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Relations between Russia and European Union Developments and Complexities

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Conclusion: It concludes that the systemic incompatibility will remain which will be the key problem between Russia bent on sovereignty and hard power, and the EU integration machine, and with its imperialist bureaucratic culture, which is structurally incapable of accommodating a Russia disinclined to submit itself to Western normative hegemony. Their relationship will remain stagnant and crisis-prone unless the EU's approach to Russia changes along with the Russian policy itself. The policy on both will be reactive rather than proactive and will lack cohesion and consistency.

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I. Introduction

A strategic partnership had been building between Russia and the EU until the crisis in Ukraine, covering, among other issues, trade, economy, energy, climate change, research, education, culture, and security, including conflict resolution in the Middle East, counter-terrorism and nuclear non-proliferation. The EU was a staunch supporter of Russia's WTO accession which was completed in 2012. The issue of the shared neighborhood in recent years has become a major point of friction. The accession of Crimea into the Russian Federation in March 2014 and the allegations that Russia supported rebel fighters in the east of Ukraine triggered a crisis at international level.

The bilateral relationship between the EU with Russia was reviewed by the former, discontinuing regular bilateral summits, and suspended the dialogue on visa issues and talks on a new bilateral agreement to replace the PCA. The policy of combining gradual sanctions with attempts to find diplomatic solutions to the conflict in eastern Ukraine was being followed by the EU. The efforts of the E3+3 group of countries with Russian participation that concluded a nuclear agreement with Iran in July 2015 raised hopes for greater cooperation on the global stage. However, Russia's intervention in the Syrian War since September 2015, supporting President Bashar Al Assad, and information campaigns both inside and outside Russia have caused additional tensions with the West.

The 2014-2016 recession resulting in the turbulence in the banking sector from which the Russian economy recovered in 2017. It benefitted from increasing revenues from oil and commodities exports. The year 2018 showed modest economic growth. This appeared to slow in 2019 and 2020. The country's economic performance is dependent on oil and gas prices and its investment climate remains uncertain.

Concentrated in a few sectors there is a lack of transformative investments in the economic system, while large firms close to the state dominate the market. The EU remains Russia's biggest trading partner despite the sanctions and Russia is the EU's fourth-biggest. Numerous factors marred the trade and economic relations, such as Russia's embargo on several EU agricultural commodities, disputes of the WTO, and on opportunities limitations for EU companies participation in Russian public procurement[1].

Moscow enjoys almost undisputed influence and its foreign policy capitalization or the presence at international radars has overreached even the Soviet global clout at its highest point in certain aspects, despite its economic fragility has reached global prominence. Not considering the EU a serious interlocutor makes Russia once again almost a competitor with the United States.

On both sides, the controversial adversarial rhetoric pitch seems to put into oblivion not only the outlines of a common security space and the entire heritage of Russia-West relations at present. It shatters all dreams of future promotion of arms control or a constructive build-up of deeper confidence and a relationship of trust between Russia and the West. Russia since the fall of the communist state is painstakingly trying to define its national identity rocking

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between the acknowledgments that it is historically an integral part of Europe, the geopolitical Eurasian heartland with a certain dream of a Eurasian entity to be created.

The fact has been ignored by many politicians and analysts in Moscow that due to the influx of European technological prowess in the eighth century Russia has become a powerful empire under Peter the Great with considerable military might and diplomatic clout without whom it would have evolved into a semi-colony like ancient China. It is thus that it has become a major player in European affairs[2].

II. Developments in Relationship

Russia should develop good relations with European countries from the pro-European perspective and try to join all leading European regional organizations as full members. The European economies to which the Russian economy is attached to a great extent, the volume of bilateral trade between the two is unrivalled in Russia's overall trade relations. In the Russian economy, in which Europe is ahead of the investors in all the foreign direct investments. Russia if it were to be considered a European country by European nations themselves, the security interests of Russia as its geography dictates would be served well. Russian territory to the west of the Urals is plain and difficult to defend against powerful armies of European nations[3].

At the political level is the Partnership Cooperation Agreement PCA between Russia and the EU which came into force in 1997, initially for 10 years. Its renewal has been taking place since 2007 every year. The PCA is complemented by agreements in the political, commercial, scientific, environmental, and energy fields[4]. Russia further expanded opportunities for economic relations with the EU and other foreign partners. When in 2012 it joined the World Trade Organisation[5].

The EU-Russia Energy Dialogue which was launched in 2000 focused on the energy, its efficiency, the interconnection cooperation of the EU and electricity network of Russia, trade, and the safe use of nuclear materials[6]. In March 2014, following the retaking of Crimea by Russia, the EU imposed restrictive measures, including targeted economic measures, against Russia. In turn, Russia imposed restrictions on imports of agricultural products and food from the EU[7].

Since the 1990s when relations were established the EU was caught by surprise several times on Russia's actions. The energy crisis of 2006 between Russia and Ukraine and Russia's 2008 war in Georgia, are just some of the most prominent examples. To anticipate Russia's moves by the EU the failure of which is rooted in its stalemate to know the Russian view of the world and the EU and how it understands its actions. Similarly, Russia's perception of the EU's intentions is distorted by the Western perception of it in relations in the international arena.

Some elements must be considered to understand and predict their actions in between the relations of the two players, the image each of them has of themselves. Understanding these elements in Russia and EU case, the EU's image of itself and of Russia and Russia's image of itself and the EU is an essential pre-condition of its relation besides strategies to solve them[8].

III. The Institutional Aspects

Constituted as the successor state of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation to which the EU proposed the conclusion of a new agreement. Signed in 1994 and ratified in 1997, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement PCA sets the contours of the relationship to be in its format to fit EU-Russia relations it has not been developed uniquely but rather represents a strategic tool that the EU used for defining its relations with those countries of the former Soviet Union with which its interests was in building up bilateral relations, but had no intentions to offer the prospect of membership.

Entertaining very different expectations about their future partnership the two sides entered into negotiations. The inclusion of Russia into the international community of democratic states and as per the aims it pursued this goal not only when dealing with the EU most importantly the US in particular along with the Western states or organizations in general. Stable political relations with the West were not seen as an end in itself but also as a ticket for enjoying economic prosperity and maintaining internal stability[9].

The institutional paralysis and political deadlock in relations between Russia and the European Union are all the more striking, because both sides are vitally interdependent in their external and domestic security. Joint neighborhood, in humanitarian issues, and the EU accounts for over 50 percent of Russia's external trade and most of the FDI. The closer the EU and Russia get to each other, territorially or economically defying neoliberal theories of interdependence, the more problematic their relationship becomes, so that interdependence and contiguity turn into a source of permanent frustration[10].

In the EU-Russia relations, there was never a shortage of framework documents, from the aforementioned Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) to the various strategies such as the EU's Common Strategy on Russia adopted in 1999 and reciprocal Russia's Midterm Strategy for the relations with the EU[11]. It was proclaimed that the strategic partnership has not been supported by the clear mechanisms of implementation, timelines, benchmarks, and criteria which, by contrast, characterize the relations

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of the EU with European applicant countries. Lacking the prospect of Russia's membership of the Union, the entire EU-Russia paperwork remains mostly a declaration of intent, an instrument of policy avoidance rather than a clear policy guidance[12].

The Common Spaces language, the EU discursive strategy of uncertainty which presupposes leaving as much room as possible for different interpretations of basic concepts that form the background of the EU-Russia relations. The Moscow-based Council for Foreign and Defense Policies the critical report of which on the Common Spaces as merely a transitory stage in the EU-Russia relations that reflect the lack of vision on both sides[13]. In the new EU-Russia basic treaty, the failure to open negotiations in this sense does not seem to need to create a legal vacuum. According to Article 106 renewing the current Agreement can be done infinitely until both sides decide to replace the Agreement, without embarking on a laborious process of re-negotiating and almost improbable ratification of the new framework document[14].

After the autumn of 2013, the Eastern Partnership is not discussed in the same way by Russians, there is no doubt anymore that the EaP is aimed against Russia. The Association Agreement with the EU comes to the forefront as the most important and problematic consequence of the EaP participation for post-soviet states. The discussion is over and one clear interpretation of the events in Ukraine becomes predominant. According to this interpretation, the EaP and, particularly, the EU's insistence on the Association Agreement backed by the US provoked the split in Ukraine's society and elites. This necessitated Russia's involvement as it resulted in violence. In Russian discourse, in contrast, it is expected to find explicit framing in terms of competitiveness, which is indeed the case. First of all, political science scholarship in Russia interpreted EaP as a potential tool for geopolitical competition used by the European Union to push Russia further away from its traditional sphere of influence in the near neighborhood.

In the same vein, Bagdasarov the leader of a parliament faction, and Medvedev the then President, some members of parliament raised the issue of the possible impact of the Eastern Partnership on Russia. In economic terms, this competition was framed initially and it was in line with the EU's framing at that time and agrees with academics that there may be more to the EaP than the European Union would be prepared to officially acknowledge. The geopolitical competition that the EU openly denies is exactly the unconfessed dimension of EaP[15].

EU policy toward Russia has reflected the unique character of the EU as a supranational entity. The Union itself, the Commission; the Presidency; the troika of Presidency, also high representative for the CFSP from which it has combined policies and the European Parliament with policies from member states. The union and its member states' policies have been harmonious. In 1999 a Common Strategy was adopted by the EU this was led by one of the main driving forces after the achievement of this goal.

In early 2004, the EU's policy towards Russia was the major review which was triggered by a lack of harmony. But a fully coordinated and coherent EU policy regarding Russia was not always achieved. The common positions on Russia adopted by the EU as a whole sometimes only describe the smallest common denominator. The big member states especially Germany, France, Italy, and earlier the United Kingdom and the immediate neighbours of Russia in the EU formulate their positions.

They feed them into the EU debate and actively engage in the formulation of EU policies. They try to influence and mobilize a Commission that also has to take account of the views and national interests of twenty-five member states and appears to be slow on occasion. Furthermore, member states with particular interests do not hesitate to take up with Russia bilaterally issues that the union as a whole could or should address[16].

IV. The Energy Factor

With the continuous decline of fossil fuels as the indigenous primary energy production, the European Union faces a situation where it is increasingly reliant on imports to satisfy demand. Here, the Russian Federation has emerged as the Union's leading supplier of hard coal, crude oil, and natural gas[17]. However, notably in the aftermath of the supply interruptions of 2006 and 2009, concerns are raised about Europe's future gas supply security[18].

A systematic empirical study on this development has been rather overlooked so far despite the deterioration numerously expressed in the EU-Russian gas relations. The effect of Russia's power increase related to their gas relations for which the empirical evidence is missing as well. Investigating the extent to which the level of cooperation in the EU-Russian gas interactions has declined in the last twenty years, the present work aims to fill those gaps.

It is for two reasons that the focus is on the EU-Russia gas relations. First, unlike coal and oil, gas[19] transportation heavily relies on pipelines[20]. This means that the gas producer-consumer relationship necessitates an especially high commitment from all parts of the supply chain and hardly allows for partner elasticity, as the gas destination and route are not subject to switching in contrast to an oil cargo, for instance[21]. The EU's dependence on Russia is the second reason raised particularly concerning gas and in light of future supply security. The EU-27 gas import

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dependence is forecasted to increase to some 83% in 2030[22]. The EU-Russia energy relations interdependence is observable. This interdependence determines the incentives of both sides for cooperation and partnership which aim at enhancing the energy security that is a vital aspect of any state's well functioning[23].

The EU perceives itself as more dependent on the supplies of Russian gas than Russia depends on the EU energy market. This understanding derives from the fact that demand for energy consumption is increasing, especially gas, where Russia is the main supplier to the EU. The relatively expensive production of alternative energy resources; the possibility for diversification of suppliers is not an easy task for the EU since most of the alternative suppliers are located in politically hostile and unstable environments. The internal difficulties to liberalize the EU market where there is growing divergence in positions of the MS on how to enhance the security of energy supplies where they consider the security of supplies as a crucial aspect of their national security agenda and therefore they are reluctant to let such issues be considered at the EU level.

Concerning Russia's dependency on the EU energy market, it can be argued that it is dependent but to a lesser extent. The following factors highlights this situation, Russia has bilateral long-term contracts with the EU MS which secures Russia's energy exports. Russia's substantial part of energy exports depends on the EU energy market at high prices which constitutes a large part of state revenues. This can be characterized as sensitivity interdependence where Russia can adjust its policies as a response to the changes in the EU's energy policy[24].

The structure of EU-Russia energy relations both historically and geographically bridges one of many emphasizing the inter-linkage between the politics of energy security and geographies of supply and demand[25]. There is an asymmetry between these geographical realms, between exporter and importer[26]. Encouraging greater liberalization of the Russian energy sector the EU's attempts to export its values were unsuccessful, with the EU now introducing more explicitly geopolitical tools to increase the security of supply[27]. Carbon emission reduction strategies cannot replace hydrocarbons completely in the short-term, therefore energy consumers such as the EU will continue to depend on energy imports[28]. However, the low carbon transition adds another dimension to the geopolitics of energy trade, as another commodity on the international energy market[29].

In political and geopolitical besides economic terms in which the Russian energy policy is explicitly framed[30], it has been claimed internally that to strengthen the Russian position in the world, is by way of the development of the energy sector[31]. Applying to many other energy-producing states, such a position to Russia is not exclusive. High energy prices in the 2000s allowed many energy-producing states such as Russia, Venezuela, Sudan, and Nigeria to accumulate hard currency reserves[32], and increase state control of energy sectors. This resulted in barriers to foreign investment, has undermined decarbonisation policies, and clashes with the liberalization of energy trade promoted by Western energy consumers[33].

Since 2000 Russian leaders have seen revenues from the energy sales as a way to reconstruct the country's economic and political power[34]. The 2009 Russian Security Strategy emphasizes that one of the main long-term directions of national security in the economic sphere is energy security[35]. Russian power and influence in international politics are derived significantly from energy trade, Russia as an energy superpower, which also affects how Russian energy policy is interpreted externally[36].

V. Challenges on Security

The post-Cold War Europe essentially comprises an extension of rules and institutions devised by and for the non-Communist states of Europe while the Cold War was still going on. In 1992 with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Union was built on agreements designed over the course of four decades by leaders of important Western European states. In the late 1940s, NATO emerged as a tool for resistance to the Soviet and communist threat to those same states. A conscious choice was made by European and the US diplomats to use the institutions inherited from the Cold War as the foundation for the new post-Cold War order, rejecting other options in the process[37].

A Europe of concentric circles was the solution attempted. A core Europe was at its center which comprised states that were already members of the Euro-Atlantic community at the moment when the Soviet Union disintegrated. Central and Eastern European states formed the intermediate circle that aspired to, and were eventually granted membership in, both the EU and NATO.

In the outermost circle, the post-Soviet neighbors along with Russia assumed to be part of a wider Europe that shared interests and values in common with the others but remained outside institutional Europe. In Central and Eastern Europe, for many states that the lure of membership in the world's largest trading bloc and a potential military alliance justified compromises. Such an approach that required for those states that view Russia as a potential threat.

Though, Russia being a rule-taker as a condition of gaining entry to Europe always rankled. Initiatives to hold non-member states strongly to institutional Europe, Moscow refused to participate in, such as the EU's Neighborhood Policy, in large part as

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doing so would mean accepting a status which will be equal to those of the smaller states of Central and Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, and adopting rules and regulations written without its involvement. This was an approach without consideration that Russia being a Great Power[38].

The expansion of the European Union or NATO was never accepted by Russia. In the first decade of the post-Cold War era, it was largely accepted by Moscow. About NATO discussion and the EU expansion moved beyond the former Warsaw Pact states also to include Soviet successor states like Georgia and Ukraine, the Baltics were always in something of their category, Russia turned from soft protest to an openly hostile attitude.

Integrating these states with the efforts of the EU and NATO had left Russia on the doorstep and appeared to challenge its influence and standing as a Great Power. Portrayed in Russia as a continuation of Western efforts, this was to reduce Russian influence that existed since the Cold War. The expansion into the post-Soviet region was neither about nor directed against Russia as being argued by the US and European officials, their claims never received much leverage in Moscow[39].

In EU-Russia relations the delinking of the security dimension from the more global context are difficult to accept. The regional challenges relate to the narratives associated with the shared neighborhood which have become increasingly antagonistic, or to counter-terrorism activities, which have provided ground for more collaboration, with the role of other players the US, Turkey, and China. The internal and the external nexus as it means applies both to security readings within the European Union and Russia and to those regarding their relationship.

At the structural level challenges will exist with the redefining of the European security order opening the ground for competitive as well as cooperative relations. Transnational threats to security coming from criminal organizations, cyber-security threats, or terrorist groups, with a transnational dimension, will keep adding to the security challenges these players face. Overcoming the mistrust, in the face of a military build-up and hostile discourse, besides reaching the political conditions for the normalization of relations will be on the top of the agenda[40].

The post-Cold War Euro-Atlantic security order is being challenged by Russia. Compared to Ukraine's dealings with NATO, this issue is much broader. New treaties between Russia and the West as per Moscow's proposal contradict the basic principles on which peace in the Euro-Atlantic area is built. Stakes are high as Europe has not been closer to a large-scale military conflict on the continent since the fall of the Berlin Wall[41].

The European security architecture's concerned irritants are being informed by the competing strategic interests. The geopolitical significance of the Russian perceptions is being challenged, both on the nuclear and conventional front, by anti-missile systems projects and by the CFE. The core legitimacy of the role of NATO in Europe is being challenged by diverging views.

The energetic asset, gas has also been an instrument to foster Russian position as a power. With the difficult security relations of European countries along with regional organizations with Moscow, the principled foundations of these relations are being considered. The normative bases of cooperation have emerged in multilateral forums, the EU, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE, and the existing divergences despite which declared common values and principles[42].

VI. Conclusion

The EU and its member states both at the political and economic levels are sometimes on two parallel lines. The lack of harmonization between European objectives and national interests was yet another proof of relations with Russia. In the Council of the EU the member states continue to follow a coherent line because, although with different interests, all states agree to renew sanctions on Russia. At the same time, each state, especially those analyzed, developed bilateral cooperation policies based on their historical relationship with Russia.

A supranational organization with a normative agenda and a Westphalian state following power politics, fundamentally both Russia and the European Union are different actors. Since the beginning their actions and relations have been shaped by these underlying differences, influencing the framework of their official relations and shaping their cooperation. In the EU response the differences and evidence which was brought by the Ukrainian crisis, suggest a higher degree of awareness of Russia's geopolitical attitude of increasingly geopolitical approach towards the region. Russia and the EU, for both the priority will be the lowering of tension in Ukraine, and will have to reflect on a long-term strategy for their future relations. Some signs of mutual differences should be taken into account by these strategies, and the EU is already doing so as suggested.

The competing visions of Russia will proliferate and the decentralization of EU policy towards Russia, from the traditional and personalized approaches of France, Germany, and Italy, to the historical background of Russia on the part of new member states from Eastern Europe. The bilateral policies as a result will come to the fore. A good example is a current disagreement within the EU concerning the Nord Stream which is the North European Gas Pipeline, seen as favoring Germany and other nations of old Europe, whilst undermining the position of the East Europeans and the common EU stance vis-à-vis Russia.

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Both the European Union and Russia initially understood Eastern Partnership as an economic integration project, aimed at increasing exchanges and flows between the European Union and the six participating countries. The European Union was very hesitant to admit the competitive potential of the Eastern Partnership, about Russia's ability to integrate and influence the EaP countries. In Russia the economic attraction maneuvered by the EU was understood in terms of geopolitical competition for influence in the region.

Russia not so strong in the early 1990s was more willing to cooperate with the European Union in gas-related matters than the relatively strong Russia in the post-2000s. There is some extent of correlation between Russia's increased power and a tendency toward decreasing level of cooperation with the EU. It is questionable whether the developments observed here should be interpreted as a threat to Europe's long-term gas supply security and this correlation should not be overstated. A political weapon for which Russia uses energy to extract a concession from the EU, as is to be cautiously assumed.

In the long-term, Russia is interested in securing revenues from gas exports to Europe, while politically aggressive behavior only reinforces the Union's efforts towards diversification of supply sources, promoting energy efficiency, utilizing its alternate source, and most importantly towards the regulation of the openness of its internal gas market for third states. The fact that the energy relations between Russia and the EU are hotly debated and such discussion reflects the substantial differences in visions on how to proceed with cooperation. Analysts aim to answer the question of why the conflictual issues occur in EU-Russia energy relations.

The EU's attempts to export its liberal market rules have been resisted by Russia, for example with the ECT. This is also increasingly a characteristic of EU external energy policy in part as a result of this failure, whereas the energy policy of Russia has been long explicitly linked to its foreign policy. A priority considered for EU at present is the diversification of energy suppliers, with political and financial support, offered to realize projects that would not otherwise be commercially viable.

It has been both opportunities and problems created by a complex common history and geographical proximity for the development of EU–Russia relations since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Behind the EU–Russia agenda they are the main driving force. A great number of documents have been drafted and an elaborate bilateral dialogue structure has been put in place to cope with this complexity.

Since the end of the Cold War for the first time, the West is playing defense. Notwithstanding efforts to shore up weak spots in the transatlantic order, the model of European and Euro-Atlantic security based on the progressive extension of liberal institutions dating from the era of the Cold War must have approached its limits, both on geographical and conceptual front.

Interrelated security disputes, which ranged from the US plan to extend its missile shield in Europe to the eventual NATO enlargement after the Cold War, are challenged by Moscow. A growing dissatisfaction has been voiced by the Russian leaders with the existing institutional frameworks for cooperation and has been opposing three core developments that of the arms control which included the missile defense and the CFE treaty, NATO, and the shared common neighborhood notion with the EU. The Russia - Georgia war in 2008 has contributed to the emergence of more fragmented geopolitics in relations with Russia, as the ongoing Ukrainian crisis is demonstrating.

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20. Despite the possibility of LNG, about 80% of gas imported by the EU is currently transported via pipelines (BP p.l.c., 2010).
21. The pipeline infrastructure requires large (upfront) investments and is linked to high entry costs, which results in long-term exclusive contracts between suppliers and consumers as means of reducing the risks involved in those investments (International Energy Agency, 1995).
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(forerunner to the EU), and NATO not only existed, they had proven their worth in enabling the West to bring the Cold War to a peaceful conclusion.

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