

## WIDER EUROPE

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**IS WASHINGTON ABANDONING EASTERN EUROPE?**  
*By Janusz Bugajski*

President Obama's decision to scuttle the planned U.S. anti-ballistic missile defense shield in Central-Eastern Europe has raised security fears among America's new allies. In reality, missile defense against an Iranian threat has never been the burning issue for Warsaw, Prague, or other capitals in the region. It is the content of the security relationship with Washington that is of primary concern.

Building an alternative sea-and-land-based interceptor system to counter short and medium-range Iranian missiles instead of the land-based anti-ICBM system may be technically sound but the strategic context is politically volatile. In a region that feels increasingly vulnerable to pressure from Russia, there is a general conviction that Moscow may capitalize on the missile defense decision to accelerate its neo-imperial agenda.

There are two major fears in Central-Eastern Europe, revolving around America's consistency and commitment. The change of policy on missile defense opens up charges of American unpredictability. Governments in Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, and the Baltic states view themselves as loyal allies, regardless of the identity of the U.S. administration. Rightly or wrongly, they joined the "coalition of the willing" in Iraq during the Bush administration despite damaging their relations with several West European partners in order to assist Washington.



U.S. Navy Seaborne Anti-Ballistic Missile readiness exercise using the proposed SM-3 interceptor.

Poland and the Czech Republic acceded to the missile defense program to reciprocate for Washington's support for their NATO membership and to help guarantee future U.S. backing if their own security were threatened from more immediate directions. Some officials in the region may now feel they are being punished for supporting the policy choices of Obama's predecessor.

In the longer-term, the Central-East European governments may not so readily support U.S. policy, particularly in future "out of Europe" wars. They are more likely to imitate several traditional European allies and hesitate to give diplomatic backing to or provide combat troops on U.S.-led missions that are not internationally mandated or domestically popular.

The second and more nerve-rattling fear in the region is the prospect of U.S. accommodation toward Russia. Apprehensions could grow that Washington may concede more significant ground to Moscow to the detriment of the new democracies, in return for agreements on arms control and in the hope of Moscow's constructive cooperation over Iran and Afghanistan.

Although President Obama and his cabinet have underscored that the decision to shelve the missile shield was not dictated by Russia's opposition, the Central-East Europeans remain skeptical and are not easily reassured by invocations of NATO's article five defense guarantees. Warsaw, Prague, and other capitals will be closely watching Washington's subsequent moves.

In the worst case scenario, the U.S. will mute its support for the future inclusion of Ukraine and Georgia in the NATO alliance, will accede to signing a new European or Eurasian security charter as proposed by President Dmitry Medvedev, essentially designed to eviscerate NATO, will not offer Georgia or other threatened states any meaningful self-defense assistance, and will ignore Russia's persistent provocations against Estonia, Latvia, and other former satellites.

In Moscow's calculations, the decision on missile defense was a U.S. concession that could lead to more significant American capitulation in the former Soviet empire. The Kremlin is intent on re-establishing and expanding its zones of "privileged interests" – a concept that assumes Russia's right to determine its neighbors' foreign policies and security orientations and create counterparts to NATO and the European Union.

Instead of establishing a strategic partnership between the U.S. and Russia, the "resetting" of relations risks missing the threat that Russia poses to its neighbors. The Kremlin's energy blackmail, military threats, and the persistent manipulation of ethnic and territorial disputes are intended to create dependent states along Russia's borders and to prevent them from developing into America's partners.

If the Obama administration is to effectively reassure Europe's new democracies and resist Russia's imperial impulses then it must enhance the security of vulnerable countries. There are several concrete steps it could take, such as formulating detailed NATO defense plans for all Alliance members bordering Russia, accelerating assistance in military modernization, and buttressing the territorial defense capabilities and military deterrents of the new allies.

The Strategic Cooperation Agreement between Washington and Warsaw needs to be honored, including the placement in Poland of a battery of Patriot missiles manned by an American military contingent. Without such measures, the Obama administration may be increasingly perceived as weak and wavering and Moscow may be tempted to further test its pliability by manufacturing conflicts with pro-American neighbors or more intensely interfering in their domestic politics. Ukraine's presidential elections in January 2010 could become the focus of Russia's assertiveness as Moscow seeks a new administration in Kyiv that will reject membership of Western institutions. America's reaction will demonstrate whether it is determined to defend its principles and interests or is tempted to accommodate an expansionist Russia.

But the onus is not only on the American side. The Central-East Europeans must also underscore their commitment to an effective alliance by enhancing intra-regional cooperation, engaging their eastern neighbors in joint programs, strengthening the EU's security and foreign policy mechanisms, and demonstrating their significance as contributors to trans-Atlantic security.

All parties must also be cognizant that Russia's leaders could reanimate the missile defense dispute in order to put pressure on Washington to concede more significant strategic ground. Indeed, some officials in Moscow are already claiming that Russia's nuclear weapons could still be threatened by Washington's proposed anti-missile system. According to Russia's envoy to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, there are no guarantees that the system would not be based in Arctic waters, the North Sea, or the Baltic Sea so that the trajectories of Russian ballistic missiles could be tracked and its offensive capabilities reduced. Additionally, some of the Central-East European capitals could become partners in the development of the new SM-3 anti-missile system announced by President Obama and thereby susceptible to further pressures from the Kremlin.

## The Contentious Slovak Language Law

By Marton Ugrodsy

Twenty years after the disintegration of the Soviet bloc, the Central European countries are embedded in NATO and the EU as consolidated democracies. Nonetheless, they are not immune from lingering and sometimes open disputes over history, identity, and the status of ethnic minorities. Whereas similar questions preoccupy several West European states in their internal configurations, in Central Europe they can be a source of interstate conflict. One such glaring example is the position of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia.

The law on the State Language of the Slovak Republic dated from 1995 was amended on June 30, 2009, provoking tensions between Slovakia and its southern neighbor, Hungary. The 1995 law grants ethnic minorities the right to use their own language in official communications in regions where they constitute at least 20 percent of the population. The 2009 amendment abolished this right and further restrains the official use of minority languages in the country. The law now requires every public interaction to be conducted in Slovak or a Slovak translation must be provided.

The new legislation obliges members of the state administration, including policemen and postal workers, to communicate in Slovak with every client. Furthermore, the law states that every piece of public communication – advertisements, billboards, and even inscriptions on monuments – must have a Slovak translation followed by the original text in the minority language. The law designates the Ministry of Culture as the supervisor of the provisions, with the right to fine non-complying citizens and legal entities sums between EUR 100 and EUR 5000.

The legislation immediately alarmed Hungarian minority leaders in Slovakia, as well as Hungarian politicians in Budapest. Leaders of the Hungarian Coalition Party in Slovakia (SMK/MKP) stated that the law criminalized the use of the Hungarian language and they organized a 6,000-strong protest in the town of Dunajska Streda on September 1. On August 21, Hungarian President Laszlo Solyom was denied entry into Slovakia (unprecedented under the Schengen Agreement), with authorities citing "security reasons."

Prime Ministers Gordon Bajnai and Robert Fico met on September 10 in an effort to ease tensions, but the summit yielded limited results. They did not agree on the alteration of the language law and Slovakia did not apologize for the Solyom denial, which was one of the main aims of the Hungarian delegation. On September 17, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Balazs called Slovakia a "younger brother who needs to be taught European manners," which further exacerbated tensions.

Premier Fico claimed that the language law complies with European standards and accused Hungary's political parties of exploiting an internal Slovak issue for their own purposes. Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajcak characterized Hungarian calls for international assistance as a "misleading, disinformation, and a slanderous campaign." Jan Slota, leader of the ruling coalition's ultra-nationalist Slovak National Party, stated that Budapest is using its "servants" (SMK/MKP) to nurture conflict between the two countries, which Slota claimed could lead to "war."

At the international level, the European Union (EU), the U.S., and the OSCE were asked to help mediate the dispute, but they view it as a bilateral issue between Bratislava and Budapest. Hungary's request that the EU intervene was turned down by EU Commissioner for Multilingualism Leonard Orban. Orban stated that the EU lacks the tools to settle the conflict and would not get involved as long as the parties can reach a compromise. President of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek tried to mediate, but this did not produce any results. OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Knut Vollebaek asked Budapest and Bratislava to settle the conflict through compromise.

On October 12 former New York Governor George Pataki visited Komarno in southern Slovakia, where he stated that the law violates human rights and that no other country has laws that punish people for speaking their native language. Fico retorted that he "considers it unprofessional and politically incorrect that an American politician on a personal visit commented on the language law." Zsolt Nemeth, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Hungarian Parliament, visited Washington in late October to ask for U.S. assistance, asserting that "international public opinion is on Hungary's side in the Language Act dispute."

*Continued on page 5*

## WILL BOSNIA BEND OR BREAK?

By Janusz Bugajski

EU and U.S. representatives have given Bosnian officials limited time to find sufficient common ground on constitutional changes for the country to move forward on the EU membership track. But nobody can be certain whether this major international push will bend the will of separatist sentiments in Bosnia or actually propel the country toward a breakup.

International actors are stressing the urgency of the negotiations for several reasons: to calm escalating political tensions, to undermine ethno-nationalism as the overriding factor in the build up to the October 2010 elections, and to ensure that Bosnia does not fall further behind the rest of the region in its moves toward EU integration.

Both EU and U.S. representatives have stressed that they harbor no illusions that Bosnian leaders will suddenly see the light and embrace full-scale reform. However, they have not specified how they are prepared to react if the talks crumble. And this has left the terrain open to growing speculation that a breakdown in talks will convince Washington that Bosnia's partition may be the only lasting solution.

Such rumors and suppositions are likely to reinforce the intransigence of Bosnia's Serbian leadership. They are evidently testing the commitment and stamina of the Obama administration, having concluded that the White House is so preoccupied with Afghanistan and Iran that it will not interfere too strongly with Bosnia and leave most of the work to EU officials.

Bosnian Serb Premier Milorad Dodik has probably concluded that the EU's position on Bosnia is contradictory and can be exploited for the separatist cause. Moreover, the talks initiated by Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg have been depicted as another international imposition that the Serbs must withstand to preserve their entity and identity. This position was made clear by Nebojsa Radmanovic, the Serb member of Bosnia's troika presidency, who openly opposes any strengthening of the central government through international dictat. A day after meeting with Steinberg and Bildt, Dodik asserted that the current crisis showed Bosnia was an "unsustainable" country.

The EU position remains confusing and conducive for manipulation. On the one hand, the Union wants constitutional reform to push the integration process forward. On the other hand, it seeks to weaken the powers of international representatives in Bosnia who can promote this process and without whom conflicts could escalate. EU policy seems to suit Serb leaders who have challenged the legitimacy of the Office of the High Representative (OHR) and threatened to withdraw from all Bosnian institutions if the position is preserved.

EU officials have stated that protectorates such as Bosnia cannot accede to the Union and want to place greater onus on local leaders to establish a functional central state. They have also claimed that blockades of constitutional reform will no longer be tolerated.

Despite this tough talk, it is unclear what the repercussions will actually be other than the denial of EU membership, which no one in Bosnia really believes is in the cards any time soon. Clearly the incentive of visa liberalization for travel to the EU is insufficient.

Diplomats are hoping that an agreement can be forged by November 18-19, when decisions are due on whether to end the high representative's mandate. Opponents of the OHR closure, including the U.S., assert that it will simply reward Dodik's push for independence and may spark a new war. By contrast, several European countries believe the continued international presence is actually contributing to the political deadlock by making Bosnia's political leadership dependent on foreign backing.

The most recent signals from the Serbian leadership are not encouraging. Dodik has dismissed diplomatic efforts to amend the constitution while claiming that "Bosnia is demonstrating its failure by the fact it came into being only as a result of the efforts of the international community to sustain it as a state."

Although the government in Serbia has been encouraged by the EU and U.S. to play a constructive role, Dodik's statement was issued after he met with Serbian President Boris Tadic. Before the meeting, Dodik had hinted that "minimal constitutional corrections" would be acceptable as long as the process takes place through Bosnia's institutions.

However, after a visit to Belgrade he evidently changed his tune claiming he was not sure "whether even minor changes to the constitution would be possible." He also asserted that the international community had abandoned the Dayton accords and entered into a period of "forceful change."



## DOES EULEX NEED SUPERVISION?

Janusz Bugajski

A year after the EULEX deployment in Kosova questions are intensifying about its role and results. In particular, is the rule of law mission committed to the country's territorial integrity and national sovereignty or are its representatives prepared to backtrack on fundamental decisions by the majority of EU members in order to gain short-term concessions from Belgrade?

Several controversial moves by EULEX commanders in recent months have placed the mission in open dispute with the government in Prishtina and under intense suspicion among the majority population. Most recently, EULEX officials signed an agreement with the government in Serbia concerning police cooperation. The move drew strong protests from Kosovar officials and stirred some limited but vociferous street protests and even attacks on EULEX property in Prishtina.

According to EULEX spokesmen, the police arrangements with Belgrade are intended to improve the rule of law throughout Kosova. The policing accord has reportedly been discussed with the Serbian authorities for several weeks and will evidently help combat organized crime and cross-border smuggling, especially through the sharing of vital information on criminal activities and crime networks.

In stark contrast to the positive EULEX interpretation of the agreement, government officials in Prishtina claimed that the police accord was an infringement on their sovereignty because the democratically elected administration was not a party to any technical arrangements between EULEX and the Serbian Interior Ministry. In which case, logically speaking, Kosova should not recognize the EULEX-Belgrade agreement as valid, or indeed any EULEX agreements concerning Kosova with governments that do not recognize the existence of the new state.

While officials in Prishtina have tried to remain calm despite the obvious affront to their authority, more radical voices in Kosova are claiming that EULEX has a disguised agenda. It is allegedly focused on appeasing Serbia by limiting Kosova's sovereignty and providing Belgrade with a direct role in Kosova's internal affairs.

According to this scenario, the police agreement is likely to be followed by other deals that would whittle away and eventually discard the authority of the elected government in Prishtina. The Serbian government would thereby gain by political stealth and cooperation—what it could not achieve through confrontation and a frontal diplomatic assault.

Observers will be closely watching the EU Special Representative (EUSR), Pieter Feith, who recently voiced support for ensuring a single customs area for all of Kosova. Will another agreement be signed with Belgrade without Prishtina's participation or approval?

Relations between the Kosovar leadership and the EU mission have deteriorated since EULEX positioned itself to help supervise Kosova's independence and raise the country's democratic standards. Relations will probably worsen unless EULEX representatives make a clear and unambiguous statement about their role and relationship with Prishtina and Belgrade.

Unlike America's international representation, EU institutions are notorious for their complexity and confusion, which contributes to various conspiracy theories either about their long-term objectives or the motives of particular individuals in office. Forging bilateral deals with Serbia without any input from Kosova officials may seem like smart policy for some EU representatives in order to achieve a practical agreement, but the approach can be dangerously short-sighted and counter-productive both politically and psychologically.

If EULEX acts opaquely and without official Kosovar participation then its representatives should not be surprised if they lose trust, credibility, and effectiveness in the country. Indeed, the likelihood of success in helping to build an effective democracy in Kosova will be seriously undermined if EULEX itself cannot recognize Kosova's independent status and bows to the five EU members who have yet to acknowledge the country's statehood.

It can certainly be argued that signing deals with a foreign government on behalf of Kosova without the approval of the elected government is an undemocratic procedure and in conflict with core EU principles. It does not set a good example of how democratic decisions are made and how legal authority operates.

Unilateral EULEX decisions on behalf of Kosova will also embolden the Serbian authorities to bypass Prishtina and continue to obstruct its international recognition and institutional membership. Serbian officials have been clearly relishing the EULEX-Prishtina dispute. Media reports in Serbia have focused on the street protests in Prishtina and the allegedly deepening rifts among Albanians. Protest organizers in Kosova's capital have been quoted as accusing the Kosova authorities of treason and demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Hashim Thaci.

Belgrade will also welcome and exploit any rifts between Prishtina and EULEX by formulating potential new areas of bilateral cooperation with the intent of making the government in Prishtina appear to be weak and superfluous. If EULEX collaborates in such subterfuge, whether through naïveté or neglect, it should not be surprised if the road to a law-abiding and functioning democracy becomes increasingly long and rocky. It seems that EULEX itself needs to be more effectively supervised.



Events

CSIS-PISM (Polish Institute Of International Affairs) International Conference THE UNITED STATES AND CENTRAL EUROPE: CONVERGING OR DIVERGING STRATEGIC INTERESTS? Washington D.C., November 4, 2009

Ten months into the Obama administration is a useful time to take stock of the U.S.-Central European relationship and to consider both common and differing foreign policy priorities. Moreover, in the light of recent U.S. decisions on anti-ballistic missile defense and with NATO tasked with formulating a new Strategic Concept, it is valuable to obtain the perspectives of the newer members of the North Atlantic Alliance.

The conference featured two panels with former and current U.S. and Central European government officials, as well as regional experts. Among the speakers: Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, Czech First Deputy Foreign Minister Tomas Pojar, and CSIS Counselor and Trustee Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Philip Gordon delivered the keynote address over lunch.

CSIS-IND (Institute of New Democracies) International Conference KAZAKHSTAN'S OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES Astana, Kazakhstan, October 28, 2009

On October 28, 2009, the Republic of Kazakhstan hosted an international conference in Astana co-organized by the CSIS New European Democracies project and the Institute for New Democracies (IND). In preparation for Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010, CSIS and IND are formulating concrete recommendations for the Kazakh government in all three OSCE dimensions (security, economy, democracy) and will issue a final policy paper before the close of 2009.

The Astana conference, a follow-up to a conference held in Washington DC in June 2009, was divided into three panels, each addressing one of the OSCE dimensions. It featured experts and policymakers from Europe, the U.S., and Kazakhstan, including Martha Olcott (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), Stephen Minikes, (former U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE); Vladimir Socor (Jamestown Foundation), Michael Laubsch (Eurasian Transition Group), Janusz Bugajski, (CSIS) Richard Weitz (Hudson Institute), and Margarita Assenova (Executive Director of IND).

Newsletters

CSIS Europe East Select Briefing

Select Briefing is a weekly update of news from the new European Union (EU) member states, as well as from the countries aspiring to join in future rounds of EU enlargement. The CSIS New European Democracies Project monitors daily developments throughout the East, Central, and Southeast European regions and its research is nonpartisan and nonproprietary.

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Continued from Page 2 (Slovak Language Law)

Tensions are not expected to ease in the near future since both countries will hold general elections in 2010. According to recent opinion polls Fidesz, Hungary's center-right opposition, is expected to form a government next year. In Slovakia, Robert Fico is expected to retain his post as prime minister. The current dispute may become a useful tool in the election campaigns to divert attention from more pressing domestic problems, such as economic decline and the rise of extremist political formations. In looking beyond the immediate conflict, it is worth underscoring that if countries in the region aspire to play a more prominent international role and be treated as security partners by the U.S. then they must finally resolve all remaining disputes between their majorities and minorities.

Marton Ugrodsy is a Hungarian American Scholarship Fund (HAESF) fellow with the New European Democracies Program for 2009.

## Announcements

### CSIS Establishes Lavrentis Lavrentiadis Chair in Southeast European Studies



The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has established the Lavrentis Lavrentiadis Chair in Southeast European Studies and appointed Janusz Bugajski, director of the CSIS New European Democracies Project, as the inaugural chair holder. The Chair was made possible by the generous support of Greek entrepreneur Dr. Lavrentis Lavrentiadis. The principal mission of the Chair is to

- Develop projects with policy impact in the U.S. and overseas;
- Provide expert advice to external constituents, including government and business leaders;
- Contribute to policy debates in the U.S. Congress, the Executive Branch, and among their international counterparts;
- Inform the Washington policymaking and European diplomatic community on issues impacting the region through a range of public events;
- Generate recommendations for U.S. policy toward South East Europe;
- Represent CSIS on a national and international level, among scholars and policy leaders in the U.S. and Europe.

The Lavrentis Lavrentiadis Chair in Southeast European Studies will serve a leading role in advancing the international policy discourse at CSIS and among its external constituencies in Washington, DC, including the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government and the U.S. policy, academic, NGO, and business communities. Chair activities will include annual conferences in Washington and Athens, Congressional briefings, policy roundtables, publications, policy briefs, fact-finding missions, and a fellowship program.

## Publications

### Dismantling the West: Russia's Atlantic Agenda

By Janusz Bugajski



*Most people thought that the idea of geopolitical competition with Russia went out the window with the end of the Cold War. Janusz Bugajski's book is a sober reminder that it did not. Not only does a new, more assertive, and nationalistic Russia seek to reclaim its sphere of influence or 'special interests' on its borders, but Bugajski warns us that Moscow's agenda today is to again divide the Atlanticist West and expand the 'Eurasianist' zone deep into Europe proper.*

**--Ronald D. Asmus, former deputy assistant secretary of state for European Affairs.**

As the Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008 demonstrated, Russia has developed into a neo-imperialist power seeking to restore its spheres of dominance, to undermine the emergence of a wider Europe, and to prevent the development of a coherent transatlantic community. Under the Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev presidencies, the Russian Federation has set itself an ambitious foreign policy agenda of counterbalancing U.S. influence and curtailing the expansion of Western institutions. This strategy's key component is to raise Russia's global stature and to diminish America's role by undermining the NATO alliance and neutralizing the European Union. The Georgian conflict demonstrates that Moscow is prepared to use military force to achieve its strategic objectives.

Janusz Bugajski explores how the Russian authorities have systematically sought to undermine Western interests through sustained diplomatic campaigns, increasing control over energy supplies, escalating political subversion, and the recent military campaign in the Caucasus. He provides evidence that the notion of a "strategic partnership" between Washington and Moscow is premature at best and a dangerous deception at worst. The struggle between the Western democratic model and the Russian authoritarian alternative will have a lasting impact on America's global alliances.

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