

EU-RUSSIA RELATION WITHIN THE ENLARGED EUROPEAN COOPERATION

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Abstract

EU-Russia relationship has evolved from confrontation and neglect during the Cold War to a vital partnership for both parties, which approaches dependence on energy resources.

Cooperation between EU and Russia takes place on several levels, from the Northern dimension of cooperation to cooperation in the Black Sea area, from the human rights cooperation to ensuring the European security.

EU-Russia partnership is vital for both sides, representing one of the pillars of European security building. The degree of interdependence and the need to coordinate efforts in order to address current international challenges (such as the financial crisis) in a world that is projected to be multipolar require the two parties to strengthen ties and cooperation on the principles of international law norms.

1. The implications of EU's relationship with USSR on EU-RUSSIA relationship

The formation of the European Communities in the '50s caused a hostile reaction from the Soviet Union, which clearly fall within the general picture of the beginning of the Cold War between the political-military blocks.

This attitude was motivated by the fact that the USSR perceived the creation of the Communities as an economic weapon whose only existential logic was blocking or limiting Eastern bloc economies.

Therefore, the USSR refused any dealings with the European Communities and for this purpose, the official position was the non-recognition of the Communities although within the international relations was not required recognition of international organizations; consequently, it changed from an aggressive anti-community propaganda to a total ignorance.

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During the '60s, trade between the Community market and the USSR were modest, though steadily improved over the very low one (almost insignificant) of the '50s.

The '70s were marked by some attempts of the Communities to establish some contacts with the USSR which were due both to political¹ and economic reasons. A further cooling of bilateral relations came in 1979, when the USSR invaded Afghanistan. Although the Community opposed the U.S. embargo against the Soviet Union in 1981, they started to reduce imports from the country and abandoned the attempts to cooperate with CMEA, which had started earlier in the decade, taking into consideration that there were no major trade interests with the Soviet area²(S. S. NELLO, 1991).

The arrival to power of Mikhail Gorbachev gave the signal of a new era of East-West relations, especially in Europe. In 1985, Gorbachev called for the establishment of official relations between the EC and CMEA and as a result, in 1988, it was signed *a joint declaration on mutual recognition*, followed by the establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and the European Community.

In the early 90s, the relations between the European Community and the Russian Federation were full of enthusiasm. Under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin, Russia seeks to join as soon as possible the community of civilized states, expressing willingness to take radical economic and social reforms. The European Community believed that Russia will manage to move quickly through transition and implement all the necessary reforms.

2. The construction of a strategic partnership

2.1. The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement - basis for cooperative relations

The opening of the USSR and then Russian Federation to West launched a cooperation process in which the EU's efforts focused on supporting Russia's democratization process and economic reforms. These

¹The inauguration of „Ostpolitik“ by Chancellor Willy Brandt and the coming Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Helsinki.

² The commercial trade with all CMEA countries did not exceed 6-7% of the total commercial trade and the USSR imports in 1985 from the EU area did not exceed 12.2% and exports amounted to 18.1% with a large share of primary goods and energy which generally enjoyed free access to the Community market.

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efforts have resulted ever since 1991 in concluding the „*Tacis program*”¹ with Russia, with the purpose to provide technical assistance to Russia in the transition to a market economy. So far, the European Union supported Russia with over 2.6 billion Euros in order to conduct institutional, legislative and administrative reforms, as well as her economic and social development Russia (European Commission Delegation to Russia, 2008) and worked in 58 of her areas.

In 1990, Russia had incomplete information on the project within the EU. In the early '90s, Moscow was concerned about the expansion of NATO and the EU began to be seen as a stabilizing factor on the Western borders. (Alexey GROMYKO, 2005).

In June 1994, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) was signed, the legal framework of the relations between the EU and Russia which confirmed them to be strategic partners. The agreement was signed by the governments of the EU member states, President of the European Commission and President of the Russian Federation in June 1994, on the island of Corfu. The agreement came into force just over three years (due to the war in Chechnya)², on December 1, 1997 and initially a validity period of 10 years was set automatically extended after 2007, provided that both parties agree.

Partnership and Cooperation Agreement is based on the principles and objectives shared by both sides: promoting peace and international security, promoting democratic norms and political and economic freedoms. The Agreement shall be oriented to strengthening political, commercial, economic and cultural relations and is based on the idea of partnership on equal terms.

An important aspect is that this document establishes *an institutional framework of the relations* between the two parts of the agreement.

In this respect, they provided assistance for *the organization of two summits a year, at the highest Heads of State and Government level*, intended to set strategic directions for the EU-Russia developing relations.

¹ TACIS (Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States) was established in 1990, representing a grant financial aid for the states resulted from the dissolution of the USSR, in order to help them overcome economic and social issues which were caused by switching to economy market and strengthening democracy.

² in October-November 1996, PCA was ratified by the Duma and Federation Council;

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At ministerial level, the Permanent Partnership Council was created to coordinate mutual actions and discuss ministerial problems and issues, meeting whenever such a framework was necessary¹.

The relations between the two sides may be discussed on the level of *senior officials and experts* but a regular *political dialogue* takes place at meetings of foreign ministers and senior EU officials and their Russian counterparts and in the monthly meetings of the Russian Ambassador to EU with the Political and Security Committee during which are discussed a wide range of topical international issues.

Regular institutional relations are established between the European parliamentarians and the Russian parliamentarians in the *Parliamentary Committee for EU-Russia cooperation*.

As a consequence of Russia's transformation and the developments in relations with the EU, PCA provisions were supplemented by a series of international sectoral agreements and certain mechanisms of cooperation.

After the financial crisis of 1998 that marked the end of the first phase of transition of post-Soviet Russia, the Russian Federation started the long road to stability and economic growth, so that, a decade of economic and social unrest, 1999-2003 brought Russia not only a progressive increase of stability and predictability of the political environment, but also a record of economic growth, macroeconomic stabilization and political reforms.

Following the EU enlargement, in April 2004, the two sides signed a Protocol to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, in order to extend the agreement on the 10 new Member States of the European Union.

The EU is currently negotiating with the Russian Federation on a new agreement since both parties have gone through significant political, economic and social transformations which will be reflected in the new agreement. The purpose of the new agreement is to provide a comprehensive and sustainable framework for the future EU relations with Russia based on respect for common values.

Although a new agreement is necessary for both parties, extremely complex problems separate the two positions regarding issues of international security, energy cooperation, frozen conflicts in the former Soviet area and Russian ambitions to become a great global power again.

¹ So far have been conducted several meetings of the Permanent Partnership Council with the participation of Foreign, Justice, Home Affairs Ministers and those responsible for energy policy, transport and environment.

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2.1.2. Strengthening cooperation - the four common areas

Within the European Council in Madrid that took place in December 1995, the EU adopted its first strategy on EU-Russia relationship, which claimed that "*good relations between the EU and democratic Russia are key to stability in Europe*". Therefore, the EU has offered Russia a partnership to facilitate its transition to democracy, market economy and human rights.

In June 1999, the EU has developed *the EU Common Strategy on Russia* (European Commission Delegation to Russia, 1999), in recognition of the need for a consistent policy in the relations between the two parties. Strategy is the starting point for developing policies to strengthen democracy and public institutions in Russia, integrate Russia into the European economic and social area and enhance stability and security in Europe.

On the other hand, on the level of structural reforms, Russia has progressed significantly, especially after 2000, when the government implemented a more coherent strategy, which included many economic sectors as well as social policy (regulation of business, taxation, pensions or ownership of land). However, there remain important issues such as energy, financial or social fields that need to be improved. In November 2002, as a result of Russia's efforts in transition to a market economy, the European Commission has granted Russia market economy status with full rights. There must be noticed that, in the EU-Russia trade relations, only ten anti-dumping measures are in force relating to products which are only 0.5% of the total imports from Russia.

At the Summit in St. Petersburg, in May 2003 (European Commission Delegation to Russia, 2003), EU and Russia agreed to reinforce their cooperation by creating four long term 'common areas' within the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and based on values and common interests.

At the Summit in Moscow in 2004, was reached an agreement on a roadmap in order to achieve the common area on the four dimensions mentioned above. The Summit in London, in October 2005, assessed the progress of the roadmap, passing from tactical agreements to strategic cooperation. This cooperation is intended to take place in four common areas:

Common Economic Area aims to approximate the EU economies with the Russian ones, with the ultimate purpose of creating an integrated

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market between the EU and Russia. This can be achieved through the legislative convergence of the two parts which do not imply, however, the harmonization of rules and the Russian standards with the European acquis. Legislative convergence also includes cooperation on environment and in this regard, the EU welcomed the ratification the Kyoto Protocol by Moscow.

Since spring 2004, the EU and Russia agreed on the terms and conditions required to be met by the latter in order to join the WTO. While negotiations¹ continue on different levels of details, this agreement is of critical importance to the future economic relations between the two parties. Cooperation in energy and environment is built within the European economic area whose existence and development is a compulsory condition for them.

Another area of cooperation within the Common Economic Area is to develop pan-European transport network (highways, rail networks, etc.), energy transmission channels (oil, natural gas units and interconnection of electricity networks, etc.) as well as telecommunications and networking.

Common Area of Freedom, Security and Justice covers police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters. This area is a growing area of cooperation between the EU and Russia, based on respect for human rights, focusing on common issues - namely, terrorism, illegal migration, cross-border crime, including human trafficking and drugs.

Meanwhile, both the EU and Russia are firmly convinced that the efforts to ensure better security and improve border guard must not lead to new barriers in the cooperation of both parties. People should have a greater freedom of movement and this has led to negotiations ever since the second half of 2004 in order to simplify bilateral visa regime.

At the Summit in Sochi, on May 25, 2006, the leaders agreed to simplify visa regime of June 1, 2007 (The European Commission's Delegation to Russia, 2007). In the future, both sides intend to establish the necessary conditions² that will allow the removal of visa restrictions. It should be noted, in this regard, a number of other initiatives such as the Cooperation Plan for 2007-2010 between FRONTEX and the Russian border

¹ The EU has an uncompromising position in the negotiations on energy. The dialogue on energy took place as Russia is the EU's main supplier of hydrocarbons.

² Travel document security, establishment of common rules on border crossings, etc.;

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structures, cooperation between the European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction, Russian Federal Service for Drug Control and Europol.

Common Area of External Security seeks to strengthen cooperation in policy and foreign security, stressing the importance of international organizations like the UN, Council of Europe, OSCE.

One of the major goals of cooperation, in this area, is focusing both sides' efforts on preventing conflicts, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction, where applicable, with direct view on the frozen conflicts in the vicinity of the EU and Russia.

Common Area of Research, Education and Culture aims at promoting cooperation by promoting scientific, educational and cultural exchange programs. Its purpose is to strengthen the economic and intellectual capacities of both parties and promote several programs to facilitate direct contact between their citizens which will lead to further mutual understanding and closer ties between the two companies, in particular for young people.

Scientific cooperation between EU and Russia is very good, recording successful results which led Russia to be ranked third among the countries in the *EU Research and Development Framework Programme*¹.

Cooperation in education² was conducted mainly through Tempus program which contributed on the educational reform in Russia with convergence towards EU standards in the field. In this regard, the Commission had to extend the program for 2007-2013.

An important step of this cooperation was the opening in 2006 of the Institute of European Studies in addition to the Institute of International Relations of Moscow (MGIMO University), forming a focal point of European studies for training students and leaders of tomorrow.

Moscow Summit in May 2005 adopted the Action Plan on short to medium term which included instruments for implementing the four common areas and make it a reality.

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7> - the official site of the European Commission;

² http://www.etf.europa.eu/Web.nsf/pages/Tempus_EN?opendocument - the official site of *The European Training Foundation* which is an EU agency with the purpose of contributing to the development of education and training of EU partner countries.

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Therefore, the EU-Russia medium term cooperation is determined by the actions necessary to achieve these areas of cooperation (The European Commission, 2006).

Thus, on the EU-Russia Summit in June 2008, EU-Russia Joint Statement was adopted regarding cross-border cooperation which provide cooperation within the framework of the four common areas in a seven border programs for 2007-2013.

2.1.3. Northern dimension of EU cooperation with Russia

The Northern dimension of the cooperation was established in 1999 and comprises the reflection of the EU's relations with Russia on foreign and cross-border policy on the Baltic Sea and the Arctic Sea. The Northern dimension addresses the new challenges and opportunities that have developed in these regions aiming to strengthen the dialogue between the EU, its Member States in the area, the Nordic states in the region associated to the EU in the EEA (Norway and Iceland) and the Russian Federation.

The political framework for setting up and developing the Northern Dimension is represented by *the Political Statement on the Northern Dimension* that fits over the wider Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia. A special emphasis is placed on subsidiarity and ensuring the active participation of all stakeholders in these regions, including regional bodies, local and regional authorities, academic and business communities and civil society.

Among the key issues¹ of the cooperation within the Northern dimension there are:

- economic and infrastructure;
- human resources, education, culture, scientific research and health;
- environmental protection, nuclear safety and natural resources exploitation;
- cross-border and regional cooperation;
- internal affairs;

In order to implement these priorities there were successively developed: the first Action Plan of the Northern dimension for the period 2000-2003 adopted by the European Council in Feira in June 2000, followed

¹ Northern Dimension - Areas of cooperation UE-Russia in http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p_225.htm

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by the second Action Plan covering the period 2004-2006 adopted by the European Council in Brussels in October 2003¹.

The funding of the cooperation within the Northern dimension is achieved by the contribution of all parties and regarding the financial support on the EU level, achieved by existing financial instruments such as TACIS, Interreg and instruments provided by the New Partnership for Neighborhood which should be the main source of funding offered by the EU.

Since 2007, within the Northern Dimension there has also been held the political cooperation between parties, so that the Northern Dimension could be used as a political and operational framework for promoting the implementation at regional and subregional levels, the four common areas created with Russia and with the full participation of Norway and Iceland. In order to strengthen the political cooperation of all stakeholders in the region was proposed the encouragement of Belarus participation at expert level, for the beginning².

After a long retreat period, dedicated to internal reforms, Russia has returned as a major player at regional level and claimed its powerful interests in the Northern area of the continent and the Frozen Ocean. Significantly in this respect is the symbolic gesture with geopolitical overtones of planting its flag on the ocean floor and claiming some submarine territories in this area which have become very important under the circumstances that they have important natural resources and the new climate changes facilitating the access to their operation³.

¹ See *Northern Dimension Action Plans* in European Union in the World, External Relations - http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/north_dim/ndap/index.htm;

² *Guidelines for the development of a political declaration and policy framework document for Northern Dimension policy from 2007* - http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations;

³ In the Arctic there have already appeared minor tensions between Russia and Norway on the fishing rights around the Spitsbergen archipelago (there are large resources of natural gas and oil which are currently locked in the frozen layer). If global warming cause these resources to become available, between Russia and Norway a very tense situation could be created. In this crisis, the U.S., Denmark and Canada could be attracted as they fight for important energy resource opportunities.

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2.1.4. *Black Sea cooperation*

The Black Sea region has recently become an intersection area of the Western interests with the Russian ones, represented by the two integrative systems: the Euro-Atlantic area and the Russian one or CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States).

In these circumstances, the Black Sea region raises great challenges for EU as the resolution of the frozen conflicts or energy security which seeks to be addressed by boosting regional cooperation and participation in the multilateral negotiations in which Russia plays an important role.

EU cooperation with Russia in the Black Sea is currently achieved within the existing regional cooperation mechanisms such as the Commission for the Protection of the Black Sea which regards the protection of marine environment in the area but also within the most important form of multilateral cooperation in the region which is the Organization for Economic Cooperation in the Black Sea.

In recent years, the Russian Federation has returned in force both in the world politics, especially extensive in their energy ramifications and in the regional ones, stating that it has "recovered" in the Balkans and the Black Sea areas. The war in Georgia marked a new phase regarding the presence of Russia in the area. Russia has occupied important positions in particular on markets transmission, distribution and processing of energy products in Romania and Bulgaria, has significantly improved its relations with Turkey and Iran and strengthened its influence in Moldova and Ukraine. Moreover, after being accepted in the WTO Russia has announced the formation of a customs union with Kazakhstan.

The Black Sea region occupies a conspicuous place on the security agenda of Russia which became the ensurance of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia following the military conflict with Georgia in August 2008. Russia considers the region as part of its neighbourhood where it is not willing to share influence with the EU, so it sabotages the actions that could have this result¹.

The European Union has vital interests in the Black Sea region, reason for wishing to represent one of the major players in the region.

¹ in this respect it is significant the refusal of the leader of Kremlin to participate in the Black Sea Forum in Bucharest;

3. A pragmatic partnership or confrontation

Immediately after 1990, the West believed that Russia would manage to pass quickly over transition and implement the necessary reforms. The economic crisis of 1998, the war in Chechnya, the frozen conflicts in former Soviet area, the question of Kosovo, the war in Georgia, human rights and energy policy are just some of the major differences in their relations. Russia was disappointed because it was not included in the structures of political cooperation and European security, but especially because NATO continued its existence, even accepting new members from the former communist states and leaving the possibility of even accepting some other states, former parts of USSR, such as Ukraine or Georgia which are traditionally considered part of the Russian sphere of influence.

Both EU and Russia stated that their dialogue and cooperation is a success, but in reality, the political statements remained without concrete steps towards a strategic partnership as long as the main framework document governing the bilateral relations is the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, extended to 2007. A closer analysis of this document reveal that it lacks substance and concrete projects, and the actions are expressed in terms of "dialogue" and "cooperation", neither side wishing to address key issues.

As a result, Russia has tried to rethink its relations with the EU and in a debate with high and broad participation in Moscow, in January 2005, it was outlined the possibility of existing only two models of the relations with the EU:

1) Russia's strategic goal in the relation with the EU is integration, whose end point may be joining the EU;

2) cooperation without formal integrationist elements (such as adopting legislation in line with the European one) between two independent power centers belonging to the companies of civilized nations.

In the first case, it was stated that EU membership is counterproductive to the long-term interests of the Russian Federation as a world-class power. "Due to the mentality and political culture, Russia is not able to accept the position of 'leader among many other leaders' in the EU" (S.A. KARAGANOV, 2006).

The supporters of this thesis were in minority but the majority stated that on medium and long term Russia will not be able to maintain a global role for itself. The common point of the expressed views was that the

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greatest obstacle in resolving the uncertainties and the lack of trust between Russia and the EU is represented by the differences in value between the two companies and especially between elites.

It seems that Russia has opted for the second model by adopting a strength position and an intimidation and blackmail tactics regarding the EU oil supply, which is a situation caused by creating the necessary preconditions for the emergence of the EU's energy dependence on Russia (Vladimir MILOV , 2006). This position was influenced by the fact that the EU did not take into account (in real) the possibility of Russia's accession even in a distant future.

Russia's economic growth mainly caused by the huge increase in prices¹ of energy products made it more powerful (Georgi DERLUGUIAN, 2006), less cooperative and, above all, less interested in cooperation with the West.

Although the EU is a far greater power than Russia if analyzing demographic and economic parameters (the economy is 15 times higher), military spending and territory², the Europeans are vulnerable regarding the source of their power, namely unity. This is an aspect exploited by Russia, which used each particular interest to the detriment of European unity, as the adage *divide et impera*.

Thus, a study of the European Council of Foreign Relations (Mark LEONARD, Nicu POPESCU, 2007) has identified five distinct approaches of the relations with Russia in the Member States of the "old" and "new" Europe:

- *Trojan horses* (Cyprus and Greece) which often defended Russian interests in the internal EU negotiations and would exercise a veto against the adoption of common positions on Russia;

- *Strategic Partners* (France, Germany, Italy, and Spain) that have enjoyed special relations with Russia, and have sometimes undermined common EU positions;

¹ growth caused, on the one hand, by the lack of resources on global level on the basis of the economic growth of some resource-intensive countries such as China but on the other hand, the price has also climbed because of Russia, which has used its position as the EU energy supply semimonopol, a position which was created through its actions of monopolizing the Caspian energy resources and systematically preventing the creation of other European supply routes.

² EU population is 493 million people to 143 million inhabitants of Russia; the EU area is 17,075,000 sq km to Russia's 4,423,000 sq km.

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- *Friendly Pragmatics* (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia) which maintained close relations with Russia and put their private interests above the EU political goals;

- *Distant Pragmatics* (Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Netherlands¹, Romania, Sweden and the United Kingdom) which also focus on their interests but criticize Russia's behavior whenever necessary;

- *New Cold Warriors* (Lithuania and Poland) which show an unhidden hostility against Kremlin and are willing to exercise their veto to block EU negotiations with Russia.

In what the following policy towards Russia is concerned, each of the five groups of EU countries rallies to two approaches. One approach regards Russia as a potential partner which may be attracted on the EU's orbit through a process of integration leading to the unification of interests. The second approach regards Russia as a threat that should be controlled through a software process that involves the removal of Russia from the G8, NATO expansion, support of anti-Russian regimes in its neighbourhood and the creation of a cordon sanitaire.

Latest international developments² have demonstrated that Russia's neighborhood policy is better coordinated and implemented than the EU's, because Russia has political, economic and even military resources in order to exercise its influence on its neighborhood which is much stronger than the EU's. Renewed Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation of July 12, 2008 stated that Russia „has developed a full role in global relations” and underlined that” the development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements with CIS Member States constitutes a priority area of Russia's foreign policy” (Olena PRYSTAYKO, 2008).

The new challenges for Russia on the EU are more important taking into consideration the deeper consequences that can appear than energy

¹ It is to be seen whether, following the strategic cooperation agreement signed by Rosneft and Royal Dutch Shell companies in Moscow on July 6, 2007, the Netherlands has already passed from the category of Distant Pragmatics to Strategic Partners.

² The fragility of the orange regime in Ukraine, the blocking of the admission into NATO of Ukraine and Georgia due to the military conflict in August 2008, the concluding of cooperation agreements with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan;

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blackmail or blockage exerted by Russia to the UN by exercising its right of veto. What Russia "offers" is a *new alternative ideology*¹ to that of the EU that differs in the understanding of sovereignty, power and world order. Russia seeks to revise trade agreements concluded by Western oil companies, military agreements such as the European Treaty on Conventional Forces (Vladimir SOCOR, 2007, 2008)², but also diplomatic codes and conducts such as the Vienna Convention.

Thus, President Medvedev launched in Berlin, on June 5, 2008, the idea of a new European security treaty to replace the Helsinki Final Act, arguing that the current security architecture of Europe did not pass the tests of strength during the recent events and that it must correspond to a multipolar system of international relations to which we turn (Andrew MONAGHAN, 2008).

Although this proposal cannot remain unanswered, it delayed to appear both from the EU and the U.S.A. proposal to build a *Trans-Eurasian Security System* was launched at the level of the theorists of international relations since 1997.

Taking into account that deeper reactions delayed to occur (which also include the U.S. position, NATO, OSCE), an analysis was made (by the specialists), (Marcel H. Van HERPEN, 2008) to identify how the EU should respond and detect the hidden targets³ of Medvedev's plan which aimed at limiting the influence of U.S. and EU, NATO, preventing the crystallization

¹ Moscow believes that laws are the expression of power and if the balance of power changed, the laws should reflect this change.

² The intention to renegotiate or withdraw from the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe belongs to Russia since July 2007 when Russia notified all the contracting states to suspend this document due to new international realities and to maintain this document in its current form would be detrimental to Russia

³ According to this analysis, the hidden objectives are: Introduction of China as a counterweight extra-European power, alongside the U.S.; Counseling the profile in Sanghai Organization (seen by some as a way to counter NATO of Asia), Division of NATO (between "friends" like Germany, France, Italy, Spain and "hostile" represented by Britain, the Baltic states, etc.); Total lock of NATO (because the Russian proposal aimed at individuals, states, institutions and alliances); Consecration of a "Monroe Doctrine" of Russia for immediate vicinity (which means NATO farewell for Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova. Removal from the game of the current European security Treaties, the OSCE and the CFE Treaty.

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of a common foreign policy of the EU to Russia as well as re-discussing the current European security treaties.

After this warning, a number of ideas were advanced to counter the Russian proposal, but it would be premature to present them here, since decision-makers in NATO and EU member states have not done an active policy of them (yet).

EU-Russia Summit, in June 2008, during the Slovenian Presidency has relaunched the negotiations on a new cooperation framework agreement after identifying some basic principles¹ in accordance with the principles of international law, on which negotiations should be conducted and after obtaining a common position from all Member States². Unfortunately, soon after the outbreak of the military conflict in Georgia in August 2008, the process of negotiations that had just started was blocked.

For the next EU-Russia summit in Nice, on the 14th of November, France expects the release of negotiations with Russia since the EU presidency is held by France which is classified as a "friendly" state to Russia and has direct interests in this regard and the parties will be represented at the highest level³. It remains to be seen whether EU member states would reach a consensus in spite of having already given some conflicting signals⁴ upon unblocking the negotiations accession, certain countries being sceptical of Russia's lean toward compliance with such terms, the six-point peace agreement, signed with Georgia on Kremlin not fully complying on that strategic partnership.

Nowadays, Russia and the EU have an asymmetric relationship in the sense that currently, almost all indicators are in favour of the EU. Not

¹ *EU-Russia Summit: The start of a new age* - Press Releases, <http://www.eu2008.si> - the official site of the Slovenian Presidency.

² Poland and Lithuania have long blocked the negotiations with Russia because of bilateral issues, such as the Russian embargo on the Polish meat or the refusal to supply the largest refinery in Lithuania after it was privatized by a Polish investor;

³ from Russia President Medvedev and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announced their presence, see http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/rusia (6.11.2008).

⁴ EU foreign ministers adopted in October 2008, in the pre-deployment meetings of General Affairs and External Relations Council in Luxembourg, an opposite position regarding the resumption of negotiations for the conclusion of partnership with Russia. Thus, the EU countries were divided into two camps, France, Germany and Italy adopted pro positions and Britain Poland, Sweden and the Baltic States have expressed contrary positions.

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only are the size of territory and population positive but also the structure of the economic exchanges. Thus, 56% of the Russian exports address to EU and 44% of its imports are from the EU, while only 6% of the EU exports bound for Russia and only 10% of the EU imports are of Russian origin. Even energy interdependence reflects an asymmetry in favour of the EU, since during 2000-2005 the imports of Russian gas have fluctuated (Pierre NOEL, 2007), while 70% of the Russian gas exports is bound for the Community. The absence of a Russian pipeline to China makes it vulnerable to the developments in the EU consumption.

Finally, it can be said that EU-Russia partnership is vital for both sides, representing one of the pillars of European security building and the degree of interdependence and the need to coordinate efforts to address current international challenges (such as the financial crisis) in a world that is projected to be a multipolar, require both parties to closer ties agreement and cooperation on the principles of international law norms.

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