



THE POLISH
QUARTERLY OF
INTERNATIONAL

AFFAIRS

volume 23

no. 4/2014

Special Issue:

What Next?

Developments in the Post-Soviet Space

Kerry Longhurst

Jakub M. Godzimirski

Elżbieta Kaca

Anita Sobják

Stanislav Secieru

Ievgen Vorobiov

Robert Ondrejcsák

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Mearsheimer and the Poverty of His Realism

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Collegium Civitas
SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STUDIES

NUP Norwegian Institute
of International
Affairs

PISM ACADEMY | THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

FSS
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This issue of *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs* was prepared within a project: “Mapping Polish and Norwegian Perspective on Regional Integration in Eastern Europe” supported by a grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants and co-financed by the Polish funds.

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Publisher:

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ISSN 1230-4999

The views expressed in The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs are solely those of the authors.

The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs is regularly presented in the catalogue of International Current Awareness Services, in Ulrich's International Periodical Directory, and in International Political Science Abstracts/Documentation Politique Internationale. Selected articles are included in the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences.

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There are currently three strategically different zones in Central and Eastern Europe. The first comprises Central European NATO member countries, the second is made up of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia (between NATO and Russia), and third is Russia itself. The crucial changes after the Russian invasion of Ukraine are the termination of connections between the first and third groups, as well as between the second and third groups, and deepening connections between the first and second groups. As Central Europe belongs to the same security complex as Ukraine, and because Central European security cannot be divided from Ukrainian security, it is desirable to link Ukraine and Central Europe to the same strategic structures. We need to provide an additional perspective and bring the Eastern European partners strategically closer to Central European and European security. We need a regional version of Partnership for Peace, a Partnership for Stability (PFS). This paper analyses the determining factors, challenges and opportunities of this concept.

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Roman Kuźniar takes a critical stance on the widely discussed article by John Mearsheimer, in which the University of Chicago professor blames the West for the Ukraine crisis. Mearsheimer reiterates that both EU and NATO enlargement could not but be seen as threats to Russian interests. With Western plans to bring Ukraine and Georgia into the EU and possibly to NATO as well, Russia could not have reacted otherwise, Mearsheimer argues. Kuźniar contradicts Mearsheimer's position, pinpointing long-time Western efforts to build bridges to Moscow and include Russia in close cooperation with NATO, the EU, the G-8 and others. None of that worked, Kuźniar explains, because Russia wanted to be respected as yet another Soviet Union. Kuźniar's view is that the right way to deal with the "new Russia" is not to appease it, but to contain its aggressive tendencies.

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The accumulation of conflicts and crises in Eastern Europe and the Middle East has created a "crescent of fire" in the EU's neighbourhood. This new situation poses challenges for NATO and the EU in both the short and long terms. In order to maintain an active role in resolving these conflicts, it is necessary to define their nature and adjust the tools available to this new situation.

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Mapping the Context and Asking the Questions

This special issue is the fruit of a collaborate project carried out by three institutions: Collegium Civitas, Norwegian Institute of International Relations (NUPI) and The Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM). The overall title of the project, which was funded by the FSS Norway Grant scheme, was “Mapping Polish and Norwegian Perspectives on Regional Integration in Eastern Europe.” Activities under the project involved not just research but also teaching and a summer school; in this sense, the ideas and arguments in this special issue also reflect the interactions of researchers and academics with students at Collegium Civitas. Altogether, around 100 students from at least 10 countries, including Russia and Ukraine, benefitted from involvement in the project. Students brought new perspectives and ways of thinking about the subject matter. Their insights represent the views of a new generation of young people who, in different ways, will shape the future of Europe and its relations with its eastern neighbours.

The grant was awarded with the aim of nurturing dialogue between Norwegian and Polish researchers and academics to plot national perspectives on developments in the post-Soviet space, with an accent on trying to understand patterns of integration, disintegration, conflict and cooperation. The idea for the project and formulation of research questions took place, however, prior to the annexation of Crimea and outbreak of hostilities in Ukraine; subsequently, the project came to focus on matters relating to disintegration and conflict and discord between the West and Russia.

What are Norwegian and Polish perspectives on the post-Soviet space? This may not seem an obvious question for readers who are well-versed in Cold War history. Poland and Norway were, let’s not forget, on opposite sides of the Iron Curtain before 1989. Also, whilst Poland and Norway both lie in Northern Europe they are not direct neighbours and do not have a

history of intensive contact. However, when one looks at political geography and the map of economic and societal relations of today's Europe, it is clear that Poland and Norway have a great deal in common and that their interests overlap to a growing extent. This fact is seen in the latter's support for research and education in Poland, amongst other examples.

Both Poland and Norway are NATO frontline states and both share a high degree of exposure to the threat emanating from Russia and its increasing belligerence. It is therefore unsurprising that in recent years Oslo and Warsaw have issued a number of joint initiatives calling for transparency in accounting for Russia's ballistic weapons that are based in close vicinity to both states. Norway, along with Poland and the Baltic States, is more vulnerable to the impact of the war in Ukraine and the deterioration in NATO–Russia relations.

Poland and the Baltic States have in common Cold War-era energy infrastructure that requires their dependence on Russian supplies, and this remains significant despite recent initiatives to increase diversification. Norway, one of the biggest energy producers in the world, potentially offers an alternative for these states. The development of the Lithuanian LNG terminal, which could considerably lessen the Baltics' dependence on Russian energy, is one result already of cooperation with Norway. As Poland is nearing completion of its own terminal, Norway remains one of the most attractive options as a potential supplier.

Finally, there is also a growing bilateral dimension to the relationship. Following the opening of the Norwegian labour market to new Member States of the EU, Poles have become the largest non-Norwegian ethnic group in the country. At the same time, there are growing numbers of Norwegian students that choose to study in Poland.

As the relationship between Poland and Norway is deepening on every level, it is clear that the eastern neighbourhood of the EU is an area of common concern that begs more common initiatives and which will require more research into the key issues and problems of the region. This volume makes a valuable contribution in this respect.

Through its various articles, this edition provides a broad, yet deep understanding of some of the crucial issues at stake. It provides historical insights, contemporary considerations and also prognoses about how the post-Soviet region could develop in the years to come. The spread of further

disorder across the wider region is debated, with the question as to whether conflict in Crimea and Ukraine will spread across the whole post-Soviet space. The fate of Russian President Vladimir Putin's Eurasian Economic Union is a further variable that will shape the West's relations with the states of the region in profound ways, even if the project falls short of its goals. Energy has and will remain at the core of EU–Russia relations and is a key concern for those states in the West that are highly dependent on Russia for their basic energy needs. Much of the EU's attention towards the eastern neighbourhood has been channelled into improving the Eastern Partnership, to make it more relevant and worthwhile for reform-minded officials in Eastern Europe to implement modernisation. However, in 2015 neighbourhood policies are under review; it is an open question as to whether the EU's mettle in the region will be strengthened as a result. Finally, a case study of Moldova gives a succinct and useful focus to consider broad questions about the post-Soviet space and the ramifications of geopolitical competition between Russia and the West.

All in all, the papers presented in this edition of *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs* give fresh insight into what has become the most severe and far-reaching foreign policy challenge to confront the West since the end of the Cold War. It is clear that the Norwegians and Poles involved in this project have a great deal of valuable and insightful perspectives on these matters and that this is just the start of further collaboration.

The team would like, once again to acknowledge and give thanks for the generous support received for the funding of the research, teaching and summer school activities associated with this project.



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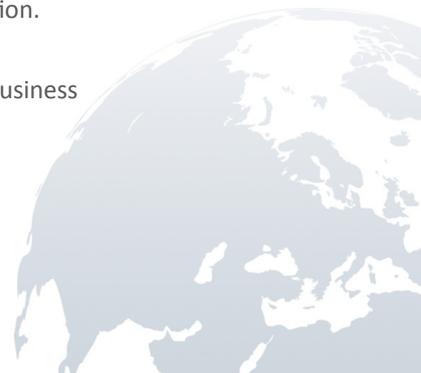
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Moldova: On the Straight and Narrow?

In November 2014, the Republic of Moldova held parliamentary elections, the eighth since the country gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Though every previous election has earmarked significant steps and developments, and also notable setbacks, for the first time in the country's post-communist history, the election of 2014 was arguably about broader geopolitical issues tied up with the patterns of disintegration and conflict prevailing across the eastern neighbourhood.

Events during the run-up to the elections demonstrated that, this time, what was at stake was the country's future political and economic strategic orientation, and that a choice was going to be made. Popular and elite discourses surrounding the elections claimed that the election was essentially about voters choosing between the EU and Vladimir Putin.¹ Though a coalition of liberal/pro-EU parties eventually secured an overall majority to govern, the results of the elections revealed the delicate balance of power present within Moldovan domestic politics, general apathy towards politics, a weariness of corruption, and scepticism towards the EU, twinned with strong levels of support for communist and pro-Russian parties. Furthermore, the outcome showed significant popular support for cooperation with Russia, and the attractiveness of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). It is important to remember that it was a pro-Russian Socialist Party which was the overall single biggest vote winner.²

¹ "Moldova to press on with pro-European course after election," *The Telegraph*, 1 December 2014, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/moldova/11266858/Moldova-to-press-on-with-pro-Europe-course-after-election.html.

² For a geographical illustration of voting patterns, see: A. Nardelli, G. Arnett, "Support for pro-Russia parties in Moldova, mapped," *The Guardian*, 1 December 2014, www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/dec/01/support-for-pro-russia-parties-in-moldova-mapped.

Considering all of this, a key question is whether there are robust foundations in place to support a continuation of Moldova's cooperation with the EU, and more importantly to enable an intensification of the pace and depth of that cooperation. With this point in mind, this article is strident in its claim that the stakes have never been higher, nor the questions more intense, regarding the future of Moldova's relations with the European Union. At the same time, the article posits that it is important not to assume that Moldova will inevitably become another falling domino in Russia's strategy of destabilising and reclaiming elements of the former Soviet Union. Despite plenty of sabre rattling before Chişinău signed the Association Agreement with the EU, and plenty of bullying thereafter, Moldova currently remains rather an object of Russian economic and political pressures.

To tackle these assertions, this article will concentrate on addressing the question of whether Moldova's European trajectory can stay on the straight and narrow. It seeks to identify the multi-layered geopolitical factors and domestic sources that condition and impact upon Moldova.

If we accept that Moldova's recent election demonstrated how the state remains more or less torn and fractured between East and West, then a discussion about current EU and Russian approaches in the neighbourhood, as derived from historical circumstances, is useful. Subsequently, the specifics of Moldova's position in the neighbourhood's troubles will be highlighted, taking care to note the similarities and differences to other post-Soviet states. Following this, focus will be placed on identifying the key areas in which Moldova has felt the pressure of Russia's "neo-conservative" foreign policy and evaluate levels of "success." The overall conclusion will seek to draw all strands together to answer the key question about continuity, and also to reflect upon how the West, and the European Union more specifically, can assure Moldova's future as a westwards orientated European country.

A number of factors render Moldova an interesting case study that can be used to consider broader developments across the post-Soviet space. Moldova is a microcosm of the symptoms, challenges and opportunities that prevail across the rest of the post-Soviet region. Moreover, it is a poignant case study with which to judge the EU as an effective norm-exporter and transformative power in its eastern milieu. Though more firmly entrenched than elsewhere in the region, Moldova's complete democratisation remains subject to a protracted period of economic and political transition, hindered, unfortunately, by ongoing corruption. Though the country has emerged as