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THE EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS AT THE CROSS-ROADS: THE NEED FOR A RESET?

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Abstract

The research objective of this study is twofold: On the one hand, it aims at analysing the multifaceted EU-Russia relations as seen from different theoretical/conceptual approaches. On the other hand, this paper examines how the EU-Russia dialogue is organised in sectoral terms-economy, trade, visa regime liberalisation, local conflict management, etc. Both progress and problematic areas in the EU-Russia bilateral relations are identified. The need for a radical change in the existing conceptual framework of the EU-Russia relations and the search of a new, more efficient, EU-Russian joint strategy is explained.

Keywords: European Union (EU), Russia, Eurasianism.

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Yolların Kavşağında AB-Rusya İlişkileri:
Bir Sıfırlama (Reset) Gerekli Mi?

Özet

Bu çalışmada araştırmanın amacı iki yönlüdür: Bir yandan farklı kuramsal/kavramsal yaklaşımlar olarak görülen çok yönlü AB-Rusya ilişkilerini, diğer yandan da, AB-Rusya ilişkilerinin ekonomi, ticaret, vize uygulamasının serbestleşmesi, yerel çatışma yönetimi vb. yönlerden nasıl organize edildiğini incelemek iddiasındadır. Ayrıca AB-Rusya ikili ilişkilerinde ilerleme ve sorunlu alanlar tanımlanmıştır. AB-Rusya ilişkilerinin mevcut kavramsal çerçeve içerisinde radikal bir değişime olan ihtiyacı ve yeni, daha verimli bir AB-Rusya ortak stratejisinin aranmasının gerekliliği açıklanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avrupa Birliği, Rusya, Avrasyacılık.

Introduction

Pessimistic assessments of Europe's ability to play a role of the most important reference point for Russia's identity abound. "Russia no longer sees itself as part of modern Europe. The idea of creating a common European space from Vladivostok to Brest has failed. The ongoing rapid change of the European model prompts Moscow to take any long-term projects involving Europe with a big pinch of salt", one author concludes.[1] Even among Russia's liberal community Europe is under the fire of sharp critique. According to one account, at the peak of its strength Europe had based its policies on private property, minimal state, intra-European competition, and a feeling of cultural superiority. In the recent times, as soon as those principles were substituted by social distribution, regulatory powers of the state, pan-European unity and multiculturalism, Europe's role in the world is in decline.[2]

1 Y. Shestakov, "Why We Have Finally Fallen Out of Love with Europe", **Valdai Discussion Club**, vol. XXII, (December 2011), available online at: http://valdaiclub.com/europe/36480.html (in Russian).

2 Y. Latynina, "Evropa, ty ofigela [Europe, you got crazy]", **Novaya Gazeta [New Paper]**, 16 (August 2011), Available online at: http://www.novayagazeta.ru/politics/48064.html (in Russian).

Expectedly, the crisis of eurozone made Russian discourse on the EU even more critical. Many Russian experts believe that Russia should wait until Europe recovers from the current economic troubles. They argue that the deep financial troubles within the EU will make it a doubtful partner for Russia and seriously damage the prospects of Russia's European orientation. Europe's weakness may lead it to more robustly team up with the United States in the policies on Syria and Iran, and thus to disregard the dangers of a possible destabilization of the larger Middle East for Europe itself.[3] As seen from this vantage point, the only good news for Russia is that a less ambitious and a more inward-oriented Europe may play down its normative pressure on Moscow, which may open a new chance for a new twist in Russia-EU relations.

However, if compared with the US and NATO, the EU is usually perceived by Russia as a more convenient partner than these international actors. In contrast with the EU, which is seen as an important supporter of international law and order, Moscow treats the US and NATO as major 'spoilers' and 'troublemakers' in international relations, who regularly breach international law and undermine the role of international institutions and multilateral diplomacy. In all the most problematic cases (Kosovo, Iraq and South Ossetia) Russia appealed to the EU as a strong proponent of international law and a preferable mediator. It explains the reasons why the director of the Moscow-based Institute for Europe Studies deems Russia "is interested in preventing the EU from falling apart. We don't need a patchwork Europe. It is easier to deal with it as a unique formation which already exists".[4]

The drastic rise of mass-scale protest activity in Russia as a reaction to electoral fraud in parliamentary (December 4, 2011) and presidential (March

3 E. Evstafiev, "Glazami konservatora: perezagruzka mertva [A conservative view: the reset is dead]" **Index Bezopasnosti [Security Index]** vol. XVII/4, (2011), p. 150. Available online at: http://www.pircenter.org/data/publications/sirus4-11/Review%20Evstafiev.pdf, (in Russian).

4 N. Shmeliov, "Chto nam nuzhno ot Evropy [What we need from Europe]", **Soyuznoe veche [Chamber of Union]** (in Russian), vol. LIX (2011), p. 7.

4, 2012) elections caused a double-faced effects on the prospects of Russia's integration with Europe. On the one hand, the growing activism of civil groups did much more for Russia's Europeanization than more than a decade of Putin's 'vertical of power' and 'raising from the knees'. On the other hand, as a reaction to the prospects of an 'orange revolution', the Kremlin tended to move away from the European norms of democracy and human rights towards an even more protectionist, introvert and sovereignty-grounded regime with a more nationalistic than European discourse. The Kremlin foreign policy philosophy is strongly based on the idea of multipolarity which – perhaps, paradoxically – is by and large accepted in Europe as well, but in entirely different connotations. In spite of a seeming concord between Russia and the EU on the prospects of a multipolar world, the very concept of multipolarity is differently understood by the two parties, which makes inevitable explicit or implicit debates and even clashes between them on the essence of the concept and its institutional forms.

The *research objective* of this study is twofold: On the one hand, it aims at analyzing the multifaceted EU-Russia relations as seen from different theoretical/conceptual approaches. The key question addressed below is how the various perspectives of multipolarity can shape the EU–Russia relations and bring different outcomes. Arguably, Moscow and Brussels have dissimilar ideas about the practical arrangements the idea of multipolarity implies; besides, inside Russia and the EU there are multiple views on multipolarity. All this plurality of voices requests a scrutiny of different models of a multipolar international society in which Russia and EU are its constitutive poles.

On the other hand, this paper examines how the EU-Russia dialogue is organized in sectoral terms – economy, trade, visa regime liberalization, local conflict management, etc. Both progress and problematic areas in the EU-Russia bilateral relations are identified. The need for a radical change in the existing conceptual framework of the EU-Russia relations and the search of a new, more efficient, EU-Russian joint strategy is explained.

The EU-Russian relations: a conceptual framework

In our analysis we stem from an inter-subjective approach to the EU–Russia relations. Inter-subjectivity connotes not only a possibility to achieve some practical effects of altering policies of other actors, but to constitute their roles and even identities in the process of communicative exchanges. Political subjects are partly constituted by their obligations to their partners in their otherness. In light of this approach, the molding of Russia's role in a multipolar world is impossible without references to European experiences and practices, and vice versa. Intersubjectivity makes any subject position dependent on the outside and thus immanently fluid and split. This is why inter-subjective relations are inevitably full of distortions, disconnections, asymmetries, ruptures and imbalances. The concept of "the friction of ideas" (or "ideational friction"), borrowed from Swedish colleagues, makes the case for "deep-seated cultural differences between Europe and Russia".[5] While frequently using the same vocabulary (like multipolarity), European and Russian discourse- and identity-makers infuse different meanings in them.

Inter-subjectivity in the EU-Russian relationship is hard to deny, but its interpretations may be different. This study is based on an approach to inter-subjectivity as an active "power to affect and a passive power to be affected".[6] To put it differently, even in its role as an object of the EU influence Russia still can – perhaps indirectly – influence the state of debate within the EU and its choice(s) for future actions. For Russia this is especially important, since Russia's ability to influence the EU is limited, which makes the EU-Russia inter-subjectivity apparently asymmetrical. The EU policy philosophy can be expressed as follows: "If I act toward the other based upon principles I carry

5 K. Engelbrekt - B. Nygren, "A Reassertive Russia and an Expanded European Union", **Russia and Europe: Building Bridges, Digging Trenches**, (eds. K. Engelbrekt & B. Nygren), London 2010, p. 3.

6 Y. Citton, "Political Agency and the Ambivalence of the a Sensible", **Jacques Ranciere: History, Politics, Aesthetics**, (Ed. G. Rockhill & P. Watts), Durham and London 2009, p. 122.

with me previous to and outside of my interaction with the other, then it is not really the other I am concerned with. I am imposing my ethical framework upon the other, rather than taking up the other in her own right" (May 2008: 149). As a reaction to the alleged universality of the EU norms, rules and principles Russia prioritizes its sovereignty and a great power status which does not to be confirmed by anybody, including the EU.

In a multipolar world, the EU-Russian inter-subjective interaction may take different institutional forms which we are going to flesh out in this paper, dwelling upon a distinction between different schools of International Relations Theory (IRT). The following conceptual approaches can be identified in the European and Russian world policy thinking:

The Eurasianist/geopolitical approach is developed by some Russian strategists. Stemming from the philosophy of Eurasianism (born by the Russian émigrés of the 1920-1930s) this school believes that Russia and the EU are two different types of civilizations with 'historical missions" of their own. According to the Eurasianists, Europe is an embodiment of technical and socio-political progress; it represents a 'technocratic power' and, at the same time, a 'normative power' which attempts to establish norms and rules not only inside itself but also in its neighbourhood. As far as Russia is concerned it is not very strong as an economic/technocratic pole but plays the role of the world's main asset of spirituality. In addition, Russia is a 'bridge' between the East and West that is helpful in communicating between these two civilizations.[7]

The 'classical' (Morgenthau-type) realist approach still popular both in European and (especially) Russian foreign policy thinking. The realists, for example, try to pursue the spheres of influence politics. "Russian elites believe that the country's great-power status depends largely on the role it plays in the

7 On Eurasianism and other Russian IR schools, see A. Sergunin, "Discussions of International Relations in Post-Communism Russia", **Communist and Post-Communist Studies**, vol. XXXVII (2004), pp. 19-35.

post-Soviet space – it can only be a pole in a multipolar world if it has a sphere of influence".[8]

One more realist concept is *balance of power* that dates back to the Cold War times, yet retains some vigour – though in a deeply modified form – in the beginning of the 21 century. However, for Russia the balance of power is an idea of limited utility – it is mainly applicable to the relations with NATO, still overburdened by hard security misunderstandings, but not to Russia's relations with the EU (or China). Yet paradoxically it is the EU that has to include the balancing elements in its foreign policy arsenal – along with the dominating normative principles – while transforming the post-Soviet/"near abroad" area to the joint EU – Russia neighbourhood. The basic problem with the practical implementation of the balancing approach is that the EU and Russia possess different types of power. Russia's is mostly "compulsory power" which consists of the direct control over the policies of its "junior partners", including sanctions, manipulation with energy price, military force, and so forth. The EU, by contrast, relies on a combination of "institutional power" (which rests upon decisional rules, the shared understanding of responsibility and interdependence, etc.) and "productive power"[9] (i.e. that one which produce social identities by means of discourses and meanings, as it is the case of European identities of countries like Ukraine, Moldova and even Georgia stimulated by the EU and its member states).

'Manageable competition/conflict' model is close to Hedley Bull's 'organised anarchy' concept (the English IRT school). More specifically, it can take a form of a transformed (realism-driven) version of 'concert of powers' concept where major European actors may exercise a depoliticized type of policing, conflict management and crisis prevention in the most troubles areas. Yet this model can be operational if and only the EU reaches beyond its

8 B. Judah - J. Kobzova, - N. Popescu, **Dealing with a Post-BRICS Russia,** London 2011, p. 23.

9 M. Barnett - R. Duvall, "Power in International Politics", **International Organization**, vol. LIX/1, (2005), pp. 49-57.

technocratic and bureaucratic thinking and takes political decisions concerning the acknowledgement of a higher status for Russia. In the Russian discourse this strategy transforms to the idea of "two empires" which ascribes the "imperial" background of the European integrationist project. What is attractive in a "two empires" model is a potential division of spheres of influence between Moscow and Brussels. In this light, some of Russian experts are positive about the developing EU's military capabilities and security activism.[10] According to this logic, the restoration of the EU subjectivity in an imperial form is a feasible perspective for the future, since the EU potentially has its own ambitions, interests, and ideology that will push it to taking certain actions of its own. This trajectory could be beneficial for Russia since it might be instrumental in balancing the U.S. preponderance.

As a sub-category of the above-mentioned model the concept of Russia's 'constructive engagement' is popular in some European political and academic quarters. According to this view, Russia is an 'alien', 'other', something incomprehensible and even dangerous. But it's better to engage it in some sort of interaction (and thus 'civilize it) than keep it isolated. The degree, level and specific methods of engagement can vary.

The neoliberal concept of the EU as a 'soft power' ('soft empire', the only pole in the European region) with a 'periphery' that should be 'civilised', 'democratised', 'pacified', 'disciplined' or even 'policed' (if necessary). Another name for this model is 'Europe of concentric rings' with the EU in the very centre. The 'periphery' (including Russia) is an object for the EU's policies and experiments rather than a subject. Russia's role is to be a 'younger partner' at most. This model was applicable to the EU-Russia relations in the 1990s (pre-Putin era) but now it is increasingly experiencing problems because Russia does not want to be a 'humble and obedient pupil' and wants to build its relations with Brussels on the equal footing.

10 D. Danilov, "Rossiya v bol'shoi Evrope: strategiya bezopasnosti [Russia in a wider Europe: security strategy]", 2000, available online at: http://www.ieras.ru/journal/journal2.2000/5.htm.

A related neoliberal model can be dubbed either *multi-regionalism,* or *"regional multilateralism"*.[11] Both are presumed on the inability of one single power to tackle the regional issues in their complexity. There is, of course, always a need in regional leaders, but they should act in a wider context and provide rather "security umbrellas" than imposing their versions of the Monroe doctrine. The European approaches to regionalism in the EU neighbourhood, as exemplified by Northern Dimension and Eastern Partnership programs, are predominantly focusing on the issues of norm projection, policy transfers, and other spill-over effects that constitute the essence of Europeanization as extension of EU normative power and order. The concepts of New Regionalism, dimensionalism and multi-regionalism, widely spread in Europe since the end of the Cold War, were introduced in Russia as academic concepts, yet received lukewarm reception among political elites. In the meantime, other European concepts, like "security regions" (rooted in Karl Deutsch's functionalist theory of security community) and "regional security complexes" (authored by Barry Buzan) were taken with more sympathy by their Russian colleagues who see regional security institutions as barriers that prevent superpowers from intervening in security situations on regional level.

The neo-functionalist / neo-institutionalist (procedural unification) approach (which is also a part of the neoliberal IRT paradigm). According to this view, the integration processes in Europe's new neighbourhood is an inevitable and natural result of 'spill-over' and 'ramification' effects. This approach is less bothered by the question who the centre and periphery of the integration dynamics are. The main question is a rather pragmatic one – how to organize the EU's relations with its neighbours (including Russia) in practical terms: what institutions, programs, instruments, procedures better serve Brussels' aims. The EU-Russia four common spaces and the Partnership

11 H. Mylonas - E. Yorulmazlar, "Regional Multilateralism: the Next Paradigm in International Affairs", 2012, available online at: http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2012/01/14/regional-multilateralism-should-be-the-next-paradigm-in-global-affairs/.

for Modernization concepts (see next sections) may be seen as a reflection of this kind of logics.

There is also an offspring of the neoliberal *interdependency theory* which has much in common with the previous approach. Both the EU and Russia understand that, economically, they set to be interdependent and benefit significantly from a greater integration of trade, investment and technology exchange. Russia is the EU's third-largest supplier and fourth-largest client. The EU is Russia's most important trading partner by far, accounting for 50% of its overall trade. The Union is also the biggest investor in Russia and 75% of Russian FDI stocks come from the EU countries. As President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso underlined, the key question is not whether the EU and Russia are interdependent on a wide range of political and economical issues, but rather how that interdependence will be managed.[12]

'Europe of Olympic rings' where each 'ring' (actor) has an equal say and acts on the same footing. No 'teacher-pupil' or 'centre-periphery' type of relations is possible under this approach. This model is a combination of the neo-liberal and globalist principles. According to this way of thinking, the main problem is how to establish proper rules of the game and division of labour between the players. However, this model is the marginal one both in the European and Russian expert communities. Most of the experts believe that this model is theoretically possible and even desirable but highly improbable (not to say utopian) in the foreseeable future.

The postmodernist concept of *'Europe of spaghetti'*. According to this account, Europe is not something clear and structurally defined; rather, it is unstructured, intertwined and chaotic (like spaghetti on the plate). Europe and its neighbourhood are diverse, often incoherent, contradictory and conflictual but this is good because such a constellation is rich in its manifestations and extremely interesting for a researcher (Europe is a laboratory, testing ground,

12 J. M. Barroso, "Bringing EU-Russian Relations to a New Level", **Baltic Rim Economies**, 21 December 2011, available online at: http://www.tse.fi/pei.

the place for experiment). Polyphony is better than monophony. Europe should not afraid of Russia's non-Europeaness, 'wildness' and specificity. Rather, these Russia's attributes add some peculiar flavour to European politics and discourse.

The variety of conceptualizations of the EU–Russia inter-subjective relations shed some light on the nature of multiple splits within both Russian and European subjectivities. The idea of divided subjects is no novelty for political philosophy, but it is important to avoid banal interpretations of Russia's identity split between proverbial Westernizers and Slavophiles, and the EU identity fluctuating between values and interests. We take a more flexible approach: "it is the encounter with otherness that divides".[13] It is our contention in this paper that there are much deeper splits that boil down to Russia's and the EU's orientation on several different models of policies to each other, each one being an instrument adjustable to a certain type of international structures.

In the discussion below we point out the key landmarks that affected the state of the EU–Russian relations in the last decade and try to see whether both parties perceive each of them in a similar manner, and if not, how strong are divergences between them.

European Neighbourhood Policy and the EU-Russia Four Common Spaces

The case of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is a perceptional gap between Russian and the EU: what for Brussels in a move to a closer *normative unification* and a *multi-regionalist* approach, for Moscow represents an undue expansion into Russia's presumed *sphere of interests*.

In March 2003 the European Commission presented its Communication on "Wider Europe Neighbourhood: A new framework for relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours", outlining the basic principles of ENP.

13 L. Layton, "What Divides the Subject?", **Subjectivity**, vol. XXII, (2008), p. 61.

The purpose of the ENP was to build friendly relations with the EU's new neighbours in the post-enlargement era. In October 2003 the European Council welcomed this initiative and urged the Commission and the Council to take it forward. Since then, the Commission has also held exploratory talks with partners in Eastern Europe and the Southern Mediterranean, which already had Partnership and Cooperation Agreements or Association Agreements in force.

Russia was also eligible for participation in the ENP project, yet Moscow declined the proposal to join. The main reason for Russia's discontent was that the ENP concept did not provide Moscow with a special status in its relations with Brussels. Russia felt that, because of its previous intense cooperation with the EU and its geo-economic and geopolitical role in Europe, it deserved more than a position of merely one of many neighbours of the Union. Likewise, Moscow was also discontented with the ENP concept in that, in contrast with other regional co-operation projects, it leaves almost no room for Russia in setting the bilateral cooperative agenda. The concept, as viewed from Moscow, seemed to be based on the assumption that the EU's neighbours should simply accept its rules and upgrade their legislation in accordance with the European standards, rather than the EU developing specific models for each country. Some Russian strategists tended to believe that the ENP had a secret goal of undermining Russia's positions in its traditional sphere of influence. For this reason, Moscow received the ENP rather coldly.

Moscow has eventually succeeded in getting a special status in its relations with Brussels. Instead of the ENP a concept of the EU-Russia four common spaces were adopted at the St. Petersburg summit in May 2003 and endorsed at the Rome Summit in November 2003. The road maps to four common spaces (economy, trade, environment; internal security; external security; research, education and culture) were adopted at the May 2005 EU-Russia Summit.

The Four Common Spaces, to our mind, is consensually understood by both Russia and the EU as a combination of *manageable competition* and *procedural unification* principles. Both parties agreed – at least, in words -

to approach each other as strategic partners, and signed the four roadmaps that presuppose the formation of procedurally integrated "spaces", or areas of common interest.

Partnership for Modernization

The EU-Russia common space in economy was specified by the Partnership for Modernization program. The PfM was initiated by the EU-Russia Rostov-on-Don summit (1 June 2010). A Work Plan was adopted in December 2010 and is being regularly updated. According to the PfM progress report (December 2011) (Progress Report 2011), there was a dynamic development of the program over the recent period.

For example, Brussels and Moscow are engaged in a dialogue on a roadmap on energy cooperation for the period until 2050. To promote a low-carbon and resource efficient economy, they agreed to enhance the exchange of experience in the regulation of industrial activities. A laboratory of joint Russian-European business projects on energy efficiency was established in Cannes. A project on energy efficiency in north-western Russia is being implemented within the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership. The EU awarded grants for projects to non-state actors on education and awareness raising for energy auditors, managers and engineers.

The 'environmental pillar' of the PfM is under development as well. For instance, the Russian component of a shared environmental information system has been launched. A seminar on applicability of the Convention on assessment of environmental impact in trans-boundary context (the Espoo Convention) to the Nord Stream gas pipeline and other similar projects has been held. Russia promised to ratify the Espoo and (similar) Aarhus conventions.

In the area of transport, the secretariat for the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics was established. An EU-Russia Aviation Summit was held in St. Petersburg in October 2011, discussing potential venues for bilateral cooperation.

The EU-Russian cooperation on public health is now focused on specific/ practical issues, such as clinical trials of pharmaceuticals, fight against counterfeit medicines and communicable diseases. Russia and the EU have agreed to continue the harmonisation of sanitary and phytosanitary norms in 2012, with a focus on food safety standards, on animal health requirements and on audit.

There is some dynamic in the EU-Russian research cooperation as well, above all in space cooperation. For example, on 21 October 2011 the Russian Souyz vehicle that has been launched from the European spaceport at Kourou in French Guyana put into orbit the first two satellites of the "Galileo" global navigating system. The Russian Roskosmos and European Space Agency plan as many as fifty joint launches.

The EU-Russia PfM is complemented with "modernisation partnerships" between Russia and individual EU member-states. 23 bilateral memoranda on establishing such 'partnerships' have been signed by the end of 2011. The EU and Russian leaders believe that such a multi-level cooperative scheme provides for effective use of benefits of the existing industrial and research specialisation between EU member states, contributes to establishing and deepening of regional and sectoral cooperation.

The private business sector and international financial institutions are being engaged in the PfM as well. Vnesheconombank of Russia, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank have committed to provide financial support (up to €2 billion) for the PfM projects.

Despite the general progress in the PfM' implementation this programme has also evoked some tensions between Brussels and Moscow.

For example, in the energy sphere the main bone of contention is Moscow's unwillingness to ratify the European Energy Charter which was signed by Russia under President Boris Yeltsin but later interpreted as discriminatory. The main obstacle to Russia's ratification of the EEC is Moscow's unwillingness

to separate production, reprocessing and transportation of gas from each other. In practice, the Charter's requirements mean reorganisation of monopolist companies such as Gazprom, Rosneft, Transneft, etc., and better access by foreign companies to the Russian energy sector. To counter the EEC the Kremlin suggested an energy charter of its own in 2009. However, the Russian initiative has not been endorsed by Brussels and this part of the EU-Russia energy dialogue is frozen so far.

Besides, the EU and Russia have a difference of opinion on specific ways of energy transportation. Given the permanent Russian-Ukrainian clashes on gas transit shipments *via* the Ukrainian territory, Moscow favours the development of alternative routes, such as Nord Stream and South Stream. The EU-member states differ by their attitudes to these projects: while Germany and the Netherlands support the Nord Stream, Italy, Bulgaria and some other South and South-eastern European countries opted for the South Stream. At the same time, most of the EU member-states prefer to diversify sources of energy supplies and, for this reason, - to Russia's discontent - support the alternative Nabucco and White Stream projects (which bypass Russia) and further development of the 'old' (Ukraine-controlled) pipelines (Yamal-Europe).

Moreover, Russia made it clear that it is eager to further develop atomic energy technologies and has expressed its sharp interest in participating in developing the atomic projects in Europe. This intention, however, runs against the dominant anti-nuclear attitudes that are especially vibrant in countries like Germany and Italy, which are among the key Russian partners in Europe. Particularly, Russia's European neighbours are frustrated by Moscow's plan to build a nuclear plant in the Kaliningrad *oblast* by 2016.

While Russia mostly insisted on European investment and high-tech transfers under this programme, the EU side tried to develop a more general vision of modernisation (including its legal and socio-political aspects). The EU insisted on the importance of ensuring an effective, independent functioning of the judiciary and stepping up the fight against corruption (including the

signing by Russia of the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials). The EU encouraged Russia to further develop an appeal system for criminal and civil court cases. Brussels also believes that an active involvement of civil society institutions in the reformist process should be a part of the modernisation 'package'.

Yet Russia wants to avoid situations in which the EU could take a role of an example, a standard to be adapted. Moscow also suspects that the EU tries to use the modernization partnership to make Russia to comply to the "ideology" of Eastern Partnership. Even liberally minded Russian experts propose to remove the issues of democratization and human rights as a precondition for modernization partnership, and in its stead focus on Russia's acceptance of technical norms and rules that successfully work in the EU and can be projected on Russia (energy efficiency, customs regulations, educational exchanges, environmental protection, etc.).

Russia's WTO accession

The EU policies on Russia's accession to the WTO was - from the very beginning - double-edged. On the one hand, Brussels tried to encourage Moscow to join this important global economic institution; but, on the other, it aimed at protecting its member-states' trade interests in relations with Russia. Such a position has resulted in one of the lengthiest accession negotiations in the WTO's history (18 years). The two sides spent a lot of time and energy to solve numerous problems in areas such as agriculture, car- and aircraft-building industries, banking and phytosanitary control. The EU also urged Russia to adopt a stable and fair legal framework to properly regulate business activity. Moreover, Brussels insisted on renunciation of any protectionist measures, such as the Russia-Kazakhstan-Belarus Customs Union, which has led to higher consolidated tariffs. The EU was particularly worried about the alleged Russian pressure on Ukraine to join this Customs Union although Kiev has already joined the WTO and was about to sign a Free Trade Area agreement with Brussels. Finally, the compromise was found and the December 2011

WTO ministerial meeting has approved Russia's accession to the global trade club. Russia became a full-fledged WTO member in late August of 2012.

Brussels claims that the success of the accession negotiations is the result of its both efficient normative policies and skilful diplomacy. Under the EU pressure Russia agreed to introduce international standards (WTO rules) in areas such as industry, agriculture, trade, customs procedures, banking, audit and accounting. According to some accounts, the main residual barrier to Moscow's WTO membership - Georgia's demands to put its customs control on Russia's borders with Abkhazia and South Ossetia - was removed by Gunnar Wiegand, Director for Eastern Europe, Southern Caucuses, Central Asia, European External Action Service, who visited Tbilisi in late October 2011 and managed to strike a compromise.[14]

However, the question whether this success story of Russia's 'constructive engagement' can be attributed only to the EU or to other international actors (particularly, the US) as well – still remains to be open to discussion.

It should be noted that the EU has already expressed its concerns on Russia's incompliance with the WTO rules. Particularly, Brussels is dissatisfied with Russian protectionist tariffs on imported second hand cars and ban on import of live animals from Europe.[15]

Liberalization of the visa regime

This area of cooperation exemplifies joint initiatives that are similarly assessed both in Russia and the EU as an important move toward *normative* (*procedural) unification*.

14 G. Trushkina, "Rossii vruchili propusk v VTO [Russia has got a pass to the WTO]", **Utro [Morning]**, 10 November 2011, Available online at: http://www.utro.ru/articles/2011/11/10/1010018.shtml

15 J. Chaffin, "Europe Cools on Russia's WTO Accession", **The Financial Times**, (5 December 2012), available online at: http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/ff524424-3eff-11e2-9214-00144feabdc0.html.

For Moscow, the signing (on 14 December 2011) of the Russian-Polish agreement on visa-free regime for the residents of the Kaliningrad *oblast* and two Polish border regions (the Warmian-Masurian and Pomeranian *voivodeships*) is one of most important and undisputable positive outcomes of the Polish EU Presidency that took place in the second half of 2011. Notably, the initial plan was to establish a visa-free regime only within the 30-kilometer area from both sides of the border, but Moscow and Warsaw managed to extend this practice to the entire Kaliningrad *oblast* and the two mentioned Polish *voivodeships*. This agreement is seen by Russian and European experts as a model to be replicated in other border regions.

Under the Polish EU Presidency (second half of 2011) Brussels and Moscow finalised the document which was titled "Common Steps Towards Visa-Free Short-Term Travel" and the relevant roadmap has been launched at the Brussels summit of 15 December 2011. According to this document, the EU and Russia have to coordinate their efforts in four specific areas: providing Russian citizens with the so-called biometrical passports; fighting illegal migration and developing a common approach to border controls; fighting trans-border organised crime, including money-laundering, arms- and drug-trafficking; ensuring freedom of movement of people in the country of residence by abolishing or changing the existing administrative procedures of registration and work permits for foreigners.

The EU leaders emphasise that the full implementation of the agreed common steps can lead to the opening of visa-waiver negotiations. Meanwhile Brussels and Moscow plan to upgrade the Russia-EU Visa Facilitation Agreement of 2006 and the Local Border Traffic Regulation in accordance with recent EU-Russian agreements.

However, Moscow views the list of common steps for visa-free short-term travel and the Russian-Polish agreement on local border traffic as insignificant concessions on the part of Brussels. The Kremlin insists on the intensification of the EU-Russia dialogue in this area with the aim to promptly sign a full-fledged

visa waiver agreement. To explain delays, the European side refers to residual technical problems related to the implementation process. For example, the EU notes that it is difficult for Russia to quickly provide its citizens with new-generation biometrical passports. Brussels also underlines that its dialogue with Russia should be in tune with the visa facilitation process concerning Eastern Partnership countries (this is both incomprehensible and irritating for Moscow). The EU also insists that Russia must cease issuing passports to residents of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which are seen by the EU as occupied provinces of Georgia. It also emphasises the necessity to intensify cooperation on illegal immigration, improved controls at cross-border checkpoints and information exchange on terrorism and organised crime. Contrary to the Russian expectations, Brussels considers the introduction of the visa-free regime with Russia as a long-term rather than a short-term prospect.

The Common Space on External Security

The 2005 Road map envisages several areas of the EU-Russia external security cooperation: coordination of their activities in the framework of international organizations; fighting international terrorism; arms control and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; conflict management; civil defence.

The EU-Russian joint peace-keeping operations in various parts of the world can be seen as one of possible venues for security cooperation between Brussels and Moscow. At the EU-Russian Nice summit (November 2008) Moscow and Brussels decided to launch a series of joint peace-keeping operations in Africa. For example, the Russian helicopter groups participated in the EU-led peace-keeping operations in Chad and Central African Republic, an experience that was positively assessed by both sides. Besides, some cooperation continued between EU NAVFOR Atalanta[16] and the Russian naval

16 EU NAVFOR: Operation Atalanta acts in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions. The military operation was launched 8 December and has been extended by the European Council until December 2012.

mission deployed off the Somali coast, enhancing the levels of protection provided to merchant shipping.

Along with the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, the French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who chaired the European Council in the second half of 2008, was a key figure in the cease-fire and post-conflict settlement negotiations in August 2008. He also played a crucial role in launching the Geneva talks on security arrangements, including the issues of internally displaced persons, which began on 15 October 2008, with the participation of Russia, Georgia, EU, US, OSCE, and UN.

Yet not everything went smooth, of course. For example, Brussels insisted that Moscow must fulfil all of the conditions under the Six-point Ceasefire Agreement (2008) and to immediately withdraw its troops from the 'occupied' (according to the EU terminology) Georgian territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia to the pre-conflict positions. Moscow also must guarantee the EU Monitoring Mission access to those territories. The Russian side, however, insisted that it fulfilled the ceasefire agreement and that with proclamation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia's independence the entire situation in the region has completely changed and new approaches to the conflict resolution should be developed.

The EU also was discontent with the Russian position on Transnistria, particularly with the lack of progress on the negotiations about the conflict there and called for a resumption of the official 5+2 negotiations with the aim of finding a solution in the very near future. The EU has finally succeeded in persuading the 5+2 group members to resume negotiations. There were two rounds of negotiations in Vilnius (30 November-1 December 2011) and Dublin (28-29 February 2012) although without a visible success. It should be noted that some experts believe that the resumption of the 5+2 negotiations is a result of the OCSE's rather than the EU's diplomatic activism.

Although both the EU and Russia are positive about the resumption of the official 5+2 negotiations they differ by their approaches to the format and

content of these talks. The EU favours discussing some 'serious business', such as the future status of Transnistria or changing the mandate for the peace-keeping forces in the conflict zone. In contrast with this 'grand policy' vision, Russia supports the 'step-by-step' or 'low politics' approach which is based on the resumption of the Moldova-Transnistria dialogue on concrete issues, such transportation, customs procedures, education, mobility of people, etc.

Moscow had expectations that with the recent reinvigoration of the Eastern Partnership there could be a progress in the Nagorny Karabakh conflict resolution. However, contrary to these expectations the Baku-Yerevan bilateral relations even became worse and the Azeri President Ilkham Aliev hinted that the 'military solution' of the Karabakh conflict is not excluded.

The roots of these disagreements go back to the different understandings of the notion of security by the EU and Russia. While the EU supports a comprehensive/multidimensional view on security – not only in its 'hard' but also in its 'soft' version (and the road map on external security suggests this perspective), official Moscow still prefers a traditional vision of the concept, concentrating on its military aspects. Few Russian experts profess and promote views that are close to the European vision of security.[17]

There was also a fundamental difference between the EU and Russia in understanding another area of the EU-Russia common space on external security, namely: the struggle against international terrorism. For example, while Europeans have viewed the Chechen rebels as "freedom-fighters", Moscow has seen them as terrorists, and while for Moscow the Hamas has been a radical organisation, yet still eligible for further political dialogue, the EU has basically perceived this Palestinian grouping as a purely terrorist movement.

17 On the Russian security debate see, A. Sergunin, "Mezdunarodnaya bezopasnost: novye podkhody i kontsepty [International security: new approaches and concepts]", **Polis**, vol. VI, (2005), pp. 127-135.

In contrast with the EU that prefers multilateral diplomacy and approaches, Moscow still emphases bilateral (state-to-state) relations (such as 'special relationships' with Germany, France, Italy, etc.) instead of the EU-Russia dialogue, displaying a certain mistrust of supranational institutions. Moscow believes that bilateral contacts are more efficient that multilateral politics. In practical terms, it means that from the very beginning Moscow has not perceived the EU as a reliable security provider.

Given the lack of a proper institutional basis for the EU-Russian dialogue on external security Germany and Russia tried to provide this dialogue with some institutional support by suggesting establishing a Committee on Foreign and Security Policy at the ministerial level (Meseberg, June 2010). France and Poland have eventually supported this idea. The suggested agenda for future discussions in the committee was the Transnistrian conflict resolution and creation of a European missile defence system. Similar committees already exist at the bilateral level (for example, in Russia's relations with Germany and France) and have proved to be efficient. This experience can be successfully used in the framework of a similar EU-Russia institution. To date, however, such a committee is still in its formative phase.

Again, the perceptional gap between the EU and Russia can be identified in case of the Meseberg process. While for Germany this was a part of its attempt to contrive a common security agenda with Russia, based on normative principles, for Russia it was another possibility to implement the 'concert of powers' approach in conflict management.

Eastern Partnership

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) has been launched by the EU in May 2009 with an official aim to both facilitate and accelerate market- and democracy-oriented reforms in six post-Soviet countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine).

The EaP represents another case of disagreements between Russia and the EU. From the EU part, this program is a combination of normative unification and power balancing, yet Russia almost completely ignores the first tenet and angrily focuses on the second. The key problem with Russia's explicit or implicit hindering the EaP is that the policy of preventing Russia's neighbours from participating in EU-sponsored projects is tantamount to the negation of sincerity of the "European choice" proclaimed by Russia itself.

Moscow reacted to the EaP with both caution and scepticism, because the Russian leadership was not sure about its real goals: is the EU serious about making its new neighbourhood a stable and safe place, or is it some kind of geopolitical drive to undermine Russia's positions in the area? Moscow is particularly sensitive to the EaP programme because Russia has fundamental interests in the region that range from strategic and political (confederation with Belarus, military-technical cooperation with Belarus and Armenia, military conflict with Georgia, support of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia) to economic (investments, trade, energy supply, etc.) issues. Armenia and Belarus are strategic allies of Russia, who depend on economic and military assistance from Moscow. Voices of those experts who are positive about the convergence of the German and Polish visions of the EU "Eastern politics", presuming that it is these two member states that are the most interested in pushing for some dynamics in the area of the EU – Russian common neighbourhood, are in minority.

There are other, more specific critical points in the Russian attitude to EaP:[18]

- Many Russian experts believe that the main EU interest in the EaP is the construction of alternative oil and gas pipelines bypassing Russia, e.g., Nabucco or White Stream. Georgia and Ukraine are considered

18 For the review of the EaP's Russian perceptions see A. Sergunin, "EU and Russia: An Eastern Partnership Muddling on?", **Open Democracy**, 28 January 2010, Available online at: http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/alexander-sergunin/eu-and-russia-eastern-partnership-muddling-on.

important transit countries, while Azerbaijan can serve both as a source of, and transit point for, energy supplies. Russian specialists, however, doubt that these plans are realistic and believe that any new energy transport schemes without Russia's participation are doomed to failure.

- As already mentioned, some Russian specialists believe that the EaP's 'hidden agenda' includes an EU plan to undermine Russia's geopolitical dominance in Eastern Europe and Caucasus. The EU views Russia as a revisionist power trying to regain its former control over the post-Soviet space. Brussels interpreted the Russian-Georgian military conflict of 2008 and the 'gas wars' with Ukraine as evidence of Russian imperialist intentions. In this sense, the EaP is seen by some Russian experts as the EU's attempt to withdraw six post-Soviet states from Russia's sphere of influence and establish a sort of protectorate for these countries.

- A number of Russian experts have expressed profound doubts over the EU's capability to effect serious changes in the existing regimes of the six partner countries, by transforming them into prosperous states sharing European values and ideals (one of the main official EaP objectives). The EU might find it difficult to achieve the desired result (it has problems in "digesting" even the so-called "new" members of the Union). The present generation of post-Soviet politicians is prepared only to pay lip service to democracy and liberalism rather than to actually put these values into practice.

- Some Russian analysts suspect that Brussels intends to use the EaP to bring the Kaliningrad question back on to the EU-Russia agenda on Brussels' own terms. They put this interpretation on a number of statements by Polish diplomats that some EaP-related programmes could cover the Kaliningrad Region (Poland invites the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation to the EU's Eastern Partnership programme).

Thus, most Russian experts remain either negative or sceptical about the EaP which they see as an encroachment upon its "near abroad" sphere of influence. Russian discourse is contaminated by a number of either highly judgmental or falsifiable hypotheses – like the belief in a "common mentality the majority of post-Soviet people"[19], "lust for sovereignty", etc. Not always Russian policies are in tune with its neighbours': Moscow seems to be interested in a de-politicized form of regionalism, but its neighbours (like Ukraine) look for much more normative and value-based models of regional integration as a wider Europe. Russia wants to play its own game in the post-Soviet region by forging a "community of unaccepted" to the Western institutions[20], yet quite often emotional and subjective assessments prevail, as well as assessments that are not supported by solid empirical evidence. It seems that the lack of a sound Russian strategy towards the EaP is one of the sources of misunderstanding in EU-Russia bilateral cooperation, which sometimes contributes to derailing the Brussels-Moscow dialogue. As a result, both EU and Russian policies often give the impression of haphazard muddling on, rather than a sound and forward-looking strategy.

Conclusion

Several conclusions emerge from the above analysis:

- Regrettably, none of the partners – either the EU or Russia – was able to develop an adequate and forward-looking approach to their bilateral dialogue. The existing approaches mainly oscillate between the antagonistic 'pairs' such the highly ideological or purely pragmatic approaches, hostile or friendly attitudes, pessimistic or optimistic scenarios.

19 A. Galkin, "Rossiya kak subyekt mirovoi politiki [Russia as a world policy actor]", **Politia**, vol. XLIV/1, (2007), p. 16.

20 L. Bliakher, "Vozmozhen li post-imperskii proekt: ot vzaimnykh pretenziy k obschemu buduschemu [Is the post-imperial project possible: from mutual claims to common future]", **Politia [Polity]**, Vol. XLVIII/1, (2008), p. 15.

- At the moment, the sentiments of mutual disappointment and pessimism prevail. On the one hand, the Russian strategists blame Europe for its selfish and simplistic approach to Russia as well as for its inability to abandon the 'teacher-pupil' model in Brussels' relations with Moscow. On the other hand, the EU is discontent with the lack of progress in Russia's socio-economic and political reforms. For example, a recent report from the European Council on Foreign Relations concludes that the EU is missing out on an opportunity to turn Russia into a partner on issues of mutual concern: "Europeans have gone from thinking of Russia as a 'big Poland,' that it can encourage towards liberal democracy, to a 'small China,' which it can do business with but little else".[21]

- However, there is a growing feeling among the European and Russian actors that following the U.S.-Russian relations the EU-Russian dialogue badly needs a 'reset'. However, it is unclear how to do this: who could and should take a lead, what specific instruments are needed, how much it could cost, what timing should be, etc.? The 'EU-Russia four common spaces' concept and its derivatives such as, for instance, the Partnership for Modernization have proved to be helpful instruments but they are too technocratic/functionalist and lack a strategic vision. The domestic situations both in the EU and Russia are often unfavourable for developing well-balanced and sound strategies. Rather, internal pressures permanently reproduce xenophobic sentiments which cannot be ignored completely by the European and Russian ruling elites. The ongoing global financial-economic crisis also forces Brussels and Moscow to make uneasy choices which not always have positive implications for another partner.

- At the same time, many European and Russian theorists and practitioners

21 L. Norman, "Europe's foreign policy challenges", **The Wall Street Journal**, 4 January 2012, available online at:http://blogs.wsj.com/brussels/2012/01/04/europes-foreign-policy-challenges

realize that the EU and Russia – in a sense - are doomed to cooperation because they are strongly interested in and dependent on each other and simply cannot avoid a further dialogue. In reality, they have to choose between the 'minimalist' option (limited cooperation in certain areas such as economy, trade, environment, visa regime, research, education and culture and no or a minimum of dialogue on political, security, human rights issues) and the 'maximalist' one (full-fledged cooperation on the whole range of bilateral issues, cooperation which is based on shared values and norms). The 'muddling on' scenario cannot be excluded as well.

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