

From a European neighborhood policy toward a new 'Ostpolitik': the potential impact of German policy

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From a European Neighborhood Policy toward a New *Ostpolitik* – The Potential Impact of German Policy

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From a European Neighborhood Policy toward a New *Ostpolitik* – The Potential Impact of German Policy

Summary

The rainbow revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine drew inspiration from, and were oriented toward, Western values and norms. One of the most important objectives driving the new wave of post-Soviet transition has been the desire to join Euro-Atlantic structures. The goal of becoming an EU member is no longer limited to foreign policy declarations but forms a key component of the domestic reform agendas of these states. The unexpected dynamism of democratization and reform emerging from Eastern Europe has put pressure on Western policymakers to develop solutions that go beyond the agenda of an EU enlargement limited to 27 or 28 member states, partnership and cooperation with Russia, and a Neighborhood Policy driven by “everything but institutions” (Romano Prodi). The French and Dutch rejections of the European Constitution appear to signal that the “deepening” and “widening” of the EU have reached their limits for the time being. The European Neighborhood Policy is an important step forward, but it is not sufficient to guide democratic developments in countries that desire a concrete prospect for EU membership, including Ukraine, Georgia, and in the future even Belarus.

Ukraine’s Orange Revolution once again demonstrated Putin’s failure to influence the post-Soviet integration space through personal networks, direct pressure, and economic dependency. At the same time, Russia remains an important actor in Europe as a whole. For the first time, Russia and the EU face the common challenge of shaping overlapping integration spaces between Russia’s old neighborhood or “near abroad” and the EU’s new neighborhood. Eastern Europe’s “return to Europe” has been driven by individual Eastern European states themselves, together with some of the new EU member states, such as Poland, Lithuania and Slovakia. But all of these efforts will be of limited relevance without support from Berlin. Focusing on Germany’s potential role in elaborating and implementing a new *Ostpolitik* raises key analytical questions: What is Germany’s potential impact on a new *Ostpolitik*, and what German interests and actors would be involved? In considering this new foreign policy agenda, one must focus on the current state of affairs as well as on the strategic concepts that will shape future policy. This paper examines the potential impact of German foreign policy toward Eastern Europe and provides a critical assessment of other national and international actors involved.

1. Germany's Impact on a New *Ostpolitik*

Berlin's current obligations and interests in shaping relations with Eastern Europe are strongly influenced by the legacies of World War II: these include in particular the post-war existence of two German states; the geographic realities following reunification that led Germany to become an important Central European player; Germany's economic position in the region; and, last but not least, the German tradition of driving Eastern policy within Western alliances. Recent German Eastern policy has been characterized by similarities with Willy Brandt's historic *Ostpolitik*, far-reaching but highly personalized relations with Soviet/Russian heads of state, and leadership in the process of EU eastern enlargement.

Legacies of the Past

A brief glimpse at history provides a key to understanding Germany's current interest in Eastern policy. On December 7, 1970, former German chancellor Willy Brandt's famous *Kniefall* at the Warsaw Ghetto memorial not only symbolized the first official apology for Nazi-era crimes, but also initiated a new period of reconnection and cooperation between Eastern and Western Europe. The goal of 1970s *Ostpolitik* was to transcend but not to reverse the existing status quo between the two German states, while giving up the goal of immediate reunification as a prerequisite to all other German-German policy decisions. Among the elements of Brandt's *Ostpolitik* were the abandonment of the Hallstein Doctrine and the recognition of the Oder-Neisse line as the border between Poland and East Germany.

Brandt's *Ostpolitik*

Closer economic, cultural and social ties with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union formed an additional significant component of Brandt's *Ostpolitik*. Western economic assistance helped shore up faltering communist economies, but it also made visible to Eastern European citizens the contrast between the wealth and high-quality consumer goods of the West and the relative poverty of the East.

In 1970, the Treaty of Moscow was signed between West Germany and the Soviet Union. Quickly thereafter, West Germany signed treaties with Poland (Treaty of Warsaw, 1970) and other Eastern Bloc states. Among these treaties, the most controversial agreement was the 1972 Basic Treaty that established mutual recognition between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. Despite criticism that Brandt was being overhasty in recognizing the Warsaw Pact countries, this new political strategy enhanced opportunities for cooperation and understanding and created gaps in the Iron Curtain by allowing limited yet increasing people-to-people contacts. To this day, experts continue to argue over the extent to which Brandt's *Ostpolitik* contributed to the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

After more than two decades of not pushing the issue, the question of German reunification gained new relevance during Gorbachev's term in office. In response to democratic changes and the opening up of borders throughout East Central Europe, including the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Gorbachev was initially skeptical toward German reunification but eventually supported the necessary political arrangements. For its part, Germany – with the objective of German reunification, its own economic interests, and common political goals in mind – provided \$40.25 billion in support to the Russian Federation in 1990-1993. This made Germany the largest international donor to the Russian Federation in both absolute and per

Germany's reunification

capita terms (during the same period, the United States provided \$11.8 billion, Japan \$4.6 billion, and the U.K. \$1.04 billion in assistance).¹

Promoting EU enlargement

At the same time, Germany remained the driving force in bringing the Central European states back to Europe. The German government played a central role in pushing the EU enlargement process forward at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, when the EU decided that the associated countries in Central and Eastern Europe would be offered membership in the European Union. As a result, enlargement was no longer a question of *if* but *when*. Again, Germany succeeded in combining three strategic objectives: maintaining good relations with the Kremlin; playing a decisive role on behalf of Central European countries, particularly Poland; and coordinating German initiatives with its European and transatlantic partners.

In addition to Germany's geographic position, historical development, and political agenda, German *Ostpolitik* is also traditionally driven by economic interests.² In 1980, Central European countries accounted for 4.9% of West Germany's exports and 4.6% of its imports. By 2003, these figures had increased to 12.1% and 14.3%, respectively. These figures were expected to increase in 2004 by 16.5% and 18.5%, respectively.³ Germany is also Russia's most important trading partner, with the volume of trade recording a considerable increase in 2004 (up 18.4% to over EUR 31 billion). However, Russia's share of German trade declined substantially in 2004 and amounted to only 2.8% of German exports and 2% of German imports.⁴ Bilateral economic relations between Russia and Germany are largely asymmetric: Russia exports primarily raw materials and energy resources to Germany, while German exports to Russia are comprised largely of finished products and capital goods.

A 'Russia first' approach plus the new neighborhood policy

To sum up Germany has entertained long-standing and multi-faceted relations with the countries of Eastern Europe. These related interests and experiences have also helped shape relations between the European Union and its Eastern neighbors. Up to now, German foreign policy in this area has been driven by a combination of actors from the German Foreign Office and the Chancellor's Office. During the past decade, German chancellors have favored a "Russia first" approach that has involved close personal relations between Helmut Kohl and Boris Yeltsin, and between Gerhard Schröder and Vladimir Putin. At the same time, German Foreign Ministers had little alternative but to cede eastern policy to the Chancellor's Office while formulating their own agenda beyond the "Russia first" approach. For example, during his term in office, Joschka Fischer placed a strong focus on conflict management in the Balkans. Other Foreign Office policies, such as an emphasis on developing a new European neighborhood policy, have sought to take a more differentiated approach toward Eastern Europe as a means of counterbalancing the "Russia first" strategy. Other initiatives include "The Role of the European Union with 25 and More Members in the 21st Century," a joint effort of the German and Polish Policy Planning Staffs.⁵ Under the guidance of Policy Planning Staff directors Georg Clemens Dick and Piotr Switalski, German and Polish policymakers proposed a common foreign policy agenda for the enlarged EU that encompassed a new neighborhood policy, transatlantic relations, and the EU's impact on globalization. Even before the European Council declared its intention in November 2002 to elaborate a new neighborhood policy, the Polish-German initiative had already outlined the initial objectives.⁶ The document

designated Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Russia as neighborhood countries. By including Russia, Polish and German policy planners sought to maintain the strategic balance in Europe while avoiding the threat of new dividing lines. In practical terms, the initiative suggested that the enlarged EU take a differentiated approach to its new neighbors based on their varying levels of transition, and proposed a broad range of policies based on functional cooperation. For example, institutional linkages between the enlarged EU and its neighbors should be based on broadening the European Economic Area. Another example of Germany's effort to create an institutional framework for a new *Ostpolitik* involved the cooperation between France, Germany and Poland within the Weimar Triangle. Even though the Weimar Triangle has decreased in importance, its potential for revitalization in the future should not be dismissed. While Germany had a substantial impact on EU eastern enlargement, one must ask how Berlin is asserting its interests in the face of new challenges posed by neighborhood relations, such as guiding democratic transitions in post-Soviet states and shaping the overlapping integration spaces between the EU and the Russian Federation.

To assess the potential future directions of German *Ostpolitik*, it is useful to look at the lobby groups that are pushing this issue forward. Ever since Gorbachev's term in office, German *Ostpolitik* has been influenced by economic interests. Some of the most influential actors of the German energy sector and German banks are affiliated with lobby groups such as the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (*Ostausschuss der deutschen Wirtschaft*) with representatives in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kaliningrad and Novosibirsk, the German-Russian Forum, and the German-Ukrainian Forum. All of these institutions are committed to promoting German *Ostpolitik*, but their priorities are focused much more on promoting trade relations and a favorable investment climate rather than on strategy development. The same assessment applies to actors promoting civil society relations with Eastern Europe. Guided by interests of historical reconciliation and grass-roots contacts, these groups make important contributions to intercultural understanding and exchange, but their impact on future-oriented strategies is limited.

Economic interests

Altogether, Germany's wide-ranging experiences, interests, and actors make it the clear leader among the old EU member states in developing policies toward Eastern Europe. In addition, Germany's geographic location, directly bordering a number of new EU member states in Central Europe, puts it in a crucial position to shape the new agenda of structuring the overlapping integration spaces between the EU's new neighborhood and Russia's old neighborhood. At the same time, Germany's Eastern policy forms only one part of the country's overall foreign relations, and other priorities might increase once a new government takes power in late 2005. While it is still too early to firmly predict the contours of the new government's foreign policy, it is important to consider how the outcome of Germany's recent elections, as well as certain domestic political priorities, will affect Germany's Eastern policy in the near future.

2. What to Expect from the New German Government in Terms of Eastern Policy

2.1. Ukraine as signpost toward a European neighborhood policy and beyond

Certain key events and factors provide important indications as to what one can expect from the new German Government in terms of Eastern Policy. These include: Germany's reaction to the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the recent visa scandal, the September 2005 national elections, and the issue of Turkey's potential membership in the EU.

Germany and the
Orange Revolution

In autumn 2004, the Western world – including Germany – was surprised by the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. A democratic opposition movement driven by Western democratic values suddenly fulfilled longtime Western demands that had hindered Ukraine from becoming a part of European institutions. Suddenly, when policymakers in Berlin, Paris, or London were asked about Ukraine's prospects for joining the EU and other Euro-Atlantic institutions, references to Ukraine's un-civil society and the lack of democracy were not sufficient to justify a negative answer. In light of the new strategic challenges coming from Kiev, the German Bundestag on 1 December 2004 conducted a debate on "Strengthening Democracy in Ukraine."⁷ All of the speakers – including representatives from both the former ruling coalition as well as the opposition – tended to highlight three main themes. First, speakers insisted that elections must take place according to Western democratic standards. Second, some parliamentarians, such as Angel Merkel and Claudia Nolte of the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) and Gernot Erler of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), argued in terms of a "European framework," i.e., that domestic policy developments in Ukraine needed to be oriented toward European values, that crisis management should be conducted under the aegis of EU representatives, and that European decision-makers needed to provide a positive signal regarding the integration of Ukraine into European structures. With regard to the European Neighborhood policy, Claudia Nolte argued that the concept contains only a limited, and therefore insufficient, openness toward Ukraine. Third, the parliamentary debate focused in Russia. Most of the speakers, among them Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, highlighted Russia's position in connection with the Ukrainian election crisis. From this perspective, the crisis in Ukraine would be impossible to resolve without Moscow's support (Schröder ultimately did use his good personal relations with Putin, calling his friend in the Kremlin twice to underscore the importance of finding a peaceful and democratic solution of the Ukrainian crisis.)⁸ This parliamentary debate was preceded by two resolutions. On 21 October, before the first round of the presidential election, the German Bundestag urged the Ukrainian government to hold free and fair elections, emphasizing their importance both for Ukraine's future as well as its relations to Russia and the European Union.⁹ After the second round, during which obvious falsifications were exposed to an international public, Bundestag members from all parties supported a petition criticizing the outcome of the elections and demanding free and fair elections according to OSCE standards.¹⁰

These debates and petitions within the German Bundestag shed light on the development of a new *Ostpolitik*. Berlin highly appreciated the relevance of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, as it pushed the Ukrainian question higher on both the European and Russian agendas. However, most statements emerging from

Germany failed to transcend the existing policy framework. In comparison, the U.S. favored a “carrots and sticks” approach, while Poland emphasized a Euro-Atlantic perspective for Ukraine. U.S. Congressman Dana Rohrabacher submitted a bill entitled “Ukraine Democracy and Fair Elections Act of 2004”. The bill called on President Kuchma and Prime Minister Yanukovich to “stop overt, flagrant and inadmissible violations of Ukraine’s human rights commitments to the OSCE, and guarantee respect for fundamental democratic liberties”. The act proposed sanctions if the violations of standards listed in the bill continued. Such sanctions included barring top officials of the Ukrainian government and their family members from entering U.S. territory. Other threatened restrictions against Ukrainian officials included the confiscation of their property in the United States, blocking their bank accounts, seizing the funds in these accounts, and banning loans to Ukrainian officials.¹¹ In contrast, the resolution adopted by the Polish Sejm calling for free and transparent elections in Ukraine, was much more positive than the American and German positions. Instead of criticizing media restrictions or the unfair election campaign in Ukraine, Poland’s statement expressed support for Ukraine’s future in the EU and NATO.¹²

International reactions to the Orange Revolution

While most German declarations on Ukraine reflected the existing European neighborhood policy that demanded democracy in Ukraine avoided concrete commitments on Ukrainian membership within Euro-Atlantic institutions, individual German policymakers did seek to initiate a new debate. One of the most prominent contributions was Wolfgang Schäuble’s position on the future of European integration.¹³

Underscoring Ukraine’s history, culture and geographic position, he argued that Ukraine – and under certain conditions Moldova and Belarus – should be offered a “European perspective.” Schäuble stated further that European policymakers would miss a crucial opportunity to have a positive impact on the future of European integration if they failed to take advantage of the current situation. Unfortunately, however, Germany’s domestic agenda, together with the escalation of the “visa scandal” in late 2004, hindered the formulation of additional forward-looking positions that, like Schäuble’s, could add dynamism to Germany’s general encouragement of democratic transitions in Ukraine and other countries of the former Soviet Union. The visa affair arose as a result of a new German visa policy instituted by Minister of State Ludger Volmer, a member of the Green Party, who discarded essential safeguards against abuses such as illegal migration and human trafficking in order to speed up the process for issuing tourist visas. The controversy prompted Volmer’s resignation from his roles in the Bundestag’s Foreign Affairs Committee and as foreign affairs spokesperson for the Green Party, and it severely damaged the reputation of Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer. Pressure from opposition political parties, particularly the CDU and CSU, ultimately forced the creation of a parliamentary Commission of Inquiry to examine the visa affair.¹⁴ The visa “scandal” not only raised negative images of Ukraine as a source of illegal migration but also put a damper on the euphoria following the Orange Revolution, thereby negatively influencing that part of the German political elite who might otherwise have provided more forceful support to Ukraine’s efforts to join the EU and NATO.

A European perspective for Ukraine

The EU’s new neighborhood was a foreign policy issue during the recent German national elections in September 2005. The foreign policy issues addressed in

political party platforms were not limited to Ukraine but also included the future shape of the European Union in general, and Turkey's EU candidacy in particular. For example, the CDU/CSU advocated a more restrictive approach toward future EU enlargement and placed a stronger emphasis on domestic policy priorities. From this perspective, if the EU's eastern neighbors sought to join European institutions, they would first need to carry out democratic transitions as a necessary prerequisite. From the opposite perspective, one might argue that, to a certain extent, it is precisely the prospect of joining European institutions that serves as the most important driving force for democratic and market-oriented transitions; without a European perspective, such countries are likely to implement Western values only to a limited extent.¹⁵ Consequently, the Christian Democrats did not advocate EU membership for Turkey but rather favored a "privileged partnership," short of full membership, with Ankara.¹⁶

In contrast, the Social Democrats emphasized the importance of supporting democracy, freedom, and liberty beyond EU borders.¹⁷ The SPD has expressed its support for good relations with the EU's neighbors in general, and meeting European obligations toward Turkey, Romania, and Bulgaria in particular. The Green Party platform adopted a similar position, postulating a responsible partnership with the EU's neighbors and keeping the door of European integration as open as possible.¹⁸ Of all the EU's direct neighbors, Ukraine has initiated the most far-reaching changes toward democracy and European values. As a result, the Orange Revolution poses a particular challenge to German elites and German society in general to place a higher priority on German-Ukrainian relations.

Special relations with Belarus

While Ukraine provides an example of the spread of European values, the lack of democracy in other countries, particularly Belarus, confronts European decision-makers with the challenge to guarantee stability and security beyond the EU's borders. There is a strong political lobby in Berlin directed toward Belarus, both in terms of seeking historical reconciliation for the destruction of World War II as well as promoting future democratic structures. Within the Bundestag, the Belarusian agenda has been supported by members of the CDU (Claudia Nolte), the SPD (Ute Zapf, Gernot Erler), and other parties. Prior to Belarusian elections in 2000 and 2004, the Bundestag adopted resolutions demanding free and fair elections according to OSCE standards.¹⁹ Aside from criticizing the authoritarian regime, demanding democratic values, and supporting civil society, these resolutions took no further actions. The ongoing human rights violations in Belarus have also led Bundestag members to issue statements of solidarity with victims of the authoritarian regime.²⁰

German-Belarusian relations are also characterized by grass-roots cooperation. About 800 German NGOs are engaged in a wide range of activities in Belarus, including charity, historical memory and reconciliation, city partnerships, technical assistance, youth exchanges, etc.²¹ Very often German interest in grass-roots activities is much higher than what the authoritarian regime of President Lukashenka will tolerate, and activities are obstructed by administrative chicanery of all kinds, such as the denial of visas or entrance into Belarus.

Sine 1997, the "Minsk Forum," organized annually by the German Embassy in Minsk in cooperation with the German-Belarusian society and supported by numerous other donors, serves as a meeting point for the German lobby for

Belarus where a broad variety of issues concerning Belarusian domestic development and international cooperation are discussed.²²

In 2005 the German international broadcaster Deutsche Welle announced its plans to launch an information program for Belarus called the “Belarusian Chronicle.” The European Commission has awarded a 12-month grant of 138,000 Euros, starting 1 November 2005, to this project. The broadcast’s overall objective is to increase the Belarusian public’s awareness of democracy, pluralism, the rule of law, freedom of the press, and human rights.²³ The Belarusian opposition criticized the initial decision to run the program primarily in Russian, arguing that the German decision lacked the necessary empathy for the culture and political relevance of Belarusian language.²⁴

Moldova, another focal point of European neighborhood policy, is culturally, historically and geographically less related to Germany than Belarus and Ukraine. Nevertheless, some German policymakers, such as Michael Zickerick, the former German ambassador to Moldova, and Bodo Hombach, the former Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South-East Europe, have expressed support for the integration of the Republic of Moldova into European institutions. The strategy of German elites toward Moldova is framed primarily within the European agenda rather than focusing on strengthening bilateral relations, even though the German embassy is one of the few Western diplomatic representations in Chisinau²⁵. All in all, Moldova has never been a high priority within Germany’s Eastern policy, and further German engagement depends strongly on individual advocates such as Zickerick or Hombach.

A personalized approach toward Moldova

Due to its historical obligations, economic interests and geographic position, Germany has a strong tradition in shaping Eastern policy, including Willy Brandt’s approach toward reconciliation, support for Gorbachev’s concept of a common European house, and the promotion of EU eastern enlargement. The latest challenges, such as the Orange Revolution or Lukashenka’s authoritarian regime, have been addressed in parliamentary debates and pronouncements made during the 2005 German elections, thereby indicating Berlin’s sensitivity for these issues. The German agenda is focused on supporting democratic developments, western values, and a European orientation within Eastern European states.

Democracy, western values and European orientation

So far, however, German policy represents a “wait and see” approach and, to a large extent, does not offer far-reaching visions or solutions regarding the future of EU Eastern enlargement, the geographic limits of the EU, or alternative institutional prospects for democratic newcomers such as Ukraine – and potentially Belarus – within the European architecture. The new German Government, a grand coalition between the CDU/CSU and the SPD, incorporates both approaches, i.e., both restrictive and open positions regarding EU eastern enlargement. The current lack of forward-looking foreign policy proposals is being filled in to some extent by policy planners, German political foundations, and other actors who have elaborated proposals beyond current Brussels policy. From a critical perspective, more German policymakers and experts appear to be focused on promoting democracy in Belarus rather than offering Ukraine sustainable commitments toward integration within European institutions. In addition, due to the difficulties encountered in promoting Turkey’s EU candidacy as well as the current constitutional and budgetary crises confronting the EU, Germany appears unwilling to

adopt the Polish position that seeks to offer Ukraine the prospect of future EU accession.

2.2. The “Russia first” approach and beyond

Characteristics of German-Russian relations

German Eastern policy has traditionally been characterized by a “Russia first” approach. Gerhard Schröder has continued to personalize German-Russian relations at the highest level by placing a high priority on bilateral relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Accordingly, the German-Russian agenda has been largely interest-driven rather than value-driven. First and foremost, Schröder has acted to promote German economic interests; other issues of common German-Russian interest include the formation of a strategic axis during the Iraq conflict and certain socio-cultural initiatives. By referring to Putin as a “democrat through and through” (“lupenreiner Demokrat”) and demanding that the West take a more differentiated view of Russia’s Chechnya policy, Schröder not only avoided criticism of Putin but also rejected a more value-oriented approach to EU-Russian relations. The bilateral German-Russian agenda became a particular problem after eight Central and Eastern European nations joined the EU in May 2004. Poland and the Baltic states have been very sensitive to unilateral German policy initiatives. From the perspective of Warsaw, Riga, Vilnius or Tallinn, EU-Russian relations must be framed within a common European strategy. From a Central European perspective, “axis-building” between Berlin, Paris, and Moscow is associated with traumatic historic experiences of a *Zwischeneuropa*. The new EU member states therefore strongly advocate the Europeanization of relations with the Russian Federation.

Criticism from Central Europe

In 2005, two occurrences were particularly representative of the character of German-Russian bilateral relations: the celebration of 750th anniversary of Kaliningrad, and negotiations to construct a Russian-German gas pipeline under the Baltic Sea that bypasses Poland, Ukraine, and the Baltic states. On 3 July, Putin hosted French President Chirac and Chancellor Schröder in Kaliningrad to celebrate the 750th anniversary of the city. At the same time, Russia did not invite the two new EU members that are direct neighbors of the Russian exclave, Lithuania and Poland. Alexander Kwasniewski and Valdas Adamkus, the presidents of these countries, interpreted this as a deliberate diplomatic snub that reflected the increasingly difficult relations between Russia and Central European countries.²⁶ On 8 September, directly prior to the German elections, Putin paid a one-day visit to Berlin. Schröder and Putin were present when the Russian state-owned energy giant Gazprom signed an agreement with E.ON and BASF on a new pipeline project connecting the Russian city of Vyborg to Greifswald in northern Germany. In addition to promoting the German-Russian energy partnership, and once again demonstrating the priority of interests over values, Putin’s visit to Berlin signaled his personal support of Schröder in the elections one week later. The strongest criticisms of these developments have emerged from Poland and Lithuania. Both countries consider the pipeline agreement a violation of their strategic interests. The Baltic states are still resistant to bilateral German-Russian policy initiatives, as they call to mind the Soviet annexation that resulted from the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939. In addition to these particular legacies of the past, Central European states are concerned about reduced energy transit revenues. The Russian-German pipeline has damaged these countries’ trust that relations with Russia will be conducted within a European frame-

work. The issue overshadowed the visit of Lithuanian President Adamkus to Berlin on 25 October.

Adamkus underscored his criticism that Schröder's bilateral approach toward Russia ignored the strategic interests of other EU member states, and he also expressed a certain optimism that designated chancellor Angel Merkel will show greater understanding for Lithuania's particular interests with regard to European-Russian relations.²⁷

To what extent might the designated German government change the most criticized areas of German-Russian relations, i.e., the high level of personalization, the lack of emphasis on democratic values, the bilateral policy initiatives that violate the interests of other EU member states, and the "Russia first" approach? The following paragraphs will explore this question in greater detail.

Beyond the personalized and interest-driven German-Russian relations

During their election campaigns, all German political parties adopted positions on the importance of German-Russian relations. The CDU advocated good relations with Moscow but at the same time indicated potential changes in policy. The Christian Democrats argued that the personal friendship between the Kremlin and Berlin should be more embedded within transatlantic relations, should consider the interests of Central European states, and should more strongly emphasize developments in Russian domestic policy.²⁸ Similarly, the Green Party recommended a Russian-German dialogue oriented toward democratic standards, human rights, and finding a solution to the situation in Chechnya. The Green Party platform also underscores the importance of responsible relations with Germany's Central European neighbors.²⁹ In their foreign policy program, the Liberal Democrats (FDP) supported close political, economic, and cultural cooperation with Russia.³⁰ In addition, the FDP argued that contacts with civil society representatives should be increased. The FDP also adopted a critical tone with regard to violations of press and media freedoms; the weakness of democratic structures in general; and the need for the Russian government to develop a political solution to the Chechnya conflict. The SPD party platform largely neglected the issue of relations with Russia, but did argue for good relations with Russia within a European context.³¹

To gain an idea of the potential direction of German foreign policy under the designated Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, one can refer to a public statement that the then-Minister of State gave at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik) on 21 September. He directed a relatively significant amount of attention to Russian-German relations, particularly with regard to common economic, political, energy, and security interests.³² By emphasizing joint German-Russian interests and praising the significance of Baltic Sea pipeline for bilateral relations, Steinmeier neglected the challenges and risks of violating Polish and Lithuanian interests.

Prospects of the German-Russian relations

Certainly, it is too early to make predictions regarding the future Russian policy of the German Foreign Office as well as the division of foreign policy competencies between designated Chancellor Merkel and the new Foreign Minister. As far as Merkel is concerned, potential policy shifts toward Russia will more likely affect the style and not the substance of relations.³³ In terms of substance, Merkel's approach toward relations with Russia will depend on the extent to which she

emphasizes Russian domestic developments and a European policy framework that takes the particular interests of Central European and Baltic states into consideration. As far as the personal character of relations is concerned, a Putin-Merkel friendship might be positively influenced by Merkel's knowledge of Russian, Merkel's gender will likely prevent the establishment of an "old boys' network." Future German policy toward Russia also depends significantly on the division of foreign policy competencies between the Chancellor's Office and the Foreign Office, and the determination as to which of these offices will be the driving force behind relations with Russia. If Steinmeier favors policy continuity characterized by the prioritization of German economic interests, Merkel may find it difficult to formulate a new Russian agenda, or she might simply be less interested in Moscow than was Gerhard Schröder.

3. The Future Trajectory of Germany's Eastern Policy

Germany, a traditional leader in the formulation of policy toward Eastern Europe, confronts the challenge of developing and implementing a new *Ostpolitik* that takes into account both the recent changes inside the region as well as the crisis of European integration following the French and Dutch constitutional referenda. At this time, before a new German government has actually taken office, it remains too early to give reliable predictions on the future direction of German Eastern policy. The coalition treaty signed between the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats on 11 November 2005 mentions a broad spectrum of foreign policy goals relating to Eastern Europe. The treaty declares that relations with Russia should be based not only on common interests but also on common values and should be conducted on both the bilateral and European levels. Supporting Ukraine on its way to Europe is formulated as another priority. By highlighting these foreign policy priorities, the designated German government has indicated the importance it attaches to these issues. At the same time, however, the coalition treaty contains contradictory priorities with regard to Eastern Europe and fails to formulate a long-term strategy.³⁴ Nevertheless, both external pressures as well as debates within the German foreign policy elite point to the future priorities and strategies of German *Ostpolitik*.

3.1. German-Russian Relations: Europeanization, depersonalization and value-orientation

Interests versus values

Russia's position within the region is too important to neglect. During the rainbow revolutions, it became obvious that the Kremlin's influence inside the region requires some reassessment. Germany's strategic goal, at the bilateral and particularly at the European level, should be to take Russia seriously by inclusion while pointing out the basic conditions for cooperation. The current interest-driven approach should be complemented by value-driven cooperation. In light of current developments in Russian domestic politics, such value-driven cooperation should pay particular attention to strengthening the separation of powers. The forthcoming re-negotiation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which forms the legal basis for relations between Russia and the European Union and which expires in 2007 during the Finnish and German EU presidencies, will provide an occasion to identify not only new strategies but also a new style of mutual relations.

Aside from assuming leadership in the Europeanization of policy toward Russia, Germany must also pursue good relations with Moscow while respecting the interests of Central European states. In practical terms, the conduct and content of future German-Russian relations will also depend on the domestic division of power between Steinmeier and Merkel, and the extent to which leading German policymakers choose to go beyond personal relations with Putin.

3.2. Shaping the structure of overlapping integration spaces

The rainbow revolutions in Ukraine and other countries of the former Soviet Union, combined with the internal crisis of European integration, have opened up a new strategic landscape. Ukraine's Orange Revolution once again demonstrated Putin's failure to influence the post-Soviet integration space through personal networks, direct pressure, and economic dependency. At the same time, Russia remains an important actor in Europe as a whole. For the first time, Russia and the EU face the common challenge of shaping overlapping integration spaces. For its part, Western strategy must take Russia seriously, including it in decision-making processes while pointing out the basic conditions for cooperation. In turn, Russia should develop long-term cooperative strategies that uphold democratic principles and that are attractive to the West.

So far, it is the new EU member states, particularly Poland, Lithuania, and Slovakia, who have provided the momentum in developing and implementing a new *Ostpolitik*. But transcending the EU's current, limited to neighborhood policy requires the support of at least one of the main "old" EU member states. Given its foreign policy traditions, experiences, and interests, Germany is optimally positioned to promote new strategic alliances with other EU member states. Based on new alliances and forms of collaboration, a new *Ostpolitik* would strive to identify both the geographic future of Europe as well as additional forms of functional and institutional integration. A Ukrainian leap toward Europe would have far-reaching consequences, not only for Kiev but also for the European Union. Such a development would immediately make the EU a truly pan-European actor. Along the way, the EU will also have to answer a number of questions in the medium term: How will the EU close the gap between the accession of Turkey and other potential member states and its need to maintain manageable decision-making and governance structures? How can the EU successfully stabilize the crisis-ridden countries of the Balkans? How can democracy be supported and solidified over the long term in Belarus or the Black Sea region, which includes Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan?

Driving forces of
a new *Ostpolitik*

To be able to meet these challenges, the architects of a new *Ostpolitik* need to develop strategies for a multi-level Europe. In the future, the EU cannot allow territorial overextension obstruct its ability to act effectively. On the other hand, it will be equally important to be able to guarantee security and stability on the continent. In these efforts, it is worth considering forms of association comprising varying degrees of integration, or partial memberships in individual areas of European cooperation. Both the Schengen Agreement and the European Economic Area already provide examples of institutional arrangements in which not every EU member state participates in every area of integration.

Strategic approach of
a *multi-level Europe*

3.3. From authoritarian regimes toward western values

Despite their geographic proximity, Belarus differs fundamentally from Ukraine. While President Lukashenka has succeeded in consolidating his authoritarian regime, free and fair elections initiated a regime change in Ukraine. A new *Ostpolitik* will certainly fail if it does not take the different domestic situations of Eastern European countries into account. Key segments of the foreign policy establishments in Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Germany place a high priority on democratic transition in Belarus. Yet regime change cannot simply be supported from outside; rather, it must be initiated by a democratic opposition. National elites, Western governments, and the Kremlin cannot take authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe for granted. At the same time, the latest developments in Ukraine exemplify the problems of sustainable regime change toward democracy and a market economy. Therefore, the advancement of democracy must form an important pillar of a new *Ostpolitik*. To identify and support shifts toward democracy, a new Eastern policy should differentiate East European countries according to their orientation toward Western values. In addition to assessing developments at the governmental level, policymakers and experts need to pay attention to a broad spectrum of actors, particularly democratic opposition movements.

3.4. Actors and driving forces of a new *Ostpolitik*

Due to its historical background, economic interests and geographic proximity, Germany will be the center of gravity for a new *Ostpolitik*. In addition, new EU member states – particularly Poland and Slovakia – are committed to the development of an active Eastern policy due to their geographic proximity, their common experiences of post-socialist political and economic transition, their well-developed networks, and their common interest in establishing stable relations with Russia. Beyond their own specific regional interests, however, these new member states will need to find additional coalition partners to push this policy forward.

Russia's position within the region is too important to neglect. During the rainbow revolutions it became obvious that the Kremlin's influence inside the region requires some reassessment. Western policymakers must take Russia seriously, including it in decision-making processes while pointing out the basic conditions for cooperation. Russia's agenda is to increase democratic principles of its foreign relations. A new *Ostpolitik* is part of the transatlantic agenda and should be treated as such. Issues that possess particular potential for joint action include the support of democratic transitions in Eastern Europe as well as the assessment, management, and resolution of regional conflicts. From an institutional perspective, fast-track NATO membership has been discussed for countries such as Ukraine. In general, new strategies cannot be driven solely by national governments and European institutions, but must also be advanced from the bottom up by civil society. This precondition derives from the decisive role that civil society actors have played in the velvet and rainbow revolutions in Eastern Europe since 1989.

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