



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Record of interview with Jan Techau, Carnegie Europe, 9 July 2014

1. A Foreign Office official interviewed Jan Techau on 9 July.

Enlargement and UK interests

2. Enlargement has moved the EU structure and orientation closer to the UK's objectives. Because of enlargement, the EU has a protectionist outlook and has become more outward looking, focusing on the single market and stability in its neighbourhood.
3. In general enlargement has slowed the pace of integration in line with UK preferences, although this dynamic has varied by policy area. For example enlargement may have lead to increased integration in border control but made further integration in Justice and Home Affairs more difficult.
4. Enlargement has made the UK more influential. New Member States were friendly towards the UK given its support for their accession. Furthermore these countries were more "Anglo-Saxon minded", moving the EU away from the Franco-German axis and towards a more British vision of the EU.
5. The UK benefited economically from migration although there were perceived cultural costs for the population.
6. Due to UK policy since 2004 the UK has not benefitted from enlargement as much as it could have.

Enlargement and EU foreign policy

7. Overall enlargement has had a positive impact; however it has a double edged quality. It increases the weight of the EU internationally and widens the perspective. At the same

time, given that foreign policy is conducted through unanimity, it makes it harder for the EU to reach consensus on how to approach different countries.

8. Institutional reform to a move away from unanimity is not likely to happen soon in response to this downside. Political leadership on the part of larger Member States, particularly the big three, could unlock these problems for effective EU foreign policy. At present this is not happening largely because these countries are concentrated on domestic problems. France is focused on its economic problems, the UK has the potential to make a significant contribution to EU external affairs, given its history and global orientation, but it is faced with a “profound situation of ambiguity” in its relationship with the EU. Germany is still held back by its history from taking a leading role.

The balance of competence

9. The balance between Member States and EU institutions is appropriate for enlargement. The Member States are the real masters of the process.
10. Problems stem from how power is used rather than where it is placed. The premature accession of Romania and Bulgaria was the fault of the Member States which pushed for their accession in 2007.
11. When Member States do not take a leadership role the enlargement process can be run “on autopilot” by the institutions. This is not desirable as the institutions lack the capacity to run a policy which requires a high degree of political engagement from the member states’ capitals.
12. It could be beneficial for the institutions to gain greater power to monitor and push for reform in countries which have just joined the EU to keep up the pace of reform. This may be unnecessary if conditionality can be properly applied pre-accession.

Lessons learned

13. There are a number of lessons to be learned:
 - a) Conditionality should be rigorously applied and only when this is fully met should candidates be admitted. This would prevent premature accession.
 - b) Conditionality is only fully effective when there is political will on the behalf of the candidate country to reform itself. This is why conditionality was effective in Poland

and the Czech Republic but less effective in Romania and Bulgaria where political will was lacking. Furthermore; the political will of EU institutions and Member States is needed for a credible offer of membership. The Turkish case shows how an initially strong aspiration for modernisation and membership was undermined to a large extent by the EU itself by not giving a consistent message on Turkey joining.

- c) Different candidate countries should be treated on a case by case basis in light of their individual circumstances rather than merely through a “checklist” approach.

14. There is a tension between strict conditionality and a geopolitical perspective on the interests of the EU in its neighbourhood. The latter may lead the union to alter the pace of the accession process. It will be necessary to balance these two priorities case by case.

15. Meeting the chapters of the *acquis* is not sufficient as accession to the EU means joining a value based community.

16. The “New Approach” is a positive step forward in lesson learning.

The challenge of political will

17. A prevalent view in the EU is that future candidate countries are culturally remote and the EU does not have the “absorption capacity” for new members. Techau’s view is that this second argument is misplaced.

18. This view can be addressed through reassurance that EU citizens can maintain their identities within an enlarged EU. A more meaningful EU wide election process could help address the democratic legitimacy issue. More real participation could help building a stronger European identity which in turn would further enlargement make look less threatening.

19. The attractiveness of the EU for potential candidates is not as great as it was for Central Europe. The reason may be that the enlargement process involves significant burdens over a long time and a loss of sovereignty with benefits which are not immediate or guaranteed.

Future Enlargement: Turkey

- 20. For foreign policy, Turkish accession would be a great opportunity. There is a historical perspective on aligning Turkey with the West and it would lead to a maturation in the foreign policy discourse.
- 21. It would be challenging for the EU to absorb Turkey into its decision making structures .Treaty change would be necessary prior to Turkish accession. Member States would try to institutionalise certain policies before Turkey could alter them as a member.
- 22. Turkish accession would make further political integration more difficult and there would likely be many other effects which cannot be predicted at this stage.

Future Enlargement: Western Balkans

- 23. There is now an opportunity, through enlargement, to pacify the Western Balkans for the first time since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.
- 24. There are challenges from disputed territories and religious issues. Bosnia and Herzegovina has been particularly disappointing and the Dayton structure should now be considered a failure.

The Eastern Partnership Countries

- 25. The EU cannot offer a credible enlargement policy towards these countries as the political will is absent within the union.
- 26. These countries are not ready to go down the path towards accession. There would need to be a far greater commitment to reform.
- 27. While an explicit membership perspective should not be put on the table now, it should also not be explicitly excluded. The door needs to remain open in principle.

Other comments

- 28. Enlargement is currently low down the political agenda within the EU given the importance of other issues such as economic reform.

29. The best way for the UK to exert international influence is through the EU. It is an enormous force multiplier for a mid-sized player like the UK. Uk eminence on its own, outside the EU, is an illusion.
30. The strategy of a renewed commitment of the UK to EU only if the EU reforms is misplaced. Only a fully committed UK can achieve reform.