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*S. Medvedev*

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BETWEEN “SOVEREIGNTY”  
AND “EUROPEANIZATION”**

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The paper explores the discursive foundations of the current crisis in EU-Russia relations. The problem lies in contrasting readings of sovereignty in Brussels and in Moscow. The Kremlin is bent on Westphalian readings of stateness, promoting visions of a “sovereign democracy”, and a strategy of bureaucratic centralization. Meanwhile, the EU pursues a strategy of Europeanization, seeking to transform nations and spaces along its perimeter to its own image and liking. In deconstructing “Europeanization”, the paper challenges conventional readings of the EU as a postmodern actor, and argues that the EU’s external policy has embarked upon an essentially modern strategy of “bureaucratic imperialism”, rooted in traditional readings of Westernness as goodness. The collision of two modernist projects, Moscow’s bureaucratic centralization and Brussels’ “bureaucratic imperialism,” is a key structural impediment in EU-Russia relations.

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*Sergei Medvedev*, Higher School of Economics, Moscow

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A plague o’both your houses!  
*Mercutio*

## The Problem: A troubled relationship

In terms of Russia’s relations with Europe and the “near abroad”, 2006 was a year of trade wars. In early January, at the height of an unusually cold winter, a “gas war” between Russia and Ukraine led to the shortage of gas supplies to customers in both Eastern and Western Europe. Later on, EU-Russia relations have been complicated by further disputes, from Russia’s unwillingness to ratify the European Energy Charter to the EU’s concern over Russia’s ban on wine imports from Georgia and Moldova. In November 2006, an EU-Russia summit in Helsinki failed to open talks on the new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) due to a Polish veto in protest at the Russian ban on the import of Polish meat. On top of all things, Russia threatened to ban all food imports from the EU on 1 January, 2007 because of the unsettled phytosanitary issues with new EU member states Bulgaria and Romania.

In a sense, there is always some *plat du jour*, a trade dispute on the menu of EU-Russia relations, from the “gas war” to “meat wars”. These issues may seem purely technical, yet in fact many of them can be easily resolved. Still, they reveal a larger problem of EU-Russia relations: Mistrust, mutual frustration and, broadly speaking, an institutional stalemate producing permanent outbreaks of contention. As grimly observed by Alexander Rahr, “the basis for the EU-Russia partnership is as narrow as it has ever been”<sup>1</sup>.

Stalemate may be the most appropriate definition of the present quality of EU-Russia relations. In a different sense, EU-Russia relations can be characterized by a word from the late Brezhnev era, *zastoi*. Literally, this means “stagnation”, or “muddling through”. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the crisis affecting the ailing USSR was disguised by high oil prices and by the inflow of petrodollars, as well as the immense symbolic economy of the Soviet system: Pompous Party congresses and May Day parades, exaggerated five-year plans and triumphant reports. By the same token, the current state of EU-Russia relations is disguised by massive East-West hydrocarbon flows (as articulated by the latest Russian impact on “energy security”) and by impressive symbolic activity, including heady summits, strategies, roadmaps, and ritual invocation of a “strategic partnership”.

<sup>1</sup> Rahr A. With each passing day the EU and Russia need each other more and more // Rossiiskaya gazeta. 26 October 2004. P. 13.

These oil and gas flows — and symbolic diplomacy — conceal a troubled relationship. The agenda is overburdened with permanent bureaucratic squabbling over technical issues such as Russian steel quotas, royalties (from European carriers) for flights over Siberia, the Kaliningrad transit problem and Russia's concerns over Schengen visa policy. Moreover, increased EU demand for Russian oil and gas has become a source of permanent tension, with the EU looking for guarantees of supply (e.g. by securing safe and cheap energy transit through the Russian territory and enforcing the Energy Charter), and Russia looking for guarantees of demand (e.g. by trying to buy a stake in European distribution chains, “the last mile” to the European customer).

Broadly speaking, it is not just the past year, but the entire “noughties” that have been a period of disillusionment in EU-Russia relations. With Putin's coming to power — and the rise (or rather, the return) of a semi-authoritarian bureaucratic state in Russia — the EU is becoming increasingly disappointed about the prospects for “Europeanization” of Russia. For Russia, too, the EU looks much less attractive than in the 1990s: “An over-bureaucratized formation, pursuing socialist economic policies that stifle economic growth”, in the words of Dmitry Trenin<sup>2</sup>.

This mutual frustration is all the more striking, considering the fact that the EU and Russia are vitally interdependent for their external and domestic security, on humanitarian issues, and because the EU accounts for over 50 percent of Russia's external trade as well as most of the FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in Russia. The paradox of the situation is that the closer the EU and Russia get to each other, territorially or economically, the more problematic their relationship becomes, so that interdependence and contiguity turn into a source of permanent frustration.

Yet another paradox is that on paper, the relationship looks just fine. There has never been a shortage of framework documents in EU-Russia relations, from the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) which was signed in 1994 and came into effect in 1997, to various strategies (including the EU's “Common Strategy on Russia” adopted in 1999, and Russia's reciprocal “Mid-term Strategy for relations with the EU”)<sup>3</sup>. However, the proclaimed “strategic partnership” has not been supported by clear mechanisms of implementation, timelines, benchmarks and criteria which, by contrast, characterise EU relations with European applicant countries. Without the prospect of Russian membership into the Union, the entire corpus of EU-Russian paperwork remains large-

<sup>2</sup> *Trenin D.* Integratsiya i identichnost. Rossiya kak “novyi Zapad” (Integration and Identity. Russia as the New West). M.: Evropa Publishers, 2006. P. 370—371.

<sup>3</sup> For the analysis of the CSR, see: *The EU Common Strategy on Russia: Learning the Grammar of the CFSP* / H. Haukkala, S. Medvedev (eds.). Helsinki: The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2001.

ly a declaration of intent, an instrument of policy avoidance rather than clear guidelines.

In this sense, the recent failure of the EU-Russia summit in Helsinki to open negotiations on the new PCA (coming into force following the expiry of the current PCA in December 2007) does not seem to need to create a legal vacuum. At present, both sides seem content with the idea of renewing the current Agreement (according to Article 106 this can be done infinitely until both sides decide to replace the Agreement), without embarking on a laborious process of re-negotiating and an almost improbable ratification of the new framework document. As observed by Timofei Bordachev,

“The format of political and legal relations between Russia and the EU does not essentially influence the development of real integration wherever there is mutual interest. Many countries that have much closer and effective ties with the EU than Russia do not seek to formalise their commitments by ratifying them in parliament and making them a part of national law. One of these countries is the United States, which has a visa-free regime and a huge trade turnover with the European Union: Yet, it makes do with general political declarations accompanied by a package of bilateral agreements and binding working plans on specific issues”<sup>4</sup>.

The same is true of the most recent addition to the EU-Russian body of texts, the four Roadmaps, corresponding to the four Common Spaces: The Common Economic Space; the Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice; the Common Space of External Security; and the Common Space of Research, Education and Culture. Adopted at the EU-Russia summit in St. Petersburg in May 2005, the Roadmaps present some 400 bulleted action points, mainly phrased in the language of “cooperation” and “dialogue” but vague on implementation mechanisms. Lacking strategic guidance, policy instruments, or even precise definitions, Michael Emerson has called the Common Spaces “the proliferation of the fuzzy” in EU-Russian relations<sup>5</sup>. To this effect, Emerson quotes French philosopher Paul Thibaud writing on the EU Constitutional Treaty on the eve of the French referendum:

“The constitutional treaty... turns its back on history, which it seems, was just a painful experience, and remains indefinitely extensible for its geography and its competences. The proliferation of the fuzzy is a manner of being for the European Union, and something which the Constitution... did not want to end”<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> *Bordachev T.* Russia and the European Union after 2007 // *The Elephant and the Bear Try Again. Options for a New Agreement between the EU and Russia* / M. Emerson (ed.). Brussels, CEPS, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> *Emerson M.* EU-Russia, Four Common Spaces and the Proliferation of the Fuzzy // *CEPS Policy Brief*. May 2005. No. 71. P. 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Thibaud P.* Qui sont et où sont les bons européens? // *Le Monde*. 11 May 2005.

By the same token, Andrei Makarychev has described the language of the Common Spaces as “the EU discursive strategy of uncertainty” which leaves as much room as possible for different interpretations of basic concepts that form the background of EU-Russian relations<sup>7</sup>, while an oft-cited report by the Moscow-based Council for Foreign and Defense Policies criticised the Common Spaces for being merely a transitory stage in EU-Russian relations that reflected a lack of vision on both sides<sup>8</sup>.

Indeed, there is a lack of strategic perspective on the future of EU-Russian relations in both Brussels and Moscow. Neither side can articulate the long-term goals of their relationship, or the common values, norms and interests that underlie the “strategic partnership”. Most notably, by the mid-2000s, official Russian policy regarding the EU has been reduced to the flat and square statement that “Russia does not seek membership of the European Union” and it is obvious that such a negative pronouncement cannot inform a strategic agenda<sup>9</sup>.

### The Discourses: Sovereignty and Europeanization

The failure to formulate the long-term goals of the bilateral relationship is not just the result of a lack of political will. There is an objective logic at work, namely a difference in the EU and Russian domestic discourses, the readings of sovereignty.

The fundamental difference is that strategic thinking in Moscow is deeply embedded in Westphalian notions of sovereignty. The comeback and consolidation of the nation-state has been and continues to be the key issue on the agenda of both Putin’s presidential terms. The visions of a “sovereign democracy” and “nationalization of the future” have been made public by the Kremlin’s chief ideologist, Vladislav Surkov<sup>10</sup>. As Derek Averre has put it,

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<sup>7</sup> *Makarychev A.S.* The four spaces and the four freedoms: An exercise in semantic deconstruction of the EU discourse. Nizhny Novgorod Linguistic University Working Paper Series. No. 1—2. P. 31.

<sup>8</sup> *Otnosheniya Rossii i Evropeiskogo Soyuza: sovremennaya situatsiya i perspektivy* (Russia-EU relations: Their current state and prospects) / S. Karaganov (ed.). M.: Council for Foreign and Defense Policy, 2005, paragraphs 1.4.2—1.4.4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* Paragraph 1.2.2.

<sup>10</sup> *Surkov V.* Suverenitet — eto politicheskii sinonim konkurentosposobnosti (Sovereignty is a political synonym of competitiveness). Speech to United Russia activists, 7 February 2006 // [www.edinros.ru/news.html?id=111148](http://www.edinros.ru/news.html?id=111148). *Surkov V.* Natsionalizatsia budushchego (Nationalization of the Future) // *Expert*. 20 November 2006. No. 43.

“the current drive to strengthen state power, accepted by the majority of Russian political elites as necessary both as an instrument for national reconstruction and as a corrective to the disorder of the Yeltsin years, produces neither the internal stimulus to reform nor the external point of reference which would allow multifaceted engagement with Europe, especially in the context of a changing international system and developing notions of sovereignty”<sup>11</sup>.

From the “sovereignty” point of view, Russia has not quite figured out how to deal with a new sort of political animal, the European Union. The EU is a difficult counterpart, described alternately a “unique, not to say strange, political actor, with divided and clashing institutions, unclear sovereignty, a weak sense of common interest and few institutions in the political arena yet able to achieve its declared ends”<sup>12</sup> and as “a bureaucratic body almost without political leadership”<sup>13</sup>. From this perspective, it is not clear to Russia where political power in Europe lies: Is it in the national capitals, the Council or the Commission? Russian decision-makers are sometimes compelled to repeat the frustrated question of Henry Kissinger he used to ask back in the 1970s: “If Europe has a foreign policy, I wish someone would tell me its phone number!”. Quite often, Russia resorts to tried and tested bilateralism, only to find out that bilateral agreements (e.g. Gazprom’s deals with European governments) run into European Union regulations and Russia faces a much less cooperative EU Commission.

The missing sense of direction in Russia’s relations with the EU also reflects a wider feeling of ambiguity about the future of the European project following the failure of the EU Constitutional Treaty in the Dutch and French referenda in 2005. The EU is currently at a crossroads, facing a choice between a federalist future, represented by the Constitutional Treaty, and a more minimalist kind of integration—a “Common Market Plus”. Alternatively, the choice is between wider integration, with the eventual membership of Ukraine and probably Turkey, and stopping at the current stage of enlargement, including Bulgaria and Romania. This ambiguity about the future format of the Union adds to Russia’s strategic indecision with respect to the EU.

The EU, too, lacks a long-term strategic vision for its relations with Russia. For EU policy makers, the basic structural impediment is that Russia does not have a so-called “vocation for membership”, and they have difficulties in dealing with their enormous non-acceding neighbor. After half a century of successful integration and adaptation to the outside world, the EU is still essentially an integrationist machine. At its core is a set of bureaucratic rules, procedures and

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<sup>11</sup> *Averre D.* Russia and the European Union: Convergence of Divergence? // *European Security*. June 2005. Vol. 14. No. 2. P. 175.

<sup>12</sup> *Lynch D.* Russia faces Europe ( EU-ISS Brief). May 2003.

<sup>13</sup> *Makarychev A.* Russia’s discursive construction of Europe and herself: Towards New Spatial Imagery. Nizhny Novgorod Linguistic University Working Paper Series. No. 1—2. P. 5.

institutions aimed at transforming nations and spaces to a universal standard. However, as Michael Emerson has observed, the EU does not have a well-defined model for exporting these laws, norms and values “beyond suggesting weak and fuzzy derivatives of the enlargement process, while it cannot afford to overextend the real enlargement process for vital, even existential reasons”<sup>14</sup>. Once it appears that a nation cannot integrate, the technocratic integrationist mentality fails to produce a strategic outlook and a coherent policy. The EU operational mode is therefore best described as technocratic and bureaucratic, rather than political and strategic.

The technocratic integrationist logic of the EU largely explains the “intrusive” nature of the EU’s policy towards Russia that so often irritates the Russian side. In an apparent desire to shape Russia in its own image, the EU projects its values, norms and regulations (but also fosters its material interests), expecting Russia to comply with the EU-defined code of conduct. In short, this is an extension of the EU’s internal logic — the EU acted the same way with respect to Slovakia or Estonia — but without the added benefit of EU membership.

The extrapolation of the EU’s internal logic is evident throughout the documents intended to govern its relations with Russia, such as the PCA, the Common Strategy on Russia, the European Neighbourhood Policy (which Russia does not want to be covered by), and Roadmaps for the EU-Russian Common Spaces. All these documents have been written using EU bureaucratic language. Starting from the original PCA, prepared during the early 1990s when Russia was seen as a “nation in transit”, in need of advice, assistance and mentorship, these documents are all based on a purely EU conception of how its neighbourhood relations should be organized. According to Emerson, the long text of the PCA was a watered-down derivative of the ‘Europe Agreements’ signed with the newly independent Central and East European countries that were seeking accession to the EU: Russia was then one of the new boys in the class of post-Communist states<sup>15</sup>. By the same token, The European Neighbourhood Policy

“is itself a weak and fuzzy derivative of the EU’s enlargement process. This neighbourhood policy is embracing the same comprehensive agenda of the EU’s internal policy competences and political values, but without the mega-incentive of accession. The four common spaces [between Russia and the EU. — *S.M.*] are now a weaker and fuzzier still derivative of the neighbourhood policy<sup>16</sup>”.

<sup>14</sup> Emerson M. The Proliferation of the Fuzzy. P. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Emerson M. Introduction // The Elephant and the Bear Try Again: Options for the New Agreement between the EU and Russia / M. Emerson (ed.). Brussels: CEPS, 2006

<sup>16</sup> Emerson M. P. 3. As the author further concedes, the EU “has worked out for itself a well-identified corpus of law, norms and values. But it does not have a well-defined model for exporting these”. (Ibid. P. 4.)

The entire set of EU policies and instruments intended to govern its relations with its external environment can be summarised under the heading of *Europe-ization*. By this term, the Brussels-based Center for European Policy Studies means the “transformation of national politics and policy making in line with modern European values and standards” through:

- Legal and institutional obligations flowing from the norms and rules of the EU and the Council of Europe
- Objective changes in economic structures and the interests of individuals as a result of integration
- Subjective changes in beliefs, expectations and identity<sup>17</sup>.

Europeanisation is a traditional Eurocentric discourse that falls in line with the historical constructions of Westernness (positing Western values and practices as universal and non-negotiable, with a civilising mission incumbent on the West) and Easternness (positing the East as barbarian, devoid of morality and rule of law, a space to be converted and transformed)<sup>18</sup>. According to Jutta Weldes, something of a compulsion is entailed within the Western cultural frame that sees the West to have the ‘right’, even the ‘obligation’, to intervene in the social development of others and to ‘assist’ them in finding the true Western path to social justice and prosperity. Armed with such an ‘obligation’, the West is therefore seen to have every justification to insist on the reproduction of its values and institutions elsewhere<sup>19</sup>. In this context, Slavoj Žižek speaks of the “Eurocentric procedure of imposing its own hegemony by means of the exclusionary discursive strategy of devaluating the Other”<sup>20</sup>.

For all its postmodern imagery and the “rejection of power”<sup>21</sup>, the European Union is a direct descendant of the Western missionary tradition<sup>22</sup>. Looking at the very origins of the EU, one finds Western notions of democratic peace theory— the idea that liberal democracies do not go to war with each other. The EU was constructed in order to reconcile France and Germany, the two nations that stood at the origins of three European wars in a span of seventy years

<sup>17</sup> The Wider Europe Matrix. Presentation by the Center for European Policy Studies. Moscow: November 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Lehti M. Competing or Complementary Images: The North and the Baltic World from the Historical Perspective // Dynamic Aspects of the Northern Dimension / H. Haukkala (ed.). Turku: Jean Monnet Unit, University of Turku, 1999. P. 22.

<sup>19</sup> Weldes J. Going Cultural: Star Trek, State Action and Popular Culture // Millennium. 1999. No. 28/1. P. 131.

<sup>20</sup> Žižek S. Da capo senza fine // Contingency, Hegemony, Universality. Contemporary Dialogue on the Left / J. Butler, E. Laclau, S. Žižek (eds.). L.; N. Y.: Verso, 2000. P. 231.

<sup>21</sup> Kagan R. Power and Weakness // Policy Review. June 2002 (<http://www.policyreview.org/JUN02/kagan.html>).

<sup>22</sup> For an analysis highlighting the missionary elements of the EU in world politics, see: Larsen H. The Discourse on the EU’s Role in the World? // The New World Order: Contrasting Theories / B. Hansen, B. Heurlin (eds.). Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000. P. 217—244.

## The Challenge: Global risk management

(1870—1939). This ‘peace mission’ has been central to subsequent enlargements of the EU and provides a rationale for the further extension of EU borders and the dissemination of liberal democratic values across its external frontiers<sup>23</sup>. To quote former EU Commission President, Romano Prodi:

“Europe needs to project its model of society into the wider world. We are not simply here to defend our own interests: We have a unique historic experience to offer. The experience of liberating people from poverty, war, oppression and intolerance. We have forged a model of development and continental integration based on the principles of democracy, freedom and solidarity and it is a model that works”<sup>24</sup>.

In this respect, Christopher Browning describes Europeanisation as ‘developing’ outsiders up to ‘our standards’, and entails a representation of others as somehow devoid or lacking in moral fibre, irrespective of empirical reality. This is further inscribed by the fact that membership of the EU requires applicant states be vetted against established criteria of democracy, the rule of law, Human Rights, economic structures and so forth, in order to assess their ‘fitness’ as potential members<sup>25</sup>. Failure to live up to these standards, in turn, represents a failure to achieve equal subjectivity with EU members and condemns one to remain excluded<sup>26</sup>. This is precisely what happened to the EU’s image of Russia as soon as it had become clear that it no longer fitted the ideal “European” normative model and moved towards a semi-authoritarian bureaucratic state. Disillusionment in the Europeanisation of Russia has led to its subsequent marginalisation and isolation in EU discourses and practices.

In response to the EU discursive offensive, Russia has come up with the idea of “exceptionality”. As put by Gleb Pavlovsky, “the state entity with its centers located in Strasbourg and Brussels is not a hotbed for those living in Kiev or Moscow, even if they think of themselves as Europeans”<sup>27</sup>. However, even if this discursive defense succeeds, portraying Russia as an “exception”, a “special case” argument leads to the implicit acceptance of Europeanisation as the hegemonic “norm”. In this model, the “exceptional” Russia will be tolerated rather than accepted in its otherness.

<sup>23</sup> *Browning C.S.* The Region-Building Approach Revisited: The Continued Othering of Russia in Discourses of Region-Building in the European North // *Geopolitics*. Spring 2003. Vol. 8. No. 1. P. 45.

<sup>24</sup> *Prodi R.* 2000—2005: Shaping the New Europe. European Parliament, Strasbourg, 15 February 2000. Available at <<http://europa.int/>>.

<sup>25</sup> *Christiansen T., Joenniemi P.* Politics on the Edge: On the Restructuring of Borders in the North of Europe // *Curtains of Iron and Gold: Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Interaction* / H. Eskelinen, I. Liikanen, J. Oksa (eds.). Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999. P. 90.

<sup>26</sup> *Browning C.S.* P. 57.

<sup>27</sup> *Pavlovsky G.* *Rossia vse eshche ishchet svoyu rol' v mire* (Russia is still looking for its place in the world) // *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. 31 May 2004.

For all their obvious differences, Russia’s recent impact on the notions of sovereignty and Europeanisation have one thing in common: They are two different reactions to the forces of globalisation, two different ways to manage ambiguity and global risks that have emerged in the noughties. In short, the current stage of globalisation puts to test the key parameters of modern politics: Sovereignty, stateness and bureaucracy, while the EU and Russia are coming up with their respective responses.

Indeed, globalisation is Janus-faced: At first sight it appears to be a force for unification, integration and standardisation. It is heralded by the universal spread of free markets and information networks, accompanied by a specifically American face of Western culture (“Coca-Colonisation”) and legitimised by the acceptance of democracy and Human Rights as universal values. One obvious political corollary of globalisation is “de-sovereignisation” and the decline of the nation-state as the basic unit of international relations.

But there is the other face of globalisation, like international terrorism, global criminal networks, and flows of illegal migrants that necessitate mobilisation of the residual powers of nation-states. And finally, there are all sorts of identity movements that emerge by resisting globalisation, and yet are themselves invariably global: Chechen separatists, Mexican Zapatistas, and Aum Shinrikyo, just like the anti-globalists themselves, all go online, create global networks and transcend state borders.

The name of the game is globalisation versus adaptation (or outright resistance). This collision has been called different names by different authors: The Net and Self (Manuel Castells)<sup>28</sup>; McWorld and Jihad (Benjamin Barber)<sup>29</sup>; and the Lexus and the Olive Tree (Thomas Friedman)<sup>30</sup>. Almost any trend towards unification and integration is offset by the adaptation strategies of nation-states, indigenous cultures, groups and individuals, and by the emergence of various resistance identities:

- De-nationalisation, de-sovereignisation and de-bordering are counterbalanced by re-nationalisation, the nation-state’s reclamation of its inherent monopoly on violence, security and borders.
- Integration (as manifested, for example, by EU enlargement) is counterbalanced by the forces of fragmentation (e.g. in the former Yugoslavia, or in Georgia).

<sup>28</sup> *Castells M.* *The Information Age. Economy, Society and Culture*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

<sup>29</sup> *Barber B.* *Jihad versus McWorld. How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World*. N. Y.: Random House, 1996.

<sup>30</sup> *Friedman T.L.* *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*. N. Y.: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1999.

• Global markets' strive towards homogeneity and the universal applicability of neo-liberal strategies is offset by the re-emergence of the nation-state as an anchor of identity and the focal point of cultural resistance to globalisation. There is also a clear drive towards greater protectionism and even re-nationalisation of strategic industries ("resource nationalism"), as happened recently with the oil industry in Bolivia.

• The Americanisation of global culture is met with increasing anti-Americanism, in Europe, Russia and the Third World.

• The rise and fall of the "New Economy" is matched by the heavy weight of the Old Economy, and its main commodity, oil, which is just as important today as it was in the twentieth century. In all likelihood, the importance of hydrocarbons for the economy will grow, even in developed countries, with the attendant global patterns of competition and dependence;

• The rise of "liberal imperialism" of the West<sup>31</sup> and the promotion of the New World Order (as seen, for example in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq) is met with the increasing force of global terrorism and the threat of "Coming Anarchy" (Robert Kaplan)<sup>32</sup>, while regional instability emerges in Europe's turbulent neighbourhoods.

In all these cases, the key variable, and point of contention, is the role of the nation-state: Is it being fragmented, diminished and dissolved by the forces of globalisation, marketisation and integration, or is it being reinstated and reinvented by the forces of resistance, localism, protectionism and identity? What strategies of adaptation are available to the nation-state? Does it consolidate sovereignty, enhance stateness and emphasize traditional nationhood, or does it pool sovereignty with other nations, yield to supranational governance and develop new identities?

These questions strike at the heart of the current transformations of the relationship between the EU and Russia. The EU is going through a difficult period of coming to grips with the level of integration achieved by 2005, when the Union expanded to 25 (Bulgaria and Romania are due to join in 2007) and stood on the verge of becoming a quasi-federative state by adopting a Constitutional Treaty. Debates about the "Old Europe" versus the "New Europe", the caricature images of the "Polish plumber" stealing jobs in the West, Ukraine's emerging bid to join the EU and especially the controversy around the idea of including Turkey in the EU have all overstretched and questioned the limits of the European project.

Meanwhile, the Islamic factor came to the fore with the heated debate about headscarves (*hijab*) in French schools in 2004, race riots in major European cit-

<sup>31</sup> Cooper R. The New Liberal Imperialism // Observer. 7 April 2002.

<sup>32</sup> Kaplan R. The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dream of the Post-Cold War. N. Y.: Vintage, 2001.

ies in November 2005, and the imminent threat of Islamic terrorism in Europe following the Madrid and London bombings in 2004—2005. What was previously seen as an external challenge to Europe turned into a domestic social, security and identity issue. With the image of a "clash of civilisations" brought back home, the Turkish bid for EU membership has become even more problematic.

Against this background, Europeanisation can be seen as the strategy of global risk management. The EU wants to minimise the ambiguity of its external environment (Ukraine, Russia, Turkey, North Africa, energy security) by extending its own bureaucratic norms and regulations. Under the guise of European values, the EU pursues a peculiar kind of *bureaucratic imperialism* that seeks to modify and partially control EU's neighbourhood through various instruments like the ENP, the Common Spaces, the Energy Charter, etc. This is a rather old-fashioned strategy of risk management aimed at controlling contingencies rather than adapting to them.

Russia, too, is going through a difficult period of adaptation to global risks that makes it re-define sovereignty and government. During the revolutionary 1990s, the Russian state retreated and shrunk to levels unseen since the Civil War of 1918—1921. At the same time, the country had opened itself to globalisation in an unprecedented manner. Ideas of joining the EU and NATO were given serious consideration in the early 1990s, while Russia's regions were allowed, according to President Yeltsin, "to take as much sovereignty as they could swallow". At some points, the situation deteriorated into pure anarchy, as the state lost its monopoly on violence (e.g. Chechnya), and became corrupted by the oligarchs. This was accompanied by social atomisation and ideological chaos, with traditional Russian ideas of statehood being marginalised by the ruling liberal ideology.

There was increasingly a quest for order and stability in the late 1990s, which eventually paved the way for the rise of Vladimir Putin. On becoming president on 31 December 1999, he headed Thermidor, a classic counterrevolutionary act, heralding the return of the state. Both of Putin's terms in office have been devoted to rebuilding the Russian state, and to reclaiming lost ground from business elites, Civil Society, the press and the West.

The State is the key to understanding the Putin phenomenon. Initially, he treated the state as a means of modernising Russia and for adapting it to globalisation: For him, Russia's national idea was 'competitiveness'. Analysing Putin's agenda back in 2000, Peter Rutland observed that his task

"was to adapt the Russian state to the challenges of the global environment: to "customise" global practices and requirements to suit Russian conditions. . . . All around the world, national leaders have been struggling to protect vulnerable social groups and preserve national cultures while adapting to the competitive pressures of the global market place. In the East, it led to the

opening of China and sparked the “Asian values” debate. In the West, it caused liberals and socialists to embrace free trade and fiscal conservatism. The “Putin enigma” can be understood as part of an arc of political transformation that stretches from Mohammed Mohatir and Deng Xiaoping to Tony Blair and Bill Clinton<sup>33</sup>.

However, after the YUKOS affair in 2003, and especially after the terrorist act in Beslan in 2004 that prompted a sweeping campaign for centralisation, the state for Putin has become an end in itself, a means of preserving power, a self-propelled bureaucratic enterprise. While it is likely that the Putin regime (and probably himself personally) will stay in power after the 2007—2008 elections, the state will most likely remain the key player in determining the future of Russia in the medium-term.

Bringing the state back in and stressing sovereignty, Russia displays a different strategy of global risk management, a bureaucratic-conservative strategy of centralisation, aimed at minimising or excluding external risks (e.g. prohibiting any involvement of the West with Civil Society in Russia, as seen in the infamous NGO law, or in limiting the access of Western companies to key oil and gas deposits like Shtokman and Sakhalin-2).

“Sovereignty” and “Europeanisation” are two competing bureaucratic strategies of managing globalisation, one aimed at *protecting* internal order, and another aimed at *projecting* internal order. Russia is reinforcing domestic stateness as a conservative means to minimise the ambiguity of global challenges, while the EU projects its domestic structures as a means to manage ambiguity along its periphery. In fact, Russia and the EU have inverted their global roles they have played during the second half of the 20th century, when the USSR sought to export its model, and the EC was inward-oriented, and refrained from any foreign policy initiative. These days, it is vice versa: Russia, for the first time in 500 years, refrains from territorial ambitions and concentrates on domestic issues<sup>34</sup>, while it is the EU that turns into a revisionist player and seeks to remodel its neighbourhood. Katinka Barysch has called this a “paradigm shift in the EU”:

“Looking internally for the past 50 years, [it is] now turning outwards, seeks to define its role in the world and will see to have more influence on devel-

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<sup>33</sup> Rutland P. Putin’s Path to Power // Post-Soviet Affairs. December 2000. Vol. 16. No. 4. P. 316.

<sup>34</sup> Russia “attempts a reformulation of the national interest from a spatial definition to a functional definition”. For the first time in Russian history, national interest is not linked to sheer power and territorial control, but rather to domestic reform, prosperity and the efficiency of governance<sup>34</sup> (Medvedev S. Rethinking the National Interest. Putin’s Turn in Russian Foreign Policy. Marshall Center Paper No. 6. Garmisch, 2004. P. 55—56). At least these are the proclaimed objectives of the Kremlin, and even if in real life the efficiency of governance is falling dramatically, Russia is definitely inward-looking, compared to the Soviet period.

opments within its immediate neighborhood (without, however, ‘internalizing’ that challenge through further enlargement)<sup>35</sup>.

Both strategies of risk management are essentially modern, aimed at eliminating or minimising ambiguity (a truly postmodern strategy would have been to integrate and internalise ambiguity in a pluralist way). The modern *modus operandi* is largely explained by the fact that both strategies have bureaucracies at their core that seek to reproduce and reinforce their influence by eliminating difference (Putin’s authoritarian project) or by transforming difference according to one’s own model (the EU’s bureaucratic imperialism). Andrei Makarychev has observed the paradoxical symmetry of political logics in Moscow and in Brussels, quoting to this effect Jef Huysmans’ reasoning that the “most radical form of political articulation is... a desire to overcome all estrangement — that is, the fact that we have to live with others who are not like us — either by eliminating or radically marginalizing those who are different or by turning those who are different into the same as us”<sup>36</sup>. This is exactly what makes one perceive European and Russian policies as two poles of the same chain of political options, opposing each other but being subsumed to the same political logic<sup>37</sup>.

While it is commonplace to list Russia, along with China and India, as the key global players that follow the political script of modernity, the EU, too, for all its alleged political postmodernism, is engaged in a typically modern practice of othering and transforming the Other (or, at a minimum, tolerating the Other), rather than accommodating and integrating difference.

## The Forecast: EU-Russian Gridlock

The collision of two modernist bureaucratic projects is a key structural impediment in EU-Russia relations, and a background of all recent crises. Thus, the mid-term forecast for EU-Russia relations is not particularly optimistic. Most likely, we are in for a protracted stalemate. The EU-Russian dialogue will be plagued by loose institutions, hollow summits and a bureaucratic tug-of-war. The rhetorical heading of this ambiguous policy setting will be the four “Common Spaces” with their non-obligatory Road Maps. Indeed, new policy docu-

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<sup>35</sup> Barysch K. The future of EU-Russia relations — do we need a new agreement after the PCA? Notes from the roundtable of December 5—6, 2005 in Potsdam.

<sup>36</sup> Huysmans J. International Politics of Insecurity: Normativity, Inwardness and the Exception // Security Dialogue. 2006. No. 37. P. 21.

<sup>37</sup> Makarychev A. Neighbors, Exceptions and the Political: A Vocabulary of EU-Russia Inter-Subjective (Dis) Connections // The Elephant and the Bear Try Again: Options for the New Agreement between the EU and Russia / M. Emerson (ed.). Brussels: CEPS, 2006.



ments may appear, like a re-negotiated PCA after 2007, but, given the long tradition of non-committal EU-Russia paperwork, they will hardly change much.

The key problem will remain the systemic incompatibility between a semi-authoritarian Russia bent on “sovereignty” and “hard power”, and the EU integration machine, with its “bureaucratic imperialism”, which is structurally incapable of accommodating a Russia disinclined to submit itself to integrationist pressures. Unless significant changes occur in Russia’s internal and external policy, as well as in the EU’s approach to Russia, their relationship will remain stagnant and crisis-prone.

On both sides, policy will lack consistency and cohesion and will be reactive rather than proactive. EU policy towards Russia will be decentralised, and competing visions of Russia will proliferate, from the traditional and personalised approaches of France, Germany and Italy, to the historical mistrust of Russia on the part of new member states from Eastern Europe. As a result, bilateral policies will come to the fore. A good example is current disagreement within the EU concerning the Nord Stream (North European Gas Pipeline), seen as favouring Germany and other nations of “old” Europe, whilst undermining the position of the East Europeans and the common EU stance vis-a-vis Russia.

Russia, too, lacks a long-term vision of its relations with the EU and will pursue a reactive policy of damage limitation. Obsessed with the threat of “coloured revolutions”, Moscow will warily watch, and try to counterbalance, EU policies in their joint neighbourhood, considering the potential of Ukrainian and Moldovan membership as a threat to Russian national interests. Meanwhile, it will be happy to explore the benefits of bilateralism trying to exploit internal EU disputes and differences between Europe and the United States (e.g. on Iraq).

Of the areas of cooperation between Russia and the EU, some substance will be left in the economic sphere — if only to solve issues arising from Russian energy and raw materials exports and food imports from the EU, though much of those will be increasingly covered in the WTO framework, as Russia is preparing for accession in 2007. Humanitarian issues will be high on the agenda, although these will fade as they lack a solid institutional and legal foundation. Meanwhile, questions of internal and external security will become increasingly contentious, with issues like visas, migration and re-admission, and EU-Russian rivalry in the CIS coming to the fore. This rivalry will be all the more problematic, since Russia has excluded itself from the ENP, which is now seen as aimed against Russia, in an area perceived as Russia’s natural sphere of interest. In fact, many of Russia’s commentators view the ENP as an attempt by Brussels to erect a *cordon sanitaire* on its eastern border, further isolating Russia.

Various types of EU “dimensionalism” (“Northern Dimension”, “Eastern Dimension”) and cross-border regionalism, especially in the peripheral Black Sea, Baltic and Nordic areas might provide some compensation for the decay in

the relationship. However, given the current policy setting in Moscow and Brussels, neither of these projects will be given high priority, and different regional initiatives will remain in the same low profile and under-financed condition they have been in for a good part of the past fifteen years.

Time-wise, the gridlock in EU-Russian relations will be long-lasting, with no incentives, actors, or political will to break it. Domestic entanglements on both sides will most probably prevent Moscow and Brussels from starting a serious dialogue on the future of their relationship any time soon. Russia will enter the 2007—2008 election season, the prime goal of which will be the reproduction of the current corrupt regime, exhibiting an attendant authoritarian drift (“managed democracy”), Great Power rhetoric and rituals of enemy construction. The EU is likely to be seen as a challenger to Russian interests.

Meanwhile, the EU will be too busy with domestic developments, accommodating the “Big Bang” enlargement with twelve new states (including Romania and Bulgaria in 2007) and re-considering the future of the EU Constitution following the failure of referenda in 2005. Given these conditions of uncertainty, Russia will not be at the top of the EU’s priority list: Rather, it will be viewed as yet another external threat, the impact of which has to be minimised.

In other words, both sides, preoccupied with domestic developments, will see the other’s actions as a threat: Russia will see the EU as an “orange” challenge to its internal undemocratic system, whilst the EU will see Russia as a threat to its energy security, democracy promotion and enlargement plans. This naturally leads to a policy of damage limitation on both sides. However, both sides also have to show tolerance and restraint. Moscow has to be tolerated by Brussels for the sake of energy supplies (especially as the North Sea deposits are almost exhausted, the Middle East is becoming increasingly volatile, and Caspian reserves turn out to be overvalued) and global security (WMD, terrorism). Brussels has to be tolerated by Moscow for the sake of energy demand, issues of joint neighbourhood, and, in general, because Brussels is a gateway to the West. Mutual irritation and damage limitation, combined with forced toleration and the need to avoid major crises, leads to the phenomenon of an “enforced partnership” between Russia and the EU<sup>38</sup>, heavy on rhetoric but light on implementation.

Looking beyond 2008—2009, change will not come easily. The problem is not of a passing nature, and is not only connected with Russia’s authoritarian drift during Putin’s second term, or with the EU’s current travails of enlargement and constitutional reform. Nor does the problem lie in the poor quality of EU-Russian relations, which could be corrected by some good policies and

<sup>38</sup> *Herd G.P.* Russia and the EU // Through the paper curtain / J. Smith, C. Jenkins (eds.). RIIA, 2003.

proper documents. Once again, the real issue is the systemic incompatibility of the EU and Russia, which undergo different cycles in the evolution of their spatial governance<sup>39</sup>, display contrasting reactions to globalisation and engage in modern rituals of othering.

## **A Recommendation: Going beyond modern scripts**

### ***Revoke the rituals of othering***

A more positive outlook for the EU-Russia partnership requires a mental change on both sides. The Russian elite needs a less isolationist and securitised imagination of the outside world, getting rid of various conspiracy theories and fears of the “orange revolution” coming from the West. In this sense, rather than policies of fear and damage limitation, Russia should be looking for ways to accept the European Other, and for institutionalised forms of cooperation.

The EU, too, will have to do its homework. In particular, the mechanisms of foreign policy-making will have to be detached from the ideology of integration, and from the practice of offering weak derivatives of enlargement as a substitute for a strategy for external relations. Like Russia, the EU foreign policy machine needs to be de-bureaucratized and given a bold political vision, based on Europe’s interests, not on “European values”, defined in terms of civilisation.

The magnitude of change seems all the greater since it involves mechanisms of identity formation. By the mid-2000s, after the accession of the (largely Rus-sophobic) East European nations to the EU and after the “coloured revolutions” in the post-Soviet space, the EU and Russia have returned to the opposing positions of constitutive Others in their respective identity projects. Russia’s new Great Power identity is increasingly formed in opposition to the West (e.g. the official state holiday, the National Unity Day, is now 4 November, the day the Poles were expelled from Moscow in 1612, and this holiday has a decidedly anti-Western sound). For Europeans, too, discourses othering Russia are evoked at every opportunity, be it World War Two Victory celebrations in Russia in 2005, the 2006 G8 summit in St. Petersburg, or the Litvinenko poisoning affair later

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<sup>39</sup> According to Makarychev, “Both Russia and the EU are entities in a state of flux. In Vladimir Kaganski’s analysis, Russia herself is an example of unformed space, which needs to be reassembled. Though in a different sense, the EU is far from being based upon a well established spatial structure of governance. Therefore, one may wonder whether the two entities in transition are in a position to constitute a durable set of spatial arrangements.” (*Makarychev A. The four spaces and the four freedoms. P. 43.*)

the same year. In this sense, any realistic prospect of an EU-Russian partnership needs a change in identity patterns.

### ***Work beyond the Moscow-Brussels framework***

Considering that stagnation in EU-Russian relations will prevail in the short run and that partnership is not likely to occur without systemic political and psychological change in both the EU and Russia, the obvious policy advice is to avoid the structures and rhetoric of partnership, or, indeed, any permanent arrangement, or legally binding framework, for EU-Russian relations. One needs to lower expectations in order to avoid disappointment.

In fact, the question may arise whether the entire complex of interactions between Russia and the European countries is bound by EU-Russian relations, or, indeed, by the heavily bureaucratized dialogue between Moscow and Brussels. EU-Russian relations are too important (one could say existential) to be left to the bureaucracies on either side. Other avenues of dialogue exist, first of all the traditional web of bilateral relationships: Russia-Germany, Russia-France, Russia-Italy, Russia-Finland. Fears that these relationships might ruin a “common” EU approach are groundless since there is no common approach to begin with.

Likewise, dormant regional initiatives, like the EU’s Northern Dimension, as well as the non-EU CBSS and the Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation could become useful interfaces for engaging regions, local communities and groups of people across borders. So far, these initiatives have been under-resourced on both sides, but, given the overall loose EU-Russia institutional framework, they should be given a second chance.

### ***Out-of-the box thinking: Problematising “sovereignty” and “Europeanisation”***

The tool kit of EU-Russian relations is clearly not adequate for overcoming the stalemate. Apart from the bilateral and regional diplomacy, some innovative “out-of-the-box” thinking is needed to jump-start the relationship from its current stasis. This may seem far-fetched, idealistic and politically suicidal for the incumbents, but at some point one has to question the fundamentals which underlie the policy thinking in Moscow and Brussels, namely, “sovereignty” for Russia and “Europeanisation” for the EU.

For Russia, problematising its cherished “sovereignty” (defined in strictly security terms) could mean the abolition of visa requirements for EU citizens, the “unilateral visa disarmament”<sup>40</sup>. This could have a groundbreaking effect on EU-Russian relations, and Brussels will feel obliged to reciprocate, significant-

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<sup>40</sup> *Skidelsky R., Erochkin P. Unilateral visa disarmament // The Moscow Times. 28 May 2003.*

ly simplifying the Schengen visa regime for Russian citizens, with a view to abolishing visas altogether.

By the same token, Russia and the EU could experiment with the establishment of “pilot regions” along the common border, which could become test grounds for the adaptation of EU legislation and for visa-free exchanges. The first of such regions could be Kaliningrad. The idea of the Kaliningrad enclave assuming the status of an “overseas territory” of Russia was briefly entertained in early 2005, but dumped by the Kremlin, which feared the loss of sovereignty it would entail, and by Brussels, which was unwilling to grant Russia any kind of “exceptionality”. Still, the idea of a voluntary adaptation by parts of Russia of some of the EU *acquis*, not because of pressure from Brussels but for purely pragmatic reasons, merits consideration<sup>41</sup>.

As for the EU, the key problem in its relations with Russia is the “sacred cow” of Europeanisation that “offers Russia the option, either of being imperialised within its [Europe’s] folds, or, alternatively, remaining marginalised on the periphery of Europe”<sup>42</sup>. Whether authoritarian or democratic, Russia will never feel comfortable as the subject of a “civilising”, “educational” discourse. In this sense, “Europeanisation” can hardly become a solid foundation for an equal relationship.

By the same token, Russia’s “exceptionality” cannot be a good foundation for EU-Russian relations either, since it will rest on the implicit acceptance of the hegemonic European “norm” within which Russia will not be accepted, but tolerated.

This brings us back to the question of globalisation. In adapting to its risks and challenges, Russia and Europe default into traditional modernist discourses. For Russia, the return to “sovereignty” in the 2000s means falling back on the modern origins of Russian statehood of the past five centuries, formed in opposition to the West<sup>43</sup>. Meanwhile, for the EU, “Europeanisation” may sound post-modern but in practice means a retreat to an essentially modern teleology of progress and to a colonialist interpretation of Westernness as goodness. In questioning “sovereignty” and “Europeanisation,” Russia and Europe will have to go beyond their modern thinking and the rituals of othering and try to accept the Other as a given, rather than something to be opposed or transformed. The result could be Euro-pluralism, a new discursive foundation for a durable EU-Russian partnership.

<sup>41</sup> The Kaliningrad Partnership in EU-Russian Relations / Ch. Pursiainen, S. Medvedev (eds.). M.: RECEP, 2005.

<sup>42</sup> *Browning C.S.* P. 45.

<sup>43</sup> *Poe M.* The Russian Moment in World History. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

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**Медведев С.** Кризис в отношениях России и ЕС: между «суверенитетом» и «европеизацией». Препринт WP14/2007/02. – М.: ГУ ВШЭ, 2007. – 24 с.

В работе исследуются дискурсивные аспекты кризиса в отношениях России и Европейского союза. Проблема заключается в различных прочтениях концепции суверенитета Москвой и Брюсселем. Кремль склонен к “вестфальской” интерпретации государственности, используя теорию “суверенной демократии” и стратегию бюрократической централизации. ЕС придерживается стратегии “европеизации”, предусматривающей трансформацию государств и пространств вдоль своих внешних границ по собственному образу и подобию.

Проводится деконструкция понятия “европеизация” и ставится под сомнение традиционная интерпретация политики ЕС как постмодернистского актора. Напротив, выдвигается предположение, что внешняя политика ЕС основана на сугубо модернистской стратегии “бюрократического империализма”, которая коренится в традиционном взгляде на Запад как на благо. Столкновение двух модернистских бюрократических проектов – российской бюрократической централизации и брюссельского бюрократического империализма – составляет основу нынешнего кризиса в отношениях России и ЕС.

Sergei Medvedev

## **The Crisis in EU-Russian Relations: Between “Sovereignty” and “Europeanization”**

Выпускающий редактор *А.В. Заиченко*

Технический редактор *Ю.Н. Петрина*

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