as Russia’s gas pipelines to Europe pass through the country, including its breakaway region of Transdnistria. At the same time, Russia possesses several economic levers at its disposal to influence Moldova’s economic and political decisions. Russia accounts for around 40 percent of Moldova’s exports, as well as a considerable share of investments in the country. Moldova is heavily dependent on Russian energy supplies and has accumulated a substantial debt to Russia. Moldova’s lack of own resources and dependence on external, especially Russian, energy imports was clearly revealed during the winter energy crisis in 2001 after Russia temporarily suspended gas supplies. Moreover, Moldova’s only energy plant, vital to the country’s economy, is located in the pro-Russian Transdnistrian region, which provides an indirect economic leverage to Russia in political dealings with the Moldovan central authorities.³⁴

³³ Reuters, 23 October 2003.

³⁴ Ella Akerman, *Implications of Russia’s foreign and security policy on Moldova*, publication of the Institute for Public Policy, Chisinau (February 2002), 2-3; available at: www.ipp.md/publications/Implications_Russia_policy.doc

The issues of oil transit in the Caucasus region affect Russia’s economic and political stances concerning Georgia. The political and financial support of the United States was instrumental for the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, which was designed to pump Caspian oil to Turkey through Georgia bypassing Russia. The construction of the new pipeline was congruent with Georgia’s aspirations to benefit from its geographical location as a Caspian oil and gas transit route. The project, however, has directly challenged Russia’s ambition to maintain its influence in transshipment of oil in the region.³⁵ In response, the Russian government has carried out both political and economic manoeuvres regarding the countries of the Caucasus and Caspian region, including Georgia. Russia effectively reduced the advantages and competitiveness of the Baku- Tbilisi- Ceyhan route by constructing an alternative pipeline system stretching from the Caspian basin to Russia’s Black Sea ports and obtaining the vitally important transit rights of Kazakh oil.³⁶

Economics has become a key factor in Russia’s relations with Ukraine. Generally, Russia’s relations with Ukraine have been among the most complex and controversial. The disputes on the removal of nuclear weapons from Ukraine, the division of the Black Sea Fleet and, especially the enduring and contentious issue of Crimea have politically complicated Russian-Ukrainian interstate relations. Throughout the 1990s, Russian political elites either supported or contemplated exploiting the economic levers and pressure in Russia’s relations with Ukraine.³⁷ A liberal Russian politician Boris Nemtsov revealed the sentiment of Russia’s political elite for Crimea and inclination to support economic means to achieve political ends by commenting in 1997 on the acquisitions of property by Russian businessmen in Sevastopol: “Historical justice should be restored by capitalist methods.”³⁸

Russia, however, has avoided exploiting a potentially more powerful “gas and oil diplomacy” despite the fact that Ukraine has been almost entirely dependent on deliveries of Russia’s energy resources, and accumulated a substantial debt, above all, to Gazprom.³⁹ Russia’s self-restraint effectively could be explained by Ukraine’s enormous strategic importance to Gazprom, and eventually Russia, as it has provided the transit corridors and access to pipelines, through which Russia exports its gas and oil to the Western European countries. This has led to recognition of the existing mutual economic interdependence between Russia and Ukraine on both sides. Hence, although occasionally Gazprom has supported applying certain political and economic pressure on Ukraine in

³⁵ Jean-Christophe Peuch, “Russian Interference in the Caspian Sea Region: Diplomacy Adrift,” in David Lane, ed., *The Political Economy of Russian Oil* (Lanham: Rowman& Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 189-212; Vladimir Socor, “Oil, Energy, and Military Conflict: The South Caucasus Region,” in Atis Lejins, ed., *Russian Foreign and Domestic Policies: in Harmony or at Odds?* (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2003), 52-60.

³⁶ Rosbalt News, 10 January 2004.

³⁷ Daniel Drezner, “Allies, Adversaries, and Economic Coercion: Russian Foreign Economic Policy Since 1991,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Spring 1997), 96-105.

³⁸ *Kommersant-Daily*, 18 February 1997.

³⁹ For instance, already by the second half of the 1990s, Ukraine owed to Gazprom for gas deliveries \$1.1 billion, whereas Moldova \$333 million and Belarus \$910 million; see, Peter Rutland, “Oil, Politics, and Foreign Policy,” in David Lane, ed., *The Political Economy of Russian Oil* (Lanham: Rowman& Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 166.

order to facilitate the payment of gas deliveries and to reduce the constant gas “leakage” from pipelines running through the Ukrainian territory, in general, an intense political confrontation would have not been in Gazprom’s interests as it could complicate gas shipments to Europe. The Russian gas giant’s concerns throughout the 1990s and early 2000s have unmistakably contributed to, as Russian expert Yakov Pappé has concluded, the establishment of Russia’s “Kozyrevian” rather than “Primakovian” foreign policy towards Ukraine.⁴⁰

The Russian political elite has contemplated potential solutions to the “Ukrainian dilemma.” The eventual Russian-Belorussian integration had been expected to provide an alternative, less politically volatile and lower-cost transit route of Russian gas to Europe thereby reducing Russia’s dependence on Ukraine. Gazprom, which has been generally supportive of integrationist processes with Belarus, launched already in 1996 construction of a new pipeline system carrying gas from the Yamal fields to Western Europe through the territories of Belarus and Poland bypassing Ukraine.⁴¹ Notwithstanding the official rhetoric, however, integration with Belarus would impose considerable economic costs on Russia and, as a result, support for it has not been unequivocal. Moreover, the new pipeline system would not dramatically alter Russia’s reliance on access to Ukrainian gas pipeline systems.

As a result, Russia’s political elite has attempted a kind of “velvet integration” with Ukraine. In the process, Russia has demonstrated cautiousness by exploiting the “carrot” rather than the “stick” policy, in other words, advancing positive initiatives for closer integration, such as restructuring the Ukrainian energy debt, an agreement on the Common Economic Area and joint management of the pipeline systems instead of assertive pressure. Russia’s transforming approach was signalled by the ratification of the treaty on friendship in 1999 and eventual appointment of the former long-standing Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin as not only Russia’s Ambassador to Ukraine, but, also Special Presidential Envoy for the Development of Russian-Ukrainian Trade and Economic Ties. The appointment of Chernomyrdin signified the political and economic importance of Ukraine for Russia and willingness to facilitate closer mutual relations.⁴²

Russia’s subtler policy regarding Ukraine has apparently proved to be efficient. Alongside political rapprochement, Russia has expanded its economic influence in the country. By 2003, Russian companies increasingly dominated Ukraine’s oil refining complex, as well as other sectors of the country’s industry. More importantly, Russia has established a foothold in Ukraine’s transit sector.⁴³ It is indicative that by July 2004, the semi-private

⁴⁰ Yakov Pappé, “Neftianaya i gazovaya diplomatiya Rossii.” *Pro et Contra*, Vol. 2 (Summer 1997); available at: <http://pubs.carnegie.ru/p&c/Vol2-1997/3/04pappe.asp>

⁴¹ Sergei Medvedev, ed. *Business Elites and Russia’s European Policy* (Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2000), 19; Rutland, “Oil, Politics, and Foreign Policy,” 169.

⁴² Arkady Moshes, *Ukraine in tomorrow’s Europe*, Report of Finnish Institute of International Affairs, No. 4 (2003), 19.

⁴³ Moshes, *Ukraine in tomorrow’s Europe*, 22-23.

company ITERA was replaced in the Ukrainian transit domain by RusUkrEnergoprom, a Gazprom dominated joint company, which was established to manage Turkmen gas deliveries via Russia and Ukraine. On July 5, 2004 the Ukrainian government also authorized the reverse use of the Odessa-Brody pipeline, which was finalized later in July during the meeting between the Russian and Ukrainian Presidents in Yalta. These events have demonstrated both the continuous importance of Ukrainian gas and oil pipeline transit route for Russia and increasing Russian influence on this strategically important transit corridor.⁴⁴

Concluding remarks: Russia’s several foreign policies

The Russian President Vladimir Putin has aspired to consolidate and centralize Russian foreign policy similarly to the domestic decision-making environment and process. Hence, the President and the government have been increasingly playing a decisive role in determining the aggregation of political and economic interests and directing those interests along the general domestic and foreign policy priorities. As a result, an apparent consensus has been reached regarding Russia’s foreign policy objectives, formed on the precepts of, which could be dubbed, an “economised pragmatic nationalism.” The pragmatic nationalism as an ideological trend in Russian foreign policy thinking appeared after the break-up of the Soviet Union and has apparently gradually acquired a dominating position among the Russian political establishment. Generally, the pragmatic nationalism distinguishes Russia from the West in terms of location, culture and identity, making it as a bridge between Western and Eastern civilizations. Accordingly, the pragmatic nationalists have advocated considerably more balanced, and if necessary competitive, relations with the Western countries, including the European Union. Anti-Western stances and confrontation should be avoided, provided Russia’s national interests were not infringed, especially in the former Soviet republics.⁴⁵ The current policy of prioritising economic considerations and engaging in interaction with the Western powers, in general, and the European Union, in particular, does not preclude a more assertive geopolitical policy in the future. Although seemingly Russia’s geo-political aspirations have been supplemented, if not superseded, by exigencies of geo-economics, it is not excluded that “economised” foreign policy actually is a prelude to a more geopolitically oriented foreign policy course. The currently “economised” foreign policy could become a means in the longer term for an assertive position in the pursued multi-polar international system and increased influence in the “near abroad” countries. This assessment of the prospective scenario for the development of Russian foreign policy course is far from being definite,

⁴⁴ Vladimir Socor, “New Gas Trader to Boost Turkmenistan-Ukraine Transit,” *The Jamestown Foundation’s Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 1, Issue 64 (2 August 2004).

⁴⁵ Robert Donaldson and Joseph L. Noguee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 114.

yet there are some illustrations for such assumptions, including Russia's evolving policy towards Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Even though Russia has applied somewhat various means to those countries, one may arrive at the conclusion that the implemented policies were motivated and shaped by the political priority of maintaining Russia's influence in the "near abroad."

Having surveyed the general direction of Russian foreign policy in its formation stage some analytical caveats, however, are in order. The consensus in and consolidation of Russian foreign policy thinking and making are not as obvious and unequivocal as it may seem at a cursory glance. Russia's policy, including towards the European Union and its "new neighbours," has been rather fragmented, ambiguous and contradictory. The dual character of Russia's approach to the European Union has been demonstrated on various occasions. Regarding the countries of the "near abroad," there has been a continuous wavering and vacillation between unilateralism and multilateralism, political and economic priorities and means, rhetorical assertiveness and indifference. Hence, in contrast to Putin's domestic policies, Russia's foreign policy generally has remained, to a large extent, reactive, inconsistent and situational. In effect, Russia pursues several foreign policies concurrently. In Moldova, Russia has acted simultaneously as an assertive unilateral power pursuing its geopolitical interests and a multilateral conflict broker willing to accept the involvement of outside actors. With respect to Georgia, Russia demonstrated an assertive approach during the standoff between the Georgian and South Ossetian authorities, whereas it apparently maintained self-restraint and played a mediating role during the conflict in Adjara. Moreover, in 2002, Russia also remained rather undemonstrative when the United States launched a Train and Equip programme to upgrade Georgian military forces in the framework of the project which could have been seen as an expansion of the presence of the United States in the region, historically considered Russia's zone of national interests. On the other hand, Russia's increasingly subtle and "economised" policy towards Ukraine was somewhat abruptly interrupted by the Russian-stirred vociferous territorial dispute over Tuzla. The Russian approach to Belarus has also revealed incoherence and contradictory tendencies. Instead of patiently promoting the integration of Belarus with Russia, posited as one of the major declared foreign policy objectives, the Russian government's approach not infrequently has vacillated between political indifference and rather confrontational gestures, such as temporary suspension of gas deliveries.

It is worth recollecting here the incisive comment of Henry Kissinger, one of the most influential foreign policy decision-makers and insiders in the U.S. government in the 1970s, on the ostensibly harmonized and coherent Soviet foreign policy at the time: "It is always tempting to arrange diverse Soviet moves into a grand design. The more esoteric brands of Kremlinology often purport to see each and every move as part of a carefully orchestrated score in which events inexorably move to the grand finale. Experience has shown that this has rarely been the case."⁴⁶ What is then the explanation of the

⁴⁶ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1979), 161-162.

incoherence of Russian foreign policy or, effectively, the existence of several foreign policies, including towards the "near abroad" countries? One of the major factors for the fragmentation of the Russian foreign policy making is a continuous "pulling and hauling" between various political, institutional and economic interest groups within and around the political leadership of Russia, or, borrowing the description shrewdly coined by Winston Churchill - a fight of "bulldogs under a carpet."

Russia's military have traditionally demonstrated and maintained geopolitical thinking, and assertive and frequently confrontational stances. As the recent developments pertaining to Moldova and Georgia have indicated, Russia's military leadership has been reluctant to withdraw Russian armed forces from these countries. This reluctance is apparently facilitated by the ambition to retain Russia's influence in the "near abroad" and considerations to exploit the military presence in order to pressurize politically Moldova and Georgia, and consequently strengthen Russia's positions there. The Russian military evidently has become the driving force behind Russia's assertive approach.⁴⁷ Moreover, after the recent parliamentary elections, the so-called "patriotic" parties, especially *Rodina*, have made this approach considerably more vocal and stronger in the Russian foreign policy discourse.

Russian diplomatic representatives and, especially, export-oriented business groups stand on the other side of the spectrum of political and economic actors in Russia's foreign policy process. Large corporations have unequivocally contributed to the formation of Russia's foreign policy priorities and character. Foreign policy interests and orientations of the business elite have generally supported the non-confrontational position of Russia, the post-Soviet area included. Particularly, the representatives of the Russia's export-oriented energy sector have been more prone to and interested in political and economic cooperation rather than confrontation with the major consumers in the West and countries providing transit corridors. As Michael McFaul had specified some years ago, "...the political and economic winners in Russia's transition are the very groups that would not benefit from war."⁴⁸ Although Putin has substantially limited the "oligarchic" influences on the domestic level, the gradual economisation of Russia's foreign policy indirectly has made the interests of the large economic groupings important. The political leadership's aspiration to elevate Russia's international standing and prestige has been accompanied by a growing awareness that it can be reached by economic development, which largely depends on business expansion and efficiency.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ More on the Russian military sector and its contributions to foreign policy, see, Mark Galeotti, "The 'Power Ministries' and Russian Foreign Policy," in Jakub Godzimirski, ed., *New and Old Actors in Russian Foreign Policy* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2000), 153-170; Robert Nurick, "Reform and the Russian Military/Security Sector," in Atis Lejns, ed., *Russian Foreign and Domestic Policies: in Harmony or at Odds?* (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2003), 64-70.

⁴⁸ Michael McFaul, "A Precarious Peace. Domestic Politics in the Making of Russian Foreign Policy," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Winter 1997/98), 5-35.

⁴⁹ More on business groups in Russian foreign policy, see, Medvedev, *Business Elites*; Yuriy Fyodorov, "Russian New Industrialists and Foreign Policy," in Jakub Godzimirski, ed., *New and Old Actors in Russian Foreign Policy* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2000), 205-220.

Which trend in Russian foreign policy becomes predominant regarding the post-Soviet countries depends not only on Russia's domestic developments and results of political "pulling and hauling," but also on the position of the United States and, especially, the European Union towards its "new neighbours." To date, the policies of the Western countries have not been unequivocal and on various occasions revealed ambiguity and reluctance on their part for active participation in the post-Soviet countries causing some disappointment there. Last, but not least, internal developments within Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have also become an important factor in determining future Russian foreign policy. Thus, the Ukrainian presidential elections and subsequent position with regard to the country's strategic relations with the United States and European Union could affect considerably the character of Russia's future policy towards Ukraine in particular, and Europe's "new neighbours" in general.

How Domestic Political Problems in Belarus Affect Foreign Policy Choices Between Russia and Europe

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Background

One of the key problems, which Belarus faces in its development, is determining the country's place and role in the world. In terms of geopolitics, the specific thing about Belarus is that it is located at a place where the interests of several major international policy players coincide - the United States, the European Union, as well as the Russian Federation all have interests there. Belarus now has a new geopolitical condition, one that is based on its decision to move down a non-democratic path of development, with the threat of personified authoritarianism. This situation creates more in the way of questions than answers.

Given that this is so, there are several major issues that are of particular importance. What is Belarus, and what is its role in the rest of the world? It is clear that in the search for identity, a vision of the future cannot be presented from above or from the outside, because these ideas must emerge from in-depth interests and from the merger of a variety of factors and trends. One factor in the emergence of a country's foreign policy and its geopolitical choices is the domestic political situation, which prevails.

This study will review three possible geopolitical choices for Belarus - the Western route, closer integration with Russia, or a fairly peculiar route of neutrality. The aim here is not only to look at these geopolitical options, but also to analyse the factors which shape foreign policy conceptions, looking at the kinds of conceptions that they are and seeking to integrate the influence of domestic political factors with the specifics of establishing external relations. Foreign policy is not an autonomous segment of a country's politics, it is always linked to domestic politics, too. In the case of Belarus, domestic politics have done everything to determine the country's place and role in the world and to arouse reaction from other countries. Domestic factors such as the institutional structure of the

state, the existence or absence of a civil society, the level of organisations and movements in opposition - these are factors which inevitably help in determining a country's role in international politics.

The image of Belarus is not a flattering one - human rights violations, disappearance of individuals, splits in the opposition, the weakness of political parties, etc. The country's political system is unstable, there is the possibility of institutional conflicts, and there is the threat of authoritarianism. These factors have created obstacles in relations with the West and the East alike. The referendum, which was held in Belarus in 2004, provided yet, another foreign policy challenge for Europe, the United States and Russia. If one seeks to apply the concept of the Western route in analysing Belarus, then one must ask whether it could ever be that a country in which the civil society is entirely absent or at best is weakly developed, in which human rights violations have been noted and in which the opposition is poorly developed indeed, could become a part of Europe. One must also ask whether in its desire to intensify its integration with Belarus, Russia is prepared to close its eyes to Minsk's domestic political problems and to stand up with its neighbour against the West.

The hypothesis for this study is this: Domestic political factors such as the insufficient development of the institutions of the civil society, the absence of a consolidated opposition, and the concentration of political power in the hands of the president (as dictated by the country's presidential-parliamentary institutional system and by political practice), significantly hinder the ability of Belarus to establish constructive and mutually advantageous relations not only with the countries of the West, but also with the Russian Federation.

1. The foreign policy choice for Belarus: The West, Russia or the path of neutrality?

1.1. Belarus from the perspective of the West

The end of the 20th century was marked by the changes in international politics, which occurred after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The counties, which emerged from the post-Soviet rubble, were forced to choose their future path of development and to find a place in international politics. The Baltic States, which are neighbours of Belarus and which re-established their statehood, chose the model of democratic development and the market economy.

Belarus chose a different development model, one, which preserved certain elements of the Soviet system. As has been noted by numerous commentators, Belarus has preserved the "Soviet spirit". This is evident in the city centre of Minsk, where there are still monuments to Lenin and Dzerzhinski. Belarus still has the KGB, and its name has not been changed since Soviet times. The state regularly organises mandatory group work sessions on Saturdays that are known as *subbotnyiki*, and Western investments and

companies are few and far between in Belarus. In Western thought, Belarus is seen as a country which has a deficit of democracy, human rights and market values, but also as one which has a border with the European Union and NATO.

Collaboration between Belarus and the European Union began shortly after Belarus declared its independence. A partnership and co-operation agreement was signed on March 6, 1995, setting out the main directions of interaction between Belarus and the EU. Goals which were stated in the agreement included the establishment of an institutional structure for political dialogue which helps in developing political relations among the two sides; mutually advantageous trade and investments, as well as harmonic economic relations between the two parties so as to promote stable economic development; ensuring stable foundations for legislative, economic, social, financial, scientific, technical and cultural co-operation; and support from the European Union for the Belarusian Republic in the strengthening of democracy, in economic development and in the transfer toward a market economy. The agreement, however, was not ratified by several EU member states, and on March 26, 1996, a temporary agreement on trade was signed instead. It never took effect either.

After a 1996 referendum on constitutional reforms which European countries declared to be unlawful, the European Council, on September 15, 1997, approved a statement on Belarus, which resulted in, reduced political dialogue between the two sides. Economic co-operation was narrowed across the board and interrupted altogether in some cases because of economic sanctions that had been instituted.

Another opportunity to promote dialogue between Belarus and the EU and to regulate the relationship appeared when the OSCE opened an office in Belarus and reinstated the authority of the Belarusian National Council in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The referendum on October 17, 2004, however, created a very serious obstacle against any continuation in that dialogue.

All of this suggests that the dialogue between the European Union and Belarus is cyclical in nature. The EU is ready to co-operate, but the situation changes constantly because of domestic political factors in Belarus. What are the main problems there? People usually list a whole range of shortcomings, but perhaps the most successful characterisation of the political regime in Belarus was produced by the political scientist Viktor Charnau, who defined the long-term strategic goals, which determine the nature of the Belarusian political regime:

- To consolidate the power of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka and to extend his term in office as long as possible;
- To restore, modify and preserve the primary elements of the Soviet system;
- To expand influence in controlling the civil society;
- To expand influence in relations with "our brethren in Russia", rich with natural resources, with an eye of perhaps taking over the "throne" in Moscow sometime in the future.¹

¹ Vainiene, R., Krolikowska, E., Ptoskonka, J. and V. Romanov (eds.). Belarus: Reform Scenarios. Warsaw: Stefan Batory Foundation (2003), p. 26.

Other serious problems to which people make reference include human rights violations and the weakly developed market economy in Belarus. One may ask what would be the best way of optimising the domestic political situation in Belarus and the country's relationship with the European Union. Western values will be disseminated in the country not if Belarus is isolated, but rather if other countries work together with it. The future of Belarus depends in several respects on the way in which the country's society develops, on the way in which people come to understand their interests and priorities. This is a particularly important issue, because one of the causes for domestic and foreign policy problems in Belarus is rooted in psychology - the Belarusian political elite and the Belarusian people are not prepared to perceive and accept the values of democracy and the free market.

1.2. Integration processes between Belarus and Russia

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to the emergence of two international structures in the post-Soviet space. Immediately after the legal liquidation of the USSR in December 1991, the Confederacy of Independent States (CIS) was set up, and Belarus and the Russian Federation began to integrate. Russia's choice in this regard was based on the argument that the West was to blame for the collapse of the Soviet Union, and so Belarus could have no choice but to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Russia in the fight against globalisation (which was seen as yet another example of imperialism and hegemony). This approach offered closer rapprochement with the countries of the CIS, and particularly with Russia. This approach can to a certain extent be described as an anti-Western approach, one which stressed the idea that the mentality, history, culture, language and religion of the Belarusian people are close to those of Russia and the other Slavic peoples, that these nations could present a counterweight to the consumer ideology of the West, and that the Western world is alien and strange.

The process of integration between Russia and Belarus began in 1990, when a 10-year treaty on political co-operation was concluded. Both countries had positive potential in this area, because they had common historical traditions, not least within the Soviet Union. There are, indeed, certain similarities in language, culture and religion. In 1996, Article 17 of the Belarusian Constitution was amended to say that both Belarusian and Russian would be state languages in the country. Also of note is Article 50 of the Constitution, which says that each citizen of Belarus has the right to preserve his or her national belonging, and no one can be forced to state that belonging.

The history of relations between Belarus and Russia is one of a number of documents, which sought to bring the two countries closer together. On April 2, 1996, an agreement on the formation of the "Community of Russia and Belarus" was signed. One year later, on April 2, 1997, the two governments signed a treaty of union. Statutes for the union were later adopted. On December 25, 1998, a declaration on future unity was signed, as was an agreement on the equal rights of the two countries' citizens. On December 8, 1999, in Moscow, the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation agreed on the establishment of a two-state union, and that treaty took effect on January 26, 2000. Integration became more intense in the socio-economic, financial, trade, cultural and educational spheres. New laws and constitutional amendments were drafted, and new institutions were set up.

There are two factors in the integration between Russia and Belarus, which can be accentuated. First there is the emotional factor. It is based on populism among politicians in both countries, with politicians hoping to see the emergence of a strong country, which in the future might once again become a major power in the world. Then there is the pragmatic factor, which is based on a true understanding of the geopolitical situation and of mutual advantage. Russia's interests are based on geopolitical, military and strategic interests. Belarus is at an advantageous geographic location, and its territory provides important links to Europe. If it were to merge with Belarus, the Russian Federation would gain direct access to Kaliningrad and the Baltic States from the economic and the military perspective. The military potential of Belarus allows Russia to ensure the military safety of Russia and Belarus on Belarusian territory. Russia is important to Belarus, in turn, as an important trading partner for imports (delivery of energy resources from Russia) and exports (Russia offers a vast market for Belarusian products). A unified customs system ensures increased turnover of goods between the two countries.

Despite certain achievements in bringing the two countries closer together, however, there are also difficulties and problems on both sides. The political elite in Belarus and Russia do not have a joint vision of the potential union in the future. There are politicians in Russia who feel that a close union with Belarus will hinder Russia's economic development, because Russia will be forced to resolve Minsk's economic problems. The main argument for those who uphold this view is as follows: Russia has too many unresolved political and economic problems (the conflict in Chechnya being the most vivid example) to undertake responsibility for Belarus.

In the case of Belarus, it has to be said that even though it has tried to strengthen relations with Russia, it does not want to become integrated into a union to the point where its own sovereignty is lost. Belarus is perfectly well aware of the fact that it will not dominate the mutual relationship. On the contrary, Belarus might end up being controlled by Russia. There are political scientists in Belarus who think that if the so-called "Russian development vector" ends up dominating the Belarusian geopolitical choice, then Belarus will remain on the periphery of European civilisation.² The researcher Gricanov has claimed that Russia is a country with a different system of value co-ordinates, because the philosophical foundations for that country's development are based on the Eurasian concept. This means, according to the researcher, that for a long time to come, Russia will be unable to make use of the postulates of Western political science, which is exactly why all of the country's attempts to modernise itself on the basis of Western European models were doomed to failure. The situation in Belarus, argues Gricanov, is very different. It has a realistic opportunity to become a normal European country such as Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, but if this is to happen, the governing structures in Belarus must consistently focus their attentions on Europe, they must choose the Western development model and the Western system of values.³

² Круглый стол политологов на тему: «Теория и практика политического процесса» // Информационно-аналитический бюллетень Фонда Сороса «Открытое общество» // <http://www.data.minsk.by/opensociety/1.01/5.html>

³ *Ibid.*

Any review of the process of integration between Belarus and Russia immediately creates the question of whether one can talk of merger or incorporation. Incorporation means that a part of a country or the entire country is absorbed into another country. Where is the guarantee that closer integration will not end up with Belarus being absorbed into the Russian Federation? The most constructive form of co-operation, of course, is based on the principle of parity, but in real life that is an ideal that is very difficult to achieve in politics.

Another psychological nuance in the integration of the two countries lies in the fact that Belarusian President Lukashenka has no intention of playing second fiddle in the relationship between the two countries. It is very much doubtful that if the two countries were to merge, Lukashenka would preserve his power. As Arkadii Moshes has put it, Lukashenka performs two different roles in relations with Russia. On the one hand, he has proclaimed himself to be the chief defender of integration in the post-Soviet space, but on the other hand, he is the chief apologist for the sovereignty of the Belarusian state.⁴ These inconsistencies in the behaviour of the Belarusian president suggest that Lukashenka does not really want integration with Russia. Instead he wants to receive Russian natural resources, and particularly gas, on the cheap.

It is also important to consider external factors, because the future of Russia and Belarus is by no means seen unilaterally in the rest of the world. In the context of the most recent events in Belarus, if Moscow chooses to continue to support Lukashenka, it may end up in a dead end where it can either go on with support for the Lukashenka regime, thus worsening Russia's relationship with Europe and the United States, or it can work harder on developing co-operation with the Western world.

1.3. The option of neutrality for Belarus

The third theoretical option for Belarus when it comes to choices about geopolitical decisions might be called a fairly peculiar version of being neutral. In that case, the accent would be on the development of Belarus, and Minsk would develop relationships with those who want to collaborate with the country. There would also be stress on the need for modernisation that can be achieved only with the country's own strengths, increasing power and mobilising internal resources. The neutrality model, however, can involve two different approaches. Would it mean isolation from the surrounding world, or would it represent a willingness to work with all potential partners - i.e., a route toward integration?

If we look at neutrality as a paradigm of isolation, then we see that it would not be very constructive, and Belarus would end up as a backward country, which, on the basis of its own resources, tries to elaborate its own strategy. Even on the theoretical level, such a strategy would be ineffective for a variety of reasons. Belarus has been behind the times

⁴ Balmaceda, M., Clem, J. and L. Tarlow (eds.). *Independent Belarus: Domestic Determinants, Regional Dynamics and Implications for the West*. Harvard University Press (2002), p. 197.

for some time now, there is little in the way of human potential because people are tired of the Communist experiment that was conducted during the Soviet period and then by the regime of Lukashenka, and so it is doubtful whether one could hope that Belarus would quickly develop on the basis of its internal resources alone, even if power were to be consolidated. The choice would deepen all of the existing problems, it would cut Belarus off from the world's financial flows, etc. This means that if Belarus were to choose neutrality as a form of isolation, the consequences would simply be negative, and the country would have to fall back even more.

The integration model might also involve a strategy, which seeks to involve Belarus in the world of globalisation. Because of its history, culture and other factors, Belarus may never become a part of the West, but that doesn't necessarily mean that Belarus must turn into Russia, into a country which simply exists to oppose the West, or an "island in the ocean of the world". Only the selection of the Russian vector ensures the one-sidedness of Belarusian development at this time. That is precisely why it is important for Minsk to develop contacts in the West and the East.

In the context of the integration model, Belarus can concentrate on the restoration of its country without allowing for any self-isolation or confrontation in foreign policy. The Belarusian people have historically enjoyed the concept of social harmony, and they have sought to ensure harmony in their own society and in the surrounding world. This means that integration into the global economy may become a goal for the country, and perhaps Belarus might even establish relations with NATO and the EU that are based on collaboration. Such co-operation might be aimed at the expansion of economic relations with the EU and at a dialogue about security issues with NATO - perhaps in relation to an important and timely issue such as the fight against terrorism. Also of great importance is the domestic situation in Belarus. A civil society must be established, the non-governmental sector and the presence of democratic political and social institutions would help Belarus to strengthen its foreign policy positions. Belarus can activate political and economic contacts with the newly enlarged European Union, but the fact is that such a relationship would also include the Russian factor. That is because any economic co-operation between the European Union and Russia or even the establishment of a unified economic space would certainly include a very important role for Belarus, if only because of geographical considerations. The fact is that that Belarus is one of the primary transit routes between Russia and the EU. It is also necessary to take into account that the politics of Ukraine and Moldova have much to do in establishing contacts among Europe, Belarus and Russia.

It is possible to analyse the choices, which Belarus has in terms of its future development from the perspective of public thinking. One indicator of public thinking about the state's foreign policy choices lies in the fact that the country's young people, of course, are its future. Eventually the youngsters will have an effect on the state's governance and on its geopolitical choices. Today Belarusian students are more likely to attend universities in Europe or the United States than in Moscow or St Petersburg.⁵ People in Belarus do

⁵ *Круглый стол политологов, op. cit.*

not have any unified ideas about the integration of Belarus and Russia. An independent socio-economic and political research institute, for instance, conducted a study which showed that the idea of establishing a unified state with one and the same flag, symbols, currency, etc., is supported by fewer and fewer people. At the end of 2003, only 18.5% of residents supported the idea of a merger, and in mid-2004, the percentage had dropped to 13.8%. Economic union was supported by 55.7% of respondents in 2003 and 50.1% in mid-2004. Asked whether relationships with Russia should be maintained as with all other countries of the CIS, the number of respondents who agreed increased by 7% - from 20.6% to 27%. Some 9.1% of respondents had no particular view on union between Belarus and Russia.

Asked about the possibility of having a unified constitution for Russia and Belarus, 50.4% supported the idea at the end of 2003, but only 37.8% did so in mid-2004. If the people of Belarus were given a choice to join the European Union or form close links to the Russian Federation, then 36.5% would plump for EU membership, 41% would want to merge with Russia, and 22.5% had no opinion on the matter.

Neither is the Belarusian elite particularly likely to support the idea of merging Belarus and Russia. Nearly all of the surveyed leaders of public opinion and experts in the field, irrespective of whether they worked for government institutions or NGOs, said that Belarus and Russia should not merge into a single country. Nearly two-thirds (65%) argued that the relationship between Belarus and Russia should be the same as with any other CIS member state. Only one-third supported closer political and economic links with Russia.⁶ These data are an extremely important indicator of the public mood, because it is the people of Belarus who, in the final analysis, will have to choose the state's path toward foreign policy development. Survey data tell us that Belarus does not necessarily have to be isolated in the world. It has to work with international institutions and other countries in many different areas, making use of the experience of Western Europe, Russia and other countries. At the same time, however, Belarus must also keep in mind the traditions and specifics of its own history.

2. The domestic policies of Belarus as a factor in foreign policy

2.1. The institutional system in Belarus: A powerful president

The Republic of Belarus has had six different constitutions - in 1919, 1927, 1937, 1978, 1994 and 1996. All of these constitutions have, to a greater or lesser extent, been related to Russia, i.e., they were designed on the basis of examples of Russian constitutions.

In the post-Soviet era, the first time that a constitution was discussed in Belarus was at a meeting of the Belarusian Supreme Council on November 11, 1991. The most

⁶ Data about the independent study can be found at <http://www.iiseps.by/press2.html>.

heated debates surrounded the issue of the country's institutional structure - should it be a parliamentary republic, a presidential republic or an amalgam of the two? On October 23, 1992, the Supreme Council received a draft constitution, which spoke to the establishment of a parliamentary republic in which a president would be head of state, but without the right to lead the executive branch of government. The draft was rejected. On May 19, 1993, a new draft was submitted to the Supreme Council, and this time it spoke to a powerful presidency.

The constitution, which was adopted by independent Belarus on March 15, 1994, thus, was similar in several respects to the initial draft constitution that had been considered by the Russian Federation in 1993. In 1994, in both countries, the constitutions became stumbling blocks in relations between presidents and MPs when it came to the role of the president in the institutions of power. As a result of this controversy, the text of the constitution strengthened specific authority for the Belarusian president. Why did the system choose to establish a powerful presidency? There are several reasons, among them a vacuum of power and the absence of strongly personified authorities. Next, there was the personal factor of Vjacheslav Kebich,⁷ along with a political situation in which the parliament decided that the constitutional model must satisfy the needs of a specific individual. Then there was the experience of the neighbouring countries of Belarus - Russia, Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania. Finally, there was a lack of political culture among the Belarusian elite, as well as among the population, and the state simply was not prepared to accept the values of democracy and parliamentarism.

The authors of the 1994 constitution built up an institutional system in which the presidency would have significant powers. Article 100 of the constitution, for instance, authorises the president to take steps in pursuit of national security and of political and economic stability. This is a norm, which can certainly be interpreted in various ways. In the 1994 constitution, the president was also declared to be the head of government, which means that the foundations for a strong presidency were already put in place at that time.

From the beginning, it was thought that the 1994 constitution would have to be reviewed, and on November 24, 1996, in a referendum, the Belarusian people approved a new constitution, both in response to the need to improve the effectiveness of governance in Belarus, and in response to changes in the domestic political situation in the country. A significant role in the amending of the constitution was played by Lukashenka and his personal influence during ongoing institutional conflicts. One of the views that was expressed about the term in office and authority of the president was that Lukashenka's lawful and legitimate term in office would expire in 2004, because he was first elected in 1994 and, in accordance with the constitutional requirement of no more than two terms in

⁷ Born in 1936, Vjacheslav Kebich was leader of the Belarusian government between 1990 and 1994, and his policies had two basic directions - development of a market economy and establishment of relations with Russia in a way which, to a certain extent, hindered the Kebich's ability to develop market processes. In the 1994 presidential election, Kebich was the most important competitor against Alyaksandr Lukashenka. The view prevails that if Kebich had won, Belarus would have chosen Western examples in its further developmental choices.

office, he would have to step down 10 years later. Supporters of this view also argue that the referendum in 1996 was illegitimate, because the amending of the constitution was actually an attempt to usurp power.⁸

The years of 1995 and 1996 were known as “years of crisis in power” in Belarus, because there were constant institutional conflicts between the president and the parliament. Lukashenka won public support in his attempt to accumulate more power, because many people felt that his active efforts to limit the functions of Parliament represented true strength, true ability to bring order to the state. The values of parliamentarianism and the divisions of power were lost in the shuffle - 27% of residents said in one survey that they would support the president even if he were to violate the constitution.

The result of the deep institutional crisis was that the Supreme Council did not meet a single time between September 1995 and January 1996. The Constitutional Court then became involved in the process, repealing a whole series of orders that had been issued by the president in the absence of Parliament. The Constitutional Court declared these to have been unconstitutional. Lukashenka responded with a decree in which he ordered government services to ignore Constitutional Court rulings.

A new period in the crisis began when a new session of the Supreme Council tried to expand its own power. There was an open battle at the top of Belarusian government, and in fact there were two centres of power, which were independent of one another. The 1996 referendum to amend the constitution was a continuation to the crisis. Two different sets of amendments were tabled. In the president’s version, the role of Parliament would be reduced exclusively to the drafting of new laws. In the Supreme Council’s version, the institution of the presidency would be excluded from the state’s institutional system. The president prevailed in the November 1996 referendum.

The 1996 Belarusian constitution makes it clear that the Belarusian institutional structure is a mixed one, establishing a semi-presidential republic in which there are efforts to balance a powerful institution of executive authority with effective parliamentary controls over the activities of government. The typology of Shugart and Carey allows one to determine that Belarus is a presidential-parliamentary country,⁹ one that typically corresponds to the following characteristics: 1) The president is elected by the people; 2) The president can appoint and sack ministers; 3) Ministers require the confidence of Parliament; 4) The president has the right to sack Parliament.¹⁰

⁸ The threat of authoritarianism in Belarus has been discussed, among others, in Kelley, D.R. (ed.). *After Communism: Perspectives on Democracy*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press (2003), p. 22.

⁹ Other countries with a presidential-parliamentary institutional system include the Weimar Republic which prevailed in Germany between 1919 and 1933, as well as the Russian Federation after 1993. It was the factor of constitutionalism in Russia in particular which most influenced the structuring of the Belarusian institutional system.

¹⁰ Shugart, M. and J. Carey. *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1992), p. 24.

Second, the status of the president of Belarus is similar in several respects to the status of the president of Russia. When he has discussed the constitutional foundations of Belarus, Lukashenka has claimed that the constitution was based on the constitutional experience of Russia, France and Italy.¹¹ The fact is, however, that the authors of the Belarusian constitution focused mostly on Russia’s 1993 constitution. Confirmation of this is made clear if one compares the two documents. Both in Belarus and in Russia, the president is the head of state and a guarantee of the constitution, as well as of human and civil rights and freedoms. Both presidents are popularly elected, neither has a vice president. In both countries, the president oversees a number of important issues. Both presidents can organise referendums to deal with specific issues, both can decree a state of emergency, both can sign international treaties, and both can pardon criminals. The Belarusian and the Russian president are given the right to influence the work of the executive branch of government. In both cases, the president can appoint a new head of government, but this requires the agreement of the lower house of Parliament (the House of Representatives in Belarus, the Duma in Russia). When it comes to the appointment of other ministers, however, the Belarusian president has broader authority. The Belarusian president can take unilateral decisions on the matter, while the Russian president acts on the basis of a proposal from the head of government. Both in Belarus and in Russia, the structure of the government is based in part on proposals from the prime minister. Both presidents have the formal right to chair government meetings, although neither has done so very often. Both the Belarusian and the Russian president can sack the government. Both presidents also have specific authority in the area of legislation. They can issue normative acts - in Belarus, these include ukazi, decrees and instructions, while in Russia, they include ukazi and instructions. Both presidents have the right to initiative legislation and to veto laws. Both presidents can sack Parliament - in Russia this is related to the work of the government, while in Belarus it is based on the work of the government or a ruling from the Constitutional Court. Both presidents can summon Parliament to emergency session. In Belarus, this prerogative applies to both houses of Parliament, while in Russia, it applies only to the lower house - the Duma. In both countries, the president can send messages to Parliament.

When it comes to the appointment of MPs and justices of the Constitutional Court, the Belarusian president enjoys much greater power than his opposite number in Russia. The Belarusian president is given the right to appoint, unilaterally, six justices of the Constitutional Court and to appoint the chairman of the Constitutional Court with the agreement of the Council of the Republic. The Russian president can recommend candidates for posts on the Constitutional Court for approval by the upper house of Parliament, the Federation Council. The Belarusian president can also appoint eight members of the upper house of his country’s Parliament, the Council of the Republic. The Russian president has no analogous rights.

¹¹ Dawisha, K. and B. Parrot (eds). *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1997), p. 276.

Thus we see that a sign of a mixed, presidential-parliamentary institutional system is a powerful presidency, one that has extensive authority in the executive branch of government. In such countries, governments face dual responsibility - before the president, and before the parliament.¹² The status of the Belarusian president is quite similar to that of the Russian president in a presidential-parliamentary system, although certain articles in the Belarusian constitution make it clear that that country's president has more extensive authority than does his colleague in Moscow.

It is worth taking a closer look at the Belarusian institutional system. In accordance with the 1996 constitution, the president of Belarus is the head of state and of government. Despite the fact that the constitution formally upholds the separation of powers, the fact is that the main mechanisms of governance are concentrated in the hands of the president. His authority is described in Chapter 3 of the constitution. The president is the head of state, the guarantee of the constitution of the Republic of Belarus and of human and civil rights and freedoms. The president represents the state on the international stage. The president is the guarantee of national security, national independence, unity, territorial integrity and international obligations. He is the embodiment or personification of national unity, the supreme commander of the republic's armed forces. The president ensures political and economic stability in the country. He ensures interaction among the institutions of power and serves as a mediator between those institutions. The president is inviolable, law protects his honour. The president implements the constitution and the law and is responsible for ensuring that they are implemented with precision. The president has the right to make an annual statement before the people about the situation in the country and the foremost directions of foreign policy. The president has the right to participate in the work of Parliament, to attend open and closed parliamentary sessions, and to take part in debates without having to wait in a queue for authorisation to speak. The president is not subject to parliamentary control. At his own initiative or at that of the government, he can issue decrees with the force of law. The president's legislative initiative, in fact, limits the right of Parliament to issue laws. Draft laws which may lead to a reduction in the state's assets, to new expenditures or to increased expenditures may be presented to the House of Representatives only with the president's personal approval.

Parliament has the right to impeach the president, but only if the president has engaged in treason or similar high crimes. Impeachment is proposed by the House of Representatives by majority vote and at the initiative of one-third of MPs. The situation is then investigated by the Council of the Republic. The president is sacked if no fewer than two-thirds of MPs in the Council of the Republic and two-thirds of MPs in the House of Representatives vote to that effect.

Article 81 of the 1996 constitution specifies that the term in office for the president is five years, and no one person can serve as president for more than two terms, i.e., for more than 10 years. This was one of the main factors in Lukashenka's decision to hold another referendum in October 2004. This issue will be discussed in greater detail below

¹² Паречина С.Г. Институт президентства: история и современность / Под общ. ред. Матусевича Е.В. – Мн.: ИСПИ, 2003.

The parliament of the Republic of Belarus is the National Assembly, which has two houses - the House of Representatives and the Council of the Republic. The lower house, the House of Representatives, has 110 members. The Council of the Republic is a house of territorial representation. MPs have a term in office of four years, although the term can be extended at times of war.

The fact that Belarus is a presidential-parliamentary republic is made evident by the fact that the constitution sets up the possibility of an institutional conflict. Parliament can impeach the president, while the president can sack Parliament. Article 94 of the constitution says that the term in office of the House of Representatives can be ended prematurely if it approves a vote of no confidence in the government or if it twice rejects candidates for the post of prime minister. The term in office of members of both houses can also be ended prematurely on the basis of Constitutional Court rulings if it is found that the houses of Parliament have systematically or grossly violated the constitution.

The primary duties of Parliament have to do with preparing new laws, with establishing the highest institutions of power, and with ensuring the sovereignty of the state. Parliament declares presidential elections, can propose the impeachment of the president, summons an emergency session at the request of the president, receives legislative initiatives from the president, submits approved laws for the president's signature, takes decisions on the appointment of presidential candidates for high-ranking jobs, receives the president's annual messages, ratifies the treaties and agreements which the president has signed, and approves the president's decision to declare a state of emergency in Belarus or some part of the country.

The House of Representatives considers proposals to amend or interpret the constitution if the president so suggests or if 150,000 citizens so request in written petitions. The House of Representatives also considers laws, which have to do with a wide range of issues. The prime minister presents the government's operating programme to the House of Representatives, which then approves or rejects it. If the programme is rejected twice, that means a vote of no confidence in the government. The prime minister can also call for a vote of confidence. One can also be held if one-third of the members of the House of Representatives so request.

The Council of the Republic approves or rejects laws that have been adopted by the House of Representatives when it comes to amending or interpreting the constitution and to other laws, as well. The Council of the Republic ratifies the appointment of the chairman of the Constitutional Court, the chairman and members of the Supreme Court, the chairman and members of the Supreme Economic Court, the chairman of the Central Elections Commission, the prosecutor-general and other high-ranking officials.

The right of legislative initiative rests with the president, with members of both houses of Parliament, with the government and with the citizenry, which can propose laws on the basis of no fewer than 50,000 petition signatures.

The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus is the central institution of governance. It is subordinate to the president and is responsible before Parliament. The

government handles all issues of governance, except those that are in the competence of the president or of Parliament. The government supervises the implementation of laws, and produces co-ordination and systematic control over the operations of lower-ranking institutions of executive governance.

One important aspect of the prime minister's authority is that he can ask the House of Representatives to hold a vote of confidence in his government. If the vote fails, the president can either sack the government or sack the House of Representatives. This norm in the constitution means that the government can create an artificial crisis so as to ensure the sacking of the lower house of Parliament. On the other hand, the government can also seek the support of the House of Representatives so as to expand its political authority. In one instance or another, it is extremely evident that the government is dependent upon the president.

In short, an analysis of the authority that is set out for the president of Belarus in the country's constitution (in some cases the president is authorised to take decisions in place of the government and the National Assembly, and in many other situations the government and the National Assembly are directly dependent upon the president) make it clear that the president has a leading role in the Belarusian institutional system. This is made clear by those norms in the constitution which place the president in a higher status than is applied to any other participant in the process of national governance.

2.2. Political parties and the opposition in Belarus

Some elements in the political life of Belarus suggest that at least in formal terms, the country is a democratic one. The constitution, in fact, says that this is so. The point is that real democracy is not the same as illusionary democracy, because after all, the constitutions of the Soviet Union also spoke to basic principles in the structure of the state, which formally corresponded to the requirements of democratic countries. That is why some researchers call Lukashenka's regime in Belarus "pseudo-democracy".¹³

The 1996 referendum to adopt an amended constitution allowed Alyaksandr Lukashenka to expand his authority very substantially. This meant:

- Legalising a dictatorship within which there has been the establishment of institutions that are directly subordinated to the president and resemble the institutions of the "Oprichnina";¹⁴ these include the Presidential Administration, the Presidential Property Management Department, etc.;
- Extensive institutional centralisation and consolidated and personified power which has led to a dictatorship in which one person dominates; in other words, all of the branches of power have been concentrated in the president's hands.¹⁵

¹³ Kelley, D.R. (ed.). *After Communism: Perspectives on Democracy*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press (2003), p. 241.

¹⁴ "Oprichnina" was the name of a team of bodyguards for the Russian Tsar Ivan the Terrible (1565-1584).

¹⁵ Vainiene, et. al., op. cit., p. 26.

The status of the opposition in a country, the effectiveness of the opposition in influencing public processes, and the type of political party system that exists in the country - these are always precise indicators of the extent to which the political regime in a country is democratic or undemocratic in nature. The opposition in Belarus is severely split. Among the reasons for this, three are of particular importance. First of all, the failure of Belarus to develop a civil society has meant that the opposition remains outside of the Belarusian political system and is thus dysfunctional. Second, there is a lack of consolidation in the opposition because of quarrels among its various participants. Third, many people in Belarus have no idea of the role that the opposition plays in the country's political processes, and this, too, is due to the government - the regime is convinced that the people of Belarus cannot see the opposition as a reflection of the regime itself.

The weakness of the opposition is made more severe by the fact that Belarus has an insufficiently developed system of political parties. The status of parties is best characterised by public thought: The people of Belarus have much less trust in the public institution that is the system of political parties than they do in the institutions of national governance - the president, law enforcement agencies, and the like.

The multi-party system in Belarus, like the country itself, is more than 13 years old. A range of political parties appeared in 1991. The emergence of these parties occurred in a way that was somewhat reminiscent of processes in the Baltic States. First of all, a major role in the establishment of political parties was played by the intelligentsia. Second, the ideas of the local popular fronts came to the fore.

An important phase in the emergence of political parties in Belarus was the first alternative election for the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR in the spring of 1989. The Communist Party of the USSR saw its monopoly on power crumble severely as a result of the election. The Belarusian Popular Front, which emerged in 1989 and was registered in 1991, was an early example of something similar to a political party. In the 12th session of the Belarusian Supreme Council, the Popular Front organised a faction with 40 members at one time or another. Other political parties, which emerged during this period, were the Belarusian Unified Democratic Party and the Belarusian Social Democratic *Hramada*.¹⁶ Both parties announced officially that they would try to influence the establishment of power in Belarus, and both said that they would stand in opposition to the ideas of Communism. Within the Communist ideology, too, there were alternative parties - the Democratic Platform and the Marxist Platform, for instance.

On July 28, 1990, the Supreme Council approved Resolution No. 222-XII, "On the registration of public organisations in the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic". On the basis of this decision, on October 3, 1990, the Council of Ministers of the Belarusian SSR issued Resolution No. 225, "Temporary regulations on the establishment and activities of the public organizations of citizens of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic". This resolution paved the way for the institutionalisation of the political party system in Belarus. The process was subsequently one of quantitative dynamics.

¹⁶ "Hramada" is a word which can mean society or community.

In the 1994 presidential election, however, only six of the 21 registered political parties presented candidates to the people - the Belarusian Popular Front, the Agrarian Party, the People's Harmony Party, the Communist Party, the Belarusian Unified Democratic Party and the Belarusian Social Democratic *Hramada*. The participation of parties in the election stimulated their inclusion into the political process of the country, and it also facilitated the spread of political parties at the regional level. It is also true that parties gained practical experience in the field of elections and campaigns.¹⁷

Law No. 3266-XII, the law "On political parties", was adopted on October 5, 1994, and in Article 5, it declared that "the Belarusian state guarantees the protection of the rights and lawful interests of political parties". The law defined the concept of political parties and set out the requirements for establishing a political party - the registration procedure, the required number of members, etc.

Something of an impulse in the development of Belarusian political parties occurred in 1995, when a Supreme Council election was held. Representatives of no fewer than 11 political parties were elected to Parliament. Immediately after the 1996 referendum, however, the institutions of power began to exclude political parties from political life and the processes of governance. Political parties in opposition began to be seen by those who were in power as anti-Belarusian structures. In 1999, Lukashenka issued a decree, which required the re-registration of all of the country's political parties. Only 18 of the 28 parties, which existed in Belarus at that time, took the decision to re-register.

In the context of this, one may well ask about the main factors, which hinder the further emergence of political parties and the opposition in Belarus. The first factor is that political parties in opposition are weak in their organisation and in their ability to offer material support for their candidates in elections. A second reason for the insufficient development of opposition forces and political parties is rooted in the configuration of the country's institutional structure and in political practice - people who work in the executive branch of government are appointed from above, they are not elected. Political parties do not have the right of legislative initiative, and that means that legislative institutions at all levels do not have any real power. Even if they are in power, political parties cannot effectively carry out the fundamental functions of a party - representing the views of different groups in society.

Belarusian law also limits the ability of opposition forces to make use of less conventional forms of political participation such as demonstrations, picket lines and protest meetings. Activists from political parties and opposition forces are routinely arrested and detained even for the dissemination of information. There have been recorded instances of political repressions against independent labour movements, too - activists have been sacked and threatened, and the movements have been banned. When political, public and

¹⁷ Политические партии Беларуси – необходимая часть гражданского общества: Материалы семинара / Авт.-сост. Александр Федута, Олег Богущкий, Виктор Маптинович. – Минск: Фонд имени Фридриха Эберта, 2003, pp. 15-16.

labour union activists are beaten up by persons unknown, that is seen as an attempt by Lukashenka's political regime to create fear among its opponents. On a few occasions, public activists and opposition politicians have simply disappeared in Belarus, and this is also attributed to the activities of the state's institutions of power.¹⁸

Another aspect of the repression of political opposition is that the role of independent mass media outlets has been curtailed, and controls over the flow of information have been strengthened. During the last two years, a radio station called "Majak" has been shut down, and the operations of the television channel "Culture" have been severely curtailed. In July 2004, the Belarusian Foreign Ministry announced that it was withdrawing the accreditation of correspondents from the Russian State Television and Radio Company. This followed a report on the Russian channel in which a correspondent said that between 2,000 and 5,000 people had attended a protest meeting in Minsk. The Belarusian Interior Ministry insisted that in fact there had been fewer than 200 participants.

To be sure, one cannot avoid mentioning a few positive aspects of the current situation in Belarus, although these are not as evident as the negative ones. There have been positive changes in the field of education, for instance. There are private universities in Belarus where students can learn modern Western concepts of law, political science, sociology and philosophy. Textbooks from the West are used for this purpose. Students have a chance to travel to the United States, Europe and other places thanks to international exchange programmes such as "Work and Travel USA". However, there have also been limitations to the liberalisation of the Belarusian educational system. In July 2004, the Belarusian Education Ministry announced that the licence of the European University of the Humanities (EHU) would be annulled, and that meant the shutting down of one of the most prestigious non-governmental institutions of higher learning not just in Belarus, but in the entire CIS.

According to EHU administrators, the main reason for the shutting down of the university was that either the Education Ministry or the Belarusian government as a whole was dissatisfied with the path which the university had chosen toward the internationalisation and pan-European integration of its educational system. The Education Ministry had already, in late 2003, complained about the idea that the EHU was inviting too many guest lecturers from Western Europe and the Americas to teach classes. It is necessary to note that the EHU received some financing from the European Union and from several international organisations. This guaranteed international resonance in the wake of its closure. The head of the OSCE mission in Minsk, Ambassador Eberhard Heyken, expressed deep concern about the suspension of EHU operations. The German ambassador to Belarus, Martin Hecker, stressed the importance of "open and international education" in determining the role, which Belarus would play in the international arena.

¹⁸ Among those who have disappeared have been the politicians Yuriy Zaharenko and Viktor Gonchar, the businessman Anatoliy Krasovski, and the journalist Dmitriy Zavadski.

The ambassador added that changes in the national educational system would cause international solidarity between the EHU and other institutions of education.

People in Belarus have been seeking to intensify co-operation with foreign partners in the fields of science, education and culture, there have been academic conferences, seminars, etc. People from Belarus take part in international projects such as the NATO Scientific Programme. Some scientists and instructors have spent time in the West. The behaviour of the institutions of power, however, makes co-operation with the West and the inclusion of Belarus into the European structure of science far more difficult. In 2004, Belarus expelled a British radiology specialist, Alan Flowers, who had been delivering lectures in the country. Flowers later said that he was expelled because of his work with non-governmental organisations.

The opposition in Belarus resembles an interest group whose members autonomously carry out specific functions, competing amongst themselves to see which can receive support from Europe, which will be the first to make a statement about one issue or another, or which will be the first to apply for permission to organise a demonstration. The weaknesses and failures of the opposition in Belarus are laid bare when one considers the fact that there is a lack of joint plans and co-ordinated activities among the opposition structures. The leaders of parties, non-governmental organisations, labour unions and human rights organisations are far too often dealing with the internal problems of their organisations and with the fight for popularity and recognition. There has been no targeted, co-ordinated and harmonised strategy for long-term action, each organisation tries to satisfy its own interests.

Another problem for the opposition in Belarus is that there is a lack of a visible leader who could compete with the personality of Alyaksandr Lukashenka. Political parties and opposition organisations also lack co-ordination of activities at the regional level. There have been some attempts to bring opposition organisations together - the Consulting Council of Opposition Political Parties (OPPKP) was one example. The fact is, however, that there is no reason to speak of any true consolidation or effective co-operation amongst opposition forces. The OPPKP did manage to collect the views of the European political elite about the political regime in Belarus, as a result of which the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly declared, on July 6, 2003, that the regime is undemocratic. The relevant resolution stated that Belarus does not ensure access to the mass media for all political parties, that Parliament has no significant functions or authority, and so the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly urgently calls on the Belarusian government to revise the elections code so as to set up proper conditions for free, honest and transparent elections. This achievement by the OPPKP, however, did not lead to any further consolidation of opposition efforts. On the contrary, the accomplishment did not even attract sufficient attention among OPPKP member organisations. A process of redistributing power within the OPPKP began, there were mutual accusations of attempts to usurp power, and other far less than constructive phenomena became evident.

Foundations for the consolidation of democratic forces have been set out several times. In the wake of the Lukashenka-initiated referendum in 1996, the results of the vote could have provided an impulse for consolidation in the opposition. In the latter half of

2002, virtually all of the democratic forces in Belarus objected to a proposal by Russian President Vladimir Putin that Belarus be absorbed into Russia. Democratic forces proclaimed that Europe is their priority, and this represented another opportunity to come together. The opposition dropped the ball, however, failing to take the initiative in supporting independence and the Western option.

In January 2004, a new national coalition, "5+", was established in Belarus, bringing together people from political parties, public organisations and the worlds of science and culture. This once again created hopes that the opposition in Belarus is coming together, with "5+" disseminating a document called "Five Steps Toward a Better Life". Leaders in the coalition insisted that true consolidation among democratic forces was necessary.

External impulses have also helped in the consolidation of opposition forces. Various structures in Europe have tried on numerous occasions to support the Belarusian opposition and even to promote dialogue between them and the state. These efforts have basically all failed. In 1997 and 1999, the foreign ministers for Germany, Austria and Finland visited Minsk, but the negotiating process went nowhere. European structures are ready to support the Belarusian opposition even today. Evidence of this can be seen in the reaction of Western European countries to the referendum of October 2004. The extent to which the Belarusian opposition will make use of Western support on this occasion will depend both on the volume and intensity of the support, and on the way in which the domestic political situation emerges in Belarus.

The referendum on October 17, 2004, was meant to ensure that the president could extend his term in office lawfully and seek a third term. This referendum has been the most important element of Belarusian politics in recent times. Why was the referendum on extending Lukashenka's term in power held simultaneously with parliamentary elections? The answer is evident - the aim was to bring voters into the voting precincts. Political scientists, political observers, representatives of power and the mass media in Belarus and elsewhere in the world had been analysing the possibility of this referendum since 2002. Various predictions were made, but both in the West and even in Russia, the main thesis was that Lukashenka, who had been lawfully elected and could be seen as the legitimate president of Belarus, would automatically lose that legitimacy if he forced through the referendum. In the event, the referendum was held, and the official result was that 77.3% of those who voted plumped in favour of a third term in office for the sitting president. Belarus did not have to wait long for outside reaction to this fact.

Another result of the Belarusian referendum is that Lukashenka has now consolidated the official reactions of the European Union, the United States and even, to a certain extent, the Russian Federation. The secretary of state of the Russian-Belarusian Union, Pavel Borodin, announced his support for the Lukashenka initiative, and the Russian Duma declared the results of the Belarusian referendum to have been legitimate, but the fact is that the Russian political elite are increasingly coming to believe that the Belarusian president, by organising his referendum, has lost the support of the West, and also of Russia. Sergey Karaganov, who is chairman of the Russian External and Defence Policy Council and deputy director of the Europe Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences,

has said of Belarus that it is very doubtful whether Russia and the countries of Europe will be pleased at the emergence of another North Korea in the centre of Europe.¹⁹

Europe refused to recognise the results of the parliamentary election and the referendum in Belarus. The European Union has issued strong support for the conclusions, which were made by the OSCE - that the elections in Belarus failed to satisfy international standards for several reasons. Europe remains ready for dialogue and co-operation with the Belarusian leadership, but only if the subjects of power in Minsk agree to play in accordance with the "European" rules of the game, i.e., that they agree to respect the rule of law and the values of democracy. The role of the opposition in Belarusian political processes is particularly important to Europe. When demonstrators were attacked by security forces and opposition leaders were arrested, the European Union expressed its readiness to support opposition forces in the country.

In early October, 2004, the American Congress approved and President George Bush signed an act on democracy in Belarus in 2004, which declared that the elections in the republic took place in an atmosphere of terror and pressure. America is ready to support political parties and public organisations, which stand up for human rights and democracy. The American law also provides for economic pressure against Belarus, banning any financial support for official Minsk. The sanctions will remain in place until such time as the Belarusian government demonstrates visible progress in the field of democratisation.

Conclusions

It is highly unlikely that Belarus will manage to establish relations with the West while ignoring or minimising the factor of Russia. Similarly, if Belarus and Russia were to choose to merge, they would not be able to refuse the support of the West (the 1990s showed that close integration between the two countries is possible in theory but very difficult in practice). This means that it is necessary to make note of the advantageous geographic location of Belarus between Europe and Russia and to take maximally pragmatic advantage of it. The enormous potential, which exists in economic and transit issues, must be taken into account. Public opinion surveys in Belarus have indicated that neither the Russian nor the European vector can be excluded from Minsk's foreign policy, and that is an important indicator. Belarus, along with Ukraine and Moldova, could play an important role in the development of relations between Europe and Russia.

Recent events, however, suggest that Belarus may very well sink into deeper isolation. The legitimacy of the October referendum is questioned in the West and, in part, in Russia. The Belarusian constitution offers the president every chance to change the configuration of power as he sees fit, and that eventually leads to the reduced effectiveness of the institutional system and even to crisis. When the civil society is underdeveloped, when

the mass media and the opposition are severely shackled, when the freedom of Parliament to act has been significantly minimised and when there are imminent possibilities for institutional conflict, expansive presidential authority can be dangerous irrespective of the person who is president.

Full isolation, clearly, is impossible for several reasons, but under prevailing circumstances, it is also not possible to talk about the establishment of constructive and mutually advantageous co-operation. Without eliminating the problems which exist in its domestic political system and choosing the path of democratic development, Belarus cannot expect any Western support in politics or the economy. This means that the remaining potential ally for Belarus is Russia, but it is not at all clear that Russia would really want to support the further development of anti-democratic processes in its neighbouring country. Russia could ignore the criticisms of the Western world about events in Belarus, and Moscow could support Minsk, but in that case Russia would face a dead end in terms of having to select between two foreign policy partners - Europe and the United States on the one hand, or Belarus on the other. There are people in the Russian political elite who know perfectly well that if they were to support the political regime of Alyaksandr Lukashenka, they would risk a situation in which Russia damages its own foreign policy interests in the West.

In terms of the integration of Belarus, the choice of neutrality might offer opportunities for constructive relations with the West and the East. Before such relations can be strengthened and intensified, however, it is most important for Belarus to choose the road of democratic transformations. If the political system in Belarus is stable, if human rights and political and economic freedoms are truly upheld, then that will create a favourable environment for co-operation in the fields of politics, economic affairs, social affairs, education, culture, etc., both with the West and the East.

¹⁹ С. Караганов. Решение о референдуме – это еще не выборы // Российская газета, 09.09.2004.

Moldova and the EU Neighbourhood Policy

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Background

In 2003, the EU announced its aim to build a new framework of cooperation with countries on the border of the enlarged EU based on “shared political and economic values”. In less than one year, the EU Concept changed its name and gained new shape as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The ENP was seen as an attempt of the EU to avoid creating new divisions while, at the same time, maintaining a distinction between the EU and the rest of Europe.

The EU Commission sees the task of building a ring of friends with the Western CIS (Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova) through a policy of constructive engagement, based on shared political and economic values. At the same time, the EU sees that its relations with Russia will follow a sort of special partnership. But, by keeping relations with Russia at a distance, the EU is aiming to increase the strategic significance of the new neighbours. At the same time, a new policy destined to encourage South Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) to think about a virtual European destiny has also come into being. It affirms a consensual, gradual evolvement of political and economic links between the EU and non-integrated states.

While the new EU instrument aims to compensate for the lack of an immediate path for integration for the states remaining outside, EU officials are keen on trying to fight back any specific mention of future integration deadlines, prompting some analysts to note that the era of the success story of EU enlargement is over. The ENP has come into force with a large variety of policies and resources dedicated to assist EU’s neighbours.

Individual Action Plans are seen as keys for furthering new fields of cooperation, although limited by repeated appeals for providing “everything except institutions”. Some top officials vehemently deny chances for the new neighbours to be associated with the EU,

although officially, the EU cannot exclude this possibility. In the meantime, some of the new neighbours see their chances to compete for EU membership as even less likely now than some years ago, while the benefits of the ENP at the same time are still vague.

Because the EU is not promising any substantial upward evolution for its neighbours, the ENP is usually portrayed to be a euphemism defining the geographic space of what is NOT Europe. But, when the EU appears to acknowledge as legitimate their frustrations, it shows its concerns and rightly points out the deep and unresolved issues that are challenging the domestic stability, democratic legitimacy and viability of its new neighbours. One of the major issues is that the walls which are to be built by the EU against them will, in effect, bring about full isolation from the integrationist processes in Europe, leaving the neighbourhood countries in the same ‘ex-Soviet basket’ fully controlled by Russia’s new abroad policies and might.

Hence, several issues must be raised in this context about the roots of these mutual concerns. What were the origins of Moldova’s relatively unsuccessful attempt to move towards a European perspective in the last decade? What is the general character and objectives that Moldova is willing to pursue today with regard to the ENP? How is the Action Plan going to play out its added value for the suppressed EU aspirations of Moldova’s diverse actors? Is the Moldovan government consistent with its EU commitment and what are the factors that may influence its behaviour in the years to come?

This paper will briefly survey the interplay of visions and expectations on the proposed ENP for Moldova, and will focus on the main effects that it might have on the overall domestic and foreign policy of the country.

1. Moldova – EU: building political dialogue from the outset

Since the latter part of 1990, a call to “leave USSR and join the European family of nations” was launched by the growing democratic movement in Moldova. The European identity served as a catchall denominator to push for an immediate exit-strategy from the USSR and promote efforts to propel political reforms. But Moldova’s demands featured low on the international agenda. Many expected that it will opt for reunification with neighbouring Romania after the Soviet collapse in 1991, while others were unsure for how long it will survive as an independent sovereign entity. Largely inspired and militarily assisted by Russian troops, military hostilities between the government and the break-away Transdnister province ended with the installation of Russian peacekeeping forces dividing the country in two parts, thereby ensuring a kind of protection belt for the separatists who continued to build up their de facto independence¹.

¹ Appeal of the Presidium of the Moldovan Parliament on the aggression of the Russian Federation towards Moldova (Sfatul Tarii, no.108, June 24, 1992), Declaration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova on the 14th Army Military Involvement (Moldova Suverana, no.86, June 23, 1992).

Domestic affairs were mostly affected by territorial secession and antagonism of the elites. Particularly painful were the state-building and economic transition processes in Moldova. After the abortive coup d'état in August 1991, the pro-soviet organizations in Moldova received full support from locally deployed Russian troops, and Russia remained for almost a decade the undisputed principal peacemaker and mediator of this conflict. Western support for Moldova was almost unnoticeable. The lack of visible support greatly inhibited the pro-European policies of Chisinau, making Moldova resemble a kind of no-man's land, tilted toward the majority of ex-Soviet states, whose long-term stability prospects were seen as being very questionable and problematic².

In 1994 the EU Commission assessing the situation in Moldova noted positive changes: the first multiparty general elections, adoption of a new Constitution, liberalization of trade and financial macro stabilization and the proposal to set up a political framework document – the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) – which was signed on Nov. 28, 1994³. The PCA focused mainly on trade and economic co-operation, and was only a modest extension of the 1989 EC-USSR Agreement, in particular if compared with the political relevance of the EU agreements with the CEE countries. Through the PCA, Moldova committed itself to strengthen democratic institutions, finalize the transition to a free-market economy, observe democratic values, principles of international law, human rights and other aspects that are prioritised by the EU. The EU for its part undertook to aid Moldova in consolidating its society and to support market-oriented reforms.

In the mid-1990s, Moldova became increasingly involved in European and international organizations. It joined the Partnership for Peace programme in March 1994 and ratified its CIS membership one month later. In July 1995, it became the first CIS member to join the Council of Europe in July 1995, and joined GUAM in 1997 (GUUAM in 1999). But, while enhancing its interest towards the European choice, Moldova's partnership with the EU was not activated until the entry into force of the PCA in July 1998. Nevertheless, the PCA signature was seen in Chisinau as a first step towards EU accession⁴, even though the PCA did not aim toward a gradual integration into the EU, or upgrade economic and political links with the EU as compared with other ex-soviet entities. Moldova therefore repeatedly called for a new political framework with the EU.

Already in 1998-2000, during the meetings of the mixed EU-Moldova Parliamentary Committee there were proposals debated to design and implement a new political document as a basis for future cooperation. EU membership was adopted as a strategic objective by Moldova in its Foreign Policy Guidelines for 1998-2002 by the new government formed after parliamentary elections in March 1998⁵. These Guidelines called for the creation of a special structure vested with more power to promote a pro-active policy geared towards eventual EU accession, with upgraded contractual relations

² John McCormick; "Understanding the European Union. A Concise Introduction", Palgrave, 2002.

³ Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Commission and the Republic of Moldova, 1994

⁴ Oleg Serebrian, An assessment of the present status of the Republic of Moldova's accession to the EU', in 'The Republic of Moldova and European integration', IPP, Cartier, 2002.

⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, The Foreign Policy Guidelines for the period of 1998-2000, Chisinau, June 1998.

through an Association Agreement as a priority in the medium-term. The European choice coincided with a number of steps and decisions that showed an emerging reluctance on the part of Moldova towards cooperating with the CIS.

Though limited in scope, the PCA ushered a period of enhanced cooperation between the EU and Moldova opening greater opportunities for Moldovan business. Recovering from the Russian financial crisis (February 1998), which brought significant losses to the national economy of the country, Moldovan elites realized that only the EU perspective could ensure the country's security, stability and prosperity. The Russian crisis exposed the vulnerability of the Moldovan economy and shattered many dreams linked to Moldova's pro-CIS course, and strengthened the need for increasing the strategic orientation towards EU integration.

As gaining a Southeast European country status was seen as the next best accession pathway to the EU, definitely preferable to the PCA/TACIS framework, Moldovan diplomacy began to concentrate efforts on gaining membership in the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SPSEE). Moldova harboured enthusiastic expectations towards the emerging Stability Pact's agenda, with one political element emerging as perhaps the dominant one, i.e. - the promise of clear EU membership prospects through the Agreement on Association. Membership in the Stability Pact was attracting all the states of the region, but for Moldova it had a special value primarily because it would be designated as a 'South East European state', which was much better 'brand' than that of an 'ex-Soviet'/'CIS' state. The Stability Pact was thus a kind of silver lining, a symbolic recognition of belonging to a different place in (Southeast) Europe⁶, a choice motivated both in terms of historical, ethnic and cultural links, but also by a pragmatic approach towards the overarching objective of becoming a mid-term candidate for the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP). To cite some opinions expressed by diplomats, 'a new status would mean to be some kind of life buoy that might get the country out of the "troubled waters" of the CIS and focus it towards Brussels, even though it meant a detour through the Balkans⁷.

Chisinau tried to overcome objective limitations of the PCA by seeing the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe as a pact for integration with Europe⁸. It was expected that SPSEE membership would convince the West in having a larger and more direct involvement in the Transdniestrian conflict settlement, as the OSCE was perceived to be a weak and ineffective institution. Brussels for its part feared at some stage that Moldova's membership in the SPSEE would create a precedent for other ex-Soviet states to seek admission to this process. Thus, in spite of Ukrainian attempts to pursue the same course in applying for membership status in the SPSEE, at the meeting of the Regional Table of the Stability Pact on June 8, 2000⁹ in Thessalonica, only Moldova was invited to apply.

⁶ Wim van Meurs, Moldova ante portas: the EU Agendas of Conflict Management and 'Wider Europe', CAP.

⁷ The Republic of Moldova and European Integration, Oleg Serebrian, On assessment of the present statute of Moldova's accession to the EU, IPP, Cartier, 2002, p.250

⁸ *Ibid.* p.68

⁹ II Meeting of the Regional Table, Thessalonica, 8 June 2000: Record of the meeting - www.stabilitypact.org.

Ironically, Moldova became a member on June 28, 2001, two months after the election of the Communist Party to power in Moldova, which had aggressively positioned itself against policies that would westernise the country. It should be emphasized, however, that membership was conditioned on the understanding that Moldova should apply neither for membership status in the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP), nor that the SPSEE platform would be employed in solving the Transdniestrian conflict, thus significantly downgrading Moldovan expectations.

Hence, the rhetoric of European integration was not followed up in practice by successive Moldovan governments in the late 1990s; the institutional structures called for by the Foreign Policy Guidelines (FPG) were not established, and many of the reforms required, including the original Moldova's PCA commitments, were either not introduced or remained unimplemented. Although, the government of Moldova has been relatively consistent in stating its desire to become part of the Stabilization and Association Process, which it regarded as a step to becoming a full member of the EU, it did very little to explore the opportunities offered by membership in the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe, such as concluding free trade agreements with other state-members. One may say that Moldova learned to "talk the talk" of European integration, but found difficult to prove its commitment to "walk the walk".

For a long time, governments in Moldova believed that there was no fundamental contradiction between the pro-CIS and pro-EU policies, and persisted in sending contradictory messages to Brussels and the CIS. The origins of this ambivalent policy were apparently linked to the widespread perception of the gulf between two hostile geo-strategic factors – Russia and expanding NATO – among policy-makers in Chisinau, who were very much aware of the lack of positive incentives coming from the West¹⁰. Apparently, the EU Commission's reluctance to accept the country as an equal to its Balkan partners in the SPSEE played its role. Another factor was that Moldova lacked an advocate in the EU who could support the country's needs and aspirations. Although Romania attempted to champion Moldova's European destination, its support could not dispel criticism of Moldovan institutional weaknesses, particularly because the Romanian domestic performance itself was bleak. In addition, after 2000 Romania was increasingly constrained in its relations with Moldova because of its growing prospects in becoming a NATO and EU member, and was inclined thereby to drop its privileged relationship with Moldova, which had become an increasingly "embarrassing neighbour".

In August 2000, the Moldovan Parliament, opposing President Petru Lucinschi, who wanted additional executive powers, decided to change the political system of the country from a presidential to a parliamentary republic. The power struggle, however, led

¹⁰ Ion Stăvilă, *Moldova between East and West: a Paradigm of Foreign Affairs*, Ann Lewis (ed), in 'The EU and Moldova', Federal Trust, 2004, London: '...One tradition, with its particular way of thinking and its economic links as they existed at the end of 1980s, urged us to keep to the 'Euro-Asian way'. At the same time, our history and aspirations inclined us to start our journey back to Europe. The difficulty of this choice was accentuated by the fact that the EU was not ready to respond properly to our expectations...'.
¹¹ For three years after 1998, the Alliance of Democratic Forces (ADR) held a relative majority of seats in Parliament (60 against 40 held by the CPM, with a deputy, Ilie Ilashecu, imprisoned by the separatist regime of Transdniestria).
¹² Infotag, May 11, 2000
¹³ IPP, *Federalization Experiment in Moldova*, Russia and Eurasia Review, Vol.1., No.4, July 16, 2002.
¹⁴ Since 1996, Moldovan Government had provided Transnistria with legal customs stamps for their exports.

to the dissolution of the ruling coalition, the Alliance of Democratic Forces (ADR) and, to elections in early 2001¹¹. After months of political infighting the ADR split and, in the elections, only two parties retained their legislative seats: the Communist Party (CPM) with an overwhelming majority - 50,2%, and the Christian Democrat Popular Party (CDPP) – with 8,18%. The third parliamentary fraction was the Braghis Alliance – with 13,4%, headed by former Prime-Minister Dumitru Braghis. Due to the proportional majority election system, the Communists were allowed to take 71 out of 101 seats in Parliament and elect their own President on the basis of the constitutional changes made in July 2000 by the previous Parliament.

Full integration in the CIS and the revision of the privatisation results were the main platform of the CPM, with the EU almost omitted as a priority. Relations with Russia slightly improved after the 2001 shift in power, but in spite of gaining huge leverages in domestic politics, CPM leaders were less keen to follow their ideas of joining the Russia-Belarus Union after they took office. With the exception of the Interstate Treaty, signed in October 2001 with Russia, they were unable to meet their election promises as even participation in the Euro-Asian Economic Community in May 2002 was restricted to Moldova's joining only as observer. The same happened one year later, in September 18-19, 2003, when Moldova was not even invited to join the Economic Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) made up of Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus. The perceived exclusion or marginalization by the CIS big four seriously affected the self-esteem of the Communist rulers in Moldova, and they felt betrayed. Returning from Yalta, the Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin commented exiguously on the EFTA stating that this was a result of overall CIS failure, which proved to be a distrustful, ineffective and unstable club of states.

Criticism of the CIS was a prelude towards reviving the EU commitment. Ironically, it was the same CPM leadership, which claimed during the election campaign that Moldova's integration with the EU as a "crazy undertaking" and a "delirious idea" now declared that there were to be no more illusions about the CIS, and that Moldova now had to hurry up in implementing its pro-EU stance¹².

Many have seen this turnabout as a result of failure to exploit positive links with Moscow in settling the Transdniestrian conflict, which, despite new Moldovan concessions, including acceptance of an 'impending federalization' by the CPM leaders, little progress nevertheless was registered¹³. Aiming to pressure the separatist regime in Tiraspol, the Moldovan Government introduced new custom stamps¹⁴, following its WTO membership in May 2001, and officially requested Ukraine's permission to deploy joint customs and border controls on Ukrainian territory, which Ukraine declined. Having no other tools

to effectively control the entire border with Ukraine, which allows the Transnistrian regime almost unrestricted possibilities to enrich itself from illegal border activities, Chisinau decided to address its complicated security issues through the emerging ENP instrument¹⁵. Caught between Russia's "near abroad" and the EU's "neighbourhood", Chisinau declared itself in favour of the EU.

2. EU Neighbourhood Policy: rediscovering European identities

In spring 2002, British Foreign Minister Jack Straw launched the idea of a "new neighbourhood policy" towards Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus in the post-enlargement context. The Copenhagen EU Council concluded that 'a new framework for political dialogue and economic cooperation must be set up with countries which will become neighbours of an enlarged EU', and, on March 11, 2003, the European Commission issued a Communication on EU's relations towards its Eastern and southern Mediterranean¹⁶ neighbours after enlargement, with the objective of "promoting regional and sub-regional co-operation, political stability and economic development"¹⁷. The long-term aim of the ENP is to establish close relations similar to those enjoyed by the EFTA states in the European Economic Area (EEA). The EFTA states, however, enjoy considerable participation in EU institutions in various ways, while no role in EU institutions is envisioned for the countries covered by the ENP.

Nevertheless, the EU assumes a great deal of responsibility in order to "encourage economic and political reforms, improve human rights and institutional performances, while avoiding creating new divides between the Union and its neighbours"¹⁸. It is expected that the new status would provide them with several benefits, in particular: free trade asymmetric agreements with the EU, free movement of capital, and facilitated access of some parts of the population to the Schengen area. In addition to these very appealing promises, one may also notice that often top EU top officials see the role of the new neighbours as barely disguised buffer-states aiming to shield the EU from unstable and potentially risky areas, with Turkey guarding the EU from the Middle East, and Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus - from Russia.

¹⁵ Nicu Popescu, The EU and Transnistrian settlement, www.azi.md, Moldova Azi, June 23, 2003.

¹⁶ Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia.

¹⁷ Commission Communication: *Wider Europe — Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*. March 11, 2003, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

¹⁸ The Wider Europe initiative does not apply to the western Balkans and Turkey, who are offered an open-door policy of future membership. North Africa and the Middle East are not geographically European and therefore membership is not an issue (Morocco was politely told after applying that it was not "European."). The initiative is seen by the EU as a significant step to improve the community's interventions at its external borders after enlargement, and it mostly fit into the expected mandate of the next mandate of the newly elected European Council.

EU officials reject any particular association between joining the ENP and the question of possible EU accession¹⁹. To employ a formula very popular in Brussels, the EU is ready to provide "everything but institutions" (Romano Prodi, 2003), or that Wider Europe will fulfil its obligations in granting four freedoms (free circulation of goods, services, capitals and persons) in exchange for certain policies. Many top officials in Brussels see no room for newcomers after the projected 2007 last wave, saying that any particular exception could endanger the very unity of the EU, while the possible accession of Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova "would paralyse governance by creating either chaos or a bureaucratic monstrosity in Brussels"²⁰. Both Moldovan and Ukrainian officials were not impressed by this approach, but apparently they could not but accept the modest offer, keeping in mind that new battles, sooner or later, will be on hand to help gain further concessions towards the aspired EU membership.

The EU vision on future relations with its neighbours is to discard any attempt from their side to apply for association membership. Instead, the EU is ready to deliver a number of compensatory benefits that would ease their frustrations. The new policy will create, however, new dividing lines between the new neighbours and states that have already received EU membership (Poland, Baltic States, etc) or are in the process of finalizing the accession (Romania, Bulgaria). Security control on the borders with Moldova will result in prohibiting Moldovan citizens to move freely into neighbouring Romania, Bulgaria or Poland. Proper "neighbouring packages", hence, may be useful in order to diminish, not increase the distance between the EU and its new neighbours. Therefore, despite good relations between Moldova and the EU, Moldova's citizens feel themselves alienated from European institutions, and isolation is generally resented²¹. The visa is still a luxury to be received by most citizens and, because very few foreign embassies exist in Moldova, citizens must travel to Budapest, Kiev, Bucharest, Moscow or Sofia in order to apply for visas. Usually the procedures last from one week to several months and Moldovan citizens often are treated with neglect or even open hostility.

After seven years of uneasy talks the EU signed a wide-ranging association agreement with Syria in October 2004 prompting observers to see the rejection of allowing Moldova to follow a similar path as unfair and discriminatory²². They note also an interpretation gap between the EU's proposals and what the new neighbours claim they have understood. In Chisinau's view, the ENP is a "gateway towards EU integration", and was interpreted more as a "great" diplomatic breakthrough than a definite "no". Although the EU repeatedly denied Moldovan demands for preparing the groundwork for an association agreement in the medium term, which would acknowledge the possibility of full EU membership

¹⁹ In response, top-ranking EU officials (Patten, Verheugen) stated that integration is not a realistic prospective for the CIS states, like Moldova, Ukraine, and that they should not cultivate unrealistic expectations.

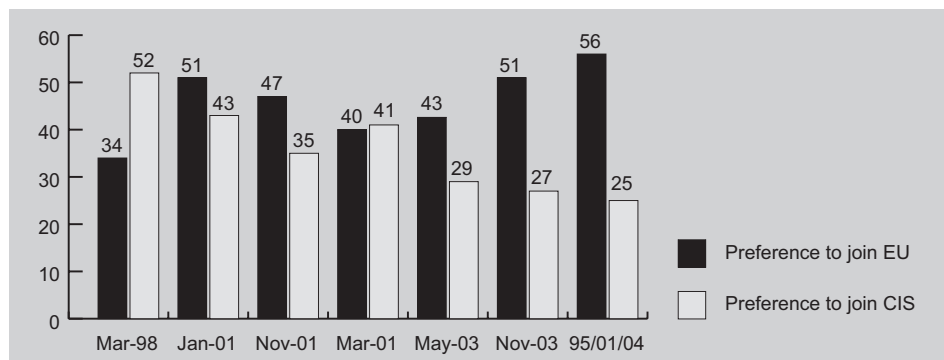
²⁰ Fritz Bolkestein, The limits of Europe. <http://foreignpolicy.org.ua/eng/topic/index.shtml?id=2821>; Sep. 28, 2004.

²¹ 33% of respondents stated in October 2004 that their interests will be negatively affected when Romania will join EU because of the visa limitations, against 27% believing that this will strengthen the existing relations: CIVIS/IDIS.

²² N.Popescu. "The Options of the Republic of Moldova in its relationships with the EU" <http://www.azi.md>, 01.19.04.

in the long term, and the wording of statements of the PCA Cooperation Council are strikingly more restrictive than those addressed to Ukraine, EU-Moldova relations have gradually become much broader than they were initially framed in the 1994 PCA. Non-economic issues referring mainly to justice and home affairs, security and defence issues, and trade have gained more prominence on the agenda of meetings between EU and Moldovan officials in the last two years. Moldovan officials found the pledge included in the Communication of March 11, 2003 of particular relevance, according to which “the EU will take a more active role in seeking conflict settlement in Moldova – in mediation, post-conflict reconstruction and security arrangements”²³, which is particularly appealing in as far as the federal solution has been increasingly discredited in the eyes of civil society and in the West²⁴. The mediators (Russia, Ukraine and OSCE) have been unable to meet the minimal conditions of playing an impartial role in the existing pentagonal negotiations format.

In June 2001, Moldova was invited to join the European Conference, and this was followed in 2002 by new initiatives coming from Brussels to expand the dialogue with Moldova in several other fields. The number of politicians and diplomats who acknowledge the experience of the Baltic States on their successful path towards the EU is increasing, and so is the popular perception that the EU integration is the preferred option for the country. Thus, according to data provided by the Public Opinion Barometer (IPP), support for European integration has reported a growth from 34% to 51%, while for the CIS it has dropped from 52% to 27% between March 1998 and November 2003²⁵. Proceeding from the above, a declaration signed by the majority of Moldovan politicians, 23 political parties and the absolute majority of the MPs, affirmed in July 2002 the will of the political class and society of Moldova to join the EU.



²³ Dov Lynch, “The New Eastern Dimension of the Enlarged EU, in Judy Batt, et al (eds), *Partners and Neighbours: A CSFP for a Wider Europe* (EU ISS Chaillot Paper no.64: Paris, September 2003);

²⁴ Vladimir Socor, “Maastrich must not be another Porto – nor a mini-Yalta”, IASPS Policy Briefings: Geostrategic Perspectives on Eurasia, Nrs, 35, 36, 37. Eurojournal.org, November 2003.

²⁵ Human Development Report on the Republic of Moldova, UNDP/IPP, 2003, pp.39-42.

The adoption of a strategy draft on the integration of the Republic of Moldova to the EU, elaborated at the initiative of the MFA, reflects generally the changes in the paradigm across various social strata and stakeholders of Moldovan society on the final scope of relations with European institutions. An explicit EU perspective and corresponding roadmap are indispensable elements for a sustainable reform process for Moldova. Local observers have emphasized the difficulty in mobilizing society to accept to pay for transition costs while lacking adequate incentives for that; or, to “pass a driving exam without a chance to get a license”. There is no logical explanation why an open-door policy is used for one region of geographic Europe (the western Balkans) and denied to another (the western CIS).

Many EU officials see Moldova as a geopolitical shadow of Russia, and this perhaps is the best explanation why Moldova has played a relatively marginal role in the EU neighbourhood policy. Another example of unintended wrong ideas is the EU’s tacit consent of the role played by Russia in separatist Transdnistria. For years, the EU refrained from responding to Chisinau’s demands for enhanced EU participation in the conflict settlement, while remaining silent over security guarantees or multi-national peacekeeping forces to replace the existing ones, which are at odds with the OSCE and other international organizations’ principles and standards²⁶. Thus, the Country Strategy Paper (2001) states that “without Russia, there is no possibility to achieve a practical settlement of the Transdnistrian conflict” (sic) and further, “Moldova has set its aid to join the EU, but until now, the EU does not consider Moldova to be a potential candidate for accession. Since the largest markets are in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, Moldova should maintain close relationships with these countries...” The Commission of March 11, 2003, reiterates at large the same approach when stating that “relations of the EU with Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova will be developed considering the priorities of Russia”²⁷.

In spite of their nostalgic views and old-fashioned policies that allowed the Communists to win elections in February 2001, even they soon realized that there was no viable alternative for the country unless it will become firmly anchored towards a EU long-term membership trajectory. In September 2002, President Voronin launched an initiative establishing political and administrative structures tasked with the coordination of EU policy, even though this stems from the assumption that it is not yet needed by the MFA. On Nov. 13, 2002, a National Commission for EU integration was set up, and one year later, in September 2003, Moldova presented Brussels with a Concept for the Integration of Moldova into the EU. This is of course a very much delayed start and, perhaps, a unique if not the last chance for Moldova “to connect its antique thoroughfares to the rails of the European Express”²⁸.

²⁶ Nicolae Chirtoaca, “Moldova: Reform Requirements”, in *Security-Sector Reform and Transparency-Building*, Harmonie Papers 17, CESS, 2004, pp.93-102.

²⁷ European Commission, WE/Neighbourhood. COM (2003) 104 final, March 11, 2003.

²⁸ Gheorghe Cojocaru, “Russia’s ‘near abroad’ or EU’s ‘new neighbourhood’?”, Moldova Azi, <http://www.azi.md/comment?ID=27101>.

Given the long tradition of history and cultural heritage of belonging to Europe, the objective set up by the Concept is natural and justified, but this is exactly what EU is denying to Moldova – the prospect of firm integration with the EU. Despite repeated claims that EU integration is an overarching objective of the whole society and state of Moldova, the Concept of European Integration went for instance to the EU without any broad discussion at all²⁹. It underlines the official vision of the state on the imperative urgency of joining EU institutions, having as a major task to define “the place of Moldova in the broader integrationist waves on the European continent, setting up the most effective ways for EU integration, as well as the main tasks, stages and responsibilities to be accepted as an accession member to the EU”.

An annual action plan for matching the *acquis communautaire* had been planned, but then the invitation to draft individual Action Plans within the framework of the Wider Europe was proposed by the EU. Indeed, in spite of the deepening and widening of EU-Moldova relations by the end of the 1990s, this period witnessed a relative marginalization of Moldova in EU policy towards non-EU European states. Since March 2003, when it launched the Wider Europe Neighbourhood Policy, the EU has repeatedly changed the far-reaching dimensions of cooperation with its proximate neighbours. Moldovan officials agreed that the ENP offers an ambitious and realistic framework for strengthening relationships, and thereafter, tried very hard to negotiate a Plans of Action based on the premises of the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) dimension, even though this was not recognized by the EU. As mentioned earlier, EU officials denied any link between the invitation to joint ENP and the question of possible EU accession³⁰. But, the EU enlargement “godfather”, Commissioner Gunter Verheugen, who called Moldova in 2002 a “quasi-dictatorial regime”, asked Moldova in December 2003 “to follow the ENP, and forget about SAP”.

3. Moldova’s Action Plan

The ENP approach is built on the contractual experience of the EU with states that signed the first-generation PCA after 1991, but it includes also a number of peculiarities. In February 2004, an Individual Action Plan (AP) started to be negotiated by the EU and Moldova and both sides approached this work from quite divergent positions. The EU wishes Moldova to develop into a strong and stable country with close links to the Union on the basis of the common values of democracy, rule of law, human rights including freedom of the media, as well as common interests, as defined in the ENP³¹. What Moldova actually needed was to combine the aspired access to the SAP instrument for the Western Balkans and the Wider Europe/ENP strategy and to take advantage of the existing leverages of enhancing its individual capabilities for the Action Plan.

²⁹ Democratia, Oct. 21, 2003, p.10

³⁰ In response, top-ranking EU officials (Patten, Verheugen) stated that integration is not a realistic prospective for the CIS states, like Moldova, Ukraine, and that they should not cultivate unrealistic expectations.

³¹ June 14, 2004: Moldova – EU Council Conclusions

For instance, the ENP is applying the principle of differentiation and urges all its new neighbours to give as much support to their Plans as possible. For this reason, the Action Plan is expected to be tremendously important for Moldova, but only if it will continue to differentiate itself from more powerful neighbours - Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. In addition to the principle of differentiation, the EU is attempting to apply the principle of progressiveness. This means that the EU is going to provide new opportunities of cooperation, while Moldova will use to its advantage its small size. It is obvious that all links, contributions and memberships to the existing initiatives of cooperation in South-eastern Europe may play a very important role in Moldova’s strategy of differentiation from its northern neighbours. A critical assessment of pros and cons is thus needed for cooperation with South East Europe institutions, such as the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe not in the least in order to avoid overstressing Moldova’s capacities in diplomacy and policy-making³².

Although it is difficult to judge the extent of ambitions included in the negotiated Action Plan for Moldova³³, one may be absolutely sure that it will attempt to incorporate similar objectives and instruments that were earlier linked to the Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAA) with the countries generically included in the area of the Western Balkans. The European Commission underlines the need for significant further progress in terms of political, administrative and economic reform in Moldova to implement the Action Plan, its leitmotiv is surely integration, not membership³⁴, which is often perceived in Moldova to be a kind of equalisator for the four countries of the Western CIS: Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova, commensurate with Russia’s aim of “pursuing integration, not membership” in the EU. Nevertheless Chisinau has voiced its firm desire for a joint Action Plan, and a Country Strategy document for EU integration. While speaking in favour of merit-based progress in relations with its new neighbours, the EU should be ready to expect that Moldova, or Ukraine, will attempt to apply the same terms and milestones that propelled the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe states towards association agreements. This does not imply that the Balkan states are more successful, or easier, but in the end they did receive a clear political incentive toward EU accession made on individual merits and not within a group of states be they Western CIS or Baltic States.

The country strategies on European integration may be a good leverage for overcoming the existing incongruence of expectations, which need to be addressed by joint working groups and enhanced dialogue. One might say, for instance, that this is exactly that allowed Croatia to become, in a relatively very short period of time, a prospective candidate

³² Suedosteuropa-Gesellschaft, Widenmayerstr. 49, D-80538 Muenchen.

³³ Until now, September 20, 2004, the Individual Plan of Action Moldova – EU is still a confidential document.

³⁴ “The aim of the new Neighbourhood Policy is therefore to provide a framework for the development of a new relationship which would not, in the medium-term, include the perspective of membership or a role in the Union’s institutions. A response to the practical issues posed by proximity and neighbourhood should be seen as separate from the question of EU accession”. Commission Communication: Wider Europe — Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours, March 11, 2003.

for membership already in 2007 together with Bulgaria and Romania. The gradualist approach is certainly a leading tool of the ENP. But Moldova should not simply demand a Stabilization and Association Process perspective and then lose years in vain waiting for a EU decision. Rather it should use the Action Plan EU-Moldova to move forward in reaching its major domestic targets. But, there is certain dilution of the sense of direction and relevance of Ukraine and Moldova belonging to Europe, which is perhaps the most counterproductive signal from the EU, considering the logic of the transformation under way in the EU itself. The possibility of concluding new *Neighbourhood Agreements* was one of the key elements of the Wider Europe initiative, therefore, it was right to expect that the new approach would certainly eliminate the present-day marginalization of Moldova. As the gradual inclusion of Moldova in other relevant spheres of cooperation with the EU will depend primarily on Moldova's own performances, the pragmatism of the Action Plan will dissolve the initial romantics, converting it into the language of a gradualist strategy of integration.

The ENP shall be seen as a sound basis for internal transformations through a multifaceted alignment to EU's sectorial dimensions, known as the *acquis communautaire*. As long as economic benefits belong to a long-term project, efforts of sectorial integration can be concentrated in other fields, such as Justice, Internal Affairs or Foreign Policy, and/or Common Security. For instance, Moldova may declare that it will associate unilaterally with the EU in the field of Foreign Policy and Common Security, a precedent already employed by several neutral states in the EU (Austria, Finland, Ireland, Sweden). A priority would be the security of the border with Ukraine and Moldova, aiming to curb illegal trafficking and smuggling and to introduce visa checks for citizens of countries other than EU defined neighbours.

The conditionality of domestic reforms and democratisation is surely an important tool of the EU, but many observers say that this might be less convincing for the neighbours considering that previous EU efforts to liberalize trade through the Euro-Mediterranean process, failed to generate more democratisation in North Africa and the Middle East. Therefore, it is not clear at all if this sort of conditionality would bring the desired effects as envisioned in the ENP. It is widely known that some of the EU state members oppose the idea of free circulation of persons and there will be interested lobbies that will want to limit trade with the neighbours in the best tradition of EU protectionist policies. Eventually, an answer could be a sectorial integration of neighbours in various policies of the EU. Apparently, economic benefits from Wider Europe will be only declaratory as long as Moldova does not have a free trade agreement with the EU. Equally, enhanced cooperation with Moldova on Justice and Home Affairs will be elusive if it will be applied only to impose additional restrictions against citizens of non-EU states using Moldova, Ukraine and, perhaps, Belarus, as emigration filters.

Although the initial drafts of the Action Plan portrayed the same structure as the PCA, a technical overview of specific tasks, eventually it was upgraded to the level of a bilateral political treaty, which dispels any doubts about Moldova's possibilities to advance to a higher status in relations with the 25-member bloc once its objectives are achieved. Successful implementation of the Action Plan would support Moldova's aspirations to become soon an associate member of the EU.

Andrei Stratan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated that: "We welcome this decision and regard it as a step forward. Moreover, this is just what we have been proposing all the time. It is high time that we start thinking about what the prospective relations of the EU and Moldova should be like after enlargement"³⁵. President Vladimir Voronin expressed himself even more clear: "the European integration of Moldova is the main strategic document for us, which is superior to all party programs and current tasks of the power branches". One may say however that the real substance of synergies and complementarities shall rely less on the rhetorical level and more on the practical use of policy instruments. Incompatibilities and divergences would not be critical in the short term, but rather in the mid- and long-term objectives of the implementation of the Action Plan.

Of particular relevance will be the following short and medium-term steps and policies to Moldova:

1. Opening up a Moldovan Delegation at the EU Office in Brussels: On 1 January 2005, Moldova will open an EU office in Brussels. Although delayed for several years, the new diplomatic mission is going to have an overarching responsibility and mandate, which derives from the ambitions as laid down in the Action Plan for Moldova.

2. Opening up an EU Delegation in Moldova: As an example of a missed opportunity, Moldovan officials regret that until now, the EU Commission has had no official presence in Moldova despite having offices in 120 other countries around the world, including a recently opened delegation in New Zealand. The establishment of a permanent EU Office in Chisinau has been the subject of a special agreement with the Commission. In fact, the immediate assistance provided to the Action Plan implementation and a quick installation of an EU Delegation in Moldova may have a spillover effect, showing that doors of the union are not closed and long-term prospects will be monitored and will be commensurate to real achievements.

3. EU participation in the conflict settlement process: Active participation of the EU in an expanded format of negotiations will augment Moldova's chances to restore territorial integrity of the country, and help to guarantee the protection of human rights. This may also contribute to the creation of an enabling international format that could secure a long-lasting regional security arrangement based on the democratic choice of the population and demilitarisation of the region under full international scrutiny. Unconditional and complete withdrawal of the Russian military and munitions is a top priority, as well as the disbanding of paramilitary structures that were built under the direct tutelage of the same Russian military. Addressing the long-standing stability and good governance can be achieved primarily through a serious and consistent system of western guarantees, as the Baltic experience explicitly shows. While the quest for security against a possible threat from Russia was the trigger for advancing quick and

³⁵ Interview with Andrei Stratan, Minister of MOF, June 18 (Interfax), 2004.

decisive NATO membership for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, the EU officials appeared to be reluctant to address Moldova's security challenges, whose strategic relevance was ignored if not mismanaged³⁶. The need for imaginative solutions in Moldova towards the EU had to address these particular questions and move cogently towards a radical and multifaceted transformation of the country in line with EU structures.

4. Benchmarking instruments: As laid down by the Copenhagen European Council of June 1993, the candidate countries must meet a set of political and economic criteria, but the same shall be applied to all countries that aspire to achieve an elevated status with the EU on the basis of their comparative merits and commitments. There is a huge demand for transparent and effective assessment criteria and indicators through which progress in implementing the activities of the Action Plan would be systematically assessed and guided, and that must carefully take into account the drawbacks and mistakes of the first-generation PCA. The new EU-Moldova political framework instrument will be properly endowed with a transparent and intelligible monitoring tool, largely participatory, with clear deadlines and benchmarks in the Action Plan to assure commitment. On the basis of clear merit-based criteria, it would be desirable to upgrade the existing EU agreements to the level of association agreements in order to give stronger incentives for implementation of reforms.

5. Home Affairs and Justice argument: Considering that European public opinion is very sensitive to the issue of trans-national crime originating from the ex-USSR, Moldova will fully put to use its comparative advantages. The reputation of ex-Soviet organized crime networks of human trafficking, and prostitution are at odds with any possible early inclusion of Moldova in the EU. A stereotype has been created as a result of the massive "invasion" in the last decade of Russian organized crime in the EU member states, and there are a number of security concerns expressed by the EU regarding ways of protecting itself from threats of this kind. Whatever wrongdoings are associated with Moldova, there is certainly a "Russian tail" in the opinion of EU officials. Trans-border crime is perhaps one of the most serious problems posed to Europeans with enlargement, and Moldova is surely a border-state, an advantageous location for various criminal groups moving from east to west. Moreover, the EU cannot accept the continuation of trafficking of human beings, illegal goods and weapons from Transdnistria. The only possible solution would be to address these threats and persuade the EU that it is able to run successful policies. It would be highly advisable to design and implement a number of policies that would be associated with the EU Justice and Home Affairs. In November 2004, Moldova announced its intention to join the Ohrid Security Process and Mutual Border Management and the regional Initiative on Migration, Asylum and Refugees as an active member of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe³⁷. Curbing criminal networks is surely a very sensitive issue for the EU, and a significant contribution on the part of Moldova in combating organized crime should be welcome. In addition, there are important trends and factors that are positive for Moldova's EU ambitions, including

³⁶ Sven Arnswald and Mathias Jopp, "Implications of Baltic States' EU Membership", NDCFSP, Febr.27, 2003.

³⁷ Chisinau, 8 november (INFOTAG).

those dealing with new security arrangements, EU–Russia relations, and US policies against international terrorism.

6. Action Plan is a clue to further EU talks: Although the EU cannot close the door to Moldova, top EU officials have stated on various occasions that Moldova cannot be seen as an appropriate candidate for accession. Despite tough and unfair statements, one must be sure that any official request from Chisinau for associate status and an immediate rejection by the EU would be not only politically incorrect, but even risky as EU institutes would be blamed for applying a double standards policy. Any decision of this sort would be preceded by a rigorous assessment of the current capacities of Moldova to fulfil the criteria for association, which must be seen as a step ahead. But also, the official statement in the Country Strategy Paper that the EU does not consider Moldova, for the time being, a candidate for accession is discouraging, and a rhetorical incentive to hinder Moldova in applying for association status. But, if Moldova would apply officially to be considered as a candidate for EU membership, at least to remain politically correct, Brussels would have no reasons to refuse it immediately without a plausible argument³⁸. It is obvious and clear that Turkey or former Yugoslavian small states are not more European than Moldova and if, "the refusal of the European vocation for Turkey is impossible and undesirable"³⁹ then the same can be said for a small state that speaks a language of Latin origins, shares European culture, and has Christian faith.

7. Exploring Moldova's competitive advantage: In 2001, Moldova became a full member of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SPSEE), but was not included in the SAP (Stabilization and Association Process). Thus, in spite of some hopes that this membership would clear the question of future EU membership; it appeared more as a mirage that did away with the best of expectations. No attention was paid to the almost desperate solicitations of Moldova to receive at least some signs of support of its future EU trajectory, which were provided, however, to other members of the SPSEE, irrespective of the merits or potential for change: the European Council's Decision in Feira (2000) and Joint EU Meeting with all five Balkan states, were held to announce and ensure a clear perspective of association in the EU for these countries, with, of course, the caveat that this would become realistic only when the Copenhagen criteria are fulfilled. Similar in many respects with the European Agreements for most of the candidate states in Central Europe, the Stabilization and Association Agreements were suitable instruments to secure a number of legal and institutional mechanisms to consolidate the status of their relationship with the EU on the basis of a crystal clear schedule; this has allowed the EU to address each of these countries on an individual basis in order to match them to European standards. Macedonia and Croatia have signed with the EU individual agreements on Stabilization and Association. In the meanwhile, these ideas may find fertile ground within the EU as the integration of the Central and Eastern states will have a positive role in policies that address the implementation of the Moldovan Action Plan.

³⁸ Every European state may join the EU, according to Article 49 of the Political Treaty of the Union.

³⁹ Loukas Tsoukalis, "Noua economie europeană revizuită", traducere din engleză, editura Arc, 2000.

Among the long-term priorities, one can enumerate the following:

1. Perspective for an association agreement leading to full integration in the EU: This is the main instrument, which has assisted reforms in all countries that have joined the EU. A three-steps approach would be helpful for Moldova too: (a) start of the Action Plan Implementation; (b) definition of progress indicators and selecting date for the ratification of a European Agreement on Neighbourhood and Association (EANA) for 2007 and, (3) on the basis of the accomplishments registered, elevation of the status to that of a EU membership candidate in full accordance with Copenhagen criteria of membership. The Action Plan brings the hope that in two to three years, the country will be better positioned to apply for a clearer EU status according to the optimists. Others claim that criteria for assessing the Target Plan of the actions are still vaguely defined. However, the resources and ambitions in the ENP already play a large role in creating incentives for domestic transformation, therefore the political elites will be able to measure their contribution in furthering domestic reforms in the political debate towards **full inclusion** of the country in the EU, and not only pronouncing vague and unconvincing integration mantra. This shall gain a significant place in the strategic direction of the country's external and domestic policy reflected in the concept of integration into the European Union already referred to.

2. Free-visa regime with the EU: The EU should proceed to allow certain categories of Moldova's citizens to receive multiple visas (official delegations, parliamentarians, governmental officials, business people, researchers, students, university lecturers, etc.), overcoming the perception of a rigid and obstructive exclusion of Moldova. Also, by legalizing a number of labour migrants already in the EU, a new social perspective for Moldavians already working abroad would be created, as well as establishing a framework of solving labour disputes, and creating labour opportunities and community legislation.

3. Concluding An Asymmetric Trade Agreement with the EU: This would create considerable incentives for trade and cooperation in Transdnistria, so that ordinary people and the business community would be more interested to register as legal economic agents of the Republic of Moldova.

4. Capacity building for the country's performance: Aiming to achieve a successful implementation of the Action Plan would require considerable human capital and resources. Weak administrative capacity is, in part, a reflection of weak democracy. So far, the EU's policy towards the institutional weakness of the non-integrated states has been exclusion. Accomplishment of all objectives also needs an important financial input; therefore, the strategy has to come with an assessment of the financial needs for the implementation of the strategy. A related fundamental question concerns Moldovan doubts as to whether the EU is really committed to Moldova and willing to engage itself more deeply in the handling and resolution of the republic's manifold problems in the areas of conflict management, economic development and human security. Capacity building should include also a full package destined to articulate how good governance should work, and how others associated with EU states succeeded in transforming themselves in a relatively short period of time. Monitoring the functioning of the

democratic institutions, local autonomy and elections under OECD, EU field departments should be adjusted to the specific demands of Moldova.

Obstacles that can influence the implementation of the Action Plan:

The pro-European policy of Moldova has shown many ups and downs since 1991. Public support has been steadily becoming an internal driving force towards EU accession for Moldova. Although lack of progress in reforms and some aspects of foreign and domestic policies caused disappointment or unrealistic expectations, the EU should embark upon a policy of critical engagement and dialogue, by developing new types of cooperation with consistent financial and benchmarking tools. In the meantime, the following obstacles should be addressed:

1. The extra-territorial Soviet legacy: Overt Russian resistance to Moldovan EU accession is one of the most serious obstacles. This Russian policy is due to traditional Russian geopolitics and specific policies toward the "near abroad". This is in conflict with the enlargement of Western European organizations. In spite of being accepted by Moscow, the integration of the Baltic States in the EU and NATO is still perceived by many politicians and officials in Russia as a genuine anti-Russian move, infringing upon Russia's "legitimate rights". The same rhetoric was applied earlier toward the Central European States, when they applied for NATO and EU membership, and is applied today with regard to Moldova's pro-EU ambitions. So far, Russia has employed a wide range of political and economic instruments, stemming from ideological pressure (70% of the printed mass media and 80% of the electronic mass media are Russian-owned or are reprinted/broadcasted directly from Russia) to economic and military blackmail. Apparently, even the fact that a large Russian-speaking minority in Moldova has been directly affected by such pressures does not serve as an argument to renounce this conventional power policy. Often, pro-European statements in Chisinau were immediately penalized in Moscow by increasing the costs of energy or by suspending its delivery, while, at the same time, Russia consistently supplied the separatist regime in Tiraspol with gas and charging Moldova for these supplies. Political pressure was applied to convince Chisinau in accepting a common Euro-Russian foreign policy, which would be more favourable for Moldova⁴⁰ and, in spite of the temptation, politicians in Chisinau resisted only thanks to long-term expectations of EU's enhanced partnership with Moldova.

2. Too big neighbours: Surprising as it may appear, the proclaimed pro-EU course by Ukraine is not favourable to Moldova. First of all, because its official accession may significantly affect the internal cohesion of the EU, as Ukraine could get even a larger number of seats in the EU bodies than Poland, and because of the Polish-Ukrainian partnership, which already is a political given. On Oct. 10, representatives of 11 EU

⁴⁰ <http://www.azi.md>, January 25, 2003.

states undersigned a joint communiqué favouring a European perspective for Ukraine⁴¹, which was followed on Oct. 21 by the finalization of the Ukrainian-EU Action Plan⁴². In particular, the document largely follows the same EU-Moldova Action Plan aiming to enhance domestic reforms and access to EU markets for Ukrainian goods, strengthen trans-border cooperation, and adjust legislation to attract more FDIs. Preparation for accession and, alternatively, bi-lateral negotiations in the same format with these countries might be rather unfavourable to Moldova, as it will last much longer, if not forever. Ukraine is a very large country, in which there is a wide variety of diverging groups that may oppose further EU integration, emphasizing the “Slavic choice” or any other privileged special way that may suspend for an indeterminate time any pro-EU policy. Moreover, it is impossible to see Ukraine as an engine for Moldova’s EU path of integration given the deep internal splits between the state and civil society in both countries, while a hasty pro-EU policy in Ukraine may increase separatist trends. Therefore, Moldova has to enhance its good neighbouring relations and mutual regional cooperation with Ukraine, at the same time as she promotes a competitive policy with regard to EU accession.

3. Exhausted costs for EU enlargement: Money is less important than political dialogue between the EU and Moldova. Realistically speaking, one may disbelieve that the funds directed towards the neighbours will be sufficient to face current domestic challenges since the inclusion of the new members has already created formidable budgetary burdens. Any financial possibilities may appear only after 2007 with the adoption of the next budgetary cycle. The EU’s recent remarks on the need to deepen and finalize accomplished integration should be regarded as a warning message. Apparently there is growing opposition in Europe towards further easternisation of the EU’s membership, eroding thus the moral force for further enlargement. With this decision in mind, the EU would most probably accept new members only in very rare and specific circumstances. The size of Moldova is surely a great benefit, but the geographical dimension of a new member would have costs in political terms, and most probably – it could signify some concessions to Russia or Ukraine for the acceptance of Moldova, perhaps with a limited involvement of these states in the future international format for the conflict settlement in Moldova. Therefore, Chisinau should be so convincing as to make Brussels aware that the South-Eastern dimension of the EU is unfinished without Moldova, and that the secessionist enclave at the border with Ukraine is a threat to the whole ensemble of stability and security in Europe, not only to Moldova. One has to be sure: EU’s active involvement in the conflict resolution will bring immediate positive results, as the separatist regime cannot survive against stronger pressure proportional to the current economic and political weight of the EU in the world.

4. Good neighbourhood benefits: Romania is already a NATO member, and it will join the EU in 2007. This is certainly a strategic advantage for Moldova, which is to be carefully considered and exploited. This would mean that Moldova could benefit from a strategic partnership with Romania in the EU, but this would imply a significant and

strategic reconsideration of Moldova-Romanian relations. The identical nature of both languages and the fact that Romania has already translated the *acquis communautaire* would essentially facilitate the period for community law implementation. Romania would also be a good partner in providing technical assistance and advisory services to Moldova in the accession process. Romania is playing a critical role in the emerging regional security and stability architecture, therefore Moldova’s place and relevance would be a very good argument in shortening the road towards the EU. But Romania’s projected accession in 2007 will also create a real Schengen border on the Prut River, which will dramatically limit the relations between the two states with a Romanian-speaking population, and apparently there are very few remedies to avert this crisis.

5. Abolishing separatism: The war against international terrorist organizations has greatly influenced the trans-Atlantic relations for the better and for the worst. It was the USA that spurred Turkey’s accession to the EU and the EU to become a global security actor. One might see that the relatively quick integration of the Baltic States into NATO and the EU was also the result of a variegated number of U.S political moves against Russian opposition and the EU’s traditional hesitation. Therefore, only with very serious U.S. support can Moldova be able to resolve its major security problems, i.e. by involving the U.S. as a mediator in conflict resolution with Transdnistria. At the same time, Moldova must be on guard against any attempts to link the conflict settlement with the so-called federalization project (similar to the Kozak Plan), which is not and will never be a feasible solution, but merely a freezing of the conflict. Moldova should make further efforts in convincing the international community that instability and regional insecurity are exploited by the separatist regime in order to survive, and that it cannot be a credible partner in future political negotiations. A more active involvement by the USA and the EU is necessary for bringing the separatist leaders to justice and for creating the necessary conditions for the organization of free and democratic elections in Transdnistria.

6. The fading CIS membership: Domestic observers note usually a strong contradiction in the official policy of the Moldovan government to remain simultaneously within two free trade zones. Although, no EU officials ever referred to the current CIS membership as an obstacle in Moldova’s relations with the EU, it served in fact as an excuse to postpone some technical projects, as well as some institutional commitments that were vital to the strengthening of Moldovan statehood⁴³. Politicians thought Moldova can survive only as a successful non-aligned state, ignoring that CIS membership is very much a non-European alignment. The historical decision of the EU to enlarge further east woke up the political class in Moldova, forcing it to reconsider its attitude towards the EU. A special impetus for this reconsideration were the opinion polls, which were largely favourable for an associated membership with the EU while maintaining a sympathetic relationship with traditional partners like Russia and Ukraine. For a very long time, the governments in Moldova thought that there was no fundamental contradiction between the pro-CIS and pro-EU policies, and persisted in sending contradictory messages to both Brussels and

⁴¹ ЕС согласился дать Украине “европейскую перспективу” Корреспондент.net 11 Октября 2004, www.kmu.gov.ua

⁴² Сogласован План действий Украина-ЕС Корреспондент.net 21 Сентября 2004.

⁴³ Gheorghe Cojocaru, *Politica Externă a Republicii Moldova*, Civitas, 2001, p.202.

the CIS. But, as soon as the CIS Summit was hosted in Yalta on September 18-19, 2003 where Moldova was not even invited to join the Economic Free Trade Agreement, matters changed very quickly as already noted. The country's belief in the viability of the CIS was shattered significantly, while support for the EU rose considerably.

4. New incentives for conflict regulation in Moldova: positional deadlocks and challenges

Moldova is today a partitioned state whose sovereign rights are blatantly infringed upon by the illegal stationing of Russian military troops on its territory and unprotected borders with Ukraine. Efforts to reunify the country within a common state have been made since 1992 almost regularly, but the lack of decisive international efforts, apathy of the West, and almost undisputed Russian hegemony throughout the region have nullified most of the country's efforts to resolve its security threats. Limited-scale violence relative to other concurrent conflicts in the ex-Soviet space and an early ceasefire led the EU to regard it as a good example of conflict management for other post-Soviet crises; therefore, the West preferred to get involved only through the OSCE and its mission, which was established in 1993.

Although the EU Council acknowledges that solving the conflict on Transdnistria is key to making further progress towards building a strong and stable Moldova⁴⁴, many analysts perceived the Commission's reluctance to get involved in Moldova as another illustration of the EU's failure to project force, while EU bureaucracy became tangled with the conflicting interests of member nations⁴⁵. As evidence indicates, all other conflicts in the South-East Europe region - in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia, have been or are being resolved under Western auspices with NATO on the ground, and with active EU involvement, promoting the democratisation of these countries and offering them the prospect of joining NATO or the EU⁴⁶. Moldova will be an immediate neighbour of the EU in 2007 and is an aspiring candidate itself. EU participation in the conflict settlement would contribute to the creation of joint Moldavian-Ukrainian border control points with the participation of EU monitoring units.

With the West turning a deaf ear and with no effective capabilities Moldova was not able to defend its sovereignty, mercenaries from Russia and Ukraine⁴⁷ were able to build a powerful military springboard on a thin strip of territory. Following the fait-accomplé argument, the separatist enclave continues to rely heavily on various groups of politicians and oligarchs in both Ukraine and Russia, raising huge earnings that come from drugs,

⁴⁴ EU Council Conclusion on Moldova, June 14, 2004.

⁴⁵ Thomas Fuller, "EU looks on warily as its Eastern neighbours move in", *International Herald Tribune*, April 29, 2004.

⁴⁶ Vladimir Socor, "Why is the West repairing the Old Iron Curtain?", April 16, 2004, *Wall Street Journal Europe*.

⁴⁷ UNA/UNSO paramilitary organizations acted in 1992 as Russian military and Cossacks on behalf of the secessionist regime of Transdnistria. Iulian Chifu, "Diplomatic War in Bessarabia". Bucharest, Paideia, 1997.

human trafficking and arms-smuggling from the ex-USSR military hardware depots⁴⁸. The pro-Russian sentiment in Tiraspol is generously rewarded by Moscow in cash and strategic resources; annually, Transdnistria, which has a population estimated at 425,000, receives almost \$50 million a year in energy subsidies, which have now totalled \$1 billion including interest⁴⁹. In addition to the huge economic and social troubles generated by the separatist regime, the breakaway Transdnistria province turned into an ideal platform for human rights abuses, repression of Moldovan citizens and escalation of serious threats that may easily turn into new military hostilities.

Widely covered in the Moscow mass media, Igor Smirnov, the leader of the secessionist regime, announced his readiness to give military assistance to South-Ossetia and, in spite of the anti-terrorist rhetoric of the Russian Federation, elements of the Transdnistrian military and Cossacks appeared quickly in Tshinvali, fully armed and ready to provide military training to local paramilitary troops, already mobilized by the authorities of that region⁵⁰. One month later, Transdnistrian authorities decreed in July 2004 the closure of the last six surviving Latin-script Moldovan schools in the region, arresting teachers and confiscating educational materials used in the schools. But, in spite of the vociferous statements made by PACE, OSCE and EU⁵¹, most of the schools did not resume their work in September, nor in November, which was condemned as a blatant case of language cleansing, almost similar to ethnic cleansing. Apparently, this was also a reason for President Voronin to announce in July 2004 that federalization is no longer an option and that no more talks will be held with the current leaders of Transdnistria.

During the 2004 Istanbul summit, Russia's Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov used the OSCE's own terms of reference in defending Russia's refusal to withdraw its troops⁵². Although Moscow claims to have the geopolitical monopoly over the conflict in Moldova, the break-away region is turning into a stage where other, more competitive actors may get involved as Moldova becomes increasingly involved into the process of European integration. While the EU security interests in Moldova are legitimate, it is hard to see how the Transdnistrian conflict poses any direct security challenges to Russia, which is 1000 km distant. Russia's presence in Moldova is a matter of ambition, not a vital necessity. Thus, Moldova can become the test for the EU in the use of its peace-support capabilities as an element of the ESDP (European Security and Defence Policy). Meanwhile, the EU's Wider Europe document sets out incentives which it can offer to neighbouring countries in return for concrete progress demonstrating political, economic and institutional reforms.

⁴⁸ Oazu Nantoi, *The Issue of the Conflict in the Eastern Zone of the Republic of Moldova after Maastricht*, November 2004, IPP, www.ipp.md/studii.

⁴⁹ Tod Lindberg, "Turmoil in Transdnistria", June 1, 2004, www.washingtontimes.com.

⁵⁰ Statement of I. Smirnov, June 2: "We were helped in 1991-92 [referring to Russian military and Cossacks' assistance to Transdnistria]. We shall by all means provide such help -- any help that South Ossetia may request" (Russian TV Channel One, June 2). In Vladimir Socor, "South Ossetian leaders speak to Jamestown in Tskhinvali", *Eurasia Monitor*, Thursday, September 2, 2004, Vol. 1, Issue 77; Vladimir Socor, "Transdnistria Offers Military Assistance to South Ossetia, Abkhazia", Monday, 14 June 2004, Vol. 1, Issue 30; "OSCE's Structural Weakness on Display in South Ossetia", Friday, September 3, 2004, Vol. 1, Issue 78.

⁵¹ Brussels, 7 October 2004, Statement by Mrs Marianne MIKKO at the first working session of the European Parliament delegation to the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Cooperation Committee.

⁵² Interfax, June 28, 2004.

Among these incentives proposed is a greater EU political involvement in conflict prevention and crisis management. Things are changing, and change affects the basic paradigms of the EU on security related mechanisms, and on the way the West would like to resolve the frozen conflicts in the proximity of the EU's borders. The increased EU focus on Transnistria has been accompanied, and indeed caused, by a growing awareness of the linkages between the unresolved conflict and Moldova's difficult economic and political situation. The Action Plan Moldova–EU stipulates expressly the “removal of Russian troops and armament from the territory of Moldova as an inseparable element to the settlement of Transnistrian conflict”.

As long as Transnistria remains outside the control of Moldova proper, Moldova itself will not be able to form a viable state and the instability generated will persist. But, next to increasing pressures on the immediate withdrawal of the Russian troops, the EU should be willing to pursue a second step towards the full demilitarisation of the region, by creating a new international format for negotiations. Not one of the conditions that could ensure regional security in the area can be achieved so far as Ukraine or Russia will remain the single guarantors of the settlement. In addition, old guarantors cannot be helpful in providing economic support for the reconstruction of Moldova, the essential condition for long-lasting stability. Political guarantees solely by the Ukraine or the OSCE are not sufficient and, in addition, are clearly undermined by Russian power capabilities.

The EU acknowledges that solving the conflict in Transnistria is key to making further progress towards building a strong and stable Moldovan statehood⁵³, and this is clearly a European-style solution within the European Neighbourhood Policy. In order to achieve a long-lasting regulation of the Transnistrian conflict, Moldova is now requesting active Western involvement, as only EU pressures may secure progressive implementation of the border control with Ukraine, and generate pressures that are almost indispensable for further progress. A complex approach in resolving the conflict is the following:

- Ensuring unconditional withdrawal of the Russian troops and munitions, including demilitarisation of the paramilitary troops, now designated as the local army by Russian diplomats;
- Promoting democracy, rule of law and human rights, freedom of expression and decriminalisation as preconditions for any substantial talks over the status of the region;
- Breaking up vested interests, particularly in Transnistria, now controlled by criminal elements and former KGB elements;
- Strengthening the economic and democratic reforms in Moldova, with obvious benefits deriving from the ENP framework of cooperation with the unified country;
- Settlement of the conflict on the basis of territorial-administrative autonomy within a territorially and politically reintegrated Moldova, under firm and undisputed international/European guarantees.

⁵³ June 14, 2004: EU COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON MOLDOVA (Luxembourg). Since December of 2002 the EU has issued three declarations addressing the situation in Transnistria, which is seen as an almost unprecedented level of attention on its part.

In particular, the EU should actively employ its political, financial and economic weight to influence the current mediators. A Declaration of Stability and Security for the Republic of Moldova was launched in the summer of 2004 by Moldova, aimed at enhancing international guarantees for the unity and inviolability of the country and as of September, the EU, followed by Germany, Romania, and the US have stated their support. Many believe in Chisinau that a clear perspective of EU integration will enable Moldova to use this issue as a paramount argument in favour of further stabilization of the country that would orient the population to seek the advantages of a policy of adjustment to the standards and political criteria of the EU integration process.

In the summer of 2004, the European Court of Human Rights issued a final verdict in the long-running case of a group of Moldovan citizens unlawfully imprisoned by the Transnistrian self-styled judicial authorities, saying *inter alia* that the “Transnistrian incumbent authorities are the creatures of Russia and the Russian military”⁵⁴. With specific reference to the plaintiffs' grievance, the Strasbourg-based court found that “Russia made no attempt to put an end to the applicants' situation brought about by its agents”. This decision and considerable popular sentiment against federalization was another factor that moved Moldova to denounce proposed federalization and led to appeals to the West for support⁵⁵.

Civil society responded quickly to this decision and in September 2004, the “3D's” strategy of demilitarisation, democratisation, and decriminalisation can lay the foundation for a long-standing settlement. The “3D's” strategy's implementation timeline covers a period of four years, and outlines through a Plan of Action the policies and decisions that may lead a resolution of the conflict. Although, EU calls on both parties, in particular the Transnistrian leadership, to act constructively and in good faith towards reaching a settlement and urges the mediators to redouble their efforts to assist in the process, it has always emphasized the recognition of the territorial integrity of Moldova. In addition, the OSCE's role shall be reconsidered and reoriented, for instance, to promote democratic standards, monitor free and fair elections in the area, promote ethnic minorities' integration and the reformation of security structures, etc. The EU's capabilities may also suggest intensified co-operation to combat common security threats, such as trafficking in drugs and human beings, money laundering and corruption. Apparently, the EU sees a way to become more active in the resolution of the conflict in Transnistria as a part of the Action plan with Moldova, and the reasons behind this sentiment are based on:

- Capabilities of the EU to act as the sole actor having the necessary economic, political and security capabilities to enforce a long-lasting settlement of the conflict in Moldova;
- The EU's direct involvement in setting up the conflict regulation mechanisms which upgrade the political standards and criteria shared by the mediators, and would

⁵⁴ The ECHR (July 8, 2004 – No. 349 8.7.2004 ‘Ilascu against Moldova and Russia) verdict found that, from 1991 to date, “The Russian authorities contributed both militarily and politically to the creation of a separatist regime in Transnistria, part of the Republic of Moldova, and they continued to provide military, political and economic support to the separatist regime, thus enabling it to survive [and] strengthening it...The Russian army [is] still stationed in Moldovan territory, in breach of the undertakings to withdraw [it] completely, given by Russia at the OSCE summits in 1999 and 2002...Transnistria remained under the effective authority, or at the very least under the decisive influence of Russia, and survived by virtue of the support that Russia gave it.”

⁵⁵ Vladimir Socor, “An Opportunity On the Dniester”, The Wall Street Journal Europe, October 1-3, 2004.

certainly make them more responsible and consistent with the responsibilities they declare. Thus, the case of Moldova may certainly show to what extent Russia's and Ukraine's commitment towards EU enlargement can be tested and trusted within the wider strategic partnership with EU based on common values and joint interests;

- The EU involvement would bring more stability to the borders with Ukraine, a major incentive for Home Affairs Policy of the EU and a specific action of sectorial integration with the EU strategy. By inviting the EU to monitor border agreements implementation, Moldova may contribute with its own efforts to the Home and Justice Affairs (3rd pillar);
- The EU is the sole credible actor in fighting against organized crime, human trafficking, smuggling of goods, arms and drugs, but the EU can also send a multinational military force to assist the withdrawal of the Russian troops from the region, and disarming of paramilitary units.

A strategy of post-conflict rehabilitation will be particularly demanding for Moldova, after a long decade in which the country has paid high economic, political and social costs of the unresolved conflict. But, this can be seen as a great incentive to the population, and may start as soon as the troops of the Russian Federation are effectively evacuated. This would lead to a stronger and more balanced commitment by the international community, i.e. EU and UN with regard to the new neighbourhood states that have outgrown from the old and ineffective Western CIS mantle.

The EU and Russian Hegemony in Georgia

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Introduction

As a natural connecting route between Asia and Europe, Georgia has an attractive geo-strategic position in the South Caucasus. Because of its geography and geo-economic relevance as a potential trade channel between Asia and Europe, different foreign policy actors, including the EU and USA, became significantly interested in the further development of Georgia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Russia, a former imperial power, had difficulty in accepting the intense involvement of other powers and international organisations in Georgia and in rethinking its role in the South Caucasus. Moscow has failed to find new constructive responses to the emerging geopolitical situation in the region and has been trying to keep Georgia under its influence through its military presence in the country since 1992 and by taking advantage of the frozen conflicts there.

Georgia, while elaborating its independent foreign policy line, has faced the dilemma of distancing itself from Russia while maintaining friendly relations with Moscow. One of the chief tasks of the Georgian Government since independence in 1991 has been to lessen Russian influence within the state. Shevardnadze's attempt to re-invent the role of Russia in Georgia, presenting it as a stabilising hegemonic power, was doomed to failure and served only to bring into question Georgia's Western orientation. Russian pressure in the first half of the 1990s resulted in Georgian concessions to Moscow following the loss of Tbilisi's control over Abkhazia in 1993: the signing of the CIS framework treaty and the acceptance of a Russian military presence in Georgia at the end of 1993 marked Georgia's return to the Russian orbit.

There were two main tasks that Russia, as a stabilising hegemonic power, had to carry out in Georgia as specified in the bilateral military agreements concluded between 1992 and 1995. Russia had to assist Georgia in the resolution of the conflict in Abkhazia and in the formation of a new Georgian army. It is, however, questionable whether Russia fulfilled

this mission. Russian support for Abkhazian and South Ossetian separatism and the stationing of Russian troops without Georgia's consent - together with economic pressure - should be seen as the main features of Russian hegemonic interventionism.

In realising that Moscow still can play a decisive role in the stabilisation of the South Caucasus, the current Government of Georgia is seeking a more constructive Russian role and new forms of co-operation in the spheres of economics, joint border management, and joint anti-terrorist measures. Russian mediation during the crisis in Adjara in Spring 2004 raised hopes within Georgian political circles that Moscow could play a more constructive role in the two breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and also rethink its role in the region of the South Caucasus as a whole¹. However, the recent crisis in South Ossetia, which flared up after attempts by the Georgian Government in August 2004 to stop smuggling to the region through the Roki Pass between South Ossetia and Russia, suggested strongly that Russia is not [yet] ready to rethink its role in Georgia to any significant extent. Russia's support for separatism in Georgia's breakaway regions makes it difficult for Tbilisi to believe in a constructive Russian role. It therefore becomes problematic to elaborate a clear strategy towards Russia that would reflect the real state of affairs with regard to bilateral relations. What is the position of the EU in this bilateral game?

The role of the EU in Georgia, after the EU launched its projects in 1992 in the country, was limited to those economic activities connected with energy transportation from the South Caucasus to Europe. Georgia did not demand a more active EU policy until Saakashvili gained power in 2003. The new Georgian President visited the European capitals immediately after his election as a Head of State in order to signal his Europe-friendly attitude. The appointment of a French citizen of Georgian origin, Salome Zurbishvili, to the post of Georgian Foreign Minister in 2004 marked the political orientation of Georgia towards the EU.

One of the chief tasks of Georgia's new leadership was to clearly define its foreign policy priorities. Georgia's future membership of NATO and her fully-fledged integration into the EU in the long-term are declared primary foreign policy goals of Tbilisi². In the short-term Georgia would like to have a strong political partnership with the EU that would involve the EU in Georgia as a foreign and security policy actor. Moreover, Tbilisi wishes to see the EU as a strategic partner, which is actively involved in the developments in Georgia, and not only as a donor organisation generously supporting Georgia's democratic reforms. In this respect, Georgia's political leadership expects concrete actions from the EU. The Georgian Foreign Minister recently urged the EU to boost its role in the Caucasus region and to hold direct talks with Russia over the border security issues³.

¹ Radio Free Europe, 11 May 2004, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/05/3033012f-e946-44cf-b36b-0abb99889784.html>.

² Speech of the Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili on Presentation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia at the Georgian MFA at: <http://www.european-security.com/index.php?id=4383>.

³ Civil Georgia, 15/09/2004.

One of the genuine constraints on effective co-operation between the EU and Georgia is the fact that the EU policy towards Georgia is not clearly formulated as yet. During his first and last visit to Tbilisi in September 2004, the outgoing Chairman of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, noted that the EU would not interfere in the internal affairs of Georgia and in Russian-Georgian relations. At the same time he stressed that the frozen conflicts must not hinder the reforms in Georgia and recommended that Tbilisi seek better relations with Russia and a peaceful resolution of those conflicts⁴. According to Prodi, Russia does not want an unstable situation in Georgia.

After the anticipated enlargement of the EU, Georgia will become a new neighbour of the wider Europe. Thus the EU cannot afford to keep out of political developments in Georgia. However, the absence of a consistent EU strategy towards Georgia and the whole region of the South Caucasus has led to further misinterpretations with regard to possible EU involvement in the region. This is especially the case in Georgia, whose expectations with regard to early membership of the EU ignore the current reality to a significant extent. After including Georgia in the direct neighbourhood policy in Summer 2004, Georgia's membership of the EU seems unrealistic in the medium-term. The question of possible European involvement in Georgia following the eastward expansion - and to what extent both parties could benefit from this - is of much greater relevance than membership.

There are certain external and internal factors that should be analysed with regard to a new EU strategy in Georgia. The democratic deficit within the country, the unresolved conflicts and the weakness of the state institutions characterise the internal situation and make it difficult for the EU to commit itself to Georgia. Moreover, there is a lack of co-ordination between the international actors involved in Georgia (NATO, USA, Russia, the EU). This article sets out to examine the question of what policies the EU should adopt in Georgia. I will discuss the main features and character of Russian policies in Georgia and the role of the EU in light of the waning Russian hegemony in the country.

The notion of hegemony, with which term I have chosen to describe Russian policies towards Georgia, may be defined as a relationship between two states in which one of these influences and, to a certain extent, controls its counterpart. Such hegemony can be legalised⁵. The impact of the hegemony on the development of the respective [subordinate] state need not be negative. It is held that hegemony is based on the full recognition and acceptance by the controlled state⁶. Russia, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, evolved into the hegemonic power in the post-Soviet landscape. Russia's attempts to legalise its military presence in Georgia and the stationing of its peacekeeping forces in its neighbour's conflict zones should be seen as an attempt by the hegemonic power to underpin its policy line by legal means. Such attempts seem to imply an acceptance of the

⁴ Rustavi 2 Broadcast, September 18 2004.

⁵ As noted by Gerry Simpson, the legalised hegemony means: „the existence within an international society of a powerful elite of states whose superior status is recognised by minor powers as a political fact giving rise to the existence of certain constitutional privileges, rights and duties and whose relations with each other are defined by adherence to a rough principle of sovereign equality”, in: Gerry Simpson, *Great Powers and Outlaw States*, Cambridge 2004, p. 68.

⁶ Heinrich Triepel, *Die Hegemonie-Ein Buch von führenden Staaten*, Stuttgart 1938, p. 141

hegemonic policy by Georgia and thereby guarantee greater international legitimacy. The legitimacy of hegemony in international relations can be measured by the means used by the hegemonic power and the acceptance of those means by the respective [subordinate] states. The likelihood of such acceptance is greater when the hegemony has a positive impact on the state under control. This formula of a constructive and stabilising hegemony should be brought into question in the case of current Russian-Georgian relations.

Today, the circumstances that once determined a strong Georgian link to Russia seem to have changed. Russia, however, is making every effort not to lose its dominant role in the region. Russia is likely to activate and refresh its foreign policy tools in the country. One of the most important reasons for which Russia will have to change her foreign policy priorities and means is the growing EU interest in Georgia and the South Caucasus, where the EU has a strong strategic interest in the energy projects. Moreover, stability in Georgia, which should guarantee security on the future EU border, is something, which increasingly concerns the EU. The political tensions between Georgia and Russia will not facilitate peace and security along the future borders of the EU.

Against the background of current Russian-Georgian relations, it is hard to believe that officials in Brussels do not realise the importance of engineering a shift in the current Russian policy in Georgia. However, it remains unclear whether the EU will be bold enough to play a more active role in Georgia and to contribute to improving the Russian-Georgian relationship. The new Georgian Government is trying to elaborate a more balanced political line towards Russia and, at the same time, to determine a new Georgian policy towards Europe. The EU can take advantage of these changed circumstances. To this end, indeed, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) may be seen as a new opportunity.

EU-Georgia Relations up to 2004

Between 1992 and 1995 the activities of the EU in Georgia were mainly limited to humanitarian and technical assistance through TACIS and ECHO (European Union Humanitarian Office) programmes. This changed after political stabilisation was achieved in the mid-1990s. In 1996 a new stage of co-operation was launched through the signing of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA) between the EU and Georgia, which entered into force in 1999, and which was aimed at enhancing the rule of law and the transition to market economics in Georgia. The scope of the EU-Georgian co-operation until 2001 was set forth in the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement. This document established several co-operation bodies at different institutional levels, but remained, nonetheless, a vague instrument that was unable to fashion any effective mechanism for a full-scale political and strategic partnership between the EU and Georgia, especially with regard to Georgia's *rapprochement* with Europe and the more active role of the EU as a foreign and security policy actor in the country. Between 1996 and 2001 the EU preferred to maintain its presence in Georgia without holding any clear

vision for future EU-Georgian relations.

During this time Georgians tended to see the EU as practising a policy of neglect which they hoped would change with the appointment of the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus in 2001; but these expectations are yet to be realised. The appointment of the Special Representative signalled an increasing EU interest in the South Caucasus; however, this office was not provided with the necessary resources and authority to involve itself effectively in the resolution of the most crucial problems facing Georgia. In the end, the EU established itself as a donor organisation rather than as a political partner of Georgia. Nonetheless, since 2001 there have been some positive signs:

- The appointment of a Special Representative marked the overturning of the EU's post-Soviet inertia towards Georgia as well as its increasing strategic interest in the stability and democratic development of the South Caucasus;
- This was followed by an intensification of the debate on Georgian problems within the EU;
- The EU declared itself ready to put Georgia on the agenda of its relations with Russia more consistently.

Since the "Rose Revolution" of November 2003, when President Shevardnadze was ousted from office, the EU has chosen to support Georgian democratic reforms with substantial financial assistance⁷, and to include South Caucasus in its "New Neighbourhood" policy of Summer 2004, thereby correcting its own omissions at the launch of the programme. In 2003 the South Caucasian states were left outside the direct neighbourhood programme, which showed the reluctance of the EU to devise a strategy for the South Caucasus. This policy caused concern within Georgian society since it was perceived as ignoring the steps that had been taken towards the European political orientation of Georgia and its national interests. The "Rose Revolution" and the developments, which followed the events of November 2004, gave an impetus to the redefining of the new neighbourhood policy in geographical terms. The democratic reforms that the new Government sought to put in place after the "Rose Revolution" motivated the EU to include Georgia in the neighbourhood policy. This event strengthened Georgian expectations that the EU was planning to heighten its low profile in the country⁸.

It is, however, more than questionable whether the inclusion of Georgia in the direct neighbourhood policy of the EU will fill in the existing gaps in EU-Georgian relations. A communication from the Commission, *Paving the way for New Neighbourhood Instrument*, issued on 01.07.03, identifies the objectives of the new neighbourhood policy as follows: Promoting sustainable economic and social development in the border areas; working together to address common challenges, in fields such as environment, public

⁷ On 16th June 2004 the EU Commission pledged 125 million Euro assistance at Georgia Donors' Conference in Brussels; the money is to be spent on rebuilding the state institutions, fighting corruption and reducing poverty.

⁸ The Cabinet of Ministers of Georgia has already approved a National Program of Harmonisation of Georgian Legislation with EU Legislation. In all Ministries there will be a Deputy Minister in charge of EU relations in the relevant area. Georgian government desires to achieve a higher level of integration with the EU. There is a Parliamentary Committee on European Integration, additionally – a newly created Government Commission on European Integration.

health, and the prevention of and fight against organised crime; ensuring efficient and secure borders; promoting local, “people-to-people” type actions⁹. Additionally, the programme has to ensure a stake for partner countries within the common European market. There are, however, certain reasons for which the real value of the ENP for Georgia remains questionable at this stage:

- It remains unclear whether the EU intends to develop substantially new and more effective forms of co-operation and mechanisms with regard to the “hard” security threats in Georgia from which stem other “soft” security risks. As the EU Commission noted the ENP should “...enable the EU and its partners to attain the full benefit of the structures which are in place”¹⁰. This would mean, however, that the reliance of the EU on the existing forms of co-operation remains strong. It is [yet] unclear whether the elaboration of an action plan for Georgia, which should bring Georgia closer to the EU, will change this.
- The new policy of the EU on “Wider Europe”¹¹, including the states, which would presumably never become member states of the EU, is not convincing enough. It is a problematic question as to how much this policy coincides with Georgian expectations towards the EU. There is a capability-expectations gap in this regard.
- It is questionable whether this policy would facilitate the Georgian reforms if we consider that the most powerful incentive - possible Georgian membership of the EU - has been implicitly withdrawn in advance. “The aim of the new Neighbourhood Policy is ... to provide a framework for a new relationship which would not, in the medium-term, include a perspective of membership or a role in the Union’s institutions. A response to the practical issues posed by proximity and neighbourhood should be seen as separate from the question of EU accession”¹².
- Moreover, there is no consistent programme as to how to facilitate Georgia’s participation in the common European market without addressing primary security threats, which endanger the national economy.

Under these circumstances the inclusion of Georgia in the Neighbourhood Policy should not be seen as a step towards the membership of the EU. It should be understood rather as a raw basis for a stronger interdependence of Georgia with the EU and its member states.

In the elections of 2004, in which the Georgian population supported a Western-oriented political leadership, the Georgian Government was mandated to ensure security, economic progress and democracy. In this process Georgia, as a small and weak state has

⁹ See in: http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/com03_393_en.pdf. Dov Lynch, The European Neighbourhood Policy, http://eurojournal.org/files/dov_prague.pdf.

¹⁰ Communication from the Commission, European Neighbourhood Policy – Strategy Paper, in: http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/strategy/Strategy_Paper_EN.pdf.

¹¹ Communication on the Impact of Enlargement on Regions bordering Candidate Countries, Community Action for Border Regions, adopted in July 2001, in: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communic/pdf/borden.pdf.

¹² Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, “Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours”, issued on March 11, 2003, in: http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf.

to lean on either a stronger power or an international institution most suited to its national interests. Thus Georgia is likely to follow the political course of those foreign actors who are able to provide incentives with respect to greater security, economic development and democracy. Georgia sees the EU as one of the major providers of these benefits. Will the EU be able and willing to make significant progress in this regard through its Neighbourhood Policy, and thereby outweigh Russian influence in Georgia?

Russian economic involvement in Georgia and the EU

Russia views the EU as a major economic player and is likely to accept the EU economic presence in the South Caucasus to a significant extent. This does not mean, however, that Russian and European economic interests are compatible in the long-term. The compatibility of economic interests should be assessed in the light of the current situation and the dynamic of possible developments. The EU has a strategic interest in the South Caucasus as an energy corridor and as a route connecting Asia with Europe. The most important economic project of the EU in terms of strategic relevance is TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia), launched in 1993. TRACECA aims to connect the Black and Caspian Seas by means of modern transport and communications systems and to develop an integrated transport infrastructure within the region. This project should facilitate regional co-operation and support the political and economic independence of the regional states by enhancing their capacity to access European and world markets through alternative transport routes¹³. However, the project has yet to achieve its initial strategic goal of diversifying supply routes to Europe.

The second most important project of the EU is INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas to Europe)¹⁴, launched in November 1995. Georgia joined the programme on 22.07.99. It provides for the modernisation and expansion of the energy corridor between Europe and the Caucasus. This project also supports regional co-operation among the participating states and should attract new investments to the region. In addition, the member states of the EU are involved in the BTC (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan) oil pipeline and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzrum gas pipeline projects that will supply Caspian oil and gas to the European markets through Georgia. The construction of Baku-Tbilisi-Erzrum gas pipeline, which should become a significant source of income and enhance the state’s security, will be completed by the year 2006. Under the agreement signed in October 2003 between the Georgian International Oil Corporation (GIOC) and the South Caucasian Pipeline Company (SCPC) the investors will secure the supply of natural gas to Georgia. After the construction of the pipeline, Georgia will receive 5% of the natural gas transported from Azerbaijan (Shah-deniz natural gas field) to Turkey. Furthermore, Georgia will purchase additional volumes of gas at a reduced price – USD 55 per thousand cubic metres during the coming 20 years. Currently, Russia is the only supplier of gas to Georgia - at USD 60 per thousand cubic metres. Consequently, the implementation of the Shah-deniz gas pipeline project would reduce Georgia’s energy dependence on Russia.

¹³ <http://www.traceca-org.org/>.

¹⁴ <http://www.inogate.org/>.

Europe, on the other hand, needs alternative energy routes to reduce its dependence on Russia, and therefore supports the stability in Georgia that would ensure the viability of the energy pipelines. However, it remains highly questionable whether this support is strong enough to bring about a change in the status quo in the country and to ensure lasting stability. By conserving the conflicts for as long as possible in their existing [frozen] state and by neglecting the negative role of Russian influence on the stabilisation of Georgia, a kind of minimal stability might be achieved [in the short-term] which would not, however, correspond to the EU interests in the long run. Furthermore, this minimal stability (as practised by Shevardnadze) the implied goal of which was to keep the state from ultimate meltdown, does not meet the ambitions of the current Georgian Government. The present administration is now attempting to restore the country's territorial integrity and to curb smuggling and criminality in the breakaway regions through effective governmental control.

The energy projects of the EU in Georgia are not extensive enough to eliminate those "hard" security risks facing Georgia; but they may contribute to the strengthening of the Georgian economy. A strong economy is seen as one of the major incentives for the reintegration of breakaway regions into the Georgian state. Additionally, democracy and eventual Georgian membership of the European structures should be viewed as factors that may contribute to the consolidation of Georgian statehood. It must be, however, stressed that the European economic involvement in Georgia in the energy sector is not balanced. Owing largely to the insecurity of the Georgian market for Western investors, the major economic projects of the EU are not underpinned by the active involvement of European business and capital in Georgia.

Enhancing regional security through intensified economic co-operation between the EU and Georgia would be unthinkable without taking into account the competing economic and strategic interests of Russia in the region. Some representatives of the Russian political elite regard the economic initiatives of the EU in Georgia as a direct impediment to Moscow's monopoly in the field of oil production and transportation. Therefore Moscow has no vital interests in their success and is seeking to enhance its "liberal empire" in the South Caucasus through a new economic policy. Moscow realises that the regional countries, especially Georgia, see the economic activities of the EU as a way to lessen their economic and political dependence on Russia. As the integration of the near abroad remains one of the foreign policy priorities of the Kremlin, and the policy of the EU towards the region is not clearly formulated as yet, the Russian political elite does not recognise the EU as a major competitor in its struggle for greater influence in the South Caucasus. Therefore, it continues to exploit its political and economic instruments in this region. Recognising that it controls the situation in the breakaway regions of Georgia to a significant extent and that the current state of EU energy projects will not outweigh immediate Russian influence, Russia is attempting to use this momentum to strengthen its strategic positions in the South Caucasus.

Russia has strong economic instruments to influence developments in Georgia. Moscow remains the exclusive supplier of electricity and gas to Georgia. Moscow's interest in broadening its markets into Turkey and Europe has resulted in the expansion of the Russian energy sector in the country. Russian companies, which have close ties with

the Kremlin, are becoming actively involved in Georgia. During the summer of 2003 the Unified Energy Systems (UES), led by a former member of the Russian Government under Yeltsin – Anatoly Chubais, acquired a dominant position in Georgia's power market. The company purchased 75 % share in the Telasi electricity distribution company, which was formerly owned by a US company AES, which started to do business in Georgia in 1999.

Georgia's dependence on Russia's gas supplies is equally very high. Interruptions in the gas supply by ITERA, a company founded by Gazprom and an exclusive supplier of natural gas to Georgia for the past few years until 2003, were reported to have been used as political pressure by Russia. In May 2003, the Russian firm Gazprom entered the Georgian energy market through a handshake agreement between Shevardnadze and Gazprom chief executive Alexei Miller on strategic co-operation for the next 25 years. Both Parliament and independent experts were excluded from scrutinising the deal. Moreover, the USA viewed Gazprom's expansion in the country as endangering its own Shah-Deniz gas pipeline project. Additionally, the Gazprom deal was assessed as not being as profitable as the Shah-Deniz project. Therefore, Gazprom's entry into the Georgian energy market should be viewed as a part of a strategic game in which the Russian company is attempting to take over Georgia's energy infrastructure.

The increasing dependence of Georgia on Russia in the energy and economic sector could have far-reaching implications for its foreign policy calculations. Georgian politicians are trying to present Russian expansion as a new, constructive form of mutually useful co-operation. Past experience shows, however, that Russia exerted economic pressure on Georgia during the conflict in Abkhazia, while today, against the background of tensions in South Ossetia, Russia continues to flex her economic muscles.

When analysing Russian economic expansion into Georgia, we must attempt to determine what level of stability is suitable to the interests of Russian business in Georgia. If Russia is interested in the Georgian market, does it not mean that Moscow's interest in the stability of the country must also increase? This would be the case to a certain extent. Russia would not wage a new-armed confrontation in the breakaway regions, but would attempt to keep existing conflicts frozen in Georgia's secessionist regions and to delay negotiations on the military bases in order to exert pressure on Tbilisi. This would lead to a Moscow version of stability that would exclude open confrontations with Tbilisi, but whose implication is permanent political pressure and blackmail. The commercial sector in Russia does not seem to be consolidated enough to persuade the Kremlin of the necessity for a new kind of stabilisation in Georgia, which could lead to the consolidation of the Georgian state and the rejection of military means of influence by Russia.

Since the "Rose Revolution" took place in November 2003, the new Georgian Government has been trying to elaborate a new, more balanced economic policy towards Moscow, which should be assessed as a new attempt at a careful and pragmatic *rapprochement* with Russia. Knowing that the BTC and other economic projects remain a thorn in Russia's flesh, Tbilisi is seeking to offer Moscow new economic incentives and establish new forms of constructive co-operation. In a bid to appease Moscow, President Saakashvili, during his first official visit to Russia in February 2004, offered the Kremlin the opportunity to construct a new alternative Russian-Georgian pipeline, which would

pass through the territory of Abkhazia. By doing so, Georgia continued at playing an old game, whose ultimate goal is Russian assistance in restoring the territorial integrity of Georgia.

The representatives of Georgian political leadership are trying to separate the political tensions with Russia from the economic expansion of Russian companies in Georgia, which disregards the true mindset of Russian officials towards a new imperial policy in the region and the existing links between the Kremlin and business representatives. Recent developments in relations between Moscow and Russian business, and Russian economic expansion in the CIS, especially in the Ukraine, show that Moscow is able to mobilise the commercial sector in order to advance its own foreign policy interests within the post-Soviet landscape.

Realising that there were no alternatives at the moment, Georgia attempted to rethink its policy towards Moscow and to offer more incentives. The Georgian Parliament suspended the resolution of 2002, which required the Georgian Government to veto Russia's WTO accession, in February 2004. At the Russian–Georgian business forum on May 28–29, 2004 in Tbilisi, Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania officially invited Russian investments in Georgia. The interest of Russian capital has increased since a Russian businessman of Georgian origin Kakha Bendukidze was appointed to the post of Minister of Economics of Georgia. After this appointment the Government launched a new privatisation policy and is planning to sell off state-run enterprises, including ports and other facilities, which were viewed as strategic only a month earlier. According to the new Minister: “It makes no difference who buys Georgian state-run facilities - Russians, Americans or others. The important thing is to receive as much money as possible from privatising these enterprises.”¹⁵ Considering the lack of interest on the part of Western companies in doing business in Georgia, the new privatisation policy of the Georgian Government is likely to correspond to Moscow's plans towards a “liberal empire”.

Thus the current policy of economic expansion aims at shifting Russian policies from those of a military power to those of a constructive hegemonic power. At the same time, this policy is not consistent. The recent tensions, especially in the breakaway South Ossetia, demonstrate that Russia will not necessarily reject its traditional instruments in order to exert pressure on Tbilisi. The experience of other CIS member states shows, however, that Russia will not hesitate to take over the Georgian economy - including her strategic facilities. Because an increase in Western capital in Georgia is not yet in sight, the possible Russian take-over of the Georgian economy is close to being realised. Therefore, an important task for the EU would be to intensify its economic involvement in Georgia within the ENP and, most of all, to contribute to the political resolution of the existing conflicts.

¹⁵ Civil Georgia, May 31 2004.

Russia as a stabilising hegemonic power - frozen conflicts

A key issue in Russian-Georgian relations is the restoration of effective governmental control over the separatist regions backed by Russia. A real strategic partnership requires a more active involvement of the EU in Georgia. As Vladimir Socor put it: “Strategic partnership will not be viable over the long term with rumps of countries that are open to Russian-orchestrated threats and pressures. Thus, an evolving Euro-Atlantic strategy for this region should bridge the disjunction between security policy priorities and actual security threats. It needs to refocus attention toward the persistent “old-type” threats and reorder its priorities accordingly.”¹⁶

The conflict in South Ossetia broke out in 1991 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In 1992 President Shevardnadze, who replaced Gamsakhurdia after the military coup of January 1992, signed an agreement with Russia, which established a Russian peacekeeping force, and a Quadripartite Joint Commission comprised of Russia, Georgia, South Ossetia and North Ossetia, monitoring the cease-fire. There is no political resolution in sight after 12 years of confrontation and the Russian policy in South Ossetia retains its hegemonic features:

- The authorities in Moscow reject third parties' enhanced involvement in the conflict resolution which would internationalise and professionalise the peacekeeping force;
- The double-standard policy is evidenced by the uncontrolled infiltration of Russian mercenaries, arms and paratroopers from the Russian territory into the conflict zone;
- Moscow has a strong interest in retaining her peacekeeping forces stationed in the conflict zone, while the Georgian leadership questions the neutrality of Russian peacekeeping force and the appropriateness of their staying there¹⁷.
- According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, Russia may not remain indifferent with respect to the security, rights and interests of Russian citizens resident in South Ossetia, and would, if necessary, intervene¹⁸. To that end Moscow has granted and is granting Russian citizenship to the South Ossetians. This can be seen as a tactic of “creeping annexation” of the region to Russia.
- “Presidential foreign policy” of Russia, which formally respects the territorial integrity of Georgia, remains highly ambiguous.

Through its official statements the EU demonstrates a genuine interest in the stability of the entire region¹⁹ and the territorial integrity of Georgia. The EU views the conflict settlement in Georgia as a high priority and declared itself ready in August 2004 to finance the rehabilitation of South Ossetia. There is, however, no direct participation in

¹⁶ Vladimir Socor, Addressing the Hard Security Threat in the Black Sea – South Caucasus Region, at [http://eurojournal.org/more.php?id=A132_0_1_0_M](http://eurojournal.org/more.php?id=A132_0_1_0_Mhttp://eurojournal.org/more.php?id=A132_0_1_0_M)

¹⁷ Statement of the Parliament of Georgia of August 18, 2004, Rustavi 2 broadcast; In his speech at UN General Assembly stressed the Georgian Head of State that the peacekeeping in the breakaway regions of Georgia should be internationalised, at <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=7888>.

¹⁸ Radio “Exo Moskvi”, 30.07.2004.

¹⁹ The Strategy Paper of May 12, 2004 speaks about a strong interest of the European Union in the stability and development of the Southern Caucasus, “in which the EU should take a strong and more active interest”, at http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/strategy/Strategy_Paper_EN.pdf.

the negotiations and no EU mediation in the resolution of the conflict. The activities of the EU Commission in the South Ossetian conflict zone were mainly concentrated on the restoration of the infrastructure and on contributing to confidence building between the two communities. The EU supports the OSCE mission in South Ossetia through both EU funding of small-scale rehabilitation programmes on the ground and, since April 2001, the presence of the European Commission in the Joint Control Commission. Through a Joint Action in the Framework of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the EU assisted in the establishment of a Georgian-Ossetian police force.

The current crisis in South Ossetia showed that the EU and the OSCE does not really possess effective mechanisms to prevent the possible flare-up of the conflict, to lower Russian pressure on Georgia in this matter, or to influence the final outcome. Although the current tensions in South Ossetia may rightly bring into question the constructive mediating role of Russia in this conflict to a significant extent²⁰, a new Georgian initiative on the internationalisation of the peacekeeping forces in the province, which is a key issue with respect to stabilisation, has yet to find effective support in the European seats of government.

Another frozen conflict in Abkhazia stems from a large-scale armed confrontation between the Abkhazian forces and Georgian armed formations in 1992-93. This conflict led to a humanitarian catastrophe and ethnic cleansing directed against the Georgian population of Abkhazia. Russian soldiers and mercenaries were involved in the hostilities on the Abkhazian side. In 1994, after the Georgian withdrawal, a ceasefire agreement was signed between Georgia and Abkhazia with the mediation of Russia, which legitimised a Russian peacekeeping force under a formal authority of the CIS in the province. There is, additionally, a UN Observer Mission (UNOMIG), which monitors the fulfilment of the cease-fire agreement since 1994. The UN, however, did not succeed in the political resolution of the conflict. The Boden Document, elaborated by a German diplomat Dieter Boden serving in Georgia as an official Representative of the UN Secretary General in the late 1990s, which envisaged giving wider constitutional rights to the Abkhazian Autonomous Region within the Georgian Federation, was rejected by the Abkhazians. Since that time the process has been deadlocked.

The Russian role in the conflict settlement aims at retaining the status quo for as long as possible. With the following measures Moscow is seeking to suppress any possibility of status quo change:

- granting Russian citizenship to local residents;
- relaxed visa regimes on the border;
- uncontrolled transportation and railway connection between the border regions of Russia and Sukhumi, the Abkhazian capital;
- retaining the Gudauta military base without the consent of Georgia.

This demonstrates that Russia is not interested in the resolution of the conflict, since resolution would lead to the reintegration of Abkhazia into the Georgian state. Moscow

²⁰ On August 13 the Georgian Parliament adopted a statement, which demands the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from the conflict zone (Civil Georgia, August 13 2004).

prefers to retain two separatist regions under its control for as long as possible. Realising that Georgia is trying to thaw the conflicts, the Kremlin wants to prevent third party involvement in the conflict settlement. In the worst scenario, Moscow would attempt to keep a low-intensity participation of international organisations in the conflict resolution, which would effectively constitute a more subtle way of freezing these conflicts. At the same time, Russian calculations are based on the artificial legitimacy within the CIS, which shield Russia's hegemonic aspirations *vis-à-vis* the international community. Moscow presents itself as the only guarantor of the stability in the conflict zones while, at the same time, downplaying the role and ability of international organisations to deal with frozen conflicts. The Georgian President described the peacekeeping forces as "piece-keepers – there to keep the pieces of the old empire and not the actual peace"²¹. Russia is likely to continue playing this game for the foreseeable future. If there exists no consistent Western approach towards this strategy, Russia could hardly be pushed back from the Caucasus.

The participation of the EU in the peace process in Abkhazia is limited to support to the rehabilitation of the Inguri power complex, which is under Abkhazian and Georgian control. In August 2004 the EU granted 4 Million Euros for Refugees from Abkhazia. Official EU statements in connection with Russian policies in Abkhazia demonstrate its political support for Georgian independence and territorial integrity. This was the case with respect to the visa regimes to Abkhazia. The EU, however, was not able to discuss the Abkhazian problem with Russia consistently nor to suggest alternative solutions to the conflict.

Russian military bases

Recent political tensions between Tbilisi and Moscow have overshadowed the unresolved problem of Russian military bases in Georgia. Since 1991 Russia has maintained four military bases in Georgia. The protection of the sovereignty and security of Georgia was declared as a primary goal of the military bases after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The stationing treaty of 15th September 1995, which was never ratified by the Georgian Parliament, implied a potential external threat to Georgia's sovereignty from which the country had to be protected by Russian soldiers. Moreover, foreign troops had to undertake a responsibility to guarantee peace and stability in the South Caucasus. Furthermore, they had to strengthen the defence capabilities of both contracting parties. In fact, this was a further stage in the concessions policy of Georgia, which entailed *the rapprochement* of Georgia with the true source of the threat. Essentially, it was aimed at the neutralisation of this threat, and, ultimately, at the possible benefits Tbilisi might derive from the potential of Russia in restoring the territorial integrity of Georgia. However, Shevardnadze's policy calculations failed.

²¹ BBC News, "Russian threats alarm Georgia", 14/09/2004.

Today two military bases are stationed in Batumi (Adjara) and Akhalkalaki (Djavakheti). A small-sized military staff is deployed in Tbilisi. According to the official Georgian version, Russia still maintains a military base in Gudauta (Abkhazia) in contravention to the international commitments undertaken by Russia under the Istanbul Declaration in 1999²². Russia had to dismantle the military base in Gudauta in 2001. Russian policy is to delay the negotiations on military bases. If the pressure were to be raised, Russia would be ready to withdraw from Georgia - but at a high price that Georgia alone could not be expected to pay. In the meantime Russian Foreign and Defence Ministries speak about the definition of the legal status of the military bases in Georgia. The linkage of the negotiations on military bases with the elaboration of a new framework agreement between two countries signifies Russian plans to delay the negotiations and, in the end, to legalise Russian military presence.

It must be stressed that the reaction of the EU to Russian policies towards military bases was contained. The EU formally supports Georgia in regard to the timely withdrawal of Russian military bases according to the Istanbul Agreement of 1999²³, but this support has not been reflected in the EU-Russian relations. Some experts downplay the strategic and military relevance of Russian troops in Georgia, disregarding the fact that the Georgian government does not control the military bases and they can become, against the background of current political tensions, a source of destabilisation within the country. In addition, by retaining the military bases Russia would like to draw a line that NATO cannot overstep.

After the OSCE failed to persuade Russia to speed up the military withdrawal from Georgia, the EU seems to be reluctant to take an initiative on this matter. Therefore the EU can put this question on its security policy agenda in the region and express its position towards the presence of Russian troops in Georgia more categorically. Russia is attempting to present the problem of the military bases as an issue of bilateral relations with Georgia, while, at the same time, downplaying the relevance of the Istanbul Agreement from the perspective of international law. The multilateral framework is the only means by which the problem can be solved. Therefore the EU can contribute to the internationalisation of the Russian military withdrawal from Georgia within the OSCE by drawing the attention of the international community to the breaches of international agreements committed by Russia, and by putting the problem of military bases on its agenda with Russia more consistently.

The withdrawal of the military bases from Georgia would create additional social problems and unemployment in the respective regions. The majority of the local population in the district of Akhalkalaki, mainly representatives of the Armenian minority, and in Batumi (Adjara) works for the Russian military. Possible EU involvement in infrastructure rehabilitation and the creation of new workplaces in Akalkalaki and Batumi following Russian military withdrawal could create a basis for enhanced human security in the

²² According to the Joint statement of the Russian Federation and Georgia: "The Russian military bases at Gudauta and Vaziani will be disbanded and withdrawn by July 1 2001. 5. During the year 2000 the two Sides will complete negotiations regarding the duration and modalities of the functioning of the Russian military bases at Batumi and Akhalkalaki and the Russian military facilities within the territory of Georgia", at <http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1990-1999/cfe/cfeinact99e.htm#Anchor-Join-18556>.

²³ http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/osce/stment/06_03/georgia.htm

regions and facilitate fresh confidence-building between national minorities and the governmental authorities of Georgia. If the Georgian state were able to achieve human security, it would positively affect the existing conflicts in Georgia and serve as a conflict-preventive measure.

Past experience shows that the question of minorities is open to misuse in underpinning hegemonic ambitions or different kinds of provocation. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, one of the main features of Russian foreign policy in its "near abroad" was to protect Russian nationals residing in the neighbouring countries - if necessary by military means. This was evidenced during the recent crisis in South Ossetia. The Russian political elite reiterates that Russia would intervene in the case of an armed confrontation in order to protect the lives of Russian nationals. This policy was reflected in the 'friendly relations' agreement between Russia and Georgia of 1994, which never entered into force. It should be noted that the Russian policy of protecting the rights and interests of Russian citizens abroad is not restricted to those emergency situations during which Russian citizens may be directly endangered in their respective states. It seems also to be a general policy in peacetime and is misused as an instrument of hegemonic pressure. The problem is that the Russian approach to enforcing the rights of the Russian nationals abroad by military means remains predominant; this has not been changed after the concept of the "near abroad" was launched in 1992.

The threat of terrorism

From the frozen conflicts in Georgia emanate the "soft" security risks. There are uncontrolled weapons, criminals, drugs and smugglers in the separatist regions of Georgia that may threaten the security of the EU after enlargement. Additionally, the human insecurity in the country may cause problems with immigration into the EU, especially if Turkey's possible membership of the EU is approved. Yet the region could serve as a basis for dealing effectively with new security threats emanating from the Middle East, especially those of international terrorists. Moreover, the stability of the Georgian border is decisive with regard to the conflict in Chechnya. The Caucasus will not become a secure buffer zone for the EU if the situation does not change.

It may be argued that the United States dominates this particular field in Georgia, and that there is no room for EU involvement. The United States is providing overall financial and expert assistance in combating terrorism. The US is helping train Georgian special forces, giving significant military assistance to Georgia, financing special programs aimed at preventing arms proliferation, and supporting the democratic developments in the country. In fact, the EU has no overall approach with regard to new security threats in the region. The EU actions have a sporadic, unsystematic character. The EU could make, however, an indirect contribution. The rule of law mission launched in 2004, which is planning to assist the Georgian law enforcement agencies, regional justice co-operation, and cross-border police governance, could play a positive role with regard to establishing workable preventive mechanisms in Georgia. Additionally, the EU Commission Delegation to

Georgia can participate in those police reforms, which would strengthen the anti-terrorism capabilities of Georgia and bring the Georgian security sector into line with EU standards. The European Commission Delegation in Georgia expressed its willingness to contribute to the demilitarisation of the Interior Ministry and to the conversion of Interior Troops to police support units²⁴. This would be an important step towards a European model of civil-military relations in Georgia. But the most of plans have not been implemented as yet: consequently, their effectiveness can hardly be judged.

Russian policy towards terrorism remains double-sided. Moscow pressed the government in Tbilisi in 2002 to effectively fight the terrorist groups in Pankisi who were entering the region from Chechnya. At the same time, Russia actively facilitates or acquiesces to infiltration of mercenaries into Georgia. Moreover, Russia has violated the Georgian border many times without drawing any effective reaction from the international community. During tensions in Pankisi, Moscow threatened pre-emptive strikes on the territory of Georgia, relying on the Security Council resolution on terrorism adopted after 11.09.01. With this Moscow was trying to use the shifting international approach towards terrorism to boost pressure on Georgia. The EU issued an official statement about Russian plans to launch pre-emptive strikes on the state border of Georgia in which the Russian attitude was criticised. It is thus clear that Moscow's policy of fighting terrorism lacks any credibility.

After the tragedy of Beslan, the Russian Chief of Staff, Yuri Baluyevski, announced on 08.09.04 that Russia reserved the right to carry out pre-emptive strikes on potential terrorist bases worldwide. On 09.09.04, the Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, linked the hostage taking in Beslan to the crisis in South Ossetia. Against this background and considering the fact that the Georgian-Russian state border in the South Ossetian segment is not under a full control of the Georgian authorities, the anti-terrorism policy of Moscow might be misused once again in order to advance Moscow's foreign policy interests in Georgia. In this situation the EU should actively support Georgia's sovereignty and facilitate the prevention of any spillover from Russia's anti-terrorist activity onto Georgian territory by supporting improved border management.

One of the crucial problems in the fight against terrorism is an unsecured state border. Russian border guards controlled Georgian state borders until 1994. After their withdrawal, the Americans assisted the Georgian Government in this area. The EU supported the Georgian border guards through the Joint Actions and also assisted the OSCE in monitoring sections of the Georgian-Russian border. The EU, through a Joint Action in the Framework of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), provided the Georgian Border Guards with the necessary equipment to prevent the spillover of the Chechen conflict into Georgia. Against the background of the current tensions in South Ossetia, the EU should enhance its support for improved border management in Georgia and make cross-border police co-operation possible. The EU can openly support the international monitoring of the South Ossetian segment of the state border. Furthermore, the EU can become actively involved in stabilising the state border of Georgia and monitoring its violations by foreign state or non-state entities.

²⁴ The International Conference Proceedings (unpublished), Democratic Policing, held in Tbilisi on May 5-7, 2004, organised by the EU in cooperation with the International Security Advisory Board (ISAB) and the Georgian Ministry of Interior.

Russian policy towards the international community's involvement in Georgia

As Prof. Heinrich Triepel, a German lawyer, argued in the 1930s, a hegemonic power, as a rule, may seek to shield a small or a weak state from the rest of the world, but this should not contradict the free will of such a state. As long as free will is respected and remains a basis for a bilateral hegemonic relationship, such a relationship would function and the state claiming to be a hegemonic power will succeed in enhancing its influence. If free will is absent, the hegemonic influence begins to decrease. Russian hegemony in Georgia had been declining between 1995 and 2003, but this is set to change in the light of Russian economic expansion. Georgia's return to Russia's sphere of influence can be enforced if no means of conflict resolution or of internationalising the conflict management are found. Moscow realises this and is thus attempting to heighten Georgia's international isolation.

One of the features of Russian hegemonic policy is implied in the officially declared interest of Russia not to admit the stationing of foreign troops on Georgian soil and to restrict the military co-operation of Georgia with NATO member countries, especially the United States²⁵. Thus Russia is trying to curb the foreign policy freedom of Georgia and, thereby, its sovereignty. The Russian reaction to the signing of a US-Georgian military agreement in 2003, and to NATO involvement in the country since 1994, has been negative. The statements of the Foreign Ministry and Parliament of Russia made clear that the Moscow political elite does not want to see American military instructors in Georgia. Yet the Russian perception of NATO's role in Georgia is contradictory. Joint communiqués of the US-Russia and NATO-Russia summits in May 2002 stated that the US and the NATO would, jointly with Russia, undertake peacekeeping operations and conflict resolution efforts in Moldova, Georgia and in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. These plans, however, were not implemented. The failure to come to an agreement on the Republic of Moldova and Georgia within the NATO-Russia Council in Brussels demonstrated that co-operation between Russia and NATO in this regard is highly unlikely to bear fruit. The NATO-Russia Council can hardly be viewed as a body that would take responsibility for such joint operations.

A more realistic framework of co-operation would involve the OSCE, through which Russia is trying to implement her security policy interests most extensively. But in light of Russian criticism of the OSCE, this solution should also be brought into question. The Georgian proposal to extend the mandate of the OSCE, by which the organisation would take the lead in conflict resolution in South Ossetia, has been rejected by Moscow. According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, these kinds of proposals "aim at switching attention from the major problem and hinder reaching [a] decision that would put an end to the escalation of tensions in the region"²⁶. It must be however stressed that the OSCE as a sole player without an active engagement of other big players such as the EU, NATO and USA would hardly be able to achieve a political resolution to the frozen conflicts in Georgia.

²⁵ <http://english.pravda.ru/politics/2003/04/04/45597.html>.

²⁶ Civil Georgia, 31.07.2004.

The role of ENP

The ENP, in its current format, is not likely to change the state of affairs with respect to the hard security threats in the medium-term. Although the EU has emerged as a security actor and enhanced its military dimension over the years, it has a limited capacity and political willingness to provide for the security of Georgia. The EU continues to play a secondary role in the settlement of Georgian frozen conflicts. Today, the EU is reluctant to take the initiative and play a more active role in the conflict settlement.

As the last decade has shown, the indisputable Russian monopoly on peace management in Georgia is no longer tolerable. A more consistent Europeanisation²⁷ of the framework for the conflict resolution would contribute positively to further settlement and stabilisation. As a major economic partner of Russia²⁸, the EU can, in the long-term, facilitate the shifting of Russian priorities.

The closer co-operation with Washington, which has strong interests in conflict resolution in Georgia, would clearly be a more effective way to press Russia. The EU might contribute by initiating a discussion on “effective multilateralism” in Georgia in co-operation with the United States. Such a policy could be acceptable for Moscow, which fears increasing American dominance in the South Caucasus. The EU involvement could make the American involvement in the South Caucasus more acceptable for Moscow.

The policy of Europeanisation could include the following: the EU could introduce some element of mediation in its activities in the conflict zones and launch a discussion on the possible deployment of European peacekeepers and police forces - especially in South Ossetia - within the framework of the OSCE. Since the Russian side has accused the OSCE of bias in South Ossetia²⁹, and the UN settlement plan towards Abkhazia has been blocked³⁰, the EU would be able to bring the fresh energy needed to assure effective multilateralism in conflict resolution in Georgia. Such a policy would coincide with the declared political aim of the EU to take more responsibility in ensuring security in its new neighbourhood³¹, and would also help prove its credibility as a security policy actor by enhancing its crisis management capabilities. This policy would have a significant democratic legitimacy within Georgia. Georgian officials are showing a political willingness to see the EU involved in addressing the primary security concerns of the country. Moreover, the civilian society of Georgia would also approve more active EU involvement.

²⁷ The Europeanisation will be defined as „an instrument of conflict resolution”... “the cultural, legal, institutional and economic impact of European integration on domestic structures” which “can contribute to conflict resolution by triggering critical political, security, economic and societal developments in a manner that can positively transform the interests of the conflict parties”, in: European Institutional Models as Instruments of Conflict Resolution in the Divided States of the European Periphery, CEPS Working Document No. 195, http://shop.ceps.be/BookDetail.php?item_id=1046.

²⁸ Common Strategy of the European Union of 4 June 1999 on Russia, http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ceeca/com_strat/russia_99.pdf.

²⁹ In a statement issued on July 21, the Russian Foreign Ministry argued that: “from the very beginning, they (OSCE – M. V.) have not been able to adequately assess the situation and the reasons standing behind its escalation. As a consequence, their actions have not been effective enough. But, what is most important, they have been unbalanced... the organisation should adopt a clear position regarding the need to prevent an escalation of the conflict and to implement the agreements that are governed by international law”.

³⁰ Concerning the current situation in Abkhazia see the Georgian Ambassador’s Letter to the UN Security Council over Abkhazia, in: <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=7508>; “Annan laments lack of substantive dialogue in Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict”, at <http://www.mfa.gov.ge/cgi-bin/news/viewnews.cgi?category=all&id=1090917358>.

³¹ See the Recommendation of the European Parliament to the Council on the EU policy towards the South Caucasus, lit. Q, in: <http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?L=EN&OBJID=67241&LEVEL=4&MODE=SIP&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N>.

Is a new Russian strategy possible under Putin?

Some leading politicians in Russia seem to realise that Moscow has to change its “strategy” toward the South Caucasus and the post-Soviet republics in general. It is evident that a hegemonic policy by military means alone will have no consistent success in Georgia, and must be replaced by other incentives such as economic co-operation and assistance in democratic development and conflict resolution in the country. The EU can facilitate this process.

Is modern Russia genuinely able to implement a new strategy and to provide new incentives for her partners more consistently? There are both militant hard-liners and supporters of a balanced diplomacy in Moscow. According to some observers, Russia should present herself as an equal partner respectful of the sovereignty of other equal partners. Some politicians argue that Russia should support democratic reforms in the countries of the post-Soviet landscape and thereby eliminate the need for them to seek support from the West. However, the notion of Russia’s autocratic and totalitarian past, together with deficiencies in the exercise of democratic processes in the post-Soviet era, precludes the possibility of Moscow’s emergence as a liberalising force with respect to democratic reforms in Georgia.

The crisis in Georgia and, particularly, direct and indirect support to the separatists demonstrates that a double-standard approach still dominates among the Russian political elite. A strong willingness to regain all the attributes of a great power in its near abroad still holds sway in the leading political circles in Russia, and this is likely to remain the case for the years to come. On the other hand, Russia does not have sufficient resources to carry out this policy. Thus, if pragmatism prevails in Moscow, co-operation with the EU in the South Caucasus could prove beneficial for both sides.

Although the EU is not a security actor in the region, it could play a positive role in neutralising negative Russian influence on the basis of its strategic partnership with Russia, and facilitate a better Russian-Georgian relationship. The question is whether the EU is truly able to balance Russian dominance in the South Caucasus, and whether its remedies and incentives would be acceptable for Russia. The EU is not a military alliance like NATO, and its enhanced presence in Georgia would not pose an immediate threat to Russian strategic interest. Additionally, Russia is interested in economic co-operation and trade with the EU. Therefore, Moscow would try to develop a stable relationship with the EU.

In the final analysis, the EU, acting as a sole foreign and security policy actor, would have limited success in the resolution of the major security problems in Georgia. The EU should co-operate with other major players in the region, especially with the United States, NATO and the OSCE. At the same time, EU assistance should be provided to the UN in Georgia. The EU can positively influence the creation of an international framework guaranteeing effective multilateralism and a balance of interests in economic, political and military terms while, at the same time, strengthening Georgian independence and sovereignty.

Concluding remarks

- Through its new economic initiatives, the EU can foster a *rapprochement* between the countries of the South Caucasus. The EU can fund and enhance energy projects in the region in order to strengthen the independence of regional states.
- Another option for the EU policy in Georgia might be to support democratic development in the country, especially in the area of security sector governance. The EU could contribute to the reforming of Georgian border guards and police.
- At the same time, it can be tested in which areas co-operation with Russia would be most realistic and effective.
- The EU can facilitate the internationalisation of conflict management with respect to the frozen conflicts in Georgia and include this question in the dialogue with Russia more comprehensively.
- The EU can test the introduction of the Bosnian model of peacekeeping³² in South Ossetia, guaranteeing constructive co-operation between the Georgian and Ossetian police forces, and the possibility of deployment of the multinational force in Abkhazia.
- The possible role of the EU in this regard could be considered equally in terms of conflict prevention or post-conflict rehabilitation of the country, strengthening the civilian dimension of security policy. However, these elements should be included in a more overall approach with regard to the conflict settlement.
- The EU can persuade Russia to withdraw from Georgia and provide financial support and rehabilitation after military withdrawal.
- The EU should retain the prospect of membership as an important incentive, for instance, with respect to conflict resolution and establishing good governance and a market economy in Georgia.
- Elaborating a country tailored strategy towards the soft security risks should be put on the agenda of the EU.
- Building a stronger awareness of human and minority rights should become one of the priorities of the EU in its dealings with the Georgian Government. The EU can support the enhancement of political participation of individuals and national minorities, as well as democratic control over executive power. Furthermore, the EU can include the protection of human rights and the democratic control of the military in the conditions for the development aid to Georgia.
- The EU can increase co-ordination with other international actors.

³² The European Union Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the first civilian crisis management operation under the European Security and Defence Policy. One of the main mission objectives is the fight against organised crime and corruption.