Around Europe
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Too Little Too Late?

EU Monitoring Mission to Georgia

The world had a rude awakening on Friday, 8 August 2008, with the news that war had broken out in Georgia. Coinciding with the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Beijing, international attention was focused elsewhere. But that was only symptomatic of the response of the international community for some time. Abkhazia and South Ossetia had been described as 'frozen conflicts' and were not receiving enough attention. That does not mean that no-one was doing anything.

The UN began its mission in 1993; this is a military peacekeeping mission with a police component that was initially set up to monitor the ceasefire agreement of July 1993 between the government of Georgia and Abkhazia. The mission has been there ever since with a mandate that has been reviewed and altered depending on the changing circumstances. It has 143 personnel (of whom 14 are police). Of the EU Member States, the following are represented among the personnel: Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Sweden and the UK. The Russian Federation is also involved.

The OSCE Mission started in December 1992 and focuses on the whole of Georgia, on South Ossetia and on Abkhazia. It works on a wide range of issues including conflict settlement, democratization, human rights, police assistance including border police training, rule of law, and munitions disposal. This mission – as at February 2008 – had 142 staff of whom 106 were national staff with the remainder internationals. The mission has been headed by France, the UK and currently Finland, in turn.

Both Georgia and Russia are, of course, members of the UN and the OSCE.

NATO has been developing relationships with Georgia for some years, starting in 1992 when Georgia (along with a number of other Eastern European countries) joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (renamed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership in 1997). These developments continued with Georgia joining the Partnership for Peace Programme in 1994 and the Planning and Review Process in 1999. In 2004, Georgia entered into an Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO and more recently, in April 2008, NATO began the process towards NATO membership of Georgia.

The EU's relationship with Georgia is not new either. The EU entered into a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Georgia in 1999, sent an EU Crisis Management (Rule of Law) Mission to Georgia in 2004, and agreed a European Neighbourhood Action Plan with Georgia in 2006. In terms of development assistance, both the European Commission and the Member States bilaterally have been assisting Georgia. Statistics available from the OECD for the ten-year period from 1997 to 2006 show that the total amount of assistance given (by the EU and the MS) amounted to just over 830 million USD , with the European Commission and Germany the major donors.

In response to war, the President of the European Union, Nicolas Sarkozy, intervened diplomatically and brokered a six point plan between Russia and Georgia. The plan is incredibly short on detail:

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1. Do not resort to force.
2. Definitively cease hostilities.
3. Give free access to humanitarian aid.
4. Georgian military forces must withdraw to their usual barracks.
5. Russian military forces must withdraw to the lines occupied before the start of hostilities. Until an international mechanism is put in place, Russian peacekeeping troops will implement the security measures.
6. Open international discussions over security and stability modalities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Finally, on 15 September 2008, the Council of the European Union agreed a Civilian Crisis Management Mission to Georgia which starts on 1 October 2008, to be composed of 200 people whose role will be to monitor the Parties' action including compliance with the six point plan across the whole of Georgia. The mission is under the control of the recently appointed EU Special Representative to Georgia, Pierre Morel. The Head of Mission is Hansjörg Haber, a senior German diplomat with extensive experience in peacekeeping activities, including the UN Mission in Georgia.

The question arises whether another mission, operating alongside the already existing ones, will bring about peace where the others have not. Once the dust of the summer of 2008 has settled, what will this mission be able to do to prevent this conflict from reverting to the status of 'frozen' – not to say forgotten?

What matters most is to achieve a situation which the people of the region (Georgians, Abkhazians, South Ossetians, Russians, and possibly others) can live with, a situation in which they feel safe enough and not too sidelined to move forward to build a future together. Which of these missions and initiatives will make this the focus of their attention?

Martina Weitsch

Disagreement going Nuclear

Two leading figures in the UK Green movement clashed on BBC Radio 4's Today programme in September. The bone of contention: nuclear power. Mark Lynas, author of High Tide, has attracted the ire of some environmentalists by arguing that nuclear power will be a necessary part of the low-carbon energy mix. His is not a lone voice. Such eminent enviromentalists as James Lovelock, James Hansen and George Monbiot have all declared their sympathy, if not enthusiasm for a new generation of nuclear power stations. On Radio 4 Lynas argued that nuclear is safe, low-carbon over its life cycle, and that waste can be put to use in 4th generation fast-breeder reactors which can use radioactive waste to generate more energy. Opposing Lynas was Caroline Lucas, MEP and leader of the UK Green Party. Lucas suggested that new nuclear would lock the UK into a centralised energy model just at the time when we need to develop decentralised energy provision. She went on to raise the dangers of waste storage, the high financial cost, the risks of terrorist attack and the links between nuclear energy and weapons proliferation. Their argument was heated and no love was lost between the two.

In August, BBC Newsnight hosted a discussion featuring Guardian columnist George Monbiot and Jonathan Porritt, chair of the UK's Sustainable Development Commission. Monbiot stated that he believed preventing new nuclear builds was now far less important than stopping new coal plants like the Kingsnorth development in Kent. Monbiot's new openness to nuclear aroused a sharp response from Porritt who accused Monbiot of selling out, much to the amusement of the third studio guest, former Energy Minister Brian Wilson, who claimed that the debate on new nuclear had, in fact, been resolved years ago. Indeed, the UK government is now committed to new nuclear and the anti-nuclear lobby will have their work cut out to prevent a new generation of plants being built. In Germany, where nuclear is due to be phased-out by 2022, the International Energy Agency has warned that this is likely to result in increased investment in coal plants, and a corollary increase in carbon emissions over the coming years.

Whoever is right, the clash over nuclear energy highlights how people who share similar platforms and world views can disagree strongly on crucial issues and find no way, as yet, of reconciling these views. It has also shown up some leading green activists as unwilling to respond with humility to those with opposing views. Whether right or wrong, by challenging the cherished arguments of mainstream environmentalism, Monbiot and Lynas have highlighted the potential dangers of

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Croatia's Forgotten Trauma

Croatia will be the next country to join the EU. A visit to its stunning coastline or its proud capital might lead Europeans to forget its involvement in the bitter break up of Yugoslavia. The former city state of Dubrovnik could easily be compared with any other Adriatic or Mediterranean honey pot the EU has to offer and Zagreb feels nothing less than central European. However, should our intrepid tourist take a trip to Eastern Slavonia, the easternmost part of Croatia, a stark reminder of an unforgettable past will confront them.

The scars of the war are still visible here and they run very deep. Eastern Slavonia is still suffering from the heavy fighting it saw in ways that seem so distant from the capital and the coast: economically, it is in ruins as private investment is scarce and the educated are fleeing; politically, it is stuck as nationalism is keeping the communities divided and the war wounds fresh; socially, it is at odds as returnees are shunned and segregation continues to interfere in education; and mentally, it is deeply depressed as trauma is left unaddressed and is passed on to the young.

Vukovar: a town scarred by the war

Through its enlargement process the EU is dealing with these issues, save that of mental health. Economically, the EU provides Croatia with significant support by way of its instrument for pre-accession assistance, which amongst other things targets regional development. Politically, it is having an impact, at a national level at least, with prominent political figures minding their language and the country enjoying good diplomatic relations with its neighbours. The hope is that local politicians will eventually follow suit. Socially, the EU is insisting on its values, although not enough according to local peacebuilders. Minority rights and returnee legislation has been adopted but implementation is rare. The most pressing issues are being looked at and steps are being taken. Whether these steps are adequate or not is another question. What is clear, however, is that neither Croatia nor the EU is taking the region's mental health seriously. Eastern Slavonia and in particular towns such as Vukovar are deeply traumatised.

According to the Coalition for Work With Psychotrauma and Peace (CWWPP), a lack of capacity and understanding is leading doctors in the region to oversubscribe powerful anti-depressants, which do not address the underlying root trauma but merely suppress the symptoms. Consequently the trauma remains. Externally, it is manifesting itself in domestic violence, indiscriminate shootings and suicides. Internally, the trauma is causing physical and mental ailments such as reactive depression and schizophrenia.

CWWPP is particularly concerned about the younger generations who are receiving a transmitted trauma from their parents. Making matters worse, the older generation's capacity to communicate has been severely affected by their trauma and consequently vital communication skills are not being passed down to the younger generation. This in a region where the people are ethnically divided and therefore where dialogue with 'the other' is desperately needed. Compounded by economic hardship and the political and social segregation of the region, the future looks grim and potentially explosive.

Croatia and the EU must take the region's mental health seriously and adopt a more holistic approach to the rehabilitation of Eastern Slavonia. The resources are available but awareness is definitely lacking. Although the enlargement process is thought of as an essentially economic or political affair, it also presents the perfect opportunity to tackle the issue of trauma. It is clear that action must be taken in order to help Eastern Slavonia heal the wounds of its recent past and truly move on to a healthy and peaceful future.

Text and photo: Calum Shaw

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being blinded by an emotional attachment to a particular point of view. The anti-nuclear side may be right, and their arguments and facts may also be accurate, but all approaches should be open to question, and those who question them should not be met with hostility. In addressing the complex issue of how we best respond to the energy crisis, we will need to be open to ideas which challenge our convictions and beliefs. Do Friends have any insight into more constructive ways of dealing with disagreement and into how best to communicate strongly held views? I'm reminded of these words from Advices and Queries (Britain Yearly Meeting): 'Do not allow the strength of your convictions to betray you into making statements or allegations that are unfair or untrue. Think it possible that you may be mistaken.'

Neil Endicott

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