

HALKI INTERNATIONAL SEMINARS 2009

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*Current & Emerging Security Challenges
in Southeastern Europe, the Mediterranean & the Middle East:
The role of the international community & transatlantic institutions in conflict management*

This year's meeting marked the 20th anniversary of the Halki International Seminars, a quite successful forum for promising young academics and professionals to discuss global and regional issues, but also a confidence-building exercise aiming at un-demonizing the Other and promoting understanding among participants from various troubled regions of the world. It is our hope that the established network will be a worthy investment for the future.

The discussion began with a sort of crystal ball gazing regarding global politics on the dawn of the 21st century and an exploration of trends, challenges, problems and prospects. It was pointed out that one of the difficulties we face today is that we do not know how to frame the world because of the many different players, scenes and issues that need to be taken under. However, two megatrends can be identified: a) the shift of power away from the West and towards new or re-emerging actors and b) the issue of politics of scarcity broadly referring to resources, including climate change. Both these trends are aspects of globalization. The power shift has been happening for some time and has been accelerated by the global economic crisis. If one looks at Iran or Sudan, they will realize that the ability of the West to set the rules of the debate and determine its outcome is quite limited.

Indeed, the world is undergoing a transition and that we have reached a post-American phase. What remains unknown is where the world is going to. The various answers coming from different parts of the world are wishful thinking rather than predictions. The main force of convergence in the world today is the EU, but there are also other like-minded states, such as Brazil, Japan or South Africa. We cannot determine yet whether the EU will achieve its convergence goals or not, however the changes it has already brought about in the way we do politics and deal with each other are already radical. In order, however, to have better chances at succeeding the rule of consensus in intra-EU decision making will have to be abandoned. The forces of divergence include countries as different as the US, China and Russia that are bound together by the same aspiration and driving force behind their actions: the attainment of power. Russia will remain a major regional power, but will not become a global player due to its minor economic dynamism, lack of soft power, etc. China has the ability to affect the global system; however we do not know yet how. Finally, the US will be the main catalyst of change, because it can go either way. The key question the world will have to answer in the future will be how to take joint action on issues that have been recognized as common challenges for us all.

Climate, energy and the associated issues come out of the following trilemma: there is growing demand for resources, however supplies are more difficult to reach and climate change-related pressures are also rising. People tend to think in linear terms, but in the case of climate change this might not be sufficient, because the changes that will be brought about will be much more abrupt. The socioeconomic stresses and geopolitical changes emerging out of climate change will be quite significant. According to scientists, if the international community does not take the appropriate measures, the average temperature will rise by at least 5 degrees Celsius, making life in many parts of the world either very difficult or even impossible. What the world will have to cope with is the unprecedented magnitude and speed of the phenomenon, as well as the element of uncertainty associated

with it. At a first glance, addressing the problem adequately seems rather difficult: we currently produce around 40 gigatonnes of greenhouse emissions and will reach 80-90 by the mid of the century, while the Earth can absorb only 5-10 gigatonnes a year. The sooner we achieve the necessary reductions in emissions, the lower will be the point at which the temperature will stabilize.

The technology needed is already in our hands or can be attained relatively easily. The sooner we take action, the cheaper the transition will be. It is estimated that for every 10 years we delay taking action, the cost of combating climate change doubles. Currently it seems that the 2 degrees threshold is no longer attainable, because achieving it has become too expensive, however there is a 50% chance of stopping the temperature rise at 3 degrees, if we act fast. Global, collective action is, however, inhibited by two factors: a) the issue of competitiveness and b) the issue of vested interests that politicians are bound to try to protect. A solution has to be: effective and achieve its goals; efficient, e.g. make the best use of the resources available; and, equitable and fair.

In the negotiations, four camps have been formed so far: Europe, Australia and Japan; USA and Canada that are taking measures on a national level, but do not wish to commit on an international level; emerging big economies, like China and India; and the least developed countries, which have done the least to cause the problem, but will most likely be hit the hardest. For Russia climate change remained a low priority and was considered as a tool for achieving other foreign policy goals. For efforts, such as Copenhagen, to work the US and Canada have to join the European camp, China and India have to adopt the current position of the US and the LDCs have to be supported in order to cope with the impact climate change will have on them.

As far as energy is concerned, the situation between Europe and Russia is characterized by a sense of distrust, fear and hardening. The EU is slowly putting in place elements of a comprehensive and effective energy policy. From a Russian perspective, there are two dimensions to the issue of energy. The global dimension is linked with the ongoing shift of power towards countries that are rich in resources and their demands for greater participation in the international decision-making process, which Russia wishes to lead in order to set a new, more equitable framework. The regional dimension basically means control over the chain of supply, mainly towards the EU. In this respect, the Ukraine is becoming the #1 issue in EU-Russian relations both in terms of geopolitics, as well as an energy transit point. Despite the ongoing discussions no common ground has yet been reached and it is possible that we will experience another energy crisis in the future.

The discussion then moved to regional issues, starting with the observation that it is again possible to put the words "Balkans" and "normalization" in the same sentence. Nevertheless, there are still obstacles. It was argued that there are two versions of the present in the Balkans. The optimists stress the slow but steady progress that has been achieved and are certain that the future of these countries lies with the EU. The pessimists, on the other hand, who are mainly to be found on the other side of the Atlantic, believe that the region is still instable, that no real progress has been achieved and that the EU has been essentially ineffective. This might be attributed to the fact that the Americans, unlike the Europeans, do not visit the region and still look at it through the prism of the 1990's (although there are different views within the country about the issue). The Balkans were making slow but steady progress, despite the fact that this is not an automatic process. He added that the horror scenarios put forward by certain columnists were far from reality and that the Balkans proved that the EU's soft power can work, as long as the reward promised

is credible enough. It was also mentioned that cooperation between the EU and the US is absolutely necessary for adequately addressing the problems of the region and that the Balkans were a micro-region and therefore significant only as a group and not as individual countries. The Balkans are lucky in terms of geography, because now they constitute the inner courtyard of Europe and therefore cannot be excluded, and that as late-comers they have the advantage of learning from mistakes of the ones that came before them. The integration process to the EU should move on faster – taking, of course, into account the burdens of the recent socialist past - and politicians in the respective countries to take the necessary reform efforts more serious. While the emphasis should be on the 3 C's of the EU enlargement strategy (consolidation, conditionality and communication), three more should be added own: clarity, coherence and consistency. Finally, the importance of regional cooperation for rebuilding the institutional “roof” that collapsed in the 1990's was stressed.

There is definitely no comparison between Bosnia as it is today and as it was in the 1990's, but that the country is still far from normalization. The country is currently in a serious political crisis with an uncertain outcome, since many reforms introduced by the international community are being challenged by the locals, policy-making is deadlocked and the necessary reforms stalled, status questions are being reopened and local political elites are unable to agree on pushing through the necessary reforms. Full normalization requires a new momentum, which political elites in Bosnia do not seem ready to provide. The most likely worst-case scenario for Bosnia is a complete deadlock, if the international community withdraws.

Then it is possible that the Bosnian Serbs will pursue secession and a new cycle of violence will erupt, albeit not with the same intensity as in the 1990's. The current political crisis is the result of enduring features of modern Bosnian politics and society: an extremely complex state organization, intense inter- and intra-ethnic political competition, the proliferation of parties and populist politics. To that one has to add the fact that the state still does not enjoy any legitimacy in the eyes of a significant part of the population, political elites are characterized by a lack of will to change and the society remains deeply divided. Furthermore, the international community has mishandled many of its initiatives in Bosnia, for example by introducing extensive reforms with no long-term strategy and low sustainability, by drawing out transition periods or by mistakes during the process of constitutional reform. At the moment the US and the EU do not wish to see any major shake-ups in the country. In the past many hopes were put into Europeanization, but the current crisis seems to suggest that these might have been exaggerated. Solutions have to come from Bosnians themselves. The international community can be of assistance in this process by removing the fear of another war, remaining active, but refraining from the hard-hand solutions of the past and moving from institution-building to facilitating the achievement of political consensus and the reconciliation of the Bosnian society.

In comparison to 1999, Kosovo has clearly come a long way. This progress, however, would not have been possible without the huge support of the international community in terms of financial, political and military support. Nevertheless, with the settlement of the final status of the province still pending and politics logics prevailing over development logics future progress could be severely crippled. Despite the fact that the declaration of independence in 2008 was unilateral, one year later fears of major instability or a mass exodus of Serbs have not been confirmed and the new state has already been recognized by 60 countries representing 70% of the world's global economic power and 22 out of 27 EU members. Currently new legislation is being adopted, the institutional setup is being completed and powers previously held by the representatives of the international community are gradually

passed on to Kosovars themselves. However, a quick reality check reveals that Kosovo is faced with a difficult economic situation, a weak rule of law, a poor level of education, high unemployment, a hugely challenged public administration, a legislation that still needs to prove its implementability and political parties that need to start proposing a concrete program rather than repeating that of the independence declaration.

Turkey and its relationship with the EU and the US also featured among the central issues discussed. There is obviously turbulence both in the relations between Turkey and the EU, as well as within the country itself. This feature will probably remain dominant in the years to come. Although there is consensus that accession negotiations with Turkey are necessary not only because Turkey has historically always been a part of the European system, but also because they are in the interest of the EU, there are different views about the future of this relationship and a frank discussion is thus necessary. The EU and Turkey share many common interests, for example in foreign policy. In view of the forthcoming progress report by the Commission, one should keep in mind the bigger promise of this process: a reformed Turkey within a reformed EU. The negotiations should be based on fairness and a certain degree of imagination, while at the same time the highly political nature of the process should not be concealed from the European public.

There should rather be emphasis on the cooperation between the two sides, which will ease the fears of the sceptics in Europe. Cooperation in the energy sector is important, because Europe aims at diversification in the supply of energy both in terms of routes as well as in terms of sources. In this context, the area of the Caspian Sea with its significant, non-committed reserves becomes highly important, elevating at the same time the importance of Turkey as the link between the energy sources and the European market. When it comes to energy, the interests of states that are not automatically congruent have to be aligned. However, when the issue is discussed in a broader rather than in a narrow context, the search for common ground is easier. Despite the fact that it is not the only one, the Nabucco project is currently the main focal point of the European energy policy. Two conditions have to be fulfilled for the project to be realized: a) an agreement on the international standards of transporting energy has to be reached soon, and b) Turkey and Azerbaijan have to come to an agreement regarding transit issues. While the EU cannot formally accept a link between the issue of energy transport and the resolution of the dispute over the Nagorno-Karabakh or accession negotiations with Turkey, it is clear that a way has to be found for all three tracks to move forward, even if the multilateral nature of the EU makes the achievement of a solid position vis-à-vis the other players difficult.

The election of Obama signalled changes in the US-Turkish relations, mirroring a general improvement in transatlantic relations. In his recent speeches in Turkey, Obama outlined this new setting by stressing the importance of partnership, praising Turkey's democracy and culture and linking it to the country's critical role in the region and highlighting Turkey's role as a link between the West and the Muslim world. In addition to that, he outlined what the US expected from Turkey in the near future: an improvement in the relations with Armenia, a resolution of the Cyprus issue, assistance in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, engaging in dialogue with Iran, safeguarding stability in Iraq and fighting global terrorism. This approach can be interpreted both as recognition of Turkey's potential as well as an appeal to the Turkish public opinion. However, despite the rhetoric about Turkey's European perspective, however, the USA actually uses it as a viewing platform towards the Islamic world.

Regarding Turkey's regional involvement on transatlantic relations, there are the both advantages and difficulties in adopting such a role, while at the same time aspiring to become a member of a European Union that is increasingly turning into a union of values. According to the new doctrine of strategic depth guiding Turkish foreign policy, Turkey's Ottoman heritage would allow the country to become a key player in the region. As a result of that, its foreign policy would stop being bilateral and turn into an integrated approach of the region as a whole. Achieving zero problems with all of its neighbours, Turkey would find itself in a win-win situation and finally strike a balance between security and soft power. However, zero problems with the neighbours is a goal, but can never be a policy by itself. Furthermore, the geographical distance that comes with being a regional power would not allow Turkey to truly integrate into the European space. Last but not least, the region that Turkey aspires to dominate as the main regional player is characterized by a lack in coherence and numerous dangers of asymmetry. Therefore, the question arises, whether it is wise for Turkey to become one more independent variable in an already uncertain regional system.

It was also argued that the Middle East is Turkey's natural habitat and the country is implementing a new modus operandi in the region: projecting soft power (mediation in the Israeli-Syrian talks, efforts to convince Hamas to agree to a ceasefire, relations with the Iraqi Kurds, etc.). As far as energy is concerned, the issue is both significant and instrumental, mainly because it breaks the monopoly of Russia as a transfer hub. Turkey was forced to pursue a trans-Caspian stabilization and cooperation platform and in this framework to improve its relations with Armenia. It is also more important to look at Turkey's impact on the region of Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is gradually replacing the Middle East in terms of priority and importance, among other things because it was the first case in which NATO was called upon to prove its sustainability.

The discussion then moved to the "frozen conflicts" in the Black Sea region. In 2008, the region experienced perhaps the first European war in the 21st century. Traditional Russian policy was to keep the status quo, be a projector of stability and a major peacemaker and extend Russian influence. After NATO enlargement, an additional aim has been to prevent Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO and prevent NATO and the EU to expand to regions that Russia considers they should belong to the Russian security and integration projects. Even now after the recognition of independence of Abkhazia and Ossetia, the two countries remain instruments to Russian policy. The decision to recognize them was based on calculation on how best to serve Russian interests, although in the end cons probably exceeded the pros. By recognizing the two countries Russia has reduced the scope of these instruments and has tied its own hands by sticking to the independence.

The border will remain a source of constant irritation while the Georgian minority in Abkhazia and Ossetia, especially, will become a major irritancy. Finally the state of Russia-Georgian relations is an important issue and they should improve on the basis of the historical connection of the two peoples; the Russian interest is to have friendly relations with Georgia however this will be hard since Russia will definitely stick to its decision on the independence of the two countries.

There is an effort to address security issues in the area adopting a functional approach, through the regional lenses. Another way to address security issues is the capacity of the Black Sea synergy, a new EU policy, to act and have an impact on the frozen conflicts— its particularity is that it allows other non EU actors such as Russia and the OSCE to be involved. This could be a window of opportunity for the EU to be more active in the region. There

seems to be wide agreement that the conflicts cannot be resolved in the zero sum logic by trying to reach a bilateral agreement; a wider, more positive and different context involving more actors is needed.

Considerable time was also devoted to discussing Transatlantic Initiatives in the wider region. Today there is an organized framework for interchange between the North and the South as well as the West and the East reflected in a number of initiatives such as the ENP, Union for the Mediterranean, Istanbul Initiative, and NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue. The question however is how to coordinate the different initiatives. It was argued there is a contrast between the initial excitement about the regional initiatives and the current concern about how to deal with the two 'seas of uncertainty', the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. The ENP is a policy linked to the enlargement process of the EU. The whole discussion started in order to mainly address the concerns stemming from the East and not the South where a framework, the Barcelona process, was already in place. The ENP addresses mainly the enlargement fatigue question and relations with countries of great concern about the EU such as Belarus, Turkey and Ukraine.

Overall the ENP should not be viewed solely through the geopolitical lenses, as the question is to create a ring of sustainably developed societies, not a ring of friends. The ENP therefore is more about dealing with concerns such migration and internal stability in the immediate EU neighborhood. Additionally, such initiatives are the result of individual Member-States' ambitions to affect EU foreign policy and a reflection, therefore, of internal decision making and power-games within the EU – an element important to understand the evolutions in the European policy.

The Barcelona Summit in 1995 marks the beginning of the Euromed partnership. Over time however, it is widely perceived that the Barcelona Process has failed, which to an extent is an unfair comment. Indeed, the 2010 Free Trade Area target is far from being fulfilled. This target, however, was to say the least very ambitious. It was also criticized for not having any impact and providing a solution to the Middle East conflict. However, it was never meant to. The Barcelona Process and the ENP introduced a bilateral approach to a number of issues providing an instrument for bilateral relationship between individual countries and the EU.

The Union for the Mediterranean came along as a response and created new structures, while there was an overwhelming positive feeling when it involves project partnerships, away from the solely political side. However, it encompasses different perceptions and there are many challenges. Firstly, a difficulty to adjust to the new structures and secondly it is proving a real challenge on overcoming the 'political issues' and move to what is perceived as the more concrete issues. There are a number of existential problems:

- a) This new initiative created a space for conflicting aspirations between different states to develop. Different partners are looking for different things and have different interpretations on how things should develop
- b) Within the EU there is a divergence of views as to how the initiative should be approached by the EU as a Union or as an intergovernmental arrangement with some EU elements - including also the elements of competition on where to place the focus, the South or the East.
- c) Among the partners there are also different aspirations. On the one hand there is the Arab group which specific interests as well as other non-EU non-Arab states with aspirations ranging from accession perspectives to enhanced bilateral relationship with the Union. Less problematic is the difference in aspirations between the so-

called North (EU block) and South (non EU) because the difference in aspirations is more evident.

The Mediterranean Dialogue was actually a brainchild of NATO's emerging after the end of the Cold War. However, the perception of NATO as a US instrument and the war in Iraq worsened the negative image of the organization and impaired the initiative as there was a lack of enthusiasm from the partners in the South which made the cooperation one sided, from North to South only and not interactive. The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative was from the beginning much less ambitious but again a useful exercise. Future actions should include the expansion of the Mediterranean Dialogue geographically to make it more multilateral, including for instance Lebanon and Syria.

Not surprisingly, there was a lively discussion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There was some hope that the change of administration in Washington might lead to a new perspective a path towards the solution. It was argued that the actors themselves have to build a long-lasting solution to the conflict and a peace agreement cannot be imposed from the outside. However, factors that stand as obstacles are the imbalance between the two actors and the situation inside within the Palestinian camp, which make the realization of the two-state solution seemingly obsolete. Is the window of opportunity closing permanently? Or is there still a window of opportunity for the two-state solution? It has been pointed out that any other solution other than the two-state solution is not going to be workable. There are many difficulties to implement it and many opportunities have been missed in the past sixteen years, but the two-state solution is the future and is achievable.

It was observed that President Obama should act during the first year of his presidency, not to implement the agreement but at least to define and reach the agreement of principle on the part of the partners themselves to make a two-state solution possible and not act at the end of his Presidency as other presidents did in the past. It was also suggested that the involved sides should engage in confidence building measures, in an effort to build trust between partners. For this to be achieved there needs to be from the outset a clear understanding of what are the aims and for the Palestinians to know that if they abide by the conditions, restrictions a non violent approach will be feasible, otherwise there will be no reasons for them to make the compromises because they need certain assurances first. Hamas should be involved at least through the encouragement of third parties, although some felt that direct engagement should be the preferred method. Israeli security concerns must be taken seriously, particularly if borders are set along the 1967 line. Israelis therefore should also know from the outset what kind of security arrangements would be in place, however, a distinction should be made between genuine security concerns and phony ones.

Regarding the Arab Peace Initiative, the Arab states must acknowledge that the initiative was an important beginning but not the end of their responsibility. Arab nations must act to help the Palestinians develop institutions that will sustain their state and recognize Israel's legitimacy, as well as pressure Israel to reconsider its policies; Achieve a just solution on the Palestinian refugee problem with return or compensation; Accept the right of a Palestinian State, on the Palestinian territory; the next step would be Israeli withdrawal from all territories occupied after 1967 on the West Bank and Gaza strip with East Jerusalem as its capital. All the states of the region will then enter into a peace agreement with Israel and establish a normal relationship with the country.

The Iranian nuclear programme and its impact on regional and global security was extensively debated. What would be the consequences if Iran was to develop nuclear

weapons openly or, following the Israeli model, weapons in the basement on its neighbors and the international system in general – would other countries follow Iran's lead? There was skepticism about the argument of some American and Israeli scholars that were Iran to apply nuclear weapons it is possible that it would use them against Israel. This would be irrational and the Iranian leadership understands the consequences. But there is concern because of the random factor as well as the damage to the international non-proliferation regime, which any case is not in great health lately. If one country were to walk out of the NPT and start developing nuclear weapons it could be a fatal blow to the whole system.

The Obama administration is waiting for the election results in Iran to act. There have been extensive discussions on how to deal and respond to Iran and its nuclear program but currently they are withholding any attempt to start the dialogue. What will happen in the near future is dependent on what the Iranian regime will do and at the same time Obama while critical doesn't want to alienate the Iranian constituency. It was argued that the new 'Obama' US policy on the Middle East has the following characteristics: (1) Do something substantial early on rather than at the end of his term (2) willingness to engage the 'nasties' e.g. Iran (3) the principle that the USA cannot do it alone (4) it is a very much interest driven policy. Obama is the first American president to declare that a Palestinian state is in America's natural interest (5) all problems in the Middle East are interconnected and again this is very different from the Bush administration approach.

Obama's main message is that we are willing to work with you but you need to do your share and help yourselves – help America to help them. Obama is presenting three big challenges to the region. He has been encouraging the local stakeholders to (a) stop whining, think of your interest and act accordingly (b) think in terms of your neighbours competing narrative. Accept and address the other side's narrative; and (c) end hypocrisies and stop using public opinion as a pretext for not doing what should be done. Unfortunately, it appears that, with the exception of Jordan, the Middle East has a leadership deficit to respond to the Obama challenge.

Bush's previous containment policy had had five elements: economic sanctions, avoid taking any options from the table, including the military option, strengthening American security guarantees, maintaining a strong military presence in the Gulf, and remaining vigilant in Iraq to prevent Iran from taking advantage from the forthcoming American withdrawal. The Obama administration's policy combines all the above elements plus three components that are part of the broader approach Obama has adopted. That is, firstly try to engage the Iranian regime without making the engagement conditional; secondly, the US must push forward the Palestinian-Israeli question, deal early on with the conflict because it is part of the bigger picture of cooperation with the Arab states among others to stabilize Iraq; and thirdly, examine whether there is a real possibility of distancing Syria from Iran and reach some kind of understanding with Syria and Lebanon, also linked with some kind of economic incentives package.

Regarding the role of NGOs, it was pointed out that we live in times of radical changes and that there were revolutionary developments on a global scale, such as the financial crisis or the global power shift. NGOs did not anymore need to engage in the same revolutionary work as before the regime changes in Eastern Europe, but to revolutionize people's thinking and to make an intellectual shift. In recent years the EU seems to have lost its narrative. The financial crisis added to this grey picture by revealing that there was no true solidarity between the old and the new Europe (gas crisis, economic bailout programmes, etc. There is no general recipe to address this situation. The ratification of the Lisbon Treaty would boost

Europe's morale, while the economic crisis might lead to the adoption of new ideas and an update of economic models. NGOs needed to adapt to the new world, because there is nothing sadder than an irrelevant NGO.

In the Arab world there is still no real understanding of the concept of civil society, which is commonly equated to political opposition. There are three types of NGOs in the Arab world today: real NGOs that work hard and whose activities are closely monitored by the police; NGOs that are basically controlled by people in or around the government, but funded from the EU, the USA and other donors; and the so-called "cocktail party" NGOs that were so cut off from the majority of the population in these countries that they had no real impact. One of the problems of civil society in the Arab world is corruption: NGOs were founded and operated only as a means to receive grants and organize glamorous events at expensive hotels. Another problem of Arab civil society is the circumstantial nature of many activities due to weak support.

Serbia is a good example for illustrating how a developed civil society can overthrow an authoritative regime and what difficulties it has to face in the aftermath (setting new goals, achieving new competences, etc.). Before the fall of Milosevic civil society in Serbia developed independently, creating a system parallel to the state apparatus, opposing the regime and championing a single, easily-identifiable goal: political change. In this context a vibrant regional cooperation developed which in many cases also brought politicians to the table of negotiations and opened the way for initiatives in other sectors, such as education, culture, etc. Today, the civil society in Serbia remains highly politicized. The political strength it has gained makes it unreceptive towards change and adaptation. As the country moves into the phase of normalization, civil society will also have to transform itself. There should be more cross-sector partnerships for facilitating the financing of NGOs and the EU should pay more attention to their work and potential.

In the concluding discussion, it was argued that there is a new agenda of issues that shape the new reality of international relations, such as climate change, diseases, such as the swine flu, transnational terrorism, political radicalization, etc. These new phenomena create a sphere that exists not among states but beyond and above them. To address this situation the international community will have to establish new rules and institutions to govern not only the behaviour of states but also globalization itself. The antagonisms caused by multipolarity will have to be replaced by a collective leadership and sovereignty has to be shared in view of the greater good. In other words, we have to create a prototype for some kind of global government. Differences in vital interests and priorities, though, make this seem rather unlikely.