Providing humanitarian aid, and deescalating the conflict.

Initiating first steps towards real collective security

Memorandum from the working group on Ukraine

Faced with the violence of the conflict in Ukraine, and its real and possible further escalation, fears and concerns in Europe are rising. Celebrities, citizens, civil society and political organisations as well as numerous and diverse institutions have voiced their concerns[1]. They often see, explain and assess the long chain of tragic and dramatic facts in fundamentally different ways, thus coming to very different conclusions. "The roots of the current situation lie in the events of the 1990s," concludes Mikhail Gorbachev, listing the facts: NATO enlargement, the war in Yugoslavia (particularly Kosovo), NATO missile-defence plans, the war on terrorism… All of these relate to the collapse of a socialist experiment in a freedom not based on equality and with "short-sighted policies, of seeking to impose one's will and faits accomplis while ignoring the interests of one's partners" (Gorbachev). To a certain degree, Gorbachev does not consider the facts and his explanations are overtly simple, yet he nonetheless says what needs to be said: War is never a solution. There are first signs of a revival of political dialogue, which is a chance that must be kept alive and made use of.
After all, the history and the complexity of the problem are no reason to postpone immediate measures and steps towards a solution. We can plausibly formulate and summarise these in the call to "Provide humanitarian aid, deescalate the conflict". More concretely, this means:

- *enabling and protecting humanitarian aid convoys, the deployment of medical personnel and helpers;*
- *providing immediate aid to refugees, providing them with board and lodging;*
- *ending violent conflict and the transport of Russian and Ukrainian weapons and armed fighters into the conflict zone and ensuring the withdrawal of troops;*
- *removing fascist, extremist and terrorist elements from the ranks of the army, the police and other security forces, and disarming and dissolving all paramilitary groups;*

---

[1]For example the Polish appeal "Gestern Danzig, heute Donezk" (Yesterday Gdańsk, today Donetsk) and the German appeal "Wieder Krieg in Europa? Nicht in unserem Namen!" (A new war in Europe? Not in our name!) http://maidantranslations.com/2014/08/31/aufruf-polnischer-intellektueller-an-die-europaischen-burger-und-regierungen/ bzw. http://www.dw.de/wieder-krieg-in-europa-nicht-in-unserem-namen/a-18116380

> - *disarming fascist, extremist and terrorist elements; legally persecuting and politically confronting persons and organisations proven of crimes;*[2]
> - *rebuilding the destroyed areas in Ukraine; ensuring generous aid to alleviate and heal wounds*
> - *raising Ukraine's military neutrality to a principle and ensuring it; withdrawing "foreign security forces"; abandoning the idea of a Ukraine NATO membership and the implementation of Article 7 of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement*
> - *lifting visa requirements for Ukrainian, Belorussian, Kazakh, Russian, Georgian and Armenian citizens for all EU countries; widely expanding university scholarship programmes*
> - *creating a shared infrastructure and implementing economic development projects with all the aforementioned countries to further the establishment of a single European economic area*

Based on this, steps could and would have to be taken leading to collective security structures without NATO and US hegemony. In this respect, the OSCE offers a potentially promising perspective. This requires a peace conference soon, and the German government needs to take the initiative here. Action days organised by peace activists and organisations in Germany, the EU, Europe and globally could promote and accompany such a peace conference.
An eastern policy striving for peaceful co-existence in Europe in equality and dignity is what is required! The corresponding political will must become immediately effective.

To remember and to ponder

The following (incomplete) list should aid understanding of the genesis of the "Ukraine conflict". More often than not, society today vilifies the "wish to understand". This is due to widespread myths, stereotypes and a language that foments emotions instead of helping to clarify issues. "Pro-Russian", "pro-Ukrainian", "pro-European" are a few examples of such expressions.

The list makes it clear that various options existed for European and international development. It also makes it clear that the form German unification took, as well as the hegemonic approach taken towards the wishes of majority groups to overcome the split in Europe, covered up and destroyed other approaches for a pan-European structure for security and co-operation. The West, which for most people in central and eastern European nations represented the hope for a better life, has strengthened its military and economic power vis-à-vis the East. Only selectively did a truly European integration take place. In particular, the process marginalised the interests of the many millions of people in the Soviet Union's successor states.

---

[2] Except for those who can be proven to have personally committed murder, torture or rape, all those involved should be granted amnesty.

On September 12, 1990, the Two Plus Four Agreement opened the door to German unification. The agreement was supposed to end the Cold War between the "superpowers" of the US and the USSR, between the North Atlantic Treaty and the Warsaw Pact states, which came at the cost of "hot" wars, conflicts and much human suffering. The condition was to "take account of everyone's security interests". In particular, this included a commitment to refraining from further expanding western military alliances. In November 1990, the heads of state or government of the parties to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe CSCE[3] met in Paris. After the "era of confrontation and division of Europe", the participants hoped to usher in a new chapter in European history. It was a time for "fulfilling the hopes and expectations our peoples have cherished for decades: steadfast commitment to democracy based on human rights and fundamental freedoms; prosperity through economic liberty and social justice; and equal security for all our countries." Within this context, the charter emphasizes the role played by the European Union (or actually its immediate predecessor organisation): "We recognize the important role of the European Community in the political and economic development of Europe. International economic organizations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Bretton Woods Institutions, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (ECD), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) also have a significant task in promoting economic co-operation, which will be further enhanced by the establishment of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). In order to pursue our objectives, we stress the necessity for effective co-ordination of the activities of these organisations and emphasize the need to find methods for all our States to take part in these activities." The document makes no reference to the term "NATO" or "North Atlantic Treaty"; the concept of "defending" is mentioned only once: "We are determined to co-operate in defending democratic institutions against activities which violate the independence, sovereign equality or territorial integrity of the participating States. These include illegal activities involving outside pressure, coercion and subversion." Furthermore, the charter uses the term "protection" exclusively in the context of the protection of social and environmental living conditions, or in relation to collaboration, human and citizens' rights, culture and nature. The document emanates a will for a self-determined, peaceful co-existence and collective security. It developed out of a compromise between differing interests resulting from uncertainty over the future scope for action. The successful strategists during the clash of systems had surely developed strategies for possible "post" scenarios, in particular for their preferred outcome: Russia, as well as all the other states of central and eastern Europe, would erect systems to the liking of the West. They knew of the hopes of influential politicians to achieve peace and collective security and their fears of the dangers of failing states. There was, therefore, at least

---

[3]Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy – European Community, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom, United States of America and Yugoslavia

in theory, the idea of building a collective security system that included Russia, the US and all European states and was orientated along CSCE norms.

In January 1991, a coalition led by the US and supported by the UN Security Council began a war against Iraq to free Kuwait. The coalition intervened in an inter-Arabic conflict and left no doubt as to who was to have the military say in the world. Re-unified Germany supported the war, which was fought with the support of troops from Poland and Czechoslovakia too.

On February 27, 1991, the Ukrainian parliament, Rada, decided to hold a referendum in March 1991. The Rada agreed on two questions: Should the Ukrainian Republic become part of a centralised Soviet Union or should it be part of a federation of states with equal rights? In March, 70.5% voted for the first option and 80.2% the second option. Many, therefore, chose both options. The coup against Gorbachev on August 19, 1991 then led to the declaration of Ukrainian independence. On December 1, 1991, a second referendum took place. This time, 90.3% of votes were in favour of an independent Ukrainian state. In Crimea, however, only 54% voted for independence. Even before the election, the US had announced that it would recognise a pro-independence vote. On December 2, 1990, the presidents of the Russian Republic and Poland recognised the result of the referendum. Romania demanded the restitution of territories annexed by the USSR, which were now to fall to Ukraine. Russia's President Yelzin declared he was willing to negotiate with Ukraine the issues of the Russian fleet in the Black Sea, the Crimean peninsula, the debts of the former Soviet Republic, Ukraine's Gazprom debts and the rights of the Russian minority living in Ukrainian territory.

Ukraine's referendum led the USSR, a signatory of the Charter of Paris, to cease to exist. Overnight, many millions of citizens became foreigners in the places they lived. Millions of people, in particular Russians, suddenly experienced humiliation and discrimination.

After Hungary and Austria pushed for the break-up of Yugoslavia, the German government, alluding to the right of peoples to self-determination, recognised Slovenia and Croatia as independent states at the end of 1991.

In 1991, the NATO committees decided on a new strategy for dialogue, co-operation and collective defence, as well as possible missions outside of the area covered by the treaty. Following this, the Maastricht Treaty signed in February 1992 already contained a strong military component and a problematic "security dimension".

In 1992, NATO imposed an embargo against Yugoslavia.

In spring 1992, Crimea declared its independence but Ukraine's parliament did not accept the step.

In autumn 1992, the Council of Ministers of the European Communities agreed to negotiate directives for partnership and co-operation agreements with the USSR successor states, with three rounds of negotiations taking place in 1993 with Ukraine.

In March 1994, Europe expanded the negotiation directive for Ukraine to include the Ukrainian wish for a free trade agreement.

Europe gave no regard to the military and economic weakening of Russia, which had to lead to fears among the population.

The optimistic development option made possible by the Charter of Paris soon began to fade. In spite of mutual demonstrations of power, the option of a two-pillar power structure remained, with the EU and the Western European Union on the one side, Russia and the eastern and central European nations on the other, and NATO relegated to the backseat. This structure would have implied, after all, a conception of fencing off of spheres of interest. It would have converted the smaller states in particular into trump cards for the EU, the US and Russia. In the short or long term, this had to lead to new crises.

Russia has also signed the "Partnership for Peace" – a platform created in 1994 to enable military collaboration between NATO and 22 European and Asian non-NATO member states. Moreover, by 1994 important non-proliferation agreements for nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction have also been signed with the Soviet successor states.

In 1992 and 1993, an open conflict over the Black Sea Fleet developed between Russia and Ukraine. "'In its analysis of the political situation in Ukraine in 1993, the CIA was the first organisation to realise that Ukraine could become split in two."[4] Whilst the presidents of Russia and Ukraine simply planned to divide the fleet, the responsible military authorities believed this was not feasible. The Russian parliament declared Sevastopol a Russian city, which as a territory, and unlike Crimea, had not been included in Khrushchev's 1954 "present" to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. In June 1995, the presidents of the two countries decided to divide the Black Sea Fleet, with Russia keeping 81.7% and Ukraine receiving 18.3%. The fleet would be based in Sevastopol and Russia would pay rent by supplying Ukraine with gas. This also enabled Ukraine to repay its Russian debt. In 1997, Russia and Ukraine extended the agreement until 2017. Since 1995, therefore, the price Ukraine pays for gas is always linked to the deployment of and the payments for the Black Sea Fleet.
On December 5, 1994, the CSCE summit in Budapest decided that Ukraine would give up its nuclear warheads and ensure their transport back to Russia. In exchange, the US, the UK and Russia committed themselves to defending Ukraine's territorial integrity, including recognising Crimea as a part of Ukraine. Belarus and Kazakhstan, who, like Ukraine, also acquired Russian nuclear weapons after the dissolution of the USSR, concluded similar agreements.

At the NATO Council meeting in Berlin in June 1996, NATO adopted the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) concept. This concept made it possible to unify the task forces of NATO and non-NATO states and thereby enhanced the alliance's overall military capabilities. In May 1997, NATO and Russia signed the "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Co-operation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation". This could have led to new impulses for change to or a dissolution of

---

[4]Yaroslav Hrytsak, *Revolution in der Würde*, in: Claudia Dathe/Andreas Rostek (Ed.), Majdan! Ukraine, Europa, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Schriftenreihe, Volume 1447, Bonn 2014, p. 72

NATO. At the NATO summit in Madrid in July 1997, however, NATO offered Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic membership and agreed on the "Charter on a Distinctive Partnership" with Ukraine. This included the creation of a NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) and the establishment of a NATO Information and Documentation Centre (NIDC) in Kiev. Furthermore, in October 1997, the US helped create the informal GUAM network (consisting of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) to curtail Russia's influence in the region. GUAM subsequently lost importance but went on to become a highly destructive force after 2004, and hence became an official international organisation. Furthermore, in 1997, Zbigniew Brzezinski noted in his book *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*: "Somewhere between 2005 and 2010, Ukraine, especially if in the meantime the country has made significant progress in its domestic reforms and has succeeded in becoming more evidently identified as a Central European country, should become ready for serious negotiations with both the EU and NATO."[5]

Increasing oil production in Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, and the resulting importance of Georgia as a country for transit and transport in the mid-1990s, increased NATO's interest and led to the development of a strategic partnership.

With the partnership and co-operation agreement between the European Union and Ukraine of April 1, 1998, both sides agreed to close political ties, mutually beneficial trade and investments, as well as co-operation in matters of the economy, social affairs, finance, science, technology and culture.

On March 12, 1999, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary became NATO members.
On March 24, 1999, NATO began its air raids on Belgrade and Yugoslavia. Operation Allied Force was NATO's first essentially US-led war against a nation not posing a threat to members of the alliance and without a UN mandate. At its jubilee summit only a few weeks after the bombardment, NATO adopted a new strategic concept (The Alliance's Strategic Concept). NATO then established a Ukraine liaison office in 1999. More or less at the same time, the European Union adopted a Ukraine strategy as its new common foreign and security policy instrument. December 2000 saw the signing of the Treaty of Nice, which yet again emphasized and bolstered the EU's military and security aspects.
Only a few weeks earlier, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan had established the Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC). This group of states aimed to dismantle tariffs and trade barriers and enhance economic co-operation. Formally, the agreement came into force in May 2001. One year later, the organisation granted Moldova and Ukraine observer status. Russia and Belarus strived for particularly close co-operation.

Immediately after September 11, 2001, NATO invoked the *casus foerderis* and on October 7, 2001, started a war against the "terrorists" of Afghanistan. At the beginning of October 2001, NATO decided on measures to counter "international

---

[5] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Die einzige Weltmacht. Amerikas Strategie der Vorherrschaft*, Frankfurt am Main, 2001, p. 127

terrorism"; among these, the exchange of intelligence, blanket overflight rights and access to harbours and airports for US forces, and the permanent deployment of a fleet in the eastern Mediterranean (Operation Active Endeavour). Uzbekistan became a NATO partner.

At the end of December 2001, the European Commission adopted the Ukraine Country Strategy Paper (CSP), which is based on a joint community strategy towards Ukraine that "acknowledges Ukraine's European aspirations and welcomes its pro-European choice". Not only did the paper aim at strengthening EU-Ukraine collaboration, a fundamental aspect was to increase the internal and external security of an EU preparing for eastern enlargement. Ukraine's western boarder became an EU boarder, thus increasing the importance of Ukraine as a transit country. The strategy set three principal objectives: supporting the democratic and economic transition process in Ukraine; meeting common challenges on the European continent (stability and security in Europe, the environment, energy and nuclear safety); and providing support for enhanced co-operation between the EU and Ukraine in the context of enlargement (support for Ukraine's integration into the European and world economy, co-operation in the field of justice and home affairs).

At the turn of the century, a third development option established itself: A NATO under US leadership that relevantly influences European politics, contains the OSCE and more or less controls the WEU and the EU. In 2002, NATO and Ukraine agreed on the NATO-Ukraine Action Plan. At its Prague summit on November 22, 2002, NATO decided the so-called NATO Response Force (NRF) with land, air and sea forces for rapid deployment. The force reached its full strength of 25,000 soldiers in November 2006.

In spring 2003, the US and its coalition of the willing, including the post-Soviet Republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, as well as the former Warsaw Pact states of Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary, began the Iraq War .

In 2004, the Baltic States became EU and NATO members. Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Slovenia too became members of the North Atlantic Treaty. Since 2004, an Individual Partnership Action Plan has provided for even closer links between Georgia and NATO. Relevant political circles and parts of the population in Ukraine wanted an equal development.

This strategy increased the military strength of "the West" vis-à-vis Russia and damaged Russia's security interests.

On May 1, 2004, the number of European Union member states increased by ten: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus all became members.

In this light, Ukraine's presidential elections in autumn 2004 came to be seen as decisive for the country's orientation; either towards the EU or towards Russia. After the run-off on November 21, the ostensibly pro-Russian Yanukovych declared his victory, a move considered unlawful and fraudulent by many. Following several

weeks of protests (the Orange Revolution), Ukraine scheduled a new run-off for December 26, 2004. This time Viktor Yushchenko won.

In September 2005, NATO began a programme to detect and intercept short-range and medium-range missiles – the so-called Active Layered Theatre Ballistic Missile Defence (ALTBMD). In July 2006, the NATO secretary general disclosed plans for a pan-European missile defence programme. It concerned in particular co-operation between the US, UK, Poland and Czech Republic. In 2005, the NATO-Ukraine dialogue was intensified, and GUAM revived. Ukraine strengthened its EU-rapprochement process. More and more frequently, Ukraine spoke about not wanting to extend its agreement with Russia on the lease of the Black Sea Fleet naval base beyond 2017.
At the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006, conflicts arose surrounding the conditions of Russia's supply of gas to Ukraine.
In 2006, an intensive dialogue raised Georgia's NATO co-operation to a new level.

On January 1, 2007, Bulgaria and Romania became EU members. At the end of 2007, EU member states signed the Lisbon Treaty. It combined greater political and economic co-operation among EU countries with steps towards enhancing the union's capabilities as a global actor, bolstering competitiveness and increasing "internal security". The treaty superposes the democratic elements with strategies that are repressive, foment foreclosure and rearmament, and therefore gravely increase socially, environmentally and globally destructive development tendencies. The 2007-2013 Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for Ukraine under the new European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument states: "One of the key policy implications of the European Security Strategy is the need for the EU to 'promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations'." Clearly, "well governed countries" means "working towards EU integration and NATO accession", such as GUAM and the states supporting the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM). EUBAM's mission is to stop the trafficking of weapons, human beings and drugs to and from Transnistria, a region that declared itself "independent" in 1988 and which Russia broadly supports, also militarily. In particular, "well governed" also meant that there would be no extension to the bilateral co-operation agreement with Russia ending in 2017 that regulates the presence of the Black Sea Fleet. Moreover, payments for the use of Ukrainian infrastructure thereafter would have to reflect market prices.

In July 2008, fights broke out between the Georgian military and the militias of the Republic of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, both of which neither Georgia nor the international community recognises. In August, the skirmishes escalated when a Georgian unit began an offensive to recapture control over the region. Russian troops from the North Caucasus intervened and even marched into Georgia proper. After a bloody five-day war, the sides signed a ceasefire on August 12. At the end of August

2008, Russia recognised the independent republics. During the conflict, Ukraine supported the NATO position and condemned Russia.

Even though EU foreign ministers barred prospects for a rapid EU accession of Ukraine in 2007, they nonetheless offered an association agreement. The EU-Ukraine summit in September 2008 discussed such an association agreement. The phrase that "Ukraine as a European country shares a common history and common values with the Member States of the European Union (EU)" expresses the special role of the Ukraine for Europe. Until 2010, the EU planned to provide Ukraine with aid worth 500 million Euro. The agreement aimed to establish a free trade area and to facilitate visa requirements for Ukrainian citizens. The last negotiating round on the association agreement began in October 2009 and ended in 2011. In spring 2010, the presidents of Russia and Ukraine signed an agreement that secured Russian presence at the military base in Sevastopol until 2042 in exchange for a 30% reduction in gas prices. There were attempts in Ukraine to disturb the ratification process.

In 2009, Georgia became a member of the Eastern Partnership, i.e. part of an intensified EU neighbourhood policy.
In March 2012, the EU aimed to initial the association agreement with Ukraine, but only sign it on the condition that former Prime Minister Tymoshenko—jailed for abuse of power—be released from prison. The agreement in particular implied the dissolution of economic ties with Russia, substantial guarantees for the transit of natural gas, and co-operation with the EU in military and security policy questions. At the same time, the agreement strove to dissolve existing ties with Russia, thereby weakening Russia. Russia's commitment to co-operation with the USSR successor republics led to the creation of a customs union with Kazakhstan and Belarus on July 1, 2011. In October 2011, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tadzhikistan, Ukraine and Belarus signed an agreement to establish a free trade zone. Through other free trade agreements, Ukraine already possessed access to the customs union for many products. 2012 then saw further steps taken to create a single economic area with the corresponding institutions.

In 2009, Croatia too became a NATO member. In a new strategy paper in November 2010, NATO member state representatives decided to expand the planned missile shield to "the whole of Europe". During and after the process, NATO offered Russia co-operation and the tone of the NATO paper seems appeasing. On the downside, however, the paper orientates members towards an upgrade of military capabilities and increasing deterrence potentials. In 2011, NATO intervened in Libya. In 2012, NATO provided Turkey with new missile systems to protect the country from Syrian rockets.

Surrounding the association agreement, the phase between 2011 and 2013 was characterised by both progress and backlashes. Whereas the EU questioned the actual rule of law or the development of the rule of law in Ukraine, Ukraine

contentiously disputed the restructuring and the guarantees for the transport of natural gas demanded by the EU. Furthermore, Ukraine also saw equally controversial debates on the potential effects of severing ties with Russia on the economy and on military and security policy issues.

"2013 was characterised by severe internal scandals. The most important of these was most likely an incident in Vradiivka, a small town in southern Ukraine. There, two drunken police officers and a taxi driver brutally raped a young woman. To cover up the crime they then attempted to murder her … Tired of the arbitrariness and inaction of the police, people revolted and stormed the police station in Vradiivka. The whole country followed the events in the small town. Minster of internal affairs, Zakharchenko, … at first had nothing better to do than intimidate civil society."[6] In more general terms: "It was an uprising against injustice, corruption, the lack of rule of law and violations of human dignity."[7] Such events can then explain statements alleging that many slogans on Kiev's Maidan square and in eastern Ukraine were the same or very similar: they demanded justice, democracy and upheld the struggle against the oligarchs and the security and legal apparatuses protecting them. "The cause for the failure of the Maidan movement in Kiev (the end of pro-democracy protests-ed.) was the fear of its leaders to demand fundamental social and political change and their ambition to negotiate between those upholding such demands and others with national democratic and even fascist demands.

Protests in Donetsk-Luhansk were weak for the same reason. The majority dressed its demands in a nationalist-cultural, pro-imperialist and nostalgic rhetoric and demanded deepening Ukraine's ties with Russia."[8]
Putin would have feared nothing more than a left-leaning, democratic revolution in Ukraine, because this would have entailed social consequences for Russia, putting the social consensus there into question.[9]
A large number of people, in particular those from the middle classes, relate the EU to the idea of the respect for law. "It all fits together: a pro-European position, the sovereignty of the country, the rights and dignity of every individual. They are all different sides of a single question. When we decide for Europe, then this also concerns our sovereignty, human rights and freedom."[10]

These statements illustrate that it was not the to and fro concerning the association agreement that led to the protests against the Yanukovych government, which increased dramatically after the government decided not to sign the agreement.

---

[6]Olexandr Irwanez, Chaotisch Notizen einer Revolution, in: Claudia Dathe/Andreas Rostek, (Ed.), Majdan! Ukraine, Europa, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Schriftenreihe, Volume 1447, Bonn 2014, p. 59-60
[7]Maria Matios, Ich würde gern, ibd., p. 121
[8]Игорь Панюта, Турне по Юго-Востоку Украины. События и люди глазами очевидца//firstsocial.info/analiz/66368
[9]Ibd.
[10]Juri Andruchowitsch, Auf der Eisbahn, in: Claudia Dathe/Andreas Rostek, (Ed.), Majdan! Ukraine, Europa, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Schriftenreihe, Volume 1447, Bonn 2014, p. 53

Rather, it was discontent with living conditions in general. This discontent concerned social, cultural and political rights and concepts of justice and dignity.
That very different political forces began to compete violently, to win over and/or instrumentalise the dissatisfied for their political goals, should come as no surprise.

Nonetheless, the question remains: Why and how could all of this happen? Whilst a number of "orthodox" positions see Gorbachev's sell-out as the main reason behind the escalation of violence, other "orthodox" views hold Putin and "the Russians" responsible, and yet others simply blame "capitalism". It is, however, true that the Perestroika process of democratisation meant that those willing to strengthen their position in society at the cost of others increasingly resorted to nationalist themes and emotions and benefited from a position of power. The appeal to nationalist themes and emotions simply proves that the underlying attitudes were never overcome in the Soviet Union. Rather, they were tolerated and frequently also instrumentalised. Forces of emancipation and solidarity were too weak to change society. The Soviet Union fell apart, or was dismantled. In the struggle over Soviet heritage during the shift to a society that endorses enrichment and privileges over others, those who were able to maintain old and build new social and political networks in particular prevailed. And when these are based on concentrated real capital and therefore on wealth, and political, state and violent potential, capital oligarchies can emerge. Based on their concrete position in the globalised world, functionality was obviously the core criterion for the strategies they developed. In terms of their genesis and form, the Russian and Ukrainian capital oligarchies are a special case. Yet they are by no means characteristic of Russian or Ukrainian society alone, they are just as much a trait of US-American, German, French, British and other societies. They all share the principle of doing anything that aids the defence and expansion of one's own power.
When in Ukraine the capital oligarchies were forced to reorientate themselves following democratic protests and the efforts of those who, out of their own interests, hoped to reorganise the constellations of power, new uncertainties emerged, bringing increased potential for violence. When Yanukovych's government lost its legitimacy after it resorted to lethal violence on Maidan, its agreements lost validity and, not least, the autonomous status of Crimea was endangered, Russia proceeded to organise the secession of the peninsula from Ukraine. The move may have been more or less comprehensible. It was foreseeable, however, that it would have repercussions in Russia, Ukraine, the European Union, Europe, the US and NATO. Large parts of Ukrainian society necessarily had to view the secession of Crimea as a threat. The move also came as a provocation to Ukrainian nationalists and their followers, as well as an encouragement to Russian nationalists and their followers. Russia's demonstrative "No further!" message directed at the EU, the US and NATO was met with an escalation of violence. Russia answered with a game of "ping-pong", which had severe consequences. Peace-loving democratic citizens, organisations and institutions were and still are unable to distinguish those actors working in favour of sympathy and solidarity.

Democratic protesters in Ukrainian regions, in particular those of Russian origin, protesting against the dominant political forces, were met with brutal violence and the government described them as "terrorists" or even as "brutes". This was a call for murder. Mainly owing to their ruthlessness and brutal intimidation tactics, Russian nationalists then gained a key position in the affected regions. Yet it is murderous to use this as a Legitimation for expelling people and for refusing help to refugees, for opening fire on civilians and for using internationally prohibited weapons. It is equally murderous to withhold essential aid and provisions from civilians. Shooting down flight MH 17, also aided by Ukraine maintaining its airspace open, was also fatal. Deadly has also been the use of Russian military operatives in Ukraine, however it was declared and justified.

The violence exerted by state police and elite forces on Maidan square, the actions of Ukrainian and foreign secret services and other armed forces, the offensive of fascist units, their struggles with each other, and their mutual entanglement; all of this created a violent vacuum. Massacres perpetrated by nationalist and political extremists, which were covered up by government, the government-driven civil war, the mixing of government, militia, police, the military and extremists were never and are still no reason for the US, the EU and NATO to stop intensifying co-operation, signing agreements and taking joint action against Russia. Russia's reaction is dictated by the country's own interests and is not aimed at strengthening democratic, emancipatory and solidarity-oriented forces working for peace. This is a conflict between competing powers. Should the conflict worsen or even if it only continues unchanged, then this will inevitably lead to a greater emphasis on repressive components in EU and Russian policy. Analogously, it is true, what Rosa Luxemburg said in 1916: "It is war as such, no matter how it ends militarily, that signifies the greatest defeat [for Europe's proletariat]."
"Today, the foremost priority should be renewal of dialogue, regaining the ability to interact and to listen to and hear each other." One might smile at these words by Gorbachev, or believe that they are naïve, but what reasonable alternative is there in the international arena?
Establishing a dialogue will only become possible if democratically minded people are able to dramatically increase the political pressure on those who rule in Europe and globally and who wish to dictate developments.