



SÜDOSTEUROPA- GESELLSCHAFT

in cooperation with

SWP

Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik
German Institute for International and Security Affairs

supported by



Stabilitätspakt für Südosteuropa
Gefördert durch Deutschland
Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe
Sponsored by Germany

International Workshop

The Western Balkans: Interests and Policies of the EU, Russia and Turkey

Berlin, 16 – 17 October, 2014

Conference report by: Franz-Lothar Altmann, Hansjörg Brey, Johanna Deimel, Wim van Meurs, Dušan Reljić, Michel Tannas

Introduction

The Western Balkans went through terrible wars resulting from the collapse of Yugoslavia. In the aftermath of the wars the EU offered its membership perspective to the Southeast European or Western Balkans (WB) region, while emphasizing the need of reconciliation, of stability, democracy and of economic prosperity. There are no doubts that the EU perspective of the Western Balkans is the driving force for reforms and stability in the region. The EU remains highly committed to the Thessaloniki 2003 agenda. However, today in some WB countries, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Macedonia, the EU integration process has come to a standstill. At the same time, the crisis in the Ukraine has become a matter of heightened concern. Russia's annexation of the Crimea was generally regarded as a violation of territorial integrity and sovereignty and as a fundamental breach of international law, no less so in the Western Balkans.

Neither Russia nor Turkey can offer an alternative to EU integration. EU and Turkey share the same goal, i.e. stability and prosperity of the region. Turkey has a historic legacy in the Western Balkan countries and today links itself not exclusively with Muslim communities (Albanians and Bosnians). Economically Turkey is an important partner for the region at large. Turkey made it very clear that there is no alternative for EU integration of the Western Balkans and that its presence is not in competition, but complementary to EU rapprochement.

Russia also has historical and cultural ties with the region stemming from common cultural and historical Slavic legacies. Russia is of strategic importance for the Western Balkans in terms of the

transit of oil and gas but also as an export market. Putin had called the Western Balkans “a sphere of particular interest”, the most obvious example is the South Stream pipeline project. At the same time, the EU exerts pressure on the Western Balkan countries to follow its lead and heed EU foreign policy guidelines including restrictive measures and sanctions adopted in the course of the Ukrainian crisis.

Panel I: Cold War 2.0? Revival of a Systemic Confrontation and Emergence of a New World Order?

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall 25 years ago cooperation between Russia and the West instead of confrontation seemed to be the leitmotiv. Yet, the policies of the West since 1991 were perceived in Russia as if the West has been using Russia's temporary weakness for its own interest - EU enlargement, NATO enlargement, the missile defense program of Georg W. Bush, intervention in the Kosovo war, the Iraq war, etc. Even Putin's alarmist speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007 failed to produce any real change in Western policies towards Russia. Therefore, Russia had the impression of being increasingly isolated in permanence. The Ukrainian crisis has shown that the EU was able to act in a very difficult situation and was able to find a compromise within the EU-28 in their response to the Russian annexation of the Crimea.

Despite reminiscences of the **Cold War**, the current situation has marked **differences**, identified during the workshop by various participants:

- China is reluctant to side with Russia, and the UN General Assembly was quite clear on the Crimea as well. The USA are absent, the crisis is all about the Ukraine and thus a European-Russian issue. So we have a bipolar situation with the EU on one side and Russia on the other.
- There is no political block-building so far, although Russia made several attempts to create new political structures in the post-Soviet space, e.g. the recent Eurasian Union. Russia's neighbors have focused on economic cooperation avoiding political alliances dominated by Russia.
- Russia does not challenge western market economies. Quite to the contrary; Russia's integration into the global market is unprecedented.
- There is no clash of ideologies that results in a systemic confrontation, even though European values and lifestyle are perceived as a threat.
- Finally, the EU and the West are too interdependent with Russia to afford a crisis to last.

The new conflict, according to one opinion, is a result of the refusal to accept the new balance of power. In historical terms what has happened in the last 15 years is a re-arrangement of the post-Soviet space and the post-Ottoman East, including the emergence of the Kurdish question. It was stated by one representative from the Balkans that not only in terms of territory Russia has been the greatest investor in incomplete states. Russian policy, so the discussant, has been actually destructing states. The test case in this view was Mitrovica since 1999. Ukraine has experienced the destruction of a functioning entity as well. The past 15 years Russia has successfully prevented the

legitimacy of Kosovo and its territorial integrity and has destructed the integrity of independent Georgia, the speaker claimed. It has redrawn borders over the past few months and has purposively destabilized Ukraine. Also it was stated, that it is easier to destabilize liberal democracies, because they need institutions and consolidation time. From this point of view it is also easier to create incomplete states than to create functional new ones. Yet, the Europeans do not recognize that liberal democracy is not a global trend and that it does not come as given. Finally, the confrontation happens between **democracy** and **non-democratic systems**, as well as political Islam attacking liberal democracies in the post-Ottoman world.

To another opinion, different to the previous systemic confrontation, today the lines go between “**Islamization** and **secular state**”, and between a totalitarian secular state and a western style democracy. The Islamization process is becoming an important factor in the Western Islamic countries and it seems that the struggle within the Western Islamic countries will be a determining factor of the new world order. If Islamization goes on and if radical Islam succeeds in the Western part of the Islamic world, it will have a major impact on the world order. Turkey is still excluded, because it has kept its secular constitution. But Turkey is at a crossroad and the country again will be very important in the new world order if Turkey stays strongly within the Western alliance. In the coming years two factors will determine Turkish relations with the EU and the region - Kurdish oil and the Kurdish issue, as well as the Cyprus issue and Cyprus gas.

It was further stated that Putin’s Russia has tried to bring international relations in a **multi-polar world** basically back to New York to the UN Security Council and not to Brussels. The main problem is according to one statement that Russia is not a factor of stability and not a creative power either. Furthermore, Putin’s policy remains unpredictable, which marks the real threat for partnership and trust between the EU and the Russian Federation. And, Russia is seeking compensation for its domestic weaknesses. Also the EU is driven by its own problems and lacks coherence in defining its position towards Russia.

As elaborated by one participant the direction of the emerging **new world order** could be described by the parallel trends of an emerging multipolar system in the North and failing states in the South. Globalization ties these two halves of the world together, i.e. problems of the multi-polarity are spilling over to the South, and the problems of failing states in the South are increasingly challenging the states and the population in the North.

Recommendations: The international community, not least the EU, needs to restore basic trust and cooperation on political, economic and security issues. War on terror might become a joint endeavor of Russia and the West. Arguably, the EU needs more realism than idealism: Frankly, does the Association Agreement mean that the Ukraine will be part of Europe in the future or not?

Panel II: Assessing EU Policies Towards the Western Balkans

Is the European Union still “highly committed” to include the Western Balkan states and Turkey, or is this mere rhetoric? As one could expect, the former opinion was voiced by representatives from EU member-states, whereas the later judgment was pronounced by an independent commentator from the enlargement region. One participant pointed out that there are **frozen conflicts** in the region, such as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, **frozen disputes**, such as in Macedonia, **frozen democracies** in most countries of the region, and also **frozen enlargement**. This in spite of the fact that the EU assumed that it could unfreeze the previously mentioned deadlocks bringing them to a positive end by pursuing the enlargement process. It was pointed out that Russia’s recent assertiveness resounds also in the Western Balkans and might actually have helped turn the Western attention back to the region. Marginalizing the Western Balkans typically offers chances for radical domestic actors.

The example of the present liberal government of Albania is telling: it experiences problems in an illiberal environment so that delays in the enlargement process make it more difficult for the cabinet in Tirana to push faster for reform and Europeanization. At least for this country, Russia is too far, China without a major role, Turkey certainly a partner but not a model, the Arab/Islamic world not an option because the Albanian society is too westernized, and the US not competing with the EU, so that together with stronger regional co-operation European integration remains the path to be pursued. The real danger comes from stagnation in the region and the avoidance of many governments to take upon itself the risk of real reforms, one participant argued. And for Europe, in this opinion, the dividing line is increasingly not between member and non-member states, but between the diverging socio-economic realities of north and south.

A speaker from **Bosnia and Herzegovina** doubted that the Western financial assistance is significant enough to “change anything” and argued that the European Union Special Representative remains ineffective, and the recent elections witnessed the old elites more or less re-elected. This in spite of the fact that the catastrophic floods in spring 2014 showed that the authorities are not able to deliver basic services to the population. Admittedly, most of the candidates had the EU high on their electoral platforms, yet it is evident that the EU has tried in Bosnia and Herzegovina carrots and sticks, to no avail. The situation in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Muslim-Croat federation) was characterized as “chaotic” while Republika Srpska is looking steadily for arguments to prove that secession is unavoidable because of the failures of the common state. The EU should try to steer the actions of the government and engage the public administration with meaningful tasks.

An experienced researcher of transition issues pointed out that the slow pace of change in the governance on the candidate and potential candidate countries in the Western Balkans can always be evoked to prevent EU membership. However, governance always changes incrementally as there

are many constraints. In a way, EU enlargement projects open the way to more corruption and it is therefore unrealistic to expect EU integration to solve corruption issues. Accordingly, the EU should not place the drive to fight corruption so high on its agenda. **The period before accession is “the best time” for the enlargement countries** as their governments are most susceptible to external demands for change. Another speaker from Bosnia and Herzegovina insisted that the nature of the country’s constitution based on the Dayton accords necessarily produces nationalistic politics. The drive for EU membership as an anti-dote to this is presently losing momentum because the EU enlargement policy is losing credibility with Juncker’s verdict that there will be no enlargement in the next five years. The discussant also expressed surprise that the EU would insist on so many strict criteria towards the enlargement countries in spite of the fact that many EU member states do not fulfil them themselves either.

One speaker argued that **Russia** is not a role model for anyone, whereas **Turkey** is producing much noise but has failed to make an impression in the region. Islamization is not to be in the Western Balkans because of the different character of the societies. However, the population in the region increasingly sees the nation states in the EU as actors determining the enlargement process (for instance Germany in the Serbia-Kosovo issue) whereas the EU as a single actor is seen as the main player in public perception in issues of secondary importance, for instance LGBT rights.

A speaker who is familiar with the work of Brussels institutions was adamant that things are moving forward and pointed out that in the new European Parliament there are now six groups of parliament members engaged in work with Western Balkan countries, whereas it used to be only two. He explained Juncker’s statements as an attempt to please the Eurosceptic populist segment of the population in the member states. A German participant pondered how the underlying interests, resulting from the changed composition of the European Parliament, affect the EU enlargement policy and if this foils a coherent EU policy towards the Western Balkans. An official working in the field of regional co-operation warned that stagnation causes disappointments and that, as the example of Bosnia and Herzegovina has shown, social protests can easily erupt. The mandate of politicians is usually four years, so that it becomes questionable what the politicians in the region may define as an objective during their mandate without accessions in the next five years.

Arguably, the problems with enlargement started with the 2005 EU constitution because it did not provide an answer to the question of Europe’s identity. Russian president Putin now offers a different model how to deal with identity issues. Finally doubts were raised that accession to the EU can work if the EU sticks to the mantra of obligation to fulfil literally all criteria, all the more so as these criteria are in flux.

Panel III: Strategic Foreign Policy Concepts of the External Actors in the Western Balkans Region

For more than a decade since the Kosovo War, the EU appeared to be the dominant international player in Southeastern Europe because the US had shifted their foreign policy focus towards the Middle and Far East. However, Turkey and Russia have recently returned to the region with own long-term interests and agendas not complementing but rather challenging the position of the EU.

Although **Turkey** had always stressed the necessity of stability of the Western Balkans for its own sake, an increase of Turkish activities can be found only after 1990. Prevailing are economic interests in this potential market, but social links with the Muslim population combined with demands from Muslims in the Balkans towards Turkey should not be neglected. Strong economic growth in the last two decades has provided Ankara with more resources and capacities to go west. The Turkish civil society too became more active for the Western Balkans. On the other hand, the EU's activities to stabilize the Western Balkans have also improved conditions for Turkish investments. The Turkish government has so far hesitated to use religious sources, but recently it became more engaged in the region to counteract radical Islam. Turkey regards itself as a pivotal state among different regions, but tries to avoid further complications by getting involved in too many external relations. Increasingly a sentiment of exclusion by Europe has pushed Turkey to act separately as an alternative to the EU in its neighborhood.

In the 1990s **Russia** had not longer been an international player due to domestic disturbances and economic weakness. Only in the last decade Russia came back to the international arena with a more assertive attitude. The rise of energy prices caused an excessively optimistic behavior as an energy superpower. Claiming to challenge the mono-centrism of the USA prompted sympathy of others when Russia tried to assert itself, but in the meantime the EU has become the main competitor. Russia felt alienated from Europe's development and challenged by EU and NATO expansion into the post-Soviet space, as Moscow's recent actions in the Caucasus and Ukraine prove. The Western Balkans too became more relevant for Moscow as a region where it is competitive in many aspects: energy, history, culture, and special relations with Serbia and Bulgaria. Thus it tries to establish strategic partnerships, to upgrade existing relations, e.g. by supporting Serbia in the UN Security Council in the Kosovo case. And it has been rewarded with considerable economic assets in Serbia. Republika Srpska has explicitly asked for privileged relations with Moscow. Since the recent economic crisis in the EU has placed some uncertainty of its further engagement in the Western Balkans, Russia is going to play on it and bound to become more prominent as an alternative not only to the EU, but also to Turkey and China.

The **EU** has become the security provider in the Western Balkans offering integration, but the Western Balkans are losing their importance for EU's foreign policy. The EU is now trying to redefine

its position in the world security. Too many new challenges have diverted and fragmented its strategic interests. In the discussion, questions have been posed whether the new leadership in Brussels will bring about a change of instruments and institutions.

In the perception of the region, the strategic triangle EU – Russia – Turkey generates anxieties: The Western Balkans might be left alone or it might become a proxy conflict zone. The EU is seen as the region builder, setting the rules of the game, Russia is trying to penetrate, and Turkey is just a regional power. At present Serbia is often seen as the example of a country on the cross lines between the three. It definitely wants to become an EU member, but it intends to maintain special relations with Russia and is challenged by the support of Turkey for its Muslim population in Sandžak. In the Ukraine crisis, Serbia first followed the EU position concerning territorial integrity, but refused to join EU sanctions. Serbia needs Russia's support in the Kosovo issue and fears economic collapse if Russia reciprocates EU sanctions. Most likely future developments will force Serbia to take sides. Otherwise the fear of the EU would be justified that Serbia is moving again more to the East. In 2015 Serbia will hold the OSCE chairmanship, but discussants questioned the capacity of Serbia to become a trouble solver between the EU and Russia, first of all in the Ukraine crisis. Russia, at least, is claiming that OSCE is getting more weight and should play a stronger role in all European affairs.

In the discussion it was stated that the Russian Kosovo veto in the UN Security Council is more beneficial for Russia than for Serbia because it provides Russia with an important stronghold in the midst of the Balkans. In addition to the support for Serbia's claim on Kosovo, Russia is also using the notion of brotherly relations of Orthodox nations. Will Russia and Turkey find common interests on the Balkans and are joint actions conceivable? Participants in the discussion doubted this option, claiming that the two are first and foremost competitors.

Panel IV: Long-Term Conflict Lines

Are ethnic conflicts a matter of the past, a quarter of century after 1989? With the Ukraine crisis, war and ethnic conflicts are back on the agenda. There is a dangerous trend of unfreezing frozen conflicts. One reason is certainly the new global rivalry between Russia and the West, leading to a new global disorder. With the new dichotomy, international organizations are weakened. New economic frictions arose with the sanctions against Russia and the nationalization of Russian capital.

There are also important domestic aspects for the persistence of old conflict lines: In the Western Balkans, current crises are reflected in a traditional way there are no new responses to these. The reactions of political elites throughout the region to recent Belgrade football incidents also sadly demonstrate this fact. Moreover, certain interest groups tend to be unhappy with the results of conflict solutions (as concerns territory or ethnic homogeneity). There are beneficiaries of on-going conflicts. Representatives from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina argued that many in their

countries, the war veterans and their offspring, even earn their living from keeping up the memory of the war. In addition, the integration into EU is creating a new wall between “insiders and outsiders.” There is a sense of unfairness and failure of those excluded and nationalism seems to be on the rise on both sides of this border. The fact that Cyprus is in the EU and remains divided, is understood by many as a message that not all problems have to be solved prior to accession. It is debatable whether Cyprus is a precedent or a warning.

A view on the main conflicts in the region seems to confirm the observation of lacking progress and, sometimes, rather reflects regression. The Kosovo conflict with Serbia is a rare example, where progress has been achieved with the so-called Brussels Agreement. A look on the conflict parties reveals an ambiguous picture: Kosovo’s domestic development is uncertain with no functional government in place since the elections in June 2014. Whether or not the new EU Commission will invest much energy in urging the conflict parties for further progress, is uncertain. With Serbia being torn between its commitment to the EU and friendship with Russia, it is a least true that there is now no single anti-EU party present in the Belgrade parliament. Bosnia and Herzegovina is described as being stuck as dysfunctional state with no signs of movement. Remarkably though, there was no objection to the analysis that Macedonia is the worst problem, yet, “nobody looks on it”. The country has the highest percentage of population that is objecting EU membership. Skopje’s EU candidate status is blocked, with the EU losing much of its influence. The causes rank from authoritarian tendencies to state capture and corruption. No-one seems to take care of Greece’s sustained blockage because of the unresolved name question. As both Russia and Turkey are perceived as being partisan forces, they cannot act as honest brokers.

Evidence on the rise of religious divides is ambiguous: The Orthodox Church in Serbia seems to be more radical than ever. Certainly, political Islam is gaining some influence in the region. Participants express a warning against alarmism: Labelling mainly Muslim parties in the Western Balkans like the SDA in Bosnia as “Islamist” is unjustified, as Muslims in the Western Balkans are the most secular ones.

A final issue of debate was the role of EU in igniting or contending old and new conflicts? The EU has been established as an anti-war organization, “but has lost memory of that”, as one participant claimed. There is a strong perception that the EU has lost its credibility and its function as a role model, sometimes coupled with a growing reliance on the USA. Undisputedly, the EU remains the strongest power in the region - but not the only one. Brussels is seen as the main but not the only guarantor of security. Signs of commitment from the side of European capitals for the membership perspective of the region are highly appreciated: the Western Balkans Conference organized by the German Government in Berlin on 28 August 2014 was considered a strong commitment from Germany and the EU for Southeastern enlargement.

Panel V: The Balkans, Energy Resources and Economic Dependences

Neither Turkey nor the Balkan nations are major energy producers, but their strategic geographic position at the crossroads of the main transportation routes from energy-rich areas such as Russia, the Middle East, the Caspian Sea and Central Asia to industrialized and energy-consuming areas such as Central and Western Europe give them significant geographic potential as a transit point. The Western Balkans in addition face significant energy challenges, among them the social affordability of energy and the link between populism and energy prices in the region. Turkey too needs to take timely measures in order to cope with growing energy consumption.

Typically, the stability of the Balkans is connected to the process of the accession to the EU. Since 2009, Turkey has begun to promote its own version of sustainable stability development in the Balkans. Turkey approached the region as a whole, starting different initiatives to improve both economic and political relations with all Western Balkan states, with an aim to increase its own influence. The use of economic ties to neighboring countries shapes today's foreign policy of Turkey. Turkey's Balkan policies rely on economic interdependence through trade relationships, an inclusive understanding of security and a cultural approach through its neo-Ottoman nostalgia and its religious approach.

The development of the **Energy Community** has often been compared to the establishment of the Coal and Steel Community of the 1950s and the subsequent genesis of the European Union. Since 2005 the Energy Community Treaty creates a legal framework for an integrated energy market between the European Union and nine Southeast European partners. Although the agreement commits all signatories to implement the energy acquis, which should lead to the full integration of the Western Balkans into the EU's internal energy market, the membership conditions equal rights and obligations for all members. As questionable remains the idealistic approach to implement European rules into the energy sector. This may generate deep reforms in the Balkan markets dominated by state interests and ownership, which is not easy and sensitive for many reasons. The integration of a small market into a big market remains questionable.

The European Energy Union allows a certain degree of independence vis-à-vis third countries, by pooling the resources, combining infrastructures and uniting negotiating power. Also diversifying energy sources, and reducing the high energy dependency of several member states would help to reduce dependence. However, one cannot separate investments into the energy sector from the overall state of investments into the economies of the region. Presently, the self-sufficiency ration with regard to electricity of the countries in the region, perhaps with the exception of Serbia, is quite high. If there is no major impetus to economic growth, the region will not need much more electricity. It remains to be seen who would be the investors into the energy sector in the region. It is a fact that the gas pipelines carrying Russian natural gas via Ukraine to the region are outmoded, so the choices are modernization or building alternatives, such as South Stream or more energy

coming from the north (EU). South Stream can be made compatible with EU legislation but it remains to be seen how this issue will develop politically.

Panel VI: Continued Conflict or Bridging the Divide?

In the discussion, it was undisputed that there is neither an alternative nor the risk of any change in the strategic orientation of the Western Balkan countries towards **EU integration**. While trade is mostly oriented towards the EU, the Western Balkans are suffering from the effects of the global economic and financial crisis. In addition, the EU has failed to fulfil its promise to boost economic prosperity and economic transition for the region. Deficits are competitive production for exports, institutional and administrative capacities, as well as a business climate attractive for investors. Arguably, Brussels can make better use of its tools in the EU accession and negotiation process.

Several choices of the **Russian** government were regarded as irreversible by the discussants:

- mobilization in political and economic terms instead of a liberal model;
- favoring an authoritarian state instead of a hybrid one;
- choosing a nation state instead of an empire, which has very serious consequences both inside and outside Russia;
- pursuing hard power instead of soft power;
- favoring the East (China) over Europe.

According to one speaker, Russia should be seen as world power in decline. No matter if it is active on international stage or not, there are limits to its power and Russia can play its role of a world power only as spoiler, which makes Russia all the more dangerous. The Western Balkans are exceptionally suited for Moscow's new assertive foreign policy. Russia is eager to make friends and this possibility is very much limited to the Western Balkans. However, Russia is no alternative to EU integration for the Western Balkans. The region has a legitimate right to establish relationships with Russia on the basis of mutual interests, especially considering the volume of Russian FDI in the region. From a Russian perspective, the Balkan countries are divided into traditional partners (Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro), prospective partners (Republika Srpska and Macedonia) as well as potential partners (Slovenia and Croatia).

The Western Balkans were advised to be pragmatic in economic relations with Russia. Even though Russia cannot compete with the EU, it is important for the Western Balkans. The Southeast European countries are dependent on Russian energy, but Russia is also dependent on the supply side and any energy crisis is bound to affect Russia as well. This mutual interest should push to find some compromise on South Stream. In that kind of pipeline and infrastructure diplomacy, Serbia can play an important role. The Western Balkans are important for Russian business as well. There is an interrelation, i.e. the worse the situation is in Russia, the more Russian business is eager invest outside Russia in a friendly environment.

Turkey has been an ally of the West for a long time and also under Erdogan's presidency Turkey remains a partner of Europe and the West. Functional integration will continue on both sides, not at least because of the spillover of the European process. Future scenarios range from a dramatic but unlikely brake-up of the relationship to an equally implausible miraculous breakthrough in accession negotiations or a step-by-step scenario. It was generally underlined that the roadmap on visa free travel and the work on it are an important step in mutual trust building between the EU and Turkey, and an indication the EU and Turkey are both ready to work together pragmatically.

Turkey is active in schools in the Western Balkans. It offers health care services in Istanbul, it is a hub for tourism from the Balkans, and Turkish students will continue to come to the Western Balkans. The societal and economic level of the relationship between Turkey and the Western Balkans will be getting denser in the future. Yet, to another opinion, Turkey has dramatically failed so far to be a strong economic partner and has only limited resources for being economically attractive for the region. Turkey is not a competitor to the EU but belongs to the same region and is part of the big frameworks set by the EU through the negotiation processes and by NATO membership. It is misleading to regard Turkey as competitor, because that only has to do with rhetoric and not with substance. It is thus not very helpful, if Turkish foreign policy actors got into the rhetoric of emphasizing the past rather than the future. Even more, Turkish foreign policy has not much space for the Western Balkans due to the situation in Syria as a preeminent security concern in combination with the Kurdish issue.

With the bleak picture of weak economies and low foreign direct investment, the Balkan countries have to look for alternatives for fuelling their economies. **China** is an obvious choice – but it is far away and thus at least politically not a matter of concern for the Western Balkan countries. There also is some investment from the **Gulf States**, but they generally do not show a strong presence in the region. Nevertheless, their investments in the region have raised anxieties in Brussels concerning *acquis* compliance and radical Islamist sentiments.

The question was raised by an **OSCE** expert whether the security *acquis* of the 1990s could be a recipe for bridging the divide between Russia and the West? The OSCE incorporates states from Vancouver to Vladivostok and was the political center of arms control agreements in the past. Now the OSCE comes up as a crisis-management tool and not necessarily with the idea of a pan-European security architecture. The discussant pointed out that certainly enlargement has shifted the center to EU-Brussels and NATO-Brussels, with Russia excluded from the beginning, and Turkey still excluded from the EU. Russia perceived the Georgian attack of 2008 in the presence of military advisors of the USA as a threat to its vital security, international prestige and strategic interests. Further perceived threats for Russia were then the Ukrainian presidential elections in May 2014 and the NATO's statement to intensify cooperation with the Ukraine in April 2014. All that seems to have alienated Russia and made it embark on a more aggressive and military-driven policy.

Is there a way back to the adopted *acquis* or is Russia following an isolated approach? Serbia will hold the OSCE presidency in 2015 and probably Germany will follow in 2016. From January 2015 onwards Germany and Serbia will work together in the OSCE troika. It will be crucial to re-establish a pan-European security order. In order to prevent a permanent confrontation in Europe, Russia has to be included in solving the security issues and many territorial conflicts in Europe as well as for global challenges, e.g. nuclear non-proliferation, the Middle East and Afghanistan. The question whether Russia is ready and willing to return to joint endeavors in security challenges remains to be answered.

END