

DEBATES

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TURNING PRESENCE
INTO POWER
LESSONS FROM
THE EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD

COMMENTS

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Introduction

Nicu Popescu and Andrew Wilson, authors of the report *Turning Presence into Power: Lessons from the Eastern Neighbourhood*, believe that in order to tackle the wave of revolutions in the South, Europe needs to consider its experience from the point of view of its engagement with its eastern neighbours. Despite being the largest trading partner for most of the countries in the south, Europe does not exercise much influence over the politics of the region. The EU did not succeed in transforming presence into power or, as the authors of the report write: “(into) the ability to achieve outcomes, set the agenda and define what others want.” They add: “EU power in the Eastern neighbourhood would mean that Brussels was increasingly able to nudge its neighbours towards more democracy and reforms and greater support for EU interests and values in the region.” The EU has not achieved most of its goals related to democracy and security. Moreover, it did not succeed in preventing negative tendencies among its eastern neighbours.

According to Popescu and Wilson, the following structural problems lie behind this failure:

- Increasingly authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes in most of the neighbourhood states. Only the state of Moldova is more democratic now than it was five years ago;

- Emergence of a multi-polar world that allows countries in the eastern neighbourhood to play “neo-Titoist” games of balancing between external actors: Russia, Turkey and even China; and

- EU’s own focus on the financial crisis and its own institutional reforms.

In this situation, the EU should effectively increase its own visibility and outreach with the public, business community and state institutions in the eastern neighbourhood. It also needs to develop a transactional relationship with its eastern neighbours – in other words, clearly define its own interests and set tough conditions to its eastern interlocutors on issues such as visa liberalisation.

The report by Popescu and Wilson was published in 2011 by the European Council on Foreign Relations. The Stefan Batory Foundation and the European Council on Foreign Relations jointly published the Polish version of the report soon after the English original.

Below the reader will find articles by Polish authors who discuss theses put forward by Popescu and Wilson.

The Batory Foundation organized a debate on the ECFR report on 19th July 2011. The audio recording of the debate can be found on the following website:

<http://www.batory.org.pl/debaty/20110719.htm>

Andrzej Brzezicki

Western consumptionism and eastern authoritarianism

Engaging in the discussion on Eastern Europe and suggesting that Brussels increases its activity in the region, while all the attention of the EU is directed at the southern neighbours of Europe and at the crisis in EU Member States, is noble in thought but out of touch with reality.

The authors of the report *Turning Presence into Power*, Nicu Popescu and Andrew Wilson, diligently point out many strengths and weaknesses of cooperation between the EU and the countries of the Eastern Partnership. They also suggest a number of actions which would “turn presence into power.” It is beneficial if one reads the ECFR report along with the paper *Integration or Imitation? The EU and its Eastern Neighbours* by Katarzyna Pełczyńska-Nałęcz, published in 2011 by the Center for Eastern Studies. The author criticises the EU Neighbourhood Policy severely, but also places much responsibility for the current situation on the political elites of the Eastern European countries. In addition, Pełczyńska-Nałęcz puts forward a revision of the EU neighbourhood policy.

The authors of both reports, and many other analysts, politicians and publicists, think that progressive integration of Europe and EU enlargement to the east is desirable and achievable. The problem is that this view is not the only reasonable opinion. It gets more challenging yet when one acknowledges that unlike the post-communist countries which had already joined the EU, the countries of the Eastern Partnership do not think of EU integration as the only possible positive scenario.

What comes instead, then?

Two concepts have recently gained popularity – “external integration” and “associated member”. Both sound internally contradictory, but they do have a logic of their own. Both the elites of the Eastern Partnership countries and

the elites of the EU employ them in discussions. Perhaps they are related to the project of building a zone of stability, not entirely intentional, but quite attractive for many. The zone could encompass countries tied to the EU by economic agreements, for which full integration will never be an option.

Today, the EU is most proactive about building relations with the Eastern Partnership countries through comprehensive free trade agreements (where possible). Proponents of the slogan “economy first” claim that such an approach will naturally result in political and constitutional changes in the Eastern Partnership countries. Well, not necessarily. Pressing for such an agreement with Yanukovych’s Ukraine with the hope that he will foster democratisation of the country, while he puts his political opponents in jail, is a proof of either a certain foolishness or cynicism of European bureaucrats.

Until recently it seemed there are two ways for the countries of Eastern Europe – democratisation and integration with the EU (that was good) or return to dependence on Russia (that was bad). As it turns out today, despite the passing of time, the “multi-vector policy” as the Ukrainians put it, or “Titoism” as Popescu and Wilson name it, is still a viable option. They are right. Titoism is en vogue again, though some thought it was a song of the past. They pass over one thing – that Western Europe quite likes Titoists, and would gladly see them take power, as they guarantee stability and (with the exception of Alexander Lukashenko since 19th December 2010) good business.

Building the stability zone has many advantages

First – from a geopolitical perspective – such a solution does not settle unequivocally whether the countries involved choose Russia or the West. This allows the Union to avoid an open confrontation with Russia, and sets the elites and societies of the Partnership countries free from a challenging dilemma. The Titoists mentioned by the authors of the report are ready (with the exception of Georgia) to pay tribute to Russia in order to have their rule approved. They could pay Russia a symbolic tribute,

recognizing its dominance in the region, accepting the existence of “russskiy mir” and Russian military bases on their territories (Armenia even considers having the Russian military base in Gyumri a guarantee against Azerbaijan’s attack). Russia continues to offer some benefits in exchange for this “illusion of an empire”. The Partnership countries are also ready to pay Europe a tribute in tangible terms in exchange for a standard of living offered by the West to all those who can financially afford it.

Second, the economic integration, even if partial – by means of signing comprehensive free trade agreements with WTO member states – will positively affect EU markets.

Third, it sanctions the principle “my home is my castle”, which is convenient for the political and financial elites of the Partnership countries. Access to credit and various programmes is most certainly attractive. Do they need much more? Not really. They do not thirst for democracy and have no particular visa problems. Furthermore, the societies of the Eastern Partnership countries are not fully convinced that the European Union is the goal to be achieved if they must bear so many sacrifices.

Such circumstances release the European Union from excessive concern about human rights and democracy. Politically motivated killings and interrupting public demonstrations will always evoke the Union’s outrage. However, a dubious electoral process or closing down another newspaper, television or radio channel fits well within EU’s margin of tolerance.

The countries of Eastern Europe created a hybrid way of life – wild capitalism (albeit with a considerable system of allowances) with no or limited democracy. In other words, the principle is: get rich, no matter how. Low wages are compensated by a black market, piracy and smuggling. Western consumptionism and eastern authoritarianism coexist well together.

Popescu and Wilson rightly notice the authoritarian tendencies in the Eastern Partnership countries. The question is whether the EU elites agree with them that this phenomenon

needs a countervailing force. The failure of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and an increasingly authoritarian rule by Mikheil Saakashvili in Georgia seem to confirm that authoritarianism is a fact of life which one needs to learn to accept. Such an attitude is characteristic not only of the cynical “old” Europe. Let us just take a look at Poland that organized a recent summit of the Presidents of the United States and Ukraine, which was a specific legitimization of antidemocratic changes taking then place in Ukraine. And it was not an isolated case when democracy took a back seat. Although for different reasons, already the former president of Poland Lech Kaczyński strove to revitalize relations with authoritarian Azerbaijan and befriended the president of Georgia despite the fact that the latter was destroying Georgian democracy reborn after 2003. The leaders of Eastern Europe do not consider that these gestures create obligations on their part, but rather that they confirm acceptance. They are not blind either – if the West strikes deals with Russia and China, why should they care about democratic standards?

From this perspective, the EU does not have to revise its policy or even increase its presence, let alone turn it into power. Why should it? More or less authoritarian leaders will guarantee that beyond the eastern frontier of the Union there will be territories which will never pose any direct threat but will instead be decent economic partners. While skilfully juggling with regulations, the EU will be able to recruit from those territories cheap labour force or cheap energy (the production of which will not be restricted by environmental regulations), while remaining richer and better developed and therefore producing luxury goods – and it will always find enough rich people in eastern countries to sell those goods to.

And what about the fact that this kind of a “deal” is made above the heads of the people in those countries? It is hard to argue that this should bother the EU Commissioners. Obviously, this scenario is harmful for the nations of Eastern Europe. However, can it be easily explained that it is also harmful for the citizens of the European Union? Surely not, particularly at times when anti-immigration and

anti-foreigner sentiments are on the rise. It is in the interest of EU citizens to safeguard their prosperity and not to bother with the Ukrainians, Belarusians or Armenians.

How can this be prevented? If the EU really thinks that political and not just economic integration with the East is in its interest, which – again – may not be obvious for everybody, it needs to get ready for a long march and indeed drastically revise its current policy.

The European Neighbourhood Policy should have a more selective character; the Eastern Partnership should be a more diversified programme, it should assume “different speeds” and stimulate competition among participant countries. In the end, the countries of the Eastern Partnership also have different views when it comes to the European Union. Some of them are not interested in a membership at all.

That is why countries like Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine should be prioritized, so that the societies of the remaining countries see what they lose as a result of their own inaction or through their elites’ fault. Only in those three countries the social uprisings (Georgia 2003, Ukraine 2004, and Moldova 2009) led to the revision of elections or a change in power. This shows they have a significant potential for changes.

In Moldova – due to the size of the country, but also because its elites and the society are ready – it would be easy to reach tangible results and visible improvement in the living

standards of its inhabitants. In Ukraine, there is still some democratic potential which could stop authoritarian tendencies. Georgia, as the authors of the report admit, is most advanced institutionally in the transformation. Compared to Armenia and Azerbaijan, it is also a country with a broad spectrum of civil freedoms. Moreover, it remains in good relationships with those two countries antagonistic toward each other and can provide them with a shining example.

To conclude, first the EU needs to focus on Moldova’s development to make it an example of a success story within the Eastern Partnership and a template to follow for the societies of Ukraine and Georgia, so that these countries stop slipping down the slope of authoritarianism. Second, not only their economies but also the democratic tendencies in Ukraine and Georgia need to be encouraged and strengthened. Under the current conditions, all profits will anyway go to those in power.

Real and easily visible (due to geographical proximity) changes will be more attractive to the societies of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus rather than some instructions from a distant Brussels.

Within the European Union, in turn, we need an initiative explaining to the citizens that Eastern Europe is also Europe. There are some problems with understanding that, as illustrated by the example of the Eastern Partnership founding document.

Translation Katarzyna Snyder

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Eastern Partnership – get it while it's hot

A clear indication to a perspective of a future EU membership will allow the Eastern Partnership to take advantage of an opportunity to transform from a neighbourhood policy into an enlargement policy. Should that not be the case, the initiative launched in 2008 by Poland and Sweden will remain limited to development support, and the history books will take a note of it as the EU's merely political gesture toward its eastern neighbours.

The report by Nicu Popescu and Andrew Wilson correctly interprets a sense of accelerating political and social processes in Europe's immediate neighbourhood at the turn of 2010 and 2011. The authors of *Turning Presence into Power. Lessons from the Eastern Neighbourhood* understood some basic lessons from the subsequent crises in Belarus, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Syria (and soon probably also from the crises caused by unilateral Palestinian actions, as well as the Azeri-Armenian conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh): the cost of bringing back peace significantly exceeds the cost of preventing destabilisation.

Popescu and Wilson's call to raising the level of ambition in the EU Neighbourhood Policy is twice as valuable because it is:

- Supported by hard arguments,
- Branded by a well known EU research centre, and
- Timely: the EU Member States have just started pondering proposals for changes in the Neighbourhood Policy submitted by the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Catherine Ashton in the document *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood*.¹

¹ *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood. A Review of European Neighbourhood Policy. Joint Communication by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign*

This overall positive appraisal will not be changed by doubts regarding stronger and weaker emphasis in the discussed report. First and foremost, the content of the report seems to convey an undue longing for a lost epoch of enlightened empires and the colonies they civilised. Popescu and Wilson are not the only ones mesmerized by the colours of those times and it is a positive thing. When – citing Joseph S. Nye – the ECFR experts define the desired strength of the EU as “the ability to achieve outcomes, set the agenda and define what others want”, they in fact describe an image of Brussels which, like some ancient Rome (fourth in a row?), through its general-governors in the European Commission, tells the peoples inhabiting the shores of the Dnieper and Dniester, the slopes of Ararat and the Białowieża woodland what they should do, and the peoples gratefully carry it out.

Meanwhile, EU relations with its European neighbours are based on an economic and trade policy which is entirely up to the European Commission. And the Commission is not eager to apply geopolitical criteria, because this would pose a threat to the community approach it is standing for. There is no acceptance for “politicising” the European Neighbourhood Policy in the Member States either, as this would mean giving up more power to the European Commission. It is characteristic of Popescu and Wilson to go straight from generally deliberating a lack of the EU's power to concrete technical and trade solutions such as incorporating the countries of the Partnership into a common air space and reducing roaming fees and bank provisions.

Paradoxically, the ECFR experts have less faith in Schumann's model “from technological to political *rapprochement*” than Russian experts. In response to the EU's dialogue with its eastern neighbours about creating comprehensive free trade zones, Moscow fast tracked its activities towards incorporating Ukraine into a Russian-Kazakh-Belarusian customs union. Russians understand well that should their neighbours adopt Western legal and technical standards, the reconstruction project of

Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission, Brussels, 25th May, 2011, <http://ec.europa.eu>.

Russia's exclusive influence over the former USSR territories would be finished.

It is worth noting that the authors of the aforementioned *A New Response...* went even further than Popescu and Wilson in their ingenuity about transforming the EU's presence into power. Their document assumes that the EU relations with neighbouring countries will be based on responsibilities taken by both sides and on a shared obligation to respect certain universal values and norms. The EU activities are expected to take a more individualistic approach to their respective neighbours, and the principle according to which the EU gives its support only under specific conditions is supposed to be strengthened. The main criterion in the assessment is the pace of internal reforms, including democratisation. Therefore, the size of financial support from the EU for its neighbours after 2014 is to be contingent upon an individual appraisal of each neighbouring country's performance in the years 2010–2012. The European Commission and the High Representative Catherine Ashton grasped – seemingly better than Popescu and Wilson – that the Arab “Spring of Nations” took Europeans by surprise because they were too focused on the system of power, including a state coercive apparatus, while underestimating the importance of analysing the socio-economic processes and in particular the effects of the Old Continent's financial crisis on its surroundings.

A New Response... meets Popescu and Wilson's expectation that the EU increases its visibility because it proposes joint actions of the EU and its eastern neighbours on the international scene and tending to shared interests by applying the Common Security and Defence Policy mechanisms (cooperation in areas of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and fighting terrorism). What is most interesting, the proposal by Catherine Ashton and the European Commission contains a provision which indirectly refers to a perspective of the future EU membership of the Eastern Neighbourhood countries (the goals of the Eastern Partnership Initiative were equated with values contained in Article 49 of the Lisbon

Treaty).² This is a good omen before the Eastern Partnership Summit takes place in Warsaw in September 2011. A joint communiqué from this meeting should provide a strong incentive for continued efforts toward transformation by the EU neighbours. Without a clear road to the possibility of future EU membership not only will the Eastern Partnership Initiative lose a chance for an upgrade from a neighbourhood policy into an enlargement policy, but it will also gradually cease to be an effective development policy while remaining a merely political gesture of the EU towards its eastern neighbours.

We must not forget that the value of the European integration process lies in that it is not inevitable, infallible or irreversible. This was confirmed in the case of Greece, but also by France temporarily reintroducing control at the border with Italy and Denmark reintroducing border control on its frontier with Germany. It is true that the cases of post-Second World War Germany and Japan and of South Korea show that democracy and the free market can be installed from the outside. This, however, requires dozens of years in spending to maintain tens of thousands of military contingents. If we can be gracious with mistakes made by the descendants of ancient Athens, why should we deny such understanding to the descendants of Colchis and the Steppe? Particularly because Popescu and Wilson's revelations about the death of the rule of law and civil rights in the “colonies” of the Eastern Partnership are way exaggerated. And the report *Turning Presence...* provides the best proof for that. In this report one will find the thesis about democratisation of the Arab societies which had been, in some cases for 40 years, under one man's dictatorships. In this context, some tendencies of the last 5 years in Ukraine or Moldova should not be treated as determining factors.

On the other hand, if the Arab “Spring of Nations” is to be compared – as Popescu and

² It states, among others, that every European state which respects values such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights including rights of the minorities, and commits to supporting those values, may submit an application for EU membership.

Wilson suggest – to the fall of Communism in Central Europe, one needs to remember that the representatives of *anciens régimes* were back in power several years into the transformation. Also in the report *Turning Presence...* we can find diagrams showing Georgia's fantastic achievements in the field of good management and elimination of corruption. It is Tbilisi that offers support to the Polish expert missions in Tunisia, not the other way round.

While evaluating the perspective for democracy in the neighbouring countries of the EU, one should consider the security dimension. In the case of the Arab states, the security aspect involves remaining cautious due to signals of the rising strength of Islamist extremists. In the case of the Eastern Partnership countries, it involves forbearance toward symptoms of frustration over losing the colonies by an empire quite different to the Austro-Hungarian one. As it turns out from reading *Turning Presence...*, Popescu and Wilson got attached to comparisons with Tito's Yugoslavia³ when describing actions of the Eastern Partnership countries, which allegedly use the proximity of EU/NATO and Russia to draw as many benefits from it as possible. However, those countries are rather bending over backwards so that none of their actions and intentions toward one of the sides provokes the other side's outrage. That is why Ukraine officially gave up on the idea of joining NATO only to intensify its practical military cooperation with the countries of the North Atlantic Treaty. The case is similar with Yerevan's decision regarding the extension of the agreement over Russia's military presence in Armenia.

Russia is consistent about strengthening its offensive potential within its military units located in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and was highly determined when it negotiated with Kiev the prolongation of an agreement on stationing its Black Sea Flotilla in Crimea. These, as well as the pace and the scale of modernisation of the Russian army (including cyclical ZAPAD manoeuvres at the NATO borders) undermine Wilson and Popescu's thesis that Russia

abandoned *hard power* tools and reverted to *soft power* in the context of its relations with the neighbours. The latest spy scandal involving president's Mikehil Saakashvili's personal photographer is just a cherry on top. The consolidation of executive power in Georgia, Ukraine and Belarus, criticized by the ECFR experts, is simply an answer to the existential threat from the outside.

An abating factor in Popescu's and Wilson's "process" are their intentions. An excessively critical description of the political and economic situation in the Eastern Partnership countries is a means to advocate an increase in EU's ambition *vis-à-vis* the Eastern Neighbourhood. The case is similar with their analysis of the EU bureaucracy engagement in the development of the Eastern Partnership. Popescu and Wilson focus their attention on remarks by an anonymous EU bureaucrat and come to a conclusion that Brussels has "no heart" for its eastern neighbours. Yet they do realise very well that the level of EU engagement is indicated not by subjective emotions but by measurable progress in negotiating specific agreements. In the case of Ukraine it seems very realistic that negotiations on the EU Association Agreement will be concluded by the end of 2011 and signed in 2012. A comprehensive free trade zone agreement will be an integral part of this document. The EU-Ukraine accord on a simplified visa regime and readmission was signed in 2007. In November 2010, a Plan of Action on liberalisation of a visa regime was adopted. In the beginning of September 2011, the European Commission will announce the evaluation results of the first stage of implementation of the Plan by Ukraine. An agreement on the European Energy Community was signed with Kiev in 2010. If we continue to describe in a similar spirit the state of relations between the EU and the respective Eastern Partnership countries, we will come to more optimistic conclusions about the level of Brussels' engagement (and presence and power) in the East. Plus, aside from Brussels there are also the national capitals, forgotten in the text by Popescu and Wilson. The realization of "eastern" interests by the respective EU Member States which in bilateral relations apply tools

³ See Andrew Wilson, Nicu Popescu, *European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood*, London 2009.

unavailable to the EU as a whole (e.g. political foundations cooperating both with public administration and with the NGOs) is a necessary element to be evaluated in any appraisal on the presence and power of a united Europe in its neighbourhood. Suffice to mention two out of many initiatives: a Warsaw conference of donors for Belarus in February 2011 and formation of the Polish-Lithuanian-Ukrainian battalion.

Wilson and Popescu rest their sceptical assessment of the EU Neighbourhood Policy potential among others on showy but substantively groundless comparisons of statistics concerning the participation of Bangladesh and the EU in international peacekeeping missions. Aside from the fact that the bad shape of the Transnistrian crisis – contrary to the situation in Lebanon and in many African states – does not pose a threat of genocide or civil war, the underdevelopment of EU peacekeeping missions in the former USSR territories is not a result of weak EU crisis management policy only. There are two other important factors at play:

lack of cooperation with Eastern Partnership countries in the area of security policy (which is dealt with by one of the priorities of the Polish Presidency 2011) and lack of relations on this matter with third parties who have an interest in the region (Russia, Turkey).

The report takes into account a broader international context of the EU Neighbourhood Policy, and even if individual pieces of the puzzle can be interpreted differently, this wider view provides another reason for which reading the latest, the previous and the (hopefully) future reports by Wilson and Popescu not only is enjoyable, but should be obligatory. In conclusion: the presence and power of the European Union in the eastern neighbourhood is not in such a bad a shape that it could not be improved.

Translation Katarzyna Snyder

The opinions presented in the text are not the official position of the Bureau, but private views of the author and co-authors.

Andrzej Szeptycki

The European Neighbourhood Policy has a logic of its own

European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is characterised by two weaknesses – a low level of engagement by EU Member States in the countries of Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus (also in the countries of the eastern and southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea) and low effectiveness of EU activities in these regions. According to Nicu Popescu and Andrew Wilson, the latter problem, at least in part, comes as a result of the former one. In reality, the situation is much more complex. Both phenomena are certainly related, but their interdependence has an intricate character. Moreover, these two are not entirely incidental: one can say that the European Neighbourhood Policy has a logic of its own.

Frailty of outcomes

The very first question one needs to ask is: What is the eastern (and southern) neighbourhood region from the EU perspective? If we look at the EU as a rising power, or more provokingly as an empire¹, the neighbouring countries can be perceived as the European peripheries, which are not a part of the system's core, yet remain dependent on it. Such a statement does not provoke much resistance when speaking of the Mediterranean countries. The ENP is but one EU initiative directed at the region (others include "5+5", the Barcelona Process, Union for the Mediterranean, etc.), which are openly classified by some as postcolonial². In the case of the eastern countries, the situation is less obvious since the EU has never been traditionally engaged with that part of the continent. At the same time, some of the new Member

States, and Poland in particular, have a rich history of such engagement.

It is characteristic of a periphery that it develops according to the templates imposed by the centre, while retaining a different quality. In the case of traditional empires, the main coercive instruments were political and military; in the case of modern forms of domination, the instruments are legal and financial, and these provide the means the EU uses to build up and consolidate its influence and power. The Central European countries "had to" accept the Union's standards – i.e., the whole of the *acquis communautaire* – counting on financial assistance from the EU and, more broadly, the perspective of stabilization and prosperity associated with EU membership. In turn, at least formally, they became rightful co-participants of the European empire. The peripheries stand no such chance.

The EU suggests to the neighbouring countries certain political (democracy, human rights, etc.) and economic (partial integration with the common market within the framework of an enlarged free trade zone) solutions while offering more or less measurable benefits (limited financial help, visa liberalisation). These solutions are not bad *a priori*. Nonetheless, their authors tend to underestimate the role of local circumstances and overestimate European experiences and current EU interests. As the post-colonial school of thought would put it, the EU is trying to impose on the countries of Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus its own model of development, fully convinced that it is universal and should be introduced as a part of a mission to civilise – a sentiment well known to the Europeans. The EU disregards – or perhaps tries to disregard – some crucial problems of the region such as frail national identities of some neighbouring countries or their dependence on Russia. This is well illustrated by the EU approach to post-Orange Revolution Ukraine. Viktor Yushchenko was (moderately) welcomed as a democrat, but he lost in the eyes of Europe when he attempted to implement a nation-building policy having for its basis, *inter alia*, the heritage of the Ukrainian Revolutionary Army. While not disregarding a multitude of mistakes made by the "orange"

¹ Term popularized by Jan Zielonka (*Europa jako imperium. Nowe spojrzenie na Unię Europejską*, Warszawa 2007), who gave it a meaning different from the traditional one.

² See Miles Kahler, *Europe and its "Privileged Partners" in Africa and the Middle East*, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 1982, vol. 21, Issue 1/2, pp. 199–226.

politicians one needs to remember that deliberate actions on the part of Russia also contributed to their failure. Yet these hostile actions continued to go unnoticed by the EU, which labelled subsequent natural gas crises as “trade disputes”. Instead, it is the EU’s own interests that are crucial in designing its neighbourhood policy. The Ukrainian agricultural sector provides a good example. A sector essential to the whole Ukrainian economy has been acknowledged only to a limited degree in the free trade zone agreement between the EU and Ukraine. The reason for this was protection of European producers. Someone may point out that the EU has to acknowledge its own interests and that is true. However, it is good to keep in mind that politics of *raison d’etat* rarely goes hand in hand with effective help for others.

The EU is trying both to convey (impose) certain standards toward its neighbours and at the same time undertake action to retain their peripheral character. And it is not only about a visa regime or disqualifying future EU membership for its eastern neighbours. It is mainly about little knowledge of those countries and lack of any broader action to change it. The eastern neighbours, contrary to Turkey for example, take no part in the Erasmus programme, which enables 200,000 students annually to work and study abroad³. The eastern neighbours are of little interest to a European reader and publisher. A resident of France or Germany can choose from fivefold more publications on Poland than on Ukraine (not to mention other eastern countries). In both countries, there are more books available on Morocco than on the EU’s largest neighbour⁴. This situation results in Eastern European countries being perceived through a stereotypical and simplified lens, often focused on current political and socio-economic problems. From the EU perspective they are, in this sense, on a similar level with postcolonial countries.

The centre states, in this case the European Union, not only perceive the peripheral coun-

³ Data from: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc80_en.htm.

⁴ Personal estimates on the basis of www.amazon.de and www.amazon.fr. German data includes publications in foreign languages.

tries as poorer, weaker and less developed. They also accept the status quo. Their partners’ weakness allows for interference in their internal affairs and for imposition of solutions favourable to the strong countries (such as asymmetrical solutions adopted as a part of the wider free trade zone). It allows for circumscribing cooperation only to the areas chosen by the centre. Relative backwardness and underdevelopment of the periphery are, in the long run, the *sine qua non* for maintaining the dominant role of the centre. Such was the case with the United States and their zone of influence in Latin America. It is so in the case of China and their neighbours (North Korea and Burma). Emancipation of a periphery leads to deterioration of an empire due to the lack of *hard* and *soft power* in the hands of the centre (the Communist bloc) or because of a necessary redefinition of their mutual relationship (transatlantic relations). From the centre’s perspective a benevolent dictator, who engages in pragmatic cooperation with stronger partners while counting on personal benefits (Hosni Mubarak), is a more convenient partner than a reformer who wants to redefine bilateral relations (Mohammad Mosaddegh). Bringing this back to the earlier example of Ukraine: Yushchenko, the Orange Revolution hero, a rather honest (though naive and ineffective) supporter of Ukraine’s EU membership, was in reality a problem for Brussels. Viktor Yanukovich, the pragmatic “neo-Titoist”, despite limiting democratic standards in Ukraine, is a man with whom – quoting Margaret Thatcher – one can do business.

Frailty of engagement

The above analysis allows for a better understanding of the EU’s reluctance to engage more in the eastern neighbourhood. First, one needs to consider general reasons, external to the EU’s relations with its European neighbours, such as enlargement fatigue, a long and drawn out institutional reform process, an international financial crisis and internal euro zone problems, or finally the recent political changes in North Africa.

However, from the perspective of this discussion, determinants related directly to the ENP are more interesting and more important.

The EU, or at least some of its Member States, steer clear from being accused of over-engagement or, one could say, even expansion in the region. Such opinions were expressed in Russia after the launch of the Eastern Partnership initiative. In this sense Popescu and Wilson are right when they claim that it was easier for the EU to engage in neighbourhood policy towards Central and South-Eastern Europe in the 1990s, because it had no competitors there. Additionally, the EU Member States that place more importance on relations with the Mediterranean neighbours are reluctant to have the Union engage in the East. From the political perspective, most certainly countries like France care about strengthening the EU's position in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus (it suffices to recall the French attitude during their EU Presidency when the new Ukraine-EU agreement assumed an associative character and Nicolas Sarkozy actively, though with mixed effects, engaged in solving the Russia-Georgia dispute); that said, financially, every batch of money transferred to those in the East is a batch of money lost by those in the South.

Finally – returning to the question about the lack of effectiveness of the EU policy in the East – the EU seems to be afraid of a change of *status quo* in the region or even of any attempt at it. A firm engagement of the EU in the region, should it bring about any effects, would force EU Member States to face a number of challenges. The Arab revolutions, despite being a positive development, resulted in very tangible problems such as migration pressure. Still, from the EU perspective the political transformations in Maghreb are of limited significance because nobody is questioning a thesis that they are “the neighbours of Europe” and not “the European neighbours”. Meanwhile, a hypothetical successful political and economic transformation of Eastern Europe and – to some extent – the Southern

Caucasus would open anew the question about the borders of the European Union. It would moreover confront EU Member States with the need of significant financial support for its eastern neighbours just as it happened in the 1990s in the case of Central European countries, or with the necessity of unequivocal counter-action against Russia's ambitions in the region. It seems unlikely that in current circumstances the EU would be able to stand up to such a challenge.

The second hypothetical scenario, one that is more likely but at the same time more pessimistic, assumes that the European Union would strongly engage politically and financially in the East, yet the initiative would likely bring about few results – a similar experience to that of Poland in the aftermath of the “Orange Revolution”. Poland explicitly supported (at least declaratively) the new Ukrainian government and their allegedly pro-European aspirations. After that, it became gradually clearer that the expectations we had for Ukraine were mislead, and the “project Ukraine” (recalling the title of a book by Marek Ziółkowski) stood no chance for implementation in the form it initially had. Surely few politicians would be willing to repeat the scenario and that explains European reticence toward the East.

In conclusion, one can say that the frailty of EU engagement in the Eastern Neighbourhood and the related low effectiveness come as a result of both the benefits stemming from the peripheral character of the neighbouring countries and the challenges arising from a more decisive attempt to change the *status quo* in Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus. The European empire needs a wild frontier, which – despite merely limited control exercised by the centre – provides for strategic outskirts and a sense of security.

Translation Katarzyna Snyder

Marcin Wojciechowski

Presence is power

The report *Turning Presence into Power* contains a multitude of precious data and observations characterising the relations between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries. Above all it takes note that the EU is a much more important economic partner to all of them, save Belarus, than Russia. This is a tangible basis and at the same time a justification for the EU's engagement in the region. A fact well known to the experts, but still worth popularising and emphasising.

The presence of the EU in the region is not only a civilisational mission, a continuation of unification of Europe divided by the Iron Curtain after the Second World War, a promotion of the European values, or a way to provide a stable and predictable neighbourhood. All those matters are important, but the main and basic reason for the existence of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership is simply a cold economic calculus. The former USSR countries became ever more important export markets for the states of the Union. With time, as the legal norms and market rules get adjusted to the EU standards, these countries may become a natural location for investment and expansion for EU businesses. It is important to highlight this fact considering that some sceptics think of the Eastern Partnership as of a kind of charity on the part of the European Union. To my mind it is rather a sort of a well-remunerated term deposit, an investment fund, or even a capital accumulation program, should one decide to use banking terminology.

The authors of the report – Nicu Popescu and Andrew Wilson – are right to point out the regress of democratisation in the Eastern Partnership countries over the last year. Moldova is one exception. What is striking, however, is the one-sidedness of their judgement and putting all the countries into one pot. I will refer to that later. The diagnosis of three main reasons for the lack of effectiveness of

the EU policy toward the Eastern Partnership countries, however, is accurate: authoritarianism on the rise in those countries, a multipolar world in which the Eastern Partnership countries have more options for their foreign policy, and finally a weak engagement of the Union in the Neighbourhood Policy.

The authors' practical suggestions on how to increase the EU presence in the region are also reasonable. A liberalised visa regime, cheaper flights, lower roaming and telephone connection prices and facilitating the Eastern Partnership students to come to the EU are undoubtedly the simple and effective long-term ways to promote the EU in the region.

Another way is to develop cooperation with Border Guards and the Ministries of Internal Affairs of the Eastern Partnership countries – a necessary step considering the perspective of visa liberalisation or abolition of visas, most likely in the case of Ukraine. Cooperation is needed also in the context of the organization of joint events such as Euro 2012, or alleviation of the effects of natural catastrophes, such as floods, which are quite frequent on the EU-Ukraine and EU-Moldova borders.

What is disappointing about the report is its automatic approach to all six countries of the Eastern Partnership as if they were one. Meanwhile, they can be divided into categories. Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine are countries that have explicit European ambitions and are more democratic than the rest of the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States. Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan have no such ambitions, are under authoritarian rule, and their elites in power have no intentions of changing that, even rhetorically. A much employed in the report motive of “neo-Titoist games” played by the elites of the former USSR territories relates mainly to the latter three countries. It is these countries that treat their relations with the EU instrumentally, including their participation in the Eastern Partnership. They use their European relations as a tool in games with the former regional leader, Russia. It is best illustrated by the example of Belarus which has been playing this game for years. Even though everybody knows it, Minsk

continues to reap benefits from interchangeably approaching the West and Russia, with affinity toward the latter.

The only way to disable the eastern partners from engaging in neo-Titoist games with the EU is a consequent application of the principle “more assistance for more reforms” and, by way of analogy, “less for less”. This should become an official rule of the European Neighbourhood Policy both in the East and in the South. Inasmuch as the principle “more for more” has been officially written into the EU documents, the principle “less for less” can only be applied as a matter of analogy. For now it has been demonstrated only in the sanctions against Belarus for stifling democracy, forging elections and repressing the Belarusian opposition. The question is why the EU decides not to undertake similar steps toward Armenia or Azerbaijan which, considering the level of democracy, are not much different from Belarus, even after taking into account their Caucasian specificity. Selective application of the rules toward the Eastern Partnership countries, but also towards Russia which is an important point of reference to them, will obscure the image of the EU as one that applies clear criteria for cooperation and refers to transparent rules of the game. It is important because Russia, who feels threatened by the EU presence in the region, keeps on promoting the Union’s image among the Eastern Partnership countries as a dishonest player who applies double standards.

Most likely because it was written a couple of months ago, the report does not take note of progress in negotiations on the EU-Ukraine association agreement. Despite other negative tendencies present in that country, like the persecution of Yulia Tymoshenko or the protracted arrest of the former Interior Minister Yuri Lucenko, Kiev grew to be the region’s leader in its cooperation with the EU. It is an interesting tendency showing that if not just smooth words but also political will of the local elites are tuned into cooperating with the Union, then success is possible even in the difficult post-Soviet reality. If by the end of the year Ukraine succeeds in negotiating the association agreement with the EU, it will provide

a very interesting example to be replicated in other countries of the Partnership. One could say even today that after years of suspense, the new rulers of Ukraine and their business back-up decided that strategic rapprochement with Ukraine is in their interest.

Let us not be deceived that the administration of president Viktor Yanukovich made such a decision due to idealistic reasons, as it was done years before by the countries of Central Europe ruled by former dissidents and intellectual groups related to them. Yanukovich’s people probably figured that in the long run, economic ties with the EU will pay off, strengthen their wealth, and enable them to sell their capital, banks and businesses gained in various ways to the European partners and for higher European prices. Today these assets have a lower price due to Ukraine’s isolation from the Common European Market. Even if such realistically painful motivation for rapprochement with the EU may offend the European ethical standards, it is well worth to take advantage of. In the end, in times of financial crisis, it is pragmatism and mutual interest that should stimulate development of international relations. Idealism and civil society will be following the path taken by capital. Indeed, one of the important reasons for the EU accession by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 2004, aside from dreams of historical unification of Europe, was eagerness of the big western companies to expand markets in which they could operate. Now this principle may be applied in reverse.

In any case, the success of the Eastern Partnership depends on whether the ruling elites in the participating countries will get engaged in the project. In at least three Eastern Partnership countries – Georgia, Moldova and Azerbaijan – the societies are interested in getting closer to Europe. In this case I would not place much trust in unreliable polls, but rather I would look at certain electoral, political and cultural trends. It is a huge success of the EU presence in the region that in at least three eastern countries Europe is truly en vogue, and their politicians cannot disregard that trend. For now they often leave it at words, but as the example of Ukraine shows,

if words get mixed with an authentic political will, things start moving forward. We are witnessing a similar process in Moldova ruled by a pro-European government for two years. The recent local elections in this country show that the government's attitude along with an increase of interest on the part of the EU may generate a very pro-European thinking within the society.

The ECFR report dealing with Eastern Partnership is rather conservative. Usually, such is the virtue and a professional habit of analysts. Yet some more optimism in assessment of at least some countries of the region would be, to my mind, beneficial. By the same token, getting overly excited and excessively optimistic regarding the potential of the

Eastern Partnership would not be appropriate either. There is a Polish saying: "If you don't have what you like, then you like what you have". And such is the case with the Eastern Partnership. It is the best of all existing tools of influencing the situation in the post-Soviet countries. And the only one available in the present conditions. It needs to be fully saturated with content: on one hand, increasing the EU's engagement, an option pointed out by the authors of the report; on the other hand, getting the eastern elites interested in the project. Even if one needs to use subtle bribery, such as making them aware that rapprochement with Europe will bring them benefits, also the tangible ones.

Translation Katarzyna Snyder

Biographical Notes

Andrzej Brzeziecki (born 1978) – journalist and publicist. Editor in chief of a bimonthly “Nowa Europa Wschodnia”. In 2002–2008, editor of and currently contributor with “Tygodnik Powszechny”. Author of a number of books: *Przed Bogiem. Ze Stanisławem Obirkim rozmawiają Andrzej Brzeziecki i Jarosław Makowski* [Before God. Andrzej Brzeziecki and Jarosław Makowski talk with Stanisław Obirek] (Warszawa 2005), *Białoruś – Kartofle i dżinsy* [Belarus – Potatoes and blue jeans] (with Małgorzata Nocuń, Kraków 2007), *Ograbiony Naród. Rozmowy z intelektualistami białoruskimi* [The robbed nation. Conversations with Belarusian intellectuals] (with Małgorzata Nocuń, Wrocław 2008), *Lekcje historii PRL w rozmowach* [Polish People’s Republic history lessons in conversations] (Warszawa 2009). Member of the Polish-Ukrainian Partnership Forum.

Bartosz Cichocki (born 1976) – political scientist, international security expert, currently with the National Security Bureau. Worked with the KARTA Center, Center for Eastern Studies and Polish Institute of International Affairs. Co-authored, together with Leszek Pietrzak, a National Security Bureau report on Russian historical propaganda in the years 2004–2009 (2009).

Dominik Jankowski (born 1983) – political scientist, international security and European Union expert. Currently works on his Ph.D. thesis at the Warsaw School of Economics in the Department of Global Economy. Employed at the National Security Bureau. Previously worked at the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces and in the Kazimierz Pulaski Foundation. Cooperated with the Amicus Europae Foundation.

Andrzej Szeptycki, Ph.D. (born 1977) – political scientist, senior lecturer at the Institute of International Relations of the Warsaw University. Regular contributor with the “Nowa Europa Wschodnia”, council member of the Polish-Ukrainian Forum and member of the programme board for the Polish-Ukrainian Partnership Forum. Vice-chair of the Szeptycki Family Foundation board. Author of such books as *Francja czy Europa? Dziedzictwo generała de Gaulle’a w polityce zagranicznej V Republiki* [France or Europe? General de Gaulle’s legacy in the foreign policy of the 5th Republic] (Warszawa 2005), *Kościół, naród, państwo. Działalność i dziedzictwo Metropolity Andrzeja Szeptyckiego (1865–1944)* [Church, nation, state. Activity and legacy of Bishop Andrzej Szeptycki (1865–1944)] (editor, Wrocław–Warszawa 2011), and many articles and reports dedicated to the Polish, Ukrainian and French foreign policies and selected aspects of the European integration.

Paweł Świeżak (born 1980) – political scientist, Eastern Partnership expert. Currently employed at the National Security Bureau. Previously managed the Eastern department of the psz.pl portal.

Marcin Wojciechowski (born 1975) – publicist with “Gazeta Wyborcza”. Spent many years as a correspondent for “Gazeta Wyborcza” in Ukraine (1999–2003) and in Russia (2003–2005). Regularly contributes to the “Nowa Europa Wschodnia” bimonthly. Author of the following books: *Pomarańczowy majdan* [The Orange Courtyard] (Warszawa 2006), *Wołyń 1943–2008. Pojednanie* [Volhyn 1943–2008. Reconciliation] (ed., Warszawa 2008) and many other articles about the post-Soviet countries and about Polish and European policy in the region.