

**Jürgen Wagner**

# **Expansion Association Confrontation:**

**EUrope's  
Neighbourhood  
Policy,  
the Ukraine and  
the New Cold War  
Against Russia**



**GUE/NGL**

Gauche Unitaire Européenne/Gauche Verte Nordique  
European United Left/Nordic Green Left  
Groupe Parlementaire · Parliamentary Group  
PARLEMENT EUROPEEN · EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT  
[www.guengl.eu](http://www.guengl.eu)

**Sabine Lösing, MEP**

European Parliament  
Sabine Lösing, MEP  
Rue Wiertz WIB 03M023  
1047 Brussels

Phone: +32 2284 7894  
Fax: +32 2284 9894  
Email: [sabine.loesing@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:sabine.loesing@europarl.europa.eu)  
Assistants: Ota Jaksch, Anne Labinski

**Lokal Offices:**

Europabüro Sabine Lösing  
Goseriede 8  
30159 Hannover

Phone: +49 511 4500 8852  
Email: [hannover@sabine-loesing.de](mailto:hannover@sabine-loesing.de)  
Assistants: Daniel Josten, Michael Kuhlendahl

Europabüro Sabine Lösing  
Lange Geismarstraße 2  
37073 Göttingen

Phone: +49 551 5076 6823  
Email: [europabuero-loesing@web.de](mailto:europabuero-loesing@web.de)  
Assistant: Fritz Hellmer

**[www.sabine-loesing.de](http://www.sabine-loesing.de)**



**Expansion - Association - Confrontation: EUrope's Neighbourhood Policy, the Ukraine and the New Cold War Against Russia**

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Editors of the brochure are Sabine Lösing, MEP and the Parliamentary Group GUE/NGL in the European Parliament.  
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## Foreword



Considering the level of hysteria in which the relationship towards Russia is currently being discussed here in the „West“, it is sometimes rather difficult to find the right balance. On the one hand it is indeed true that to seriously approve of Russian politics without reservation is not possible. This of course first of all refers to parts of her domestic policies, but also with regard to foreign policy, Russia handles matters along the lines of a kind of power politics which, in case of the Western countries, has always been severely criticised by the peace movement, and rightly so. Though on the other hand, I consider it to be appropriate and important not to forget about the principle of cause and effect. After all, it was the West and not Russia that by means of its policy of NATO expansion refused to make use of the opportunity for enduring rapprochement. Yet hardly anybody in these parts is prepared to acknowledge the fact that the current crisis in the Ukraine was preceded by quite some years of an active anti-Russian encirclement strategy, and that this is really what prepared the stage for the most recent escalation. And by no means whatsoever is it sufficient, either, to point our fingers at the „evil“ United States alone. Certainly, Washington's share in activities leading to the deterioration of relations with Russia is large. However, another factor seriously contributing towards this is the frenzied EU expansion policy and the connected association agreement with the Ukraine, which to a great extent were pushed through by Germany. Further, the conflicts in the Ukraine must be seen in a broader context of re-emerging blocs which are once more embarking on a course of confrontation which is highly dangerous. If the West fails to modify its claim to hegemony in these matters by beginning to respect central Russian interests, there is indeed the threat of a renewed Cold War. How dangerous the situation is can be demonstrated by the petition „Wieder Krieg in Europa? Nicht in unserem Namen!“ („War In Europe Once More? Not In Our Name!“) of 05 December, 2014, in which 60 (German) prominent figures formulated a clear warning: „Nobody wants a war. But North America, the European Union and Russia are inevitably drifting towards one if they fail to finally put a stop to the spiral of threats and counterthreats.“ Indeed, it is likely that hardly anyone really wants a war, although when listening to the sabres rattling in certain influential hard-liners' scabbards, I am not so sure about that sometimes. Occasionally it

seems that in the European Parliament in particular, many of my colleagues are getting all fidgety in their eagerness to start a new Cold War with Russia. But what is quite certainly the case is that there is a broad consensus about putting the blame for the situation on Russia alone. Thus we read in a resolution motion adopted by the majority of EU parliamentarians in January 2015: „The European Parliament [...] strongly condemns Russia's aggressive and expansionist policy, which constitutes a threat to the unity and independence of Ukraine and poses a potential threat to the EU itself, including the illegal annexation of Crimea and waging an undeclared hybrid war against Ukraine, including information war [...]“ Not anywhere in the motion can anything resembling self-criticism be heard – not even the faintest whisper. Instead, and for quite some time now, especially in the media, we have been experiencing a propaganda campaign which is – literally – breathtaking. One of few exceptions in this is the German Handelsblatt, whose editor in chief Gabor Steingart as one of very few voices in the mass media calls for moderation: „Moving NATO units towards the Polish border and thinking about arming Ukraine is a continuation of a lack of diplomacy by the military means. This policy of running your head against the wall – and doing so exactly where the wall is the thickest – just gives you a head ache and not much else. And this considering that the wall has a huge door in the relationship of Europe to Russia. And the key to this door is labeled 'reconciliation of interests.'“ As much as taking steps in such a direction would be the right thing to do, this would first require an honest, open debate about the genuine strategic and economic interests behind the conflict and in the relations with Russia – but such a thing is nowhere on the horizon. A slightly more positive impulse is the mood among the general population, which, as a variety of opinion polls prove, is definitely not at all prepared to back the hard-liners in their policy towards Russia. But especially because the propagandistic front established by politics and the media nevertheless allows for hardly any gaps to be seen in their version of reality, it is urgently necessary to breach it with a continuous flow of alternative information. The present brochure is intended as a modest contribution towards this end.

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## Introduction



*EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini and Ukrainian President, Petro Poroshenko. (Source: European Union)*

In February, 2015, the British vice commander of NATO for Europe, Adrian Bradshaw, gave a worrying speech. In the course of it, not only did he characterise Russia as an „obvious and existential threat“, but also prognosticised a new „era of constant competition with Russia“.<sup>1</sup> And indeed, the conflict in and about the Ukraine represents the clearly most serious crisis in the relations between the West and Russia since the end of Eastern vs. Western bloc confrontation. Quite a number of observers are, rightly, concerned that the current conflicts may well even act as a catalyst in generating a new Cold War – with the central question here being why that is the case. And although there are some differences in the details, the answer coming from both sides of the Atlantic in this matter is nearly unanimous: „Russia is to blame for everything!“.

No doubt, Russia has indeed taken the gloves off in the struggle for the Ukraine to assert her interests. However, the Western side is studiously overlooking (or rather: concealing) its own responsibility for the current situation. Yet one of the major causes for the conflict lies in the supremacy strategy drawn up by the US immediately after the Cold War, since then aiming at maintaining Western dominance (under US leadership) by any and all means. From then on, consequently, derived from that strategy among others, NATO policy was oriented towards purposely weakening Russia by attempting to integrate as many countries of the former Eastern Bloc as possible into the Western sphere of influence. The fact that in case of the Ukraine, the conflicts which have become increasingly severe over a number of years have escalated in a particularly drastic manner, is not least due to the country's geopolitical significance. In terms of geopolitical strategy, the West considers the Ukraine a key country, and to control it would mean to seriously weaken Russia. Accordingly, the signing of an association agreement with the European Union, originally scheduled for November 2013, would have factually sealed the Ukraine's entry into the Western bloc. And exactly for that very reason, former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich's decision not to sign that document ensured that he made powerful enemies not only in Washington, but in Brussels as well, and especially also in Berlin (Chapter 1).

But not only NATO strategy, but also the interest policy of the European Union<sup>2</sup> is relevantly responsible for the current crisis.

For years, the EU has also been pursuing a policy of expansion which, especially by means of the so-called „European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)“, is aimed at creating a large imperial area as the power base for a future „EUrope as a World Power“ and to secure that territory militarily. And at the core of this expansion strategy, we find the aforementioned association agreements, the goal of which is a neoliberal restructuring of the adjoining countries followed by their peripheral incorporation into the „Greater EU Area“. An analysis of the EU-Ukraine agreement reveals this very clearly (Chapter 2).

This EU expansion policy has been most substantially shaped and pushed ahead by Germany, especially also including the conclusion of an association agreement with the Ukraine. Such a policy, practically applied already for years, has now recently also become an integral element of an openly conducted debate which at its core has the demand that Germany should abandon its – purported – „culture of restraint“ in favour of a world power policy backed by military strength. At the basis of this debate lies the project „Neue Macht – Neue Verantwortung“ („New Power – New Responsibility“) assembling over 50 members of the German established circles of foreign and security politics, whose central theses were subsequently included in the speech delivered by German federal president Joachim Gauck during the Munich Security Conference in early 2014. What is quite openly claimed in this context with regard to Southern and Eastern Europe is to establish the EU as the sole regulating and peacekeeping power there, and the country considered the first major milestone of implementation of what is now known as the „Gauck Doctrine“ is the Ukraine. And indeed, besides the USA, it was Germany that swiftly turned out to be the most important Western actor in the Ukraine crisis – both in preparing the coup and in the subsequent „crisis management“. Although, even if a large part of German and US interests coincide, when looking closely, there are quite a few differences to be found. This can be seen in the, partly strenuous, tensions which keep appearing within the Western camp, mostly with regard to two aspects: „Who will manage to establish their potentate as the ruler in Kiev?“ and „How far should one climb up the escalation ladder in the relations to Russia?“ (Chapter 3)

In the Ukraine, the protests which had been supported massively by the West were

followed by an illegal coup under the threat of violence during which Yanukovych, who had come to power in free elections, was literally chased out of the country. Although a large number of radical right-wingers were part of the quickly formed „transitional government“, it was immediately acknowledged by the West. Individual political actors doggedly struggling for influence in this can be clearly identified as being backed by Germany (Klitschko) or the US (Yatsenyuk). But even though they are in conflict among one another, all these actors support the radical pro-Western course embarked upon immediately after they had seized power. Soon after, an escalation set in, leading to severe military clashes with separatist powers in the eastern Ukraine and the incorporation of Crimea by Russia, an illegal act under international law. Also, although elimination of the oligarchs' influence had initially been one of the central goals of the Maidan protests, as a result, oligarch rule was even strengthened, and additionally, upon demands from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), rigorous austerity measures were imposed on the country which severely affect especially the poorest levels of the population. Further, the country is now threatened by military conflicts among the factions in the „victorious“ government camp. This includes both conflicts between individual oligarchs and between those in power in Kiev and radical right-wing groups (Chapter 4).

The already seriously difficult situation of the Ukraine is additionally made even more complicated by the international framework conditions. These include the demands, partly made quite openly and publically, to make use of the Ukraine crisis to trigger a change of power in Russia itself. Further, there is the downright mobilisation of NATO forces which greatly increases the probability of severe conflicts. Even direct armed encounters are once again considered possible – with unpredictable consequences. Although in this, Germany<sup>3</sup> is pursuing a slightly more moderate course than the US, which has led to arguments with the latter on several occasions, Germany nevertheless to a great extent supports the generally anti-Russian thrust of current policies, partly even in the front line. Thus, no disruption in trans-Atlantic relations is to be expected. On the contrary: the signs are increasing that a situation is developing further where a Western neo-liberal bloc stands in confrontation with a state-capitalist (Eastern) bloc in growing hostility (Chapter 5).

Before such a background, the current ice age is increasingly likely to become permanent. Thus, military expert Thomas Wiegold described his primary impressions of the 2015 Munich Security Conference as follows: „My very subjective perception (which is obviously by no means mine alone) after three days of Security Conference: the confrontation West versus East (or vice versa) is not only back again, it will not disappear any time soon, either. And the differences of opinion occurring between the USA and part of her European allies, for example concerning arms supplies to the Ukraine, are a quarrel about the right way – but not a fundamental division of the West. Instead, the rift between Europe and the USA on one side and Russia on the other is deepening continuously.“<sup>4</sup> To close this rift again, the West would have to abandon its claim for dominance; it would have to acknowledge that it is at fault to a relevant degree, or even mainly, for the escalation; and it would finally need to seriously show its preparedness to grant Russia a say in major security matters. (Chapter 6).

If instead, the current course is pursued further, it is highly likely that the conflict will continue with increasing severity. That such a development should really not be in anybody's interest and all efforts should be made to defuse this extremely explosive situation is evident already in the mere fact that in early 2015, the „Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists“ moved its notorious „Doomsday Clock“, which shows how close the world is to a nuclear war, ahead to three minutes to twelve. In the scientists' analysis, only once before, in 1953, was the world closer to such an apocalypse.<sup>5</sup>

1. *Russian expansionism may pose existential threat, says Nato general, The Guardian, 20 Feb, 2015.*
2. *Of course one cannot really speak of interests of "the" European Union – especially not with regard to foreign and security policy, where the large national states are the ones who to a great extent define the agenda on their own. The use of "the" European Union in the following should thus be understood along these lines. On this matter, cf. Lösing, Sabine/Wagner, Jürgen: Oligopolisierung des Rüstungssektors?, in: Z - No. 94, June, 2013, pp. 89-101.*
3. *Although, without doubt, other EU countries, especially France and Poland, also play an important part in the Ukraine crisis, a detailed analysis of these countries' policies would go beyond the scope of this paper.*
4. *Wiegold, Thomas: Ukraine in München: Es gilt die gefühlte Temperatur, Augengeradeaus, 08 Feb, 2015.*
5. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists: Doomsday Clock: Timeline.*

## 1. The Ukraine and the Cold War 2.0



*At the 2002 NATO Summit in Prague, the second eastern enlargement was decided.  
(Source: NATO)*

To Russia, the factual situation is obvious: in the early 1990s, the unmistakable confirmation was given that in exchange for NATO membership of the reunited Germany, there would be no expansion of the alliance's territory towards the East. This promise has been broken flagrantly by NATO's decidedly anti-Russian expansion policy. On the Western side, this point of view is rejected just as obviously, and Russia is given the blame for the deterioration of relations. One symptom of this was the concluding declaration at the NATO summit in Wales in September 2014, during which a factual mobilisation of the alliance against Moscow was decided upon. The reason given for that decision was that Moscow had rudely slapped aside the West's hand extended in friendship and now had to bear the consequences: „For more than two decades, NATO has strived to build a partnership with Russia [...] Russia has breached its commitments, as well as violated international law, thus breaking the trust at the core of our cooperation.“<sup>6</sup>

However, a closer look at Western policy towards Russia makes it clear that Moscow's point of view is indeed comprehensible. Thereby, the unique opportunity to end the confrontational relationship was carelessly cast to the winds (Chapter 1.1). In turn, Russia – with considerable delay – was induced to adopt an increasingly hostile stance towards the West and to adapt its policies accordingly (Chapter 1.2). As a result, the mutual relations have been deteriorating further and further for quite some years now, so that nowadays we once again hear clear

warnings of a confrontation between the blocs – which possibly never ended but is more openly apparent again – and of a New Cold War (Chapter 1.3). That these conflicts escalated particularly drastically around the Ukraine crisis is definitely not accidental, as the country is seen as a choice object in geopolitical terms in the struggle between Russia and the West (Chapter 1.4). And it is also logical in a certain way that the dispute became virulent when the association agreement between the European Union and the Ukraine was rejected: after all, the signing of this document would mean that the country would be factually incorporated into the Western sphere of influence and its membership in the Russian-led „Eurasian Economic Union“ would become impossible permanently (Chapter 1.5).

### 1.1 Hegemonic Policy and NATO Expansion

Immediately after what seemed to be the end of the Cold War, intense contemplations were undertaken in the US about how to react to the new situation. Before this background, the US defence secretary at the time, Dick Cheney, commissioned a paper elaborating a future global strategy for the US. Under supervision from his undersecretary of state for defence, Paul Wolfowitz, the document was actually written by Lewis Libby and Zalmay Khalilzad, all of them personages who were to play leading parts in the future, especially in the subsequent George W. Bush administration.<sup>7</sup>

The result was the „Defence Planning Guidance“ (also known as the „No-Rivals Plan“), a challenge claiming that it is possible to permanently consolidate US hegemony in the world and an instruction manual for how this can be brought about: „Our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union. This is a dominant consideration underlying the new regional defense strategy and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power. [...] we must account sufficiently for the interests of the advanced industrial nations to discourage them from challenging our leadership or seeking to overturn the established political and economic order. We must maintain the mechanism for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.“<sup>8</sup>

Subsequently, Cheney fully supported the theses of Wolfowitz and consorts, and rebuffed a considerably more moderate alternative draft by Colin Powell, at the time Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Since then hardly any doubt has been raised that the core theories of the No-Rivals Plan dominated US policy from then on.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, among other policy elements, the target of purposely encircling and weakening Russia was derived from it, as the private information service „Strategic Forecast“ (Stratfor), considered to have excellent contacts to the CIA, stated quite plainly: „After the fall of the Soviet Union, the West began a geopolitical offensive in Russia's near abroad, and met with some success.“<sup>10</sup>

The tool chosen to implement this geopolitical offensive was NATO, though for this to work, it was inevitable to violate the promise given to Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev at the time – in return for the factual discontinuation of the Cold War – not to expand the alliance's territory towards the East. As this is one of the major points of criticism on Russia's part, the course of events in those days is the subject of intense arguments again nowadays.<sup>11</sup> In this, the attempt is made in some parts to sweep this violation of trust aside with all sorts of nit-picking argumentation. Yet the basis here is the following conversation, which can hardly be misinterpreted: „When on 08 February, 1990, US Foreign

Secretary James Baker was attempting to win Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's approval for a reunited Germany to remain a member of NATO, Baker assured him that there 'will be no expansion of current NATO jurisdiction towards the East'. Gorbachev followed up on this: 'Any extension of the NATO zone is unacceptable.' Baker's answer: 'I agree.'<sup>12</sup>

Baker later argued that his sentences were merely referring to the territory of what was then still the GDR ["East Germany"], and were thus not meant to mean a general abandonment of any NATO expansion.<sup>13</sup> This is not exactly credible, though, as on 2 February, 1990, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, German foreign minister at the time, together with James Baker had addressed the press and described the result of their consultation as follows: 'We were in agreement that there is no intention to expand the NATO defence territory towards the East. By the way, this does not only apply regarding the GDR [...], but this applies in a fully general respect.'<sup>14</sup> Further, a note on file which was kept classified for a long time reveals that this was also exactly the statement communicated to the Soviet side in talks later in February 1990: 'according to this, Genscher said in a conversation with Soviet foreign minister Shevardnadze that the (West) German federal government 'was aware that membership in NATO of a united Germany gives rise to complicated questions'. He is quoted to have said that for [the West German government] the matter was definite: NATO would not expand towards the East.'<sup>15</sup>

However, in further negotiations, the matter was not addressed again, and there actually seems to have been no subsequent formal concession not to expand the alliance's territory. Due to this fact, on the part of the West, the argumentation is now that the statements made in February 1990 have become irrelevant: 'According to the sources, though, during that decisive phase in the negotiations, the non-expansion of NATO towards the East is never mentioned. If Gorbachev had really relied on the February talks on this matter, he would have had to mention it once again at the time. He failed to do so. In July, 1990, he agreed to full membership of a united Germany in NATO.'<sup>16</sup> Doubtlessly, Gorbachev's omission can be called geopolitical stupidity of the first order, and one can only speculate about the reasons for it. Though there are statements of Gorbachev's which prove that he apparently expected those

concessions to be valid and considers the subsequent reality of NATO's policy to be a violation of the agreement made at the time. Thus he expressed in 2014: 'The decision for the US and its allies to expand Nato into the east was decisively made in 1993. I called this a big mistake from the very beginning. It was definitely a violation of the spirit of the statements and assurances made to us in 1990.'<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, the idea to expand NATO towards the former Eastern Bloc was already introduced to the debate in 1993 by Volker Rühle, the German minister of defence at the time. One year later, the programme 'Partnership for Peace' was initiated, with the intention of providing especially ex-Warsaw Pact countries with ways of approach to the Western alliance. Thereupon, in 1997, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were formally invited to join NATO, and their membership became official on 12 March, 1999. At about the same time, NATO began its offensive war against Yugoslavia – a drastic violation of international law, as the war took place without any mandate from the UN Security Council and thus evading the Russian right of veto. The pace did not slacken afterwards, either: in November, 2002, the decision was made, and implemented two years later, to have a further seven countries join the alliance, including Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, i.e. former member states of the Soviet Union. This happened even though Moscow had always called this the 'red line' which must under no circumstances be crossed.<sup>18</sup>

Additionally, for a long time and with great concern, Moscow has been observing NATO's plans for a missile defence shield, considering them – not without reason – to be a targeted attempt at undermining Russia's second-strike potential.<sup>19</sup> Then, from 2003, the so-called 'coloured revolutions' started, replacing pro-Russian rulers with pro-Western ones in Russia's immediate neighbourhood. These included in particular the coups – partly with massive Western support – in Georgia (2003), the Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005). All in all, these individual measures amounted to a critical mass which resulted in the initiation of a fundamental course change in Russia in order to react with power-political steps to an expansionistic NATO policy perceived as hostile: 'The great change in 2005 is that in that year, Russian foreign policy shifted from a position of weakness to one of strength. [...] Post-Soviet interference is a matter of the

past, and the Russian leaders have opted to take the gloves off in the power game.'<sup>20</sup>

## 1.2 Russia's Roll-Back

While Vladimir Putin was forced fairly soon to bury any hopes – which had initially indeed existed – of entering into a relationship of cooperation with Washington<sup>21</sup>, he continued for another while to attempt to offer the EU, and especially Germany, a close alliance which was supposed to be directed more or less openly against the US.<sup>22</sup> Though at the latest with EU support for the 'coloured revolutions' starting in 2003, that option was no longer available either – from then on, the EU countries were also seen as opponents and a counter-offensive was launched: 'Towards the Ukraine and Georgia, but also Moldova, Moscow increasingly instrumentalises its economic power to exert political pressure and to counteract undesirable internal political developments in those countries – but especially in order to prevent any further spreading of the 'coloured revolutions'. The EU is no longer perceived exclusively as a partner, but as the most important competitor for influence in the post-Soviet region.'<sup>23</sup>

That things had in fact changed in Moscow many only became clearly aware of with Vladimir Putin's appearance at the Munich Security Conference in early 2007. Though his criticism expressed on that occasion was primarily directed at the US, he also addressed their allies: 'Unilateral, frequently illegitimate actions have not resolved any problem. Moreover, they have generated new human tragedies and new centres of tension. Judge for yourselves: the number of wars as well as local and regional conflicts has not diminished. [...] Today we observe an almost uncontained, excessive use of force in international matters – of military force – of force which is plunging the world into an abyss of one conflict after the other.' Further, Putin asserted that the monopoly on the use of force on a global scale lies in the hands of the UN alone, and severely criticised attempts by the Western powers to seize it for themselves: 'The use of force can only be considered legitimate if the decision is taken on the basis and within the framework of the UN. And the United Nations Organisation should neither be substituted by NATO, nor by the European Union.'<sup>24</sup> Such harsh words had not been expected: 'For several seconds, the International Security Conference sat in silence, shocked. This

was a new tone, a reminder of a past many believed to be irreversibly over: the most powerful man in Russia in full armour“, the „Deutsche Presseagentur“ commented.<sup>25</sup>

The quarrels came to a head for the first time in the summer of 2008, when Russia reacted to the Georgian offensive war against South Ossetia with a tough military counterstrike. This way, Russia unmistakably signalled its preparedness to put an end, if necessary by force, to continued Western attempts at gaining any further ground. „For the first time since the end of the (old) Cold War, Russia thus put a check on a Western attempt at expansion by military means – this fact alone demonstrates the scope of recent events in the Caucasus. At the same time the entry into Georgia is a clear signal to the West that in future, Russia will once again be a force to be reckoned with in the power game. An analysis by Strategic Forecast, a think tank also known as the ‚Shadow CIA‘ states: ‚With its operation in South Ossetia, Russia has proven three things. 1. Its army can carry out successful operations, which foreign observers were doubtful about. 2. The Russians are capable of a victory against the forces trained by US military instructors. 3. Russia has proven that the US and NATO are not in a situation which would enable them to carry out a military intervention in this conflict.‘“<sup>26</sup>

### 1.3 European Union vs. Eurasian Union

The reactions in the West to the Georgian war were extremely harsh, and accordingly, already then voices could be heard speaking of a „New Cold War“ looming between the West and Russia.<sup>27</sup> Even if this prognosis misses the core point of the conflict (see Chapter 5.5), it became „popular“ especially in its slightly altered version, embedded in a larger context, that a bloc confrontation between „democracies“ (USA and EU) and „autocracies“ (China and Russia) was developing which the West would have to arm against. In the US, it was especially influential politologist Robert Kagan, chief advisor of Republican presidential candidates John McCain and Mitt Romney, who expressed thoughts along those lines in his 2008 book „The Return of History and the End of Dreams“: „The old rivalry between liberalism and autocracy is flaring up once more, and the great powers of the world are taking position according to their form of government. [...] History has returned, and the democracies must join up in shaping it – or others will do it for them.“<sup>28</sup>

Though this is by no means a point of view held exclusively in Republican circles. Also Anne-Marie Slaughter, for instance, who functioned as Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Office for the Obama administration for some years, took the same line: „The predominance of liberal democracies is necessary to prevent a return to great power security competition between the United States and our allies, on the one side, and an autocracy or a combination of autocracies, on the other – the sort of competition that led to two World Wars and one Cold War.“<sup>29</sup>

And also on the other side of the Atlantic, numerous notable representatives of the political establishment have meanwhile adopted this position.<sup>30</sup> In 2009, Nikolaus Busse, Brussels correspondent of the „Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung“ commented accordingly: „In an increasing number of fields, we will experience passionate competition from and tough conflicts of interest with the aspiring great powers. This requires the determined global presence of the West, and that means not only the USA. [...] Though they will be less and less capable of bearing these burdens alone. [...] In a world of harsh geopolitical rivalry, Europe will not survive as a large peace movement, but must find its own sophisticated diplomacy and confident presence. This problem cannot be solved by creating new posts and structures in Brussels, but instead, the élites in the large member countries need to find the willpower to jointly address tough matters of power politics.“<sup>31</sup>

To be able to present solutions for the crisis which had culminated in 2008, while simultaneously getting prepared for any possible further escalation, in the following period Russia moved ahead in a two-pronged approach. As an option for cooperative de-escalation, the Russian president at the time, Dimitriy Medvedev, announced in June, 2008 that he was seeking to create a „Euro-Atlantic Security Agreement“. But although first content elements were leaked shortly afterwards, the draft treaty was published in detail only at the end of November, 2009.<sup>32</sup> The intended contracting parties were to be all countries „from Vancouver to Vladivostok“ (i.e. including the USA and Canada) as well as the respective international structures (NATO, OSCE, CIS...). The core of the treaty is „indivisible security“, meaning that no contracting party may undertake any actions which have a negative effect on any other's security.

Should a country consider itself affected, it can initiate a vaguely formulated consultation process – a procedure with a very obvious goal: „This lack of clarity appears to have been chosen quite consciously. For without greater precision, the principle of ‚indivisible security‘ would ultimately grant Russia an indirect right of veto against nearly every NATO decision – from expansion into the East via deployment of US or NATO troops in other countries to military operations in the Euro-Atlantic region.“<sup>33</sup>

What transpired quickly, however, was that the NATO countries have no intention to grant Russia any genuine right to a say in European security matters.<sup>34</sup> In return, Moscow speeded up the formation of a counter-bloc, with Vladimir Putin announcing in July, 2009 that Russia, Byelarus and Kazakhstan were about to create a customs union. In 2010, a standardisation of customs tariffs followed, and in 2012, border controls between the three countries were abandoned and an integrated economic area was established, guaranteeing a free exchange of goods, services, capital and workforce among the member countries.<sup>35</sup> Further, in September, 2013, Armenia announced that it would not sign the readily formulated association agreement with the EU but join the customs union instead. Then on 29 May, 2014, Kazakhstan, Russia and Byelarus signed an agreement by which from 01 January, 2015, the customs union was renamed the „Eurasian Economic Union“ – with Armenia and Kyrgyzstan joining shortly thereafter, and with Tadjikistan, Uzbekistan and Mongolia named as further potential candidates.

Even if the Eurasian Economic Union's „firepower“ is in some parts considered to be rather low in the West, e.g. in an analysis by the most important EU think tank<sup>36</sup>, the Russian endeavours to counteract Western expansionist policy were quite obviously observed with great suspicion. With increasing frequency – and quite clearly already well before the situation in the Ukraine escalated – they were seen more or less openly in the context of an impending new confrontation between blocs. Thus, a 2012 paper by the group of experts in charge of „Östliche Partnerschaft“ („Eastern Partnership“) of the „Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik“ („German Council on Foreign Relations“), including former German state secretary for defence Friedbert Pflüger and former USA coordinator of the German government Karsten D. Voigt, reads: „The discourse on foreign policy in Germany avoids

## Is It All Russia's Fault?

The widely accepted view that Russia is to blame for the escalation in the Ukraine and in the relations with the West is contested by, among others, John J. Mearsheimer, one of the most prominent US politologists: „According to the prevailing wisdom in the West, the Ukraine crisis can be blamed almost entirely on Russian aggression. [...] But this account is wrong: the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for the crisis. The taproot of the trouble is NATO enlargement, the central element of a larger strategy to move Ukraine out of Russia's orbit and integrate it into the West. At the same time, the EU's expansion eastward and the West's backing of the pro-democracy movement in Ukraine – beginning with the Orange Revolution in 2004 – were critical elements, too. Since the mid-1990s, Russian leaders have adamantly opposed NATO enlargement and in recent years, they have made it clear that they would not stand by while their strategically important neighbour turned into a Western bastion. For Putin, the illegal overthrow



*John Mearsheimer. (Source: CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons)*

of Ukraine's democratically elected and pro-Russian president – which he rightly labelled a ‚coup‘ – was the final straw.“ (Mearsheimer, John J.: Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault. The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin, Foreign Affairs, September/October 2014, p. 1)

addressing geostrategic contemplations. Though the realities should be acknowledged: when Russia speaks of stability, they think in terms of power ratios and spheres of influence there. It is just as legitimate to look at the [German respectively EU] Eastern Partnership under geostrategic considerations. With such a concept, the European Union aims at disseminating its political, legal and economic ‚playbook‘ and thus at tying in the region step by step. In this, by means of cooperation offers, the EU attempts to prevent the Eastern partners from adopting any other models of integration contrary to European interests due to their economic predicaments.“<sup>37</sup>

In view of these developments, one does not necessarily need to be in agreement with every Russian assessment of the situation, let alone with the gloves-off manner in which Moscow is operating in the Ukraine. Though that the perception that the West made use of Russian weakness to aggressively expand its sphere of influence at Moscow's expense is certainly not at all far-fetched should have become sufficiently clear from NATO's expansionistic policy as described above (also see the box „Is It All Russia's Fault?“).

### 1.4 Ukraine: A Geopolitical Prize Piece

Among the various „non-aligned“ countries situated between the European Union and Russia, the Ukraine, due to its large population and abundant resources, but also especially due to its geographical location, represents a kind of prize piece in geopolitical terms. From a Western point of view, the country's significance has been described, for example, by Zbigniew Brzezinski, probably the principal US geopolitician, already in 1997: „Ukraine, a new and important space on the Eurasian chessboard, is a geopolitical pivot because its very existence as an independent country helps to transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire. [...] As the EU and NATO expand, Ukraine will eventually be in the position to choose whether it wishes to be part of either organization. [...] Although that will take time, it is not too early for the West—while further enhancing its economic and security ties with Kiev—to begin pointing to the decade 2005-2015 as a reasonable time frame for the initiation of Ukraine's progressive inclusion...“<sup>38</sup>

To Russia, the Ukraine is indeed of immense importance, for reasons of military strategy alone, as George Friedman, head

of the private information service Strategic Forecast, emphasizes: „If Russia loses Belarus or Ukraine, it loses its strategic depth, which accounts for much of its ability to defend the Russian heartland.“<sup>39</sup> Yet the country's significance derives from much deeper levels: „Ukraine is the cornerstone to Russia's defense and survival as any sort of power. The former Soviet state hosts the largest Russian community in the world outside of Russia, and is tightly integrated into Russia's industrial and agricultural heartland. Ukraine is the transit point for 80 percent of the natural gas shipped from Russia to Europe and is the connection point for most infrastructure – whether pipeline, road, power or rail – running between Russia and the West.“<sup>40</sup>

It is thus no surprise that Moscow was also apparently striving to firmly integrate that country into its sphere of influence. In any case, such an intention was expressed in a semi-official government paper of 2013, which according to some reports was co-authored by Putin's close advisor Sergey Glazyev: „According to the document, the objective is to get the Ukraine into the fold of the Russian customs union by the time of the 2015 elections. For this purpose, European influence in Ukrainian media is to be ‚neutralised‘ by supporting Russia-friendly opinion-makers. Further, Western-oriented oligarchs are to be ‚sanctioned‘. Additionally, after the Ukraine elections, the pro-European public servants – especially in the foreign and defence ministries – are to be ‚discredited‘ and ousted from their offices. For these are, the paper quotes, ‚de facto agents of Euro-Atlantic influence‘.“<sup>41</sup>

Considering such a background, it should not astonish anyone that the struggle for the Ukraine did not begin only just recently. This became abundantly clear during the so-called „Orange Revolution“ in 2004. At the time, after controversial elections, Viktor Yanukovich was declared the winner, yet after large-scale protests – massively supported by the West – Yanukovich was forced to agree to another round of polls, from which Viktor Yushchenko, a pro-Western candidate, emerged as the victor. According to a report by Strategic Forecast, the events of that period caused veritable shock waves in Moscow. This led to the fundamental course change described above which from then on characterised the relationship towards the West and specifically Russian policy regarding the Ukraine: „The Orange Revolution in Ukraine proved a breaking

point in U.S.-Russian relations, however. At that point, Moscow recognized that the United States was seeking to cripple Russia permanently. After Ukraine turned orange, Russia began to organize a response.<sup>42</sup>

Immediately upon assuming office, Yushchenko indefatigably kept voicing his interest in NATO membership for the Ukraine, which the alliance offered as a prospect for some time, but later withdrew its offer. Further, he announced his intention to not extend the agreement on deployment of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea beyond its expiry date in 2017 – occasionally he even threatened to terminate it prematurely. The resulting drastic deterioration of Russian-Ukrainian relations culminated in the so-called gas wars of 2006 and 2009. Outwardly, these conflicts were about outstanding Ukrainian payments for Russian energy supplies. In fact, though, Moscow's intention was to take over the Ukrainian pipeline network, thus reinforcing its influence on the Ukraine.<sup>43</sup>

Russian gas cut-offs led to a drastic energy shortage in the Ukraine (also in some EU countries) and are likely to have been intended as a means of weakening Yushchenko. In any case, any assessment of the pro-Western president's term of office can be nothing but disillusioning: „After five years of 'Orange' rule, the majority of the people are worse off, while the oligarchic clans and politicians continue to go about their business with the same level of corruption and criminality as before.“<sup>44</sup> In view of this, it is not surprising that in the presidential elections of January, 2010, Yushchenko was punished, receiving a mere 5.45% of votes. In the subsequent second ballot one month later, Viktor Yanukovych came out on top in a process that happened under international observation and was confirmed to have taken place freely and fairly.<sup>45</sup> That to some degree this already was a West vs. Russia contest is illustrated by a Spiegel Online headline of the time: „Presidential Elections in the Ukraine. The Winner is Moscow.“<sup>46</sup>

Undeniably, the Ukrainian position changed fundamentally almost immediately afterwards. In exchange for price cuts on Russian energy supplies, Yanukovych extended the lease agreement for the important Russian Black Sea Fleet base at Sevastopol from 2017 to 2042 (factually to 2047). Concerning possible membership in the Western military alliance, already in February, 2010, Yanukovych confirmed that „there



*Head of the EU Commission at the time, José Manuel Barroso, President of the EU Council, Herman van Rompuy, and Ukrainian President, Petro Poroshenko, during the signing of the association agreement between the EU and the Ukraine as well as Moldova and Georgia. (Source: European External Service)*

is no question of Ukraine joining NATO“.<sup>47</sup> Even further: in June, 2010, the Ukrainian parliament even passed a law whose author was Yanukovych himself, factually stipulating the country's non-alignment and thus prohibiting accession to NATO.<sup>48</sup>

However there are no indicators that at any time, Yanukovych seriously considered membership in Russia's customs union, either. Fact is that among the population there was no clear majority for such a move, nor for any further orientation towards the West. Opinion polls of 2013 confirm this: „Ukrainian sociologists point out that the country's population has in fact not yet made a choice between the EU and Russia. According to a study by the International Institute of Sociology in Kiev, 39.8 percent of Ukrainians approve of joining the Customs Union, while 36 percent would welcome integration into the EU. 22 percent did not provide a definite answer. In contrast, a survey by the Rating Group found that 41 percent of Ukrainians are for closer ties to the EU and 38 percent for the Customs Union.“<sup>49</sup>

It is a fact that on the eve of the escalation, the country was deeply divided, with a rather more pro-Russian and a rather more pro-Western part pitted against each other. In such a situation, it would have been a ludicrous undertaking to attempt

to force a decision on the Ukraine to go in the direction of one bloc or the other – yet that was exactly what the European Union did with its association agreement.

### **1.5 Geostrategy by Means of Association: Brussels or Moscow?**

As described, the desire to integrate the Ukraine into their own respective sphere of influence was one of the top items on the political agendas of both the West and Russia. This is exactly why the „Association Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part“<sup>50</sup> is of such immense geopolitical significance. Immediately after the „Orange Revolution“, work on it began when the European Commission mandated first studies focussing on the possible effects of such an agreement. Official negotiations started in 2007, with talks continuing even after fairly pro-Russian Yanukovych had come to power in Kiev. Then, by March 2012, a document had been prepared which was ready for signing, with a principal part of about 180 pages and a further approximately 2,000 pages of appendices and protocols.<sup>51</sup>

Apart from passages which are problematic in terms of economic policy (referred to in greater detail in the next chapter), the

document is highly explosive as a geopolitical instrument. The reason for this is that the signing of an EU association agreement is equivalent to joining the Western bloc, as it makes membership in the Russian-controlled Customs Union or the Eurasian Economic Union impossible (and vice versa). For instance, Stefan Füle, who as EU Commissioner for Enlargement at the time of the negotiations about the Agreement played a major part in the matter, left no doubt in this: „It is true that the Customs Union membership is not compatible with the DCFTAs [Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas] which we have negotiated with Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia. [...] This is due to legal impossibilities: for instance, you cannot at the same time lower your customs tariffs as per the DCFTA and increase them as a result of the Customs Union membership.“<sup>52</sup> Just as clearly it was expressed by Manuel Barroso, President of the EU Commission at the time: „One country cannot at the same time be a member of a customs union and be in a deep common free-trade area with the European Union.“<sup>53</sup> The Spiegel commented on this remark: „He said that Kiev had to decide which path it wanted to take. The message was clear: Kiev had to choose either Brussels or Moscow.“<sup>54</sup>

Accordingly, to sign such an agreement means to take a practically irreversible, momentous geopolitical decision, in an attempt to get ahead of Moscow and deal The Bear a heavy blow in the process. Such a blow was intended to be all the heavier as the Agreement provides for the Ukraine's comprehensive integration into European military structures. Thereby, Russia's suspicion that this in fact means joining the Western alliance receives further confirmation: „The Parties shall intensify their dialogue and cooperation and promote gradual convergence in the area of foreign and security policy, including the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)“.<sup>55</sup> The Ukraine has of course been included in NATO and EU military structures for quite some time, e.g. as part of NATO's „Partnership for Peace“ programme, by participating in the EU's Atalanta operation at the Horn of Africa, and even as part of an EU battle group during the first half of 2014.<sup>56</sup> Still, it is obvious that by means of the Agreement, such integration is intended to be consolidated quite a bit further, as e.g. the following formulation clarifies: „The Parties shall enhance practical cooperation in conflict prevention and crisis manage-

ment, in particular with a view to increasing the participation of Ukraine in EU-led civilian and military crisis management operations as well as relevant exercises and training activities, including those carried out in the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).“<sup>57</sup>

In consideration of all these „advantages“, the EU was extremely eager to get the job completely done as quickly as possible, as an article published in 2012 reveals: „Despite all apparent differences and harsh rhetorics in the direction of Kiev, the European Union is aware of the Ukraine's important role, not only for the Eastern Partnership, but in the geostrategic relations between the EU and Russia. If the EU fails to create closer ties with the Ukraine politically and economically, the latter will inevitably drift further towards Moscow, thus goes one of the most serious arguments for swift association.“<sup>58</sup>

The explosive nature in geopolitical terms of the association agreement, and thus also of the Yanukovych administration's decision to factually dump it in November 2013, is plainly obvious, and to a good extent explains why subsequently the situation escalated so dramatically. To put the blame for this on Russia alone, as is common practice currently, means assuming a position miles away from reality: „The geopolitical conflict about the Ukraine was not ignited by the association agreement in itself, but by the refusal to sign it. The EU was convinced that this withdrawal lacked any kind of internal political rationality and attributed it to the long arm of Moscow. [...] It may well be that in this matter, everybody is pointing their fingers at Moscow. Yet the conflict's geopolitical aggravation was predetermined by the European Union. It had confronted the Ukrainian government with the made-up alternative of either EU association or membership in the Eurasian Economic Union project. A casual glance at the structure of Ukrainian exports makes clear that an exclusive trade agreement with the EU provides the Ukrainian economy with very few new prospects.“<sup>59</sup>

Just as pointedly and concisely, the power politics background and the scope of consequences of the conflict were described by Michael Stürmer in the German newspaper Die Welt: „Putin wants [to create] the Eurasian Customs Union, the EU wants to shift Kiev towards the West with an association agreement. [...] What

we see is that this is about visas, trade and subsidies from Brussels, what we don't see is that it's about geopolitics. [In the matter of the] EU-Ukraine association agreement, [there is] more at stake [...] than trade and change. It is about the Ukraine's soul and Europe's power geometrics.“<sup>60</sup>

6. *Wales Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales, Press Release (2014) 120, Issued on 05 Sep. 2014, Section 21.*
7. *Lemann, Nicholas: The Next World Order: The Bush Administration may have a brand-new doctrine of power, in: The New Yorker, April 1, 2002; Richard Perle, Andrew Marshall und Albert Wohlstetter also had an important part in writing this paper. Cf. Mann, James: Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet, New York, 2004, pp. 209ff.*
8. *Tyler, Patrick E.: Pentagon Drops Goal of Blocking New Superpowers, The New York Times, 24 May, 1992.*
9. *Halper, Stefan/Clarke, Jonathan: America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order, Cambridge, 2004.*
10. *Russia's Expanding Influence, Stratfor, 08 March, 2010.*
11. *Kramer, Mark: No Such Promise, in: Foreign Affairs, November/December, 2014; Russlands Anschuldigungen – eine Richtigstellung, NATO Informationsblatt, April, 2014; Kramer, Mark: The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia, in: The Washington Quarterly, Vol. 32, No. 2 (April, 2009), pp. 39-61. For an opposing position: Sarotte, Mary Elise: A Broken Promise? What the West Really Told Moscow About NATO Expansion, in: Foreign Affairs, September/October, 2014; Sarotte, Mary Elise: Perpetuating U.S. Preeminence. The 1990 Deals to "Bribe the Soviets Out" and Move NATO In, in: International Security, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Summer 2010), pp. 110-137.*
12. *Hassel, Florian: Erst Manöver, dann Krieg, Frankfurter Rundschau, 10 Sept, 2008.*
13. *Das große Rätsel um Genschers angebliches Versprechen, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 19 April, 2015.*
14. *Ignorant und Arrogant. Der unglückliche*

- Umgang der USA mit Russland, Weltspiegel, 09 March, 2014.*
15. Das große Rätsel um Genschers angebliches Versprechen, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 19 April, 2015.
  16. *Ibid.*
  17. Gorbachev: how we pulled down the Berlin Wall, *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, 30 October, 2014.
  18. The other states were Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia.
  19. Neuber, Arno: Schild und Schwert: Aggressive Atompolitik und Raketenabwehr der NATO, *IMI-Analyse* 2009/012.
  20. Dmitri Trenin as quoted by Gerns, Willi: Putinsche Russland, in: *Marxistische Blätter*, No. 1/2015, pp. 67-78, p. 74.
  21. Often, Russian president Vladimir Putin is accused of a kind of pathological hatred of the US which supposedly is a remnant of his time with the KGB. A critical point of view on this is assumed by Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, who in their book "Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin", published in excerpts in *The Atlantic*, make the finding that US actions since the end of the Cold War are the reason for Putin's negative US image, not any kind of deep-seated anti-Americanism. See Hill, Fiona/ Gaddy, Clifford G.: *The American Education of Vladimir Putin. How the Russian leader came to oppose a country he knows little about*, *The Atlantic*, 16 Feb, 2015.
  22. Vladimir Putin's appearance in the Bundestag in September 2001 is generally seen as an attempt of this kind, when he stated: "I am of the opinion that Europe will only consolidate its reputation as a powerful and autonomous centre of global politics if it combines its own capacities with the Russian human, territorial and natural resources as well as with the economic, cultural and defence potentials of Russia." Speech by Russian President Vladimir Putin before the German Bundestag on 25 September, 2001 in Berlin, documented in: *Internationale Politik*, October, 2001.
  23. Fischer, Sabine: Die russische Politik gegenüber Ukraine und Weißrussland, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, No. 08-09/2007, pp. 16-23.
  24. Speech by Russian president Vladimir Putin at the 43rd Munich "Security Conference"; English translation from the original Russian transcript as published on the official web site of the Russian President.
  25. Analysis: Putin im Harnisch, *dpa (Deutsche Presseagentur)*, 10 Feb, 2007.
  26. Hantke, Martin: "Alles wieder offen": Georgienkrieg und imperiale Geopolitik, *IMI-Studie* 2008/010b.
  27. The term New Cold War was popularised mainly by Lucas, Edward: *The New Cold War: Putin's Russia and the Threat to the West*, New York/Basingstoke, 2008.
  28. Kagan, Robert: *Die Demokratie und ihre Feinde*, Bonn 2008, p. 7. The English-language quote here is a back-translation from the German edition of Kagan's book, not a quote from the original English edition!
  29. Ikenberry, John/Slaughter, Anne-Marie: *Forging a World of Liberty under Law*, September, 2006, pp. 29f.
  30. Leonard, Mark: *Divided world: the struggle for primacy in 2020*, Centre for European Reform, Policy Brief, January 2007, p. 2; Wijk, Rob de: The consequences for Europe of the global crisis, in: *Europe's World*, Autumn 2009.
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  32. The draft of the European Security Treaty, November 29, 2009: <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/275>
  33. Klein, Margarete: Medwedew's Vorschlag für einen euroatlantischen Sicherheitsvertrag, in: *russland-analysen* No. 193, 04 Dec, 2009, p. 2.
  34. Clinton sagt njet - und umwirbt die Russen, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 17 May, 2010.
  35. Atilgan, Canan u.a.: *Die Eurasische Union. Ein Integrationsprojekt auf dem Prüfstand*, in: *KAS Auslandsinformationen*, 2/2014, pp. 8-51.
  36. Popescu, Nicu: *Eurasian Union: the real, the imaginary and the likely*, *EUISS, Chaillot Paper*, No. 132, 09 September, 2014.
  37. Meckel, Markus u.a.: *Deutsche Außenpolitik und Östliche Partnerschaft, Positionspapier der Expertengruppe Östliche Partnerschaft, DGAPStandpunkt* No. 1/2012, p. 2, quoted according to Achelpöhl, Wilhelm/Cremer, Uli: *Ukraine: Wir müssen über Geopolitik reden*, *Grüne Friedensinitiative*, 04 March, 2014.
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  39. Friedman, George: *Russia Examines Its Options for Responding to Ukraine*, *Stratfor Geopolitical Weekly*, 18 March, 2014.
  40. *Russia's Expanding Influence, Part 1: The Necessities*, *Stratfor*, 09 March, 2010.
  41. *Druck aus Moskau treibt Ukraine in die Arme der EU*, *euractiv*, 30 August, 2013.
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  47. Yanukovych Confirms No Plans to Take Ukraine into NATO, *RIA Novosti*, 13 Feb, 2010.
  48. *Ukraine drops Nato membership bid*, *EJObserver*, 04 June, 2010.
  49. *EU oder Russland: Ukraine quält sich mit Dreiecksbeziehung*, *RIA Novosti*, 22 Aug, 2013. English-language quote translated from this German-language article.
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  54. *Ibid.*
  55. *Association Agreement, Title II, Article 7, Section 1.*
  56. *Drucksache 18/1221 of the Deutscher Bundestag*, p. 4.
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## 2. The Ukraine in the Sights of European Ambitions and Strategies

As pointed out above, only from a narrow viewpoint can it be said that the deterioration of Russian-Western relations and the escalation in the Ukraine is the fault of NATO (and thus more or less explicitly the USA) alone. This is also, and not least, a result of an aggressive EUropean expansion policy derived from the aspiration of wanting to establish EUrope on the global scene as a world power on a par with the other great powers (Chapter 2.1). One prerequisite to this end is considered to be the creation of a Greater European economic zone and sphere of influence as a kind of „imperial base of operations“, with the immediate priority on the neighbouring regions to be „conquered“ and secured by military means (Chapter 2.2).

For this purpose, work towards a neoliberal reconstruction of the neighbouring countries has been going on for years, while at the same time providing Western European corporations with resources and especially also with new investment and sales markets as well as cheaper labour and production facilities. This was implemented in a first expansion phase with EU enlargement towards the East (Chapter 2.3). However, after its „successful“ completion in 2004, for reasons to be discussed in greater detail below, a new strategy was now required. The fruit of these contemplations was the „European Neighbourhood Policy“ (ENP) initiated in the same year, a programme according to the maxim of European „expansion without enlargement“ (Georg Vobruba). Just as in the case of direct eastward enlargement, the countries in the neighbouring regions are to be permanently integrated into a Greater European economic zone and sphere of influence, though with the crucial difference that they are not offered any realistic prospect of full EU membership (Chapter 2.4).

The principal instrument in achieving this is the conclusion of an association agreement. Such an agreement was also negotiated with the Ukraine. Though a close look at the agreement document gives rise to the suggestion that it has the potential of causing an economic disaster in the country. Due to the fact that on the one hand, the agreement favours Western European corporations to a most significant degree, and on the other hand, it is a core element of the EUropean expansion strategy, its rejection by the Yanukovych administration was seen by the EU as nothing short of a declaration of war, and immediately, any and all attempts at overthrowing that government



*Champion of „EUrope as a Global Power“: Martin Schulz. (Source: European Union)*

were supported massively (Chapter 2.5). In this, possible conflicts with other countries which are not prepared to sit by idly and just watch as the EU endeavours to expand are considered acceptable, as is pointed out, for instance, by former German foreign minister Joschka Fischer: „The EU will have to understand that in its eastern and southern neighbourhood, it is not operating in a region devoid of interests, but that it will be confronted with the antagonistic interests of other powers, even with rivals [...] The EU's enlargement policy [...] is an indispensable element of the European Union's security, even its most significant way of projecting power outward into its geopolitical neighbourhood.“<sup>61</sup>

### 2.1 Europe as a World Power

To the present day, the myth is purported that the European Union is some kind of „geopolitical abstainer“ whose strategic foreign policy, if one exists at all, is at best crudely tinkered together more or less spontaneously. What is correct about this notion is that in the specific constellation of the Cold War, any targeted EU expansion policy was factually impossible: „Under the conditions of US hegemony and ideological competition between the systems, there was no scope for any autonomous European strategy during the post-war decades. In particular, this applied to foreign and security policy.“<sup>62</sup> Though with the fall of the Soviet Union, the gradual decline of US power, and German reunification immediately followed by a reorientation of German military policy

towards an offensive stance, the previous framework conditions began to change fundamentally from the early 1990s onwards. In similarity to the US, contemplations were made also in the EU how to react to the new situation, viz.: how best to exploit it advantageously. The result was that „relevant“ circles quickly agreed that the opportunity to rise to the level of a global player in power politics should be utilised purposefully.

Since then, with increasing blatancy, influential exponents of European politics have been articulating the claim of wanting to join the front ranks in the global quarrel over power and influence. Thus, Martin Schulz, President of the EU Parliament and poster boy of the Social Democrats in the EU, wrote: „Europe, whether it wants to or not, is a global player. The EU is the largest and wealthiest single market in the world, our economic power amounts to one quarter of the global gross national product. The EU is the largest trading bloc world-wide, the biggest donor of development aid world-wide – the EU is an economic giant. With global economic power comes responsibility in world politics – Europe cannot evade such a mandate. Europe's partners – rightly – expect Europe to rise to that challenge and expect the economic superpower to also become a superpower in terms of world politics.“<sup>63</sup>

At this point, the obvious question arises how, all declarations of intent notwithstanding, this is actually supposed to be achieved practically. The most „convinc-

ing“ concept in this respect is by James Rogers, co-founder of the „Group on Grand Strategy“ (GoGS), an increasingly influential association of geopoliticians.<sup>64</sup>

## 2.2 Imperial Greater Europe and How To Secure It by Military Means

For quite some years, various members of the Group on Grand Strategy have been complaining about the West's rapid loss of influence, in particular that of EU countries. In drastic words, the two GoGS directors James Rogers and Luis Simón thus demand a serious turnaround in matters of power politics: „Today, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the European Union, its Member States and the European people stand at a crossroads. As a new generation has started to come to power and new geopolitical forces have begun to reshape the world around us, the political vision that once guided European integration has lost its way. [...] We should be under no illusions here; even our shared liberal values are not immune from corrupting foreign influence, particularly in a world where large and potentially predatory autocracies will acquire more and more influence and power. We argue that, increasingly, it will only be through an effective grand strategy and sheer power that we will be able to protect European values [...] Europeans currently face two futures: a future of power or a future of ruin. There is no alternative: we can either remain the rulers, or become the ruled.“<sup>65</sup>

To be „armed“ for such developments to an optimal degree, thus their argument, the European Union now needs to commit to a systematically pursued geostrategy aiming at expansion of its sphere of influence and establishment of an imperial grand area. Along these lines, GoGS co-director James Rogers wrote in 2011: „The ultimate aim of geostrategy, then, is to link geography and politics to maximize the power and reach of the domestic territory. [...] Such an approach must be backed up by a subtle but formidable military posture, which aims to prevent potential rivals from emerging [...]“<sup>66</sup>

Based on this, Rogers developed criteria according to which he stakes out the borders of such a „Grand Area“ and thus provides a kind of cartography, so to speak, of an EU Empire. It includes large parts of Africa, the oil-rich Caspian and Central Asian region and the Middle East, but also extends it a long way to East

Asia, where the objective is to control the shipping routes (see map). Specifically, countries and regions are to be integrated into the „Grand Area“ if they conform to the following „profile of requirements“:

„Given that certain powers have sought to take advantage of key regions and entrench themselves – often to the disadvantage of others – the European Union should do more to ascertain the minimal geographic area required to sustain the continued expansion of its own economy. From a geopolitical perspective this zone would have to meet five criteria:

1. It would have to hold all the basic resources necessary to fuel European manufacturing needs and future industrial requirements;
2. Contain all the key trade routes, especially energy transmission pipelines and maritime shipping routes, from other regions to the European homeland;
3. Have the fewest possible geopolitical afflictions that could lead to the area's disintegration and thereby harm future European economic development;
4. Show the least likelihood of significant encroachment by powerful foreign actors, relative to its importance to the European economy and geopolitical interests;
5. Represent an area the European Union can work towards defending most cost-effectively through the expansion of the Common Security and Defence Policy [...].“<sup>67</sup>

In addition, in order to exert control over the „Grand Area“, it should be covered with a dense network of European military bases: „The ‚Grand Area‘ approach would attempt to integrate those countries into a permanent Europe-led system, underpinned by military stations, better communication lines and tighter partnerships – a European ‚forward presence‘ – to reduce the need for sporadic intervention.“<sup>68</sup> This network of military bases is primarily designed to emphasise two aims: „Firstly, to deter foreign powers from meddling in countries in the wider European Neighbourhood and secondly, to dissuade obstinacy and misbehaviour on the part of local rulers“.<sup>69</sup> Specifically, he then proposes to construct a whole series of new bases: „New European military stations may be required in the Caucasus and Central Asia, the Arctic region, and along the coastlines of the Indian Ocean. The intention behind these installations would be to [...] exercise a latent but permanent power within the ‚Grand Area.“<sup>70</sup>

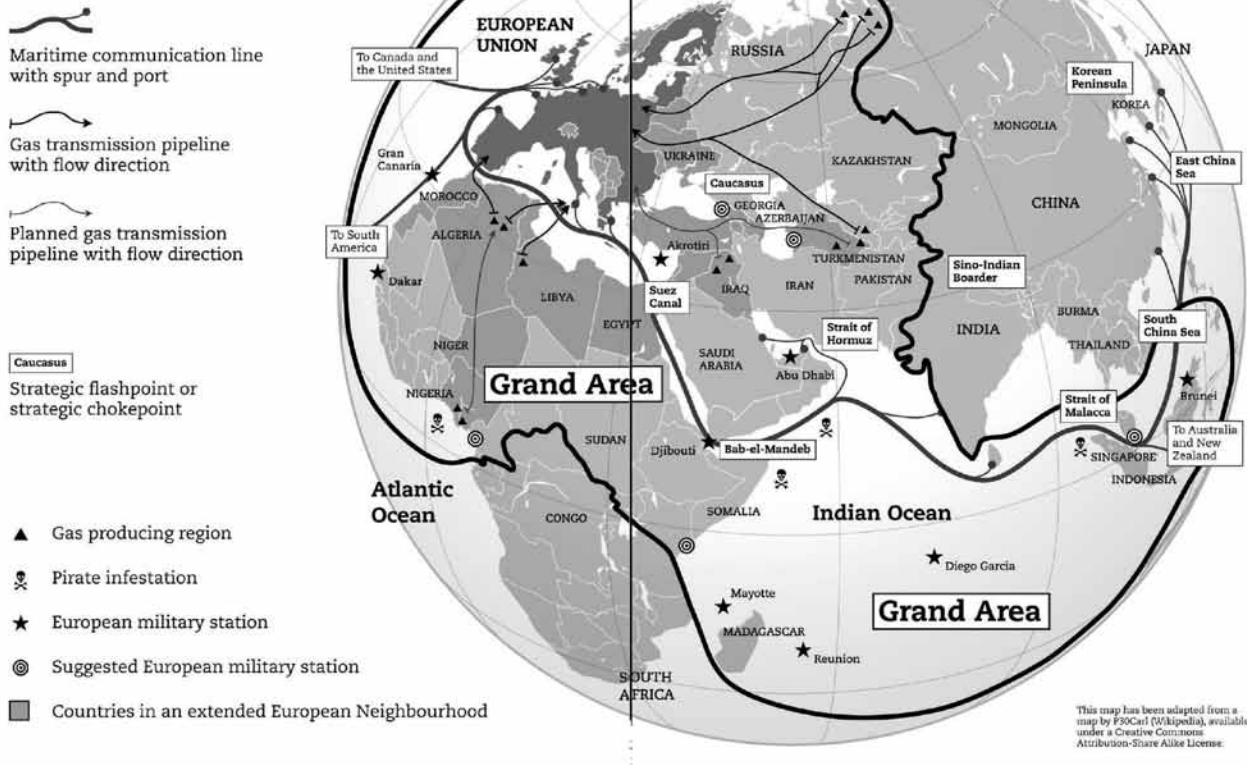
Indeed, within the political elites, discussions have been going on for some time on extending the EU's military presence as far as East Asia<sup>71</sup>, but it is clear that greater importance is attached to control of the immediate neighbouring region in the foreseeable future. Thus Thomas Renard, member of the Group on Grand Strategy's advisory board, also writes: „Of course, if the EU wants to become a global power, it first needs to assert itself as a power in its own region.“<sup>72</sup> So in this context, following Rogers' point of view, Eastern Europe and therefore also primarily the Ukraine are to be attributed a very particular significance, especially when taking Russia into account: „Eastern Europe is the gateway between the vast resources of Asia and the dense and technologically advanced populations of Europe. This means that it will either be controlled by imperial despotism in the form of Russia, or by democratic civilisation in the form of Europe. Due to its geostrategic location, who gains access over this crucial zone will also gain influence over the entire Eurasian supercontinent. When Eastern Europe is controlled from Moscow, Europeans – and by extension, North Americans – will be held captive, as they were for much of the Cold War. When Eastern Europe is shaped by Brussels (as well as London, Paris and Berlin) – and by extension, Washington – Russia will be weakened and rendered relatively harmless, as it was for much of the 1990s and 2000s.“<sup>73</sup>

One might just dismiss Rogers' contemplations as the product of some seriously misguided eccentric, but we are certainly not dealing with any kind of a „geopolitical backbencher“ here. This is evident from the fact that he was commissioned by the EU's own strategic think tank, the „Institute for Security Studies“ (EUISS), to write one of the core papers on the future of EU military policy, in which large elements of his „Grand Area“ concept were incorporated.<sup>74</sup>

Prominent politicians such as Radek Sikorski, Polish foreign minister until 2014, also assume similar positions: „If the EU wants to become a superpower – and Poland supports this – then we must have the capability to exert influence in our neighbourhood. [...] Sometimes we must use force to back our diplomacy.“<sup>75</sup> For instance, in one of the then-relevant strategy papers preparing the „EU Arms Summit“ in December 2013, Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs at the time, quite openly declared the entire neighbourhood region

## Map 1

The European Union and the 'Grand Area'



Source: Rogers, James: *A New Geography of European Power?*, Egmont Paper, No. 42, January 2011

### Evil Model: The USA's "Grand Area"

James Rogers uses the term "Grand Area", which he has borrowed from US geopolitics. It stands for a concept designed with the explicit aim of maintaining poverty and inequality in the world. A detailed outline of this concept was provided by George F. Kennan, who with his "Long Telegram" is considered to have initiated the containment policy against the Soviet Union and aggressive US politics during the Cold War (from which he later dissociated himself).

By giving the first fundamental declaration of the "Group on Grand Strategy" the title "The New Long Telegram" as well as conceptually placing his notion of imperial territory in the tradition of the USA's "Grand Area", James Rogers confirms his affinity for such an approach to world domination: "A description of the 'Grand Area' is given by the leading member of the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department, George F. Kennan. The top-secret paper *Policy Planning Study 23* (PPS/23)

of 12 February, 1948 postulates that the defeated and occupied powers Germany and Japan must be reconstructed as active items of a capitalist world order, which is supposed to be achieved by means of the resources of the so-called Third World. In this world order, free trade and the dominance of the Western civilisation are to be the sole governing principles."<sup>1</sup>

Some concrete suggestions in the PPS/23 were: "This being the case, we must be very careful when we speak of exercising "leadership" in Asia. We are deceiving ourselves and others when we pretend to have the answers to the problems which agitate many of these Asiatic peoples. Furthermore, we have about 50% of the world's wealth but only 6.3% of its population. This disparity is particularly great as between ourselves and the peoples of Asia. In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of

relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security. To do so, we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and day-dreaming; and our attention will have to be concentrated everywhere on our immediate national objectives. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction. [...] We should cease to talk about vague and – for the Far East – unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better."<sup>2</sup>

1. From: Wikipedia: *Grand Area* (translated from the German-language article)
2. Excerpt from the *Policy Planning Study*, Chapter VII. *Far East*, page 524, as quoted in Wikipedia: *Grand Area*

a factual European area of influence and intervention: „The renewed emphasis by the US on the Asia-Pacific region is a logical consequence of geostrategic developments [note: the rise of China]. It also means that Europe must assume greater responsibility for its own security. [...] The Union must be able to act decisively as a security provider, in partnership where possible but autonomously where necessary, in its neighbourhood, including through direct intervention. Strategic autonomy must materialize first in the EU's neighbourhood.“<sup>76</sup>

A similar formulation can be found in „European Global Strategy“, a document outlining a global EU strategy, commissioned by the foreign ministers of Spain, Poland, Italy and Sweden: „The EU's global influence will increasingly be determined by its actions in its strategic neighbourhood. [...] The EU should also be prepared to undertake autonomously the full spectrum of civilian and military missions in the strategic neighbourhood in keeping with international law, when and where this is necessary to protect vital European interests. This implies the ability to project both civilian and military capabilities.“<sup>77</sup>

### 2.3 Expansion, Phase I: the EU's Eastern Enlargement

EU expansion took place in two stages, of which the first was the so-called eastern enlargement, which to a relevant extent had already been decided upon with passage of the Copenhagen criteria in 1993. To be formally admitted into the European Union, the membership candidates had to submit to a neoliberal shock therapy, which in essence meant to abandon all protective measures for the respective national economy. The argument employed by the EU in this was that intensified competition against the –technologically far superior and more productive – western European companies for markets and business would lead to a considerable increase in efficiency and productivity, which would also be of benefit to the membership candidates at least in the medium term. An analogy to this „competition-is-good-for-business“ position the EU assumed (and maintains to the present day) might be that a race between a Ferrari and a Polski Fiat is fair simply because they are on the same road together: „Historically, the promotion of free trade has always been the privilege of the powerful. And to promote and maintain inequality has always been a prerequisite for the free-

	Votes in Council (in % Treaty of Nice)	Votes in Council (in % Treaty of Lisbon)
Germany	8,40	15,93
France	8,40	12,98
United Kingdom	8,40	12,61
Italy	8,40	11,81
Spain	7,83	9,24
Poland	7,83	7,62
Romania	4,04	3,97
Netherlands	3,77	3,32
Belgium	3,48	2,21
Greece	3,48	2,19
Czech Republik	3,48	2,08
Portugal	3,48	2,07
Hungary	3,48	1,96
Sweden	2,90	1,89
Austria	2,90	1,67
Bulgaria	2,90	1,43
Denmark	2,03	1,11
Finland	2,03	1,07
Slovakia	2,03	1,07
Ireland	2,03	0,91
Croatia	N/A	0,84
Lithuania	2,03	0,59
Slovenia	1,16	0,41
Latvia	1,16	0,40
Estonia	1,16	0,26
Cyprus	1,16	0,17
Luxembourg	1,16	0,11
Malta	0,88	0,08

*Weighting of votes in EU Council. Source: Council Decision of 29 September, 2014 amending the Council's Rules of Procedure (2014/692/EU, Euratom)*

trade-based capitalist market economy to function successfully. [...] Though to evoke the principles of sporting fairness and of unimpeded competition ignores the blatant disparity of the economic and political power relations in global trade.“<sup>78</sup> The entire project was therefore neither fair nor just: „The European Union's eastern enlargement primarily serves the purpose of opening up new market spaces to the strongest powers in the West – the so-called ‚global players‘, and to secure these by means of the legal regime of the ‚Acquis communautaire‘.“<sup>79</sup>

On the whole, this strategy was extremely „successful“: after years of negotiations in which far-reaching concessions had been

demanding of the candidates, in 2004 and 2007, a total of twelve new countries, nearly all of them in eastern Europe, were integrated into the EU's sphere of influence as subordinate members. Even though just recently, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the eastern enlargement, the whole venture was brazenly declared a „success story“, the real situation is a completely different matter: „For the side of Capital, the result was something to be proud of. What had been created was nothing less than economic convergence while at the same time maintaining social and fiscal divergence. In other words: entry into the EU institutionally secured the economic takeovers which in most cases had already been

transacted before. [...] The most important economic sectors, such as the banking sector or large-scale industry are in the hands of western European, frequently German owners. In case of the automotive industry, their share in Poland, Czechia, Hungary and Slovakia is between 91 and 97 percent, for the banks between 71 and 96 percent. At breakneck speed, the respective societies have gone through a process of social and regional divergent development. Deep rifts formed also between the generations; old people can no longer get by on their pensions, and young people emigrate in search of a better future. With the exception of Czechia, official unemployment statistics throughout show two-figure percentages<sup>80</sup>

One important reason why the decision-makers at the time were prepared to submit to the directives from Brussels was probably that they were hoping to successively reverse the painful concessions by means of their right of co-determination once membership had been finalised. What they had failed to reckon with, though, were the major EU powers. Even before the eastern enlargement was implemented, the latter attempted to ensure, by means of the 2003 Constitutional Treaty, that in future, the proportion of votes in the most important EU body, the Council of heads of state and government, would be determined even more strictly according to the population size of a country. After renewed, hotly contested negotiations, the new regulation finally became effective with the Treaty of Lisbon on 01 December, 2009 and, after a transition period, has been the established voting practice since 01 November, 2014. This was to guarantee that small and medium-sized member states have no or only little possibility of exerting influence on EU policy, as for instance Vaclav Klaus, ex-president of Czechia, acknowledged in perplexion about ten years after his country had been accepted into the EU: „I have to say quite harshly that we have zero influence.“<sup>81</sup>

Where there are losers in the struggle about the new voting arrangements, there are obviously also winners: „This way, the balance in the EU shifts considerably, as due to introduction of the criterion of population size, no less than 23 of 28 member countries lose influence in the Union. In relative terms, the large states France, Great Britain, Italy, Spain and Romania gained impact. The main winner, though, is the country with the largest population by far in the Union: the Federal Republic of Germany.

[...] For the EU, the new voting procedure is a further step away from a community of sovereign states with equal rights towards a hierarchically structured Union with Germany as the hegemon at the top.“<sup>82</sup>

Conversely, the new regulation also means that accession of new, especially of populous countries would change the power structure again to the disadvantage of the current major EU powers, which is exactly why further enlargement is not under any serious debate at the moment.<sup>83</sup> Considering such a background, the method of „expansion by enlargement“ – which was actually successful – could and can no longer be applied: „Even before implementation of the eastern enlargement in 2004, contemplations began in the EU Commission how matters were to be continued afterwards. [...] The EU had reached the limits of its development dynamics until then, the alternating reinforcement of integration and enlargement. [...] Yet it was also clear that to end this expansion dynamic abruptly could not be in the EU's interest. [...] So what had to be done was to develop a concept allowing for further EU expansion without forcing the EU into any further enlargement. How is it possible to expand without enlargement?“<sup>84</sup>

## 2.4 Expansion, Phase II: Europe's Imperial Neighbourhood Policy

Already in 2003, the way was paved for the new EU expansion strategy by the Commission's communication „Wider Europe“, in preparation for introduction of the European Neighbourhood Policy one year later. Regarding the endeavour's objective, the EU external relations commissioner at the time, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, wrote shortly after the Neighbourhood Policy was launched: „To share the political and economic advantages of enlargement with our new neighbours, we have conceived the European Neighbourhood Policy. By means of this policy, we are establishing a 'circle of friends' along the borders of the extended EU. This is a key geostrategic project for Europe. This zone of stability and prosperity is intended to extend from eastern Europe via the Caucasus and the Near East right across the entire Mediterranean region.“<sup>85</sup>

Officially the ENP, which currently extends to 15 countries all around the European Union, is much concerned with promoting democracy and prosperity. In fact, the core aim actually is those countries' adoption of the „acquis communautaire“, of those

70,000-80,000 pages containing all the legal acts which are binding for all member states: „The EU aquis, which has established a common market based on the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital, ensuring competition and a level playing field [...] , could serve as a model for countries undertaking institutional and economic reform. [...] The EU therefore should stand ready to work in close partnership with the neighbouring countries who wish to implement further reforms and assist in building their capacity to align with and implement parts of the *acquis communautaire*.“<sup>87</sup>

This signifies that with the ENP, the very same objectives are pursued as with eastern enlargement: any noble intentions notwithstanding, the priority is quite clearly on neoliberal restructuring and – peripheral – integration of the neighbouring countries into the Greater European economic zone and area of influence<sup>88</sup>: „What is not said is that the main objective of the economic integration is to strengthen the EU's global competitiveness, to incorporate economies into the empire's expanding economy (the EU) and to access natural resources in an energy-rich Neighbourhood. The EU's formidable concentration of wealth and economic power have given it leverage to impose market-friendly reforms including privatization, trade liberalization and the adoption of EU regulatory mechanisms while bypassing wider debates in peripheral societies. In doing so, however, it risks creating political destabilization rather than stability, as well as deepening social and economic inequalities in the Neighbourhood...“<sup>89</sup>

Only in one, albeit most relevant, detail can a difference be found to the EU's eastern enlargement: for the reasons given above, no willingness to offer the ENP countries the prospect of membership was demonstrated. In the Commission's „Wider Europe“ paper, the matter is worded rather tersely: „A response to the practical issues posed by proximity and neighbourhood should be seen as separate from the question of EU accession.“<sup>90</sup> To „convince“ politics and societies of those neighbouring countries, thus deprived of the carrot of EU membership, of the need for the stick of neoliberal reforms, mainly substantial funding is to be provided – for the „European Neighbourhood Instrument“ (ENI) alone, nearly EUR 15.5 bn have been allocated in the budget for 2014 to 2020.<sup>91</sup> The main stipulations and regulations for appearing as a commendable, peripherally integrated client and investment



*EU Enlargement Commissioner at the time, Stefan Füle, at the summit of the Eastern Partnership in end-November, 2013. (Source: European Union)*

region for the EU centre are defined as binding in an association agreement with the European Union negotiated (viz.: imposed by the EU) as part of the Neighbourhood Policy. These agreements are therefore at the core of the current EU expansion strategy, as for instance Joachim Becker, professor at the Vienna University of Economics, points out: „The association agreements the EU is promoting in the post-Soviet region are a key element in expanding the EU's sphere of influence eastwards.“<sup>92</sup>

## **2.5 Neoliberal Association Agreement: The Ukraine as a Typical Example**

Only a short while after the „Orange Revolution“ of 2004, the European Commission mandated a study to analyse the effects of a „Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement“ between the Ukraine and the European Union. The institutions commissioned with this were the „Centre for European Policy Studies“ (CEPS), the „Institut für Weltwirtschaft“ (Institute for World Economy, IFW) and the „International Centre for Policy Studies“ (ICPS), whose findings were that such a free trade agreement would be of great benefit to both sides.<sup>93</sup> On such a basis, negotiations regarding an association agreement, with such a „Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area“ at its core, were initiated, which by 2012 had led to a document ready for signing, as already mentioned.<sup>94</sup>

If one believes the statements by various EU officials, the Ukraine can hope for a

veritable economic boom from this agreement. Thus, EU enlargement commissioner Stefan Füle predicted that after signing the association agreement, Ukrainian exports to the EU were expected to double, resulting in a 12% increase of the gross domestic product in total.<sup>95</sup> However, a careful look at the document gives rise to serious doubts about such an assessment.

In principle, the Ukraine is obligated not only to adopt the current EU legislative *acquis*, but also any and all future laws coming from Brussels at its own national level. This factually makes the Ukraine a non-voting member of the European common market with no right of co-determination whatsoever regarding decisions made in Brussels, while nevertheless having to comply with them: „an act corresponding to a EU Regulation or Decision shall as such be made part of the internal legal order of Ukraine“ (Annex XVII, Article 2a).

Further elements of the document: „The Parties shall progressively establish a free trade area over a transitional period of a maximum of 10 years [...]“ (Title IV, Article 25) For this purpose, among other measures, customs duties by which a country can increase the prices of another country's goods to protect its own economy must be abolished almost completely: „Each Party shall reduce or eliminate customs duties on originating goods of the other Party in accordance with the Schedules set out in Annex I-A to this Agreement (hereinafter referred to as the ‚Sched-

ules‘)“ (Title IV, Article 29, Section 1). Whoever dares to endure the severely irritating venture of attempting to comprehend what Annex I-A is about will be confronted with a list about 1,500 pages long, detailing the future tariffs for nearly every product one can imagine. Thankfully, the European Commission itself provided some measure of clarification by pointing out in a background paper that with the association agreement, tariffs will be reduced by 99,1% (Ukraine) or respectively 98,1% (EU).<sup>96</sup>

Beyond this, so-called non-tariff trade barriers – such as quantity limits – are also factually prohibited: „No Party shall adopt or maintain any prohibition or restriction or any measure having an equivalent effect on the import of any good of the other Party or on the export or sale for export of any good destined for the territory of the other Party, except as otherwise provided in this Agreement or in accordance with Article XI of GATT 1994 and its interpretative notes.“ (Title IV, Article 35)

A further measure of considerable impact is concealed in a passage under the unobtrusive heading „Approximation of technical regulations, standards and conformity assessment“. According to this, the Ukraine is obligated to adopt European production and certification standards in order to be permitted to sell goods in the EU at all.<sup>97</sup> To achieve this, it is most likely that in nearly all Ukrainian enterprises, investments of such an extent would be required that such a stipulation represents an almost insurmountable trade barrier; that obstacle can likely only be overcome in areas where the EU explicitly so desires.<sup>98</sup>

It is rather obvious that in „free and fair competition“ under such conditions against the more productive and technically clearly more advanced western European enterprises, Ukrainian businesses are very likely to find themselves at a serious disadvantage. Along these lines, Joachim Becker also criticises: „The geo-economic and geo-political thrust of the agreements is particularly evident in case of the Ukraine. Reaching far beyond a liberalisation of trade, the Ukraine is to be partly integrated into the single EU market. This would mean that the Ukraine is to adopt substantial parts of the EU's economic legislation. Not only would the Ukraine lose its means of externally protecting its national economy, but also key options for a national industrial policy (e.g. regarding public tenders). [...] A



Current EU military and civilian operations. (Source: European Union)

‘deep and comprehensive’ free trade zone is a core element of the agreement. Though for the Ukraine, ‘in-depth’ free trade and the adoption of core elements of EU economic legislation are most likely to result in deeper-reaching de-industrialisation and deeply rooted dependence structures.<sup>99</sup>

Yet a further obstacle was Russia’s threat that in case an association agreement was signed, it would seal off its market more tightly against Ukrainian products: „Foreign trade relations clearly reveal how desperately the Ukraine needs Russia as an economic partner. According to the WIIW [Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies], of a total of 53 billion euros for which goods are exported, 25 percent go to Russia and a further eight percent to the Moscow-aligned Customs Union countries Kazakhstan and Byelarus. Five percent of Ukrainian exports go to Turkey, four percent to Egypt, followed by the top EU country, Poland, with 3.5 percent. [...] Further, the structure of foreign trade is of interest. While Ukrainian exports to the EU is mostly limited to resources such as coal and steel, Kiev exports machinery, vehicles, aeroplanes

and food products to Russia. This means that the economic value added to goods delivered to the West is much lower than that for products exported to Russia.”<sup>100</sup>

It was a well-known fact among those in charge on the EU side that this was going to create serious problems both in the relations with Russia and with the Ukrainian government. When EU enlargement commissioner at the time, Stefan Füle, was warned by Ukrainian oligarch Viktor Pinchuk during the negotiation process that a solution would have to be found which would also be acceptable to Russia and that there might be difficulties, Füle had nothing better to say than „It’s always difficult with the Russians.”<sup>101</sup> Former EU enlargement commissioner Günter Verheugen also remarked: „The situation was simply that nobody talked with Russia about what the association of the Ukraine (and others) means politically and economically. Russian concerns that because of it, trade with the Ukraine might deteriorate were swept off the table.”<sup>102</sup>

At the same time, and not only due to Russian pressure alone, scepticism among

the Yanukovych administration regarding the agreement grew. This was certainly not least in connection with the worries that „their own“ oligarchs might come off badly in the continued looting of the Ukraine. But in general, concerns about the negative economic effects of the agreement quite obviously also had a decisive part. For while on the Western side, resorting to figures calculated by the „German Advisory Group“, the consequences for trade with Russia were considered to be comparatively mild, with an estimated decline in export in the region of US\$ 3 bn, Yanukovych presented very different figures. He was referring to the gigantic sum of US\$ 160 bn which had been provided as an estimate by the „Institute for Economics and Forecasting at the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine“ of the costs for all adjustment measures.<sup>103</sup>

The Spiegel describes the corresponding dialogue between Yanukovych and former EU enlargement commissioner Füle as follows: „Stefan, if we sign, will you help us?” Yanukovych asked. Füle was speechless. „Sorry, we aren’t the IMF. Where do these numbers come from?” he finally demanded. „I am hearing them for the first time.” They are secret numbers, Yanukovych replied. „Can you imagine what would happen if our people were to learn of these numbers, were they to find out what convergence with the EU would cost our country?”<sup>104</sup> It was thus clear that from the Ukrainian point of view, considerable amendments and improvements were required. In this respect, in mid-November 2013, Mikhail Chechetov, deputy chairman of the Party of Regions, which formed the government at the time, stated: „We are not prepared to sign this agreement if hundreds of enterprises, especially in the country’s area of high industrial density, will have to close down.”<sup>105</sup>

In this situation, in which the EU refused to budge even an inch from its own position, Russia even raised the stakes by holding out the prospect of substantial benefits: a discount on gas supplies of approximately US\$ 3 bn per year and a buy-up of government bonds to the amount of US\$ 15 bn. Additionally, the Yanukovych administration in its spot of extreme financial trouble had already asked the International Monetary Fund for that very same amount and in reply was immediately proscribed a set of economic thumbscrews. According to Ukrainian prime minister at the time, Mykola Azarov, this was what tipped the balance in the end and led to the decision

not to sign the association agreement: „Shrinking trade with Russia [and] other CIS countries seriously threatens the Ukrainian economy. The deterioration of economic relations with Russia resulted in a recent downgrading of Ukrainian credit rating by rating agency Fitch, Azarov explained further. The ‚last straw‘ was the demand from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) of 20 November to raise gas prices for Ukrainian households, to freeze salaries and to cut expenses. Only then could the Ukraine expect any credits.“<sup>106</sup>

One might say cynically that the EU was clearly outquoted by Russia in a bidding competition, so it is indeed comprehensible that in November, 2013, the Yanukovych administration made its final decision to dump the association agreement, at least for the time being. To put it mildly, by doing so, the Ukrainian president had not exactly gained in popularity in the West, and certainly not in Germany.

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61. Fischer, Joschka: *Scheitert Europa? („Is Europe Failing?“)*, Cologne, 2014, p. 122.
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80. Hofbauer, Hannes: *Das Geschäft Osterweiterung läuft*, Neues Deutschland, 30 April, 2014.
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  84. Vobruba, Georg: *Expansion ohne Erweiterung. Die EU-Nachbarschaftspolitik in der Dynamik Europas*, in: *Osteuropa*, 2-3/2007, pp. 7-20, p. 7.
  85. Ferrero-Waldner, Benita: “Europa als globaler Akteur – Aktuelle Schwerpunkte Europäischer Außen- und Nachbarschaftspolitik”, *Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik*, Berlin, 24 Jan, 2005.
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  87. *Wider Europe - Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*, Communication from the Commission, Brussels, 11 March, 2003, COM(2003) 104 final, p. 10.
  88. Cf. for instance: Hinnebusch, Raymond: *Europe and the Middle East: From Imperialism to Liberal Peace?* in: *Review of European Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, July 2012, pp. 18-31; Teti, Andrea: *The EU's First Response to the 'Arab Spring': A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity*, in: *Mediterranean Politics*, No. 3/2012, pp. 266-284; Reynaert, Vicky: *Preoccupied with the Market: The EU as a Promoter of 'Shallow' Democracy in the Mediterranean*, in: *European Foreign Affairs Review*, No. 16/2011, pp. 623-637; Brand, Martin: *Die Europäische Nachbarschaftspolitik – ein neoliberales Projekt?*, in: *Utopie kreativ*, H. 217 (November 2008), pp. 988-1006.
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  91. For the period 2007 to 2013, the initial amount was EUR 12 bn, though this sum was later topped up by a further EUR 1.24 bn.
  92. Becker, Joachim: *Assoziierung Teil des Problems, nicht der Lösung. Die EU-Strategie im Ukraine-Konflikt*, in: *Weltwirtschaft & Entwicklung*, 03-04/2014, pp. 1-4, p. 1 (quoted as Becker 2014a).
  93. CEPS/IFW/ICPS: *The Prospects of Deep Free Trade between the EU and Ukraine*, Brussels, 2006.
  94. It appears that a version in Russian was only available in October, 2014. Cf. “Summit of Failure”, *www.spiegel.de/international*, 24 Nov, 2014.
  95. Stefan Füle, Statement on the pressure exercised by Russia on countries of the Eastern Partnership European Commission, Speech 13/687, 11.09.2013. For this, Füle appears to have availed himself of figures in the following study: Movchan, Veronika/Giucci, Ricardo: *Quantitative Assessment of Ukraine's Regional Integration Options*, Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting, Policy Paper, 05/2011.
  96. European Commission: *EU-Ukraine Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, Reading Guide*, [http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2013/april/tradoc\\_150981.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2013/april/tradoc_150981.pdf), p. 2. The timeline for tariff reductions is also worth mentioning: “Abolishment of customs duties is almost complete. Though there are significant differences in its rhythm, as the European Union also outlines. It is to be implemented almost immediately for industrial products with only a few exceptions (e.g. Ukrainian automotive industry), while in the agricultural sector, elimination of tariffs will take place on the EU side only gradually and over a period of 10 years.” Becker, Joachim: *Untergeordnete Integration. Das Assoziationsabkommen zwischen der EU und Ukraine*, in: *Kurswechsel*, 3/2014, pp. 76-82, p. 79.
  97. “Ukraine shall take the necessary measures in order to gradually achieve conformity with EU technical regulations and EU standardisation, metrology, accreditation, conformity assessment procedures and the market surveillance system, and undertakes to follow the principles and practices laid down in relevant EU Decisions and Regulations.” (Title IV, Article 56, Section 1)
  98. “Further, the Ukraine is obligated to adopt EU technical standards and regulations to a great extent, for instance in the field of public tenders, in hygiene, regarding designations of origin or the protection of intellectual property. The opening up of markets is especially lucrative for the export-strong EU countries, but also large Ukrainian businesses in the heavy manufacturing and extractive industries as well as in agriculture are hoping for a large sales market in the EU.” Vogel, 2012, p. 2.
  99. Becker, 2014a, p. 1.
  100. Hofbauer, Hannes: *Europas Schlusslicht*, Neues Deutschland, 13 March, 2014.
  101. “Summit of Failure”, *www.spiegel.de/international*, 24 Nov, 2014.
  102. Verheugen zur EU-Russlandpolitik: Warum Helmut Schmidt irrt, *Spiegel Online*, 19 May, 2014.
  103. “Summit of Failure”, *www.spiegel.de/international*, 24 Nov, 2014.
  104. Ibid.
  105. *Partei der Regionen: EU-Assoziierung wird Millionen in der Ukraine arbeitslos machen*, RIA Novosti, 13 Nov, 2013. (German version only, no corresponding article in English available)
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### 3. The Ukraine as a Test Case for Germany's Emerging Ambitions



*German Federal President Joachim Gauck during his speech at the Munich Security Conference in early February, 2014. (Source: Zwez, MSC)*

At the latest since the appearances of German defence minister Ursula von der Leyen, foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and of course in particular German president Joachim Gauck at the Munich Security Conference in early 2014, the new tune in the debate on future German foreign and security policy has become clearly audible. Since then, the demands that Germany should actively pursue the global policy of a great power have become much more aggressive – and the country selected for the first major trial run for this „Gauck doctrine“ is the Ukraine. It should be noted, though, that this new policy of Germany as a global power was prepared well in advance by means of the project „Neue Macht – Neue Verantwortung“ („New Power – New Responsibility“). In this project, the principal argumentation models were developed to serve as guidelines for an offensive reorientation of German foreign and security policy in general, but also for concrete action relating to the Ukraine and Russia (Chapter 3.1). In the latter context, not only the USA, but also the European Union and especially Germany had for quite some time been working towards establishing pro-Western rulers in Kiev, and once the association agreement had been rejected in November 2013, the gloves came off and action was taken as planned (Chapter 3.2). And although the US and Germany had a shared interest in ousting Yanukovych, one should not overlook the fact that already during the Maidan protests, severe quarrels began between them about whose pet potentate would be hoisted into the seat of power. Beyond this, the argument is also an indicator

of more fundamental differences in the two main actors' interests which subsequently kept coming to the surface. Yet despite such differences in the details, the actors on both ends of the Atlantic are united by their goal to incorporate the Ukraine into the Western sphere of influence. Even though Germany did not manage to prevail in all matters, and even suffered some setbacks, the entire undertaking was and continues to be seen almost unanimously as an „exemplary“ case of implementing the Gauck doctrine, as Germany is considered to have „successfully“ proven itself as a leading power in global politics (Chapter 3.3). Regarding the objectives of Germany's Ukraine policy and the distinctive position Germany is assuming in its pursuit, an openness can be observed which in some ways is impressive and is most likely also connected to the general change in the tune of the German debate: „The struggle for the Ukraine is one between the Russian president and the German chancellor. [...] Almost 25 years after the end of the Cold War, the matter is about who will manage to drag the former Soviet republics of the region into their sphere of influence. This is about geopolitics, about the ‚Grand Design‘, as experts like to call it.“<sup>107</sup>

#### 3.1 New Power – New Responsibility

There are specific reasons why the discussion process about a radical course change in German foreign and security policy gained serious momentum after Germany's refusal in 2011 to participate in the campaign against Libya. Obviously in the spirit

of „such a humiliation must not happen again!“, soon afterwards, the project „Neue Macht – Neue Verantwortung“ („New Power – New Responsibility“) was established, headed by the „Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik“ („German Institute for International and Security Affairs“) and the „German Marshall Fund“. <sup>108</sup> According to a self-description, between November 2012 and September 2013, about 50 „foreign and security policy experts from the Bundestag, administration, science, industry, foundations, think tanks, media and NGOs“ (p. 47) were gathered together. Their eponymic final report „Neue Macht – Neue Verantwortung“ (also published in English) already contained all relevant core contemplations, even identical formulations of German president Gauck's later speech, and has since then been the ideological basis for the new course of German foreign and security policy (cf. the box „Gauckism – Nationalism – Global Power“).

Its starting point is the assessment that the tight limits German activities on the global stage were subject to in previous decades no longer exist in their stricter form: „The Bonn Republic [translator's note: i.e. post-WWII and pre-reunification West Germany] lacked both the weight and the freedom of movement for independent relations with partners beyond the European and transatlantic frameworks. Today, Germany's new strength gives it new opportunities to use its influence. This, too, cause for reassessing its international relationships.“ (p. 30) The report further criticises that this opportunity has so far not been utilised in any beneficial way: „But Germany has been selective and hesitant even in offering ideas or spearheading initiatives, at least in relation to its economic strength, geopolitical clout, and international standing. In this sense, at any rate, Germany remains a global player in waiting.“ (p. 8)

To change this is the major objective, but to be able to do so, Germany will in future also „have to be clear(er) in articulating its own interests and values.“ (p. 44) How this is to be interpreted is clarified by the following passage: „If Germany wants to preserve and protect its own way of life, it must work for a peaceful and rules-based world order, using all legitimate means at its disposition, including military force where and when required [...] Germany benefits like few other countries from globalization and the peaceful, open and free world order that makes it possible. At the same time, Germany is also especially dependent on this order

working well. It is therefore particularly vulnerable and susceptible to the effects of disturbances in the system“ (pp. 38 and 2).

For such ambitious endeavours, a number of countries, primarily the US, are considered essential partners: „On most key issues – peace and security, a rule-based global order, rule of law and human rights, functioning markets, secure supplies of energy and raw materials, the environment and climate change, or human development – a comparison of German positions with those of its proven European and transatlantic partners will show broad agreement, despite disparities on specific issues. The circle of these partners with influence and shaping power extends beyond the ‚West‘ and includes (in concentric rings) not just the EU member states (indispensable partners) and the NATO allies United States, Canada, and Turkey (key partners), but countries like Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico and Israel (important partners). Nurturing these proven partnerships and deepening bilateral relations with other like-minded allies should be a priority for German

foreign policy, because these relationships act as amplifiers: they expand the scope, reach and legitimacy of German shaping power. This is especially true in relation to the world’s emerging powers.“ (p. 32).

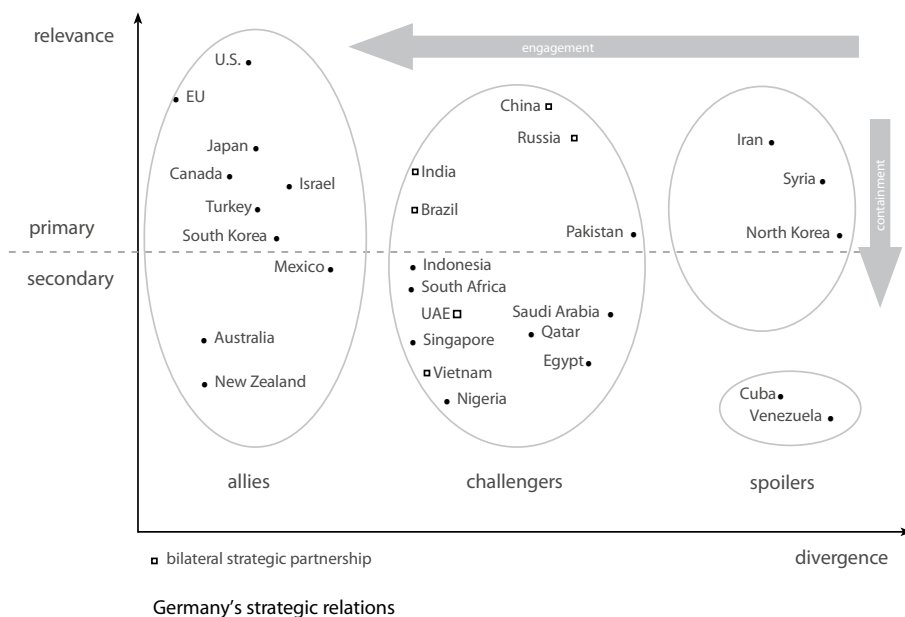
As will be elaborated below in greater detail, the „bonding agents“ of the Western alliance outlined here are a major cause of the concrete profile the New Cold War currently on the horizon has assumed (see Chapter 5.5). Beyond this, it is clearly visible that the authors of „Neue Macht – Neue Verantwortung“ indeed envision a new division of trans-Atlantic power and functions, combined with the claim to upgrade Germany’s present role as a junior partner: „Yet the United States – conscious of its reduced resources – is sending clear signals that their engagement in the world will be more selective in future, and that its expectations of partners will be correspondingly higher. This means that Europe, and Germany in particular, will have to take on a lot more tasks and responsibilities. [...] On the military-operational level, however, the Europeans will have to get used to the idea that

the United States will not only assume a leadership role less often, but will also want to participate in fewer joint missions. Europe and Germany must therefore develop formats for NATO operations that rely less on U.S. contributions. This requires greater investment in military capabilities, and more political leadership“ (pp. 5 and 43).

Where there are „partners“ to maintain the existing order, there are also „contenders“ to it. Powers considered to be among the latter are Russia and China, with intensifying conflicts with these seen as possible: „Inevitably, this will lead to competition and conflicts in Germany’s relations with the new economic and political power centres of the world: struggles about influence, and access to resources, but also about the architecture of the international order as well as the validity of the norms on which it is based. [...] In this process, some challenger states could become real partners for Germany; but it is also conceivable that some will opt for confrontation.“ (p. 32/33).

Concerning the German preferences with regard to the European Union and its Eastern policy, the following passages, among others, can be found in the „Neue Macht – Neue Verantwortung“ paper: „Economic and political integration has given Europe’s states international clout – a clout that even the major European nations can no longer bring to bear on their own. [...] Germany will have to take the lead in this field more often and more decisively. [...] Germany is naturally more strongly interested in the internal development of countries in the immediate EU neighbourhood, whether in the East or in the South, than in that of more distant states. [...] As a regional stabilizing power, the EU must strive for stability and good governance in Europe’s southern and eastern neighbourhood, and direct its efforts not only at governments, but also at civil societies. [...] German foreign policy will continue to deploy the full range of foreign policy instruments, from diplomacy, foreign aid and cultural policy to the use of military force.“ (pp. 20, 35, 26 and 7).

To put it in plain language, in that perspective – which to a great extent corresponds to the practice of EU expansion policy described above – first, Germany’s power politics ambitions can only be realised in a compound EU structure; though second, within it, Germany must be given the lead part; third, expansion into the neighbouring regions has priority, and hegemony is



*Partners, contenders and spoilers in the paper Neue Macht – Neue Verantwortung, p. 31. Oddly, in the text itself, disintegrating or splintered states such as „Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan or Mali“ are classified as „spoilers“, though they are not listed in the corresponding diagram. In what way the document’s authors intend to deal with „spoilers“ can be seen in the following passage: „ However, where spoiler states question the international order, where they violate basic international norms (such as the genocide prohibition or the prohibition on the use of weapons of mass destruction), where they lay claims to – or even attack – the commons or the critical infrastructure of globalization; in other words, where offers of compromise or dispute resolution are made in vain, Germany must be willing and able to use military power within the framework of collective measures sanctioned by international law (or at least credibly threaten its use), in order to be able to protect these goods, norms, and collective interests.“ (p. 16)*

to be achieved there; and finally, fourth, in realisation of these desires, a broad range of civil and military instruments is to be employed at the governmental or civilian levels, whichever appears opportune in the respective concrete situation.

### 3.2 Subversion and Regime Change „Made in Germany“

The entire EU expansion process is not least the product of German interests enforced via the channel of Brussels. Thus, during his term as German foreign minister, Joschka Fischer expressed already in 2000: „Especially for Germany, enlargement is of top national interest. [...] Especially the German economy will profit greatly from enlargement in terms of business and employment“<sup>109</sup> Overall, Berlin has meanwhile managed to secure far-reaching possibilities of influencing EU politics. Already in many cases, when a package is labelled „Brussels“, it actually has „Berlin“ as its contents: „Nowadays, Brussels is influenced more strongly by German interests and strategies than ever before. Mostly unnoticed by the general public, Germany has conquered the key positions in the EU's institutions and shaped structures which even tie down Juncker's self-assured Commission. Not only does Europe speak German nowadays, as the German Christian Democratic party's general secretary Volker Kauder proclaimed in 2011. Meanwhile, it even thinks and acts in the German way, according to models and rules coined in Germany. [...] On the whole, the German government has demonstrated great skill in securing a central role in the EU's institutions for itself. The old complaint about a ‚pro-French‘ bias in Brussels no longer applies; the German personnel policy has been extremely successful. Today, nearly all strategically important positions are staffed with Germans, which understandably does not meet with great enthusiasm everywhere. The British ‚Economist‘ poked fun at the ‚Teutonic Union‘, and the French ‚Libération‘ accused Merkel of determining the outcome of the ‚auditions‘ on her own.“<sup>110</sup>

To put things a little hyperbolically: in Brussels, hardly a single stone tips over without the German government having a say in it. This becomes evident also and in particular in the Spiegel's detailed documentation on the negotiation process regarding the Ukraine association agreement, in which Germany was one of the prime movers, possibly even the most relevant one.<sup>111</sup> Thus, as already described, it was mainly Germany's

position to reject a compromise with Russia and to insist on forcing a fundamental decision for the European Union. „Especially the German interests, although entirely contradictory and certainly not identical to US interests, were the driving force behind an autonomous Eastern policy. It is not a coincidence that the Ukraine conflict was not fuelled, for example, by US plans for NATO expansion, but by the matter of whether the Ukraine should associate with the German-dominated EU, and if so, then how. The German-European refusal to resolve the matter by means of including all parties involved, meaning also Russia, marked the beginning of the conflict's escalation.“<sup>112</sup>

At the same time, provisions were made to have the „capacity to act“ if the venture to absorb the Ukraine should fail, as was in fact the case. For not only the US, who, as it transpired, had invested US\$ 5 bn in the Ukraine alone for „peace and democracy“ – viz.: to promote their interests<sup>113</sup> – also the EU and thereby especially Germany were anything but inactive. Quite fundamentally, the EU naturally endeavours to leave as little as possible to chance in its neighbourhood and to influence the „fates“ of the respective countries according to its liking. This also and especially applies to its projects in the Ukraine which demonstrate rather colourfully that imperialist policies begin a long time before any gunboats are sent. In this, the aforementioned „European Neighbourhood Instrument“ is one aspect which played an important part: between 2007 and 2013, nearly EUR 1 bn were pumped into the country this way. Most of this sum was intended to „buff up“ the Ukrainian administration for implementation of the association agreement in national legislation and to build up an apparatus of pro-European civil servants.<sup>114</sup>

Additionally, the EU transferred hundreds of millions to – pro-Western – civil society groups, with further, even larger sums being allocated bilaterally by individual EU member countries.<sup>115</sup> An article in Ukraine-Analysen describing the various „patterns of interaction“ between the EU and Ukrainian civil society reveals how comprehensively Ukrainian domestic politics can (and most likely is supposed to) be influenced by means of such funding: „First, the EU has involved representatives of Ukrainian civil society in a dialogue. [...] Second, to Ukrainian civil society, the EU serves as a point of orientation and reference framework. It implicitly strengthens civil society by

demanding reforms and setting standards. [...] The group ‘We Are Europeans’ are an interesting example of this phenomenon. This unofficial association consists of young professionals in various disciplines who discuss different subjects referring to the EU on Facebook and from time launch public enquiries and carry out actions. When in 2011, the negotiations about an EU-Ukraine association agreement got stuck and the agreement could not be signed due to prevailing shortcomings in terms of democracy, more and more NGOs used their capacities to ensure that the Ukraine would not miss such an important opportunity forever. Although so far, such activities mostly take the form of public enquiries, there are increasing signs that a form of more systematic pressure exerted on political decision-makers is developing. Third and final, the EU supports Ukrainian civil society with direct funding, as in this respect, many different instruments are available.“<sup>116</sup>

Further, the impression imposes itself that the EU and the bilateral donors not only influenced the agenda of Ukrainian civil society, but in fact wrote it themselves: „This way, also projects with a political agenda can be funded in the Ukraine. The foreign funds have made many projects possible which otherwise could not have been realised. However, they have also in a certain sense distorted the development of Ukrainian civil society. Numerous observers indicate that over time, many NGOs funded by foreign sources have increasingly oriented themselves towards their donors and are losing their feedback from Ukrainian society. Also, some NGOs were formed mainly to gain access to Western funding. In the long run, an NGO élite is forming which is focused on the capital [i.e. Kiev] and develops an agenda that to a great extent is isolated from the range of problems in other parts of the country.“<sup>117</sup>

One relevant group of actors in this context are the foundations of the respective political parties. In the Ukraine, it is the German Christian Democrats' „Konrad Adenauer Foundation“ whose ventures paint a particularly colourful picture. Thus as early as 2010, the head of its Kiev office, Nico Lange, was imprisoned by order of the Ukrainian government, supposedly due to subversive activities. He was released only after top German government agencies intervened. In the report the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung published at the time, the background to this event is described

Only shortly after German President Joachim Gauck had taken office, he attracted rather negative attention with his address during his first official visit with the Bundeswehr (German armed forces) on 12 June, 2012. The newspaper Die Zeit published the following comment: „The speech the Bundeswehr has been waiting for“. Especially the nationalist-chauvinist tone the president adopted came as a shock: „There are some who confuse freedom with thoughtlessness, indifference or hedonism. [...] Such willingness to commit oneself has become rare in times where everyone must assume responsibility for themselves – and too many people think that this is already enough responsibility to bear. Here, in the Bundeswehr, I meet people everywhere who are willing to commit themselves to something – so to say, I meet ‚courage citizens in uniform‘! [...] Your slogan ‚Wir. Dienen. Deutschland.‘ (‚We. Serve. Germany.‘) is exactly to the point [...]. It fits, not just where ‚serving‘ is concerned. It sheds a light on a kind of patriotism which – based loosely on the words of Johannes Rau – is manifest in the fact that one loves one’s home country without the need to be contemptuous of the home countries of others.“

Beyond this, Gauck’s speech on German Unity Day on 03 October, 2013 made clear how close his views are to the central ideas of the project „Neue Macht – Neue Verantwortung“ („New Power – New Responsibility“) and the German elites’ power ambitions expressed in them. This is not surprising, as also regarding staff, there was a direct connection between the German president and the „Responsibility“ project. Thus, Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff, director of the German Marshall Fund, was intensely involved in Neue Macht – Neue Verantwortung, before in summer, 2013, Joachim Gauck appointed him head of his



Protest during the 2014 Munich Security Conference. The German caption reads: „Freedom for the Bundeswehr“, i.e. the German armed forces. Source: Wolfgang Smuda

executive department in charge of planning and speeches.

This explains the fact that the president’s much-noticed speech at the Munich Security Conference in early 2014 includes nearly all central ideas of Neue Macht – Neue Verantwortung: „This means that simply repeating familiar mantras won’t be enough in future! For the key question is: has Germany already adequately recognised the new threats and the changes in the structure of the international order? Has it reacted commensurate with its weight? [...] In my opinion, Germany should make a more substantial contribution, and it should make it earlier and more decisively if it is to be a good partner. [...] Sometimes

it can even be necessary to send in the troops. [...] For few other countries have such close links with the rest of the world as Germany does. Germany has thus benefited especially from the open global order. And it’s vulnerable to any disruptions to the system. For this reason, the consequences of inaction can be just as serious, if not worse than the consequences of taking action. [...] I have to admit that while there are genuine pacifists in Germany, there are also people who use Germany’s guilt for its past as a shield for laziness or a desire to disengage from the world. [...] Restraint can thus be taken too far if people start making special rules for themselves. Whenever that happens, I will criticise it.“

as follows: „Nico Lange, head of the office of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in the Ukraine, was unexpectedly arrested at Kiev’s Boryspil airport. [...] Lange is a prominent critic of the new Ukrainian government under Russia-friendly president Yanukovych. He had [...] attempted to bring the splintered Western-oriented opposition together – a natural task for the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, as several parties in that spectrum [...] have ties as observers to the European Popular Party (EPP), which the German Union parties [translator’s note: the two German Christian

Democratic parties] are also part of.“<sup>118</sup>

The EPP and its member, the German CDU, feel especially close to former boxing world champion Vitali Klitschko’s party „Udar“ („Punch“), which reportedly was initiated by the „Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung“: „Because of his success, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung noticed him; as CDU politician Werner Jostmeier reports, the foundation with close ties to the CDU ‚delegated‘ Klitschko quite some time ago ‚to provide his support in launching and establish-

ing a Christian-conservative party in the Ukraine“<sup>119</sup> According to the Spiegel, the foundation supposedly organised „training units for Udar parliamentarians and their staff members“<sup>120</sup> Klitschko personally thanked the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, saying that it had been „[...] of great help for his developing [...] party. [...] We had many questions and found answers here.“<sup>121</sup>

Also the EPP faction in the European Parliament has „rendered outstanding services“ to Udar, as, once again, reported by the

Spiegel: „Klitschko’s young party ‚Udar‘ has recently become an observing member of the family of conservative parties, EPP. EPP offices in Brussels and Budapest train Udar personnel for parliamentary work, provide support in building up a nation-wide party structure.“<sup>122</sup> While in Germany, Klitschko was circulated as the „torch-bearer of democratic opposition“, e.g. at the Munich Security Conference in early 2014<sup>123</sup>, at the same time, a succession of Western politicians travelled to the Ukraine to noisily express their solidarity with the protests. One of these, among many others from Germany, was Elmar Brok (CDU/EPP), the influential chairman of the European Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee. He had praised Klitschko as an „extraordinarily clever conversation partner with increasing political experience who clearly holds Western values dear“.<sup>124</sup> Already at the time the protests were still in full spate, he quite candidly poured out his concrete ideas on how the power shift in the Ukraine should take place: „We are experiencing demonstrations by the opposition, as it also happened already in the Orange Revolution in 2004. The citizens are protesting against the Yanukovych government’s manipulations and want to prevent the European Union’s offer of an association and free trade agreement from being rejected against their will. [...] The Ukraine requires freedom, constitutionality and competitiveness. The president lacks the courage for this, he shies away from confronting Russia. [...] The best service he could render his country would be to clear the way for new elections. [...] Vitali Klitschko has what it takes to become president of the Ukraine in the next elections, at the latest in 2015.“<sup>125</sup>

It is obvious that with his refusal to sign the EU association agreement, which had been promoted especially by the German side, Yanukovych had made powerful enemies who from then on worked towards having him ousted. Directly after the agreement had been rejected, the Spiegel wrote in shocking candour about the goals of Germany’s Ukraine policy: „The door to the Ukraine remains open‘, Merkel repeatedly emphasised after the debacle. One is still ready to talk, she confirmed. That sounded like making a great effort to save face, as one usually does after a defeat. But it also means: the affair isn’t over yet. And before the next round, the Chancellor wants to bring another player into the match: Vitali Klitschko. The six-foot-seven professional boxer is supposed to be launched as the pro-European

opponent to Russia-oriented Yanukovych – and in the end to sign the agreement with the Europeans after all. To use the term ‚regime change‘ here might be too drastic, but it’s a little about that, too: Merkel’s CDU and the family of European conservative parties EPP have chosen Klitschko to soften up the Ukrainian ‚No!‘ from the inside. He is supposed to unite and lead the opposition, in the streets, in parliament and finally in the 2015 presidential elections. ‚Klitschko is our man‘, they say in top EPP circles. ‚he has a clearly European agenda‘ – and Merkel still has a score to settle with Putin.“<sup>126</sup>

### 3.3 Tensions Within the Western Camp and German Interests

When in November 2013, the Yanukovych administration decided to reject the association agreement, the breeding ground for the Maidan protests which flared up immediately afterwards had thus been prepared at many different levels. There were certainly many good reasons to take to the streets against the highly corrupt Yanukovych government, but those preparations made it possible to swiftly hijack the

protests and drive them in the desired pro-European direction (while at the same time completely ignoring and crowding out any left-wing actors). The three-way alliance that was quickly forged and then soon assumed leadership of the protests included, besides fascist „Svoboda“ and (at that time) pro-US „Batkivshchina“, also the „Udar“ party. When the protests kept escalating further (see Chapter 4.1), on 21 February 2014, an agreement was made between Yanukovych and the three opposition representatives Klitschko, Yatsenyuk und Tyahnibok which was intended to guarantee de-escalation. To add some more substance to that agreement, it was also signed by the foreign ministers of Germany (Steinmeier), France (Fabius) and Poland (Sikorski). Its principal item was formation of a government of national unity as well as early presidential elections at the latest by December 2014. This schedule for a „regulated“ power changeover was immediately celebrated as a success of German crisis diplomacy which – so it seemed – had prevailed against the more aggressive approach favoured by the US. Along these lines, Klaus-Dieter Frankenger wrote in Frankfurter Allgemeine

#### Russia as a Justification for Arms Build-Up

Currently, by referring to Russia, it is possible to justify almost any armaments project, even the most whacky ones. Along these lines, already in April 2014, in referring to the „Russian menace“, Rainer Arnold, defence expert of the German social democrats, demanded to maintain a larger battle tank contingent (Spiegel Online, 06 April, 2014). His „wish“ was fulfilled in May, 2015: in future, not 225 as originally planned, but 325 Leopard MBTs will be at the ready to deter Russia. As if that was not enough, just before the decision, Hans Rühle, former head of the defence ministry’s planning commission piped up, claiming that the Leopard tanks should be supplied with uranium ammunition to ensure sufficient firepower (Die Welt, 26 April, 2015). But the nuclear war games go well beyond such plans, as statements by Karl-Heinz Kamp, director of the Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik (Federal Academy for Security Policy), reveal: „As the conflict with Russia is not a mere spell of bad weather, but a fundamental climate change, the overall package of deterrence must be placed in a new context.“ According to him, this refers to conventional capacities but also to „the nuclear

arms (in Europe and in the US)“ (German-Foreign-Policy.com, 13 May, 2015).

Quite generally, the reference to Russia tends to be extremely „profitable“ when made in connection with a demand to substantially increase arms spending. It should be noted, though, that the German military budget has already been raised from EUR 23.18 bn (converted) in 2000 to approx. EUR 33 bn in 2015. Even adjusted for inflation, this is an increase of nearly 25%! And this even though a – binding – agreement in June 2010 had been to reduce the budget to EUR 27.6 bn. When presenting the outline for budget planning on 18 February, 2015, finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble even announced a further increase in his paper. According to his announcements, the 2016 defence budget is to rise to EUR 34.2 bn, to 34.74 bn the following year, and to 34.8 bn in 2018, to then amount to 35 bn for 2019. One of the reasons given in the budget proposal outline is the conflict with Russia, requiring „provision of additional funding for greater NATO involvement and reinforcement in the area of defence investments.“ (Augengeradeaus, 17 March, 2015)

Zeitung under the title „Deutschland hat Verantwortung übernommen“ („Germany has assumed responsibility“): „Without the persistent efforts at persuasion from the foreign ministers of Germany, France and Poland, the Ukrainian leaders and the opposition are unlikely to have come to an agreement. That is something even the Americans should take note of.“<sup>127</sup> However, it seems that there were still a few spokes at hand for the wheel of EU diplomacy, mainly in the USA and in the Ukraine itself. To date it is still not possible to prove this without doubt, but there are quite a number of indicators that Washington used its considerable influence on the opposition parties to get this compromise dumped. Thus, the ticker of German news programme Tagesschau on 21 February at 21 hrs 53 min reported: „There were many signs that a peaceful solution would be found in the Ukraine – but the agreement between the government and the opposition is not to the liking of the masses on Maidan. They keep demanding the president's resignation – and keep threatening violence.“<sup>128</sup> Faced with the announcement that upon expiry of an ultimatum, the parliament building would be stormed, Yanukovych fled in the same night, first to Donetsk and then out of the country. We can thus establish that Germany was pursuing an active policy in the Ukraine to assert its own interests and in this even went so far as to support a violent coup which led to a substantial participation of fascist forces in the „transitional government“ (see the box „The Fascist Revolution“). What also became abundantly clear is that in spite of a great congruence of interests between Germany and the US, there are also obvious differences. The central matter in this was whether in future a pro-US (Tymoshenko or someone in her party) or a pro-German (Klitschko) president would be in charge. How roughly things were handled behind the scenes became evident especially from the wire-tapped „Fuck the EU“ phone conversation posted on the Web, featuring US Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, Victoria Nuland: „An American top diplomat makes derogatory remarks about Brussels. The Chancellor calls this absolutely unacceptable – the rift between Berlin and Washington is growing.“<sup>129</sup> Though what really annoyed the German side about the phone conversation was not the slightly undiplomatic choice of words, but the fact that it clearly revealed the US to have absolutely no intention of permitting former boxing world champion

Vitali Klitschko, lovingly breast-fed and installed with lots of German money and know-how, to assume any kind of prominent position: „Those in charge in the US did not appear to be overjoyed by the idea that Klitschko might become deputy prime minister. ‚The Klitschko piece is obviously the complicated electron here‘, Pyatt [the US ambassador in the Ukraine] can be heard. The world boxing champion should not assume office, but ‚do his political homework‘. Nuland also expresses her scepticism regarding Klitschko's participation in the government: ‚I don't think it's necessary, I don't think it's a good idea.“<sup>130</sup>

How fierce the quarrel between Germany and the US was in this matter is demonstrated by a second phone talk, tapped into on 31 January, 2014 and also posted on the Web. There, Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs of the European External Action Service, Helga Schmid, rather hotly complains about the American „allies“ to the EU's ambassador to the Ukraine, Jan Tombinski: „I just wanted to tell you one thing in confidence. The Americans are walking about a bit saying that we're too soft regarding sanctions. [...] What annoys me a lot is that the Americans are walking about pillorying the EU saying that we're too soft. [...] I just want to tell you that, so that maybe you'll talk with the American ambassador and tell him we're not soft at all. [...] It annoys me if the press now reports the EU is not on the side of freedom. [...] It's not about a race here, but it's really unfair if they spread that about here.“<sup>131</sup> The causes of these tensions are however not to be found in the fact alone that both sides intend to grab as big a piece of the Ukrainian cake as possible. US concerns about a German pet potentate actually do have a certain material basis – at least from their decidedly hostile position towards Russia. Washington is worried that German business contacts to Russia, which to some extent are rather close, may prevent Berlin from following an even harder line towards Moscow as parts of German industry may have a moderating influence.<sup>132</sup> This also became manifest in the following period, when, for instance, in the matter of possible arms supplies, there were distinct differences to be found between the US position and the – slightly – more moderate attitude of the German government. The constellation of German interests to be derived from these facts thus consists of a) the endeavour to peripherally incorporate maximally large parts of the former Eastern

Bloc into the Berlin-dominated European Union; in achieving this, there is an obvious b) preparedness to decidedly act even against central Russian interests, which includes the application of an uncompromising subversion policy; while this is c) subject to a certain degree of qualification, as due to the considerable trade volume with Russia, total escalation is undesirable. The private information service Strategic Forecast thus writes: „The German strategy in itself is contradictory. In the Ukraine, at an early stage, Germany supported the demonstrations which led to the current government. Though they did not take the Russian and American reaction into account, and they don't want to participate in a military reaction to Russia. At the same time, Germany does not want to slacken its support of the government in Kiev.“<sup>133</sup>

Quite obviously, the US pursue the same objectives in relation to items a) and b), yet at the same time place their stakes on total escalation, which the German side would rather prefer to prevent. In any case, the quarrels in the period before the coup ended with a win on points for the US. After more than 70 members of the „Party of Regions“, the ruling party at the time, terminated their membership, the party joined the opposition, and on 22 February, 2014, the parliament declared Yanukovych deposed. Immediately, a „transitional government“ was formed, installing Aleksandr Turchinov as interim president on 23 February and Arseniy Yatsenyuk as prime minister on 26 February, two representatives of Tymoshenko's party, which at the time was still pro-US. Forces of the radical right were also „rewarded“ with positions in the new cabinet for their services – the coup would likely not have been possible without their support – while Klitschko's party Udar was ignored completely: „Tymoshenko's party is in control, and the nationalists have also secured important posts for themselves. Klitschko's party is not represented in the government“, Zeit Online summarised the hostile takeover.<sup>134</sup> Even if these references are no evidence, they are nevertheless strong indicators who the powers behind the rejection of the compromise reached on 21 February 2014 were. While Germany, France and even Poland had apparently favoured an ordered transition of power, the US and their Ukrainian allies intended to seize control immediately – and the composition of the „interim government“ is a more than obvious sign as to who prevailed in this matter.

Such a blemish on its achievements notwithstanding, Germany continues to fight in the front line – literally – by diplomatic, but also economic and even military means. Faced with such a scenario, it is – unfortunately – comprehensible that the „Ukrainian operation“ is on the whole assessed as an extremely „successful“ field test for the emerging German ambitions to become a global power: „Especially the Ukraine crisis ensured that Gauck’s speech on 31 January, 2014 was perceived not as an isolated occurrence, but as the conceptual foundation to a new approach towards politics. [...] At the latest since the EU summit in Vilnius in late November, 2013, Berlin in close coordination with the EU has played a lead part in mediating between Russia, the Ukraine and the other countries of the eastern partnership.“<sup>135</sup> No less satisfied, the „Reader Sicherheitspolitik“ of the German defence ministry recognises: „The lead role among the Western powers regarding sanction policy and diplomatic mediation is assumed by the European NATO allies, with Germany leading the way. The substantial changes in the West-East power structure are most clearly manifest in the fact that a united Germany has developed from being the entity most severely affected by the East-West conflict, and a definite war theatre in case of a military escalation between the Warsaw Pact and NATO, into one of the principal actors in the current crisis between Russia and NATO.“<sup>136</sup>

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107. Blome, Nikolaus et al.: *Ein Profi für Runde zwei*, *Der Spiegel* 50/2013.
  108. *New Power – New Responsibility. Elements of a German foreign and security policy for a changing world*, SWP/GMF, September 2013. Unless indicated otherwise, the page numbers in this chapter refer to the English version of this document. For further details on this paper, also cf. Deppe, Frank: *Imperial Realismus: Deutsche Außenpolitik: Führungsmacht in „Neuer Verantwortung“*, Hamburg, 2014.
  109. Fischer, Joschka: *Vom Staatenverbund zur Föderation – Gedanken über die Finalität der europäischen Integration*, speech on 12 May, 2000 at Humboldt-Universität in Berlin.
  110. Bonse, Eric: *Europa tickt deutsch*, in: *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, 3/2015, pp. 5-8.
  111. „Summit of Failure“, [www.spiegel.de/international](http://www.spiegel.de/international), 24 Nov, 2014.
  112. Kronauer, Jörg: *Die widersprüchlichen Imperative der deutschen Ostpolitik*, in: Strutynski, Peter (Ed.): *Spiel mit dem Feuer. Die Ukraine, Russland und der Westen*, Cologne, 2014, pp. 137- 152, p. 138.
  113. „At the ‘International Business Conference at Ukraine’ in Washington, she [Nuland] had however said herself on 13 December, 2013: ‘Since the declaration of Ukrainian independence in 1991, the United States have supported the Ukrainians in the development of democratic institutions and skills, in promoting civil society and a good form of government – all that is necessary to achieve the objectives of Ukraine’s European aspirations. We have invested more than 5 billion dollars to help Ukraine to achieve these and other goals.’“ (Rude, Matthias: *Die Geister, die sie rufen*, Hintergrund, 25 Feb, 2014; quote by Victoria Nuland rendered in the original English wording here)
  114. *European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument: Ukraine, National Indicative Programme 2011-2013*, URL: [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/country/2011\\_enpi\\_nip\\_ukraine\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/country/2011_enpi_nip_ukraine_en.pdf)
  115. „Though the largest part of support funding comes from individual member states. These funds complement the
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- EU programmes and are often easier to handle, especially when the respective states' embassies coordinate their allocation themselves directly inside the country. The most active supporters of Ukrainian organisations are Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, Poland and Czechia" (Solonenko, Iryna: *Eher Partner als Geber – die EU und die ukrainische Zivilgesellschaft*, in: *Ukraine-Analysen*, No. 114, 12 March, 2013, pp. 6-8, p. 7).
116. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
117. Stewart, Susan: *Zivilgesellschaft in der Ukraine: Struktur, Umfeld und Entwicklungstendenzen*, in: *Ukraine-Analysen*, No. 114, March, 2013, pp. 2-5, p. 4.
118. Schuller, Konrad: *Inszenierung eines Missverständnisses*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 14 July, 2010.
119. *Protestbündnis für Europa*, *German-Foreign-Policy.com*, 26 Nov, 2013. According to the head of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in the Ukraine, as quoted in the German news programme *Tagesschau* ("Klitschkos internationale Verbindungen", 20 Dec, 2013), the matter happened the other way around: "In 2006, when Klitschko was a leading member of the political movement 'Pora', first contact to the CDU-affiliated Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) was made, says the head of the foundation's office in Kiev, Gabriele Baumann. When three years ago, the opposition politician founded the party *Udar* (Punch), he asked the KAS for help: 'Vitali Klitschko approached us. He requested informal contacts to the CDU and the European Popular Party as well as for support with seminars and training programmes'."
120. *Ost-West-Konflikt um die Ukraine: Merkel kämpft für Klitschko*, *Spiegel online*, 08 Dec, 2014.
121. *Protestbündnis für Europa*, *German-Foreign-Policy.com*, 26 Nov, 2013.
122. Blome et al.: *Ein Profi für Runde zwei*, *Der Spiegel*, 50/2013.
123. Ehlers, Kai: *Globaler Maidan? Liste häufig gestellter Fragen*, in: *Strutynski*, 2014, pp. 80-97, p. 83.
124. *Klitschkos internationale Verbindungen*, *Tagesschau online*, 20 Dec, 2013.
125. *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*, 02 Dec, 2013.
126. Blome et al., 2013.
127. Frankenberger, Klaus-Dieter: *Deutschland hat Verantwortung übernommen*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22 Feb, 2014.
128. *Ukraine: Der Maidan sagt Nein zum Kompromiss*, *Tagesschau online*, 21 Feb, 2014 (21:53 hrs).
129. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 08 Feb, 2014.
130. *Europa-Beauftragte der USA: "Fuck the EU"*, *Focus online*, 06 Feb, 2014.
131. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdCVHRKL-y0>
132. Concerning sanctions, important representatives of German industry keep poignantly speaking out against them. Thus, *German-Foreign-Policy.com* (*Keine Champagnerstimmung mehr*, 18 March, 2014) quotes the *Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft* (Eastern Committee of German Industry): "if now a spiral of reciprocal economic sanctions is set in motion, the European economy is threatened with long-lasting damage". Gernot Erler, the German government's Russia coordinator, also points out the possible effects of sanctions: "It is not by chance that the EU has not yet agreed on concrete measures. There will have to be a process of coordination. One thing is clear: a country such as Germany will also hurt itself by agreeing to economic sanctions. 6,200 German enterprises are active in Russia. We have 20 billion euros of direct investments in Russia, the trade volume in 2013 amounted to 76 billion euros. At least 300,000 jobs are dependent on these figures. And there is the mutual dependence in the energy sector." ("Teile der Ukraine sichern", *Das Parlament*, 17 March, 2014)
133. Rippert, Ulrich: *Ukraine-Krise: Linkspartei stellt sich hinter Merkel*, *World Socialist Web Site*, 11 Feb, 2015. The original *Stratfor* quote is obviously in English, but is rendered here as a back-translation of the author's quote provided in German. So there may be small differences in the exact wording here.
134. Jazenjuks *Kamikaze-Kabinet*, *Zeit Online*, 27 Feb, 2014.
135. Rinke, Andreas: *Raus ins Rampenlicht*, in: *Internationale Politik* 4, July/August, 2014, pp. 8-13, p. 13. Also cf. Kronauer, Jörg: *Entschlossene Weltpolitik*, *junge Welt*, 26 Feb, 2014 (quoted as Kronauer 2014a): "The Ukraine has demonstrated what German diplomacy can achieve", the *Tagesspiegel* rejoices. And: 'Finally one gets an idea of what the coalition government means when it speaks of a 'more active role for Germany in the world.'"
136. Hellmann, Günther: *Ein neuer Kalter Krieg? Russland, die NATO und der Regionalkonflikt in der Ukraine*, *Reader Sicherheitspolitik*, Issue 3/2015.

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## 4. The Ukraine in a War on Multiple Fronts

Completely ignoring the fact that the understandable primary motivation for the Maidan protests was to get rid of the clique of oligarchs who have been looting and exploiting the Ukraine for many years, the movement was quickly hijacked by pro-Western and fascist groups to whom the original goals of the protests were of very little concern. This led to a coup brought about by the threat of violence, launching an illegal interim government into power in which forces of the radical right assumed a relevant role (Chapter 4.1). The scramble between the US and Germany about who would establish their „own“ functionary, which could already be observed when the „interim government“ was formed, subsequently continued during the „regulated“ seizure of power by means of elections. In this, Germany was able to gain ground once more when Poroshenko and Klitschko formed an alliance. There is no doubt whatsoever, though, that these two camps (and their respective Western sponsors) share the goal of swift „Western integration“ – and for this reason, directly after they assumed power, preparations in that direction were started (Chapter 4.2). Alongside this development, the situation in the Ukraine itself as well as in the relations between Russia and the West escalated only a short time after the coup government had been installed. In violation of international law, Russia incorporated Crimea and continues to support the pro-Russian forces in Ukraine's eastern parts, while the West is providing massive support to the government in Kiev (Chapter 4.3). In extreme contrast to the original demands of the Maidan protests, the oligarchs' rule was even reinforced – merely a few protagonists were replaced. Further, the country was swamped in IMF austerity measures which primarily affect the poorest levels of the population. In keeping with this line, the suppression of any social protests is quite openly in preparation – and this applies to the entire Ukraine (Chapter 4.4). And finally, even within the camp of the „victorious“, conflicts keep flaring up, partly of a serious nature (Chapter 4.5).

This means that in the Ukraine, there are in fact three wars of varying intensity taking place: a fierce military one between the government forces and the insurgents in the east (and by proxy between their respective foreign supporters); the one between the new rulers and the still-destitute population; and lastly the one among the quarreling parties that instigated the coup.

### 4.1 From Protest to Coup

Even though the so-called Maidan protests began directly after the EU-Ukraine association agreement had been rejected, there are many indicators that their cause and origin are in a completely different domain: „The actual point of origin of the Maidan movement was the calamitous social, economic and political situation in the Ukraine“<sup>137</sup> So besides the decidedly anti-Russian and pro-European thrust, the demands for abolishment of oligarch rule and improvement of living conditions initially were indeed important elements.

However, leftist or trade union factors were quickly and rigorously marginalised. Thus an activist of the left-wing group „Borotba“ is quoted as follows: „When the Maidan protests began, some members of our group tried to also address social matters there. [...] Our people were in the streets together with trade unions, handing out flyers, but then the speaker on the main stage called out to attack the info stand, several of our members were beaten up, the tent was wrecked. After that, we stopped trying to participate in the Maidan protests. [...] Later, the liberal and right-wing parties brought the protests under their control, if you wanted to take part, you had to submit to their objectives. They obviously wanted to bring about an escalation. Seeing the way things were developing, we began to organise anti-war rallies instead.“<sup>138</sup>

At the latest from the time the protests were hijacked by the three-way alliance of Batkivshchina („Fatherland“), Svoboda („Freedom“) and Udar („Punch“) in early December, 2013, the nature of the protest changed fundamentally, as Reinhard Lauterbach, expert on eastern Europe, describes: „Once Maidan had been taken over by the parliamentary opposition, it changed in three ways. First, it grew noticeably larger, because each of these three parties now erected their own tent camps and staffed them with their own personnel. [...] Second: Maidan turned international, with foreign politicians [...] paying their respects to the demonstrators and thereby taking sides in the Ukrainian internal power struggle. [...] And third: Maidan was professionalised. The activists who held out continually in the tents were either regional followers of the opposition parties [...] or simply unemployed people who had been hired for a daily fee plus food and accommodation.“<sup>139</sup>

After the protests had tailed off perceptibly for some time, for instance with calls for a general strike having very little effect, in Lauterbach's assessment, they entered into a new phase from 19 January, 2014, when matters escalated violently, initiated by agents of „Praviy Sektor“, or „Right Sector“. The violent altercations reached their peak from 18 February, 2014, when numerous people on both sides were killed, shot by snipers. Although in the West, to the present day this escalation is blamed exclusively on the Yanukovich government, there are a number of indicators that at least part of the victims are to be attributed to actions by the opposition forces – and among them likely by „Praviy Sektor“ (see the box „Controversy Over Fatal Shots“).

As already described, this escalation was followed by Yanukovich's overthrow and the establishment of a transitional government. The coup was thus more or less complete, for that it was a coup is relatively obvious: it is rather likely that the required parliamentary majority to depose Yanukovich would not have been found, therefore the legal procedure was simply evaded: „How does such an impeachment procedure work? According to Article 111 of the Ukrainian Constitution, initially a two-thirds parliamentary majority is required to begin impeachment proceedings. Only then can the statutory investigation commission begin its work, which for further examination also includes nomination of a special prosecutor and an investigator, as the US service [Stratfor] points out. The commission's conclusions and proposals are then forwarded to the parliament, where this time around, even a three-quarters majority is required. This overall decision must then be approved by the Ukraine's constitutional court as conforming to the constitution.“<sup>140</sup>

It is actually understandable therefore that Russia continues to call the events as they took place an illegal coup d'état. However, this by no means prevented Western countries from immediately recognising the „transitional government“. The participation of substantial fascist forces did not appear to be any kind of an obstacle, either. Even former EU enlargement commissioner Günter Verheugen commented on the events in the following words: „What makes the current situation so difficult and also makes talks [with Russia] so difficult also has its cause in Kiev itself, and that is the fact that a taboo has been broken in a fatal manner, and we are even applauding

## Maidan: Controversy Over Fatal Shots

To the present day, the Western side puts the blame for the many people who in February, 2014 died from sniper attacks, exclusively on the Yanukovich government, which at the time was still in office. First doubts that the official version was true came after a leaked telephone conversation between Estonia's foreign minister Urmas Paet and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs at the time, Catherine Ashton in March, 2014. On the phone, Paet makes critical remarks on how the new Ukrainian government was showing no interest in finding the truth from investigations into who fired the lethal shots during the protests in Kiev. The reason for such reluctance, according to Spiegel, was that there are ever more signs that the ones who hired the sniper murderers were „not Yanukovich, but someone among the new coalition“. (Spiegel Online, 05 March, 2014). Approximately one year later, The Council of Europe presented a report also severely criticising the new rulers' „investigative fervour“: „to little, to slow and not independent: The Council of Europe accuses Ukrainian civil servants of severely dragging their feet in investigations on the numerous victims on Maidan a year ago. [...] During the three-month demonstrations, there had been ‚no true attempt‘ to clear up the incidents, according to a report submitted by three experts appointed by the European Council.“ (Die Zeit, 31 March, 2015)

Further concrete indications that not all of the sniper victims were shot by government units were provided by a report by Monitor, basing its report on some „high-ranking member of the investigation team“, as well as on wire-tapped radio communications and video analysis: „It can also be seen in videos that the opposition forces on Institutka Street were being shot not only from the direction of the government buildings, but also from

the hotel ‚Ukraina‘, which was located in their back. [...] That hotel, where numerous media representatives were staying, on that day was firmly in the hands of the opposition.“ (Monitor, 10 April, 2014) On 12 February, 2015, the BBC published an article in which an anonymous participant in the Maidan protests the BBC correspondent refers to as „a man we will call Sergei“ is quoted: „Sergei says he had been a regular protester on the Maidan for more than a month. The 19th, a Wednesday, had been quieter, but in the evening, Sergei says, he was put in contact with a man who offered him two guns: one a 12-gauge shotgun, the other a hunting rifle, a Saiga that fired high-velocity rounds. He chose the latter, he says, and stashed it in the Post Office building. When the shooting started early on the morning of the 20th, Sergei says, he was escorted to the Conservatory, and spent some 20 minutes before 07:00 firing on police, alongside a second gunman. ‚I was shooting downwards at their feet‘. ‚Of course, I could have hit them in the arm or anywhere. But I didn't shoot to kill.‘“, he stated.

Further, Canadian-Ukrainian politologist Ivan Katchanovski of Ottawa University, in an extensive analysis of the available evidence material, made the following findings: „This study puts ‚Euromaidan‘ and the violent conflict in Ukraine into a new perspective. [...] The various kinds of evidence [...] indicate that [...] far right organizations, such as the Right Sector and Svoboda, and oligarchic parties, such as Fatherland, were directly or indirectly involved in various capacities in this massacre of the protesters and the police. This study also provides a rational explanation for the failure of the government investigation to find and prosecute those directly involved in this mass killing and for falsification of the investigation. [...] Because of various evidence of US government backing of the



*Maidan protests. Source: Flickr/Mstyslav Chernov*

Maidan opposition, its involvement in the Maidan government selection and policy decisions, and its past record of supporting or organizing regime change in other countries, additional research is needed to examine if there was any involvement of the US government in the violent overthrow of the Ukrainian government.“ (Ivan Katchanovski, The „Snipers' Massacre on the Maidan in Ukraine, University of Ottawa, September 2015, p. 64)

There is certainly no absolute evidence. But there is an abundance of indications which give rise to doubts about the official interpretation. This is all the more critical because the 2013/2014 events were used as a principal justification for chasing former president Yanukovich out of the country upon the threat of violence.

this, a taboo was broken by allowing, for the first time in this century, people with a völkisch ideology, real fascists, to be part of a government, and that is a step too far.“<sup>141</sup>

### 4.2 Consensus on Western Integration – While Power Struggle Continues

Although Vitali Klitschko and his German supporters had suffered a temporary defeat

by not being included in the transitional government, they were far from throwing in the towel. The former world boxing champion thus soon announced his intention to stand in the early presidential elections on 25 May 2014, as also did Yuliya Tymoshenko. It has been known for quite some time that Tymoshenko is highly corrupt, but only in the course of the conflict with the US did the German media discover

her „weaknesses“: „Things sometimes happen really quickly. For years, we had to listen to the German mainstream media trumpet about how Yuliya Tymoshenko, imprisoned Ukrainian opposition politician, is an innocent angel, but as soon as she is released, we hear the opposite. Critics accuse her of being involved in ‚dubious deals‘ and consider her to be ‚opportunistic and unscrupulous‘, the [German TV channel]

## Ukraine: Fascist Revolution

Already what can be found on Wikipedia<sup>1</sup> about *Svoboda*, one of the three parties dominating the Maidan protests, is sufficient to clarify what kind of an organisation Oleh Tyahnibok's party is: „In the same month [December 2012], a visit by elected representatives of *Svoboda* to the NPD<sup>2</sup> faction in the state parliament of Saxony took place. [...] In July, 2013, 30 members of the Israeli *Knesset* signed an open letter addressed to the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz [...]. In it, they warned against the party's anti-semitism and russophobia and criticised that the two largest opposition parties in the Ukraine were collaborating with it. [...] In August, 2013, the German government declared upon an enquiry from the faction of the party *Die Linke* that *Svoboda* is rated a right-wing populist and nationalistic party which to some extent represents positions of the extreme right. [...] In May, 2013, the Jewish World Congress classified *Svoboda* as neo-nazi and demanded to ban the party.“ Still, some high-ranking EU representatives practically paid court to Tyahnibok, thus contributing to his legitimisation and a strengthening of the fascists' position. Along these lines, the EU's ambassador to the Ukraine, Jan Tombinski, stated the following in December, 2013: „The party *Svoboda* has won ten percent in the elections, it fully supports establishing closer ties to the EU and is therefore a partner of equal value.“ (Focus, No. 52/2013)

The reason for the charm campaign towards the forces of the radical right is obvious: without the fascists, the overthrow of Yanukovych would not have been possible, as a representative of „*Praviy Sektor*“ („Right Sector“) points out in an



Members of the „*Praviy Sektor*“, i.e. „Right Sector“. (Source: Wikipedia)

interview with Thilo Jung: „We are a union of organisations of the right who joined forces amidst the Euromaidan revolution to fight the Yanukovych regime, and in this were also on the front line. It is mainly thanks to us that this regime fell. [...] The regime fell not only because of us, but also because of all the people participating in those street protests. But when the real fighting began in this war-like situation, when weapons were actually used, we were the main fighters on the front line.“ (Jung & Naiv, 08 March, 2014)

As a reward for their „services“, the fascists were later given several high-rank posts in the Ukrainian „transitional govern-

ment“ and the administrative system. Among the persons who were part of the initial coup government were: **Aleksandr Sych (Svoboda)**: Deputy Prime Minister; **Ihor Tenyuk (presumably Svoboda)**: Minister of Defence; **Andrey Parubiy (Svoboda)**: Secretary of the National Council for Security and Defence Policy; **Dmitro Yarosh (Praviy Sektor)**: Deputy Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council; **Sergey Kvit (Svoboda)**: Minister of Education; **Andriy Mokhnyk (Svoboda)**: Minister of the Environment; **Ihor Shvayka (Svoboda)**: Minister of Agriculture and Nutrition; **Oleg Makhnyzkiy (Svoboda)**: Prosecutor General (Voltairnet.org, 06 March, 2014).

ZDF is surprised to find out. The *Süd-deutsche Zeitung* reveals that Tymoshenko is ‚tainted herself, being part of a dubious business and power élite‘. *Die Welt* comes up with a terrible suspicion: Tymoshenko is accused of being ‚just like Yanukovych – only prettier and with a braid‘.<sup>142</sup>

Klitschko appears to have realised, though, that he would not stand a chance in the elections. He therefore threw in his lot – and most importantly, his ‚Udar‘ party apparatus – with oligarch Petro Poroshenko, who with 54% clearly took the lead in the

elections against Tymoshenko's 12%. In turn, Klitschko won the mayoral elections in Kiev and since then – at least according to the German press – is available for greater tasks: „together with his ally, the likely future president Petro Poroshenko, the two-metre hulk is part of a hard-hitting duo. After his convincing success in the Ukrainian capital, Observers consider the former sports star to have a bright future ahead of him and to be capable of assuming even higher political offices. Especially because so far, oligarch Poroshenko is seen as a kind of ‚interim figure‘.“<sup>143</sup>

In view of the alliance thus forged with the new president, Klitschko was confident at first that in the parliamentary elections on 26 October, 2014, as the front-runner of „Bloc Poroshenko“, he would win and become prime minister. There was every reason to be optimistic, as Yuliya Tymoshenko kept losing support and his bloc was well ahead in the opinion polls. Though in September, 2014, numerous members of Tymoshenko's *Batkyvshchina* party (presumably in agreement with the USA) put the brakes on and founded the „*Narodnyi Front*“



*During the 2015 Munich Security Conference, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko called for even stronger Western support against Russia. Source: Widmann/MSK*

(„Popular Front“) with Arseniy Yatsenyuk, prime minister of the coup government, as its leader. This force managed to prevail in the end, by a narrow margin of 22.14% against the „Bloc Poroshenko’s“ 21.81%. This was not least due to the „successful“ attempt at skimming votes by integrating forces of the extreme right. Which, by the way, proves the claim – especially popular among the German Greens – that the strength of the fascist factions had been greatly exaggerated, which was supposedly evident in the weak election results of Svoboda and Pravyi Sektor, to be a complete myth<sup>144</sup>: „Due to an extremely nationalistic, anti-Russian election campaign, the new party ‚Narodni Front‘ quite obviously collected votes from extreme-right, nationalist voters (especially in Western Ukraine) and this way stripped the extreme parties in that spectrum (‚Svoboda‘; ‚Pravyi Sektor‘; ‚Grazhdanska Pozitsiya‘) of a substantial vote potential, so that they failed to get above the five-percent threshold and formally will not become a ‚burden‘ to the governing parties in parliament.“<sup>145</sup>

So once again, Klitschko had to come to terms with a defeat, though despite the ongoing wrestling match between him and Yatsenyuk (and behind the scenes between the US and Germany), all of these actors are united in the overall objective of wanting to steer the Ukraine „westwards“. Probably the most obvious signal of this was the signing of the political section of the EU association

agreement by the coup government on 21 March, 2014. On 27 June, 2014, also the trade-related passages were signed by Petro Poroshenko, and thus the entire document. The Western media – appropriately – interpreted this as a „ground-breaking decision“<sup>146</sup> for the country’s Western integration. After the most recent parliamentary elections – in which significant parts of the population in the east did not participate – this course change appears to be sealed for the foreseeable future: „In the newly elected Verkhovna Rada, the government camp now has a sufficient majority to continue on the ‚course of European orientation‘ and dissociation from Russia and to secure it in constitutional law.“<sup>147</sup> In keeping with this trend, in December, 2014, the parliament also paved the way for possible NATO membership: „With a law terminating its non-aligned status, the Ukraine has cleared the way for joining NATO. As expected, with a large majority, the members of the Ukrainian parliament voted for a bill initiated by president Petro Poroshenko about ending the country’s neutrality.“<sup>148</sup>

#### **4.3 The Spiral of Escalation and the Role of External Great Powers**

As already mentioned several times, significant parts of the Ukrainian population feel greater sympathy towards Russia than the West, or at least prefer to maintain a more or less equal distance. Thus, according to a survey conducted in April 2014,

in the country’s southeast, merely 25% of the population approved of closer ties to the EU, while nearly 47% were in favour of joining the Customs Union.<sup>149</sup> One year later, a moderate shift „in favour“ of the pro-European position was recorded, but both in the south and the east of the Ukraine, a majority still rejects Western integration.<sup>150</sup> Especially to those people, the amending law passed by the Ukrainian parliament as one of its first official acts on 23 February, 2014, according to which the Russian language, native language to many Ukrainians, was to be downgraded, was a fatal signal. The intention of the law was to quash an earlier regulation stipulating that in areas where at least ten percent of the population speak a native language other than Ukrainian, that language can be used officially by the authorities.<sup>151</sup> Even if, after severe protests, the law was cancelled, the damage had already been done: many people did not feel represented by the new factions in power in Kiev, and resistance began to form. In the course of March and April, 2014, the conflicts became increasingly heated, and the People’s Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk were proclaimed, administrative buildings stormed and police stations attacked. First attempts by the army after mid-April 2014 to take action against the insurgents were repelled, supposedly already involving heavy fighting.<sup>152</sup> A further decisive date was 02 May, 2014, when nearly 50 „pro-Russian“ persons were cruelly killed in Odessa’s trade union building by forces of the radical right. At the latest from that point on, the situation could no longer be called „occasional separatist activities“. The insurgency in its entire range can only be understood as a reaction by large parts of the Russian-speaking Ukrainian population who are afraid for their health and lives due to the actions of radical right-wing combat units. That the units taking on the brunt of the combat operations in eastern Ukraine and in their course proceeding extremely brutally were primarily fascist battalions such as „Azov“ only reinforced this tendency even further.<sup>153</sup>

Thus Konrad Schuller, correspondent of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, wrote as early as 11 May, 2014, after the referendums on independence in the Donbass: „Many people in this region are convinced that the pro-Western government in power in the capital since the ‚Maidan‘ revolution in winter is responsible for the recent bloody clashes between pro-Russian combatants, government authori-

## EU Police Mission: „Disenchantment, Protest and Social Unrest“

With the Council Decision 2014/486/CFSP, the EU concluded to send an „advisory mission for civil security sector reform“ to the Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine). The legal basis presented was a request for support from the European Union on the part of the „transitional government“ of 20 March, 2014. The crisis management concept drawn up as a result was put forward on 19 July, 2014 and was adopted by the Council for External Affairs on 23 June, 2014 (Revised Crisis Management Concept for a civilian CSDP mission in support of Security Sector Reform in Ukraine, Brussels, 19 June 2014).

What the Ukrainian rulers expect of the mission is expressed in a letter of 08 May, 2014 from the foreign minister at the time, Andrii Deshchytsia, to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Catherine Ashton, which is included in the EU's crisis management concept as an annex: „I would like to express my high appreciation of the consistent EU support for Ukraine aimed at counteracting Russian aggression and stabilizing internal situation.“

To outline the problem, the situation in the Ukraine is presented as follows in the crisis management concept: „With little resistance, pro-Russian militant groups have

seized control over local police, intelligence services and municipal buildings in the Eastern regions of Luhansk and Donetsk, have declared the birth of self-proclaimed independent republics and have engaged in increasingly violent actions against Ukrainian security forces. ... Ukrainian law enforcement agencies have proved unable to restore law and order.“ (p. 4, Section 5)

To remedy this situation, which is disagreeable from the EU's point of view, as the EU-friendly government has lost control over substantial parts of the country, appears to be the principal aim of the EU police mission: „The EU strategic objective is to create the conditions that would allow a stabilized security situation, re-establishment of the primacy of the rule of law and enhancement of Ukrainian authorities' capacity to ensure adequate and democratic governance of institutions in charge of internal security.“ (p. 13, Section 44)

Under the heading „Risks to Mission Accomplishment“, there is a passage which demonstrates that not only eastern Ukraine is a mission objective: „If the Ukrainian authorities fail to deliver on the legitimate aspirations of Ukrainian citizens as regards the efficiency and law-based capacities of their law enforcement struc-



tures, whether they live in West or East and whether they support this government or not, there is a risk of disenchantment and protest and social unrest in the medium to longer term.“ (p. 22, Section 73) Though with the decidedly pro-European course, and especially the social austerity measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund, „disenchantment, protest and social unrest“ are evidently considered acceptable, are even actively provoked – and with full support from the EU. And it would appear that it was decided to implement this EU police mission in order to create means of counteracting the consequences of such a policy.

ties and pro-Ukrainian activists in mainly Russian-speaking Ukrainian cities such as Odessa, Slavyansk and Mariupol. [...] The perceptible run on the polling stations, further intensified by people's anger over the bloodshed of the past weeks, seemed to demonstrate that in the Donbass, the desire to separate from the Ukraine has grown well beyond the narrow circles of active separatists and reached a substantial part of the general population.“<sup>154</sup>

Thus there can be no question whatsoever that the insurgency in eastern Ukraine is not a Russian product alone. However, it cannot be denied, either, that the separatist forces are being supported by Russia, although to what extent remains unclear.<sup>155</sup> And neither are there any indicators that Moscow intends to annex large parts of the Ukraine, even if this is implied frequently: „Russia supports the separatists by advising and training the rebels as well as supplying them with weapons, equipment, intelligence, fire support and personnel. In this, Russia

is so far trying to keep the portion of its own regular forces on Ukrainian territory as small as possible. [...] Still, Russian military support in past months never reached a level from which the separatists could have occupied the entire Donbass. Once a respective advance by Ukrainian armed forces had been beaten off, the Russian forces were soon withdrawn to their initial positions. Also, in the past, for example at the time the discussion about possible arms supplies to the Ukraine culminated, the Russian government has endeavoured to de-escalate the military situation, in spite of all its military and rhetorical sabre-rattling.“<sup>156</sup>

Apart from support to the separatists in eastern Ukraine, Moscow's other significant reaction was obviously to break international law and incorporate Crimea on 18 March, 2014.<sup>157</sup> It should be considered, however, that it is at least contested whether this was an „annexation“, even though this term is solicitously cultivated in the West.<sup>158</sup> It should further be noted that compared to

NATO's bombardment of Yugoslavia, Russia's act can be called a violation of international law „of the second order at most“. At the same time, also the Ukrainian government is receiving massive support from the West. At first, this was officially limited to financial „aid“, although for instance substantial portions of the EU funds were apparently intended for warfare: „Of the 2 billion euros of EU financial aid for 2014, the Ukraine can use a total of 1,36 billion without appropriation. This was stated in an answer by the [German] federal government. According to it, the German share is 272 million euros. The federal government simply alleges that the Ukrainian government is not waging war against the citizens in eastern Ukraine and leaves a question on that matter unanswered, namely to what extent it can exclude the use of the funds for the war.“<sup>159</sup>

Successively, though, the support became increasingly direct. The Deutsche Welle thus reported in February 2015 that Britain had

sent 75 military advisors to the Ukraine, and that prime minister David Cameron gave the following reason for this action: „If we don't stand up to Russia in the long-term it will be deeply damaging to all of us because you'll see further destabilization.“<sup>160</sup> Also at an early stage, Washington supplied „non-lethal weapons“ and in April 2015 also sent trainers to the country: „About 300 US paratroopers have arrived in the Ukraine for a training mission. [...] The training unit for 900 soldiers of the National Guard, which is under the authority of the Ukrainian interior ministry and consists mostly of former Maidan combatants, is intended to last for six months and to take place as part of a joint military exercise. Additionally, the US support Kiev with military equipment such as armoured vehicles, protective vests, radar systems and night vision devices.“<sup>161</sup>

#### 4.4 Replacement of Oligarchs, Exploitation and Repression

As already mentioned, the Maidan protests, at least initially, also had progressive motives, such as especially demands for an end to oligarch rule. But these goals were swiftly abandoned and betrayed by the new rulers. The transitional government even strengthened the rulership of the oligarchs in the country by appointing Sergey Taruta and Ihor Kolomoyskiy governors of Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk in March, 2014. If some voices complain that what has taken place was no revolution, but merely a „replacement of oligarchs“<sup>162</sup>, they are still sugar-coating the matter: „The oligarchic personnel was merely replaced, moreover, upon the transitional government's assumption of power, the oligarchs have stepped from the background, where they used to exercise their power previously, onto the political stage themselves as new governors, regional chiefs, special representatives who openly make decisions in lieu of the Kiev government, and additionally even as outright prefects of the ‚West‘.“<sup>163</sup>

The election of billionaire Petro Poroshenko, who has been an integral element of the Ukrainian establishment for years – albeit on various sides<sup>164</sup> – can be seen as a further manifestation of the strengthened rule of the oligarchs. Even if most observers consider him the best candidate among the oligarchs, and he announced his intention to curtail their power<sup>165</sup>, such a statement should be taken with a good pinch of salt. After all, as Kai Ehlers put it, „in the war of the oligarchs he wants to take on, [he

is] a shark among sharks.“<sup>166</sup> The Ukrainians do not appear to be placing much hope in Poroshenko, either: „According to a survey, only 4 percent of Ukrainians say that he is honest. But because he is clever and appears to be independent because of his money – the Berlusconi effect –, he is obviously attractive. The power élite in the Ukraine circulates within itself. Just as in feudalism, they swap places, but the power structure remains the same.“<sup>167</sup> The assessment made by the Observer about the members of parliament elected in October 2014 is not exactly flattering, either: „The New Ukraine is Run by Rogues, Sexpots, Warlords, Lunatics and Oligarchs.“<sup>168</sup>

Also in economic terms, the country is on its knees: massive arms spending and the devastations of the war have aggravated the already difficult situation considerably yet again. Thus, in 2014, industrial production took a serious hit, as did exports – in spite of a serious devaluation of the country's currency: „In 2014, Ukrainian exports decreased by US\$ 13 bn (16.6%), thus substantially contributing to the GDP decrease by approx. 7%. This development is surprising in so far as the Ukrainian hryvnya devalued severely, and that should usually boost exports.“<sup>169</sup>

Faced with such a scenario, the new rulers seem to be prepared to completely adapt their economic policy to the formulas dictated by the IMF. After Russia was understandably no longer prepared to stick to its assurances of financial support, on 30 April, 2014, the IMF granted the Ukraine a loan to the total amount of US\$ 17 bn. It is to be paid out until 2016 in quarterly instalments, with the first tranche of 3.2 bn transferred in early May, 2014.<sup>170</sup> Allocation of these IMF loans was, or rather is, tied to three extremely problematic conditions.

First, to the then still-pending signing of the remaining parts of the association agreement with the European Union, as Peter Stano, spokesman of Stefan Füle, EU enlargement commissioner at the time, candidly acknowledged: „This unprecedented amount of aid funding is in direct connection with the Ukraine's signing and implementation of the association agreement with the EU.“<sup>171</sup> Second, the IMF loans appear, at least initially, to have been linked directly to „successful“ control of the insurgent parts of the country: „The new president is under severe pressure from the International Monetary

Fund. For loans already granted to be paid out, the IMF makes it a condition that the Ukraine loses no further territories.“<sup>172</sup> And finally, third, a „reform programme“ was imposed on the Ukraine which makes any improvement of the living conditions of large parts of the population impossible to achieve: „Thus Kiev abandons the plans of the previous government to slightly raise pensions and the minimum wage (by approx. 45 cents per hour), and freezes both. Already in March [2014], the parliament decided to cut the national budget by 17 percent; over 24,000 civil servants are to be sacked in total, this is about ten percent of all people employed by the state.“<sup>173</sup> However, this is only part of the agreed measures: „The already enacted reduction of value-added tax will be rescinded, it will remain at a steep 20 percent. For gas and heating, Ukrainian citizens will also have to dig deeper into their pockets. Already by 01 May [2014], the consumer price for gas was to be raised by 56 percent, as the new rulers in Kiev, to whom Nation is so important they are prepared to start a civil war over it, had promised the IMF. From 01 July, district heating will follow with a price raise by 40 percent. In 2015, both gas and heating are to become dearer again, by a further 40 percent, and also for the following years up to and including 2018, further increases by 20 percent each year are scheduled.“<sup>174</sup>

The effects of these „reforms“, the next round of which was announced for 2015, are devastating: „On 12 February [2015], Christine Lagarde, Director of the International Monetary Fund, announced that the IMF had agreed on a new programme of economic reforms with the Ukrainian government. [...] Among those already in effect is the exchange rate liberalisation of the Ukrainian currency, hryvnya. Its 67% devaluation ensured billions in profits for international currency traders within just a few weeks, while at the same time it pushed the average monthly wage in the country to below 50 euros. An inflation rate of 25% in 2014 and the raise in gas prices by 50% in May 2014 make survival almost impossible for the weakest quarter of the population. But also the rest of the working population, especially old and physically weak people, will have to face a drastic deterioration of their living standard: For 2015 and 2016, the dismissal of 10% of civil service employees and partial privatisation of the health care and education systems are planned. The pensionable age for women is to be raised by 10 years, that of men by 5 years.

Social benefits for pensioners are to be scrapped, the market for medicines deregulated. Pensions will be frozen at the current level, free lunches for school children and hospital patients will be cancelled.<sup>175</sup>

A sell-off of nationalised enterprises is also in the IMF's programme, as AFP reported in July, 2015: „Faced with the profound economic crisis, the Ukraine's government intends to sell close to 350 nationalised enterprises. [...] Kiev intends to achieve proceeds of several billion euros from the sales. They have investors from Europe and the USA in mind. [...] Among the enterprises to be privatised are also power stations and energy suppliers as well as the port of Odessa.“<sup>176</sup> The specification to open up to Western investment has the consequence that US agribusiness corporations are increasingly grabbing prize pieces of Ukrainian agriculture for themselves. This is said to be revealed by reports by the Oakland Institute in California, whose Policy Director, Frédéric Mousseau, speaks his mind in the supplement magazine of *Die Zeit*: „The Ukrainian fields are in great demand. There are only a few other regions in the world with similarly precious – and so far not agriculturally exploited – soils. [...] The reports provide proof of how large US agribusiness enterprises have been doing business in the Ukraine for years. Among them are the Monsanto corporation, controversial because of its business with genetically manipulated seed, the Cargill agrobusiness corporation and the chemical corporation DuPont. Recently, the companies had increased their investments substantially, says Mousseau – to an extent that this equals a ‚takeover of Ukrainian agriculture by Western corporations‘. And the West's financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, support the interests of Capital by means of their policy.“<sup>177</sup> So even though things are getting truly nasty for large parts of the population due to the IMF's austerity conditions, in March 2015, a further massive enlargement of the army was rubber-stamped: „with a large majority, the Ukrainian parliament has decided on an enlargement of the army by more than one third to 250,000 soldiers. 270 of 422 delegates voted in favour of president Petro Poroshenko's proposal. Until recently, the size of the armed forces had been limited to 184,000 soldiers.“<sup>178</sup>

To this course – supported, if not even initiated by the West – there exists a clear, feasible alternative which most of all would

consider the needs of the population. For instance, in April, 2015, the „Wiener Institut für Wirtschaftsvergleiche“ (Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies) published the study „How to stabilise the economy of Ukraine“, proposing remarkable ways of how to put the country back on track economically and in a socially acceptable manner: „A shift in the spending priorities would imply among other things less spending on the military and also a substantially smaller burden of public debt service [...] Financial and material assistance should be rigidly tied to the progress on e.g. the legal system reforms (including monitoring their implementation), the severance of relationships between business and politics, proper taxation of oligarchic assets, and confiscation of illegally amassed wealth, including assets parked abroad. [...] A more constructive stance should be taken by Ukraine and the EU with regard to Russia's strategic position and concerns expressed in relation to the AA/DCFTA effects. Trilateral negotiations focusing on trade-related matters should be facilitated and decoupled to the extent possible from non-trade issues to ensure practical dialogue.“<sup>179</sup>

Considering the current power constellations, though, it is to be expected that in the nearer future, none of these recommendations will be implemented. Which, in turn, makes it very probable that even in the more pro-Western parts of the country, disaffection will continue to grow: „The pressure of the reforms the EU and the IMF have promised on the way to future association agreements makes further protests very likely in the future, especially as they also formed the sediment of the Maidan demands which to date have not been met in any way. Also in Kiev and in western Ukraine, despite the nationalistic components which in the course of the Maidan developments took on a life of their own, social hardship was a driving element of discontent. Growing social protests are to be expected in the west and in Kiev as well, for instead of a government of brigands, the Ukraine now has a government of blackmailers.“<sup>180</sup> This is the point still offering hope and prospects: that an increasing number of people in the Ukraine will put up resistance against the attempt to divert the socio-economic causes the protests are based on into channels of nationalism – and it is the „danger“ of this happening that the new rulers in Kiev and their Western supporters fear most.<sup>181</sup> It is a particularly embittering sign of

contempt that the European Union, with all its pompous torch-bearing for noble goals and principles, has dispatched an EU police mission to the Ukraine to enable the local authorities to suppress social protests – and please note: in all parts of the country (see the box „EU Police Mission“). On the whole, it is not surprising that the political course of the new rulers in Kiev is becoming more and more strictly authoritarian, repressive and nationalistic.<sup>182</sup>

What is particularly alarming in this is the increasingly open persecution of left-wing, socialist, trade-unionist or just simply „pro-Russian“ people, which is, if not promoted, then at least tolerated and not prosecuted on the government's part. This development is accompanied by a general reinforcement of forces of the radical right: „Even though the influence and presence of the volunteer units on the front in the country's east has diminished, especially the Praviy Sektor has gained even more substance in Ukrainian society. Together with the militia, Praviy Sektor units have recently been busting illegal gambling houses in western Ukraine. Without any interference, Praviy Sektor hunts down dissenters.“<sup>183</sup> The growing influence of extreme-right forces is even more worrying in view of the continuing conflicts within the still-current government camp.

#### **4.5 The Can of Worms Stays Open: Wear and Tear in the „Pro-Western“ Camp**

A scenario which is difficult to assess and leaves quite a few questions open is the chain of events in connection with oligarch Ihor Kolomoyskiy's removal from office as governor of the Dnipropetrovsk oblast at the end of March, 2015. The fact itself indicates a serious conflict between president Poroshenko and Kolomoyskiy. The latter stands for an extremely hard line in the fight against the insurgents. According to investigations by „Frontal21“, he seems to be funding at least five „volunteer units“ consisting of several thousand combatants, which took charge of large parts of the war in the east instead of the badly equipped and weakly motivated regular army. Among them is „the ‚Azov‘ battalion, a pool of Ukrainian nationalists and extreme right-wingers. Their symbol is based on the so-called Wolfsangel, a Nazi emblem from the days of Nazi rule.“<sup>184</sup>

A cynical twist in the matter is that the conflict between Poroshenko and Kolomoyskiy

sparked off due to IMF requirements which the financier of volunteer battalions defied rather flippantly. Russian news agency Sputnik however speculates that there could be a lot more behind this, namely the attempt by the US to torpedo Poroshenko's slightly more moderate course via Kolomoyskiy and his fascist formations – which once again sheds a light on the background of the different positions of Washington and Berlin: „The break between them was triggered by a law redefining the regulation concerning voting majorities in Ukrainian national enterprises. Kolomoyskiy the billionaire owns substantial shares in and has a lot of influence on Ukranafta and Ukrtransnaft, companies which have the monopoly on oil production and oil pipelines in the Ukraine. The new law dictated by the IMF would have lost him a lot of influence. In expression of his annoyance, he had the two companies' head offices occupied by armed detachments for some time. [...] Without Kolomoyskiy, Poroshenko would not have been able to keep the Donbass war going. His oil companies supply fuel for the Ukrainian army, the volunteer battalions funded by him have played a decisive part in recent months. In contrast to the regular Ukrainian army, which is not very willing to fight against their own population, the combatants of the Kolomoyskiy-funded battalions are highly motivated. They are paid much better and to some extent are better equipped than the Ukrainian army. Kolomoyskiy's TV stations are an important factor in controlling public opinion in the conflict. [...] Kolomoyskiy can find support not only in the Ukraine, but also abroad. By signing Minsk II, Poroshenko is clearly following the political line of Merkel, Hollande and Obama. This policy is not shared by all politicians, neither in Europe, nor in America. The Baltic states and Poland stand for tougher Western action in the Ukraine, and neoconservative politicians such as Victoria Nuland and John McCain, as well as parts of NATO, favour a military escalation. They may well be considering an option in Kolomoyskiy.“<sup>185</sup>

At the same time, the signs became clearer that various attempts of bringing the „volunteer units“ under government control were about to fail. Thus, their reaction to the endeavour of incorporating them into the defence ministry's command structure (they have been operating fully independently so far) was to establish a parallel organisation: „On 19 Feb 2015 (i.e. AFTER the Minsk 2 Agreement), in Dnipropetrovsk, »the leaders of 17 Ukrainian volunteer

battalions united in a ‚Joint Staff‘ which is explicitly intended as an alternative to the general staff of the armed forces.«,<sup>186</sup>

Although in early April, 2015, it was announced that integration of the volunteer units had been „successful“, there still are indicators giving rise to doubts whether that is in fact the case. For one, the role of Dmytro Yarosh, leader of Praviy Sektor, is unclear; as a kind of reward, he was appointed a high-ranking advisor around that time. What his actual tasks are and whether in this position he has the sole authority (of course in coordination with his financiers) over the volunteer units remains unclear. Further, the question is open whether the 290 US paratroopers deployed with the explicit mission to train the „National Guard“, i.e. the „volunteer units“, are intended to keep the latter in line more strictly, or whether their actual purpose is to prepare those units for Washington's considerably more aggressive objectives; they possibly have both functions.

Whatever may actually be the case, it can certainly not be observed with any optimism that, no matter what the cause may have been, in April 2015, Praviy Sektor launched a major attack in eastern Ukraine, thus violating Minsk II. From the point of view of Uli Cremer, there are various possible explanations for this offensive: „So there are three possible command varieties for the ceasefire violation through Praviy Sektor's advance: either ‚integration‘ of the militias has not been achieved, meaning that they are continuing to act of their own accord (a) or respectively at the command of the ‚joint staff‘ of volunteer battalions which has not been disbanded after all (b). Or the order came from the Kiev high command, meaning directly from the Ministry of Defence (c).“<sup>187</sup>

According to reports in early May, 2015 by Konrad Schuller, Ukraine correspondent of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, which in turn were based on releases by the Ukrainian secret service, an open conflict seems to have erupted between Kolomoyskiy and Praviy Sektor on one side and the government on the other: „The government is striking back massively behind the scenes. In an internal paper of the secret service, SBU, which has been made available to the FAZ, it is stated that ‚Praviy Sektor‘ really is something very different from the supposed citizens' militia of courageous patriots it purports to be. In truth it supposedly has close ties to the circle of controversial

billionaire Ihor Kolomoyskiy, who on the one hand openly supports many volunteer formations, but on the other has repeatedly been observed in the context of armed raids on rival business enterprises. [...] Although ‚Praviy Sektor‘ denies having anything to do with Kolomoyskiy, many connections are clearly visible. For example, in the last parliamentary election, the ‚Hetman‘, as some fighters call their leader Dmytro Yarosh, won a constituency in Kolomoyskiy's sphere of control around the industrial city of Dnipropetrovsk, and the deputy commander of his ‚volunteer corps‘, Valentin Manko, on his Facebook page simultaneously presents himself as the deputy commander of the ‚Dnipro 1‘ battalion, a unit established with Kolomoyskiy's money.“<sup>188</sup>

In mid-May, 2015, Poroshenko assembled an „International Reform Council“ for himself, members of which are, for instance, US hardliner John McCain or the chairman of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, Elmar Brok, and which is headed by former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili. At the end of May, 2015, Saakashvili, notoriously of anti-Russian persuasion and wanted in his native country for abuse of administrative authority, was then appointed governor of Odessa by Poroshenko. This was a move to kill two birds with one stone: Saakashvili, considered a hardliner, was placed in a spot which in the controversy had proved to be troublesome, bordering directly on the region of Transnistria, which wants to secede from Moldova and is supported by Russia. But above all, Saakashvili took over the office from Igor Palytsya, a close confidant of Kolomoyskiy, thus marginalising the latter even further. This appears to have happened with approval from the US, who at the latest at that point seem to have dropped Kolomoyskiy, which is also suggested by reports claiming that Washington is paying the salaries for Saakashvili's staff as well as the costs for training a new police corps.<sup>189</sup> As a consequence, Kolomoyskiy perceptibly withdrew from events, although it is far from certain that he will remain out of the game.

None of the three wars, already flaring or about to erupt – the one between the Kiev rulers and the separatists, the one between Kiev and the Ukrainian population and the one among the rulers themselves – is in any way close to a resolution, and all three have the potential to escalate to an immense scale. So in whatever way one looks at the matter, the Ukraine is facing

extremely hard times, and the context in which this challenge will have to be met, i.e. the intensifying conflicts between the West and Russia, will certainly not contribute towards facilitating the situation.

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  138. Ukraine: "Parlamentswahl wird Rechtsparteien stärken", *Der Standard*, 02 July, 2014.
  139. Lauterbach, Reinhard: *Vom Hoffnungsort zur Räuberhöhle: Aufstieg und Niedergang des Euro-Maidan*, in: Strutyński, 2014, pp. 19-32, p. 25.
  140. Ukraine Teil 4: War es ein Putsch?: <https://subversivesfieber.wordpress.com/2014/03/09/ukraine-teil-4-war-es-ein-putsch/>
  141. "Gefahr einer Spirale nach unten", *Deutschlandfunk*, 18 March, 2014.
  142. Kronauer 2014a.
  143. Bürgermeister in Kiew - die zweite Karriere des Vitali Klitschko, *Sächsische Zeitung*, 26 May, 2014.
  144. Thus, for instance, Marieluise Beck, spokesperson for Eastern European Policy of the German Greens, issued the following triumphant press release (Ukraine: *Bevölkerung bleibt besonnen und wählt Europa*, 27 Oct, 2015): "The Ukraine is Europe. We must support its course of EU convergence even more decisively. In spite of ice-cold homes for lack of Russian gas supplies, the annexed Crimean and war-like conditions in the east, voters have clearly rejected the radical parties."
  145. Schünemann, Manfred: *Zu den Ergebnissen der Parlamentswahlen am 26. Oktober in der Ukraine*, RLS Online, November 2014, p. 1.
  146. Vierertreffen zum Ukraine-Konflikt in Berlin, *Tagesspiegel*, 01 July, 2014.
  147. Schünemann 2014, p. 1.
  148. Ukraine macht Weg für Nato-Beitritt frei, *Die Welt*, 23 Dec, 2014.
  149. *The views and opinions of South-Eastern regions residents of Ukraine*, Kiev International Institute of Sociology, April 2014.
  150. *Socio-political situation in Ukraine*, Kiev International Institute of Sociology, March 2015.
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151. Hier russisch, da ungarisch, Die Tageszeitung ("taz"), 27 Feb, 2014.
152. Wikipedia: War in the Donbass region (Eastern Ukraine).
153. "In the areas retaken from the pro-Russian separatists, these battalions committed the same kind of crimes as the separatists did before", says Bogdan Ovcharuk, Ukrainian spokesman of Amnesty International. 'We have documented torture, mistreatment, kidnappings and people held for ransom. Due to the lack of investigation of such crimes and the lack of control over these battalions, such violations keep happening again and again.'" (Kämpfen auf eigene Faust, Tagesschau online, 30 Sept, 2014)
154. Zornig in langen Schlangen, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 11 May, 2014.
155. Behind the Masks in Ukraine, Many Faces of Rebellion, New York Times, 03 May, 2014.
156. Tammiga, Oliver: Ein schmaler Grat. Russland zwischen militärischer Eskalation und Deeskalation in der Ostukraine, Ukraine-Analysen No. 150, 29 April, 2015, pp. 7-8, p. 7.
157. Thus Norman Paech writes (Einseitige Unabhängigkeitserklärung verboten, Neues Deutschland, 14 March, 2014): "It is obvious that in the Ukraine's constitution there is no passage providing for any unilateral secession of any part of the country. [...] For a long time, precisely since the decolonisation process, there has been the problem of competition between territorial integrity and the right of self-determination. [...] Today, after de-colonisation, territorial integrity has precedence. And of course especially the prohibition of violence, secession must not be forced violently. The right of self-determination for minorities is reduced to being granted autonomy, self-government, federal structures within the state's borders."
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159. Ukraine: 1,36 EU-Kriegsmilliarden, IMI-Aktuell, 2015/103.
160. Britain to send army trainers to Ukraine, Deutsche Welle, 24.02.2015.
161. 300 US-Fallschirmjäger bilden Nationalgardisten aus, Die Welt, 17 April, 2015.
162. "A revolution? No, the cards were simply dealt to new players.' Sociologist Vladimir Ishchenko, Head of the Centre for Social Research in Kiev, only a few weeks after Yanukovych fled and the new government has assumed office, openly shows his disappointment. 'This government stands for the same values as the previous one: economic liberalism and personal enrichment. Not all uprisings are revolutions. It is hardly likely that the Maidan movement will lead to profound change and can thus really be called a revolution. The most serious candidate in the presidential elections on 25 May is indeed 'chocolate king' Petro Poroshenko, one of the richest men in the country.' While on Maidan, demonstrators were still dying from bullets, the transition was already being negotiated in the antechambers of power – with the entrepreneurs who were in control of the Ukraine." (Dérens, Jean-Arnault/Geslin, Laurent: Schwergewichte aus Donezk. Die Revolution in der Ukraine ist eher ein Oligarchenwechsel, le monde diplomatique (German edition), 11 April, 2014)
163. Ehlers, Kai: Roter Faden durch den ukrainischen Dschungel, URL: <http://kai-ehlers.de/texte/artikel-zur-lage/2014-05-07-roter-faden-durch-den-ukrainischen-dschungel-2>
164. "The entrepreneur is one of the leading political survivors. In the 1990s and early 2000s, the chocolate magnate had supported the president at the time, Leonid Kuchma, before joining the movement that brought about his downfall. Then he was foreign minister under former president Viktor Yushchenko, who is also godfather to his daughters. Later he became trade minister under Yanukovych, before leading the protests that ousted the president in February. Although Poroshenko belongs to the establishment, his election campaign slogan 'Live the New Way' promises a break with the past. He wants to save the country's economy by concluding a trade agreement with the EU and taking out a loan from the International Monetary Fund." (Schokoladenkönig Petro Poroschenko will Ukraine zur Einheit zurückführen, Wall Street Journal, 20 May, 2014. German version only, the English-language quote here is a back-translation from the German article.)
165. Poroshenko's words in reference to the Ukrainian oligarchs: "They will have no influence on politics. Period." ("Der einzige Ausweg sind Wahlen – und nicht Maschinenpistolen", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 09 May, 2014)
166. Poroschenko, Timoschenko und Co – Anmerkungen zu einem bemerkenswerten Programm, kai-ehlers.de, 09 May, 2014.
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170. There are additional funds from other sources: "The Ukraine expects to receive a total of 27 billion dollars from foreign creditors, among them the IMF, the EU, the US and the World Bank." (Ukrainischer Premier: Westliche Hilfgelder retteten Ukraine vor Staatsbankrott, RIA Novosti, 06 June, 2014. In German only, no directly corresponding English-language article available.)
171. As impressive as that may seem at first glance, if one takes a look at Ukrainian gas debts to Russia alone, this amount quickly drops into perspective.
172. Wie der Westen ukrainische Reformen sponsert, Deutsche Welle, 08 May, 2014.
173. Kein Zuckerschlecken, Die Tageszeitung ("taz"), 26 May, 2014.
174. Für Frieden und Freiheit, German-Foreign-Policy.com, 30 May, 2014.
175. Pommrehn, Wolfgang: Ukraine: Die Auflagen des IWF, Telepolis, 15 May, 2014.
176. Wolff, Ernst: IWF-Kredite an die Ukraine: Ziel ist die vollständige Destabilisierung des Landes, Radio Utopie, 17 Feb, 2015.
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178. Wettlauf um die ukrainische Schwarzerde, Die Zeit, 16 March, 2015.
179. Ukrainisches Parlament vergrößert Armee um ein Drittel, Der Standard, 05 March, 2015.
180. Adarov, Amat et al.: How to Stabilise the Economy of Ukraine, Wiener Institut für Internationale Wirtschaftsvergleiche, Final Report, April 2015.
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182. Brangsch, Lutz: Der Krieg der Oligarchen, in: Luxemburg, June 2014.
183. Do Ukraine's new nationalist laws justify Kremlin's criticism? Christian Science Monitor, 13 April, 2015.
184. Ein längst überfälliger Schritt, Die Tageszeitung ("taz"), 14 April, 2015.
185. Documentary: Krise in der Ukraine – Oligarchen finanzieren Bataillone, Frontal21, 05 August, 2014.
186. Sumo-Kampf auf Ukrainisch: Staat-schef entlässt Top-Oligarchen, Sputnik, 26 March, 2015. (German version only, no corresponding English-language article available.)
187. Cremer, Uli: G7-Außenminister auf Distanz zu Kiew, Grüne Friedensinitiative, 15 April, 2015 (the quote is from Ukrainische Freiwilligenverbände rücken von Kiew ab, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 20 Feb, 2015).
188. Ibid.
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## 5. Cold War: A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy?

As already elaborated above, for years now, a kind of New Cold War is being outrightly ranted into existence (see Chapter 1.3). In this, the plans, to some extent openly announced, of utilising the Ukraine crisis to contrive to also force a change of government in Russia, and thus generate a significantly more pro-Western attitude there, has recently been causing the fronts to harden continuously (Chapter 5.1). The fact that since the Ukraine crisis has erupted, NATO has been stepping up its readiness status in respect to Russia towards a general mobilisation is aggravating such a development even further (Chapter 5.2), and there is the obvious threat that the swashbuckling on both sides will lead to an all-out escalation (Chapter 5.3). In any conceivable future constellation, Germany will have an essential part, also because it is considered the most likely of the influential Western actors that might begin to pursue a course of greater benevolence towards Russia. And indeed, various interests on the German side are having a – slightly – moderating effect on German policies towards the Ukraine and Russia. While the US are pushing for an even more aggressive anti-Russian course, Germany is trying to avoid an all-out escalation – though certainly without demonstrating any preparedness to respect Moscow's elementary interests (Chapter 5.4). However, a breach between the US and Germany – as hoped for and even predicted by parts of the peace movement – is not really to be expected, the conflicts which obviously to some extent exist notwithstanding. The reason for this is that both countries have fairly similar notions of what an economic world order should be like and of the policies required to establish and maintain it. This shared interest dominates most other ambitions and aspirations, and is the bond in trans-Atlantic relations. Yet the concept often resorted to of the dichotomy between democracies and autocracies does not work here, as it fails to even come close to the core of the controversy. In fact, this is a confrontation between a neoliberal bloc and a state-capitalist bloc (Chapter 5.5). Therefore it is highly probable that the prospective Chinese-Russian alliance will consolidate further and new blocs will indeed be formed (Chapter 5.6).

### 5.1 The West to be Extended right up to Russia's Doorstep?

To some degree, it is even conceded openly that US policies are purposely intended to

damage Russia. For instance, with remarkable candour, George Friedman, head of the aforementioned private intelligence service Strategic Forecast with close ties to the CIA, at a conference in February 2015 remarked: „Now the point is that the United States is prepared to create a ‚cordon sanitaire‘ around Russia. Russia knows it, Russia believes that the United States intends to break the Russian Federation. I don't think [...] that we want to kill you, we just want to hurt you a little bit. Either way, we are back at the old game.“<sup>190</sup>

Faced with such, partly open, demands to utilise the „favourable“ situation to pave the way towards regime changes in other post-Soviet countries and even in Russia itself, every single alarm bell in Moscow must be ringing at full blast. Thus, for instance, Lilia Shevtsova of the „Carnegie Endowment for International Peace“ writes: „In the Ukraine, the post-Soviet development model, characterising all the new independent states (except for the Baltics), has crashed. The Ukraine has become the weakest link in the post-Soviet chain. One should keep an eye on the matter that similar revolutions are also possible in other countries.“<sup>191</sup>

There are also voices in Germany to be heard calling for actions of that kind – and that these calls are also aimed at Russia directly becomes clear, for example, in the words of Andreas Umland, currently one of the most sought-after „experts“ on the Ukraine conflict. In „Internationale Politik“, according to its own appraisal the most important organ of the German foreign and security policy élites, he writes: „Until recently, the EU seems to have ignored the notion that Moscow might put up resistance against integration of the Ukraine. It is a traditional blunder to be so blue-eyed with regard to the foreign policy interests of the Kremlin. [...] Now they are faced with the decision: does their country belong with Europe and its Western orientation or is it part of a Russian-influenced ‚Eurasian‘ civilisation? [...] With an alignment of the Ukraine with the EU, not only would the range of European values and institutions be extended hundreds of kilometres towards the east. If EU accession of the Ukraine is solidified, Russia would have to abandon its neo-imperial dreams for good. [...] Not only by itself is the Ukraine therefore of great significance to the EU. To the West as a whole, it could become a gateway towards gradual democratisation of the huge, previously Soviet territory in northern

Eurasia. [...] Not least for historical reasons, Germany should not make the error of showing a lack of courage, high principles and foresight in its future Ukraine policy.“<sup>192</sup>

Those actively working towards destabilisation and overthrowing Vladimir Putin see, in keeping with the ideas of „Neue Macht – Neue Verantwortung“, the appropriate means for bringing about a regime change to be the „civil society“. Along these lines, Stefan Meister, head of the areas Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia at the „Robert Bosch-Zentrum“ of the „Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik“ („German Council on Foreign Relations“, DGAP), complains (also in *Internationale Politik*) that „the ‚faction of economic liberalism‘ among the Russian élite no longer has any influence on the current Russian administration.“<sup>193</sup> The „Putin system is stuck in a crisis“, Meister states and then with breath-taking frankness in fact proposes to adapt the scenario completed in the Ukraine to Russia, as well: „Instead of continuing to legitimise the Putin system by means of offers for cooperation and dialogue bordering on self-abandonment and thus undermining its own system of values, German politics should learn that it is not the Russian élites which bring about change, but Russian society. The Ukraine has just demonstrated this; though it and other states in the eastern neighbourhood require more financial and political support. Intensification of the exchange with civil society as well as with alternative élites in business and society is a central task of European policy. [...] For this purpose, existing networking platforms such as the Petersburger Dialog could be fundamentally reformed by a reorientation towards and inclusion of genuine civil society, small and medium businesses as well as alternative élites, and new forums of exchange in and with Russia should be developed, for example through the German political foundations.“<sup>194</sup>

In view of such contemplations, one should also take another look at the real reasons for and purpose of the sanctions imposed on Russia. In this context, an analysis by the EU think tank „Institute for Security Studies“ comes to the conclusion that the sanctions are helpful in preventing Russia from annexing further parts of the Ukraine or other post-Soviet countries – even though it is extremely doubtful whether that is Moscow's intention anyway – but that they are completely inappropriate as a means of forcing a course change in currently hot

## MH-17: Zenith of Propaganda!

On 17 July, 2014, the civilian airliner MH-17 crashed over eastern Ukraine, and nearly 300 people died in the disaster. The institution chosen to investigate the incident in the end was the „Dutch Safety Board“, as the largest part of the victims, 193 of 298 persons, were from the Netherlands. On 09 September, 2014, the first preliminary report and a summarising press release were published, presenting two central preliminary investigation results in particular: first, that „no signs of any technical faults or an emergency situation“ were revealed, which in reverse implies that the plane would have been shot down. Second – and even more importantly – the report clearly emphasises that at the time of its publication, no exact information about further details, especially about the presumed perpetrators, can be provided: „The initial results of the investigation point towards an external cause of the MH-17 crash. More research will be necessary to determine the cause with greater precision.“

Also in a further report published in mid-October, 2015, the Safety Board's experts made no statements on who was responsible for the disaster. A completely different reaction came from almost the entire range of German press hounds, who already one day after the crash were absolutely sure how to assess the situation. Thus, Klaus-Dieter Frankenberger, in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, „knew“ as early as on 18 July, 2014 how to interpret the „evidence“: „At the moment one can only make assumptions. [...] But there are indicators which make it appear plausible that it was a ruthless, heinous military act committed by pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine who shot down the plane on its way from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur with a ground-to-air missile; they may have taken it for a Ukrainian military plane. [...] In turn, the European Union will have to decide whether it will seriously step up sanctions or continue to pursue illusions.“

A further example of this attitude is Stefan Kornelius, one who is always ready to call for intervention. Although as the head of the foreign policy desk of Süddeutsche

Zeitung, he warned against misinterpreting the „indicators“ as final proof, he still called them „overwhelming“: „The crash of the Malaysian plane will have a decisive effect on this war. The Ukraine will require all the support it can get to close off and secure its borders. If finally the chain of evidence against the pro-Russian separatists and the arms suppliers in Moscow is completed, Russia will have to bear the full impact of sanctions – also and especially implemented by Europe.“

Another, particularly conspicuous example was Wolfgang Münchau, founder and one of the chief editors of the former „Financial Times Deutschland“, who was given a forum for his anti-Russian rantings by Spiegel Online on 21 July, 2014: „The final proof is still to be provided, but Russia seems to be responsible for the deaths of the people on board MH17. Tough sanctions in the financial and resources sector are the appropriate answer – even if German managers don't like the idea. [...] Putin's friends in Germany will continue to insist, along formal legal lines, that there is no ‚proof‘ that Russia had anything to do with the downing of Flight MH17. However, the signs are more than clear. [...] The indicators are sufficient for a political verdict. And this is what the matter is about: a political verdict. No court will decide in this. [...] How to do it right was demonstrated by the Americans last week – before MH17 was shot down. They are backing financial sanctions. This way, they will strangle Russian companies. [...] Not only Schröder is the problem. The federal minister of the economy should make it clear to the chairmen of German enterprises that contacts with Putin and his entourage are deemed officially undesirable. Until further notice, Russia will no longer be the destination of German investments. The Eastern Commission of German Industry should now assist in organising the strategic withdrawal of German enterprises from Russia.“

These are only three examples of the numerous hysterical, warmongering reactions in the German media, culminating in the Spiegel title picture of 28 July, 2014 which insidiously instrumentalised the victims



of the crash. One of the few dissenting voices was raised by Gabor Steingart, chief editor of Handelsblatt, who – surely also in view of the interests of German industry represented by the Eastern Committee of German Industry – launched a severe attack on the German media on 08 August, 2014: „German journalism has switched from level-headed to agitated in a matter of weeks. The spectrum of opinions has been narrowed to the field of vision of a sniper scope. Newspapers we thought to be all about thoughts and ideas now march in lock-step with politicians in their calls for sanctions against Russia's President Putin. [...] The Tagesspiegel: 'Enough talk!' The FAZ: 'Show strength'. The Süddeutsche Zeitung: 'Now or never.' The Spiegel calls for an 'End to cowardice': 'Putin's web of lies, propaganda, and deception has been exposed. The wreckage of MH 17 is also the result of a crashed diplomacy.' Western politics and German media agree.“

Indeed, so far nobody can exclude without doubt that separatist forces and/or Russia are responsible for the crash. Yet there is no evidence of this which would more than vaguely stand up in court, either, only accusations of guilt and speculation. To demand such a degree of escalation on such a shaky basis was nothing but vicious warmongering, instrumentalising the victims of the plane crash in a nasty manner.

matters such as Crimea.<sup>195</sup> In consideration of the official objectives, the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik actually asserts

that the sanctions have failed completely and are even counterproductive: „On balance, the effect intended by the sanctions

is meagre. [...] So far, neither in the Russian government, nor among the extended political and economic élite or the general

population has any perceivable change of attitude towards the conflict or any change in the calculations of cost and effect taken place. On the contrary: the events in the Ukraine and their reprocessing in Russian propaganda have reinforced the support for the regime which relies on relations of loyalty and conservative national, anti-Western attitudes. Though such an unintended effect was indeed predictable.<sup>196</sup>

Consequently, it appears at least plausible when politology professor Thomas Jäger, who is certainly not among those sympathetic towards Putin's policies, has the view that – at least to the US – the principal objective of the sanctions is to fundamentally weaken Russia: „Neither the Crimean nor the Ukrainian crisis will be solved that way. Though to the American government, these are matters of the second order, anyway. While the military measures are intended to calm the alliance partners and warn the Russian government, they are not even designed to strategically alter the Russian position in international relations. The American Russia policy meanwhile has the aims of financial containment and isolation. The financial war has begun – and it is not a cold one (which is why the analogy to the Cold War is simply wrong).“<sup>197</sup> Eastern Europe expert Reinhard Lauterbach also shares this assessment: „It would appear anyway that the US strategy is less modest: it is about fomenting discontent among Russian society by means of economic sanctions and this way to create prerequisites for a regime change in Moscow, as well.“<sup>198</sup>

And indeed: even if the low oil price is having an even more crippling effect on the economy, the sanctions are also hurting Russia quite seriously. Nevertheless, Vladimir Putin currently quite obviously enjoys great popularity among the population, his approval rating in February, 2015 was supposedly at over 85%.<sup>199</sup> In such a situation it is, at the very least, extremely careless to keep ranting on about a civil society which will bring about the downfall of Putin's system. For at the latest at the point when the Kremlin begins to consider the sanctions a preparatory step towards starting a „coloured revolution“ in Russia as well, an escalation of the situation of much greater dimensions than up to now will have to be expected. Even if for the time being, such a scenario appears to be relatively distant, the tensed-up situation is already seriously dangerous, as any little spark, any kind of small misunderstanding

may fire up matters to an extent where the smouldering powder keg will really explode.

## 5.2 Playing with Fire – NATO Mobilisation and War Games

The information service „Jane's Intelligence Review“, which usually has excellent data at its disposal for insiders, considers a military campaign on the part of Russia against one of the Baltic states or Poland to be extremely improbable: „Jane's arrives at the assessment that the risk of open, armed Russian aggression against one of the Baltic states is low. Russia will continue its proactive manoeuvres, border violations and arms deployment in Kaliningrad, but this serves the purpose of intimidating the Baltic states, not of a military attack.“<sup>200</sup>

Yet based on exactly that argument, that the eastern European members need to be „reassured“, NATO initiated a downright mobilisation against Russia which after the alliance's summit in September 2014 was intensified even further. Already at an early stage, air surveillance over eastern Europe was stepped up, more manoeuvres carried out, and the US launched a „European Reassurance Initiative“ including funding to the amount of approx. US\$ 1 bn. Accordingly, in May, 2014, NATO's Secretary General at the time (and anti-Russian hardliner) Anders Fogh Rasmussen stated in satisfaction: „We have already taken immediate measures: more planes in the air, more ships at sea, and more exercises on the ground.“<sup>201</sup> On the same occasion, he already announced a „Readiness Action Plan“ by which the anti-Russian measures were to be intensified even further and which in the end was enacted at the September 2014 NATO summit in Wales.

Generally, in the NATO summit report, there are unusually many and strident hostile remarks to be found against Moscow. For instance, „Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine“ are criticised and „Russia's escalating and illegal military intervention“ is condemned „in the strongest terms“<sup>202</sup> In spite of all reassurances to the contrary, this means in fact that NATO is terminating the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, in which it is stated: „NATO and Russia do not consider each other as adversaries.“<sup>203</sup> This means that the „Readiness Action Plan“ opens up a new chapter: the days in which policies hostile to Russia were at least clothed in warm, friendly words are over, now a phase of open confrontation has begun once

more, as hardliners applaud: „The new „Readiness Action Plan“ [...] is an important turning point. For it breaks with the spirit of the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, which has proven to be an illusion.“<sup>204</sup> According to the secret document, six (later eight) new military bases – in the three Baltic states as well as in Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania – are to be established, with a permanent personnel of 300 to 600. The further details are described by the „Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung“ as follows: „In the document, Russia is classified as a ‚threat to Euro-Atlantic security‘. Its actions in the Ukraine are analysed under the category of ‚hybrid warfare‘. The alliance commits itself to ‚the improvement of NATO's ability to reinforce its eastern Allies through preparation of national infrastructure‘. This is to be realised by means of new command structures and the pre-deployment of equipment. [...] Further, a quick-response task force of about 4,000 in strength is to be formed which in case of an attack or infiltration by hostile forces can be deployed in the east within a few days.“<sup>205</sup>

Subsequently, the figure for this „Very High Readiness Joint Task Force“ (VJTF), also referred to as a „Spearhead“ force, was „corrected“ to 5,000 to 7,000 soldiers who will be an element of the Nato Response Force (NRF), which was also reinforced from 17,000 to 40,000 soldiers. The VRTF is supposed to be operative from 2016, ready for deployment within two to five days, and able to operate world-wide. However, the document issued in conclusion of the NATO summit leaves no doubt where the focus lies and thus where the principal opponent is located: „we will establish a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), a new Allied joint force that will be able to deploy within a few days to respond to challenges that arise, particularly at the periphery of NATO's territory.“<sup>206</sup> This clarifies that if required in NATO's view, the task force is also intended to be able to operate in immediate proximity to Russia outside of NATO territory – in countries such as Georgia or even the Ukraine.

This „Spearhead“ is being built up under Germany's leadership, with 2,700 Bundeswehr soldiers to participate. The German defence ministry proudly announces that Germany has a „key role“ in NATO's spearhead force.<sup>207</sup> But also in general terms, Germany is currently playing a central part within NATO, as for example the govern-

ment advisors of Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik emphasise: „At the summit in Wales in September, 2014, the NATO states in reaction to the Ukraine crisis have decided on the Alliance's most profound military adaptation since the end of the Cold War. The aim is comprehensive reinforcement and adaptation of its defensive capacities. [...] Germany represents the backbone in the Alliance's military reorientation.“<sup>208</sup>

Among the numerous manoeuvres carried out by NATO since the crisis broke out (see the box „General Mobilisation“), several are based on truly frightening scenarios: „An article by news portal German-Foreign-Policy.com (GfP) provides a first impression of which scenarios form the core of the aforementioned manoeuvres. Thus in late May, 2014, the Marienberg-based Panzer-grenadierbataillon 371 participated in the exercise ‚Reliable Sword‘: ‚According to information from the Netherlands' Ministry of Defence, it was based on the following scenario: ‚Armed insurgents threaten the security of a fictitious country. To re-establish interior peace, the government has appealed to the international community for help.‘ The scenario primarily consisted of classic airborne assault operations with the aim of crushing the insurgents' resistance by force. Similar operations also took place at Elverum in Norway in September, 2014, where parts of the Panzer-grenadierbataillon 371 were involved in the manoeuvre ‚Noble Ledger‘. This one was also about military action against separatists who were accused of ‚illegally declaring the independence‘ of a province in a fictitious state. The clearly visible similarities to the Ukraine situation were obviously intentional. As the Bundeswehr stated, the scenario appeared ‚very real in the current political context‘“<sup>209</sup>

Also the NATO command post exercise „Trident Joust“, which took place in mid-October, 2014, is highly revealing: „After an attack from the north by the country of Bothnia on the island of Hiiumaa belonging to Estonia, the objective is to throw back the hostile forces. A French and an American brigade carry out offensive actions against the retreating opponents troops which only continue to fight to delay the advancing units; NATO has air and sea superiority. [...] The core of the task force employed for exercise purposes on the side of Estonia was formed by the Nato Response Force (NRF). [...] Although the mixture of real and fictitious country names required a measure of abstraction, the aggressor's weaponry

types, e.g. Scud-D ballistic ground-to-ground missiles, left no doubt that Bothnia was supposed to be Russia. Shortly before the end of the exercise, NATO ensured that Bothnia was unable to create a *fait accompli* situation. Before this background, the strategic watershed created by president Putin by annexing Crimea was repeatedly pointed out outside of the actual exercise events.“<sup>210</sup> In view of such preparations, it is truly worrying that also in Germany, there are voices openly demanding Western military intervention in the Ukraine. For instance, along these lines, military expert Gustav Gressel expressed his opinion: „‘The OSCE mission is an alibi for the West's inactivity’, says Gustav Gressel, a military expert of the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), a think tank for matters of foreign policy. ‚Therefore a UN mission or an EU-NATO mission upon request from the Ukraine would be much better. If Russia resists the first variety in the Security Council, it should be threatened with the EU-NATO mission – Moscow would then be prepared to enter into immediate talks in this matter.“<sup>211</sup>

### 5.3 „A Hazardous Game in Full View of a Catastrophe“

It must strike us as outrageous that apparently, large parts of the Western decision-makers are completely ignoring the substantial potential for escalation and the various options Russia has at its disposal to react to the massive attacks on its vital security interests. As discussed in many contexts, possible Russian countermeasures could extend to stopping energy supplies<sup>212</sup>, but also to an area less attention is paid to, which is the financial sector. Towards European banks, Russia has piled up substantial liabilities of EUR 128 bn in total. Among these, 37 bn are to French financial institutions, 21 bn to Italian, 14.6 bn to Austrian and 15 bn to German ones. Should Russia, as brought into play by Vladimir Putin as a possible option, decide to radically and unilaterally cut these debts as a countermeasure, there would be severe consequences for the European banking system, a scenario the newspaper *Die Welt* explicitly warns against: „Even a national bankruptcy in Russia is no longer excluded. Not necessarily because President Putin can no longer pay its debts – but simply because he doesn't want to do so any more. In reaction to the economic sanctions which are increasingly afflicting the country, he might decide to punish his country's Western creditors, as the boards of some banks speculate.“<sup>213</sup>

Yet the ultimate area with the greatest potential for escalation is the military element. Considering all the manoeuvres – which are also being intensified massively by the Russian side – the danger of an accident with unforeseeable consequences is growing rapidly. As early as in November, 2014, the study „Dangerous Brinkmanship“ by the „European Leadership Network“ warned that in a number of cases, risky situations had already occurred which could easily have led to a war between Russia and the West.<sup>214</sup> At the time the study was first published, 40 such situations were identified, and a further 27 were added in its March 2015 update.<sup>215</sup> A particular danger are near-collisions in the air. These are becoming more probable also due to increased NATO activities in eastern Europe, which Russia of course considers necessary to counter. Russian news agency Sputnik writes on this matter: „The number of flights overall and those of NATO members' air forces in the regions directly bordering on Russia and Byelarus has doubled to 3000 in 2014, Russian ambassador to NATO Aleksandr Grushko stated [...]. The number of flights of US reconnaissance planes, he continues, has risen from 22 in 2013 to 140 in 2014. AWACS reconnaissance planes are flying very actively over Romania, Poland and the Black Sea. In 2014, he says, there were 460 AWACS sorties. ‚NATO should not be surprised that we escort and intercept their planes to investigate what kind of missions they are engaged in. That even more so as they are taking place close to our borders‘, he added.“<sup>216</sup>

When considering this, it is an even more serious cause for concern that currently the entire established arms control system is about to collapse. This includes termination of the „Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe“ by Russia in March, 2015, with the reason given for this being the deployment of US soldiers and combat vehicles to the Baltic region. Beyond this, both in the US and in Russia, there are influential circles pushing for a termination of the INF treaty on intermediate-range nuclear missiles.<sup>217</sup>

The most threatening prospect, though, is that there are numerous signs of a new arms race in the area of strategic nuclear weapons – and especially because from certain circles, threats of actually employing them can be heard once again: „But these are more than verbal duels in the media. At the end of March [2015], Russian news

## General Mobilisation: NATO Manoeuvres

A list of various NATO manoeuvres in 2015, based on data published by the blog „Augengeradeaus“, provides an insight into the scale of mobilisation towards the east, even though this does not cover its entire extent:

- SUMMER SHIELD (LIVEX) in Latvia, 21 to 31 March, 950 participants, among them about 50 Germans;
- PERSISTENT PRESENCE 15 (series of manoeuvres all year round in Poland and the Baltics, with German participation);
- 2015 VJTF FUNCTIONS TESTING: personnel of various headquarters, 7 to 10 April, alertness exercise for the NATO Spearhead, the interim Very High Readiness Joint Task Force. Under participation of SHAPE, Joint Forces Command Naples, the German-Dutch corps in Münster, as well as sowie units from Czechia, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway;
- FALCON VIKING: Munster, in May, deployment exercise for the interim VJTF, including the German combat unit NATO Response Force, at its core the Panzer-grenadierbataillon 371 from Marienberg;

- NOBLE JUMP: 09 to 21 June, 2015: deployment exercise (DepEx) for parts of the interim VJTF to Poland (German contingent: approx. 350 troops);
- SIIL 15 – STEADFAST JAVELIN: 06 to 12 May, Estonia, with approx. 80 German troops participating;
- SABER STRIKE 2015: Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, 08 to 20 June, 2015;
- IRON WOLF: 08 to 20 June, Lithuania, with approx. 400 German troops participating;
- BALTOPS 2015: Baltic Sea, 06 to 23 June, 2015: naval manoeuvre headed by the US, with approx. 500 German troops participating;
- SWIFT RESPONSE: 18 August to 15 September, 2015 in Germany, Italy and Bulgaria;
- SILVER ARROW: Latvia, 21 to 30 September, with approx. 250 German troops participating;
- TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2015: Italy, Portugal, Spain, 28 September to 16 October (CPX), 21 October to 06 November, 2015 (Live Exercise), this year's major exercise for the NATO Response Force (NRF) with over 25,000 troops (according to details



Source: NATO

released by the Bundeswehr: including the German NRF contingent from 2016, parts of the Gebirgsjägerbataillon 233);

- IRON SWORD 15: Lithuania, November, with approx. 150 German troops participating;
- COMPACT EAGLE: Poland, 21 to 27 November, 2015: Command Post Exercise/Computer Assisted Exercise (CPX/CAX), headed by the North-Eastern Multinational Corps in Szczecin. (Source: Pflüger, Tobias: NATO: Aufrüstung gegen Russland, IMI-Standpunkt 2015/013).

agency TASS reports the successful testing of a new Russian nuclear missile. It is said to be ready for combat within this year. Part of a large modernisation programme for the Russian nuclear forces. But also The US are planning to make their nuclear relics from the Cold War ready for the future. In the budget plans of the US Congress, 348 billion dollars have been allocated to the country's nuclear forces over the next ten years.<sup>218</sup>

The list of near-catastrophes during the Cold War is already frighteningly long, and today, the danger of an „unintentional“ escalation is much greater than in the many years in between. This is even more problematic as despite the many near-collisions, almost all communication channels have been cut off. It has been reported that the „Red Telephone“ we remember from Cold War days no longer exists. Hans M. Kristensen of the „Federation of American Scientists“ warns in this context: „Those responsible here in Washington are baffled to what extent the communication channels have been shut down. Even concerning what used to be the daily routine.“<sup>219</sup>

Although it became known in April, 2015 that a new direct communication channel between NATO and the Russian military had

been established<sup>220</sup>, the fact that the situation remains highly dangerous is demonstrated by the debate provoked by the US about supplying heavy combat equipment to the Ukrainian government. It has been reported that the Russian side would consider this a „declaration of war“ to which the reply would be decisive steps towards a global escalation.<sup>221</sup> And this is only one of the various possible scenarios according to which the situation could get completely out of control. Thus, one can only agree with historian Michael Stürmer, who warned NATO against continuing in its highly dangerous game: „Arms for the Ukraine, NATO membership? By enforcing this, the alliance will overburden itself and intensify the danger of an all-out war. With nuclear weapons casting their shadow on everything, this is a hazardous game in full view of a catastrophe.“<sup>222</sup>

### 5.4 Germany as a „Swing State“?

If one and the same state is identified by two camps pitted against each other in hostility as the key state in further developments, one should take notice of that fact. Thus, on the one hand, George Friedman of Stratfor named Germany as „the real wild card“ in trying to determine what relations between the West and Russia are going to

be like in future.<sup>223</sup> On the other side – although certainly with completely different ulterior motives – the argument presented on state-owned news channel „Russia Today“ by an RT analyst, the journalist Pepe Escobar, is that Germany is faced with fundamental decisions regarding its future course, and due to the need to tap into new sales markets, in the long run, the formation of a „Berlin-Moscow-Beijing trade/commercial axis [...] is all but inevitable.“<sup>224</sup> Advances of this kind on the part of Russia are nothing new, one only needs to recall the already mentioned speech by Vladimir Putin before the German parliament in September 2001, which was interpreted for instance by geostrategist Brzezinski – and completely appropriately – as an offer to form an anti-US bloc in contrast to the existing constellation: „One should also remember Putin's call to Germany to create, together with Russia, a European global power which shall be independent of the United States.“<sup>225</sup> From the US point of view, such a development would be a nightmare scenario, and not only in recent times, as – once again – George Friedman describes: „So the primordial interest of the United States over which for a century we've fought wars, the First, Second, Cold War, has been the relationship between Germany and Rus-

## Russia as a Justification for Arms Build-Up

Currently, by referring to Russia, it is possible to justify almost any armaments project, even the most whacky ones. Along these lines, already in April 2014, in referring to the „Russian menace“, Rainer Arnold, defence expert of the German social democrats, demanded to maintain a larger battle tank contingent (Spiegel Online, 06 April, 2014). His „wish“ was fulfilled in May, 2015: in future, not 225 as originally planned, but 325 Leopard MBTs will be at the ready to deter Russia. As if that was not enough, just before the decision, Hans Rühle, former head of the defence ministry's planning commission piped up, claiming that the Leopard tanks should be supplied with uranium ammunition to ensure sufficient firepower (Die Welt, 26 April, 2015). But the nuclear war games go well beyond such plans, as statements by Karl-Heinz Kamp, director of the Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik (Federal Academy for Security Policy), reveal: „As the conflict with Russia is not a mere spell of bad weather, but a fundamental climate change, the overall package of deterrence must be placed in a new context.“ According to him, this refers to conventional capacities but also to „the nuclear arms (in Europe and in the US)“ (German-Foreign-Policy.com, 13 May, 2015).

Quite generally, the reference to Russia tends to be extremely „profitable“ when



German main battle tank Leopard 2 A7. Source: tm/Wikipedia

made in connection with a demand to substantially increase arms spending. It should be noted, though, that the German military budget has already been raised from EUR 23.18 bn (converted) in 2000 to approx. EUR 33 bn in 2015. Even adjusted for inflation, this is an increase of nearly 25%! And this even though a – binding – agreement in June 2010 had been to reduce the budget to EUR 27.6 bn. When presenting the outline for budget planning on 18 February, 2015, finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble even announced a fur-

ther increase in his paper. According to his announcements, the 2016 defence budget is to rise to EUR 34.2 bn, to 34.74 bn the following year, and to 34.8 bn in 2018, to then amount to 35 bn for 2019. One of the reasons given in the budget proposal outline is the conflict with Russia, requiring „provision of additional funding for greater NATO involvement and reinforcement in the area of defence investments.“ (Augengeradeaus, 17 March, 2015)

sia, because united they are the only force that could threaten us, and to make sure that that doesn't happen. [...] For the United States, the primordial fear is [...] German technology and German capital, Russian natural resources, Russian manpower as the only combination that has for centuries scared the hell out of the United States.”<sup>226</sup>

In such a context, the continuously recurring tensions between the US and Germany are in some parts interpreted as an unmistakable sign that Germany – at least in the medium term, as prognosticised in the „Russia Today“ article quoted from above – will turn away from the US. Indicators for such a development are seen in the increasing volume of trade with Russia, China and other „emerging countries“ which are gaining in relevance compared to the US market, or respectively that it has already been high for many years. Further, there is the tendency of the US, whenever differences of opinion

emerge in the Alliance, to mostly pay little or no attention to the interests of its allies, which is resulting in growing annoyance on the latter's part. „Shortly before this year's Munich Security Conference [2010], German government advisors are taking account of US global policy since the end of the Bush era. At the beginning of his term, President Obama raised great expectations concerning intense cooperation with Berlin and the EU, as Berlin-based Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik writes. Yet in fact, what came to pass was ‚hardly anything more than a shift of emphasis‘. Washington still assigns ‚multilateralism‘ – code for the German-European aim of assuming an equal position to the US as a global power – nothing more than an instrumental role.”<sup>227</sup>

That trans-Atlantic relations have seen better days has also become very obvious from the NSA spying scandal and especially from the open conflicts over the course in the

Ukraine crisis. As described earlier, already the matter of whose pet candidate – Germany's (Klitschko) or the USA's (Yatsenyuk) – would assume the key positions after the regime change in Kiev provoked serious quarrels (see Chapter 3.3) As also pointed out before, this discord has its actual cause in rather different ideas of how the Ukraine conflict is „to be dealt with“ further. While the US appear to be prepared to pursue the course of escalation against Moscow, Germany seems to be a little more careful in this respect. For the latter, in contrast to the US, considerable economic interests are at stake because of the much higher trade volume, with the consequence that also relevant parts of the German élites are demanding a – slightly – more moderate course.<sup>228</sup>

More than clearly, these differences rose to the surface in the matter of whether heavy weaponry was to be supplied to the Ukrainian government, on the occa-

sion of the Munich Security Conference in February, 2015. Immediately beforehand, the USA had kicked off the ball by publishing an „expert report“ by three important think tanks, drawn up by several former Democrat government members, directly before the conference. Its core arguments were in favour of delivering not just „merely“ non-lethal equipment as before to the Ukraine, but also offensive weapons systems, to the amount of US\$ 3 bn between 2015 and 2017.<sup>229</sup>

Of course, the previously supplied „non-lethal support“ to some extent also provided a basis for offensive operations<sup>230</sup>, but it is self-evident that the new plans would have meant taking the next step towards the top of the escalation ladder. This can be gleaned, for instance, from a report in the Bild-Zeitung arguing that it was about more than „just“ arms supplies, that this is about the danger of direct confrontation: „Risky: The intended weapons and systems are so technically sophisticated that US soldiers would presumably have to train the Ukrainian army. This way, the US would get involved in the conflict with their own troops.“<sup>231</sup> Shortly after publication of the expert report, communiqués surfaced that also among the US government, a change of opinion had happened: US foreign secretary John Kerry as well as chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey and also President Barack Obama’s security advisor Susan Rice were now prepared to seriously consider arms supplies.<sup>232</sup>

Prepared by such groundwork, the US delegation travelled to Munich and loudly gave emphasis to this demand with a chorus of voices. In slightly labyrinthine formulations, but unmistakably, US vice president Joseph Biden expressed himself as follows: „Too many times President Putin has promised peace, and delivered tanks, troops, and weapons. So we will continue to provide Ukraine with security assistance, not to encourage war but to allow Ukraine to defend itself. Let me be clear: We do not believe there is a military solution in Ukraine. But let me be equally clear: We do not believe Russia has the right to do what they’re doing. We believe we should attempt an honourable peace. But we also believe the Ukrainian people have a right to defend themselves.“<sup>233</sup>

In Germany, though, only a few picked up on this sharp volley from Washington – though among them was Wolfgang Ischinger, direc-

tor of the Munich Security Conference: „Critics have been blaming the Security Conference from the start that it fuels military confrontation rather than promoting peace in the world. This time, during the run-up to the conference, Ischinger has provided a contribution towards reinforcing this preconception. On [German TV channel] ZDF, he advocated ‚an announcement of possible arms supplies‘ to the Ukraine, to push Russia into exerting stronger influence on the separatists. He characterised according contemplations in the USA as ‚important‘ and ‚appropriate‘. ‚Sometimes you need pressure to push for peace‘.“<sup>234</sup>

However at least at that point, among the German government there was no majority for this demand, and both Angela Merkel and Frank-Walter Steinmeier clearly rejected it publically at the Security Conference. German newspaper Die Welt summarised the German Chancellor’s answer to an enquiry in the following way: „The problem is that I cannot imagine any situation in which improved equipment of the Ukrainian army can contribute towards a resolution“, says Merkel. She states that the idea of getting the Ukrainian army into a position of being able to stand up to the superior opponent merely by supplying arms is an illusion. „This cannot be won by military means“, Merkel repeated, vehemently this time, „that is the bitter truth“. <sup>235</sup> As this was not at all what the hardliners flown in from the US wanted to hear, influential Republican US senator John McCain launched a boisterous rant against Merkel’s statements: „When the Chancellor says that we should by no means supply arms to the Ukrainians so that they can defend themselves and won’t be slaughtered, then she is terribly wrong and I am of a totally different opinion than she is. [...] And if someone seriously refuses to give the Ukrainians the possibility of self-defence and then wants an apology from me, then I reply: Tell me what I should apologise for? Shouldn’t you rather apologise to the families of the 5,000 Ukrainians who were slaughtered by the Russians? [...] One might think she has no idea or she doesn’t care that people are being slaughtered in Ukraine.“<sup>236</sup>

In this context, a further article in the Bild-Zeitung might be insightful, according to which on the evening of the first conference day, a meeting of the US delegation apparently took place where testy complaints were uttered about the German government’s supposed cuddle-up-to-the-Russian-

teddy course. Present was, among others, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, Victoria Nuland, who had repeatedly drawn attention before with her derogatory remarks about the Allies („Fuck the EU“). She supposedly complained noisily about „Merkel’s Moscow stuff“ and demanded to assert the aggressive US course against the EU allies: „They’re afraid of damage to their economy, counter-sanctions from the Russians. [...] We can fight against the Europeans, rhetorically fight against them.“<sup>237</sup>

It is hardly feasible that this announcement of wanting to make use of the Security Conference to stew the Germans until they abandon their refusal of arms supplies was not approved by the top dog, i.e. the US president. Even if that was not directly the case, it is still Obama who appears to want to continue leaving it up to explicit hardliner Nuland to determine US policy in this conflict. Whatever the background: obviously the US side did not manage to prevail in this matter. For the time being, they refrained from supplying heavy hardware, which, as it was most likely intended by the US, would have been perceived by the Russians as a severe escalation step and answered with appropriate countermeasures. In such circumstances, the prospective ceasefire negotiations would have been condemned to failure. Instead, with the relevant mediation coming from Germany, on 12 February, 2015, the so-called Minsk-II agreement was concluded, temporarily easing the situation and leading to a ceasefire, albeit a shaky one under constant threat of failing again.

Also since then, Berlin has been endeavouring, to some extent very explicitly, to counter attempts by the US side to further fuel the smouldering conflict. Thus in early March, 2015, when the Office of the German Chancellor rather undiplomatically more or less accused US general Breedlove of war-mongering. Spiegel Online commented on the matter: „Remarks by NATO’s commander in chief on the Ukraine conflict meet with criticism from several Allies, among them Germany. According to information provided to the SPIEGEL, General Philip Breedlove is accused by relevant circles in the capitals to have portrayed Russia’s military role in eastern Ukraine since the crisis broke out in an exaggerated manner. At the Chancellor’s Office, the term used is actually ‚dangerous propaganda‘. Foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier has therefore personally intervened by addressing NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg about the matter.“<sup>238</sup>



*The chief negotiators of the US (Dan Mullaney) and the EU (Ignacio Garcia Bercero) during the sixth round of negotiations on the TTIP, 14 to 18 July, 2014 in Brussels. (Source: European Union)*

The crucial question is how to evaluate these quarrels, and three conclusions should be considered as relevant in this:

First, the notion, also cultivated in parts of the peace movement, that in regard to policies concerning the Ukraine – and also in other respects – Germany acts as nothing more than an agent of Washington is downright ludicrous. It is certainly not the case that Germany is being dragged across the diplomatic stage by the nose ring the US have fitted it with. Germany has identifiable and from a capitalist point of view comprehensible interests which to some extent differ from those of the US, and is apparently prepared and capable to assert them in opposition to Washington – at least sometimes, as the matter of arms supplies demonstrates. And even the cases where this is unsuccessful, as in the selection of personnel for the Ukrainian transitional government, are no conclusive proof that it is sufficient for Washington to pull a few levers and in Germany, the political puppets immediately start their dance to the tune played by the US.

Second, it is certainly to be welcomed that the German government has rejected the demands to supply offensive weapons and successfully pushed for a ceasefire agreement to be concluded (Minsk-II). However, one should not exaggerate in showering the German government with praise, as its attitude and actions simply correspond to the

constellation of its interests. And these very interests and the anti-Russian policy derived from them were factors which seriously contributed towards the catastrophic escalation of the situation in the first place, a situation which now requires great efforts to maybe stabilise it again. Part of the picture here is also the prominent part Germany has been playing since the crisis broke out in terms of NATO's mobilisation against Russia.

And finally, third, the significance of the conflict of interests between the US and Germany should not be overrated, even though they are clearly identifiable. They are a kind of second-rate conflict of interests, of a tactical rather than strategic nature. This is also due to the fact that in comparison to the volume of trade with the US, trade with Russia clearly lags behind. In 2013, goods to the amount of EUR 35.8 bn went to Russia, while in the same year, goods to the amount of EUR 89.4 bn were exported to the US (compared to EUR 65.5 bn in 2010). And while Russia trade took a dive in 2014 (EUR 29.3 bn), this was more than compensated for by exports to the US (EUR 96 bn)<sup>239</sup>: „Since the Ukraine conflict and the fracking boom, a shift in the balance of foreign trade can be identified for Germany which – if it continues – will further weaken relations with Russia and strengthen the traditional ties to the USA once again.“<sup>240</sup>

Yet the alliance has a much more solid basis than merely a large trade volume: in

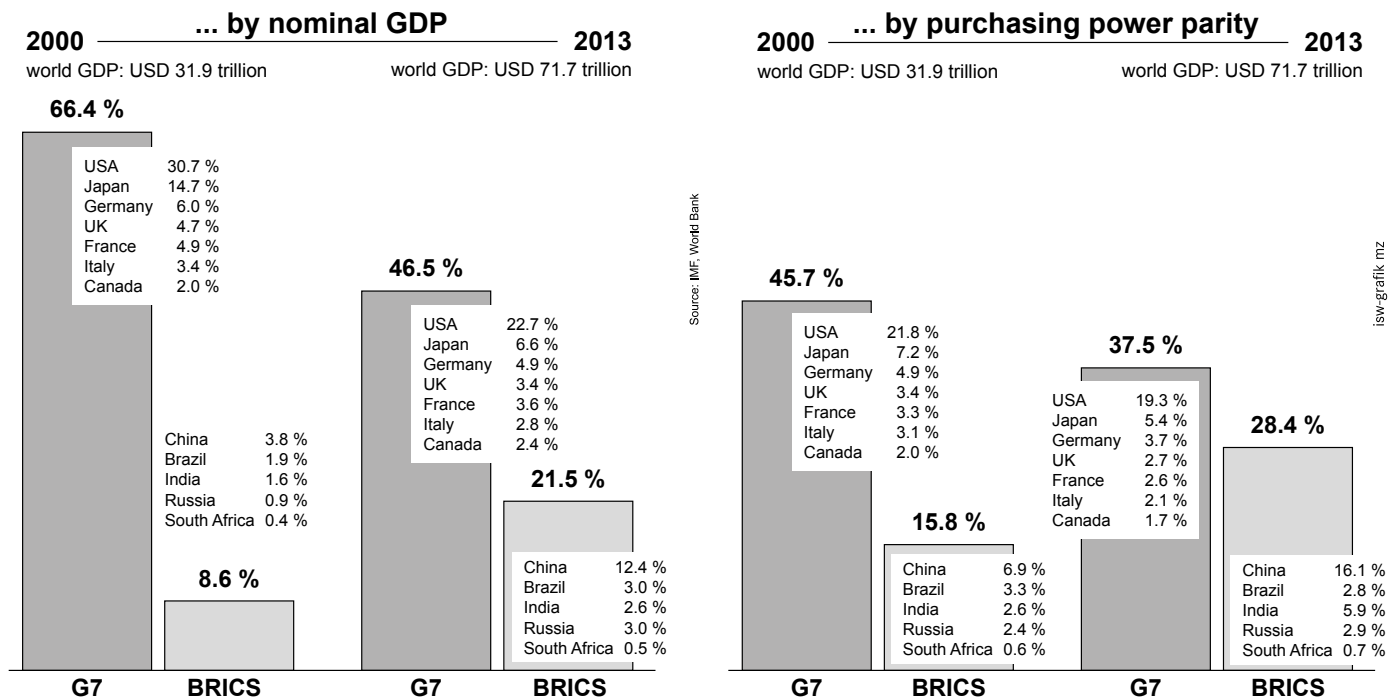
fundamental matters, i.e. the attitude that Russia is supposed to dance to the Western tune, there is a consensus. Regarding this issue, Washington prefers to rattle its sabre, while Berlin would rather adopt a gentler tone for as long as it seems feasible. Though in case that fails to be „successful“, the German government will most likely fall back in line with a course of escalation. One can hardly interpret the „Leitgedanken zur Russlandpolitik“ („Principles of a Policy Towards Russia“) published in late March 2015 by Karsten Voigt, the German government's US coordinator until 2010, in any other way: „Putin's Russia does not want to be recognised as the country it is today, but as what it once was: an empire. The ambitions to maintain and regain spheres of influence is seen by most of its neighbours as Russian revisionism. [...] If the Russian administration and the separatists fail to keep to the Minsk agreements, the US and some European NATO countries will begin to support the Ukraine by military means. Always considering all the risks, it is acceptable for German politics to oppose military support to the Ukraine. But one should not deny that the Ukraine's desire to improve its defence capacity is completely legitimate. The argument over tactical means should not endanger the joint strategy with regard to Russia. Also in future, Germany should not adopt a policy towards Moscow which would ignore the interests of its eastern and western neighbours.“<sup>241</sup>

It appears that from that perspective, superordinate interests exist which are an obstacle to any de-escalation. They represent the trans-Atlantic bond, which with a certain degree of probability makes a permanent alliance with the US seem more attractive to the German élites than a gradual approach towards the BRICS countries.<sup>242</sup>

## 5.5 State Capitalism vs. Neoliberalism

Growing conflicts with Russia, but also the general tendencies towards bloc formation – the West vs. BRICS – in the international system have been evident for several years now. This is based on the simple fact that within only a few years, a dramatic shift has taken place in the international balance of power, with the consequence that the centuries-long Western hegemony has eroded quite seriously: „The share of the G7 countries – the traditional power centres – of the global GDP has decreased from 66.4 % in the year 2000 to 46.4 % in 2013 [...], while the share of the BRICS countries has

## Global Rebalancing: G7 and BRICS shares of world GDP in Percent



risen from 8.6 % to 21.5 % within the same period. The USA experienced a decline from 30.7 % to 22.7 %, Japan shrank from 14.7 % to 6.6 %, Germany went down from 6.0 % to 4.9 %. China gained the most, almost quadrupling its share in the global GDP within the last 13 years. Russia was able to triple its share. According to purchasing power parities, the G7 countries put up 300 % more than the BRICS countries in 2000, while in 2013, the amount was a mere 25 % more. The United Nations Development Program, UNDP, assesses this development as follows: „The rise of the South has taken place at an unequalled speed and on an unprecedented scale. Never before in history have so many people's living conditions and prospects for the future changed so dramatically and quickly.“<sup>243</sup>

The decisive question in this context is what steps have been and will need to be taken globally in consideration of the rather swift erosion of the West's position of supremacy. To put it in a simplified way, there were and still are two schools of thought: one calling for a gradual transition to a multi-polar world where power and influence are redistributed according to the changing situation; and one insisting on aggressively defending Western hegemony. Especially in the US, but also in the EU and Germany, there currently

appears to be a majority in favour of the second position. As a result, at the latest since 2008, numerous high-profile consultation groups have been assembled to develop strategies, all of which led to the conclusion that in face of the threat to its hegemony, it is imperative for „the West“ to cooperate more closely and courageously in defence of its „values“ in future. Further, that it is also necessary to set aside existing conflicts of interest and regulate them amicably.<sup>244</sup>

To provide just one of the many examples of the time, here is a quote by Daniel Korski of the European Council on Foreign Relations: „the US and Europe are the best allies they've each got. Yes, they have similar traditions, share values and have a history of cooperation behind them. Yes, those interests are not always the same. But most importantly, the US and Europe are on the same side of today's geopolitical dividing line: both are declining powers with a shared, vested interest in the liberal status quo. [...] Together, the US and Europe can help manage and perhaps even mitigate their collective decline. Alone, however, both will be hunted.“<sup>245</sup>

A ground-breaking occurrence in this context was the publication of „Global Trends 2025“ in November, 2008. In this

joint product of all US secret services, not only a severe decline of the US in terms of power politics was predicted – for the first time – but also intensifying geopolitical conflicts going as far as an emergence of direct military engagement with rising powers such as China and Russia.<sup>246</sup> Also in that period, the European Union's Institute for Security Studies arrived at the result that Western hegemony will be subject to serious challenges. In this context, the principal EU think tank also explicitly pointed out the, once again, increasing convergence with assessments on the part of the US as represented in „Global Trends 2025“.<sup>247</sup> In Germany, the foreign-intelligence service Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND) was instructed to draw up a study on the effects of the economic and financial crisis on the global balance of power, intended to serve as an orientation guideline for future activities to the German élites: „In mid-April [2009], Ernst Uhrlau, head of the BND, reported to the Office of the President and presented his analysis on the effects of the situation to Federal President Horst Köhler. Expressions used at Schloss Bellevue translator's note: Bellevue Palace, the German president's official residence in Berlin on that occasion were ‚a metamorphosis of geopolitics‘ and ‚a world which after this crisis will no longer be the same, also politically‘. The central

message to the German government was: in the foreseeable future, Europe and America will come under political pressure, competition with China will intensify, and Beijing will be one of the most likely profiteers.<sup>248</sup>

There are two questions which immediately arise from this: in these strategy papers, why does the competition between „the established powers“ and „the contenders“ appear to be so extremely irreconcilable that the danger of military conflict is expected to grow? And why is it assumed that the US and the EU/Germany more or less share the same fate in this and, inseparably tied together, are forced to fight for their „values“? An answer can be found in „Global Trends 2025“, namely that fundamentally different ideas of „the rules to the game of global economy“ exist: „For the most part, China, India and Russia are not following the Western liberal model for self-development but instead are using a different model: ‚state capitalism‘. State capitalism is a loose term used to describe a system of economic management that gives a prominent role to the state. [...] Rather than emulating Western Western models of political and economic development, more countries may be attracted to China’s alternative development model.“<sup>249</sup>

In the only detailed description in the aforementioned BND paper referring to the future constellation of global political power and conflict, an almost identical threat analysis can be found: „Politics should therefore emphatically involve itself in such contemplations on the balance of geopolitical crises. For it is obvious that at this point, not all possible effects of the economic crisis have been included in such contemplations. This [especially] applies to the ideological struggle between democracies and autocracies over who can offer the more attractive model for the future development of societies. An entire generation of Western-oriented government leaders in developing countries could be forced into a defensive position if, despite painful reforms, their countries are plunged into economic turmoil.“<sup>250</sup>

Thus, during a phase in which the economic and financial crisis has destroyed what little credibility the neoliberal economic order had left, China and Russia are fundamentally challenging the rules of economic policy with their alternative model. Already in 2007, Sergei Karaganov, a leading Russian politologist, predicted a „New

Era of Confrontation“: „Bitter multi-level competition – economic, geopolitical and ideological – will become another characteristic of the New Era of Confrontation. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has formulated this peculiarity of the new world in the following way: ‚The paradigm of contemporary international relations is determined by competition in the broadest sense of this notion, particularly when the object of competition is value systems and development models. The novelty of this situation is that the West is losing its monopoly on the globalisation process. This, perhaps, explains attempts to present the current developments as a threat to the West, its values and way of life.“<sup>251</sup>

The not-all-that-new conflict between the neoliberal „heartland“ and the state-capitalist „contenders“<sup>252</sup> therefore results from fundamentally different notions of economic order as well as from the failed attempts to integrate the rivals into the neoliberal bloc. In reaction to this development, the „Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership“ (TTIP) is aimed at forging an alliance of the „neoliberal West“ and steadfastly positioning this alliance against the „state-capitalist bloc“. Thus, an analysis of the agreement’s geopolitical effects and objectives finds that it is quite generally concerned with „a reformation and reinforcement of the Western power bloc against rivals such as China or Russia“ and especially with „defining and consolidating global neoliberal standards in order to find a more advantageous position for [the West’s] own model of order in opposition to the supposedly rampant ‚state capitalist‘ system.“<sup>253</sup>

Peter van Ham of the Dutch „Clingendael Institute“ also shares this evaluation: „The main reason why the European Union and the United States have embraced the ambitious goal of achieving a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is geopolitical in nature. The rise of China (and other Asian countries), combined with the relative decline of the US and the economic malaise of the euro zone, is spurring the transatlantic West to use its combined economic and political preponderance to write new global trade rules reflecting its economic principles (rules-based market economy) and political values (liberal democracy). TTIP is an essential component of this new strategy.“<sup>254</sup>

Also in this way, already existing tendencies towards bloc formation are reinforced even further: „It would be an error to assume that

the big free-trade agreements of the US and the EU will not provoke any kind of reaction. If TTIP and TPP are implemented, reactions especially from the emerging countries are to be expected. The BRIC countries will not sit idly by and observe the fragmentation of the global trade order, but instead, will initiate their own large-scale projects. [...] The West’s inability to comprehend economic and political models beyond capitalism and democracy has meanwhile become a liability. The Western liberal democracy is now confronted with a new rival in the form of Chinese- or Russian-style authoritarian capitalism. Today, the West’s answer to these new competitors in terms of trade policy is exclusion and discrimination. This is not just an unfortunate development, but also a dangerous step backwards. For this way, a new major geostrategic conflict is backed up by a trade policy.“<sup>255</sup>

Considering such a background, the demands for a „Western renaissance“ as put forward by the circles surrounding the conservative EPP faction in the EU Parliament are understandable: „German foreign policy experts call for a ‚renaissance‘ of the trans-Atlantic alliance in defence of Western global hegemony. In future, the EU will have to cooperate more closely with the United States once more despite certain differences, they demand in a strategy paper authored by two German representatives and recently published by the think tank of the European Popular Party (EPP). It states that the ‚liberal world order‘ which since the end of the Cold War has secured the Western countries’ global supremacy can only be maintained if Europe and North America once again move closer together – economically, politically and in military terms. Any attempts to cooperate more closely with Russia should be discontinued.“<sup>256</sup>

Such phrases are informative in the respect that they further solidify the impression that the only serious difference between the assessments by US and by German intelligence services, which was still present a few years ago, apparently no longer exists nowadays. While in Global Trends 2025 of 2008, Russia was primarily treated as a rival, the Bundesnachrichtendienst in its assessment of the same period considered the country a potential prize. According to the German analysis, the prospects of integrating Russia into a Western bloc in opposition to China were good.<sup>257</sup> The manner in which the Ukraine crisis was dealt with suggests that meanwhile, Russian

integration is considered less probable, or that Russia is simply seen as less of a desirable alliance partner nowadays – which makes it all the more likely that an opposing Russian-Chinese bloc may actually form.

### 5.6 A Chinese-Russian Alliance?

Due to the – indeed existing – range of conflicts of interest between China and Russia, some observers consider a close alliance to be formed by the two countries to be highly unlikely.<sup>258</sup> However, in Russia, one is aware of the fact that this is not about any equal partnership anyway, but about where the country's interests will be treated with greater respect in a role as junior partner. And already years ago, this question was answered relatively clearly, as Russian scientist Sergei Karaganov points out: „It is quite obvious, at least to me, that the Euro-Atlantic civilization, which seemed to have finally won, in the new world is lagging somewhat behind China and other Asian countries which have turned out to be the true winners of the Cold War. [...] Against the background of these changes, America's geopolitical positions and its claims to sole leadership have sharply deteriorated – thanks to Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the economic crisis. These positions can and will be restored only partially. [...] Faced with the impossibility of its advantageous and equal accession to the Euro-Atlantic space, Russia is drifting fast towards prioritizing cooperation with China – even if as a 'younger brother', although a respected one. In addition, China quite pragmatically does not focus on differences in values, although these differences are great. The 'Asian choice' of today is not the same as the Eurasian choice of the past. It looks like a choice in favor of a rapidly rising civilization.“<sup>259</sup>

It is an obvious thing that Western „treatment“ of the Ukraine conflict is speeding up this trend, as in its course, the degree of rejection of the West among the Russian population has grown to record proportions. Surveys conducted in January 2015 provided that 81% see the US in a negative light (13% positive). Almost as high is the percentage of people who have a sceptical attitude towards the EU (20% positive). Before the Ukraine crisis, „merely“ 44% were sceptical of the US and 34% of the EU.<sup>260</sup> China's population has a similarly negative view of the West: „Almost 55% of [Chinese] interviewees agree, that a Cold War will break out between the US and China'. An independent investigation of

Chinese-language media commissioned by the Sunday Times found statements by navy and army officers predicting a military showdown as well as political leaders who demand that China should sell more arms to America's enemies.“<sup>261</sup>

Apart from this aspect, there is also a material basis for a Sino-Russian alliance in the form of the significant bilateral trade volume.<sup>262</sup> Indeed, especially since the Ukraine crisis began, numerous pointers in such a direction have become evident: to name only a few, for instance, in May, 2014, the informal exclusion of China from investment into Russian infrastructure projects was ended. A particularly sensitive matter is that restrictions concerning the sale of high-tech military hardware to China have been lifted – an issue that had been rejected for a long time. Accordingly, in April, 2015, Russia began to sell modern missiles: „As the first country, China has purchased modern Russian long-range air defence missile systems of the S-400 type. The record deal has an estimated volume of at least US\$ 1.5 billion. Many countries are striving to buy this weapon, which has no match worldwide. Though up to now, S-400 has only been supplied to the Russian army.“<sup>263</sup> Also, negotiations on an agreement to deliver gas to China with a volume of approx. US\$ 400 bn, which had been dragging on for over 10 years because of disagreements over the prices, were completed in 2014, and in acceptance of the Chinese conditions, soon after the Ukraine crisis broke out.<sup>264</sup>

It comes as no surprise therefore that the findings of an analysis by the European Council on Foreign Relations reveals that due to the Ukraine crisis, an alliance between the two countries has become more likely, and that such a development should be prevented if possible: „If the trend is sustainable, Russia will turn into China's junior partner.“<sup>265</sup> In this context, it is consistent what journalist Pepe Escobar stated in his April 2015 report, that a high-level EU source confirmed that on the part of the Germans, a vigorous approach was made towards China to attempt to persuade Beijing to distance itself from Russia.<sup>266</sup> At the moment, though, there is not much to be found in support of the thought that such an attempt might be successful. Especially because the closer ties between China and Russia are developing in the context of obvious endeavours on the part of the BRICS countries to establish a power counterweight to the West. In

its Reader Sicherheitspolitik, the German Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) comments on the matter: „The BRICS group has thus generally matured into an actor to be taken seriously. There are some indications that it may develop non only into a non-Western, but even into a post-Western alliance – and thereby become a challenge to the West and its model of global order. [...] Several times already, the BRICS countries have managed to convert their self-confidence, and their connected potential for mobilising emerging and developing countries, into concrete vetoing power. For instance, this was the case at the 2009 world climate summit in Copenhagen, during the Doha Round of the WTO, most recently on Bali in 2013, or during the Crimean crisis in March 2014, when the BRICS foreign ministers prevented Russia's diplomatic isolation by means of a declaration criticising the West.“<sup>267</sup>

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## 6. Will the Ice Age become Permafrost?



*New Russian main battle tank. (Source: Russian Defence Ministry)*

Not by accident did Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov make reference at the 2015 Munich Security Conference to the speech his president Vladimir Putin had delivered in the very same place eight years before. At the time, it came as a surprise to many how severely he blasted the Western expansionist policy and warned against the threat of a new Cold War if no course change happened in the matter. From the Russian point of view, nothing has happened since then to overcome the concerns expressed then – on the contrary, things are continuing as before. Time and time again, Putin pointed out the long list of problems, for instance in his speech on the occasion of the admission of Crimea on 18 March, 2014: „We are constantly proposing cooperation on all key issues; we want to strengthen our level of trust and for our relations to be equal, open and fair. But we saw no reciprocal steps. On the contrary, they have lied to us many times, made decisions behind our backs, placed us before an accomplished fact. This happened with NATO’s expansion to the East, as well as the deployment of military infrastructure at our borders. [...] It happened with the deployment of a missile defence system. [...] They are constantly trying to sweep us into a corner [...] And with Ukraine, our western partners have crossed the line, playing the bear and acting irresponsibly and unprofessionally.“<sup>268</sup>

For the most part, Lavrov repeated this criticism in Munich in early 2015, empha-

sising especially two aspects: for one, that the West relies on expansion and is not prepared to let Russia join in on a workable security architecture: „The world is now facing a drastic shift [...] Do they the West want to build a security architecture with Russia, without Russia, or against Russia?“ And on the other hand, he once more underlined the Russian point of view that what happened in the Ukraine had been a „coup d’état“ for which the West was co-responsible to a significant extent: „at each stage of the crisis’ development, our American colleagues, and under their influence, also the European Union, have been taking steps leading to escalation.“<sup>269</sup>

Of course, in the West, this is assessed completely differently in most circles – and not only in the US. To German Chancellor Merkel, it is thus beyond any debate who bears the sole responsibility for the escalation: „Ladies and gentlemen, for over a year now, the crisis in Ukraine has demonstrated that respect for the principles of Europe’s peaceful order can by no means be taken for granted. For Russia’s actions – first in Crimea and then in eastern Ukraine – have gone against these principles of our coexistence. Ukraine is seeing both its territorial integrity and sovereignty disregarded. International law is being violated. [...] This context must also serve as the backdrop of the decisions taken at the NATO Summit in Wales last year, with which NATO laid the foundations for better operational readi-

ness of the Alliance’s response forces. We are thus refocusing the Alliance on collective defence, including with the potential threats of hybrid warfare in mind.“<sup>270</sup>

Also at the Munich Security Conference, German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier attacked his Russian colleague quite directly: „It’s also up to Moscow to define common interests. As yet we have seen little – too little – of this, and the speech given by Mr Lavrov yesterday made no contribution either.“ Steinmeier also pulled out the corny cliché again about the Western community of values exposed to a Russia caught up in the conceptual framework of geopolitical spheres of influence: „The conflict in Ukraine is an example of this. From the outset, two crucial elements of the international order have been at stake. Firstly, there was the confrontation between the peaceful order which has been painstakingly developed by Europe, based on international law and states’ right to self-determination on the one hand, and on the other hand, the logic of power politics and spheres of influence which is prepared to flout the rules, including through the use of force. In the EU and NATO we provided a resolute and united response to the dangerous trajectory of the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine, militarily underpinned by Russia.“<sup>271</sup>

The rift between the respective (self-) perceptions could hardly be bigger, as was pointed out by, among others, the German radio station Deutsche Welle: „With full force, the views of Russia and the West clashed. Though the scrap is not only about the Ukraine crisis. The mutual distrust is rooted much deeper. Russia’s foreign minister stands alone. [...] From NATO’s eastern expansion to differences of opinion concerning international disarmament agreements – everything is one huge affront to Russia, as Lavrov interprets it. Moderator Ischinger appears bewildered: ‚We seem to be using a different history book than the Russians‘, the experienced diplomat comments and detects ‚a deep rift between the narratives‘, meaning the narratives from which a society derives its identity.“<sup>272</sup>

However, without any open, public acknowledgement of the fact that the Western policy is at least partly to blame for the current escalation, it is most likely that the actively pursued collision course will be continued on at full speed. The only thing that is being offered is „cooperative



Source: Flickr/Uwe Hiksich

confrontation“, which in fact only remains cooperative as long as Russia submits to Western aspirations without reservation.<sup>273</sup> What would be necessary is an immediate suspension of all aggressive measures, in combination with serious efforts to work on joint solutions: „This is not about a simple case of ‚failure‘, of misperceptions, misinterpretations and overreaction on both sides. What has happened is that both sides have contributed towards the amplification of a dispute which is fundamental and thus will last for a long time. There is hardly any room left for nuances, and the danger that the whole affair will gradually slide into continuously deepening antagonism. [...] What would be required is the shared preparedness of both sides to leave behind their respective own ‚action history‘, to listen (without over-eager efforts to comprehend everything), to empathise (without romanticising reality) and to commit to (civilised) constructive debate.“<sup>274</sup>

Though this would require to radically change course, and additionally also to fundamentally abandon the idea of defending with claws and fangs the hegemonic position the West has held for centuries – conditions which currently are unlikely to appear acceptable. The danger is therefore that the British NATO vice commander for Europe, Adrian Bradshaw, will be proven right in predicting in his speech quoted in the beginning that a new „era of constant competition with Russia“ may be at hand.<sup>275</sup>

Yet as bleak as the prospects may appear, there is still the hope that the majority of the people in Germany, just as in many other countries, will reject this course of escalation. The matter to attend to now and in future is how such a theoretical rejection can be transformed into practical political protest!

268. Gerns, 2015, p. 75.

269. English translation of Putin quotes: [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Address\\_by\\_President\\_of\\_the\\_Russian\\_Federation\\_on\\_the\\_reunification\\_of\\_the\\_Republic\\_of\\_Crimea\\_and\\_the\\_city\\_of\\_Sevastopol\\_with\\_Russia](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Address_by_President_of_the_Russian_Federation_on_the_reunification_of_the_Republic_of_Crimea_and_the_city_of_Sevastopol_with_Russia)

270. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov delivers a speech and answers questions during debates at the 51st Munich Security Conference, Munich, February 7, 2015.

271. Speech by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel on the Occasion of the 51st Munich Security Conference, Munich, 07 February 2015.

272. Speech by Federal Foreign Minister Steinmeier at the 51st Munich Security Conference, 08 February, 2015.

273. *Frostiger Blick in tiefe Gräben*, Deutsche Welle, 07 Feb, 2015.

274. The term stems from a paper by the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik: “The conflict over the Ukraine fuelled by Russia as well as Moscow’s dominance-oriented notions of order for the post-Soviet region force the EU into strategic explicitness in its policy towards the eastern neighbourhood region. [...] In this, EU and NATO should agree on a division of tasks. The associated countries could be gradually brought into a close relationship with NATO in the manner of Sweden and Finland today. [...] It [the EU] would seek to integrate Russia, while at the same time ensuring that the neighbours can maintain their political self-determination.” (Lang, Kai-Olaf/Lippert, Barbara: *Optionen der EU für den Umgang mit Russland und den östlichen Partnerländern. »Kooperative Konfrontation« als Richtschnur über den Riga-Gipfel hinaus*, SWP-Aktuell, April, 2015)

275. Lapins, Wolf: *Die Illusion einer Ostpolitik 4.0*, Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft, 16 Feb, 2015.

276. Russian expansionism may pose existential threat, says Nato general, *The Guardian*, 20 Feb, 2015.



## **Sabine Lösing, MEP**

European Parliament  
Sabine Lösing, MEP  
Rue Wiertz WIB 03M023  
1047 Brussels

Phone: +32 2284 7894  
Fax: +32 2284 9894  
Email: [sabine.loesing@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:sabine.loesing@europarl.europa.eu)  
Assistants: Ota Jaksch, Anne Labinski

### **Lokal Offices:**

Europabüro Sabine Lösing  
Goseriede 8  
30159 Hannover

Phone: +49 511 4500 8852  
Email: [hannover@sabine-loesing.de](mailto:hannover@sabine-loesing.de)  
Assistants: Daniel Josten, Michael Kuhlendahl

Europabüro Sabine Lösing  
Lange Geismarstraße 2  
37073 Göttingen

Phone: +49 551 5076 6823  
Email: [europabuero-loesing@web.de](mailto:europabuero-loesing@web.de)  
Assistant: Fritz Hellmer

**[www.sabine-loesing.de](http://www.sabine-loesing.de)**

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