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Workshop "Towards a Strategy for Reconciliation in the OSCE Area"

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Opening Session

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Strategy for Reconciliation: Concept-Process-Experience

Findings

The OSCE Strategy for reconciliation has to take under consideration the following:

- There is neither one universal nor regional model for the reconciliation strategy; it is mainly a bilateral, not multilateral process.
- It is as a rule oriented to the future but deeply rooted in history.
- Civil societies and non-governmental academic and confessional institutions, media and schools, as well as public diplomacy and independent intellectuals are playing more instrumental roles for reconciliation than traditional inter-governmental diplomacy.
- Reconciliation has to be seen as a multidimensional de-politicised process; it requires to seek not so much for compromise but for removing obstacles of the past in the mutual relationship (the truth cannot be the victim of the process but a point of departure in search of mutual respect).
- Only strong and self-confident partners can reconcile; the joint work of an independent group of intellectuals, academicians and experts can achieve more than traditional negotiators.
- The involvement of the broader public and a dialogue among societies, accompanied by symbolic gestures and crafted statements by officials, are decisive for reconciliation, which has to be seen not as a single act (or a series of such acts) but as permanent historical and political future-oriented efforts.

Concept

In his book *How Enemies Become Friends. The Sources of Stable Peace* (Princeton University Press, 2010), Charles A. Kupchan raised two principal questions: first, through what pathway do states succeed in setting aside their grievances, escape geopolitical competition, and construct a relationship that precludes the prospect of armed conflict? And second, under what circumstances do zones of stable peace form and under what circumstances do they fail?

In short, Kupchan's question is: how, when and why do enemies become friends?

The working group on Historical Reconciliation and Protracted Conflicts established within the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative (EASI) offered an approach that goes beyond traditional diplomacy to get at the root causes of the problem and urges a broader strategy for engaging society at large, the level at which solutions must be found. The point of departure for the EASI Report's finding is: "One of the fundamental impediments to molding the Euro-Atlantic nations into a more unified and workable security community (…) is the lingering distrust that poisons too many of the region's key relationships." (*Historical Reconciliation and Protracted Conflicts*. EASI Report. Moscow-Brussels-Washington, February 2012). The report's proposal addressed to the EU, Russia and the United States is to declare formally at the OSCE Council that "they accept the responsibility to develop a joint Stewardship Plan for the Twenty-First Century designed to produce functioning Euro-Atlantic Security Cooperation". Overcoming historical grievances requires a broad-based, comprehensive, multilevel process. Such a process has to transcend official diplomatic efforts and engage many different sectors of society in an active dialogue with counterparts from the other side.

Process

The concept of reconciliation is taken from the language of religion.

The leaders of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches at the Royal Castle in Warsaw (17 August 2012) called for "*forgiveness for the offences, injustice and evil we have caused each other*," and noted: "*To forgive of course does not mean that we can forget. Memory is an important part of our identity (...). To forgive means to renounce vengeance and hatred to participate in the building up of accord and fraternity between peoples, our nations and countries, which is the foundation of a peaceful future*."

It is not by chance that almost a half century ago Polish Catholic bishops set in motion the process of reconciliation with Germany. It was preceded by the French-German reconciliation and more than twenty years ago followed by a similar process initiated in Polish-Lithuanian and Polish-Ukrainian relations. For the process of reconciliation to be effective, it has to be institutionalised and de-politicised.

Quarrels, disputes and conflicts between European states are not a new phenomenon. European history is marked by persistent armed conflicts, occasionally interrupted by longer or shorter periods of peace. Intentional political efforts after World War II to ensure that in-depth social dialogue leads to a lasting elimination of historic animosities between

"traditional" enemies constitute a welcome new phenomenon. The relevant dialogue has been augmented by broad educational programs and youth contacts. Relations between France and Germany can serve as a model here: they were not only reinforced by the authority of President de Gaulle and Chancellor Adenauer, but also gained from institutional forms (e.g. *Jugendwerk*).

To some extent that experience proved useful in Polish-German relations. The role of the Churches in the two countries is especially praiseworthy in this context; on the German side this particularly applies to the Protestant churches.

Polish-German relations have improved over the past forty years not only due to the international law instruments that have been put in place, the operation of newly established numerous joint institutions and the involvement of tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border but, most importantly, thanks to the emergence of a new *community of interests* (prominently including the role played by the first non-communist cabinet of Tadeusz Mazowiecki and the activity of his Foreign Minister, professor Krzysztof Skubiszewski in promoting the cause of German reunification and, on the German side, the work initiated by Social-democratic Chancellor Willy Brandt and continued by Christian Democrats Helmut Kohl, Angela Merkel and many other German politicians in paving the way for Poland's accession to NATO and the European Union).

The process of reconciliation has many dimensions: political, social and spiritual. It would be hard to overestimate the input of the political elite in both countries and that of the Churches, media and intellectuals—writers, artists, filmmakers.

The psychological dimension is also crucial in the process of reconciliation, for it is a process the ultimate success of which depends on the attitudes of individuals. Reconciliation cannot be decreed. Still, governments do have at their disposal certain instruments that can facilitate a change in attitudes. This includes, for example, the convening of joint panels for the revision of textbooks on current history and school curricula so that new generations can gradually discard nationalist prejudices and stereotypes.

Experience: Poland-Germany and Poland-Russia

The process of reconciliation between Poland and Germany was primarily made possible by the changes that took place in Germany and among Germans. Poland and Poles also changed radically. It has been a qualitative transformation. Yet in order to make these changes irreversable it is essential to institutionalize the whole process and keep making persistent efforts in all possible spheres.

During his visit to Gdansk on the 70th anniversary of World War II (1 September 2009) Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin made the following remarks: "The historic, post-war reconciliation between France and Germany paved the way for the establishment of the European Union. In turn, the wisdom and magnanimity of the Russian and German peoples and the foresight of state leaders in both countries made it possible to move decisively in the

direction of building a Great Europe. The partnership of Russia and Germany has become an example of meeting half-way and looking to the future, while caringly preserving memory of the past… I am sure that sooner or later Russian-Polish relations will reach the same high standard of true partnership. This is in the interest of our peoples and the whole of Europe". (The text of Putin's message was published under the title *Pages of history: reason for mutual grievances or the basis of reconciliation and partnership?* in the daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* on 31 August 2009).

The frequent references to the processes of Germany's reconciliation with France, Russia and Poland might lead to the erroneous conclusion that these countries and Germany have elaborated a certain common model of reconciliation, a kind of a *universal* European model. That is not so. The character of Germany's relations with France, Russia and Poland is different in each instance. These relations are the product of different histories of the states involved, different mentalities of their peoples and totally different interdependencies. In its relations with France, Germany and Germans have had an inferiority complex: Germans—impressed by French civilization—envied French history and culture. That was connected with the dominance of the French language in high society and diplomacy and with an admiration for the French lifestyle, literature and high French cuisine. Though Germany was superior in other spheres—in science and technology, labour efficiency, social discipline and legal culture—both the German elite and society at large had an inferiority complex towards France.

That differed from Germany's relations with its eastern neighbours, particularly Poland. Negative, habitual stereotypes of Poles were reflected by such phrases as *polnische Wirtschaft*—denoting mismanagement—or *polnischer Reichstag*—meaning anarchy and tendency to quarrel.

After the Second World War a persistent irritant in Polish-German relations was the use by German mass media of the term *Polish death camps* with reference to Nazi death camps located during World War II on the territory of occupied Poland (camps that were located in Austria and Germany are described as *Nazi Konzentrazionslager*—without the geographic adjective denoting their location). In effect, new generations of German readers were being misled to believe that "Polish" death camps existed during WWII. There are various other minor problems of this kind that irritate Polish public opinion. However, they have never hindered Polish-German reconciliation because the guilt and responsibility of Germany for crimes committed by the Nazi regime has not been questioned. The Third Reich lost the war and the occupying powers imposed the process of de-Nazification of public life. Responsible political forces in Germany worked together to overcome the Nazi past, bring the criminals to justice and establish good relations with all the neighbours in the East and West. As a result, Poland has never had such good relations with Germany as it did after German unification within the Euro-Atlantic security structures and within the European Union.

The point of departure and criteria are quite different in the case of building good-neighbourly relations between Poland and Russia. The Soviet Union did not lose the war; on the contrary, it was one of the great victors. For millions of Russians that victory is inseparably linked with

the name of Joseph Stalin. Yet, he was a dictator responsible for countless crimes before the war, during the war and immediately after its conclusion. It was the Russians—and many people of other nationalities inhabiting the Soviet Union—who were the main victims of mass-scale Stalinist crimes, though the citizens of many other states were also targeted.

In other words, the Russian people have a deep sense of having been a victim rather than a perpetrator. From a psychological point of view there is no analogy between the attitude of Germans to Hitler and the NSDAP, and the attitude of Russians to Stalin and the Bolshevik party. It is noteworthy, however, that the dialogue on *difficult matters*, initiated between Poles and Russians, has made it easier for the present Russian leadership to pass judgment on other crimes of the Stalinist regime. Poles, by the way, had long known who had murdered in Katyn Forest the 22 thousand Polish officers interned in the USSR after the Red Army invaded Poland on 17 September 1939, in an attack coordinated with Nazi Germany.

The deliberations of the *Polish-Russian Group on Difficult Matters* did not concern mainly facts and events. The facts had been known for years. However, it was important to juxtapose Polish and Russian perceptions and different historical memories on the same facts. A remarkable result was that the Polish and Russian experts had surprisingly convergent views on the most sensitive and difficult issues (e.g., the Katyn Crime, the origin of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Red Army's invasion and incorporation of eastern Poland, etc.). It proved a much tougher task to ensure that the truth, brought to light after seventy years, reached millions of Russians. Making that happen was beyond the power of the Group. Decisions had to be made at the top level—by the Russian President and Prime Minister. The attitudes of present-day Russians were deeply affected by Andrzej Wajda's film *Katyn*, broadcast on Channel 1 of Russian television and watched by millions of people.

The conclusion here is that the process of reconciliation between Poles and Germans has followed quite a different course than the ongoing dialogue between Poles and Russians. However, recognition of universal moral and political values and truthfulness in addressing the future was pivotal in both cases.

Protracted conflicts

Finding peaceful, political solutions to the bloody conflicts that erupted within the former Soviet empire (e.g., in the Caucasus, in Transnistria) requires a completely different approach than the process of reconciliation with Poland. In the former case it is the present day rather than history that is the cause of confrontation. We are witnessing here friction between ethnic, national, religious and language groups. Past animosities have come to life, coupled with the aftermath of political decisions by the Bolsheviks, repressions and persecution of minorities, and the uprooting of whole nations (Crimean Tatars, Chechens, Volga Germans), condemned by Stalin to *a collective responsibility* and blamed for their lack of loyalty to the USSR during the German occupation. The communist authorities used similar arguments when justifying

mass deportations to Siberia and Central Asia of citizens of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, following the Baltic States' incorporation into the Soviet Union[*].

The findings of American historian Timothy Snyder of Yale University are helpful in better understanding the deep and tragic sources of conflicts in Central-Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In his book *Bloodlands. Europe Between Hitler and Stalin.* (Basic Books, New York 2010) Timothy Snyder described the fate of the 14 million non-combatants who lost their lives, being exterminated for political reasons. He writes: "In the middle of Europe, in the middle of the twentieth century, the Nazi and Soviet regimes murdered some fourteen million people. The place where all of the victims died, the bloodlands, extends from central Poland to western Russia, through Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic States (…). The fourteen million were murdered over the course of only twelve years, between 1933 and 1945, while both Hitler and Stalin were in power (…). Often what happened to one group is intelligible only in light of what had happened to another. But that is just the beginning of the connections. The Nazi and Soviet regimes, too, have to be understood in light of how their leaders strove to master these lands, and saw these groups and their relationships to one another".

In the process of reconciliation history matters

Conclusions

In search of an answer to the question *How Enemies Become Friends?*, Kupchan came to the following conclusion, valuable for the OSCE area: "Regional groupings of the states that enjoy cultural affinity are more likely to cohere as zones of peace than those that cut across ethnic, racial, and religious dividing lines (…)." His most important statement is: "Stable peace *is* possible. Enemies *do* become friends". No single regime type, culture or region has a monopoly on stable peace, meaning that the lessons of his study have potentially universal application.

The presented brief analysis leads me to the following conclusions:

- Each and every conflict has its specificity. Conflict prevention and conflict management require a holistic approach: there is a need to take into account the complexity of the situation, with its different layers and dynamics. There is a need to find specific forms of institutionalisation of the reconciliation process.
- One has to avoid what Thorstein Veblen has called *trained incapacities*, i.e., applying the means and mindsets of the Cold War to the qualitatively new political environment's circumstances and requirements. In short, inherited historical distrust has to be replaced by a confidence based on shared interests, transparency and predictability.

[*] An interesting comparative analysis on the subject is offered in *The Challenge of Preventive Diplomacy. The Experience of the CSCE*, published by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Stockholm 1994. The authors include heads of several OSCE missions to Estonia and Transdniestria; also presented are the views of the then-Secretary General of the CSCE, Wilhelm Höynck, and the first CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoel. My own experiences are reflected in the essay *In Search of a Political Settlement—The Case of the Conflict in Moldova* published in this volume.

- There is a need for more timely and more determined efforts to control an emerging crisis situation. In such situations the more sustained engagement of the international community is needed. The main challenge is now how to prevent in different form and ways the development of political populism based on aggressive nationalism and chauvinism as the glue consolidating newly established states in a search for their national identity. A political culture of cooperativeness developed within the OSCE, Council of Europe and the EU can and has to be promoted in the Euro-Atlantic Security Community[**].

- Multilateral security institutions have to be seen as instruments of national strategies, but should not be inclined to use them in an instrumental way in implementing their own national goals.

[**] The recently published Report by four research centres from France, Germany, Poland and Russia noted that the OSCE's opportunity lies in encouraging new thinking and in testing innovative ideas in a broad communication process with civil society actors, other international organisations and Partner States. Its opportunity lies in starting political projects that strengthen convergence among states and societies and thus clear the way towards a security community". *Towards a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Security Community. From Vision to Reality*. CORE, FRS, PISM, MGIMO. Hamburg, Paris, Warsaw, Moscow 2012.