



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Interview with Kai-Olaf Lang, German Institute for International Studies and Security Affairs, 30 June 2014

1. A Foreign Office official spoke to Kai-Olaf Lang on 30 June. The focus of the discussion was the relationship between EU Enlargement and security issues, and how future enlargement may affect decision-making processes and bilateral relations within the EU.

The EU as a guarantor of security

2. Lang began by explaining that after the post-Soviet countries joined the EU, there was a common assumption that these countries, after such a long period as part of the USSR, would be deeply sceptical of any move to deepen the EU at the expense of their sovereignty. However, it soon became apparent that countries such as Poland and the Baltic states were in favour of further integration and wanted “more Europe, not less”. Whilst there was little federalist ambition within Eastern European and Baltic states, their security needs, Lang argued, were not best served by remaining on the periphery. They wish to remain in the EU’s inner circle.
3. The reason for this, suggested Lang, could be found in Eastern European security considerations, which were based on two core principles:
 - i) The need for a guarantee of security from NATO and the US, to offer aid in the event that their countries were threatened.
 - ii) Support for a convergence of common economic, energy and security policies, led by the EU, to strengthen mutual support. With increasingly intertwined common policies in these areas, the EU will need to take active involvement in security issues that affects the stability of its Member States.
4. Most of the newer Member States have agreed that both a functioning security component to the EU, as well as the hard guarantees offered by the US and NATO, are essential, so balance their approach in Brussels and Washington DC. It was interesting to note, said Lang, that a consequence of the Ukraine crisis was a renewed interest in adopting the Euro from Poland, demonstrating how policy-makers drew links between hard security and economic stability issues.
5. Poland in particular had focused on a need to ensure energy security, and has been a driving force in both the Eastern Partnership strategy, as well as arguing (alongside Lithuania) for the inclusion of energy security issues in the Lisbon Treaty.

How enlargement affects decision-making in the EU

6. Lang noted that, after a sustained effort to meet the *acquis* and become mainstream EU countries, many newly acceded countries have developed a culture of consensus and an institutional aversion to saying 'no' once momentum gathers behind initiatives coming from Brussels.

How enlargement can affect EU bilateralism

7. Lang reflected on how a global player such as Turkey would affect the internal dynamics of the EU, if successful in applying for membership. With rising levels of self-confidence, economic growth and regional influence, Turkey could fundamentally shake up the existing formal and informal coalitions inside the EU, such as the Franco-German bloc, the Big Six (France, Germany, the UK, Spain, Italy and Poland), or the Weimar Triangle (Poland, Germany and France). Smaller new Member States would find it more difficult to shape the political agenda, though Lang noted that Poland had been effective by using their Council Presidency to cover areas of mutual interest such as economic growth and the Single Market.

Learning lessons and the future of enlargement

8. Lang ended by reflecting on the lessons EU Member States and the Commission will take from previous enlargement rounds, concluding that there will be increasing reticence to take in new Member States when potentially outstanding weaknesses remain unaddressed. Monitoring mechanisms, which have been applied unevenly in the past (more rigorously in Romania than in Croatia, for example), will need to be applied in a more uniform manner. Countries not achieving the requisite economic or democratic progress, or those with outstanding territorial disputes, will find it harder to convince the EU and its Member States, fatigued by the previous enlargement rounds, to sustain the political momentum behind further enlargement efforts.