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Bilateral Relations

Editors

Dr. Hanna Shelest
Dr. Mykola Kapitonenko

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Contacts:

website: <http://ukraine-analytica.org/>
e-mail: Ukraine_analytica@ukr.net
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ukraineanalytica>
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SLOVAKIA AND UKRAINE: EASTERN PARTNERS

Dr. Aaron T. Walter

University of Ss. Cyril & Methodius in Trnava, Trnava, Slovakia

Slovakia and Ukraine are geographic neighbors, which have independently sought a path for integration with the rest of Europe and strategic partnerships. While Slovakia successfully integrated joining the European Union, the Eurozone, and NATO, Ukraine is still involved in the process. The main research questions the author covers in the article are the relations Ukraine has had with the Slovak Republic since 2014, with the illegal annexation of the Crimea by Russia, and continued unrest in the Donbas region following. What, if any, regional cooperation exists between the two nations? And how much Slovakia aids Ukraine?

Introduction

There is a similar story to Slovakia and Ukraine. Their individual histories have some similar threads, yet the outcomes for each in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century are very different. Both nations spent most of their history ruled by someone else. For centuries, Slovakia known then as Upper Hungary was ruled from Budapest. Then it was a piece of the Hapsburg Empire. It is the seventy-five years as a part of Czechoslovakia that most people remember, though admittedly this union was a troubled one from the start, with Slovaks chafing at being 'ruled' from Prague, while many Czechs saw Slovakia as a poor neighbour and financial burden. Ukraine for centuries was divided and ruled by three external powers¹: Poland (and for a period of time, this included the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), Russia, and the Crimean Khanate; a successor to the Mongolian Golden Horde, and Turkic vassal state of the Ottoman

Empire. After the partition of Poland and conquest of the Khanate, Ukraine had been ruled until 1918 by both Tsarist Russia and the Hapsburg Empire. After the Revolution of 1917, Ukraine was ravaged by civil war, emerging to become a founding

« ***While their individual stories continue to share the common link of post-communist nations navigating the political and economic waves of new times and trends, the outcomes have proven different***

republic of the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, Ukraine became independent and Slovakia became independent on 1 January 1993 with the peaceful split of the 'Czechoslovak nation'; a fragile construct according to a sociologist Olga Gyárfášová.

¹ An extraordinary good book on Ukrainian history, Anna Reid's *Borderland: A Journey through the History of Ukraine* is recommended though the authoritative history of Ukraine written in English arguable remains *Ukraine: A History* by Orest Subtelny.

The transition to a market economy has produced different results for Slovakia and Ukraine. While their individual stories continue to share the common link of post-communist nations navigating the political and economic waves of new times and trends, the outcomes have proven different. While Slovakia initially struggled in the mid-1990s by the early 2000s, due to a pro-Western government, and visionary leaders, Slovakia underwent the necessary reforms to join the European Union and NATO in 2004 and met the criteria necessary to adopt the euro in 2009. Moreover, since the mid-2000s Slovakia has seen foreign investors such as Samsung and Deutsche Telekom and major international corporations such as Volkswagen and Kia make Slovakia home due to the nations low labour costs, well-trained labour force, and membership in the Schengen area that has no border controls and passport checks. While Ukraine can boast of significant FDI², French and German companies taking advantage of low wages and high-skilled workers, and international firms such as Japan's Fujikura, an automobile parts maker, investing in 2015 (with the promise of hiring up to 3,000 Ukrainians), it is not a part of Schengen and does have border and custom controls.

Moreover, economically, Ukraine has not been as fortunate as Slovakia. Ukraine suffered eight years of recession in its efforts to transition to a market economy and when GDP growth was significantly increased, it was nearly wiped out in the 2008 financial crash. This fact, along with rampant political corruption and political unrest further stymied efforts to transition the Ukrainian

economy and meet criteria necessary for ascension to the European Union. A prolonged crisis started in November 2013, continued with the Russian annexation of the Crimea and further aggression in Donetsk and Luhansk. The result has been further negative influence on the Ukrainian economy and undetermined timetable for Ukraine to join the European Union.

Nevertheless, Ukraine has continued positive relations with members of the European Union in spite of these difficulties. Ukraine and Slovakia have regional cooperation in the form of a shared gas pipeline, with Slovakia assisting Ukraine in its broader relations with the E.U. Since 2014, Slovakia has been a supporter of various peace initiatives to end the violence in the Donbass region. To understand Slovak diplomacy with its eastern neighbour, it is best to describe it within post-ascension priorities.

Slovak Foreign Policy towards Ukraine

Slovak foreign policy within the last twenty years can be defined in two periods: Pre-Ascension and Post-Ascension, where in the former membership in the EU and NATO were the goals and in the latter – the instruments. The Slovak Republic's key challenge is to take advantage of the membership in both and utilize as tools in its foreign policy advancing national interests. These tools may be efficient enough, if using Brussels rather than the respective individual capitals. Therefore, defined as post-accession priorities of Slovak foreign policy,³ the Western Balkans and Ukraine have been evaluated as significant topics

² see Robert Kirchner, Vitaliy Kravchuk, Julian Ries. Policy Paper Series [PP/02/2015]. "Foreign Direct Investment in Ukraine: Past, Present, and Future" Available at: http://www.beratergruppe-ukraine.de/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/PP_02_2015_en.pdf

³ Relations with Ukraine and countries of the Western Balkans were publicly defined for the first time as priorities of Slovakia's foreign policy after entering NATO and EU by Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda at the Evaluation conference of Slovak Republic's foreign policy in March 2004. See: "Appearance of Prime Minister of Slovak Mikuláš Dzurinda", in: Brežáni, Peter (ed) Foreign policy of Slovakia after NATO and EU accession. Starting points and strategies. 2003. Research Centre of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava 2004, pp. 11-17.

for the foreign policy since they hold rather obvious characteristics:

1. Each is a priority interest for both the European Union and NATO
2. Slovakia has its own vital interest in these areas.

Regarding its relations with Ukraine, for example, Slovak foreign policy uses NATO and the European Union as instruments, while also Slovakia may assume some of the responsibilities of NATO and the European Union towards Ukraine. In truth, there are not many issues in the foreign policy in which the interests of Slovakia and the EU and NATO⁴ coincide as closely as they were promulgated priorities of the Slovak Republic's foreign policy in March 2004 by then Prime Minister, Mikuláš Dzurinda.

The positive reputation of Slovak diplomacy during the Dzurinda's era produced results for the Western Balkans that represent the superior quality in Slovak foreign policy since 1999, with some examples such as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Eduard Kukan's successful diplomatic mission 1999–2001 as a special representative of the UN Secretary General for the Balkans in the post-war years; support by the Dzurinda's government of accession negotiations between the European Union and Croatia in 2004; and Miroslav Lajčák's success as a special representative of the EU High Representative CFSP Janier Solana in the Montenegro referendum in March 2006, allowing for the peaceful division of Montenegro from Serbia.

Unfortunately, the second half of Slovakia's post-ascension period lacks vision towards Ukraine. It remains this way despite the efforts by the Slovak Republic in 2005 to

offer bilateral support in fulfilling goals of the Action plan with the European Union and having had the Slovak Embassy in Kyiv as the contact embassy for NATO since 2007. However, a positive public opinion towards Ukraine and positive indicators with the Slovak government are not enough for a long-term strategic vision. Moreover, continuity was lacking between the Dzurinda (1998-2006) and Fico (2006-present) governments, which resulted in the absence of meaningful convergence between Ukraine, the European Union and NATO. Efforts made have been ruined by the Fico's government following the 2009 gas crisis. What is most telling is the unilateral decision by the Prime Minister Robert Fico to support Russia in the Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute, accuse Ukraine of being the actor at fault and hold it responsible for the disruption of supplies, and most importantly a stated intent to re-evaluate support for Ukraine in its aspirations to join the European Union.

The answer to this is simple: economic cooperation. This cooperation remains the reason to maintain positive relations with Moscow. Gas deliveries come from Russia. Nuclear fuel for Slovakia's Russian-built nuclear power plants come from Russia and a significant part of its defence equipment remains procured by Russian manufactures. Yet, a contradictory and at times confusing shift started after the Euromaidan protests.

In 2014, Slovakia started supplying gas to Ukraine through reverse gas flow, despite advocating a softer approach towards Russia, explained by Gazprom announcing 'Turkish Stream' project, which would radically shift Russian gas away from Ukraine and Slovakia thus depriving Bratislava the lucrative transit fee. Slovakia was listed as a 'friendly pragmatist' in European Council

⁴ See Lukáč, Pavol, Tomáš Strážay, „Regional responsibility of Slovakia“, in: Duleba, Alexander a Pavol Lukáč (ed) Foreign policy of Slovakia after NATO and EU accession. Starting points and strategies. Research Centre of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava 2004.

for Foreign Relations' 2007 power audit of the EU member states relations with Russia, and was listed on the European Foreign Policy scorecard as a leader in two out of five areas of the European Union's relationship with Russia by 2015.⁵ Since the start of the Ukrainian crisis, the Slovak government has pursued a somewhat confusing course of diplomacy.

The Slovak government and its prime minister in particular continue to publicly oppose further sector-specific sanctions against Russia. An explanation of this is both a security and political calculus for Slovakia; fear of counter-sanctions from the Kremlin, and a very selfish decision-making process by the prime minister. For Fico, the former communist party member and Putin, the former KGB agent it is about strong interpersonal relations and loyalty (Walter, 2016)⁶. More to the point, Martin Bútora, Slovakia's former ambassador to the US, does not think Fico's actions can be taken so lightly. According to Bútora, Fico is ideologically closer to the political regime in Russia than to the democracies of the West. "At present, press freedom in Russia is limited, as well as the freedom of assembly and many more freedoms that are typical in Western democracies," said Bútora. He also had an issue with the fact that Fico openly defended Russian demands at a time when relations with Russia are being reassessed in the EU and NATO because of the tense relations between Russia and Estonia as

well as Putin's threats." The European Union is seeking a common policy towards Russia," said Bútora. "This issue has been discussed in various European forums. So there has been a certain surpassing of mutual relations on Fico's part, which could be at the expense of a common European policy."⁷ What may be characterized as a post-Atlantic Age, those nations on NATO's eastern flank appear decidedly unconcerned by the Russian belligerence in Ukraine.

In truth, the Ukrainian crisis exposes a fractured Visegrad Group making it difficult

 ***the Ukrainian crisis exposes a fractured Visegrad Group making it difficult for both the EU and NATO to adopt a unified response to Moscow***

for both the EU and NATO to adopt a unified response to Moscow.⁸ Robert Fico's visits to Moscow (June 2015), his publicly stated opposition to sanctions – because they hurt national interests – the sooner removed, the better – indicates a perception that is different from Poland and other European allies. Moreover, for Fico, while his personal preference arguably is Putin's Russia, the economic considerations for Slovakia also drive foreign policy calculations. Edward Lucas, senior editor at *The Economist* and author of *The New Cold War: Putin's*

⁵ According to the ECFR, these are supporting the strong line of the European Commission's Directorate General for Trade on compliance issues with Moscow and for pushing for the diversification of gas supplies away from Russia

⁶ The author presented a paper along a similar theme at the first Annual Tartu Conference on Russia and East European Studies, Europe under Stress: The End of a Common Dream? 12–14 June 2016. University of Tartu, Estonia.

⁷ L. Lesná. Fico Finds Common Cause with Putin "The Slovak Spectator", 14 May 2007, [<http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20005088/fico-finds-common-cause-with-putin.html>]. Access 20 May 2016].

⁸ In July 2009, a group of former politicians and leading intellectuals from Central and Eastern Europe, including the Visegrad countries, wrote an open letter to U.S. President Barack Obama, warning Washington not to take the region's "transatlantic orientation" for granted. The writers warned the region could cease to be a "pro-Atlantic voice within the EU" under pressure from a "revisionist" Russia that is "pursuing a 19th-century agenda with 21st-century tactics." Russia "uses overt and covert means of economic warfare, ranging from energy blockades and politically motivated investments to bribery and media manipulation in order to advance its interests and to challenge the transatlantic orientation of Central and Eastern Europe," the letter stated.

Russia and the Threat to the West, agrees. "Poland is taking a tremendous lead as the unquestioned leader of the ex-Communist world," Lucas says. "Elsewhere, it is a very different picture. Slovakia seems to have taken, initially, a kind of almost pro-Putin line or, at least, anti-sanction..." The Slovak newspaper *Nezavisle Novini* criticized Fico, claiming softening the sanctions would be a victory for the Russian President Vladimir Putin. Rationally speaking, some observers are right to point out the difficult balance that Slovakia, and Fico, as a prime minister, faces i.e. belonging to the European Union, yet maintaining economic benefits from trade with Russia⁹. Fico has criticized the 'hypocrisy' in several EU nations for example France selling naval ships to Russia, and western firms signing a deal on a pipeline from Russia to Austria. As Grigorij Meseznikov, a co-founder of the Institute for Public Affairs, an independent Slovak think tank, explains, "[Fico] He comes from the idea, and it seems to be finding some resonance in Slovak society, that simply the question of one's own benefit is more important than strategic considerations."¹⁰ This is a risk given the potential of undermining Slovakia's position within the European Union, especially on the eve of it assuming the rotating presidency in the second half of 2016. Slovakia's own political and security interests and a growing awareness of this risk have allowed for some change. An adjustment has taken place as Bratislava has seen the potential liability of its closeness to Russia. While skepticism remains, the arch of national self-interest

prevails and Slovakia has begun to diversify its defense, economy, and energy away from Russian sources¹¹. This may indicate for some observers the arrival, finally, of some form of sympathy to Ukraine. In 2015, it appeared that Fico took a page from the *Dzurinda* playbook, dispatching a veteran diplomat and then Foreign Minister Lajčák to Ukraine. Within his diplomatic mission, Lajčák offered Ukraine a symbolic check in the amount of €10,000 for the children's neuro-surgical center in Kiev, almost three tons of predominantly medical material for military surgeons and the Health Ministry, worth €50,000. The total value of Slovak development aid to Ukraine in 2014 was approximately €750,000, while in public remarks it was accentuated that the Slovak Government wants to see a stable, democratic and prosperous Ukraine, though admittedly painful, yet necessary reforms must take place first as prerequisites for both stabilization and growth. Moreover, Slovakia has publicly stated its willingness to help Ukraine with its expertise in the transformation process, which in turn will help in the agreement on political association and economic integration between the EU and Ukraine leading to eventual ratification and implementation of the Association Agreement.¹² In addition to assisting Ukraine in its own pre-ascension process, the biggest area of cooperation remains within energy security.

Slovakia supports Ukraine with gas. In doing so, Slovakia has become an important ally. In September 2014, an upgraded pipeline

⁹ Slovakia PM condemned for pro-Russian stance, opposition to EU sanctions, "Ukraine Today", 24, February 2015, [<http://uatoday.tv/politics/slovakia-pm-condemned-for-pro-russian-stance-opposition-to-eu-sanctions-411462.html>. Access 20 May 2016].

¹⁰ Slovakia nurtures special ties to Russia, despite EU sanctions. "EurActiv", 23 May 2014, [<http://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/slovakia-nurtures-special-ties-to-russia-despite-eu-sanctions/> Access 20 May 2016].

¹¹ J. Kobzova, Slovakia Changes Course on Russia, "European Council Foreign Relations", 9 March 2015, [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_slovakia_changes_course_on_russia311312 Access 20 May 2016].

¹² The Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Kiev. Lajčák: Ukraine looks toward reforms; Slovakia is ready to help with its expertise, 12 September 2014 [https://www.mzv.sk/web/kyjev-en/news/-/asset_publisher/olsKsldtEfpB/content/lajcak-ukraine-looks-toward-reforms-slovakia-is-ready-to-help-with-its-expertise-/10182 Access 20 May 2016].

connection between Slovakia's Vojany power station and Uzhgorod in western Ukraine began operating. This had an immediate effect of reducing Moscow's ability to influence Kyiv. More to the point, Ukraine had, because of Slovakia, a better energy negotiating position with Russia on a temporary natural gas deal in October 2015 and a three-month deal reached in early April 2016. Slovakia has the largest capacity and is a loyal supplier, despite Moscow's warnings that reverse flows are illegal. Slovakia's willingness to go beyond Russian objections is a piece of this contradictory shift. For a while, such a move by Slovakia confirms that its energy interest determined its foreign policy.

Slovakia and Ukraine; Slovakia and Russia

When Russia illegally annexed the Crimea and then supported separatist groups in the Donbas region, what is arguably considered an invasion with Russian weapons and troops, the lack of condemnation from the prime ministers of Slovakia and the Czech Republic was most unfortunate and ironic. More to the point, their responses did not match the significance of the events, taking into account of their own countries' history.

In 1968, Russian troops, then operating as the Soviet Army invaded former Czechoslovakia. Therefore, it is with certain ambivalence that Slovakia has been cautious in its public remarks. For Slovaks, many of whom are from the Prague Spring generation, and whose country borders Ukraine, the rhetoric from politicians and the prime minister's public comments have proven

most apathetic. Perhaps business interests took precedence; a fear that hawkish rhetoric towards the Kremlin would hurt Slovak business, but for the prime minister, Robert Fico to state that he would not "make vain gestures for [the sake of] gestures"¹³ indicated the unwillingness to anger Russia over an issue like Ukraine. This position is in stark contrast to his predecessors. Domestic critics, such as the former Prime Minister, Mikuláš Dzurinda, called Prime Minister Fico's foreign policy timid in an interview with daily newspaper Sme. This timidity may come from a personal decision to be closer to Russia despite the structural and institutional integration Slovakia has with the European Union. It is also contradicted by public opinion polling¹⁴ indicating that the majority of Slovaks believe that Ukraine should decide its future independently and that Russia has no right to interfere. Furthermore, the poll revealed that Slovaks felt their country should help Ukraine on its difficult road to prosperity and democracy. So, while Prime Minister Fico may criticize the sanctions and publicly state his view that the Ukrainian situation is a 'duel' between the United States and Russia,¹⁵ Slovakia nevertheless operates within the integration mechanisms established by its European partners. Other integration mechanisms that Slovakia can effectively use to help Ukraine are in gaining membership to Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). CEFTA membership is widely considered an intermediary step to the EU accession and would help Ukraine with its trade liberalization.

Slovakia and Ukraine also cooperate through the European Neighborhood program. This

¹³ Czech and Slovak views on Ukraine: More timid than the Poles, "The Economist", 6 May, 2014. [<http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2014/03/czech-and-slovak-views-ukraine> Access 20 May 2016].

¹⁴ Ako to vnimame slovaci na strane ukrajincov (How are Ukrainians Perceived by Slovaks), 24, June 2014, [<http://www.ivo.sk/7467/sk/aktuality/ako-to-vnimame-slovaci-na-strane-ukrajincov> Access 20 May 2016].

¹⁵ Fico vojenska zakladna odmietnutie SR (Fico would refuse military base in Slovakia), 7 September 2014. [<http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/fico-vojenska-zakladna-odmietnutie-sr/97092-clanok.html> Access 20 May 2016].

partnership is an instrument for a deeper social and economic cooperation between the regions of Ukraine and the EU member states. There is in particular, the Hungary – Slovakia – Romania – Ukraine European Neighborhood Partnership Instrument Cross-border Cooperation program that was implemented in 2007-2013, serving a wide range of possibilities from economic and social development and increasing border efficiency to people to people cooperation.

Energy cooperation is regularly referred to in public remarks by top politicians, as a point made by then Prime Minister of Ukraine Arseniy Yatsenyuk meeting Prime Minister Robert Fico, and referencing the reverse gas supply from Slovakia to Ukraine that helped Ukraine during the winter months. Such public remarks are confirmed by the memorandum on cooperation in fields of energy efficiency, energy saving, and renewable energy within the framework of energy cooperation¹⁶. At the same time, economically, Slovakia enjoys the benefits of Russian gas supplies to Europe, since forty percent goes through Slovakia via Ukraine and thus gives Slovakia a decisive role. Additionally, as explained in the above section, Robert Fico is outspoken in his view that trade ties and imports are more important than punishing the Kremlin.

There is still an awkward division of loyalties within European member states and a clear disagreement over how to respond to Russia. For Slovakia, with its strategic geopolitical position, it remains the European Union's best placed member nation to assure that gas supplies continue, and perhaps more importantly, by assuming the E.U. presidency

this year, Slovakia can assist in diplomacy between Russia and Ukraine; finding a satisfactory end to the crisis.

People to people contacts and increased border efficiency are supported by the reconstruction and re-opening of the pedestrian crossing 'Mali Selmentsi-Vel'ke Slemence', which connects Ukraine and Slovakia. The checkpoint was constructed under the Cross Border Cooperation Program entitled "European Neighborhood and Partnership" as a part of the larger project, "Modernization and reconstruction of the crossing points on the Slovak-Ukrainian border¹⁷." Additionally, in Michalovce, another cross border project is on, supporting tourism and information flows between the regions of Uzhhorod in Ukraine and Zemplin in Slovakia. Finally, scholars have pursued bilateral events, such as the 2014 conference in Košice sponsored by the Carpathian Foundation and the Slovak Foreign Policy Association where the current developments in Ukraine, expected trends, and the threats of future cooperation for national and local stakeholders were examined. Moreover, Slovakia's Minister Lajčák was present at the 11th Yalta European Strategy Annual Meeting, speaking on energy security issues.

Membership in NATO is a badge of honor for the Eastern European states. Slovakia obtained it in 2004 and Ukraine similarly seeks membership. It is an issue that Slovakia can help Ukraine with. While talks for deeper cooperation between Ukraine and NATO took place and new standards for the Ukrainian Army were set out at the NATO-Ukraine Summit held in Wales in 2014,

¹⁶ Ukraine, Slovakia sign a memorandum on energy efficiency cooperation. "Victor News", 11 September 2015 [http://en.vnews.agency/news/world/13014-ukraine-slovakia-sign-a-memorandum-on-energy-efficiency-cooperation.html Access 20 May 2016].

¹⁷ A new border crossing point was opened between Ukraine and Slovakia, "Uzhgorod.In", 26 September 2014 [http://uzhgorod.in/en/in_pictures/2014/a_new_border_crossing_point_was_opened_between_ukraine_and_slovakia Access 20 May 2016].

since then significant events have occurred. The security situation changed after the Russian aggression in Donbas. Thus, there is a renewed urgency to cooperate with the Alliance since the summer of 2014. While membership in NATO and mechanisms of ascension to the European Union are in progress, that places additional pressure on the foreign policy that Ukraine continues to hold with Russia, but also the relations that Slovakia and Russia have, which go beyond history.

This may be the reason why several weeks after Slovak diplomats were unsuccessful in keeping key Russian officials off the sanctions list, the Slovak Foreign Minister, Miroslav Lajcak met without fanfare with the Russian deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin.

Conclusion

Slovakia has a delicate balancing act. A channel between the West and the East that includes Ukraine and Russia. Bound by commitments and ideals, Slovakia, despite occasional contradictions, continues the principle of solidarity in Europe. And as the European Union continues its cautious progress towards common identity, despite the identity crisis, which followed 2007 enlargement and 2009-2010 Greek bail-outs, as well as 2015 migration crisis, Slovakia is uniquely positioned to aid both its fellow member-states and its neighbour to the East.

With its success in the first half of the post-accession period, Slovakia showed that within foreign relations, it could be an active and relevant actor. Since 2004, while an argument can be made that a lack of vision persists, Slovakia's domestic construct and foreign affairs with Russia and Ukraine, may be used effectively for the argument that the European Union offers more than a bond of economic advantages.

Strategically, both Slovakia and Ukraine may continue to cooperate in developing their roles as key transport routes for energy resources from the East to the West. Likewise, a closer coordination of the policies of the two countries in this area allows a better utilization of their strategic geographic locations, enhanced diversification of energy supplies and since 2014, decreased one-sided dependency.

Regional cooperation exists between the two nations and Slovakia continues to aid Ukraine as it pursues integration with the West. Cross-border cooperation improved bilateral cooperation and assisted in building mutual trust and confidence.

Moreover, personal political factors indicate that Slovakia often has contradictory rhetoric acting as an agent for the EU in its relations with Ukraine and with Russia. However, the process of European and transatlantic integration as well as the creation of new geopolitical alliances in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space point to certain realities; geographic proximity, historical, cultural and linguistic similarity, common national interests and foreign policy orientations create a strong cooperation between Ukraine and Slovakia. Therefore, Slovakia remains the best EU member nation because of its strategic geopolitical position to assure energy security, and perhaps more importantly, by assuming the E.U. presidency this year, Slovakia can assist in diplomacy between Russia and Ukraine thus finding a satisfactory end to the crisis.

Dr. Aaron T. Walter is an Assistant Professor of European Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ss. Cyril & Methodius in Trnava, Slovakia, and adjunct professor of International Relations at Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. Additionally, he is an international editor for the Slovak Journal of Political Science.



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