

## Editorial

### *EU-Russia post-Samara*

The EU-Russia summit on 18 May at Samara on the Volga was at the same time both a non-event and a watershed event. The verbatim record of the press conference between President Putin, Chancellor Merkel and President Barroso, reprinted here in full, is quite a rich representation of the state of affairs.

Here we have three highly competent leaders doing their best to prevent the negatives currently on display from spiraling out of control, while at the same time standing their ground on what they feel to be important.

Their initial statements show all three recording that there is a lot of current business in the relationship that needs to be carried forward, and indeed this is being done up to a point (visas, Kaliningrad transit, customs delays, cross-border cooperation, energy cooperation, research, trade policy, climate change, etc.).

But all three put down their political markers too:

- Putin: Rights of Russian minorities in Latvia and Estonia should be protected
- Merkel: Kasparov (not named) should have been allowed to demonstrate
- Barroso: Problems with Poland, Lithuania or Estonia are problems with the EU 27

The journalists tried to warm things up with their questions. The Estonian affair over removal of the monument was the most sensitive touchstone. Barroso spoke with finesse. These historical issues are very sensitive ... if you asked the European Union we would say: be careful, discuss these issues. That said it is the government's sovereign decision to decide what monuments it wants. ... Russia has renamed certain cities. This is Russia's right. I would like to say something else ... we have enormous respect for the huge sacrifices of the Russian people during their struggle against the Nazi threat in Europe. President Putin was heard to say in the (closed) meeting that 'maybe we went too far over Estonia'.

Three conclusions may be drawn. EU-Russia affairs divide now more clearly between the business relationship (booming) and the political relationship

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(stand-off). The political differences are discussed openly and candidly, but with care to avoid an escalation to which the media would so eagerly contribute. The idea of the Strategic Partnership Treaty can be shelved until more propitious political conditions prevail, and that may be quite a long time.

*Michael Emerson*

*Joint Press Conference Following the Russia-European Union Summit Meeting*

Samara, Russian Federation, 18 May 2007. [Link](#)

PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN:

Good afternoon dear ladies and gentlemen!

We have just finished the first part of work involved in the 19th Russia-European Union summit meeting here in the Volga region. As you know, this meeting traditionally plays a key role in coordinating our cooperation and taking future-oriented strategic decisions.

As per usual, the summit's agenda was full. We discussed the main results of recent Russia-EU cooperation. We laid out guidelines for future endeavours.

The positive dynamic in our economic relations received special attention during the meeting. Russia ranks a solid third among the EU's trading partners, after only the United States and the People's Republic of China. Along with this, Russia holds the first place when measured according to the growth rates of cooperation with Europe. 52 percent of Russian exports go to the EU. In 2006 the amount of Russia-EU trade grew by almost a third. And indicators from the first few months of 2007 suggest that this trend will continue.

The EU is the largest investor in the Russian economy. And recently a number of major projects have been created in energy, modern technologies and space exploration. I am convinced that creating a more favourable business climate for entrepreneurs and investors is in both of our interests. And today Madam Federal Chancellor proposed that we create a special mechanism, a special instrument to improve conditions in the investment sector. We agree with this and think that such a mechanism certainly should be created.

We are satisfied with the new concrete agreements that we reached during this summit. The agreement on a simplified visa regime between Russia and the EU will enter into force as of 1 June 2007 and we will intensify negotiations on the future transition to a visa-free regime for both parties.

Despite the fact that Lithuania has entered into Schnengen, the regime governing trips by Russian citizens to Kaliningrad and also from Kaliningrad to the rest of the Russian Federation remains unchanged until the introduction of a visa-free regime for mutual trips.

The positive results of the Volga summit include the fact that Russia and the EU are organising a preliminary exchange of electronic information on transporting mutual trade goods. This would reduce the time at the border and would help combat fraud, the forgery of transport documents and, especially, the falsification of goods themselves more effectively. We are also going to work in a coordinated fashion towards resolving the problems associated with the long lineups at the Russian border with EU member countries. We discussed this topic during the Finnish EU presidency and we will continue to work on it today.

I would also like to point out the agreement on speeding up work on programmes for cross-border cooperation between Russia and the European Union. Presently Russian regions are participating in preparing seven out of fifteen such programmes in the framework of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument for 2007-2013.

And finally, at the request of our European partners, we are going to continue working on establishing a mechanism for

mutual information and notification in the energy sector.

One sensitive issue was strengthening the legal framework of Russia-EU cooperation. And we have not yet begun negotiations on a new agreement. But we are not over-dramatising the situation and understand that before the EU can engage in talks, it must resolve its internal problems. We respect this. I will repeat again that Russia values the strategic nature of our partnership.

I would like to emphasise that Russia, a country in which a large number of peoples and cultures have lived and developed for centuries, has made an enormous contribution to the European concept of democracy. And in this context we discussed an extremely important issue, namely the violation of the rights of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia and Estonia. Our position on this issue is well-known and we repeated it during the meeting today: we consider that this is unacceptable and unworthy of Europe.

And finally, an important part of our summit will consist in discussing major international issues. I said 'will consist in' because last night we only touched on several crucially important and painful international problems. We will continue to discuss these problems today following our meeting with you, and the discussion will include the issue of a Middle Eastern settlement. We will certainly speak in more detail about Afghanistan and the Balkans. I hope that Russia and the EU will once again confirm their readiness to join forces in the interests of peace and stability on our continent and in the whole world.

The Samara summit has proved once again that we are intent on engaging in a constructive dialogue and able to find mutually acceptable solutions to existing problems.

And in conclusion I would like to thank our European colleagues for the useful and very constructive discussion, for understanding the need for a dialogue among equals, and the stable development of every European country without exception.

I am very glad that the Volga Region was at the centre of our cooperation with various European structures: with the European Union and the European Commission. Tomorrow the yearly meeting of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development will open in Kazan. It is really quite near to where we are now. We welcome this event as well. We would like to thank the Bank's leadership for having made the decision to meet in Russia again. And I am sure that this meeting will be just as successful as our meeting today.

Thank you very much for your attention.

GERMAN CHANCELLOR ANGELA MERKEL (simultaneous translation):

I think that it was good to sit down together today. We finished the first part of our work. In the second part we will be talking about foreign affairs. I would like to thank you once again for having invited us here. Given our agenda, it seems like it would be impossible not to notice that there are many issues on which we are working very intensively. For example, the fact that the European Union is Russia's largest trading partner and that Russia is the EU's third largest is evidence of just how intense our relations are.

In addition, this summit revealed that there are a great many problems that have accumulated and that we naturally talked about. At the same time, we have not always been able to convince each other of our opinions. However, I consider that

it is always much better to talk to one another rather than about one another. And I think that it was a good idea to meet in the heart of Russia, to meet here in the beautiful Volga region. We had the opportunity to get a fleeting impression of the beauty of this region and its industrial capabilities.

I will say honestly that I would have preferred it if those who wanted to demonstrate today in Samara had been able to express their opinions and received the opportunity to do so. I am very concerned about the fact that there were some problems linked to entering here. But I hope that they will be able to express their opinions. I am speaking on behalf of all EU member states, and there are 27 of us.

We talked about our European-wide competences. The President of the European Commission will also say a few words on this topic. Let me just emphasise that we are naturally interested in discussing the partnership and cooperation agreement again and in beginning negotiations on this topic. This must happen. We have no doubts on this regard in the EU. But there were a couple of things that we talked about here during the meeting. There are issues within Europe's competences that have not yet been resolved.

I am very supportive of the fact that we continue to cooperate in the energy sector. President Vladimir Putin talked about the possibility of eventually classifying European demand and in this respect we can think about what we can or cannot do together. There is a tangible readiness to cooperate in this sector.

I also think that we have good cooperation prospects with Europol in cross-border cooperation and research. We have the opportunity to enter into quite new territory here. In particular, I see prospects for cooperation within the EU's Seventh Framework Programme. There are also good opportunities for cooperation within the GALILEO system that the Russian party mentioned today. And I think that, in this respect, there really are a lot of options and possibilities.

As EU President I can say on behalf of all 27 members that we are in full mutual understanding about the fact that we must have a strategic partnership. We hope that the unresolved issues of individual countries or other European-wide issues will be resolved in the near future.

I very highly value the fact that we had such an honest and open dialogue. This is the main prerequisite for successful negotiations and I am therefore very grateful to you.

During our working breakfast, we will talk about international policy matters. We will focus on Iran, Afghanistan and the Middle East. We will make joint efforts on these issues.

PRESIDENT OF THE EU COMMISSION JOSE MANUEL BARROSO (simultaneous translation):

I would like to thank President Putin and the Russian leadership for the hospitality that they have shown us here in Volzhsky Utyos, a beautiful corner of central Russia.

It is very important that we are holding this summit - this open, frank exchange of views. We recognise that there has been progress in many areas, particularly in our economic investment relations. There has been visible development in that respect. This is one of the reasons why we support Russia's accession to the WTO.

Today Russia is the world's only major economy that is not a WTO member and we are very supportive of the process by which Russia becomes a WTO member.

In addition, we are aware of significant progress in the dialogue

relating to the free movement of citizens. In particular, we would highlight the agreement on simplifying visa procedures and on readmission. It will enter into force in June. It represents a significant success. We are also engaged in dialogue on a visa-free regime.

We would also emphasise the progress in our academic and cultural cooperation. Russia is one country outside the European Union that receives the most funding for research projects within a cooperation framework. And we consider this a success.

Of course, there are a number of important issues linked to the work we can do in the energy sector and in the fight against climate change. Especially in view of the forthcoming G8 summit that will soon take place in Germany under the leadership of Chancellor Angela Merkel.

There has been significant progress in cross-border cooperation and we have managed to resolve some practical problems. We can consider this to represent positive developments.

Of course, difficulties remain. The question of Polish meat is a difficult one for us. We had the opportunity to tell our Russian partners that difficulties for an EU member amount to difficulties for the entire EU. The European Union is based on the principle of solidarity. We now have 27 members. And Poland's problem is a pan-European problem. Just as Lithuanian or Estonian problems are problems for all of Europe. And in order to achieve real, positive, close cooperation, we need to understand that the European Union is based on the principle of solidarity. And I therefore believe that this issue must be resolved in a spirit of cooperation, in a constructive spirit.

We also examined the issues that concern us in the spheres of civil rights and human rights. We discussed these issues openly and honestly.

I hope that we can see progress on some of these issues. The European Union appreciates cooperation with Russia. We see Russia as our nearest neighbour and an important strategic partner. Thank you.

QUESTION: Good afternoon. I have three quick questions: one for each leader. The first question is probably for Madam Merkel. We know that, ostensibly, as part of the preparations for the G8 summit there were a number of searches and raids on radical social organisations in German cities and quite coercive measures were used to disperse demonstrators. Please tell us the reason behind this brutality?

And a question for Mr Barroso. You are from Portugal. You are all too well aware of the meaning of fascism. What is the EU's attitude to neo-fascism in general and to the fact that fascist monuments are being erected in some EU cities?

And finally, I have a question for President Putin. Vladimir Vladimirovich, do the Dissenters' Marches disturb you? Why shouldn't people be allowed to walk? In what way are they bothering you?

Thank you. Could you start by answering the last question?

VLADIMIR PUTIN: Dissenters' Marches, as you said, take place not only in Russia; they also take place in virtually every other country in the world. In any case, in almost all of the world's major cities. And generally people take to the streets not because they are approving the authorities' actions but rather to express their opinion or to have the opportunity to make critical remarks or take on a critical position with respect to the actions of certain authorities. And Russia is not an exception in this regard. I am not bothered by these marches in any way.

I believe that any such activities must take place within the existing legislative framework and not prevent other citizens from living a normal life. One must abide by the law and the requirements of the local authorities that define, and should define, the place that certain actions can take place in accordance with existing legislation. This refers both to Russia and to our EU partners. You yourself alluded to what happened in Tallinn, for example. It was not just that demonstrators were dispersed -- a demonstrator was killed there. And it is not even the fact that an accident happened that was the issue. We are concerned by something else, by the fact that the person in question did not receive any help when he was injured. And he was dying right in front of the police. This constitutes a voluntary crime and we demand that the perpetrators be brought to justice.

GERMAN CHANCELLOR ANGELA MERKEL (simultaneous translation): There will be big demonstrations in connection with the G8 summit in Heiligendamm in which thousands of peaceful demonstrators will take part, and there are no concerns that these demonstrations will not be able to take place. They will receive a great deal of support. For example, pop singers are already supporting it and others are as well. The raids that were carried out were done so in connection with a very long pursuit of arsonists. The Prosecutor General's Office in Germany examined this issue and investigated it. There is evidence to show that these criminal elements have a network throughout Germany.

This is an absolutely normal occurrence. As to demonstrations, including the ones in Hamburg, there will always be cases in which demonstrators themselves use force or violence and then the police must act. It is possible to have major demonstrations in Germany and they will certainly take place during the G8 summit.

PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION JOSE MANUEL BARROSO (simultaneous translation): You are correct regarding Portugal. But I am not here to represent my own country -- I represent the European Union. But what you mentioned and the fact that I can remember a time when my country was not free (a democratic revolution took place in Portugal 18 years ago), have resulted in my sincere belief in democratic values. And not only for myself but also for the European Commission and the European Union. Democracy and freedom, the rule of law, and freedom of the person are all sacred principles. And that is why we condemn any manifestation of support for fascism or neo-fascism. We strongly condemn this. No country in the European Union supports fascism, or speaks favourably of fascism or neo-nazism. We are against any manifestation of support for such regimes. We fully support democratic development. It is for precisely that reason that we emphasise the importance of democracy, freedom of associations, and of demonstration. And that is why we are repeatedly required to express our concern when we see limitations imposed on these rights and freedoms. And for that reason we believe that it is very important that all European countries and Russia, a European country that is close to us and with whom we want to have common values, fully observe those principles and values.

QUESTION: A question for the President of the Council of the European Union [Angela Merkel]. Do you have the impression that Russia really wants to draw closer to the European Union?

Problems exist and you mentioned them. You probably were unable to resolve any of these problems. Do you perceive Russia as desirous to converge with the European Union?

And a question to Mr President [Vladimir Putin]. If you want to compare with the treatment of demonstrators in other countries, Mr Kasparov is now sitting at the airport because he does not have a passport -- it was taken away. The police has seized computers. Why do you fear giving such a small crowd the opportunity to express its opinion?

ANGELA MERKEL (simultaneous translation): In answer to the question of whether we want to work together (you asked about my impression of Russia), it is always difficult to transmit one's impressions. I can say that we talked very constructively about a great many things. We saw evidence of the fact that we are very close to one another and that we have very close trade relations. For that reason we are also interested in reliable relations. We agreed on one thing that I consider to be very important in connection with the law on investments in strategic sectors that was discussed in the Duma. We agreed that the EU will engage in dialogue about this law. And of course this will determine both reliability and reciprocity, including with respect to Russian investments in Europe. In other words, this dialogue is tangible and visible. There are sectors in which dialogue is now difficult. The outcome depends on us. I can speak for the European Union when I say that we have the desire to overcome all these obstacles. We are well aware that we had problems in the EU but we will still be able to move forward. And time will tell. I consider that these obstacles are surmountable ones. And we have differences on certain accounts but it is good that we can now talk about them openly and honestly. And this will continue to be the case in the future.

VLADIMIR PUTIN: As to the suggestion that we were not able to agree on any issue, it is absolutely mistaken. We agreed on almost all issues, except for on the particularly sensitive problems that require further study and additional work. And in general these are issues that are in the economic self-interest of a certain European country, but as a whole they are always in the EU's interests as well as in Russia's interests. As I already mentioned, we agreed on border cooperation. We agreed on customs cooperation. We agreed on cooperation in combating crime. We agreed on the fight against illegal drugs. And there are yet many other agreements which will certainly benefit the citizens of the European Union and those of the Russian Federation.

True, we have not yet resolved the issue of Polish meat. Our Polish colleagues, our friends, have not talked to us for more than a year now -- thank God that the German Chancellor is able to represent their interests. We are going to continue to work on this issue. Russian producers also have interests at stake. You understand that the EU engages in huge subsidies for its agriculture. Our producers could not even dream of such subsidies. And a product is tossed out of eastern European countries onto our market. We cannot yet cope with or resolve this problem. However, exporting agricultural products -- and especially low quality ones -- through EU countries, including through Poland from third countries, is unacceptable for us. We must engage in dialogue on how to resolve this problem. We are in favour of this, we are not against it. And we have accepted several proposals that Madam Federal Chancellor put forward and we will continue to work on this.

And now as to what we are afraid of and what we are not

afraid of. You know, after seven years of work, after restoring the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, its defence capabilities have increased significantly, as have its democratic and governmental institutions. If we were to calculate in euros then we can say that the incomes of Russian citizens have quadrupled. They have doubled in real terms. We have nothing to fear from marginal groups. And especially not the very small ones we know about. But the law enforcement agencies implement preventative measures in all countries. Is that good or bad? I think that in many cases it is far from being justified. And we cited such examples today. And such examples also exist in Germany: arrests, detentions and so forth are a part of preventative measures. What happened in Hamburg? 146 people were detained. I think that in our case two hundred people gathered to demonstrate, and there as much as 160 were detained as a preventative measure. Is this good or bad? We talked with Madam Merkel today. I think that such actions by law enforcement agencies are far from always being justified. And certainly we -- the people involved in public and political activities -- bear responsibility for this. We are going to work with our law enforcement system. But I can assure you that everyone who wants to demonstrate in accordance with the existing legislation and not by violating the order or the laws of the Russian Federation, will benefit from the opportunity to do so. Many of them provoke the law enforcement agencies to use violence and force and this, of course, draws a predictable reaction from the police or, in our case, from the militia. We are going to work with our law enforcement agencies to in any case ensure that journalists have the opportunity to disseminate objective information.

ANGELA MERKEL (simultaneous translation): I would like to say something about the Polish meat, to say one thing. The export of Polish meat and the protection of the consumer are matters incumbent to the European Union. As such, they are being debated at the European level with the appropriate commissioner and in cooperation with the responsible Polish officials. And as the current President of the European Union, I am responsible for the 27 member countries. It is not an internal Polish affair, rather, it is a pan-European issue that involves the European Union.

With regards to the demonstrators, I understand the issue very well. If demonstrators are using violence, throwing stones, breaking store windows or car windows, then of course it is important to limit their actions. I am not saying that we are questioning the state's monopoly on power. However, if a person has not done anything and is simply on his way to a demonstration, then it is a different situation.

QUESTION (simultaneous translation): If you recall three recent summits then there was one in Lahti and Politkovskaya was killed, then there was the Helsinki summit and Litvinenko was murdered, and the most recent example is the detention of Kasparov. How can this be reconciled with a strategic partnership?

JOSE MANUEL BARROSO (simultaneous translation): Let us be honest. Difficulties exist, we discuss them honestly and openly; we discuss these difficulties candidly. Madam Chancellor and I discuss them openly with President Putin. But it is precisely because of these difficulties that we are interested in developing our dialogue. We have identified and highlighted the areas where there has been visible progress.

There is significant progress in a number of areas. Difficulties remain in several other areas.

The Polish problem is an important one because it relates to EU exports. And this is very important for us. This is an EU export that cannot enter Russia. Compared with other countries, Europe has the highest standards for protecting the rights of consumers, the very highest. And for that reason meat from Poland can enter any other EU country. We have confidence in their system. They had certain problems and they made efforts to resolve them. We consider that there is no justification for the ban on Polish meat. If it were founded we would not let meat from Poland circulate in the European Union. Because we also want to protect our own consumers. This is a difficulty that we have faced with our Russian friends and partners.

Human rights are a constant topic in our discussions. This certainly is a serious problem. People are killed and we do not know who is responsible for this, or who is to blame. We declared in Helsinki that this is a cause for concern. Having said that, I must say that we believe it is in the interests of both Russia and the EU to develop their strategic partnership since we share common interests as neighbours. And it really is an important problem for us, an important international problem. And yesterday we started to discuss this issue and we will discuss it during the second half of our meeting today.

I think that the only way forward is to be honest, forthright and value the moments in which we can reach agreements. However, we must not allow the difficulties to pollute or contaminate -- if I may put it that way -- progress towards good collaboration. Our cooperation in many areas is positive cooperation. President Putin said so, I said so myself, and Madam Chancellor remarked that recently there is progress in a number of areas. If we were to compare (and I am taking part in the sixth or seventh summit with Russia) the situation today and that of three or four years ago, then you can see that our economies are more integrated. We trade more. The level of mutual investments is also higher. Therefore, I believe that the potential for further improving our relations in all these areas and in the interests of the Russian Federation and the EU exists.

VLADIMIR PUTIN: If possible, I would also like to make a few comments. As to preventative measures, the police and law enforcement agencies in European countries also operate on a preventative basis -- they do not simply react to violence committed by demonstrators. And we know of examples in which there were anticipatory preventative arrests, very fresh examples -- right now, the day before, very recently, a couple of days ago -- though we are not going to point fingers. And for that reason I would repeat that it is a common problem. That is the first thing.

Second, the crimes that you mentioned. The murder of Politkovskaya, and the murder, the death, of Litvinenko. First of all, these must be investigated. And courts must make the appropriate decisions. And only then can one look for those responsible and draw conclusions.

But you again failed to mention the demonstrator who was killed in Tallinn. And it was not just a random killing, nor was it murder by negligence -- it was a deliberate act. A person who was bleeding received no help and died. Let us not forget about that as well. And we are not using this as a justification for asking whether we need to develop strategic relations with the EU. I think that this would be baseless, unjustified.

The EU has other countries with which it cultivates strategic

relationships. And there is the problem of Guantanamo and the problem of the death penalty, something that is not one of the EU's moral values. And yet you don't question the need for developing a strategic partnership with those countries.

So let us not provoke anything. Both Russia and the EU are interested in developing their relations. And whether we like it or not they are still going to increase. 52 percent of Russia's trade is with the EU. We provide a country such as, for example, Finland with 90 percent of its energy. And the amount we supply to other countries is growing. We are interested in this. Problems exist. Both in Russia and in the EU. We are ready to discuss and resolve these problems actively, openly and frankly.

QUESTION: I have a question for Madam Merkel and President Putin. You are well-known as very pragmatic politicians. Yet in spite of this it seems that relations between Russia and the European Union have reached a dead end. Please say whether Europe is already ready to abandon Russian gas and whether Russia is ready to abandon European currency? Thank you.

ANGELA MERKEL (simultaneous translation): I do not agree with you. On the contrary, the entire programme we talked about today demonstrates that we are not only cooperating very intensively, but that we are also starting to cooperate in different and new fields. We talked about railway communications and about cooperation in scientific research. We both understand that European and Russian enterprises must have equal opportunities on their corresponding markets when developing deposits and other resources. We want to cooperate. We want to take stock of the demand for energy and other things in the near future. And therefore there can be no discussion of a dead end. We have difficulties that we are talking about, that we are discussing, and if such difficulties can not be overcome then we might have difficulty finding a shared path. Everything is just as we have reported here. I see that we need a strategic partnership because we are already within a strategic partnership. We will develop it further.

VLADIMIR PUTIN: I am ready to sign underneath every word that Madam Federal Chancellor said. We need each other. We are cooperating with one another and will continue to cooperate in the future. We are ready for an open and honest dialogue between Russia and the European Union. And today's summit once again confirmed that we are on the right track. Thank you very much.

QUESTION (simultaneous interpretation): Mr Putin, the discussion on human rights shows that there is a debate in Germany on the issue of whether Mr Putin is a pure democrat. Why do you think doubts have surfaced in Europe as to your capacities to be a democrat? And do you see yourself as a pure democrat? And is it your goal to be seen as such? And another question for Mrs Merkel, and to you, Mr Putin. What concrete steps are you planning to improve your relationship with your direct neighbours, with Poland and the Baltic States?

VLADIMIR PUTIN: You asked a very good question. Thank you for that.

What is pure water? What is pure blood? What in today's world could be pure German or pure Russian, without impurities? (You know that in Russia they say: "If you scratch a Russian

you'll find a Tatar". And this is especially topical in the region we are in.)

What is pure democracy? Where can you find it? I already answered your colleague: do we have pure democrats somewhere in the world, or in Germany itself? It is always a question of political judgment and a desire to see the glass half-full or half-empty.

I would like to once again emphasise that we want to work together with our European partners. We are interested in one another. And this process will continue independently of whether someone wants it or doesn't. Our task and the task of people engaged in political activities is to support this development in the interest of millions of people.

And as to neighbours, you know that you do not choose your neighbours. We have lived together for centuries, if not for millennia, and we will continue to live together. Despite the difficulty of neighbour relations and the fact that our interests are sometimes exclusive, we are going to look for solutions. I am confident that we will find them. And if some of our other partners in Europe can act as mediators for both us and our neighbours than that is a good thing. We would not refuse this. But of course direct dialogue is always better. We want to engage in such work and will continue to do so.

ANGELA MERKEL (simultaneous translation): With regards to direct dialogue, I can only subscribe to that thought. We really have moved forward. I think that today the Lithuanian parliament ratified a border treaty with Russia. The Lithuanian parliament ratified the treaty. We have always advocated that people speak directly to one another. And it seems to me that we are continuing to do so. Neighbourhood policy on a global level is always a topic that the EU and Russia discuss intensively. We will talk about this during our working breakfast. And we are more referring to our southern neighbours than to our eastern or northern ones.

QUESTION (simultaneous translation): President Putin has made certain reproaches to the Estonian institutions. He talked about the fact that one demonstrator was allowed to die. Addressing Jose Manuel Barroso: Do you agree with this? And what do you think the reaction of the Estonian authorities should be? Do you think that the Estonian government made the correct decision to relocate the monument to the Soldier Liberator shortly before the celebrations for the end of World War Two?

And another question for President Putin. You emphasised that it is important to you that relations between the EU and Russia operate on the same level. And here is my question: do you think that this was not the case before, that you were not on the same level? Thank you.

JOSE MANUEL BARROSO (simultaneous translation): The Estonian problem, the Estonian issue, does not fall within the competences of our commission but I will nevertheless answer the question.

These issues, these historical issues, are very sensitive and sometimes very painful. The European Commission believes that all countries should deal with these issues in an atmosphere of moderation, by showing respect and an understanding of how sensitive these problems are. That said, I must point out that it is, of course, the government's sovereign decision to decide what monuments it wants to or doesn't want to have. Russia also makes certain decisions in this regard. For

example, Russia has renamed certain cities. There used to be a Leningrad, a Stalingrad, and the names of other towns have changed as well. This is Russia's right. And Estonia also has the right to change names, to change monuments and memorials but, at the same time, if you asked the European Union we would say: be careful, discuss these issues. These issues are very sensitive and delicate and should therefore be treated with caution. That is our position.

As to what occurred in Estonia, we consider that the Estonian authorities made all the appropriate decisions with respect to the judicial system, and that is important. Crimes do happen. Crimes are committed in all countries. And when a given crime occurs it is important that the authorities fight against these crimes using all available mechanisms in accordance with the rule of law. I consider that the Estonian authorities are now acting very clearly and forcefully to overcome the difficulties that have arisen. Again I think that one must act with great care and very cautiously when dealing with historical issues. And we must first and foremost try to look towards the future, to consider our interests. And I think that such an approach is in the interests of the European Union and certainly in Russia's interests as well.

I would like to say something else. In Europe we are very respectful of the struggle of the Russian people -- and I must say the Soviet Union because it was the Soviet Union -- we are very respectful of the fight against Nazism. And we respect the contribution the Soviet Union made within the struggle against Nazism. Together with other EU representatives I was in Moscow to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of the Great Patriotic War. And we have enormous respect for the huge sacrifices of the Russian people during their struggle against the Nazi threat in Europe.

And since I am here I would once again like to state very clearly -- this is a consistent and clear position of all EU institutions and all EU governments -- our respect and our gratitude for the sacrifices that the Russian--Soviet people made in the struggle against Nazism.

VLADIMIR PUTIN : We know the EU's position. We constantly hear about the need for solidarity. We talked about this very frankly today. My colleagues will not be offended that I also asked whether there were any limits to this solidarity. Since there are some issues that must still be resolved from within. But on the whole we are satisfied with how our relations with the EU are developing over the entire period of our cooperation.

Moreover, you know that at the beginning of the 1990s I worked in Leningrad, St Petersburg. And I am very aware of how difficult it was for us. How difficult it was for the city's residents and, more generally, for the residents of country whose domestic economy had almost entirely collapsed, as had the normal mechanisms for supplying the population with the most essential products. And I remember how EU countries helped us, how Germany helped us (I myself met ships from Germany at the time), and how other EU countries helped us. We must not forget about this. That is the first thing.

Second. Now, of course, the situation has changed radically. And not simply because Russia has changed. Russia's economic potential has increased: it has been restored and continues to develop. Russia is ranked tenth -- and by some counts ninth -- on the list of the most economically developed countries of the world. According to various estimates we hold the second place in Europe for attracting investments after the Federal

Republic of Germany. Our opportunities have increased. They have become more significant. But the EU has also changed. The number of EU member states has increased. And of course it became more difficult to resolve issues within the EU that had previously been easier to resolve. We understand this. And we sympathise with the EU leadership. But we must defend our interests as professionally as our colleagues do -- as professionally as my colleagues who are sitting on my left and on my right.

We are always being criticized for the fact that we have not yet ratified the Energy Charter -- this is one of the sharpest issues in our discussions. True, we have not done this. But the EU has failed to fulfil its obligations contained in the Charter. The EU should have liberalised the market for nuclear materials in 1997. According to the Charter we should have been allowed access. Yet nothing was done. In fact, there are quite a few such issues. But they are routine ones.

Or issues concerning the deliveries of agricultural products. But are there few disputes on agricultural issues in the European Union itself, within the EU? Or on agricultural problems between the EU and, shall we say, other countries on the American continent? There are also enough of those. But what is the link between deliveries of meat from an EU member country and, for example, joint space activities? Poland is not involved in the space sector the way, for example, France or the Federal Republic are involved. But it is clear that shared principles must exist. We respect this attitude of our EU partners.

I can not say whether anything has become better or worse, it has simply become more difficult. But we are satisfied with the quality of our relations with the EU. And when we talk about equal rights we mean that we expect that our dialogue will take into account the interests of both Russia and the EU and that we will find a compromise that satisfies both sides. Today's summit has supported this.

Thank you.

**Three Ukraine leaders sign joint statement**

Press Office of President Victor Yushchenko

Kyiv, Ukraine, 27 May 2007 (unofficial translation). [Link](#)**Joint Statement by the President of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada Speaker and the Prime Minister on Urgent Measures Aimed at Resolving the Political Crisis Through Early Parliamentary Elections**

Being fully aware of the responsibility for the country's social, political and economic situation, guaranteeing that there will be no escalation of the political crisis, seeking to immediately resolve it through exceptionally nonviolent means and dialogue involving leading political forces, guided by the Constitution of Ukraine and wanting to uphold the nation's interests and preserve the country's unity, the sides have agreed to:

1. ensure that there are no attempts to aggravate the conflict in society and prevent all possible actions provoking 'force' scenarios;

2. hold an early parliamentary election on [Sunday] September 30, 2007;

3. accept that this election will be held in accordance with the President's decree based on paragraph 2 of article 82 of the Constitution of Ukraine;

4. hold plenary sessions of the Verkhovna Rada on May 29-30 to adopt and enact the bills for conducting fair, transparent and democratic elections, particularly:

[a] pass and enact the draft laws worked out by the authorized representatives of the President of Ukraine, the Cabinet of Ministers, the parliamentary coalition and the parliamentary opposition;

[b] readopt the laws passed between April 2 and May 29, 2007;

[c] pass and enact the necessary WTO laws and other legal acts on economic issues.

5. ensure that the Cabinet of Ministers and the Central Election Commission oversee the implementation of the Law on the State Voting Register;

6. appoint new members of the Central Election Commission on the basis of the agreements reached by the authorized representatives of the President of Ukraine, the Cabinet of Ministers, the parliamentary coalition and the parliamentary opposition to hold fair, transparent and democratic elections.

7. not to interfere in the work of the judicial branch and law enforcement bodies.

President of Ukraine V.A. Yushchenko  
Verkhovna Rada Speaker O.O. Moroz  
Prime Minister of Ukraine V.F. Yanukovych

**Want an EU visa? Then sing...**

By Tatiana Silina

First appeared in the EUobserver, 23 May 2007. [Link](#)

External relations commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner has presented the EU's visa facilitation scheme for Ukraine as a big achievement of her European Neighbourhood Policy - but so far it has seen an increase in visa costs and scandalous behaviour at EU embassies in Kiev.

Some time ago people walking by one of the EU embassies in Kiev watched a free concert - a children's choir from the city of Kharkov, with more than 20 kids braving the cold weather to sing folk and modern songs outside the consulate building. The songs were tender lullabies or joyful hymns, but the children's faces showed something different - humiliation. They had been forced to leave their homes 500 kilometres outside Kiev, pay to come and stay in the expensive capital, and sing for the consulate to prove that they really are a choir invited to take part in an EU festival and not illegal migrants.

They finally got their visas. But another group of 45 young journalists and political activists was less lucky. They had been invited by Polish MEP Michal Kaminsky to come and see how the European Parliament in Brussels functions and how to strengthen parliamentary culture in Ukraine. The Brussels parliament hosts dozens of such visitors every week from all over Europe, but not Ukraine. The Belgian embassy in Kiev selected five people for interviews, four of which were fine but one of which went badly, as a 22-year old literature student - who had dreamed all his life to make such a trip - became emotional. All 45 had their visas rejected. Phone calls from the European Parliament, Ukrainian diplomats and even ex-foreign minister Boris Tarasiuk did not help. The Belgian embassy did not give an explanation. Instead of helping shape 45 supporters of European integration - some of whom may one day hold powerful places in Ukraine - the embassy has insulted and embarrassed them. They will remember how Europe treated them.

**Long queues**

Talking to Ukrainian officials and ordinary people in the street, you hear hundreds of such stories. The German embassy in Kiev issues 100,000 visas a year. Poland even more. The figures seem impressive, but they conceal how many people are rejected. Some EU embassies say they reject about 20 percent. Many refuse to disclose the figure. Ukrainian diplomats estimate the real level is 50 percent. On top of this, many people's applications are never even taken for consideration - some people give up because of the long queues, some get confused by the complex paperwork and some have the bad luck to meet an EU official who got up in a bad mood that morning. In a recent survey by the Ukraine foreign ministry, the number one complaint of 50 percent of respondents was lack of politeness and respect of the dignity of applicants.

Twenty years ago in Kiev people had to stand in line for four hours just to buy sausages. Today, we are a market economy and there are enough sausages, but the queues have come back at EU embassies. If you want to go shopping in the Champs Elysee, get ready to be a frequent visitor to the French consulate in Kiev first. Ukrainian analyst Olexandr Sushko says many applicants had to go to the French consulate nine times

and wait in total 12 hours before getting their papers.

The paperwork is also worthy of Soviet-era bureaucracy. The applicant has to present a letter from his employer guaranteeing that he will keep his job open after the trip. Often you need to prove that you own certain property and how much money you have in the bank. You may have to prove that your cousin is really your cousin. Some EU embassies in the past have even demanded financial deposits to be left with them, which you can collect when you come back to Ukraine.

### The Indian middle-man

The money issue has other, confusing aspects: in the near future the fee to enter the EU will be 35 euros. But in order to even secure an interview at the German embassy you must first transfer 5 euros to the account of Indian visa facilitation firm VFS - at 100,000 people per year that's half a million euro. The Belgian and Dutch embassies have given VFS a monopoly on processing documents, so that applicants have to pay them 35 euros each on top of the Belgian and Dutch embassy fees. What is VFS doing to earn this money? It's daylight robbery - taking hard-earned cash from Ukrainians and giving it to the Belgian or Dutch state and its Indian commercial friends.

Ukraine is in a painful process of trying to reinvent itself after the Orange Revolution. As the political elite struggles for power, a growing middle class is looking for ways to grow its businesses and to find new partners in the west. Business and energy ties to Russia remain strong, but the EU has become Ukraine's number one trading partner. On Independence Square in 2004 Ukrainians showed they are ready to defend European values. The iron curtain may have gone, but instead we have a paper wall on our western border - just as impenetrable if you want to enter the EU legally, in a dignified way.

When we complain, the EU bristles. The German EU presidency even made a formal demarche to Kiev after it asked to monitor visa policy. The French ambassador to Kiev, Jean-Paul Veziant, said "The visa issue is a sovereign right of the state. Any 'control' on activity of the consulates on behalf of the state organs of the accreditation country is a violation of diplomatic practice."

### Economic discrimination?

But it's not just about ethics or values - it's about economics too. It could be argued that EU visa policy constitutes de facto discrimination of Ukrainian economic agents vis-a-vis their EU competitors, locking them out of the EU's internal market. Take the example of the international road freight and road transport sectors: instead of the normal practice of getting a one or one and a half year visa, Ukrainian lorry drivers transiting Germany get a single entry visa valid for one month, which can be obtained only if you get an invitation from a limited list of German companies.

The LvivInturtrans firm - which used to be one of the top Ukrainian bus firms to France, Belgium and the Netherlands is now cutting some services by as much as 75 percent. "We waste three months and money to receive sometimes a single entry visa valid for one month. I pay a driver two, three months' salary and he can make only one trip to Paris and back. Then he waits another three months for the next visa," Vasyl Popovych, LvivInturtrans chief, said. The firm once lost 10,000 euros in one fell swoop, after it set aside a whole

coach to take another delegation to the European Parliament, which failed to get visas. "Buses of EU companies with the same Ukrainian passengers pass EU border twice or three times quicker than we do. EU border guards are so nasty to our passengers that they use the EU buses despite the fact we have lower prices," Mr Popovych went on. "If it continues like this, then we just have a simple choice - either to sell our business to our EU competitors or go bankrupt. What is this, if not unfair competition?"

Of course it is. The EU's diplomatic corps and the Brussels institutions are well-trained in protecting the EU's political and commercial interests. But the big question remains: will the EU in the end be a winner, if it watches as a country of 48 million people on its border slides into bankruptcy, isolation and disenchantment with western ideals?

*The author, Tatiana Silina, is a journalist for the Ukrainian newspaper, the Weekly Mirror.*

### Iran and Belarus forge 'strategic partnership'

By Judy Dempsey

First published in the International Herald Tribune, 21 May 2007. [Link](#)

Belarus and Iran, two countries isolated by the United States and the European Union, agreed Monday to forge closer economic, trade and political ties, strengthening what the Belarus president termed "a strategic partnership."

The special relationship was highlighted Monday when President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, which is saddled with United Nations sanctions for failing to halt its uranium enrichment program, began a two-day visit to Belarus at the invitation of President Alexander Lukashenko, whose country is shunned by the European Union because of its human rights record.

"Tehran-Minsk ties are growing in all fields," Ahmadinejad said after arriving Monday. "The two countries enjoy close cooperation in various areas of transportation, energy, industry, economy and trade."

The Belarus presidential press service said Lukashenko had told Ahmadinejad that relations between Belarus and Iran had reached the level of "strategic partnership."

Analysts say the two countries, which share an antipathy to the United States in particular and the West in general, have been moving closer together as a way as to prove they can survive without either the United States or the European Union.

"Both countries gain advantages from the relationship," said Steven Main, an expert on Belarus at the Conflict Studies Research Center in Britain.

He said both countries wanted to show that they could survive without the United States or European Union.

It is Ahmadinejad's first visit to Belarus, a country sandwiched between the EU and its big neighbor, Russia, on whom it is completely dependent for its gas and oil supplies.

For Lukashenko, the visit offers the opportunity to diversify his country's energy imports by buying oil from Iran. This has become more urgent after Russia's giant state-owned energy monopoly, Gazprom, last December raised the price of its gas to Belarus threefold and obtained a 50 percent stake in Belarus's gas monopoly.

Lukashenko said Monday that Belarus had clinched a deal with Tehran on extracting oil from the southern Jofeir deposit in Iran.

"It would be a big boost for Lukashenko if he could diversify his energy imports away from Russia," said Gregorz Gromadzke, security analyst at the Stefan Batory Foundation in Warsaw. But if he obtains oil from Iran, he added, "it would almost certainly have to pass over Russian territory. The dependence would not go away. Russia would control the transit of the oil."

For its part, Iran has already obtained from Belarus access to advanced technology and specialists to help develop its civilian nuclear power program, according to the Conflict Studies Research Center, which does research for the Defense Ministry.

The United States says that such a program will have a military application, which Iran has denied. Belarus said last year that it would not support Iran's nuclear and ballistic program.

Military cooperation between the two countries has also been increased. In January, the Belarussian defense minister, Leonid Maltsev, agreed with his Iranian counterpart, Mostafa Mohammad Najjar, to exchange technology in the military

sector.

Analysts acknowledged Monday that the military cooperation between Iran and Belarus remained opaque, particularly over the role played by Russian arms companies, which analysts say may be using Belarus as a base to sell equipment to Iran.

So sensitive is this issue that Russian and Belarussian officials rushed to deny reports last year that Belarus had re-exported Russian S-300PS surface-to-air missiles to Iran.

"The problem is that we do not know the full extent of the military cooperation between Belarus and Iran," Gromadzke said. "It is very hard to pin down exactly what goes on."

Belarus's trade ties with Iran have yielded concrete results. When Lukashenko came to power in 1994, trade between both countries was valued at \$89,000, according to the Conflict Studies Research Center. After Lukashenko's second visit there in 2006, the total value of the contracts signed between the two countries was \$350 million.

Ahmadinejad said this was just a step toward achieving a trade turnover of \$1 billion. "We think that the first cornerstone for the powerful, long-term cooperation of Belarus and Iran has been laid," he said.

This increase in trade matters hugely for Lukashenko. By finding new export markets, he is seeking to reduce Russia's influence on the country's economy. So far, Iran has proved a lucrative market for machinery, tractors and trucks imported from Belarus, analysts said.

Lukashenko has already visited Iran twice, in 2001 and 2006, but has not visited any EU country recently. The EU has introduced a travel ban on Lukashenko and other top Belarussian officials for quashing independent political parties, arresting opposition leaders and muzzling the media.

### EU Presidency statement on the parliamentary elections in Armenia

Brussels, 13 May 2007. [Link](#)

The Presidency of the European Union notes with satisfaction that the parliamentary elections held in Armenia on 12 May were, on the whole, conducted fairly, freely and largely in accordance with the international commitments which Armenia had entered into. The Presidency welcomes the fact that, compared to previous elections, significant progress has been made.

The Presidency also welcomes the fact that the parliamentary elections were observed and monitored closely and in a professional manner by a comprehensive ODIHR election observation mission and by delegations from the OSCE and Council of Europe Parliamentary Assemblies as well as of the European Parliament. The Presidency has taken note of the interim joint statement issued by these election observation missions on 13 May.

Looking ahead to the presidential elections due to be held at the beginning of 2008, the Presidency calls on Armenia to investigate and resolve the procedural problems which still exist, particularly those concerning vote-counting but also the isolated cases of irregularities which were observed.

The Presidency of the European Union is very much in favour of intensifying cooperation with Armenia. This would breathe new life into the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Action Plan agreed under it.

*EU External Relations Council Conclusions on the Black Sea*Brussels, 14 May 2007. [Link](#)

The Council held a brief exchange of views on a communication from the Commission on a new regional cooperation initiative for the Black Sea region. It adopted the following conclusions:

“The Council welcomed the Commission’s Communication “Black Sea Synergy – A new Regional Cooperation Initiative”. The Council underlined that following the accession of two Black Sea littoral states, Bulgaria and Romania, the EU’s interest in furthering stability and prosperity in the Black Sea area has become even greater.

The Council looked forward to further examining the Communication and invited the future Presidencies and the European Commission to continue work on an enhanced and coherent EU engagement in and with the Black Sea area, particularly in the framework of a strengthened European Neighbourhood Policy and building on synergies with regional bodies and initiatives. The aim should be to intensify the regional cooperation in sectors of cross-border relevance such as energy, the environment, transport, telecommunications, science and technology, freedom, justice and security, as well as democracy, human rights promotion, respect for international law and civil society cooperation.

Given the strategic importance of the Black Sea area to the EU, the Council invites the Commission to carry out a review during the first half of 2008 of the development of the Black Sea Synergy Initiative, as a basis for further consideration by the Council of its engagement towards the region as a whole.

*EU External Relations Council Conclusions on Uzbekistan*Brussels, 14 May 2007. [Link](#)

The Council adopted a common position renewing visa restrictions against eight Uzbek officials. Such restrictions were introduced following events at Andijan in May 2005. The restrictions will be reviewed after six months, at the same time as the arms embargo against Uzbekistan.

The EU and Uzbekistan held the first round of a human rights dialogue in Tashkent on 8 and 9 May, following a second round of expert talks on the events at Andijan, held in early April. EU restrictions on technical meetings were lifted in November.

The Council also adopted the following conclusions:

1. The Council remains seriously concerned about the human rights situation in Uzbekistan.

2. The Council learnt with great concern of the sentences of imprisonment passed on the human rights defenders Ms. Umida Niazova and Ms. Gulbahor Turaeva. It took note of the revised verdict against Ms. Niazova of 8 May and her release. The Council calls upon the Uzbek authorities to release Ms. Turaeva and other detained human rights defenders and to lift restrictions of movement against Ms. Niazova. The Council calls upon Uzbekistan to respect fully its commitments to international human rights standards.

3. The Council welcomes the Uzbek confirmation that full cooperation with the ICRC will be resumed soon and expects swift implementation.

4. The EU reiterates its readiness to pursue a comprehensive and regular dialogue with Uzbekistan on human rights. In this context, the Council welcomes the fact that a first round of a human rights dialogue between the EU and Uzbekistan took place in Tashkent on 8-9 May 2007. It appreciates the readiness of the Uzbek side to engage in this dialogue. The EU looks forward to its continuation in an open and constructive manner with a view to achieving concrete and sustained results.

5. The Council also welcomes the holding of a second round of expert talks on the Andijan events in Tashkent on 2 and 3 April 2007. The Council, nonetheless, recalls its position set out in previous Council Conclusions.

6. The Council recalls its Common Position of 13 November 2006, lifting restrictions on technical meetings, and extending the arms embargo for another 12 months and the visa restrictions for another 6 months. The Council decided to renew the visa restrictions for individuals listed in the annex of the relevant Common Position for another 6 months.

7. The Council decided to keep these measures under review on the basis of the criteria set out in previous Council conclusions, taking into account the actions of the Uzbek Government in the area of human rights, including the results of the human rights dialogue. The Council urges Uzbekistan to implement fully its international obligations relating to human rights, rule of law and fundamental freedoms, and stands ready to consider the lifting of restrictions if the Uzbek government engages constructively in this respect.

**Getting Turkey right**

By Suat Kiniklioglu

First appeared in the International Herald Tribune, 2 May 2007. [Link](#)

The Turkish Constitutional Court's decision to block the election of a new president was an unfortunate and unnecessary intervention in Turkey's political process by the powerful secular elite.

The secular establishment - which has the powerful support of the military - claims that the election of Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, a member of the moderately Islamic governing AK (Justice and Development) Party - would challenge the secularism that is at the heart of the modern Turkish state.

But if the record of the last five years under AK Party rule is any indication, those fears are misplaced. Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan and his government have shown themselves to be shrewd pragmatists willing to operate within Turkey's secular democracy. In fact, the very popularity of the AK Party is due to its success in distancing itself from the Islamist Virtue Party.

The governing party's moderation and success have become an inspiration for a wide range of moderate Muslim elites in the Middle East.

Those outside Turkey who view the recent mass rallies in Turkey in support of secularism as an expression of Western values should think twice. Most militant Turkish "secularist" are in fact suspicious of Turkey's aspiration to join the European Union, often strongly anti-American and generally uncomfortable with globalization.

By contrast, the AK Party has led one of the most impressive pro-democracy drives in Turkish history and has brought the country into accession negotiations with the European Union. The Turkish economy has grown on an average of 7 percent over the last five years, and has attracted close to \$50 billion in foreign direct investment in three years.

Not surprisingly, polls indicate strong support for the AK Party while a weak opposition is struggling to pass the 10 percent threshold quota.

By blocking the election of Gul, a politician who has kept Islam largely out of public policy, the secularists are denying Turkey a critical opportunity to further moderate the AK Party. What is lost on the militant secularists is that the AK Party will eventually transform into a German-type Christian Democratic Party if it is allowed to do so.

The Turkish establishment must understand that it cannot intervene in the political process forever. It must allow Turkey's Muslim democrats to moderate themselves by learning and experiencing power and responsibility within the democratic process. This is the only way Turkey will find its elusive domestic political consensus.

In any case, the primary reason behind the intervention of the secular establishment was not fear that Turkey would become Islamic. Their fear was that the democratization drive, led in part by hopes of entering the European Union, will erode their power.

In this respect, Gul's nomination touched a key nerve of Turkey's fragile democracy - relations between the civilian government and the military, which perceives itself as a guardian of secularism and has ousted four elected governments since 1960.

The Turkish president not only appoints all judges and university rectors, but is also commander-in-chief of the armed forces,

with the authority to appoint the uniformed chief of the army.

Erdogan has now declared that he will seek early elections, as well as sweeping constitutional changes that would make the president popularly elected, rather than elected by the Parliament.

Thus the real question behind the crisis is what sort of democracy will prevail in Turkey - one under a secular elite with an authoritarian flavor, or an open and transparent democracy under Muslim democrats.

*Suat KINIKLIOGLU is director of the German Marshall Fund of the United States' Ankara Office. His views are his own and do not represent the views of the German Marshall Fund.*

**To the Turkish people from their European friends**First appeared in the International Herald Tribune, 16 May 2007. [Link](#)

In recent days Turkey's citizens have been carefully watching the reactions of politicians across Europe and the United States to the memorandum by the Turkish military issued on April 27. In these fraught circumstances, it is vital to send an unambiguous message to Turkish society. We strongly regret this intervention that could harm Turkey's progress as well as its relations with the European Union.

The EU decided to open negotiations with Turkey as a result of a striking sequence of reforms that led the European Commission in 2004 to declare that Turkey substantially met the so-called political Copenhagen criteria. One of these criteria is respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Another is a functioning democracy, including as a basic principle, full civilian control over the armed forces. The intervention by the military on April 27 throws Turkey's compliance into doubt.

The Turkish military justified this by the need to defend "Turkish secularism." However, the threat to secularism has been overstated. In fact, Turkey has undertaken a number of important reforms, in sectors ranging from women's rights to education, which provide legal protection for secular values. Much remains to be done - including removing the penal code's restrictions on freedom of speech and working to close the gender gap - and we call on the Turkish authorities to vigorously pursue the reform path. But Turkish legislation has never been closer to European standards than today, and many of these changes have been brought about under the current government.

We believe that it is up to the Turkish political process, and to Turkish civil society, to express the preferences of the Turkish public. Large demonstrations, challenges of political decisions in courts and political campaigns are all acceptable tactics in democratic politics. We understand those who are concerned about the concentration of power, but this should not be taken as an excuse for the military to limit democratic government.

Finally, we call on European governments to reaffirm the promises and commitments that the EU has made in the past. Turkey still has much to do before it meets European standards, but by showing solidarity with Turkish democrats, the EU can now help to keep the process on track.

*Urban Ahlin, deputy chairman, foreign affairs committee, Swedish Parliament; Hans van den Broek, former foreign minister of the Netherlands; Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Member of European Parliament; José Cutileiro, former secretary general, WEU; Marta Dassù, Aspen Institute Italia; Andrew Duff, Member of European Parliament; Sarmite Elerte, editor, Diena; Michael Emerson, Center for European Policy Studies; Joschka Fischer, former foreign minister of Germany; Timothy Garton Ash, Oxford University; Teresa Patrício Gouveia, former foreign minister of Portugal; Charles Grant, Center for European Reform; Diego Hidalgo, FRIDE; Michiel van Hulst, former Chair of the Dutch Labor Party; Josef Janning, Bertelsmann Foundation; Dan Jørgensen, Member of European Parliament; Mary Kaldor, London School of Economics; Lord Kinnock of Bedwellty, former EU Commissioner; Gerald Knaus, European Stability Initiative; Ivan Krastev, Center for Liberal Strategies; Joost Lagendijk, Member of European Parliament; Mark Leonard, European Council on Foreign Relations; Alain Minc, Chairman of Le Monde and head of AM Conseil; Antonio Missiroli, European Policy Center; Giles Merritt, Friends of Europe; Kalypto Nicolaidis, University of Oxford; Cem Özdemir, Member of European Parliament; Ana Palacio, former foreign minister of Spain; Diana Pinto, historian; Narcis Serra, former vice president of Spain; Aleksander Smolar, Stefan Batory Foundation; Dana Spinant, European Voice; Antonio Vitorino, former EU Commissioner; Gijs de Vries, former EU counter-terrorism coordinator; Stephen Wall, former advisor to the British prime minister.*

### Arab peace plan is key to ending Gaza violence

By Hanna Siniora, 18 May 2007. [Link](#)

The catastrophic infighting that has so far left scores of dead and hundreds of wounded by Palestinian hands in the Gaza Strip, is a deadly signal that the Mecca agreement and national unity government are in the last throes of falling apart.

Neither Fatah nor Hamas are able to prevent the daily clashes that their movements are part of. The Palestinian public in Gaza is being terrorized by the lawlessness, the shootings and killings that are turning Gaza into another Baghdad. Here it is not Shia against Sunni, but Hamas against Fatah and the slide toward total chaos is perhaps unstoppable.

The abundance of weapons, militias, clans and warring movements have made it impossible to bring order and the rule of law; too many parties, internally and externally, including the occupation, are involved in stirring the rivalries and drastic action must be applied urgently or the Palestinian people will become involved in a civil war in Gaza which will eventually spread into the West Bank.

As has been said all the time, if Israel does not agree to extend its original ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to the West Bank, Palestinians fatalities in the West Bank caused by the Israeli army leads to retaliation by Palestinians in Gaza, and the cycle of violence expands.

To stop the bloodshed, to stop the further undermining of the region, the international community -- and specifically the Quartet, with the participation and acquiescence of Israel, and the Arab League on behalf of the Arab countries, must undertake the following process:

The UN Security Council should convene in order to denounce the deterioration of security in the Occupied Territories, call on Israel and the Arab League to accept and to implement a Security Council resolution calling for an Israeli troop withdrawal from the Occupied Territories and the placement of Arab League troops in the PA (for Israel to comply these troops must come from the two Arab countries that have peace treaties or diplomatic relations with Israel mainly Egypt and Jordan).

In order to also respect Palestinian sensitivities that have struggled for self determination and independence, the Arab League heads of states or foreign ministers, as the next step to the Security Council resolution, must meet to accept a temporary mandate, where Arab troops will replace Israeli troops to stop all sort of violence, internally as well as that which involves Israel.

All the armed elements in the PA, clans, families, militias, Fatah and Hamas, even the PA security forces should be disarmed, and only the Arab troops will be allowed to carry arms to stop lawlessness and implement law and order, and bring total security. Later, a non-factional Palestinian force, professionally trained, will be reconstituted to eventually takeover the security role.

The interim Arab mandate could be five years or even 10 years—its first mission is to stop all kinds of violence. Then a process of rebuilding the local and national political infrastructure begins, parallel to the process of negotiating a regional settlement that ends the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as the return of the Golan Heights and any disputed Lebanese areas to their rightful countries.

At this sad juncture, it has become apparent that neither Hamas nor Fatah, alone or combined, have learned the political culture of working together in a coalition to serve their public, the Palestinian people, and that party politics and the struggle over power have led to killings that have led to almost civil war. The only way to prevent total disaster is for the Arab nations, with the backing of the UN and acquiescence of Israel, to work together in order to prevent the growing snowballing of violence from spreading all across the region.

*Hanna Siniora is the Co-CEO of IPCRI, the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information.*

*Political Islam in Algeria*

Amel Boubekour  
CEPS Working Document, n. 268, 31 May 2007.

[Abstract]

The recent legislative elections of May 2007 in Algeria have shown how complex the evolution of Islamist parties is in this country and how crucial an understanding of these mechanisms has become for Europe. Since the civil war of the 1990s, Islamist parties have experienced increased political participation. Drawing on interviews with various Algerian Islamist actors, this paper analyses how Islamist parties are building a new relationship with democratic mechanisms in Europe. In light of these recent changes, a reconsideration of EU democracy promotion policies is now necessary.

*Political Islam in Egypt*

Emad El-Din Shahin  
CEPS Working Document, n. 266, 9 May 2007.

[Abstract]

Drawing on results from a survey among members of the Muslim Brothers and the Wasat Party, Emad El-Din Shahin, Professor at the American universities of Cairo and Harvard, looks at changes in Egyptian political Islam and considers possible democratic models for Egypt. This paper offers valuable insight into moderate Islamist views on collaboration with Europe and clarifies positions on matters of crucial importance to future Islamist-EU dialogue.

*The Armenian road to democracy - Dimensions of a tortuous process*

Maria Raquel Freire and Licínia Simão  
CEPS Working Document, n. 267, 3 May 2007.

[Abstract]

Focusing on the internal and geo-political dimensions of Armenia's road to democracy, this paper considers the decision-making structure, the role of leadership, the development of political parties and various changes in Armenian civil society. We aim to shed light on the role of the EU in the democratisation process by looking at the relationship between Brussels and Yerevan, at the instruments and strategies in operation, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy, and at the wider international context in which these changes are taking place.

*The EU and Kazakhstan: Balancing Economic Cooperation and Aiding Democratic Reforms in the Central Asian Region*

Bhavna Dave  
CEPS Policy Brief, n. 127, 25 May 2007.

[Abstract]

Recognising that Kazakhstan is favourably placed to be the foremost player in the region, this analysis advocates that the EU should 1) develop an internally-differentiated strategy towards Central Asia with Kazakhstan as a strategic anchor in the region, and 2) prioritise the promotion of democratic reforms and transparency of political and economic processes which can turn Kazakhstan into a more effective and reliable partner of the EU and a positive engine for reform in the broader region.

*Turkmenistan in Transition – a Window for EU Engagement?*

Dr. Michael Denison  
CEPS Policy Brief, n. 129, 11 May 2007.

[Abstract]

The death of President Niyazov in December 2006 has opened a window for engagement between the EU and Turkmenistan. Prior to this, Turkmenistan could fairly be described as a 'sultanistic regime' isolated from the wider world. This paper by Dr. Michael Denison, professor in the School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds was originally presented at CEPS conference on 'Building Stronger Ties, meeting New Challenges: The European Union's Strategic Role in Central Asia.' In it Professor Denison sketches the historical political landscape, considers the likelihood of Turkmenistan diversifying its natural gas export options and concludes with 15 clear recommendations for the EU to deepen its engagement with Turkmenistan.

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## *CEPS Neighbourhood Watch Editorial address*

CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN POLICY STUDIES (CEPS)

Place du Congrès 1,  
B-1000 Brussels, Belgium  
website: [www.ceps.be](http://www.ceps.be)

phone: +32 2 229 3911  
fax: +32 2 219 4151  
e-mail: [neighbourhood@ceps.be](mailto:neighbourhood@ceps.be)

Editorial team: Michael Emerson, Neil Melvin, Gergana Noutcheva and George Dura.