



Guiding principles for the policy which is now needed on Russia

**Cooperation, as far as possible.
Security, as far as necessary**

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If the Russian leadership complies with the Minsk agreements, the economic sanctions should also be lifted. Ukraine, Russia and the EU can only implement the security provisions of the Minsk Agreement together, and together they must discuss the possible negative economic consequences of the Association Agreement.

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Sometimes you can see more clearly from a distance. A few weeks ago I spoke with Chinese, Ukraine and Russia specialists. Their analysis: the conflict in the Crimea and in the Eastern Ukraine will lead to a greater turning point in European and international politics than the terrorist attacks of 9/11. I disagreed, because it should remain our aim to establish a regime of pan-European peace which includes Russia. However, the negative experiences of the past few months show that this goal is a long way off. This negative trend, however, does not result primarily from Western policy.

After the largely peaceful collapse of the Soviet Union, pan-European cooperation deepened and accelerated: Russia was included in the Council of Europe and became a partner of the EU and NATO. Trade and cultural exchanges increased, and the network of pan-European relations became denser. While the objective of a full membership of Russia in the EU and NATO was never realistic, the West tried, though not consistently enough, to achieve closer cooperation. The Grand Coalition started work in the autumn of 2013 with the intention to deepen cooperation with Russia through new initiatives.

Russia has changed

Russia's leadership now claims its foreign policy reorientation is a re-action to Western and especially American policy. Yes, the United States and the EU have made mistakes in dealing with Russia. But these errors do not justify the annexation of the Crimea, nor the political, military and financial support of the separatists in the Eastern Ukraine.

The reasons for the foreign policy reorientation of Russia lie in its internal politics: President Putin regards the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of Soviet Communism not as a historic opportunity for building a modern and democratic Russia, but "as the greatest geo-strategic disaster of modern times". Putin's Russia does not want to be recognised internationally as the country that it is today, but as what it once was: as an empire. The endeavour to maintain and recover zones of influence is perceived by most neighbours as Russian revisionism.

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In contrast, the Westernization of the country is viewed as a threat. This connects the current Russian leadership spiritually and politically with the anti-Western left and right edges of the European political spectrum. As long as the Russian leadership is stamped with this worldview, its policies will remain a problem for the rest of Europe. However, our constructive pan-European objectives remain in place.

Our sympathy and solidarity should, therefore, be for the forces striving for democracy in Russia, even if they are currently in a minority. The country cannot be changed from the outside against the will of its political leaders and certainly not against the will of the majority of the Russian people. The resources of foreign and security policy can counteract the negative effects of today's Russian policies in international relations. But before there is a profound turning point in Russian politics, it is likely that years - hopefully not decades - will have to pass. In the phase ahead, we will no longer need a policy of complementary cooperation and integration. Instead, the motto for the now necessary Russia policy could be: collaboration where possible - security where necessary.

Selective cooperation

Russia, the EU and the US should continue to work together selectively, as in the negotiations on the Iranian nuclear program or on a joint stance on international terrorism. If the Russian leadership complies with the Minsk agreements, the economic sanctions should also be lifted. Ukraine, Russia and the EU can only implement the security provisions of the Minsk Agreement together, and together they must discuss the possible negative economic consequences of the Association Agreement.

The war in Eastern Ukraine is an opportunity to strengthen the OSCE and to make it more capable of intervening. It should be examined whether the OSCE Blue Helmets can be deployed in Eastern Ukraine. Whether the Russian leadership is ready for an improvement of the existing rules and greater transparency in arms control should be explored at the latest during the German OSCE Chairmanship in 2016. This could mean elements of cooperative security are strengthened in an environment of mistrust and conflict.

Russia is now regarded by most of its neighbours as a risk because of its behaviour. This sceptical view is understandable and will only soften if the Russian leadership change not only their rhetoric, but also their behaviour. Above all, they must end their attempts at the destabilisation of Ukraine.



Given such positive changes in the political environment, negotiations between the European and Eurasian Unions could be successful.

Many are talking today of a new Cold War. This is to some extent understandable. Better, however, if we were to develop new concepts for today's debate. On the one hand, the conflict in the Eastern Ukraine is a hot war. On the other, we are - in contrast to the Cold War - at least on paper United by a common peace policy and democratic values and norms. We should not lightly put these institutions, contracts and agreements at risk. If Russia, however, were for its part to undermine this network of relationships, we cannot repair the damage unilaterally. So it was right for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to suspend the voting rights of the Russian delegation.

Today's Russia still has an arsenal of nuclear weapons comparable with that of the USA. But if we compare all the potential available to NATO with the Russian capabilities, there is a clear superiority for NATO - in spite of Russia's modernisation of military capacities in recent years. This superiority would become apparent in the event of any conflict with NATO countries in the immediate Russian neighbourhood. Such security guarantees, however, are not available to the smaller neighbours of Russia, which are not members of NATO. This is where the regional military superiority of Russia comes into play, from which the supported separatists are benefiting.

“The aspiration of Ukraine to improve its defence capability is entirely legitimate”

Germany vetoed NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine. All the more should Germany seek a non-military stabilisation of Ukraine. This includes the willingness to provide economic assistance to Ukraine and impose economic sanctions on Russia. However, I venture a prediction: If the Russian leadership and the separatists cannot abide by the Minsk Agreement, the United States and some European NATO countries will begin to provide military assistance to Ukraine.

German policy, in the light of all the risks, can oppose military support for Ukraine. But it must not be denied that the aspiration of Ukraine to improve its defence capability is entirely legitimate. The controversy over tactical means should not jeopardize the common strategy towards Russia. Germany must continue to adopt a policy towards Moscow which respects the interests of its eastern and western neighbours.



During the Cold War, the communist ideology represented by the Soviet Union claimed universal validity. Its attractiveness declined over the decades, but the global claim remained. Today, the political leadership of Russia is defending itself against the universalist claims of "Western" values. However, none of the concepts resulting from this hodgepodge of resentment can solve the problems of the 21st century. The ideology of the Russian leadership only works where Russia exerts power and not, for example, because its economic model is attractive. The EU must, by contrast, contribute to the stabilisation of Ukraine and invest in a policy that strengthens Europe's attractiveness in the eyes of Ukrainian citizens.

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