

Abstracts

Gernot Erler

Where the Frost Comes from – Myth Making and Russian Policy from 1991 till Today

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union the cold war came to an end. The “Ostpolitik and the Détente Policy” led to the CSCE-Process with important documents regarding the “European Peace Order”. Back then, the path seemed to be open for a good relationship between Russia and the West. However, the rapport deteriorated rather quickly, resulting in the “Great Alienation”. Moscow saw itself as the victim of an anti-Russian western policy. Russian attempts for the “Reorganization of the Post-Soviet space”, from the CIS to the Eurasian Economic Union, followed. We are confronted with the Russian self-conception of an international regulatory power comparable with the United States and China while Europe is losing importance. The policy of the “European Peace Order” is put into question. Internally, we observe a Russia in search of a new identity on the basis of “Traditional Russian Values”. The international Russian policy is characterized by the “Russian Fear” of regime change through so called “Coloured Revolutions”. From Russia’s point of view the West wanted to gain control over Ukraine with such a regime change. The process of alienation between Russia and the West continues until this day and is again visible in the ongoing conflict.

Jens Bastian

The Playbook of “Erdoğanomics” in 2021 – Unorthodox Policy Experiments in Turkey

Throughout the past year, citizens in and observers of Turkey increasingly asked themselves if they were witnessing in real time a slow-motion meltdown of the national currency? President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s frequent public demands for interest rate cuts and the various justifications he added to these interpolations run counter to the traditional economic rule book. His interventions have raised far-reaching questions about the modus operandi of Turkey’s political economy and the risks involved in his unconventional policy experiment. This contribution inquires if “Erdoğanomics” is coherently implemented, let alone consistently communicated or if policy incompatibility points to wider aspects of a dysfunctional political economy manifesting itself in Turkey?

Heinz-Jürgen Axt

Dispute over Energy Sources and Spheres of Influence in the Eastern Mediterranean – International Law and Geopolitics

Conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean have a long history. Back in the 1950s and 1970s Greece and Turkey were at odds regarding the delimitation of maritime zones. These conflicts appear to have been forgotten. They were only taken note of again when Turkey and Libya agreed on the division of maritime zones in 2019. Greece and Turkey saw their rights violated. Conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean concern energy resources (primarily natural gas). As we are faced with severe conflicts in this region, the irony of the whole situation could be that such energy may prove to be a source of no value, as natural gas may not be competitive in comparison with other suppliers. The European Union has shown an interest in gas resources of the Eastern Mediterranean, but it has obliged itself to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and problems of gas transport are assessed to be tremendous. Quite a few studies on the conflicts in the region were published recently. However, two aspects need in-depth analysis: the principles of the international law of the sea and geopolitical considerations. Developments in the Eastern Mediterranean should not be perceived in isolation but must be classified in the global context.

Franz-Lothar Altmann

The European Union and the Western Balkans: Facts and Issues

The European Union's enlargement policy aims to promote peace, stability and socio-economic development in the six countries of the Western Balkans by granting the prospect of accession. While enlargement fatigue or skepticism can be observed among the member states of the European Union, chiefly due to clear democratic deficits and resistance to reform in the candidate countries, in most of the target countries the approval rates for EU membership are continuously decreasing because the time horizons are being pushed further and further into the future. The article not only discusses the problems of enlargement policy but also refers to the different geostrategic interests of the EU, the USA, Russia and China.

Christian Hagemann

Reap what you sow – EU-perspectives in Southeast Europe beyond Stabilitocracy

The European Union's (EU) policy in Southeast Europe is in crisis. On the one hand, citizens and governments of the region are frustrated because of the constant postponement of accession to the EU. On the other hand, the region is still viewed in EU capitals and by many of its citizens as a source of instability and problems for the continent. However, various researchers and observers working on politics in Southeast Europe agree that the EU is not innocent regarding the decline of democracy and rule of law in the region. They see the EU as complicit by legitimating and often financially supporting non-reforming governments, so-called "Stabilitocracies".

This article finds evidence for this argument in two less discussed country cases, namely North Macedonia and the Republic of Moldova. However, it also argues that the EU was eventually key in supporting oppositional actors to bring the Stablocrat-governments down when their time had come. Still, another problem of the EU is addressed: Its inability to support credible reform actors and their agendas in the region by offering a meritocratic EU accession process. The EU is thus not only an involuntary supporter of authoritarianism in the region, but also able to act as an ally of strong opposition movements. However, in its current state and with its current policy the EU seems unable to “bring in the harvest” of its successful actions in Southeast Europe.

Adelheid Wölfl

Language Treasures and Stimulants on the West-Southeast Divan

Bosnia-Herzegovina was conquered by Austria-Hungary in 1878. Together with the new rulers new Austrian expressions arrived in the Balkans. The Bosnians usually took these in by listening and integrated them into their own vocabulary. This constituted an amazing achievement of adaptation and integration. Today, the Bosnian language has become something of a museum for Austrian words.

The constant exchange between Central and Western Europe and the Southeast is also evident in the kitchen. Similar to communicating channels they influence each other. To illustrate, the Šopska salad is advertised as an old Balkan speciality. But it's actually a 1970s invention that came from the West. It was only from the 1930s onwards that Bulgaria organized the import of seeds. Although the Šopska salad was stylized in Bulgaria as the “healthy food of the forefathers”, it is a bourgeois and urban dish.

Dietrich Schlegel

Tracing Balkan Jazz – With Nicolas Simion and Theodosii Spassov

Around the turn of the century, the term “Balkan jazz” frequently appeared on German and international music markets. Musicians from South-Eastern Europe integrated traditional folklore of their home countries into contemporary jazz. Did this give rise to an independent style of jazz? Can “Balkan jazz” be defined at all? Is there a need for such a definition? Is it not enough that good, inspired music emerges from this melange of original folk music with modern jazz? Jazz musicians from the Balkan region, such as those who have their say in this contribution, give authentic answers to these questions.

Michael Thumann

Let Your Nose Guide You – How I Found My Way around Istanbul

This personal account depicts community life and neighbourhood structures in one of the century-old Bosphorus settlements of Istanbul. Arnavutköy by the Bosphorus is a former Greek-Albanian suburb of Constantinople. Since the 1950s, it has been transformed into a contemporary Muslim neighborhood in which traditional features of old Istanbul still prevail.