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Responsible Europe

by FLEET
Fresh Look at Eastern
European Trends

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Content

FLEET (**F**resh **L**ook at **E**astern **E**uropean **T**rends; English for 'agile', 'nimble')
- A FES-initiated network of young, open-minded experts specialising in security and cooperation in wider Europe.
- Members of the network come from across the OSCE area and work in academia, think tanks, political institutions and business.
- Since 2015 the group regularly meets for intensive workshops to discuss current challenges to security and peace in Europe and develop joint policy proposals on how to resume cooperation in the current crisis in order to ultimately restore the indivisibility of security in Europe.
- The regional composition of FLEET reflects the necessity to jointly discuss those issues with the EU, Russia and the countries in the shared neighbourhood.
- Each year FLEET focuses on a different topic within the broader thematic frame of security.

Foreword

The present publication is a result of an intense one-year process of collaborative thinking and writing by a group of young professionals FLEET (Fresh Look at Eastern European Trends). They are deeply concerned about the current security situation and care about the peaceful and prosperous future on the European continent that is home to EU and non-EU citizens alike.

At times of rampant mistrust and decline of multi-lateralism, a policy of small steps – FLEET calls it "Islands of Cooperation" – is essential for jump-starting cooperation. But where are the small steps supposed to lead? What is the "North Star" for European security? "Responsible Europe" may not be the final destination, but it is a forward-looking vision to re-build indivisible security on the European continent.

Just like in personal relations, in international politics responsibility encapsulates both a state's agency – a capacity to make own decisions and factor in conceivable effects – and a good-will obligation to constantly seek a balance between one's own interests and the interests of others. Such approach may sound commonsensical, yet the past

three decades have amply demonstrated less consideration, sagacity and humility than were hoped for upon the "end of history".

The bulk of the thinking and writing on "Responsible Europe" happened before a new coronavirus was first detected in late 2019 and then quickly spread around the globe before our disbelieving eyes. As of spring 2020 the pandemic affects each and every one of us and engulfs public debates. As the world grapples with an unprecedented challenge, only one thing seems clear: Formidable threats posed by violent conflicts, socio-economic inequality, looming environmental catastrophe and nuclear proliferation may shift and transform, but they are not going away. Neither are they put on hold even as the world seems to hold its breath, paralysed by the virus. Above all, the corona crisis is a painful yet timely reminder that global challenges cannot be solved unilaterally. They will require bold and cooperative responses. In this publication members of FLEET provide inspiring contours of some of them. After all, who, if not experts and critical citizens, is responsible for a change of trajectory?

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Introduction:
Building blocks of Responsible Europe

A new pan-continental security order that marries pragmatism with idealism

By Zachary Paikin and Pia Hansen

The conflict in and around Ukraine is not only the culmination of increasing tensions between Russia and the West – it also exemplifies Europe's failure to establish a sustainable security order after the end of the Cold War. The vision of a common European home together with Russia has failed. Normative incompatibility between the EU and Russia – both in terms of their political systems and their visions for the shared neighbourhood – has made sure of that, with the battle over Ukraine's regulatory and political orientation being the clearest example yet.

When we speak about "Europe" and the "European security order", we refer to the EU, Russia and the countries of their shared neighbourhood. In this regard we are interested primarily in the six "states in-between" located east of the EU and west of Russia, in other words, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. We detail their role in constructing Responsible Europe. But one can certainly include other non-EU members such as Norway, Great Britain or Switzerland (figure 1).

The European order is under considerable strain, facing rising mistrust and confrontation, with governments in desperate need of new ideas to move beyond the current deadlock. Most suggestions, as for instance the Structured Dialogue and the Panel of Eminent Persons of the OSCE, focus on small steps and confidence-building measures. In a similar vein, our last FLEET (Fresh Look at Eastern European Trends) publication Islands of Cooperation proposed pragmatic interactions in areas of overlapping interests. These steps are certainly valuable and can contribute to de-escalation over time. Yet small steps also require a strategic vision.

We propose **Responsible Europe**, defined below, not as a definitive answer but rather to initiate a discussion and potential roadmap towards a cooperative European security order that rebuilds trust, fosters common interests and provides sustainable peace. Putting responsibility at the heart of the argument discards self-seeking power struggles and goes beyond the Cold War bloc thinking, where small states are merely a "buffer zone" between big powers. In a first step, this requires scrutinizing the failures of the current European security architecture from multiple perspectives in order to move beyond antagonistic narratives and build a common vision of a future security order.
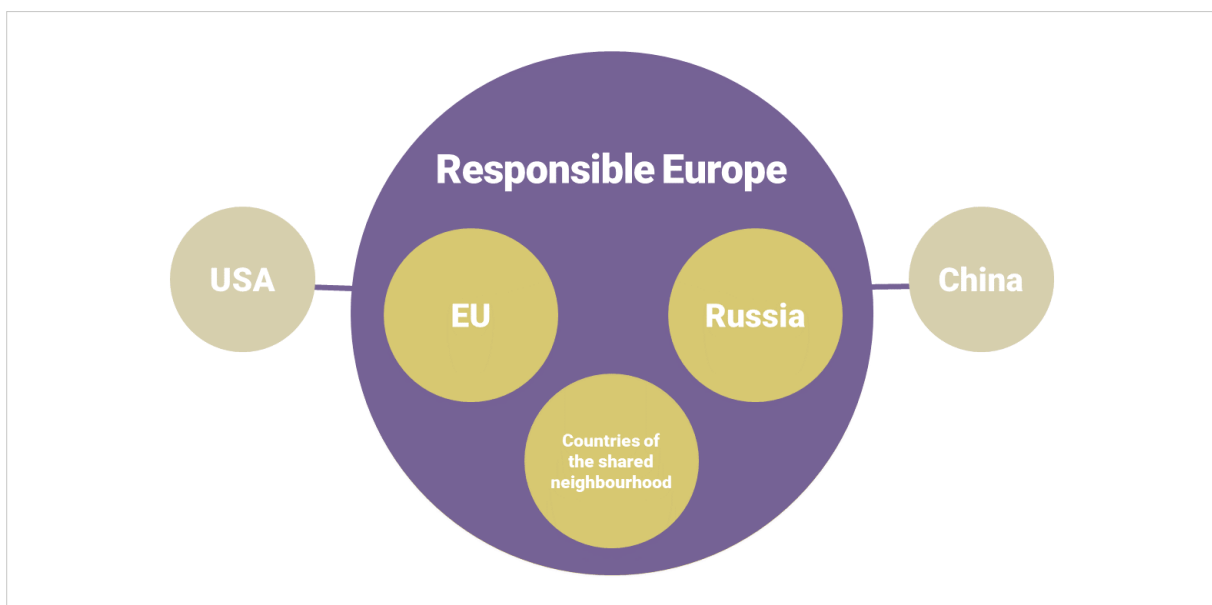

Figure 1: Responsible Europe and outside powers

The roots of today's conflict can be found at the end of the Cold War, with rival visions sprouting with respect to how Europe should be organised. While some optimistically proclaimed the end of history and the global diffusion of liberal democracy, fundamental issues regarding Europe's re-ordering remained unresolved. At the same time, the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the disintegration of the Soviet Union saw newly independent states appear on the scene. It is the diverging understandings regarding these developments by Russia, the EU, the United States and the states in-between that lie at the heart of today's security dilemma in Europe.

In addition to (military) interventionism and competing economic integration projects, soft power initiatives have played a substantial role in causing relationships within Europe to deteriorate. The European Union has been expanding its Brussels-centric political and regulatory order, unable to find an adequate place for a Russia that is increasingly perceived as authoritarian and hostile. The Kremlin, in its turn, has come to view the EU's growing soft power in the post-Soviet space as a threat to its regime stability (consider the context of the colour revolutions in the 2000s, seen by Moscow as Western-supported efforts at regime change). Following the onset of the Ukraine conflict and deterioration of relations with the EU, Moscow began to advance visions of a "Greater Eurasia" – an integrated space across the Eurasian continent. Remaining nominally open to European participation if Brussels agrees to uphold the fledgling community's "pluralistic" principles, it allows for a diversity of political systems to co-exist. Moreover, Russia and China have agreed to harmonise their respective signature integration projects – the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The Bigger Picture

Yet amidst all the concern over the future of the liberal international order and the challenge that Moscow supposedly poses to it, many miss two fundamental points that relate specifically to political order in Europe.

First, there are significant contradictions in the two sets of principles underpinning European security,

Helsinki and Paris. The international context surrounding the Helsinki system, based on the mutual recognition of the two blocs of the Cold War, featured an East-West balance of power and the presence of robust national states on the continent. The situation had radically changed by the early 1990s due to the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the move toward a political union in Western Europe.

Many in the liberal West considered these developments as a unilateral victory in the Cold War, but Russia contended that it was a joint victory over a hostile global environment and a broken economic model in favour of a new international order rooted in convergence and cooperation. The 1990 Paris Charter formulated a bold vision of cooperative security yet contained inherent contradictions that proved irreconcilable as crowds began to gather on the Maidan in Kyiv. Expressions of the right of states to choose their political and military alliances freely, originally intended to address the issue of German reunification, appeared to conflict with the principle of indivisible security – that the security of each state is inextricably linked to the security of every other state. The desire of some states that used to be members of the Soviet Union – for instance Ukraine and Georgia – to increasingly align themselves with the Western political community therefore runs up against Russia's perception of this as a threat to its security. The dream of a common European home has become the casualty of rival norms and conceptions of order.

Second, the leading actors on the European continent today are, in fact, still nascent and developing. The European Union took the leap from an internal market to a political union in 1992 at Maastricht. It had built up cooperation on foreign affairs since the 1980s but was pushed to develop a more coherent EU foreign policy when faced with the Balkan wars following the breakup of Yugoslavia. Attempts at a common security and defence policy, let alone strategic autonomy, have been stumbling since then. The end of the Soviet Union, for its part, saw the emergence of new European states, among them the Russian Federation, Ukraine and other Eastern European countries, some of which are still struggling with their political and economic transformations, protracted conflicts and Soviet legacies.

Europe's political order is therefore still finding its footing in many ways, with the rules of the game still being worked out among all players, who in turn are attempting to give lasting form to their still-inchoate internal political systems. The EU continues to attempt to find durable fixes to challenges around the eurozone, migration and Brexit, even as it contends with rising Euroscepticism and illiberalism. Some of the non-EU members in Europe are confronted with serious socio-economic woes, difficult histories and even protracted conflicts. Russia must still decide on a power transition mechanism, relations between centre and periphery continue to evolve, and questions concerning economic reform and the evolution of the country's political system remain pertinent as ever.

To make things worse, most recently the coronavirus pandemic has put all European countries to a tough test. It questions the very foundations of an open, borderless society and fosters nationalistic responses that undermine international coordination and joint efforts.

The construction of a new European security order is likely to be a protracted process. The prevalent feeling of uncertainty in Europe, exacerbated by the corona crisis, is not conducive to changes in the status quo. Meanwhile, Washington is reframing its global role and Beijing continues to expand its presence across Eurasia. The Sino-Russian partnership is deepening, affecting international order in yet unclear ways. Overall, we therefore face a set of challenges across three dimensions: internally (within Europe's leading actors), regionally (between Europe's leading actors), and globally (between Europe's leading actors and other major powers).

A paradigm shift for Europe

The gradual emergence of a new European order within the context of an evolving world requires a guiding concept for its members – the EU, Russia and the states that lie between them – to follow. We call this concept "**Responsible Europe**". While accounting for differences of opinion as to what shape the continent's political and security order should take, this paradigm retains an inclusive definition of what constitutes Europe. It encourages all European

actors to adopt a posture that

(a) encourages and strengthens stability *within* Europe and

(b) helps to transform the wider European space into a stable pillar of the *wider international order*. This pillar would contribute to global public goods and at the same time ensure that the global order does not become too normatively rigid or materially unbalanced.

As such, "Responsible Europe" is designed to enhance the internal stability of the wider European space and, eventually, its external agency with the aim of restoring mutually beneficial and peaceful cooperation. A corresponding security order would rely on *openness to flexibility* and change. International orders that are inflexible are not sustainable. "Responsible Europe" aims to reinterpret resilience in a way that is open rather than defensive, spanning the entirety of the European continent.

This new European paradigm emphasises Europe's centrality in the development of international norms, even as the global balance of power shifts eastward. Assuming a continued competition between the EU and Russia in their shared neighbourhood, "responsibility" requires all sides to adopt a realistic but nonetheless ambitious posture aimed at strengthening the foundations of all three OSCE dimensions – politico-military, economic-environmental and human.

The vision of a united Responsible Europe remains pertinent even though Europe today is decidedly disunited, and the unresolved challenges confronted at the Cold War's end remain on the historical agenda. If Europe is to serve as an independent pillar of global order, it must not become a mere peninsula at the edge of an increasingly integrated and strategically relevant Eurasia. For this to occur, Russia needs to know that it can have a positive impact on the shape of international order beyond its strategic partnership with China, while the EU must strike a sound balance between the transatlantic link and its own strategic autonomy. The EU must also realise that its credibility and reputation as a peace project depend on its ability to shape its neighbourhood's normative and institutional structure in a cooperative fashion. This requires EU institutions and member states to reflect

on how to engage Russia in a way that demonstrates the benefits of returning to the table as a leading responsible stakeholder in European affairs.

New responsibilities

Strengthening the foundations of Europe's collective global footprint over the long term requires all European actors to commit to a new approach. "Responsible Europe" must come with responsibilities.

First, members of the European space must chart a path toward a genuinely multilateral approach that rests on common rules and, ideally, mutual trust. The aim here must not be to return to old paradigms of cooperation, but rather for all of Europe's actors to seize the benefits of strategic promiscuity, while respecting each other's institutions and recommitting to solving disputes between them in a multilateral format. To compare, Moscow and Beijing do not share identical interests and priorities, but the Sino-Russian partnership is already producing a substantive albeit still fledgling conception of world order. Moscow must be shown the benefits of an order-generating dialogue with Brussels, while the EU needs to help shape the norms that govern connectivity in Eurasia in partnership with Russia so as not to entrench a zero-sum, bipolar logic across the supercontinent.

Second, all players must acknowledge the legitimacy of one another's interests, even when they differ. This must involve restraint from all parties as well as respect for the interests of smaller states. Preliminary evidence of this already exists on the EU side, shown by the limited scope of its recent Partnership Agreement with Armenia. Russia should reciprocate by pursuing a pragmatic foreign policy in the Western Balkans. Just as it demands that Washington and Brussels respect the privileged nature of its interests in its "near abroad", Moscow should not entrench a zero-sum logic in an increasingly EU-oriented region where it no longer has any serious or vital interests. The self-defeating nature of the Kremlin's foreign policy approach towards the Western Balkans has now become evident with the admission of both Montenegro and North Macedonia to NATO.

Moreover, a deeper understanding of interests should be fostered across the continent. Short-term interests should be distinguished from long-term interests, as the pursuit of the former can, in fact, undermine states' abilities to secure the latter. Russia's behaviour in Ukraine and its tactical contribution to sowing disunity and populism in EU countries are a case in point: Russia, in fact, has a long-term interest in a strong and stable Ukraine acting as both a buffer and bridge between itself and the EU, as well as a united and stable European single market with which it can reliably trade to underpin its economic development.

Furthermore, the shared European understanding of interests should not only be deeper but also wider, including not only the politico-military and economic dimensions but identity as well. Russia must understand that the EU's commitment to spreading liberal and democratic values is genuine, just as EU member states should recognise the legitimacy of Russia's post-Soviet identity-related challenges that are paramount, to understand the logic of the conflict over Ukraine.

Third, there needs to be recognition of collective responsibility regarding the management of conflict and tensions in Europe. Confidence-building measures over the short term should lead to institutionalisation of multilateral conflict-resolution mechanisms that are rooted in continual dialogue, open lines of communication at the official level and joint action. These could be supplemented by a commitment by all parties to cooperation and responsibility in the economic sphere, even if the regulatory orders of the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union remain at odds with each other for now. For example, this could take the form of pan-European fora to discuss issues such as sustainable development, social investment, fiscal responsibility, jobs, corporate social responsibility, ecological responsibility and perhaps eventually an all-European approach to foreign investments (e.g. from China).

Here is where smaller states situated in the EU-Russia shared neighbourhood could play an essential role. "Responsible Europe" conceives of these countries as agents rather than clients, placing them at the heart of Europe rather than at the periphery of two competing spheres of influence. The current level of hostility in EU-Russia relations hampers a joint effort

to build a stable, institutionalised European security architecture. The six states in-between (countries of Russia-EU shared neighbourhood) may vary in their approaches to dealing with the EU, but an exploration on their part of the ways in which they can act as an economic and political link between Brussels and Moscow could provide a much-needed boost to these efforts. The role of smaller states in shaping a "Responsible Europe" is particularly noteworthy in a context where bigger actors such as the EU and Russia often appear unwilling or unable to do so.

Looking Forward

Europe currently faces a structural problem. On the one hand, normative rivalry and internal challenges are preventing the EU and Russia from pursuing any genuine reconciliation toward establishing a new European political and security order, even though the previous one is under considerable strain. At the same time, Russia remains oriented toward Europe in many ways, having not yet fully fused nation with state, carrying an imperial legacy and strategic imperative that leaves it predisposed to desiring a "zone of privileged interests" in Eastern Europe, and continuing to profess spiritual unity with Ukraine. In other words, three decades after the Iron Curtain's fall and Russia's "return to Europe", Russia in many ways remains an empire at the eastern end of Europe rather than a nation-state at the northern tip of Eurasia. This will remain a fact of life over at least the medium term, requiring Brussels and Moscow to pursue a responsible policy in the meantime.

The following sections 2 and 3 will make the case that European countries – Russia, the EU and countries of their shared neighbourhood – should recognise their differences in perceptions and interests and adopt a path toward Europe becoming a pluralistic pillar of international order, positioning "Responsible Europe" as a practical, forward-looking alternative to the vision of a common European home that was dreamt of at the end of the Cold War. Section 4 takes a look at socio-economic underpinnings of responsibility, particularly salient at times when governments throughout the world grapple with the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic. The final section 5 suggests how Responsible Europe should go about dealing with its most powerful neighbours – the United States and China – in order to become an influential and independent foreign policy actor. Responsible Europe may be a long-term project, but this does not prevent the launch of track-two discussions to lay the groundwork in the interim.

Russia and the EU: towards the path of responsibility

By Pavel Kanevsky and Mykola Kapitonenko

Current relations between the EU and Russia revolve around a fundamental question: what will make states behave responsibly and obey the rules? Since there is no world government or global police, following the rules should be the best rational strategy in the long run (at least assuming similar capabilities of the respective sides). States should rationally pick compliance over non-compliance.

Recent experience indicates that big powers can tolerate punishment: anti-Russian sanctions imposed by the US and the EU are obviously not enough to significantly change Moscow's policies. A further imposition of high costs would include more military build-up, preventive measures, demonstrations of hostility, and the like. However, a set of measures of this sort could make Europe an even less secure place.

At first glance, there is no immediate solution in the current situation. With political changes across the post-Soviet space that have brought states in-between closer to the European Union and NATO, Russia finds itself almost isolated from an increasingly integrated European space, which, in turn, only reinforces the securitisation of domestic and foreign policies in Moscow. As a result, Russia acts not particularly responsibly towards the EU because it is disillusioned by the shape of its institutions, which in its own turn is the consequence of the inability to become part of these institutions or at least benefit from them.

The EU, in turn, does feel some responsibility towards Russia, but only in terms of minimising security risks and defending its economic interests. Some states have more at stake because of their trade flows to and from and energy dependence on Russia. Others, mostly in Central and Eastern Europe, are much more sceptical and see Russia's regional ambitions as malicious. There is a general consensus in the EU that politically Russia is not likely to democratise any time soon, while its geopolitical interests are interpreted as violating the very essence of current international rules and norms.

In this situation no grand cooperative framework is feasible. However, as the history of the Cold War teaches us, even in the atmosphere of strong disagreements actors must not lose their sense of responsibility towards each other. So how could Russia and the EU return to the path of responsible behaviour towards both each other and the states in-between, even when unifying values are missing and interests coincide only partially?

Recommendations

First, both Russia and the EU must clearly demonstrate how they envision and fulfil their responsible policies towards each other, international organisations and other states that are often victims of misunderstanding of intentions in Russia and the European Union. It would be logical if both sides agreed that, despite divergent interests, they are both responsible for fostering the peaceful existence of states in their shared neighbourhood and the well-being of their citizens. The cases of Armenia and, until recently, Moldova demonstrate that both sides can cooperate and align their interests with the interests of the respective states.

Second, both sides must ensure at the very least the continuation of limited cooperation in areas of mutual interest, such as economic cooperation, public health, cybersecurity, terrorism, migration, environment, culture, science and education. Taken together, real actions in all of these areas could build a number of bridges that would bring Russia, the EU and states in-between closer to developing a joint agenda. Political values remain the most contradictory part of cooperation. The EU must act as a guarantor of basic democratic principles and the rule of law, but at the same time acknowledge historic and cultural differences in Russia and also, to a different extent, states in-between, who travel on a non-linear path of democratisation.

Third, the interests of respective actors should be defined and articulated as clearly as possible. For example, why does Russia want some control over Ukraine? Why does Ukraine want to join NATO and why are some NATO member states so eager to offer Ukraine NATO membership? Why would the EU want to play a role in Eastern Europe? Often positions

of states seem incompatible at first sight. But talking about interests might clarify mutual threat perceptions and open up space for compromises. For instance, if Russia perceives NATO or EU membership aspirations as a threat, security compensations, guarantees and procedures should be considered. If the EU wants a stable and democratic neighbourhood without extending membership, the strategic situation would be different. Russia also may be better off with a stable, prosperous and predictable neighbourhood.

Any European security system will need time to evolve and will probably not meet the interests of all states to the full extent. In the long term, such system should try incorporating those interests into shared institutions and norms. Revisionism is dangerous; and to reduce this danger it will be useful to initiate an open dialogue about the interests of all stakeholders. Responsibility – in both creating and following norms and rules – should become more pragmatic and less emotional.

Fourth, norms and institutions should be more dynamic and take into account rapid changes in the geopolitical landscape. International organisations such as the UN or the OSCE should be more responsive and creative in responding to challenges and conflicts in Europe. There is a need to update their institutional design and peacekeeping approaches. Certainly, this largely depends on the member states, who have not always been committed to solutions-oriented policies and, most recently, have even torpedoed multilateral organisations.

The Charter of Paris of the OSCE still hold principles that are aimed at preserving the spirit and philosophy of mutual responsibility. It should not be forgotten that the Helsinki process was not a solution in itself, but it proposed a system of dynamic communication that eventually led to better understanding of positions and interests. In this sense the OSCE must be promoted further as probably the most inclusive communication hub on all levels of decision-making and expertise.

Lastly, it is important to bear in mind that Russia as well as the EU and the states in-between will in any eventuality remain important parts of the European

security architecture. No compromise between big powers should be imposed if it goes against or ignores the aspirations and needs of smaller states. Their fundamental need for more security should be addressed by introducing credible guarantees. Yet durable solutions should also take into account geopolitical interests and fears of Russia. If interests are addressed properly, smaller countries in Europe would become contributors to, not consumers of, regional security. They may provide important input to the development of normative and institutional foundations of regional stability and secure a more favourable geostrategic environment for all.

Strong agency of the states in-between as a building block for Responsible Europe

By Alla Leukavets and Dzmitry Halubnichy

Conventionally, small states apply two main foreign policy strategies vis-à-vis their more powerful neighbours. They either bandwagon with one of them or maintain a balance between several neighbours. The current unstable security environment renders these strategies ineffective and leaves small states vulnerable and dependent, thereby undermining the chances to promote their own interests. The 2014 crisis in Ukraine can be considered a critical juncture in the development of European security and it should be used as an impetus by all the six states of the EU-Russia shared neighbourhood, i.e. Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, to assume local ownership, strengthen their agency and increase their independence as well as responsibility on the international political arena.

In order to start building a Responsible Europe, it is necessary to make a transition from a region characterised by strong asymmetric dependencies to a region characterised by more symmetric interdependencies. The fundamental assumption is that the more synergies there are on all levels between the small states themselves as well as between them and the larger powers and external players, the more stable, inclusive and predictable the regional order will become. As a result, a Responsible Europe will start taking shape, where the interests of states of all sizes are taken into consideration and where both individual and collective interests of the states in-between are promoted in a responsible manner.

A responsible foreign policy for the six small post-Soviet states located between the EU and Russia rests on two foundations: economic resilience and political stability.

Economic resilience aims for the attainment of greater prosperity as well as the ability to withstand economic shocks by making comprehensive reforms to reach trade diversification (product range and trade partners) and greater energy independence (different sources and suppliers).

Political stability implies the presence of functioning accountable institutions and a working system of checks and balances, which reduce the possibility of violence and unrest inside a state (internal stability) and avert or deal with conflicts involving other states with negative regional repercussions (external stability).

Recommendations

First, the states in-between should see responsibility not only as following the rules, but also shaping them. At present, the six states often act as passive recipients of the rules, set by their bigger neighbours, i.e. the EU and Russia. Instead of doing this, the six countries should take a more active stance in the process of shaping regional rules. One of the states in-between which has already been trying to adopt such an approach is Belarus. It has undertaken significant diplomatic efforts to reduce the risks of the regional confrontation and to relax tensions between Russia and the West. Minsk has become a platform for international talks to resolve the crisis in Ukraine. Belarus's mediating role in the peace-making process has been highly praised by Western stakeholders. Diplomatic contacts between Minsk and Brussels have intensified, the EU has resumed talks on a visa facilitation regime and lifted sanctions from Belarus in February 2016. In addition, Minsk officially participates in other de-escalation initiatives in the region. For example, it has recently proposed to become a platform for a new "Helsinki-2" process, which focuses on establishing a broad dialogue to overcome the existing disagreements in the relations between the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian countries.

Second, the states in-between should take a responsible approach to improving their economic and political situation, and the impetus for these domestic reforms should come not from external actors, but from the six countries themselves.

For example, Georgia, in the words of a member of its Parliament, Tamar Khulordava, should carry out reforms for the sake of the country's own development, not potential EU membership. According to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, his country should not "beg" the EU or the US for financial support but should strive to conduct comprehensive reforms

and develop its own potential. These voices should be multiplied and strengthened, while successful reforms implemented by these countries can serve as best practice examples for other in-between states and create a positive spillover effect for the whole region.

Third, the states in-between should develop a responsible approach towards energy security and conduct reforms instead of being entrapped in a cycle of energy rents. Except for Azerbaijan and Georgia, the countries have a high level of energy dependency on Russia. This structural asymmetry has been often used by Russia as a means of pressure and rewards to influence specific foreign policy choices of the states in-between. In order to strengthen their stance in the international arena, the six countries should undertake comprehensive reforms and develop diversification strategies instead of accepting cheap energy resources from Russia. The states in-between can considerably decrease their energy dependence through decarbonising, greening their economies, effective waste management and increasing alternative sources in the energy mixes. In this way, they can avoid the vicious circle of having their economy subsidised by their bigger neighbour or a "resource curse" phenomenon that leads to less growth and development.

Fourth, some of the states in-between should consider a neutral stance in relation to their larger neighbours such as the EU and Russia (and potentially outside powers such as the US and China, see chapter 5). For example, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova have association agreements with the EU but are not members of NATO. Azerbaijan neither plays an active role in the EU integration projects, nor expresses a wish to join Russia-led integration initiatives such as the Eurasian Economic Union. In fact, in 2011, it joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) – an international organisation whose members aim not to be officially aligned with or against any major power bloc. Preservation of a neutral stance may be a viable strategy for some states in-between and help others to co-exist while participating in competing integration formats, such as the EAEU, or having a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with the EU. Opinion polls in states in-between (except Ukraine) show a preference for a "third way" – equally close relations with the EU and the EAEU and also for neutrality as opposed to alignment.

Fifth, the states in-between can become major drivers of closer cooperation between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union. At present these two economic initiatives are considered to be rival integration projects. If certain states in-between persistently and collectively express an interest in trading with both counterparts and in developing compatible production standards, this can give an impetus to an intensified EU-EAEU dialogue and as a result strengthen the economic underpinning of Responsible Europe.

Sixth, the states in-between should develop a common vision of their fundamental shared needs and challenges, thereby strengthening their collective agency. They should acknowledge shared responsibility for the neighbourhood, i.e. responsibility for yourself and your neighbours. They should strive for developing a common understanding of values and increase communication and partnerships among themselves as well as with the EU, Russia and outside powers. In order to develop their collective agency, it is important for the states in-between to have their own platform, which will become a catalyst for their shared interests and will not need backing by any of the regional powers.

Responsible Europe can only work as an interplay of two processes. First, big powers such as the EU and Russia should create an enabling environment for the development of the states in-between. Second, the six states should be responsible for the decisions they make vis-à-vis each other and the larger powers. They should base these decisions on the convergence of mutual interests as well as promote their individual interests in a responsible way that contributes to overall security on the continent.

Socio-economic responsibility in Europe and beyond

By Ewa Dąbrowska, Bartosz Rydliński and Aliya Tskhay

With the return of geopolitics caused by the war in Ukraine, the (socio)economic dimension of international politics received less attention in political debates compared to the aftermath of the global financial crisis 2008–2009. Yet the global coronavirus pandemic painfully brought back on the agenda the issues of public health, social resilience and economic stability – if not the very way our societies and economies are organised. Having reached shanty towns and royal palaces alike, the pandemic exposed the fragility of our societies and called into question previously taken-for-granted international ties, flows of goods and people, and indeed security. The global scale of the corona challenge calls for a united, cooperative response, particularly with regard to socio-economic policies.

Hence we propose to turn to socio-economic problems – no matter if related to the coronavirus or not – as a common issue area that affects everybody. Since they are shared (although to a different degree) by most European countries, they constitute an important basis for collective action of a new kind. First, states in Responsible Europe face common challenges ranging from the spread of contagious diseases, disruption of trade and value-chains, grievances of small businesses, poverty and unemployment, macro-economic instability and the like. Common approaches will help to address them. Second, addressing socio-economic problems will help enhance trust and put in place constructive mechanisms of interdependence, creating more understanding for concerns of other European countries, especially of those that are traditionally perceived as rivals or as having opposite political interests.

Turning to socio-economic problems might even prove a partial solution to the current security stalemate between Russia and the West. Stable growth was an important basis for Vladimir Putin's legitimacy in 2000–2008. With the subsequent economic decline, foreign policy came to replace economics as the source of presidential legitimacy. Would tackling socio-economic problems in Russia help support legitimacy of the Russian president? Perhaps, but another possible effect could be the empowerment of groups with a progressive agenda and the rise of respect in Russian society for the EU and other European countries. As for Ukraine and other countries of the Russia-EU neighbourhood, solving economic problems will help sustain their still fragile statehood. The West should regard them not just as providers of migrants, but as functioning states and economies. A thriving economy in this region will underpin its prosperity and security.

Instead of proposing a new but unrealistic "Marshall Plan", as, for example, the Ukrainian minister of economy advocated for in 2015, Responsible Europe opts for institutional mechanisms through which its members seek mutually beneficial solutions to common economic problems. Ideally, Western institutions will not just impose their regulations on other regions, but the latter will be worked out in a common process. Indeed, countries that find themselves within transformation processes often know their actual problems and needs much better in general but also in detail.

Recommendations

The structural changes in the global economy we are currently facing and the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic concern all countries alike, regardless of their position in the international division of labour. The transformation of the labour market in the face of new technologies and ecological changes is a massive challenge that requires enhanced cooperation efforts both across different countries and across different groups within societies. Problems of socio-economic insecurities, the consequences of climate change and the pandemic should thus become the arches for constructive cooperation.

Youth employment: Being exposed to job insecurity and in many cases expecting to have a more modest life than the generation of their parents, young people are an especially vulnerable group in European economies. The economic reverberations of the corona crisis are likely to exacerbate the situation of the young. The EU has already launched some pro-youth policies, such as the Youth Guarantee programme, which could be promoted by the International Labour

Organisation (ILO) or the OSCE in non-EU countries as well. But even within the EU, there is potential for better supporting labour prospects of the youth. Youth policies should be better coordinated with economic policy in the EU, and infrastructure and governance mechanisms for implementing these policies should be improved.

A more successful youth employment policy is only conceivable if the austerity model of fiscal policy is abandoned. Ironically, the initial corona crisis offers such an opportunity, as the massive fiscal stimulus proposals depart from the dearly-held austerity model. This does not imply fiscal irresponsibility, but more leeway for financing investment in the EU member countries and the development of new mechanisms for financing the budget. Subsequently, this new positive model of fiscal and employment policy could be expanded to non-EU countries, increasing the normative power of the EU and potentially reducing immigration from countries in which the employment situation of the youth is critical.

Climate change and sustainable development: Responsible Europe should find mechanisms to deal with climate change by responding to European countries' diverging attitudes and interests vis-à-vis the issue of reducing CO_2 emissions. Western European countries demonstrate a higher level of climate change awareness than Eastern European ones, yet both largely fail to achieve their CO_2 reduction goals. New EU member states, the six states in-between, Central Asian countries and Russia probably face the biggest challenge, because coal and other fossil fuels are an important part of the energy mix, and many jobs depend on related industries. Also, climate change deniers are politically more powerful in that part of Europe.

New civic education projects, new platforms for negotiation and finding common mechanisms for reducing CO_2 emissions and last but not least new loans and grants for East European members of the EU and possibly EU neighbour countries are all common elements of a new responsibility towards the problem of climate change. Again, the new realities that are being shaped by the unprecedented scale of the coronavirus challenge should be used as a chance. With global production, mobility, air traffic and the corresponding emissions plummeting, Responsible Europe and its partners (for instance, Canada) should seize the opportunity to decisively move towards carbon neutrality, leaving the year 2019 as a peak emission year in human history.

New alliances: Responsible Europe should be shared among all stakeholders: governments, society, unions and, of course, businesses. The European societies' expectations from the companies are growing beyond Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). With higher pressure from civil society, stricter government regulations and better awareness of the general public, business entities are expected to contribute to improving the lives of people and the environment. Corporate responsibility is a crucial component of Responsible Europe chiefly because companies are an integral part of societies. They have the capacity and means to contribute to a more prosperous, inclusive and secure Europe – as providers of jobs, indispensable goods, innovations, or by implementing social and environmental standards. Companies can partner with governments and civil society for finding solutions to common crises in the European space. The current frenetic work by private actors to find a corona vaccine and simultaneous government support to prevent bankruptcies and layoffs are a case in point.

Apart from engaging business, new alliances between international organisations could be helpful in engendering responsible collective action in the face of socio-economic challenges. Targeted cooperation between relevant agencies of the UN, the EU and the OSCE, with inclusion of civil society actors, could significantly enhance their effectiveness and reduce duplication. Combating the negative consequences of climate change, the precariousness of work, structural unemployment among young people, the uberisation of work and the growing importance of digitisation and robotisation in the European and world economies require us to join forces instead of multiplying programmes. Together with the EU and the OSCE, the International Labour Organisation could act as a guardian of compliance with the conventions and good practices already implemented in some countries. Examples of this are programmes aimed at reducing working time in order to increase employment and the productivity of workers them-

selves. The corona-induced global experience of work from home, at least in many white-collar professions, can encourage employers to grant workers more flexibility in the future, laying a foundation for a better work-life balance.

The ILO-EU-OSCE alliance could also be an effective tool for promoting uniform employment standards in Europe. It is often the case that companies with Western ownership capital do not apply the same practices in developing countries and economies in transition as in their place of origin. Corporate social responsibility assumes not only respect for the right to decent wages, but also the right to join independent trade unions. A pro-working alliance of international organisations will be able to support employees in enforcing their wage demands and those concerning the quality of work in case of a dispute with a private employer. This is all the more important because in most post-communist countries, the neoliberal system transformation has almost completely wiped out the culture of trade unions and collective disputes, which are the essence of democracy in the West.

Responsible Europe vis-à-vis China and the USA

By Alexander Graef, Alla Leukavets, Zachary Paikin and Anna Gussarova

If the transformation of Europe into a stable and autonomous pillar of the wider international order is to be successful, Responsible Europe gradually needs to develop a posture vis-à-vis regional economic integration projects and develop its own security agenda.

The EU and Russia both have relationships with China defined by a mixture of cooperation and competition, albeit to differing extents. Both have an interest in shaping China's presence in Europe in a way that contributes to the overall prosperity and security of the continent. Rather than viewing Chinese investments and initiatives in various parts of Europe exclusively as a threat to normative cohesion, there is the potential to look at them as "plugging holes" in a wider European space, which has descended into rivalry. There is ample space for both Russia and the EU to collaborate on this front – harnessing the opportunities of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) while delineating China's European role – without either of them compromising on core foreign policy strategies and objectives. The principles that inform state behaviour and uphold regional order in the European space will naturally differ from those in other regions in an increasingly diverse and polycentric world. Just as the EU is a secondary but constructive player in the Central Asian region that is primarily shaped by Russia and China, Beijing's role in Europe can be delineated by local actors.

The role of the United States in the European security architecture is also a contentious issue that Responsible Europe needs to address, even if it takes years for a new continental equilibrium to emerge. Most European states both within and beyond NATO still largely look to the US to serve as their primary security partner, while Russia has often been accused of wanting to split the transatlantic alliance. The Trump administration has devoted much of its political capital to reframing the country's role in the world, specifically with respect to US leadership and EU defence. This represents an opportunity for Europe to enhance its collective agency, putting the continent as a whole in the driver's seat on key regional and global issues. The US as the world's most powerful state is not going to retreat completely into isolation, and so the onus is on Europe to help shape Washington's role in Europe in a constructive matter, nudging it into a new era of its foreign policy in which it is no longer always the "indispensable nation".

Recommendations

First, Responsible Europe as a whole should develop an approach of engaging with China based on comprehensive, sustainable and rules-based connectivity. The BRI is often viewed as a challenge by the EU, because China actively intensifies its engagement with countries in the EU's neighbourhood but does not use the same standard of doing business with its partners as the EU. Russia shares the EU's suspicion, wary of growing Chinese investment and presence in the Caucasus and Central Asia but at the same time is eager not to be ignored by the BRI project. Some of the South Eastern European states – both within and outside the EU – often find themselves in an even more difficult situation, lacking an alternative for the desperately needed investment coming from China. In joint consultations, European countries should develop an engagement strategy with China and utilise existing connectivity platforms, possibly under the auspices of the OSCE's economic and environmental dimension.

Second, Responsible Europe should strive to develop elements of complementarity between regional economic and integration blocs, including the EU, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the BRI. A joint European approach that is rooted in engagement and actively searches for potential synergies would be welcome. A key role in this process should belong to states in between major powers, which can serve as bridges in developing cooperation formats between different Eurasian integration projects. For example, Armenia and Kazakhstan are both members of the EAEU and signed Partnership Agreements with the EU, but at the same time play an active role in realising some of the BRI projects. A similar pattern applies to EAEU member Belarus, which engages with both the EU and China. For instance, Belarus has recently started cooperating with EU member Poland over infrastructure projects as part of China's BRI. Some

EU members, such as Greece, have already shown an interest in building synergies between different integration projects by cooperating with both the EAEU and China's BRI.

These examples demonstrate that Chinese investment, EAEU rules and the EU's modernisation agenda are not mutually exclusive. Quite to the contrary, cooperation between these stakeholders is key to economic prosperity and regional security. It constitutes a responsible approach, particularly needed once countries start to revive economic and human exchanges in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Third, Responsible Europe should take active steps towards becoming a more independent and sovereign actor in global affairs, inter alia, by strengthening its own foreign and security policy. This is bound to be a long, multi-step process given different degrees of integration in Europe. The first step should be taken by the EU. The union should utilise its Permanent Structured Cooperation Mechanism (PESCO) to strengthen its own military capabilities in particular niches and improve collaboration and readiness. Better intra-EU defence policy coordination, the promotion of a sound industrial and technological basis for procurement as well as further defence investments can create both agency and opportunity. At the same time, the EU should prepare for a structural transformation of the transatlantic relationship, the eruption of security crises in its (wider) neighbourhood and policy shifts by neighbours adversely affecting EU interests. In such cases the EU needs to be able to defend its vital interests, and, indeed, security.

In the next step towards the emergence of Responsible Europe as an independent pillar of international order, the empowered EU can engage Russia and other neighbours and, whenever necessary, offer pragmatic cooperation to outside powers such as the US or China. Among the most pressing issues are the fight against climate change and pandemics, as well as the strengthening of arms control and nuclear non-proliferation. Here the common efforts by the EU, Russia and China to uphold the Iran nuclear deal after the US walked away provide a pioneering example.

Fourth, Responsible Europe, of which Russia is an essential part, needs to develop a long-term strategy for how to square great power identity with a regional order based on pooled sovereignty. Although the annexation of Crimea has seemingly imbued the transatlantic alliance with renewed purpose, the ensuing sanctions have also pushed Moscow toward a closer partnership with Beijing. If left unaddressed, these developments stand to widen the chasm that has emerged between the EU and Russia even further. However, they also represent an opportunity for Russia to gradually reduce its sense of insecurity vis-à-vis NATO.

Responsible Europe must develop fruitful relations with outside powers, primarily the United States and China. Given their economic strength, capacity for social innovation and overwhelming military power, both states affect the conditions under which Responsible Europe can thrive. Renewed dialogue, regime development and institution-building between Responsible Europe on the one hand and Beijing and Washington on the other have the potential to establish the wider European space as both a pillar and a bridge that can mitigate the transformation of international politics into a bipolar Sino-American rivalry.

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FES ROCPE in Vienna

The goal of the FES Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe (FES ROCPE) of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Vienna is to come to terms with the challenges to peace and security in Europe since the collapse of the Soviet Union a quarter of a century ago. These issues should be discussed primarily with the countries of Eastern Europe – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – and with Russia, as well as with the countries of the EU and with the US. The security order of Europe, based until recently on the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and the Paris Charter (1990), is under threat. This is, among others, a result of different perceptions of the development of international relations and threats over the last 25 years, resulting in divergent interests among the various states.

For these reasons, FES ROCPE supports the revival of a peace and security dialogue and the development of new concepts in the spirit of a solution-oriented policy. The aim is to bring scholars and politicians from Eastern Europe, Russia, the EU and the US together to develop a common approach to tackle these challenges, to reduce tensions and to aim towards conflict resolution. It is our belief that organisations such as the FES have the responsibility to come up with new ideas and to integrate them into the political process in Europe.

We support the following activities:

- Regional and international meetings for developing new concepts on cooperation and peace in Europe;

- A regional network of young professionals in the field of cooperation and peace in Europe;

- Cooperation with the OSCE in the three dimensions: the politico-military, the economic and the human.