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**THE EU
AS A MODEL OF SOFT POWER
IN THE
EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD**



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THE EUROPEAN UNION VS. BRICS OR WORKING TOGETHER? A CHALLENGE FOR RUSSIA

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Abstract: A few years ago everybody knew nothing about BRICS. It was just an abbreviation¹. Now BRICS is playing more and more significant role in international affairs². There is no doubt that in a few years it will become one of the most powerful global players³. In all fields: economic, political, crisis resolution, innovations. For all of us it is very important to create conditions for a better stable prosperous and fair world. How shall we act? Thinking about the past? Lusting to what is gone, basing our calculations only on what we have today or taking into consideration all new elements of today and future developments? These are political and philosophical challenges not only to Russia that considers itself as a natural bridge between the European Union and BRICS, but to the EU and BRICS as well. Positive answers to these questions constitute the core of this article.

Keywords: European Union, Russia, BRICS, cooperation, competition

1. EUROPEAN UNION ON THE CROSSROAD

The EU is the biggest world economy. It is a wonderful normative power. The achievements of the EU are great and numerous⁴. It succeeded in creating a

¹ In Goldman Sachs' report in 2001 "Building Better Global economic BRICs", Jim O'Neill coined the acronym BRIC for the first time by saying that Brazil, Russia, India and China could become major economies by 2030.

² First BRIC summit was held at Yekaterinburg, Russia in 2009, 2nd - at Brasilia, Brazil in 2010, 3rd - at Sanya, China in 2011, 4th - at New Delhi, India in 2012 and 5th - at Durban, South Africa on March 26-27, 2013. The latest completed the first cycle of BRICS' summits.

³ BRICS: l'arrivée d'un nouvel acteur à l'échelle mondiale. L'intervention au Séminaire de travail du Comité National pour l'étude de BRICS «Le quatrième sommet de BRICS (de 28 au 29 mars 2012, New Delhi, Inde) et son bilan pour la Russie», l'Université d'Etat Lomonossov, le 19 avril 2012, Alleuropa.ru, No. 7-8(68), 2012, <http://www.alleuropa.ru/brics-l-arrivee-d-un-nouvel-acteur-a-l-echelle-mondiale>.

⁴ For their assessment by Russian Scientists see European Union as a leading international player, «Вестник международных организаций: образование, наука, новая экономика»

framework to overcome past quarrels and hatred between European nations. It established lasting peace on the territory previously devastated by endless wars. The EU created a space of security and stability. No other nations have it at their disposal. It gave people prosperity, wealth and high quality of life. It helped to introduce into world affairs such important new topics as sustainable development, ecology and fight against impunity. It made large contributions to the development.

But nowadays there is a tendency to forget about it. The reason is very simple: the EU is in a very bad shape⁵. It cannot get out of economic, financial and debt crisis. Its economy is stagnant. Social tensions increase everywhere. Prospects are grim. All that is more than obvious. It's everybody knowledge. But fewer realize that the crisis is even deeper. Economic crisis is in train of transforming itself into a political one. Traditional division between East and West is replaced by the division between North and South. Such wonderful instruments like euro and European institutions, monetary union and fiscal union are damaging the Mediterranean countries' economies and create an illusion that they are profitable only to the northern block of the European Union⁶.

The EU is a robust supranational community. It is likely to overcome current troubles. The creation of fiscal and bank unions, the tailoring of new financial tools, upgrading of the institutional system will help the EU not only to overcome the current crisis, but to make 28 member-states much more united. If it is the case, in the long run the EU will become more efficient, powerful and influential⁷.

Only at this stage of the EU development serious doubts subsist that there is enough political will to implement elaborated remedies, undertaken measures could restore economic growth and individual countries succeed in countering populism, extremism and nationalism. The matter is that a too long economic crisis

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⁵ Kauffmann S. (2013) La grande panne. L'euroscpticisme fait rage a travers l'Union. Comment relancer la machine? *Le Monde*, 25 avril 2013., P. I; Leonard M., Torreblanca J. (2013) (European Council on Foreign Relations) Le choc des democraties. *Le Monde*, 25 avril 2013., p. III.

⁶ William Pfaff (2013). Europe in Crisis II. German abandonment of the euro is now a serious possibility. The single currency experiment is failing // *International Herald Tribune. The Global Edition of the New York Times*, April 18, 2013. P. 6; Marcel Fratzscher (2013). Scapegoating the Germans is tempting but wrong // *Financial Times*, April 11, 2013. P. 9.

⁷ "But only if Europe does manage to move towards greater integration", - President of the Economic Council to Germany's centre-right CDU party writes. - Lauk K. All the options for saving eurozone have a price tag, *Europe's Newsletter*, April 25, 2013. http://www.europeworld.org/NewEnglish/Home_old/Article/tabid/191/ArticleType/articleview/ArticleID/22081/language/en-US/Default.aspx

and evasive response to it had at least three negative consequences. The EU has fewer resources to conserve or update existing social economic model of development, its world competitiveness decreases and there is an erosion of its soft power⁸.

Some neighboring countries have no choice than to aspire to the EU membership. But other world players consider the EU experience to be less and less positive. They have doubts about the EU ability to achieve announced aims. They see that old debts produce new ones. Society is devastated by unbelievable joblessness. Tolerance and solidarity appear to be not more than a myth. Poverty and social deprivation reappear everywhere.

Even more, they are afraid that European countries are ready to violate international law and the rules of the game they have established by themselves. They are of the opinion that the EU and its member-states may follow the path to adventured and unbalanced foreign policy. They remember too well that in the past the European countries started wars of different kinds to resolve their internal problems and relinquish the burden of these problems on the shoulders of other nations.

It means that the others do not trust the EU, the way they used to through the 80-90th of the XX century. They do not trust its internal policies of social and interstate solidarity. They do not trust the member states model of social and economic development. They do not trust the EU foreign policy. But trust was the key factor of the Union attractiveness, power and influence. The EU critically needs to restore it.

To do that the EU and its member states must envisage an opportunity of following much more realistic internal and external policies, opening internal markets for external competition and turning towards partnership and cooperation with other nations. There is nothing new in such an approach. It was an essential feature of the European project during all the Cold war years. The EU tried to lead by positive examples, involving everybody in elaborating essential pieces of contemporary international law. Unilateral actions, even when they are explained by political necessities lead to nowhere. Only universal agreements and understandings create conditions for meeting challenges of today world and establishing fair, balanced and much more equal world economy.

From such a new-old approach will benefit people of the EU and BRICS countries. All of them are ready and willing to play in accordance with the existing rules of the game. They aspire for the predominance of law in international affairs. For them international stability, peace and cooperation are of tremendous importance. Only if stability, peace and cooperation are in place may they achieve

⁸ Thorough analysis of all these consequences from Russian perspective may be found in *Alleuropa.ru*, No. 1(73), 2013. Editorial, <http://www.alleuropa.ru/vishel-73-y-nomer-zhurnala-vsya-evropa>

their aims of creating in their respective countries modern socially oriented and efficient societies for everybody.

2. BRICS

Politicians, experts and journalist from the EU do not believe in BRICS⁹. They remember that only few years ago it was just an acronym and not more than that. They are of the opinion that BRICS has no future because it comprises too different countries, promoting opposite interests¹⁰. They created a myth that internal problems of BRICS countries are tremendously deep and it will take them years and years to catch up with the developed nations. They try to persuade each other that there is a need to disrupt BRICS, to rule as previously - oppressing and dividing. They wrongly consider that it is feasible. And they do not realize that all these clichés belong to the past or are phantoms of their imagination.

True, BRICS is one of the most representative international entities. It comprises leaders among countries of major continents. BRICS accounts for over 40% of the world's population, 18% of its market-exchange GDP (about 27% in purchasing-power parity), 15% of world trade and two-fifths of its foreign currency reserves. It is a wonderful example of unity in diversity. The most old and sophisticated cultures are represented in and by this international entity. It is an example at the same time of friendly coexistence of different political systems and traditions.

BRICS is one of the most dynamic economic groupings. Its rates of economic growth are significantly higher than those of the EU and its state-members. Since 2000, BRICS have contributed about one-half the increase in global output. Last year BRICS countries made 60% contribution to the world growth. They served as a new locomotive for world development instead of developed nations stagnant economies. Their successes in peaceful transformation, industrialization, urbanization, modernization are well known. Of course the major part of these achievements is due to China, but other four are following its path. They are nearly as dynamic as this third biggest world economy (after the EU and the USA).

BRICS sticks to a very proud and noble vision of interstate relations. It has no intention and never imposes its vision on other nations. It has no hegemonic intentions. It supports the UN and other universal and multilateral forums. It withstands against interference in internal affairs of sovereign nations and

⁹ For arguments and counterarguments see Post-BRICS Reality // Alleuropa.ru, No. 2(63), 2012, <http://www.alleuropa.ru/post-brics-reality-1>

¹⁰ Nye J. (2013) (Harvard University) BRICS without Mortar // Project-syndicate, April 3, 2013; Nye J. Incompatibility Hinders BRICS Bloc // Taipei Times, April 8, 2013. http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/22966/incompatibility_hinders_brics_bloc.html

temptations to solve regional conflicts by military or other coercive means. For its participants true international cooperation constitutes the corn stone of contemporary and future world order which they would like to make more stable, equal, fair and predictable.

BRICS is a fast evolving entity. It is entirely informal. It has no bureaucratic structures. Its mission is to respond to the aspirations of its participants. That's why each year, each month new frames of cooperation appear. New dialogues are launched. Among them there are those of ministers (or other responsible representatives) of finance, security, justice, economic development, culture, education, sciences, and etc. During the South Africa recent summit academic and business councils were established. The creation of large international bank for development and a foundation to provide massive financial aid are under consideration.

BRICS world influence grows from one meeting to another. It is doomed to increase in future as well. Its participants manage to overcome their differences and to take common positions. Each of them brings to the common agenda issues that are of particular interest to them, transforming these issues into those of everybody's concern. Examples are numerous. In the framework of the South Africa summit they expressed their joint position on climate change, agreed to promote sustainable development, extended support to the Russian Federation leadership in the G20. At the same time there are issues they pay more attention than to any others. One of them is a reform of the IMF and adjustment of the world financial system.

3. TWO SCENARIOS OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EU AND BRICS

In a number of analytical reports produced by national and international think tanks upon request of different governments and supranational structures a wide range of such scenarios are advanced and analyzed. In reality there are only two worth considering: that of competition and another one of cooperation. We exclude those of confrontation or of integration as entirely improbable taking into consideration nowadays international context.

Let's start their presentation by considering the main features of the first of them. According to it, the relationship between the EU and BRICS evolves as a competition in all spheres of the state, business and society activities and development. They compete for resources trying to acquire exclusive access to them and their ownership worldwide. They construe their export and import trade policies to promote in a unilateral way their national and group interests to the detriment of others. They struggle for influence or even dominance everywhere in Asia, Africa and Latin America and beyond as well as in world forums and international organizations. They try to rebuild the existing world order following

their vision of what is feasible and better for them and only them. And they promote their model of economic, social, political and cultural development as only one that is viable and successful.

This competition as we see is multifaceted. It is likely to take any kind of forms and be dependent essentially on specific features related to this or that type of activity. The competition may be very fierce or less, accompanied with violation of international law rules, previous engagements and commitments or not. But for the appraisal of such a scenario all these details do not matter so much.

There are only two parameters which are of tremendous importance. Only they must forge our opinion. To make our final judgment we may rely entirely upon them. They are as follows. First of all we need to be frank to ourselves and to answer fairly to each other whether such a relationship is for the common good and is able to serve individual and group interests in a proper way. Secondly we must understand if the level of probability that the scenario we discuss become reality is high or low.

It seems that there is no need to make elaborate calculations to get an answer to the first question. It is obvious that all azimuth competition between the EU and BRICS will be detrimental to any kind of progress in the world developments. A waste of time, force and resources deviated to unworthy purposes will be enormous. Achievement of agreements and solutions to increasing number of local, regional and global problems will become much more difficult and problematic. Trust and a culture of mutual concessions will disappear from international relations. Our Earth will be transformed in a place where it is less and less comfortable to live.

It may appear that an answer to the second question is not as obvious as for the first one, but it is not the case. Let's not dupe ourselves. Of course the probability that the competition scenario will become a fact of our life is very high. Even now some of its elements could be deducted here and there¹¹. In such prestigious newspapers as Financial Times, International Herald Tribune, Le Monde and etc. these elements are thoroughly described in a large number of articles. A lot of attention in them is paid to the monetary war between the EU, USA, China and Japan; the USA and the EU trying to preserve free market access to resources and China and Russia seeking to rely on long-lasting 30 to 40 years contracts; controversies between BRICS and Western countries over the USA and the EU colonial type interventions in Iraq, Libya, Syria and many other places to impose democracy and the rule of law.

¹¹ Parteneriado entre Rusia y la EU para la modernizacion y colaboracion bilateral con sus Estados-miembros (2012) / Rusia y Espana en el mundo multipolar. Moscow, 2012 or Alleuropa.ru, No. 12(61), 2011, <http://www.alleuropa.ru/parteneriado-entre-rusia-y-la-ue-para-la-modernizacion-y-colaboracion-bilateral-con-sus-estados-miembros-1>

Let's now proceed with analysis of the second scenario. According to it, the EU and BRICS behave like real partners, in deeds and not only in words. They consider themselves as belonging to one and the same system of entities which means that when wrong doings are committed to one of them they are committed to everybody, and if something is profitable to one of them it brings added value to both. It is a kind of collective security and prosperity system. In practical terms it means that they work hand in hand to achieve growth and development everywhere and to fight common enemies including terrorism, separatism, organized crime, drug traffic, dirty money and etc. They do their best to agree on common international rules, their identical understanding and implementation. Different mechanisms of international disputes smooth and fair settlement are enhanced and honored.

Is it for the benefit of all countries, all nations, and all regions of the world? Is it in compliance with the bravest expectations of intellectuals and common people? Is it what all of us could support with both hands? The answer is "yes".

The problem is that nobody believes that all these ideas would become truth one day. There are no signs at all for believing that such kind of scenario may prevail. As far as declarations of good intentions are concerned, wonderful words about cooperation, partnership, strategic partnership, special relations and so on their number is enormous, but they are not more than words. And in the world of politics only deeds count.

Summing up we may say that partnership scenario is good and competition scenario is bad, that we need one partnership and not the other. But the fact is that the competition scenario is much more realistic. It is a pity, it is a tragedy, but it is like that.

If it is the case and we have no proofs that it can be otherwise than the conclusion and at the same time an advice to politicians of all the countries and groups of countries involved should be as follows. Please put an end to the policies you are implementing now – they have no future. They are detrimental to everything we believe in. Do your utmost to change the existing pattern of international relations. Try to act as if the partnership scenario is feasible. There is no other way. It is the only one that will lead to peace, security and prosperity.

4. RUSSIA AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE EU AND BRICS

Russia is a key world player who may promote the partnership scenario. The scenario corresponds to the interests of the Russian people. Russia is in a position to serve as a facilitator of this scenario. It may serve as a viable bridge between the EU and BRICS.

Unfortunately, the EU does not trust Russia. But there are no reasons for that. The EU talked itself in blaming Russia for disregarding common European

values. The reality is quite different. The EU and Russia had common history. They are of the same culture and religion. They are very close to each other. They have the same dreams and beliefs. They must be together. The moment the EU overcomes its internal difficulties and acknowledges that Russia is not the Soviet Union, everything could change.

Russia invented BRICS. When E. Primakov was the head of the Russian government he explained to the West that the lack of confidence in Russia pushes it to create an alternative to the western dominance. Russia made a proposal to China and India to establish a new framework for cooperation. Russia is a magnet that brings together all the other BRICS members. Russia helps them overcome internal disputes and controversies.

Russia is very special. It belongs at the same time to the West and to the East. This country experienced everything you can imagine. Revolutions and counter-revolutions, ups and down of enormous magnitude, from being one of the superpowers to an entirely unsustainable entity. And back to one of the most influential world players.

Let's agree that we need to make our outmost to follow the partnership scénario. Let's agree that we may succeed. Than the best way to act in this direction is to use the unique position of Russia and invite it to bring together the EU and BRICS.

CONCLUSION: COMMON EU AND BRICS AGENDA

Nowadays Russia leads G20. Next years it will lead other key international forum. It has influence and know-how to convene an EU-BRICS summit as an unavoidable and the most effective tool to change outdated attitudes and to start creating an entirely new relationship between these two entities.

Different national and international think tanks made studies suggesting a tentative agenda for this summit that may take place somewhere in 2014 or 2015. Such an agenda must be well prepared and thoroughly discussed to persuade everybody that from the very beginning leaders of the EU and BRICS achieve exceptional results. But some topics are unavoidable.

The EU and BRICS must unite their efforts in preventing food and energy crisis, in promoting development targets and combatting poverty. They achieved these aims for themselves. They are in a position to do the same for the benefit of the mankind as a whole.

The EU and BRICS must create a common front to fight terrorism, separatism, organized crime and etc. It is a precondition of a success. If these two entities agree to overcome their differences, to have the same approaches towards what is to be done and in what way, havens of impunity will disappear and they will prevail without difficulties over common enemies.

One of the explanations why so many international conflicts persist is that conflicting parties have political, financial and military support from abroad. Without such a support it would have been much easier to find solutions and to work for lasting peace. Even if first elements of the partnership scenario start to appear an unprecedented pressure could be exerted on all conflicting parties to stop hostilities and to agree on terms of reconciliation. Let's try. It's the best way to proceed.

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