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EU AND RUSSIA: CURRENT PROBLEMS AND FUTURE SCENARIO. CZECH PERSPECTIVE

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New Direction



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FOREWORD JAN ZAHRADIL'S

When at the end of February 2014 Russian troops took control of the Crimean peninsula, the whole western world was left in shock. It wasn't the first time that Russia had used its military offensively against another sovereign state - in 2008 the Kremlin ordered the invasion of the Republic of Georgia in the Caucasus.

2014 was the first time that Russia had taken hostile action against a country that shares a direct land border with the European Union. Surprise at this was not the right reaction. Tensions have been high between the EU and Russia for a long time. And the current tensions between the EU and Russia did not appear from nowhere. The roots lie deeper in the past.

In the nineties, Europe was in upheaval. Germany was undergoing a process of reunification. Central and Eastern European countries were preparing themselves to face a life after communism. And the EU was preparing to welcome them into the European project as free and independent democracies. European politicians were so occupied with these new realities that Russia disappeared from the agenda. They took for granted the idea that a Russia without Communism and without the Soviet Union would automatically become a liberal democracy. They were so focused on themselves that they failed to notice Russia slip back into her old autocratic ways. By New Years Eve 1999, President Putin had taken control. Western politicians who never felt the need to engage with Russia or try to understand it, suddenly woke up, facing a new power in the east whose position was less than friendly.

Make no mistake: Russia is not an economic giant. It has yet to recover from its post-soviet slump. The GDP of the world's largest nation is not even comparable to that of Italy or other European states. And yet even

with limited resources, Russia is able to project itself on the world stage as a superpower. It achieves this in two ways. Firstly by maintaining a strong military and secondly by unifying its people behind the myth of an external enemy out to get them.

Europe has not yet figured out how to respond to this. With the awakening of an ambitious neighbor in the east, the west faces a question of how to deal with an evolving threat from a resurgent Russia.

As western democracies we believe in soft power and leading by example, whilst Russia resorts to a more conventional kind of diplomacy: using threats of force, divide and rule tactics, and economic pressure and extortion. Whilst we believe that NATO is a defence alliance to keep us safe, Russia perceives it as an imminent threat. Whilst we see an opportunity to open up to our friendly neighbours, Russia sees us moving in on their territory.

We will never move on in our relationship without understanding Russia in a realist framework. Until we realize that any concessions or gestures of good will from our side are seen by Kremlin as signs of weakness, we will not have any success in dealing with Russia. Until we learn to understand Russia's modern history, its interests and motivations, we will never be able to face Russia as an equal counterpart.

Jan Zahradil, MEP
President of the Alliance of Conservatives
and Reformists in Europe

INTRODUCTION

EU policy towards Russia and EU-Russia relations in general belong to the most important problems within the broader topic of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. In recent years, especially after the sharp deterioration of the mutual relations in 2014 brought about by the events in Ukraine, there has been a growing number of both analytical and academic works trying to find the answers to questions on the current state of the EU-Russia relations, their most serious challenges, and their possible future development.¹

When we think about the EU and Russia, we often come across several fundamental questions: Should the current situation be understood in the realist perspective as a clash of interests and ambitions of both actors in the “common neighbourhood”? Or is it rather a result of two different and incommensurable worldviews, two different ways of thinking about politics and international relations as such? Are the efforts to establish stable long-term relations between both actors, which we could have observed since the second half of the 1990s, simply unfeasible? What have been the key causes of problems in the EU-Russia relations and what are the main reasons for their current state? The clashes of interests in the EU’s eastern neighbourhood and the former post-soviet area? The nature of political regime in Putin’s

Russia combined with the EU’s ambitions to work as a normative and transformative power which inevitably leads to intervening in inner matters of sovereign states? The energy issues which offer both the potential for cooperation but also the potential for disputes? Is there still any room for cooperation or even partnership between the EU and Russia at all? And what may be the lowest denominator for such a cooperation? What possibilities and instruments does the EU possess now, in the post-Lisbon era, to deal with such a complicated actor as the Russian Federation has proved to be?

This text presents a policy study which is focused primarily on recent history and current state of the EU-Russia relations and their most important problems. I see Russia and the EU as specific actors in the international system. They both have special characteristics which must be considered if we try to understand the main features of their mutual relations as well as possible causes of frequent misunderstandings between them. After all, these misunderstandings have existed between EU and Russia for more than 25 years since the establishment of the Russian Federation as an independent state (1991) and since the foundation of the European Union after The Maastricht Treaty came into force (1993). In case of Russia, they especially include the complicated and often ambivalent history of its relations to “Europe” (or “the West”) and also numerous problems of the political transformation of the former communist regime into the current political regime with attributes typical for authoritarian regimes (e.g. according to the classical Linz and

¹ It is possible to name such works as e.g. Orenstein and Kelemen 2017; Sjursen and Rosén 2017; Rieker and Gjerde 2016 etc. Some existing publications are worth mentioning, like *EU-Russian Relations and the Ukraine Crisis* (Smith 2016); *Beyond Ukraine. EU and Russia in Search of a New Relation* (Ferrari, ed. 2015) or *European Relations with Russia. Threat Perceptions, Responses and Strategies in the Wake of the Ukrainian Crisis* (RAND Corporation 2017).

Stepan's typology).² When we analyse Russian foreign policy and its modern history, we must also remember its situation right after the end of the Cold War. Although Russia is one of the key international actors today, when the Russian Federation was born as an independent state after the dissolution of the USSR, the situation was completely different. It was searching for its new role as an international and regional actor, for a new quality of relations both to "the West" ("Europe") and to the former parts of the Soviet imperium. The evidence that this often painful and disputable process has not been satisfactorily finished yet manifests itself in recent events and in general political and security situation in Eastern Europe.

On the other hand, in case of the EU, we have to consider the particular character of this entity which is neither a "classical" international intergovernmental organisation, nor a centralised state, although some authors say it already bears some characteristics of federalism, confederalism, or consociationalism.³ Moreover, it is necessary to bear in mind that while the EU as an organisation is based on pooling of sovereignty of its members, the Common Foreign and Security Policy and especially the Common Security and Defence Policy still have a specific position among the EU policies. Even now, more than 25 years after the establishment of the European Union, the CFSP has preserved its specific, rather intergovernmental nature (most importantly regarding unanimity as the prevailing decision-making principle but also concerning the engagement of EU institutions into the policy-making process in security and defence). These characteristics have even withstood the reforms and changes brought about by the Lisbon Treaty. This study bases the identification and analysis of the key problems in the current relations between the EU and Russia on the premise of the role and importance of coherence in the EU foreign policy.⁴ This also covers searching for available instruments which the EU may use to solve the present issues (or at least to cope with them). Persisting shortcomings in the dimensions of the so-called vertical, horizontal, and institutional coherence (despite the Lisbon reform) can be identified as important elements which

are also reflected in recent history and in the current state of the EU policy towards Russia.

Together with the description of both Russia and the EU as international actors and after a summary of the history of their mutual relations, the study will focus on the key problems of today. These are present and very acute but all of them have roots in history, be it the distant or the recent one. Through this prism which puts emphasis on the three dimensions of coherence (vertical, horizontal, and institutional) in the EU foreign policy, the study will explore the instruments and processes which are at the EU's disposal in the situation of the Lisbon Treaty being the current fundament of the primary law. It will try to assess their usage in various situations and suggest potential further proceedings for the EU as an actor facing Russia in the short-term, mid-term, and long-term perspective.

The main aims of the study thus include:

- *The description of characteristics of Russia and the EU as specific international actors,*
- *The identification and analysis of the main problems which have existed in their mutual relations and which are also based on their specific features as international actors,*
- *The identification of the instruments, mechanisms, and processes which are currently available for the EU in foreign relations,*
- *The evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the instruments which are currently used or could be potentially used to solve the problems and to react to challenges in the EU-Russia relations,*
- *The suggestion of possible solutions concerning further proceedings and actions of the EU in the short-term, mid-term, and long-term perspective.*

The structure of the study thus follows the above-mentioned main aims: First, The Russian Federation and the European Union will be characterised as specific actors of the international relations, the historical context of their mutual relations along with some key historical moments and events will be briefly introduced. The most important current problems of mutual relations will be named and their nature and background will be explained with references to the above-mentioned specifics of both Russia and the EU as actors. The final part of

² Linz and Stepan 1996

³ E.g. McCormick 1996: 11-12

⁴ For more literature which speaks about the concept of coherence in the EU external policy, see e.g. Gebhard 2017: 123-142; Koehler 2010; Allen 2004; Duke 2012; Smith 2001; Gauttier 2004 etc.

BOX 1**Vertical coherence**

- the ability to achieve a consensus and/or common position on the EU level and the ability to achieve compliance and compatibility of specific national policies and member states' positions in respect of this consensus.
- It is connected very much with the problems of solidarity within the EU, good and regular exchange, and sharing information among member states on the EU level.

Horizontal coherence

- It relates to the problem of the inter-institutional coherence, coordination, and communication, as different areas of the EU external policy are in competence of different institutions.
- It has very much to do with the coordination and concertation between intergovernmental and supranational spheres of the EU external action, e.g. in the CSDP missions. While CSDP is a typical intergovernmental policy, including the decision-making mechanisms, the CSDP missions are often launched in areas where the EU's developmental activities and other external activities are governed on supranational principles. In such cases, a coherent external action is also a matter of good communication, coordination, and cooperation of intergovernmental institutional structures (like the Council), supranational institutions (Commission and its agencies), and structures which are supposed to overbridge the intergovernmental and supranational level (typically the EEAS).
- In case of the horizontal coherence, the inter-institutional coordination should lead to a formulation of a coherent external policy strategy in concrete cases (e.g. in the case of the EU long-term strategy towards Russia), despite sometimes contradictory short-term goals areas of the EU external action.

(Intra-)institutional coherence

- While the problem of the horizontal coherence concerns the objectives, aims, and content of the policies, the internal (or intra-) institutional coherence is a matter connected with technical, administrative, and procedural coordination among various institutional and bureaucratic structures responsible for decision-making and policy-making in different areas of the EU external action.
- Most institutional reforms introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in the CFSP and CSDP areas were motivated by the aim to enhance the coherence and coordination in this procedural sphere. There are different opinions concerning the efficiency of these reforms in this respect.

Source: Gebhard 2017: 128-131

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

the study will be devoted to the presentation of the instruments, mechanisms, and possibilities which may be used by the EU in the context of the primary law currently in force and the institutional structure in the CFSP area. Possible solutions will be evaluated from the perspective of applicability, their strengths and weaknesses, and realistic possibilities (if we consider present international and regional context) and the recommendations will be formulated.

The study will use data gained primarily from relevant documents (EU primary law, open-access documents

published by institutions responsible for policy-making in EU external policy areas, Russian foreign and security policy doctrines, relevant statements of the main actors of Russian foreign policy etc.), secondary literature, and media. A smaller part of data has also been gathered during interviews with insiders which I have conducted when preparing some older academic works.⁵

⁵ In that case the citation points at the particular interview with its date. The respondents wished to stay anonymous.

The study is theoretically, methodologically, and conceptually anchored in political science and international relations and therefore it does not explore in a greater detail the topics which thematically belong to other fields of study. This especially refers to the topics connected with economy, finance, and international trade, although these subjects of course do play an important role in

mutual relations of the EU and Russia. The data from these fields will be used only illustratively and will not be analysed using the methodology typical for economics as a field of study. Finally, the problems of energy security, an inevitable topic in case of EU-Russia relations, will be also approached mainly from the perspective of international relations, despite its multidisciplinary character.

RUSSIA AS AN ACTOR AND BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS

Searching for the answers to the questions mentioned in the introduction requires a basic understanding of the specific character and unique problems of both the EU and Russia as the actors of modern international relations as well as possible roots of these problems.

Understanding the Russian perspective (which does not necessarily mean accepting or even advocating it) that this specific actor uses to approach the international relations is not easy, especially from the Western European point of view. It is possible to say that the history of relations between Russia and “Europe” or “the West” constitutes a rich, most interesting, but also quite complicated story of attempts to establish cooperative or even partner relations, which is, however, also full of confrontation. Social anthropologists like Iver Neumann,¹ who often use the theoretical perspective of social constructivism, see the history of these relations as a chain of Russian efforts to establish self-identification vis-à-vis its Western counterparts, consisting of a recurring process of confrontations and rapprochements. In times of desired cooperation, Russia was often searching for inspiration and modernisation in “Europe”, especially in cultural, philosophical, and technological dimension. In times of confrontation, though, both sides frequently hit the barrier of “otherness”. This means that both entities were seen and understood as too different in the counterpart’s eyes: Russia as something “other”, “alien”, or even “inferior” in the cultural, political, economic, and technological dimension, and Europe

as a self-appointed “mentor” and critic, showing off its cultural, political, economic, and technological superiority and overlooking the Russian aspiration for equality and “real” partnership. A substantial part of this history of the mutual relations has been seen as a history of competition and confrontation of not only interests but also of ideas, identities, and stereotypes.

Of course, from the perspective of Central Europe, this de facto bi-polar prism may seem simplifying or even arrogant: neither current Europe, nor the EU can be reduced to Western Europe. Moreover, after the end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and especially after the waves of the EU Eastern enlargement, the situation is more complicated than ever. The EU is now (more than in the past) rather a patchwork comprising not only the “old” North-South division but also new cleavages that have arisen after the EU absorbed the group of former USSR satellites (which itself is not homogeneous, either). And in these countries, their cultures, and on their political scenes, we would find various modes of self-identification, both in relation to Russia and to the EU.

On the other hand, the history of the Russian self-identification in relation to “Europe” or “the West” is much older than the EU and its Eastern enlargement, and even older than the existence of USSR. The discussion on the Russian place on the map between Europe and Asia was reflected and explored as early as in the works of the classics of the Russian literature and philosophy, such as Fyodor N. Dostoevsky and

¹ Neumann 2017.

BOX 2

There have been various attempts made to categorise different ideological positions within the foreign policy debate in Russia. For example, Zimmerman saw the main cleavage between “westernisers” and “slavophiles” (i.e. those who are convinced that Russia should not copy some western models and rather should follow its unique path as concerns political and economic system as well as the area of foreign policy) and the persisting influence of this cleavage on the debate among the representatives of the political elite in the Russian Federation.

Tsygankov mentions *eurasianism* as an influential intellectual stream which was originally born at the end of the 19th and in early 20th century. Eurasianism was quite popular in the interwar period among the Russian intellectuals who emigrated before or at the beginning of the Russian Revolution. The Russian linguist and historian *Nikolai Trubetskoy*, who taught and worked in Central Europe during the inter-war period, is one of the main founders of this philosophical stream. Eurasianism usually stood in opposition to the communistic ideas of internationalism and rather followed the ideas of not only geopolitical, but also cultural-political uniqueness of Russia as a country which controls the Eurasian space and as such, it belongs neither to Europe, nor to Asia. It rather forms a specific bridge between both continents with special civilisational mission in the Eurasian area. This opinion stream thus combined some ideas of classical geopolitics (e.g. Mackinder’s Heartland theory) with ideas of some older Russian philosophers like *Nikolai Danilevsky* who has also been often included among the “slavophiles.” (Danilevsky wrote about the special character of the Russian or Slavic cultural-political heritage which is unique and different from the Western one, including its typical inclination to absolutism rather than to liberal democracy.)

Sources: Dugin 2000; Tsygankov 2003; Voráček 2004; Zimmerman 2005

EURASIANISM

Nikolai Berdyaev.² And it is not just a remote issue of history. The cleavages between the so-called “westernisers” and their opponents like neo-/slavophiles or the so-called eurasianists influenced the development of Russian political philosophy as well as modern strategic thinking in foreign and security policy after the establishment of the Russian Federation as an independent state.

At the turn of the 1990s, the relations between USSR and the rest of Europe were influenced by the overall atmosphere of the end of the Cold War. The rapid changes in the Central and Eastern Europe and the events which accompanied them had to be absorbed in the West (This includes the war in Yugoslavia, the unrest in the USSR, and its later dissolution.) They also more or less worked as a stimulus for

² In one of his most famous books, *Russian Idea*, N. Berdyaev follows various reflections of “Europe” and relation to Europe in Russian philosophy, literature, or even religious works. He reflects that Europe in the Russian literature was frequently portrayed both as an ideal and as a source of disappointment. In the past, Russia and influential Russian thinkers and authorities were oscillating between admiration, the attempts to follow the rest of Europe (often together with the desire to get rid of “backwardness” and to “modernise” the country), and the resentment, i.e. the contempt to “Western” liberalism and decadency, inclination to the protection of its “conservative” values, and even self-isolation (Berdyaev 1992).

the establishment of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. On the other side, the beginnings of the new policy of the short-lived post-Cold War USSR and the newly established Russian Federation in relation to the West have been influenced by Gorbachev’s ideas of “New Thinking” and later with liberal internationalism.³

The early 1990s are often associated with a short wave of new “westernism” and liberalism, represented by such names as the liberal economist and Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar and, to certain extent, the first Minister of Foreign Affairs of the newly established Russian Federation, Andrei Kozyrev. Their credo was to draw a line behind the Soviet past and to search for a new relationship with the West. Yet the first half of the 1990s was also a period of great instability, both in the Russian Federation and in the whole post-Soviet area. The integrity of the newly formed Russian state was endangered by separatist

³ It is possible to mention here e.g. Gorbachev’s visions of a “big Europe” or a broad area “from Vancouver to Vladivostok” where new ideological division should be avoided. The end of the Cold War was also seen as the end of the existing political-security blocks. In this perspective, the USSR/Russia was supposed to become a part of a comprehensive collective security organization born on the basis of the CSCE. See e.g. Duleba 1999; Tsygankov 2013.

tendencies in several regions, including the outbreak of violence in the Caucasus. Moreover, the attempts made to transform the collapsing economy based on central planning into a market economy in the conditions of the dissolution of the USSR as a state were accompanied by an economic recession. And hand in hand with the decreasing popularity of the “democrats” in power, extremist and populist parties were gaining momentum on Russian political scene as well as votes in parliamentary elections (especially Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s LDPR of and later the Communists). Critics of the foreign policy embodied by the president Yeltsin and foreign minister Kozyrev concentrated in the Russian parliament and focused on criticising the neglect of the Russian interests in the newly formed independent states in post-Soviet area along with presumed “excessive concessions” to the West which had led to the loss of the Russian prestige and power in international politics.

Numerous authors who tried to identify the specifics of the Russian transition of the political regime concluded that it was more accurate to see the Russian regime in the 1990s (“Yeltsin’s Russia”) as a kind of pseudo democracy or perhaps as a “hybrid regime” rather than democracy.⁴ The indicators of this sort of regime included the contrast between the formal existence of institutions and processes typical for a democratic regime (regular elections, elements of the “check and balances” principle anchored in the constitution, especially in the institutional dimension) and their actual way of working and the real role in the political system of the country (e.g. the gradual crystallisation of a party-political system with a dominant role of the “party-of power”, supporting either the president or another strong personality from the executive branch of government,⁵ a gradual crystallisation of political-oligarchic system etc.). After all, the basic contours of a political system with an undeniably strong position of the president (including president’s power to issue decrees and

4 See e.g. Diamond 2002.

5 A typical example of such “party of power” is the currently strongest Russian political movement, United Russia, connected with president Putin. But this phenomenon was born already during the 1990s: one of the earlier examples was the Choice of Russia which was active during the first half of 1990s and connected with president Yeltsin and his supporters. Another example was Our Home – Russia founded in 1995 by the Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. It was openly supported by the representatives of that time Russian ruling elites and by “oligarchs” connected to large financial institutions and energy business (like Gazprom, formerly headed by Chernomyrdin himself).

his both constitutional and real powers in naming the Prime Minister and cabinet members) began to form already during the 1990s. It is also worth to mention that this new political system was established by the constitution in 1993, after president Yeltsin’s victory over the coup organised by the opposition representatives in parliament.⁶ This armoured intervention against the mutiny has sometimes been criticised as Yeltsin’s “shelling the Parliament” and regarded as an evidence of the non-democratic basis of both the behaviour and the nature of the whole regime of the first Russian president.⁷ Specific problems of the transition which did not and probably also could not bring a liberal democratic regime of Western style overnight and rather led to the establishment of a hybrid regime with gradually strengthening elements of authoritarianism after 2000 must be also taken into account when we analyse Russia as a foreign policy actor (because of the complicated context of the dissolution of the USSR and also due to the absence of a long-term tradition of liberal and parliamentary democracy in Russia).

In the 1990s, the foreign policy was supposed to be implemented in accordance with the first Conception of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, published in 1993, to a certain extent as a reaction to the sharp opposition criticisms of the foreign policy in the early 1990s.⁸ It included the ideals of liberal internationalism on the one hand but also the concept of the “near abroad” on the other hand, defined as an area where Russia has specific political, economic, security, and cultural interests (such as the presence of Russian-speaking minorities and the tradition of close political and economic relations). For the first time, Russia defined its interests and ambitions for “special relations” with post-Soviet countries.⁹

6 Russian Supreme Soviet was later replaced by current bicameral Federal Assembly with the State Duma as the lower chamber and the Federation Council (representing the parts of the Federation) as the upper chamber.

7 See e.g. The Irish Times 2003.

8 See e.g. Light 2015; Tsygankov 2013

9 This especially evoked concerns in Baltic countries that have declared from the beginning of their independence their ambitions to integrate into Western political and economic structures, and to a certain extent also in several Central European countries which began to question where Russian “near abroad” area actually ends. On the one hand, the first Conception of the Russian foreign policy constituted an impulse for Central European and Baltic countries to strengthen their efforts to integrate into NATO and later to the EU. Moreover, post-Soviet Eastern European countries like

As for the EC/EU from the Russian perspective, the European Communities in the first half of the 1990s were naturally perceived as an economic organisation and single market area rather than a political actor. Therefore, searching for “new relations” with Europe primarily meant the efforts to build new political ties with individual (Western) European countries. On the other hand, this preference for “bilateralism” has persisted as a typical element of the Russian policy towards Europe and the EU and has become even more prominent since the second half of the 1990s when minister Kozyrev was replaced with Yevgeny Primakov, an experienced diplomat from the Soviet times. Selective building of good (or even “special”) relations with individual European countries and their representatives then remained typical of Putin’s Russia, especially during the first decade of the 21st century. From the perspective of the EU, this could have naturally been another complicating factor for the vertical coherence of the CFSP (see in 2.4).

Changes on Russian political scene brought about the replacement of liberals with the supporters of centralism and stronger position of the government and the executive (the so-called *derzhavniki* or *gosudarstvenniki*). Figures like Gaidar and Kozyrev were replaced by diplomats and politicians with experience from Soviet-time diplomacy or from strategic political-economic areas like the energy sector. In this way, Yevgeni Primakov became the second Minister of Foreign Affairs in the history of the Federation and Victor Chernomyrdin the Prime Minister. In Russian foreign policy, these changes lead to the rise of realism, accentuated geopolitics, and a certain renaissance of (neo-)eurasianism. It was demonstrated by the emphasis on a closer cooperation and re-integration in post-Soviet area; the emphasis on pragmatic and selective bilateral relations with Western European states (like Germany, France, Italy, and partially also the UK), and the emphasis on the return of Russia to the position among important poles of the multipolar post-Cold-War world. Russia was supposed to become an active subject and actor in the international system and in the European policy again, not a mere object of the system and a second category state. Building special relations with individual West European states was

Ukraine or Moldova started to play a “multivector” foreign policy, i.e. the policy of balance between new cooperation with European political, security, and economic organisations, and acceptance of Russian offers for political and economic reintegration in the post-Soviet space.

also motivated by the efforts to balance the “unipolar” tendencies in the US Foreign Policy, especially in the Balkan and Middle East, which might have found resistance from both Russia and “Europe”. The second half of the 1990s was also an era of a gradual building and overall improvement of the European security and defence policy (ESDP). The interesting thing is that from the Russian perspective at that time, it was a rather welcomed activity, a possibility to find space for potential cooperation between the EU and Russia including the security dimension (and, to some extent, to perhaps weaken the US influence in Europe).¹⁰

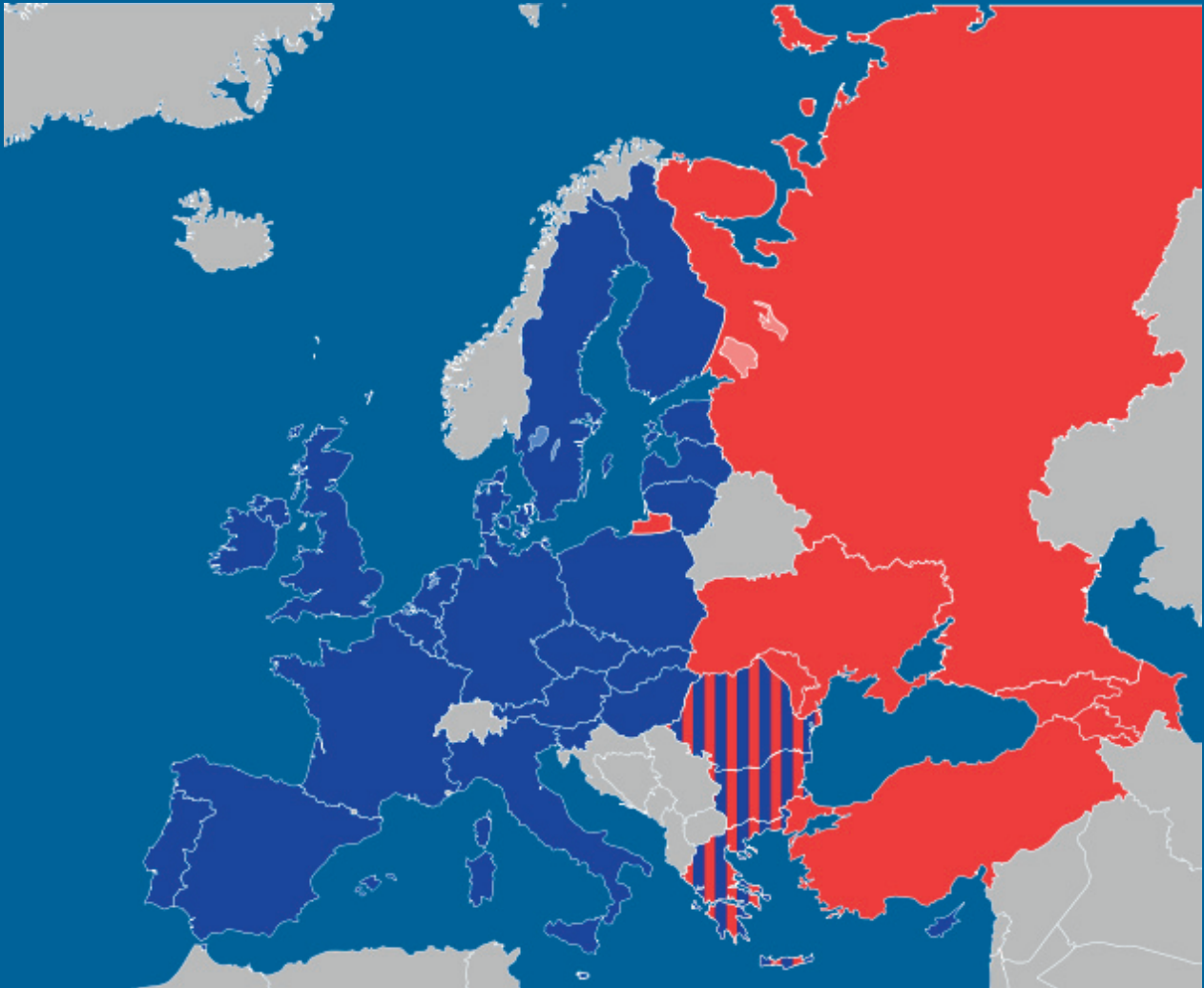
The second half of the 1990s is also an era when important milestones of the EU-Russia relations were laid. In December 1997, the Partnership and cooperation agreement (PCA) entered into force which represented the contractual basis of the mutual relationship. In 1999, the EU launched the Common strategy on Russia, the first ever usage of this instrument which aimed to enhance the vertical coherence (the coherence among the policies of the EU member states towards Russia) in the CFSP area and was also incorporated into the EU primary law by the Amsterdam Treaty. At the same time, the EU also started to support the regional dimension of cooperation with Russia. The first initiative was the so-called Northern dimension which was especially aimed to support regional cooperation in the areas of economy, environment protection, sustainable development, public health, infrastructure, culture etc. In 2007, a new platform for the EU-Russia regional cooperation was added in the form of the Black Sea Synergy.

The current situation is, of course, influenced by the political measures against the Russian Federation which include the suspension of some EU-Russia cooperation programmes. This has also touched upon the present platforms for regional cooperation, the Northern dimension and the Black Sea Synergy. On the other hand, from the geopolitical point of view, there is the potential for the development of further EU-Russia cooperation (but concurrently also the potential for possible confrontations and clashes of interests) in the Arctic area and the Black Sea area. The Northern dimension initiative started as a sort of test field for the potential of the EU-Russia cooperation. The factor with a rather negative impact

¹⁰ See e.g. Webber, Terriff, Howorth and Croft 2002.

BOX 3**Northern Dimension**

- Northern dimension initiative was officially launched in 1999. In 2006, the activities were revived.
- The participation at this platform was not confined only to the **EU and Russia**; it also comprised **Norway, Iceland**, and such organisations as the Arctic Council, the Euro-Arctic Council of the Barents Sea, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), and the Nordic Council of Ministers.
- **Canada and the USA** serve as observers; **Belarus** has participated ad hoc in some activities in the framework of the Northern dimension initiative.
- Its projects have been usually financed with the assistance of EBRD, EIB, after 2004 also by the specific EU instruments for the support of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Moreover, such financial institutions like the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) or the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) have also participated in financing some projects.

Black Sea Synergy

- Communication on the Black Sea Synergy was published in 2007, the cooperation was then initiated at the conference held between the EU and Black Sea Foreign Affairs Ministers in Kiev in 2008.
- It comprises different types of participating partners:
 - EU members (Bulgaria, Romania, Greece),
 - Five ENP members (Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia),
 - Two strategic actors in the region: Russia and Turkey.
- The main aims include:
 - Stimulation of democratic and economic reforms,
 - support and promotion of development,
 - facilitation of practical projects in areas of common concern (environment, maritime affairs, fisheries, energy, education, civil society, cross border cooperation, research...),
 - encouraging peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the region.
- Examples of the results:
 - Black Sea Environmental Partnership,
 - Black Sea NGO Forum,
 - Black Sea Scientific Forum...

Sources: EEAS: Northern Dimension; EEAS: Black Sea Synergy

NORTHERN DIMENSION AND BLACK SEA SYNERGY

on the mutual trust between both actors has been the rising strategic importance of the Arctic area since the beginning of the 21st century combined with incidents of mutual disputes, for instance between Canada and Russia. Their significance began to increase with rapid building of Russian military bases and capacities in the Arctic before 2010, i.e. even before the events in Ukraine and subsequent worsening of the relations.

Like the Northern dimension, the Black Sea Synergy was launched in connection with the EU Eastern enlargement and the entrance of Bulgaria and Romania into the EU. It was also established with the aim to facilitate the solution of frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet area and to give new impulses to the cooperation in the field of energy projects. Finally, it was also an attempt made to create an opportunity for regional cooperation which would comprise not only the EU member states and states in the EU Eastern neighbourhood but also two other regional powers, Russia and Turkey. The project brought practical results in the form of various projects and platforms for cooperation in the fields of science, technology, and environmental protection. There are also examples of other ambitious energy infrastructure projects (especially the Pan-European Oil Pipeline supposed to bypass the Turkish Straits

in the transport of Russian and Caspian oil to Central Europe). On the other hand, the often diverging and even contradictory interests of the EU countries and Eastern European countries like Ukraine, Russia, and Turkey, particularly in energy security, could have been seen clearly now. The Black Sea Synergy was supposed to help building the ambitious projects of trans-Caspian and trans-Black Sea corridors but a lot from these plans have stayed on the paper only and there are also well-known examples of cancelled or suspended projects.¹¹ The fact that the Black Sea area is not only an area for cooperation but also an area of hard geopolitical interests was explicitly shown by the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, which, again, influenced the Russian participation and cooperation in the framework of the Black Sea Synergy initiative.

¹¹ Like the project of Burgas-Alexandroupoli oil pipeline which was supposed to transport both Russian and Caspian oil to Southern Europe, circumventing Bosphorus and Dardanelles.

2.1 PERSPECTIVES OF THE EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS AND THE ROOTS OF LATER PROBLEMS

The rise of Vladimir V. Putin to the position of the Russian president in 2000¹² meant a higher priority of economy and trade policy in the Russian foreign policy and logically also an enhancement of the Russian interests in relations to Europe. Some Putin's speeches given shortly after his rise to the presidential office during the meetings with various European politicians could have even be regarded as quite pro-Western and pro-European. As an example, it is possible to mention Putin's reaction to EU's recognition of Russia as a market economy in 2002. According to Shevtsova, Putin began to talk about the creation of a single economic space with the EU, to which the EU representatives (headed by the then President of the Commission Romano Prodi) reacted in a reserved way.¹³ And this is quite symptomatic for the history of the EU-Russia relations, especially after 2000. The efforts to cooperate with the EU "on equal terms",¹⁴ on the basis of "special relationship" that could potentially lead to a close political-economic partnership between both actors, were met on the side of the EU with reservations and references not only to economic but also to present legislative (and to certain extent even normative) conditions. Direct confrontation with these conditions which would require fundamental changes in Russia itself (its legislative system, political regime, the reality of relations between the spheres of politics and economy etc.), along with the EU's plans to build free trade areas with Eastern European countries other than Russia (and much sooner than with Russia) consequently provoked a deep disillusionment and a disappointed reaction on the Russian side.

The Russian emphasis on special bilateral relations with some key EU member states was motivated mostly by the efforts to enhance trade relations with strong partners from Western Europe, mainly in the energy area. After the Russian economy started to recover from the financial crisis at the

end of the 1990s (mainly thanks to rising prices of oil accompanied by a massive centralisation and nationalisation in Russian energy sector), the initial need for Western investments was replaced with a rising interest and aspirations of the new Russian economic elite to expand actively on the European markets. At the same time, Russia was carefully observing the impacts of the EU Eastern enlargement which brought about specific consequences in trade relations and in the energy area. For instance, the interests of Russian energy companies (with Gazprom as the most obvious example) to expand on European markets gradually started to clash with an expanding EU legislation of internal energy market (especially gas market).

It is therefore possible to observe two basic tendencies in the EU-Russia relations at the beginning of the 21st century. It is true that the development of the strategic partnership continued: In May 2003, the strategic framework for the EU-Russia partnership was adopted in St Petersburg which included the delimitation of four common spaces for the EU-Russia cooperation (economic and trade dimension, global politics and security dimension, internal security dimension, and cooperation in the fields of humanities like culture, education etc.). Besides, the energy dialogue was defined as special area of cooperation and several priority projects were listed within its framework. These included a wide range of projects in the gas sector, comprising the gas pipeline constructed under the Baltic Sea (later put into practice as the Nord Stream), the new line of the Yamal pipeline (Yamal II) transporting gas through Polish territory, and the modernisation of the Ukrainian gas transit network. Nevertheless, it was also clear that the realisation of all these projects would be improbable and that the final selection would depend on the overall context of the relations between Russia and EU countries and on prevailing interests in the EU energy policy.

The EU Eastern enlargement was another example of a process that brought both problems and new opportunities to the relations between the EU and Russia. The challenges for Russia came not only in the economic sphere but also in connection with visa regulations (as the new EU member states adopted the common EU visa policy). Moreover, the problem of the Kaliningrad Region had to be solved in a unique way as it now became an exclave surrounded by EU members. (The EU's rejection of the original Russian

12 Putin, who was named the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation in 1999, was initially (on 31 December 1999) commissioned by the former, physically indisposed President Yeltsin, to assume the duties of the Russian President. Later, in May 2000, he was elected in presidential elections for the first time.

13 Shevtsova 2005: 239.

14 See e.g. Antonenko and Pinnick 2005: 55.

proposal for a visa-free travel between the EU and Kaliningrad was one of the examples of the clashes with the EU legislative principles and mechanisms connected with the EU Eastern enlargement).¹⁵ However, the Eastern enlargement was sometimes also seen as a kind of chance for a development of the Kaliningrad Region (at least judging from the rhetoric of some then key EU CFSP representatives)¹⁶ and perhaps also for Russia itself (bringing Russia “closer to the EU”).¹⁷

Shortly after 2000, problems in the EU-Russia relations occurred especially in the following areas:

- 1) Political changes in Russia connected with the rise of centralisation and certain authoritarian inclinations like the tendencies to limit pluralism, to strengthen centralisation and depoliticization, and to cement the principle of personal leadership in Russian politics provoked criticisms from journalists, intellectuals, and certain politicians in the EU countries (including the very West European countries with whom president Putin wanted to build good strategic relations)

Particularly the tendency to limit pluralism in public and political life and in media can be mentioned here. The first Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation¹⁸ approved in 2000 openly introduced the regulation in the information sphere. What is more, there have been brutal cases of violence, especially the murders of journalists like Anna Politkovskaya in 2006, that have provoked criticism in European states. Among examples of centralisation, it is possible to name Putin’s reforms of the Russian federal system

as well as the nationalisation in the energy (especially oil) sector.¹⁹ The depoliticisation of the Russian regime, another typical characteristic of authoritarian regimes according to Juan Linz, was relying on the leadership principle (including the literal identification of modern Russia with “Putin’s Russia”), on the petrification of the “party of power” system (symbolised by the United Russia movement) and also on the creation of the Putin-Medvedev power tandem.

On the other hand, the personalisation and the leadership principles which tend to result in the identification of the regime and the state with the leading political figure may be counterproductive in some circumstances, especially at times of economic hardship. This proved to be the case by first massive protests accompanying the parliamentary elections in late 2011, shortly before the presidential elections in spring 2012. Some commentators called the protest marches in larger Russian cities (Moscow, St Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Vladivostok) the biggest demonstrations since the fall of the USSR.²⁰ The reasons for this could lie in the fact that after the period of increased popularity of the Putin-Medvedev tandem, associated with the economic conjuncture, the citizens now experienced negative consequences of the economic crisis that came after 2008. Another reason for the uncommon size of protests was the rise of the opposition activity on the internet and social media where figures like Alexei Navalny became more visible. Without surprise, the oppression of opposition figures in Russia²¹ was another problem criticized in the West and in the EU.

Besides these serious changes connected with the internal political development in Russia, there were also problems that started to directly influence the EU-Russia relations after 2000:

¹⁵ The solution came in the form of specially facilitated transit documents for multiple entries by whatever means of land transport and facilitated rail transit documents for a single entry and return by rail (*Council Regulation (EC) No 693/2003 of 14 April 2003 establishing a specific Facilitated Transit Document (FTD), a Facilitated Rail Transit Document (FRTD) and amending the Common Consular Instructions and the Common Manual*)

¹⁶ See more in Antonenko and Pinnick 2005: 243-281 or e.g. European Commission 2006.

¹⁷ It is worth mentioning that such debate also occurred to some extent in 2013 in connection with the prepared signature of the AA/DCFTA between the EU and Ukraine.

¹⁸ Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation. Approved by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on 9 September 2000.

¹⁹ A well-known case is Mikhail Khodorkovsky and his imprisonment as a part of Putin’s campaign against oligarchs with potentially endangering ambitions not only in the economic but also political sphere.

²⁰ BBC News 2011.

²¹ Cases of detention of such oppositional leaders like the former chess champion Garri Kasparov, the investigations and sentences against Alexei Navalnyi, and the murder case of Boris Nemtsov (2015). Despite the conviction and sentence of five Chechen men in connection with the murder, the real background of the crime still stays unclear (see BBC News 2017). These are just the most prominent examples.

- 2) There were certain bilateral problems between Russia and East European states which became member countries of the EU in 2004. With their entrance into the EU, some of these bilateral issues transformed into the EU-wide problems, especially those concerning the energy area.
- 3) First signs of mutual incompatibility of perspectives concerning the topics of the liberalisation of the energy market and energy security grew important and rather serious with the EU Eastern enlargement and with new EU's activities in its Eastern neighbourhood. They became more and more visible during the second half of the first decade of the 21st century.

In 2006, the Finnish Presidency of the EU began preparing a new bilateral agreement on cooperation between the EU and Russia²² which was supposed to be signed during the German presidency the next year. The Russian president Putin even appeared as a special guest at the informal EU summit in Lahti in October 2006. As future challenges for the EU energy policy were discussed there, possible clashes of perspectives were already visible. The disagreements were especially triggered by the EU's plans on further integration of the energy market along with the ambitions concerning the climate protection policy which were naturally connected with the question of the future of fossil fuels. It thus became clear that the preparation of the new EU-Russia agreement would not be easy. Unresolved problems in the energy area were even further underlined by Russian-Ukrainian and Russian-Belarusian gas disputes in 2006 and 2007 that had some limited effects on gas supply to Central Europe as well.

Several bilateral disputes between Russia and some EU member states influenced the preparation of the new agreement during 2007 and 2008 (with the most apparent negative mark left on the EU-Russia summit in Samara in spring 2007). They were involving mainly Central European and Baltic states and included the following problematic points:

- a) The Russian ban on imports of Polish meat and meat products (officially motivated by health and quality reasons).²³
- b) The Russian refusal of the US project of anti-ballistic missile system in Central Europe. While this did not concern the EU as such, the missile base was supposed to be deployed in Poland and the radar base in the Czech Republic.
- c) The bilateral disputes between Russia and the Baltic states²⁴ which comprised a blend of historical and "contemporary" issues (again especially in the energy area).

Because of the intergovernmental character of the CFSP, the bilateral disputes between Russia and some newer EU member states, especially Poland and Lithuania, contributed to blocking the preparation of the new EU-Russia agreement. The Russian president Putin was told at the EU-Russian summit in Samara by the President of the European Commission Barroso that the EU was based on the principles of solidarity and that the difficulty of one member state (in relation to a third country) is also an issue for the whole EU.²⁵

²³ Poland did not accept these reasons and instead accused Russia of covering the real political reasons connected with the Polish support of the Ukrainian Orange Revolution and the new president Yushchenko, their support to Belarusian opposition, and their warm relations to the US security policy, including the project of the US anti-ballistic missile system in Central Europe.

²⁴ Including the Russian-Estonian dispute (2007) around the relocation of the monument of the "Bronze Soldier" in the capital Tallinn which symbolised the arrival of the Red Army in Estonia in the 1940s. The decision about the relocation was followed by riots in the Estonian capital that expressed the disagreement of the members of Russian-speaking minority with the "re-writing of history". At the same time, Estonia was facing several weeks of massive cyber-attacks that hit such institutions as the parliament, important ministries, websites of key political parties, large financial institutions, and communication companies. The unprecedented scale of the attack as well as its coincidence with the unrest surrounding the relocation of the statue evoked the imminent suspicions that Russia stood behind it (See e.g. RFE/RL 2007). Another example of these bilateral disputes was the conflict between Russia and Lithuania concerning the disruption of oil deliveries to Mazeikiu refinery in 2006. Lithuanian officials and analysts saw that step as a revenge: shortly before the Russian side decided to shut the pipeline supplying the respective refinery, the Lithuanian government had signed an agreement with the Polish company PKN Orlen about a sale of the refinery. Lithuanian government thus preferred an offer of the Polish company to the offers of Russian companies (See e.g. The New York Times 2006).

²⁵ Barroso was referring especially to the conflict between Poland and Russia about the ban on the import of Polish

²² The PCA was supposed to be valid for 10 years. When it came into force in 1997, it was anticipated that it could be replaced with a new, possibly enhanced agreement around 2007. Nevertheless, an automatic prolongation of the validity of the agreement every 10 years was arranged as well.

The EU Eastern enlargement thus brought about an important change: Some states of Central and Eastern Europe where Russia has had either persisting interests (not necessarily just political-security but also interests in economic, energy, and cultural sphere) or with which Russia has had disputes (often grounded in history) now became EU members. With the membership, they gained

certain duties, but also the access to the internal market and finally various rights and privileges in relation to the EU and its institutions.²⁶ On the other hand, Russia, that long strived for its strategic relationship not just with particular EU countries but also with the EU as a whole, retained the status of a third country with all related unwelcome consequences (concerning trade relations, visas etc.).

BOX 4

- In 2003 – 2004, the EU officially launched the European Neighbourhood Policy which comprised not only the countries of the EU southern neighbourhood and the Middle East²⁷ but also three Eastern European post-Soviet countries (Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova) and three countries from the South Caucasus region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia).
- Russia preferred to stay off this multilateral platform and to develop its strategic relationship with the EU based on four “common spaces”.
- In 2008, the European Commission launched the Communication to the European Parliament and the Council concerning the Eastern Partnership.
- Besides the multilateral dimension, the EaP also envisaged a gradual change of the normative basis for the bilateral relations between the EU and the countries concerned. Signing association agreements with the countries was expected along with building “circles” of “deep and comprehensive” free trade areas and deepening cooperation in the fields of energy, visa liberalisation etc.
- Eastern Partnership was launched as a specific dimension of the ENP at the Prague Summit in 2009, a joint initiative involving the EU, its Member States, and six Eastern European Partners: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

Source: EEAS: Eastern Partnership 2016. Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit. Prague, 7 May 2009

EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY AND ITS EASTERN DIMENSION

This scenario was shifted to a completely new level when the EU, following the process of the Eastern enlargement, seamlessly started to enhance the relations with the post-Soviet states in its Eastern neighbourhood.

meat to Russia as a problem concerning the trade policy of the whole EU (See more in Euractiv 2007).

²⁶ Despite some transitional measures which were limiting the full access to the EU market or to financial support, especially in the CAP area, for several years after the Eastern enlargement.

²⁷ Mostly the so-called Mashreq and Maghreb countries with which were already approached by the EU in the 1990s (see EEAS: Union for the Mediterranean 2016).

Due to the development of the relations between the EU and former members or satellites of the USSR, the relations between the EU and Russia after 2007 followed a volatile pattern. While the dialogue on the new EU-Russia agreement was revived again in 2008 (partially thanks to the settlement of Russian-Polish trade disputes), another short-term setback came the very same year with the August Georgian-Russian war. And another rapprochement attempt came several months later, at the EU-Russia summit in Nice in November 2008. Still, the atmosphere was marked by the Russian threats to deploy short-range missiles in the Kaliningrad area (an answer to the

BOX 5

The initiative came over a year after the President Putin's famous speech at the annual Munich Conference on Security Policy in February 2007 where President Putin was sharply criticising the transformation of the OSCE almost 20 years after the end of the Cold War. He said that the OSCE has transformed into "a vulgar instrument designed to promote the foreign policy interests of one or a group of countries", with "a bureaucratic apparatus which is absolutely out of touch with founding states in any way". Besides the OSCE, Putin was also criticising non-governmental organisations with international operating which were (in his view) "tailored" and "purposefully financed" for the task to promote foreign policy interests of the West.

On the other hand, Medvedev's draft of the new "European Security Treaty" published in late 2009 was calling for establishing a new collective security "pact" in the broad area "of the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space from Vancouver to Vladivostok". What was important (and quite controversial for the leaders of European powers, the French President Sarkozy and the German Chancellor Merkel), Medvedev invited not only states but also to the organisations like EU, OSCE, CSTO, and NATO, to sign the document, although the suggested relation of these organisations to the new entity was very unclear. The European leaders were thus quite careful about it and preferred keeping the discussion about the future of the security in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area strictly on the floor of the OSCE (in the framework of the so-called Corfu Process).

Sources: OSCE 2010; President of Russia 2007; President of Russia 2009

MEDVEDEV'S "EUROPEAN SECURITY TREATY" PROPOSAL**BOX 6**

Joint Declaration of the Partnership for Modernisation between the European Union and the Russian Federation is a relatively short document signed at the summit in Rostov-on-Don in spring 2010. It proclaimed the effort of both countries to enhance their bilateral trade, investment opportunities, co-operation in innovation, research and development etc. As it also mentioned "strengthening the rule of law", it was supposed to have a certain normative dimension apart from focusing on economic and technological cooperation.

Source: Delegation of the European Union in Russia 2016

PARTNERSHIP FOR MODERNISATION

US anti-ballistic missile system planned in Central Europe) and "reverberations" of the Georgian-Russian war. The new Russian president Dmitri Medvedev seemed to "compensate" for these displays of Russian military strength, though, with his proposal of a new arrangement of the regional system of collective security in Europe. Another initiative of his was the "programme of modernisation", presented it in 2009 as a program aimed at changes in Russian economy and potentially also in the Russian society.²⁸

The nature of the relations between Russia and the EU (or in broader terms Russia and "the West") in the

period of 2008 – 2012, the era of President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin, was thus quite uncertain. On the one hand, there were often ambitious proposals to cooperate further in various areas, on the other hand, there were examples of significant problems, crises including the Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis in 2009, and displays of mutual distrust. At the same time, it was a period marked by the effects of the Great Recession which hit the EU as the eurozone crisis and had also an effect on the Russian Federation which saw an almost 8% fall of their real GDP in 2009. In case of Russia, the crisis above all highlighted the structural problems of the Russian economy and the serious need for modernisation. Problems felt on both sides could be one of the reasons why the Partnership for

²⁸ See more e.g. in Krawatzek 2010.

BOX 7

The EU-Russia visa facilitation and readmission agreements entered into force in June 2007, simplifying the procedure for issuing visa for the Russian citizens. In 2013, the EU and Russia went even further by publishing the Common steps towards short-term visa-free travel for Russian and EU citizens.

After his return to the position of the Russian president in 2012, Putin declared the dialogue about the visa-free regime more explicitly as one of the most prominent priorities of EU-Russia relations. To some extent, it was under the influence of the development of the Eastern Partnership programme which promised a potential further liberalisation of the visa regime to partner countries from Eastern Europe and South Caucasus.

The EU-Russia dialogue about visa-free regime was frozen in 2014 as a part of the political measures adopted against Russia after the annexation of Crimea and the events in Eastern Ukraine.

On the other hand, the visa obligation for citizens of the Republic of Moldova (the first country out of the six EaP countries) who hold a biometric passport and want to travel to the Schengen zone for a short-stay was abolished in 2014. The same began to apply to Ukrainian and Georgian citizens in 2017.

Source: Common steps towards visa-free short-term travel of Russian and EU citizens (Russia-EU Visa Dialogue)

VISA DIALOGUE

modernisation was chosen as a kind of way out of the crisis in 2010. While the negotiations of a new bilateral EU-Russia agreement were perceived as a long-run issue, both sides wanted to show a gesture of a revival of active cooperation.

Another perennial topic of the EU-Russia talks during the last years of Medvedev's presidency were the EU's declared support for Russian entrance to the WTO and the visa dialogue.

Summary: Key formative events of the EU-Russia relations

- 1997: Partnership and cooperation agreement (PCA)
- 1999: Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia
Northern Dimension Initiated
- 2000: EU-Russia Energy Dialogue launched
- 2003: Summit in St Petersburg (creation of four "common spaces")
- 2004: First wave of the EU Eastern enlargement
European Neighborhood Policy initiated
- 2006: EU summit in Lahti (president Putin as a guest)
- 2007: Communication on the Black Sea Synergy
Summit in Samara (first explicit disputes)
- 2008: Georgian-Russian war
Summit in Nice
- 2009: Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute
Establishment of the Eastern Partnership (summit in Prague)
The third Liberalization Package (Third Energy Package) entered into force
- 2010: Joint Declaration on the Partnership for Modernisation
Eurasian Customs Union (Belarus – Kazakhstan – Russia) established
- 2012: Russia enters WTO
- 2013: Summit of the Eastern Partnership in Vilnius
- 2014: Last EU-Russia summit in Brussels
EU imposed restrictive measures against Russia in connection with the Ukrainian crisis

3

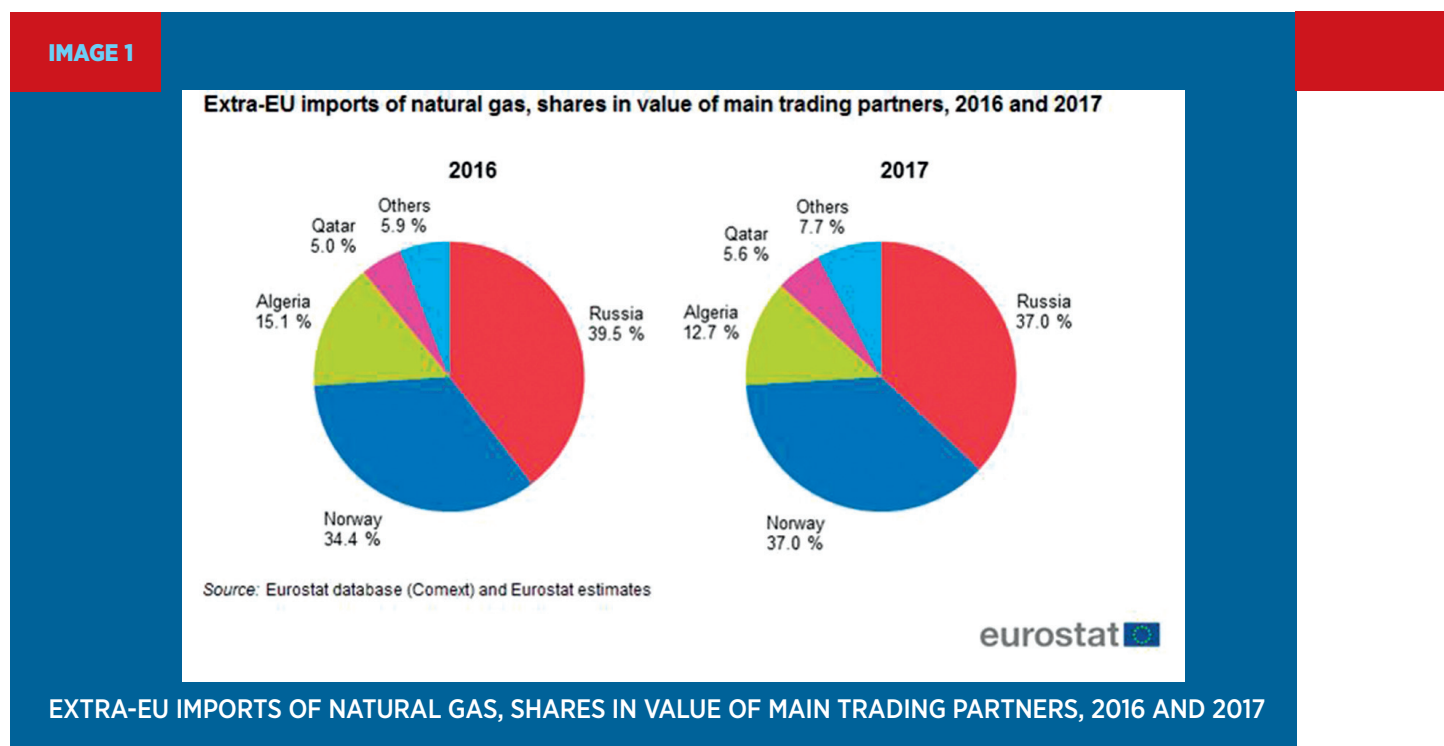
KEY PROBLEMS OF THE EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS

The previous chapters showed that despite a deepening cooperation in trade (including the interdependence¹ in supplies of energy resources), there were serious problems in the mutual relations long before 2013. Among the most prominent issues (and hence the most important topics which the EU must consider in the policy towards Russia) are:

- 1) Energy
- 2) Divergent interests and visions in the post-Soviet area, EU Eastern neighbourhood, and the world politics
- 3) The problem of mutual mistrust, “information war”, and reminiscences of the Cold War

3.1 ENERGY

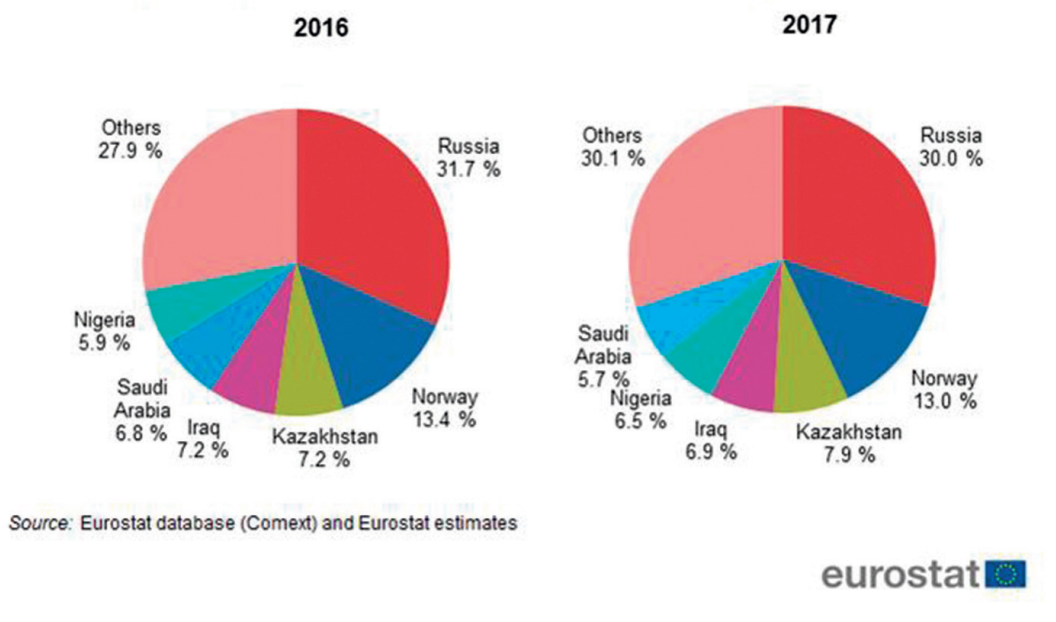
Russia is the largest oil, gas, uranium, and coal exporter to the EU



¹ See more e.g. in Krickovic 2015; Ateşoğlu Güney and Korkmaz 2014; Paillard 2010 etc.

IMAGE 2

Extra-EU imports of petroleum oil, shares in value of main trading partners, 2016 and 2017



EXTRA-EU IMPORTS OF PETROLEUM OIL, SHARES IN VALUE OF MAIN TRADING PARTNERS, 2016 AND 2017

The dependency on the Russian import of gas and oil is still the highest in the CEE countries (Poland, Estonia, Slovakia) and in Finland, to a lesser extent in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Romania, Slovenia, and Austria. The situation is worse with the natural gas due to the problem of the so-called structural dependency, linked to a more substantial rigidity of infrastructure (even with building new LNG terminals). In contrast, the largest oil and gas importers (in absolute numbers) usually make use of more diversified imports. This is the case for Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, France, the UK, and Germany, although their share of imports of the Russian gas in the overall gas imports portfolio is significant in comparison to other big European importers of fossil fuels.


On the other hand, the following chart also shows that the Russian dependence on the energy export to the EU is quite significant as well. Despite certain decline of the figures in recent years, around 60% of the overall imports from Russia to the EU still comprises energy products. Thus, Russia continues to have the label of an energy supplier from the EU perspective despite all the efforts to diversify their economy and exports.

The first decade of the 21st century brought the following tendencies in the EU energy policy: The EU has developed legislation towards more integration of gas and electricity markets. More emphasis has been put on the issues of climate protection, energy efficiency, and promotion of renewables and new technologies in the sphere of energy. On the other hand, EU has also started to emphasise the problem of energy security. This has happened to much extent as a response to crises of gas and oil supply which involved the supplier (Russia), transit countries in the post-Soviet area (like Ukraine and Belarus), and finally the consumers, EU member states, especially those in Central and Eastern Europe (including Germany as the largest European consumer of the Russian gas). The crises like the first Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute in 2006, subsequent Russian-Belarusian gas and oil troubles, and the most serious Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute in 2009 brought an unprecedented disruption of supply of the Russian gas to Europe and shook the position of Russia as the most important supplier of gas to some EU member countries (especially Germany and the CEE countries). These crises had various dimensions, both purely economic and political. The energy issues in the EU-Russian relations often combine different complicated problems of security, trade, environment, legal system, lobbying,

TABLE 1

Country	Share (%) of Russia in national extra-EU28 imports	
	Petroleum oils	Natural gas
Belgium	50-75	0-25
Bulgaria	50-75	75-100
Czech Republic	50-75	75-100
Denmark	0-25	0-25
Germany	25-50	50-75
Estonia	75-100	75-100
Ireland	0-25	0-25
Greece	0-25	50-75
Spain	0-25	0-25
France	0-25	0-25
Croatia	0-25	0-25
Italy	0-25	25-50
Cyprus	0-25	0-25
Latvia	0-25	75-100
Lithuania	50-75	50-75
Luxembourg	0-25	0-25
Hungary	50-75	50-75
Malta	0-25	0-25
Netherlands	25-50	25-50
Austria	0-25	75-100
Poland	75-100	75-100
Portugal	0-25	0-25
Romania	25-50	75-100
Slovenia	0-25	75-100
Slovakia	75-100	75-100
Finland	75-100	75-100
Sweden	25-50	0-25
United Kingdom	0-25	0-25

Source: Eurostat database (Comext) and Eurostat estimates

eurostat 

SHARE (%) OF RUSSIA IN NATIONAL EXTRA-EU IMPORTS OF EACH MEMBER STATE, 2017, IN VALUE

and entrepreneurs' interests. But the fact that the disruptions in supply also frequently hit well-paying customers in Europe provoked a series of steps aimed to enhance the EU energy security. The crises have also reminded Europe that the problems in the relations between Russia and its neighbours in the post-Soviet area may directly influence the situation in the EU itself.

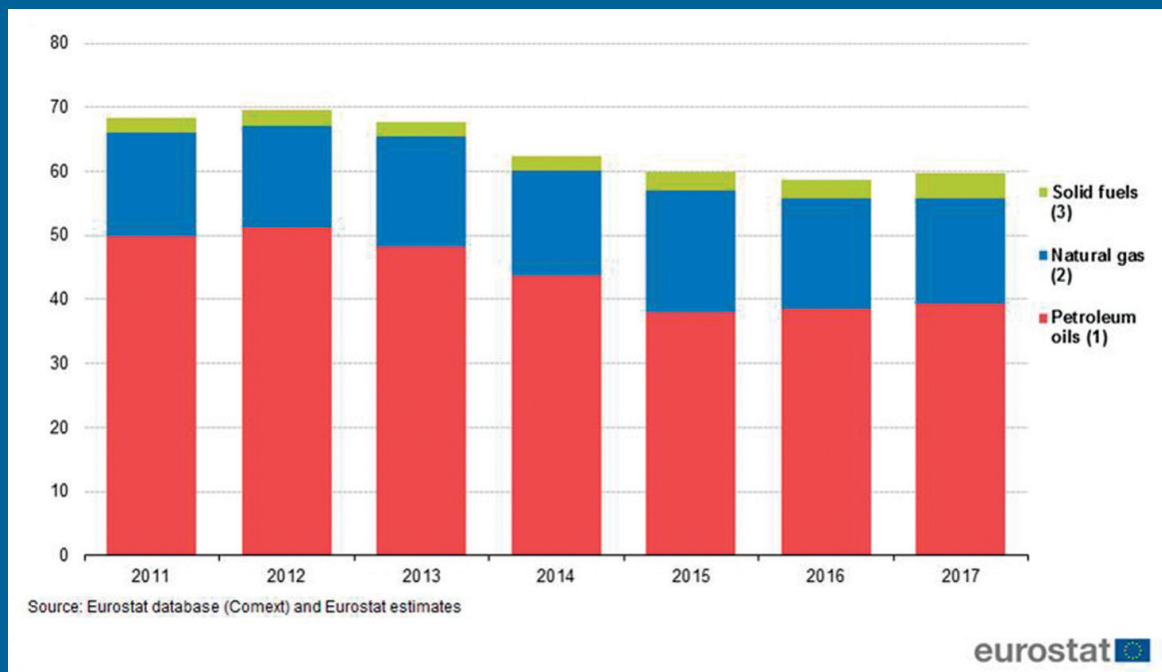
The steps to enhancing the EU's energy security included the introduction of alternative projects of new pipelines. There were the Russian projects of Nord Stream and South Stream and the competing project of the so-called Southern Gas Corridor which anticipated the supply of Azerbaijani, Central Asian, or Middle Eastern gas. These relied on both already finished and incomplete projects (like Nabucco, Trans Adriatic Pipeline, and the Trans-Anatolian pipeline).

Remarkably, the most viable project among them seems to be the Nord Stream (despite the warnings that especially Central European countries should aim to decrease their dependency on the Russian gas supply). The first stage of the project, the twin pipeline system through the Baltic Sea connecting Russia and Germany, has been operating since 2011/2012, the construction of the second stage (Nord Stream 2) began in 2018. The compatibility with the EU energy security goals are supposed to be met by the fact that Nord Stream 2 and its operation should follow the EU legislation on internal gas market.²

The legislation itself is another very important set of steps made by the EU to rebuild the internal energy market and to enhance its energy security at the

² See more in Nord Stream 2 AG: 2016.

IMAGE 3



SHARE (%) OF ENERGY PRODUCTS IN TOTAL EU-28 IMPORTS FROM RUSSIA, 2011-2017, IN VALUE

same time: In 2009, the EU substantially novelised the legislation and adopted the Third Liberalisation Package determining the rules of the European Internal Energy Market with gas and electricity. It brought about several important measures against the interests of large energy monopolies. These important provisions include the unbundling of ownership and the third-party access principle (i.e. a non-discriminatory access to the transmission network for any electricity or gas supplier combined with a regulation of tariffs which should prevent any abuse of dominance). It problematised practices so far regularly used by Gazprom which were often stipulated in their gas contracts, especially in the markets of the CEE countries, such as the practice of long-term gas contracts based on indexing the gas prices to the price of crude oil and the restrictions placed on customers to re-sell gas cross-border.

Based on the Third Liberalization Package, the European Commission even started an investigation against Gazprom for their alleged abuse of their dominant position on the energy markets of the CEE countries and for breaking the EU antitrust and competition rules. The problem concerned eight newer EU member states: The Visegrád countries (The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia),

three Baltic states, and Bulgaria. In May 2018, the Commission decided about the imposition of binding obligations on Gazprom to remove contractual barriers to the free flow of gas at competitive prices in the area. According to the Commission, Gazprom with their policy of long-term contracts, restrictions of the possibility to re-sell gas cross-border, and their price policy misused its position of a dominant gas supplier in these countries and broke the EU legislation concerning the internal energy market. Gazprom needs to respect legally binding obligations, otherwise the Commission can even impose a fine of up to 10% of the company's worldwide turnover.

Hence, the problem of energy became another clashing point in the EU-Russia cooperation. There was the EU with its legal principles and the expansion of this new legislation to the new EU member countries (brought about by the process of the EU enlargement). On the other side, there was Russia, with the energy giants controlled to much extent by the state,³ which saw the EU energy legislation

³ As concerns Gazprom, the Russia's largest producer and exporter of gas, the largest shareholder (almost 40%) is The Russian Federation and another more than 10% share is hold by companies controlled by the Russian government, Rosneftgaz and Rosgazifikatsiya. As concerns Rosneft, one

as just another way to complicate and hinder the successful operation of the Russian business on the European markets. The Russian perspective was explicitly illustrated by the way President Putin angrily commented on the “discriminatory character” of the new EU internal energy market legislative and their effects on the EU-Russia relations at the end of the press conference concluding the EU-Russia summit in Brussels in December 2012.⁴ And what was an even more alarming threat for Russia: with the new EU policy towards the Eastern neighbourhood (i.e. the establishment of the Energy Community and the Eastern Partnership which was mentioning the cooperation in the energy security area among its priorities), the internal market legislation would potentially expand to other countries in the post-Soviet area (Moldova, Georgia, and potentially also Ukraine as the contract parties of the Energy Community).

The energy policy is the area where the problems of a vertical and horizontal coherence of the EU external activities (see in 2.4 and 2.5) is particularly visible. Here, the problems concerning the internal market rules are very closely interconnected with the CFSP issues (the EU-Russia relations). Moreover, projects involving building new infrastructure are heavily influenced by bilateralism and by interests of both state and non-state actors.

As for the evaluation of the EU’s instruments and policies used in this area so far in relation to Russia, the strengths seem to rest in the consistency of keeping the existing rules of the internal energy market. The EU’s consistency may seem “one-sided”, “discriminatory”, and inconvenient from the Russian side, but it leads the actors to adjust to the existing conditions and to behave in a constructive way (like in the case of Nord Stream 2 and its compliance with the Third Liberalization Package).

The weaknesses rest in bilateralism and the lack of the vertical coherence concerning the priorities in the infrastructure projects. This can be illustrated again by the example of Nord Stream 2 and the objections that its realisation may endanger the energy security of Ukraine as the EU’s partner country. The lack of consensus about priorities in the external dimension of the EU’s energy policy (especially in the relation to issues which have a (geo)political dimension in addition to the energy security dimension) presents a significant weakness in the conduct of the Union as a whole.

of the two most important Russian oil companies (together with non-state Lukoil), its largest shareholder (50.00000001% of the equity) is JSC ROSNEFTEGAZ, fully owned by the Russian Government. See more in Gazprom, n.d.; Rosneft, n.d. (<https://www.rosneft.com/>)

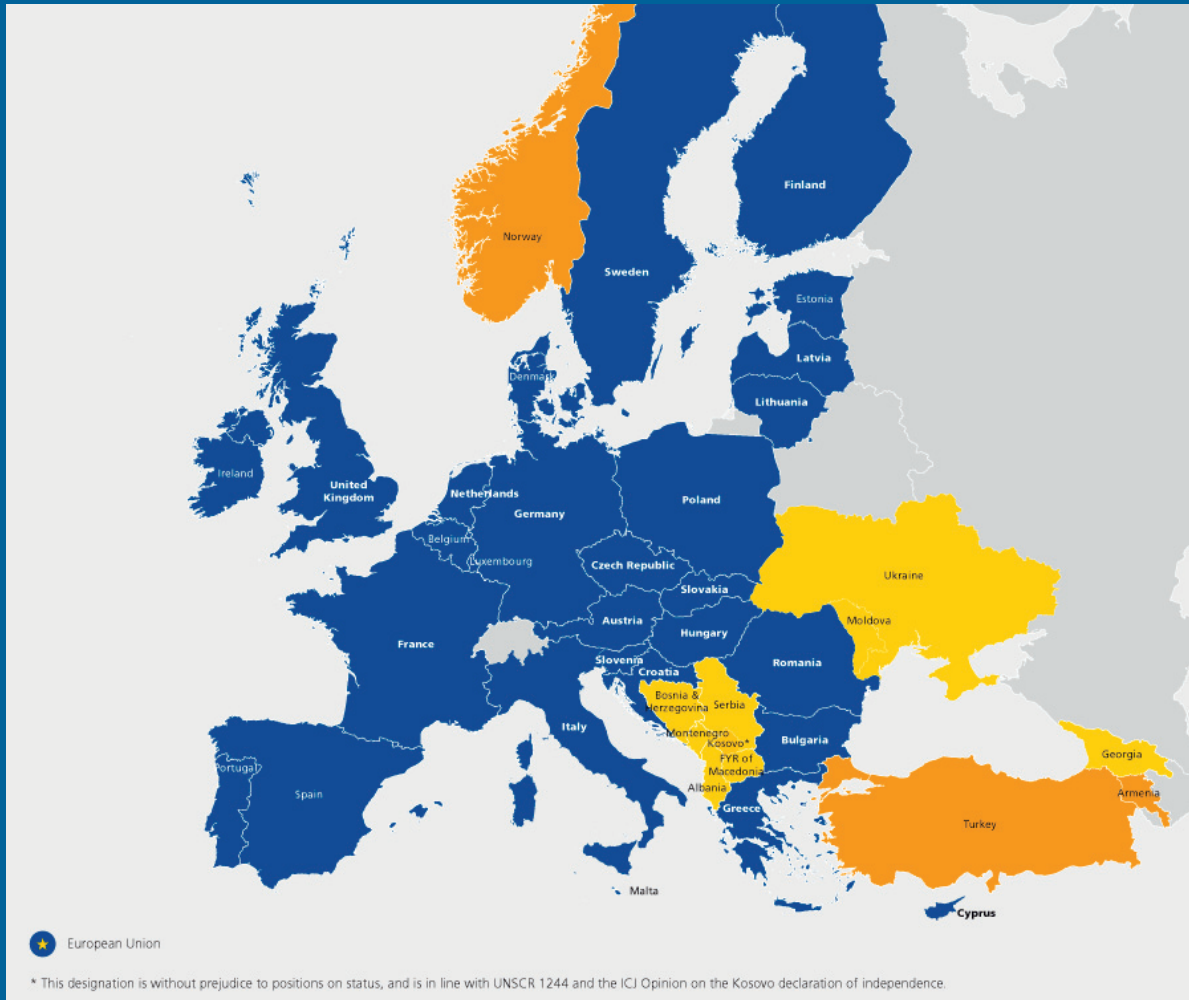
⁴ President Putin at the end of the press conference concluding the EU-Russia summit in Brussels in December 2012 took the microphone, even though the President of the Commission Barroso had already officially ended the conference. He explicitly said that from the Russian perspective, the new rules of the European internal energy market and their imposition on Russian energy companies break the Article 34 of the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, according to which: “The Parties shall use their best endeavours to avoid taking any measures or actions which render the conditions for the establishment and operation of each other’s companies more restrictive than the situation existing on the day preceding the date of signature of the Agreement.” See more in: Euractiv 2013.

BOX 8

Energy Community

An international organisation which brings together the European Union and its neighbours to create an integrated pan-European energy market. The key objective of the Energy Community is to extend the EU internal energy market rules and principles to countries in South East Europe, the Black Sea region, and beyond, based on a legally binding framework.

In 2018, the Energy Community had nine Contract Parties: **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, and Ukraine.**



Southern Gas Corridor

The term used to describe planned infrastructure projects aimed at improving the security and diversity of the EU's energy supply by bringing natural gas from the Caspian region to Europe.

It was supposed that the SGC would include several separate energy projects, including the not realised project of the **Nabucco pipeline** proposed to deliver the natural gas from Middle Eastern and Caspian fields through Turkey and several Balkan and Central European countries (supposedly Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary) to the Baumgarten hub in Austria.

While the Nabucco project, ambitious from the economic and even more so from the geopolitical point of view, was cancelled, another part of the supposed project, the **Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP)**, is under construction. It is supposed to join the **Trans Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP)** at the Greek-Turkish border with the Italian natural gas network (in Southern Italy), crossing Greece, Albania, and the Adriatic Sea. TANAP is a gas pipeline running through Turkey in the East-West direction. It was inaugurated in 2018 and it is supposed to join TAP with Azerbaijani Shah Deniz gas field.

South Stream

The Russian gas pipeline project supposed to transport the Russian gas across the Black Sea and several Balkan and Central European countries (supposedly Bulgaria, Serbia, Slovenia and Hungary) to Austria. From a geopolitical point of view (concerning the supposed destination as well as some supposed transit countries), it was a direct rival of the Nabucco project.

The project was cancelled in 2014 (officially because of the EU's sanctions and the lack of construction permits in the EU territory, but the financial crisis and economic decline in Russia after 2014 certainly played a significant role in the decision). Some propositions for resuming of the project appeared in 2018 (as expressed e.g. by the Bulgarian president). European Commission, on the other hand, rises objections against its possible realisation because of the provisions in the intergovernmental agreement that are in breach with the Third Liberalization Package rules.

Sources: Energy Community, n.d.; Trans-Adriatic Pipeline, n.d.; Euractiv 2018

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

3.2 DIVERGENT INTERESTS IN THE WORLD AND IN THE “COMMON” NEIGHBOURHOOD

In some measure, this problem relates to the previous one. It again refers to a gradual divergence of perspectives of both parties, this time concerning broader problems of the international security and politics and one particular problem of clashing interests in the neighbourhood.

Already in 2009, the Russian National Security Strategy towards 2020⁵ included some assertive passages which were portraying the world 20 years after the end of the Cold War as a competitive place where energy resources represent one of the subjects of state's competence. For the first time after the Cold War, Russia explicitly admitted the possibility of deploying military forces in case of the “break of the existing balance of forces close to the borders of The Russian Federation or its allies”. The strategy also explicitly labelled any NATO plans to “expand the military infrastructure of the alliance to the Russian borders” as unacceptable.

In 2012, Vladimir Putin returned to the office of the Russian president. In connection with his re-election, he introduced his vision⁶ of the Russian position, interests,

and goals, both globally and particularly in the Eurasian area, for the years to come. These were influenced by the Russian experience of the effects of the global financial crisis and the experience of the clashes with the existing world systems of liberalisation and regulative mechanisms (including the WTO measures and the EU regulations as we could see on the example of the energy area). Moreover, Putin was convicted that Russia must take a more assertive and ambitious position in creating of its own integration structures and mechanisms in the Eurasian area.

The new Russian Foreign Policy Conception published in 2013⁷ puts emphasis on empowering and technological modernisation of the Russian economy, strengthening the Russian role in global economic and trade relations, the diplomatic support for Russian economic interests, and the prevention of “discrimination” against Russian products, services, and investments. These priorities reveal how much confrontation with legal rules, measures, and mechanisms “imposed from the West” the Russian representatives experienced, including the EU striving to spread the European rules outside its borders with

⁵ Стратегия национальной безопасности Российской Федерации до 2020 года. Утверждена Указом Президента Российской Федерации от 12 мая 2009 г. № 537.

⁶ Some of them had been already mentioned in the NSS 2020, including further support and development of the integration in the framework of the Eurasian Economic Community and the vision of both economic and political integration in post-

Soviet area form of Eurasian Union, which was also introduced before the elections in the Russian press (Kommersant or Izvestia). In the EU, more attention to these visions was devoted after 2012 when the plans to build customs union and to further deepen economic integration in the Eurasian area started to clash with the preparation of the AA/DCFTAs with Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia.

⁷ Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. Approved by President of the Russian Federation V. Putin on 12 February 2013.

BOX 9

- In 2010, the customs union of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan was launched. The single economic area was in operation since January 2012 and the Eurasian Economic Union since 2015.
- The EAEU characterises itself as “an international organization for regional economic integration”. It has “international legal personality and is established by the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union. The EAEU provides for free movement of goods, services, capital and labour, pursues coordinated, harmonized and single policy in the sectors determined by the Treaty and international agreements within the Union.”
- An inspiration by the EU is visible on the institutional structure of the EAEU (Supreme Eurasian Economic Council composed of the heads of the EAEU Member States and deciding on the fundamental issues, strategies and areas for further integration; Eurasian Intergovernmental Council; Eurasian Economic Commission; The Court of the Eurasian Economic Union).
- Current (2018) member states are The Russian Federation, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia. The latter originally negotiated on the DCFTA with the EU but the president Sargsyan announced in September 2013 that the country would prefer to enter the Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Union.⁸

Source: Eurasian Economic Union, n.d.

EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION**BOX 10**

- At the EaP summit in Vilnius in November 2013, the AA/DCFTA with Ukraine was planned to be signed, while the AA/DCFTAs with Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia were planned to be initialled.
- In the end, only the AA/DCFTAs with Moldova and Georgia were initialled.
- The decision of Ukraine (represented by President Yanukovich's government) to interrupt the preparations of the agreement triggered the well-known 2013 events in Ukraine, including the so-called Revolution of Dignity, the Russian annexation of Crimea, and the beginning of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT IN VILNIUS (2013)

the enlargement of the Energy Community and even more with the creation of deep and comprehensive free trade zones with the CIS countries. These measures were often seen as one-sidedly imposed, not only on the countries in the neighbourhood but also on Russia and its important economic subjects in the energy markets of the countries involved.

To a certain extent, these expressions suggested that Russia would not see such development with full consent and without response.

According to the Foreign Policy Conception from 2013, the global recession showed “a constant decline” of the Western ability to “dominate world politics and economy” along with the shift of the

world power centre and development potential to the East to the Asia-Pacific area. An explicit emphasis was, again, put on the vision of the Eurasian Union as a bridge between Europe and the newly developing Asia-Pacific region.

While the EU was preparing for the EaP summit in Vilnius, the Russian president Putin came up with the idea of the Eurasian Economic Union as a future economic and political partner for the dialogue with

⁸ Commentators especially mentioned the topics of trade and energy dependency or the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the traditional alliance with Russia as the main reasons for the decision that represented a kind of prelude to the events surrounding the EaP summit in Vilnius in November 2013. See e.g. Emerson and Kostanyan 2013.

the EU. This happened at the EU-Russia summit in St Petersburg in 2012.⁹ With these plans, it was clear that the status of countries laying in-between the EU and the EAEU would become an issue.

The President of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Russian State Duma Pushkov classified the EU's efforts to tie countries like Ukraine with the agreements of the AA/DCFTA type as unsuccessful efforts to isolate Russia. "Russia directly impacted the summit in Vilnius and was its actual participant."¹⁰ In these words, it is possible to hear the perennial idea of the necessity for Russia to prevent becoming an object or second-category player both in the international and in the regional dimension. This was resonating in the thinking of the neo-/eurasianists, realists, and to a certain extent some of the new "westernisers" who have influenced the philosophy of the Russian foreign policy after the end of the Cold War.

After all, the message that Russia should gain a decent place in a new international configuration and become one of the "centres of influence of today's world" can also be found in the Foreign Policy Concept of the RF¹¹ approved in 2016. As for the Russian military doctrine that was approved at the end of 2014,¹² it openly says that the build-up of the power potential of NATO presents the main external military threat for Russia. In a direct reference to Ukraine, the doctrine condemns overthrowing legitimate state authorities and administration bodies and the establishment of such regimes in the states bordering the RF which threatens Russian interests. At the same time, the doctrine mentions the need of an "equitable dialogue on European security issues with the EU and NATO".

Similar ethos could be found in the background of the ambitious projects of the Pan-European or Euro-Atlantic/Euro-Asian collective security system (described in chapter 2.2), global systems of energy security protection, and regional integrational projects in Eurasia. The fear of the political, economic, and technological isolation of course made sense in the context of time. The Great Recession showed that the Russian economy was too dependent on the production of fossil fuels and their selling to Europe

which became a major issue in the context of the EU's policy of climate protection, diversification, and regulation in the energy area. At the same time, the "West" started to look for new ways to prosperity and economic growth by investing into new technologies, automation etc. The ambition to stay the "influential centre of the world" demanded either the effort to stay in touch with this technological development and to prevent isolation, or to create and develop one's own system of economic ties and norms and become a centre for that. (The latter way, of course, also strengthens one's bargaining power vis-a-vis the actors and structures who are economically and technologically more advanced.) There is also a possibility of a combination of both strategies and means.

In the framework of the Eastern Partnership, the EU was planning to build circles of free trade areas. The enhancement of bilateral cooperation with the post-Soviet countries was supposed to bring a further spread of the EU legal norms and regulative systems. These would affect Russian producers and suppliers without any means for Russia to influence the impact of such norms. There have also been advantages of such cooperation like the perspective of a dialogue about visa-free travel (initially accepted with caution by some EU member states, this process was paradoxically accelerated later with the events in Eastern Europe after 2013). This development (which had started already before 2013) led Russia to push on the EU to enhance the bilateral visa dialogue. To sum it up, in the overall context, the EU-Russia "strategic partnership" was gradually losing its special and advantageous character and started to seem like a placebo with no substantial correspondence to the Russian interests any more.

EU-Russia relations, of course, have not been suspended completely. There have been trilateral negotiations concerning the DCFTA between the EU and Ukraine and its impacts on Russia as well as trilateral negotiations about the security of supplies of gas transported over Ukraine. The European External Action Service as well as the High Representative regularly issue statements and declarations commenting on human rights issues and commemorating events connected with the Ukrainian conflict (like the prolongation of sanctions or the addition of particular people on the sanction list). There have also been several meetings between the EU's High Representative and the Russian Foreign

9 See Goncharenko 2012.

10 Interfax 2013.

11 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2016.

12 Министерство иностранных дел Российской Федерации 2015.

Russian foreign and security policy conceptions together with Putin's rhetoric showed that Russia started to put significant and strategic importance to economic interests and to the power connected with these interests. In that case, not only the expansion of foreign military alliances (as stated in the NSS 2020) but also the expansion of normative systems which might limit the interests of Russian economic actors in the areas of their "traditional" interests was now considered as potentially threatening and unwanted. Some commentators suggest that the EU probably underestimated both the Russian interests in the post-Soviet area and the situation in the countries with which EU was preparing new and ambitious agreements anticipating the adoption of more than 80% of the EU's *acquis communautaire*, mainly in internal market and linked fields. Especially the situation in Ukraine was (and still is) complicated in this respect, regarding the internal political, social, cultural and other divisions within the country, let alone its strategic and even symbolic importance for Russia.¹⁴ Together with highlighting the new vital interests for the 21st century in non-military, trade, and economic areas, Russia facing the events in Ukraine chose to use force as a response, a solution belonging rather to the Cold-War era of the 20th century. This was probably something what the EU and its representatives were not expecting at all. On the other hand, this blend of post-modern, modern, and quite "traditional" notions of power and instruments are quite typical for today's Russia as an international actor and must be considered both in analysis and in practical diplomacy.

Affairs Minister Lavrov (but of course no regular meeting on the summit level).

Trade relations between both actors continue to be very important. The EU (as in 2017) is still Russia's main trading and investment partner (despite the restrictive measures on both sides). Russia is the EU's fourth largest trade partner, notwithstanding the substantial drop in Russian general trade in recent years caused by their economic difficulties. (Especially in 2015 with the crisis of rouble and the fall of oil prices, as fossil fuels still represent the most important group of commodities imported from Russia to the

EU.¹⁵ Since 2016 the trade volume slowly grows, though.) Trade relations as well as the fact that Russia continues to be an important supplier of energy sources may still form a solid basis for future cooperation. On the other hand, the abolition of the current sanction measures without any substantial changes in the security situation in Ukraine would send another bad signal about the EU's position as a respectable international and regional actor.

On the other hand, there are numerous studies that try to analyse the impacts of the sanctions (especially from the economic point of view) both on the EU and on Russia.¹⁵ Yet they often omit that there are possible losses of other than economic character. For instance, the EU's measures towards Russia mean freezing of the dialogue about issues like visas (that were of high priority on the Russian side before 2013) and complications for possible cooperation in sharing modern technologies. But Ukraine does not present the only case of disputes between Russia and the West. The Ukrainian case somewhat retreated from the spotlight in recent years, in the shadow of such topics as the Russian involvement into the Syrian war and the Skripal case. But it keeps surfacing, especially in connection with military clashes and small-scale fights flaring up from time to time in Eastern Ukraine. Events like the recent killing of the separatist leader Zakharchenko may change the security and the diplomatic balance in the area any time.¹⁶

¹³ This is also the reason for the constant EU trade deficit with Russia. Even in 2015, when the trade volume was influenced by economic problems, the EU trade deficit was €61.9 billion (EU exports to Russia totaled €73.9 billion, while EU imports from Russia amounted to €135.8 billion). See EEAS 2017.

¹⁴ There are articles which suggest that despite the official recognition of independent Ukrainian state after 1991, Russia has never accepted this fact, citing the old quotation: "Without Ukraine, Russia is a country; with Ukraine, Russia is an empire." (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2015). At the same time, there could be found articles representing a purely Russian perspective that argue about the "true independence" of the country with deep socio-economic problems, oligarchic system penetrating the political-economic sphere and with foreign policy that makes the country more and more dependent on external assistance and support (MacDonald 2016).

¹⁵ See e.g. European Parliament, Directorate-General for External Policies 2017; Korhonen, Simola and Solanko 2018; Gros and Di Salvo 2017 etc.

¹⁶ After the assassination of the Head of the separatist Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) Alexander Zakharchenko, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov said at the beginning of September 2018 that another meeting of the Normandy format after his death would be inappropriate, when neither Germany, nor France officially expressed any condemnation of the assassination (interfax-Ukraine 2018).

BOX 11**EU sanctions against Russia**

- » Initial measures were introduced as a reaction to the annexation of Crimea in spring 2014.
- » Later, during the summer and autumn 2014, the restrictive measures were extended, especially after the events in eastern Ukraine (in connection with the inflow of fighters and weapons from the Russian territory and after the tragedy of the Malaysia Airlines *flight MH17 which happened in July 2014*).
- » The measures have been regularly prolonged and the EU keeps linking the possibility of their abolishment with the progress of the implementation of the so-called Minsk agreements negotiated in September 2014 and February 2015.

- **The sanctions against Russia include:**

- Diplomatic measures*

- » suspension of the dialogue about visa liberalisation between the EU and Russia
 - » suspension of the preparation of the new EU-Russia agreement
 - » suspension of majority of programmes of cooperation, both bilateral and regional
 - » suspension of EU-Russia summits

- Individual measures*

- » asset freezes and visa bans against people and entities, organisations, armed groups, state enterprises etc.

- Measures considering Crimea and Sevastopol*

- » Trade bans (import bans on products from Crimea and Sevastopol which do not bear the certificate of the Ukrainian origin; ban on export to Crimea for goods and technologies in transport, telecom, and energy sectors;
 - » Investment ban for EU companies
 - » Prohibition of EU operators from offering tourism services in Crimea

- Bans on trade in arms*

- » Export and import ban on trade in arms
 - » Export ban on goods for military use

- Measures in the economy and energy sphere*

- » Limited access to EU capital markets for long term loans
 - » EIB and EBRD suspended financing of new operations in the RF
 - » Curtailed access to certain sensitive technologies in the energy sphere (particularly in the oil sector)

Russian countermeasures

- As a response to the sanctions imposed on Russia not only by the EU but also by some other countries (e.g. USA, Canada, Australia, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Ukraine), Russia imposed ban of imports of certain agriculture and food products
- The banned import includes beef and pork of all kinds, poultry and poultry products, smoked food (incl. sausages), milk and milk products including raw milk and all foodstuff containing milk, fish, vegetables, and fruits

Minsk agreements

- The first Minsk Protocol was signed in September 2014 at the meeting of a trilateral contact group comprising the representatives from Ukraine, Russia, and OSCE (as an actor responsible for monitoring of the implementation of the protocol). It demanded immediate bilateral ceasefire, the withdrawal of illegal armed groups and military equipment as well as fighters and mercenaries from Ukraine, decentralising power in Eastern Ukrainian regions of Luhansk and Donetsk, monitoring the Ukrainian-Russian border by OSCE, and the creation of security zones in the border regions
- The terms of the Protocol were violated by separatists within less than a month. Then, after the escalation of the conflict in winter 2014/2015, another agreement was negotiated in Minsk in February 2015.
- The agreement to end fighting in eastern Ukraine was signed by the leaders of Germany, France, Russia, and Ukraine. It again demands the ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weapons and foreign-armed formations, weapons and mercenaries from Ukrainian territory, and the disarmament of all illegal groups. At the same time, it calls for a

constitutional reform to enable the decentralisation of separatist regions and the restoration of Ukrainian border controls with Russia. The provisions of the Minsk Agreement were supposed to be fulfilled before the end of 2015, but this has not happened up to now. Critics often point out to several persisting problems which include numerous examples of a breach of the ceasefire on both sides and difficulties in the promotion of new legislation concerning decentralisation and election laws for the territories controlled by the separatists on the Ukrainian political scene. And finally, there is also unwillingness to withdraw heavy weapons from the line of contact.

- The EU presents the fulfilment of Minsk agreements as a condition for the potential abolition of the sanctions.

Normandy format or Normandy Contact Group

- An informal diplomatic format for negotiations of the situation in Eastern Ukraine and possible solutions to the conflict.
- The group consists mainly of the representatives of four countries: Russia, Ukraine, France, and Germany. The negotiations take place both on the highest level but also on the level of ministries. Besides the personal meetings, there have also been telephone calls between the leaders of the countries or their foreign ministers.
- It was formed in June 2014 on the occasion of the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Normandy where many European leaders took part (including the German Chancellor Merkel, the Russian President Putin, the French President Hollande, and the Ukrainian President Poroshenko).
- The EU officially supported both the diplomatic efforts within the Normandy Format and within the Trilateral Contact Group which was also established to achieve a political solution of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. The Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine consists of the representatives of the RF and Ukraine, with OSCE as a mediator.

Sources: European Council. Council of the European Union 2018, Pifer 2017; European Parliament 2015; Casier and DeBardeleben 2017; European Commission 2016

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The conflict in Ukraine influenced the EU-Russia relations. Shortly after the beginning of the 21st century, these relations transformed into a combination of strategic partnership attempts that touched upon problems in bilateral relations, both latent and explicit, especially in the context of the EU Eastern enlargement, as discussed on the previous pages. There have been critical moments (some of them identified above) when the Russian interests clashed with the European normative system and EU's ambitions in the neighbourhood. The cooling of mutual relations thus cannot be surprising, although the accompanying measures (i.e. sanctions, no summits since January 2014) as well as the circumstances (security situation in the Eastern Europe, the information war atmosphere) have been unprecedented.

EU tried to play an active role in Ukraine in those areas that have a direct relation to its policies. It is actively present there, especially through the process of the AA/DCFTA implementation. Since December 2014, the EU has also been deploying a civilian advisory mission in Ukraine (EUAM) with the aim to assist the reform of the civilian security sector. But the mission, of course, does not involve in any direct way in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Despite the appeals from the Ukrainian representatives, especially in the first months and years of the conflict, for a peacekeeping, military mission would be needed which would operate directly in the conflict area and monitor the Ukrainian-Russian border.¹⁷

It might be alarming for the reputation of the EU as an international and regional actor that the negotiations about the situation in Eastern Ukraine and potential solutions of the conflict have been held in the so-called Normandy Format, usually with the participation of the French, German, Ukrainian,

¹⁷ See e.g. EUObserver 2015.

ale Russian representatives, or in the format of the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine (Russia – Ukraine – OSCE), i.e. without a direct participation of key representatives of the EU's CFSP. The EU has officially fully supported these formats. The exclusion of the EU might be a symptom of several tendencies, though:

- 1) Bilateralism as a long-term characteristic of the Russian foreign policy in relation to Europe. Russia simply prefers dealing with particular (important) EU member states to the official representatives of the EU. Nothing has changed even after the Lisbon Treaty reforms in the CFSP area in this respect.
- 2) It may also show some persisting unease of key Russian representatives (including president Putin) as to the acceptance of the EU-28 as an organisation, its rules, and aspirations in the foreign and security policy area. The enlarged EU brings a possibility that the key representatives will not come from the “leading” member states. They may even come from those states with which Russia has had complicated relations (like Poland), characterised by “colder” periods with serious disputes followed by attempts to improve diplomatic relations. It is also an organisation with leaders changing regularly in their offices which again could be less acceptable for a leader who prefers building of long-time personal relations with his counterparts.

3.3 PROBLEM OF MUTUAL MISTRUST, “INFORMATION WAR” AND REMINISCENCES OF THE COLD WAR

When we speak about a new understanding of power and about new types of conflicts, it is necessary to mention one more significant dimension of current problems of the EU-Russia relations: The problem of mutual mistrust, “information war”, the employment of “hybrid threats”, and some non-military instruments which mix old (Cold-War) motivations, methods, and discourse with the possibilities brought about by modern technologies that are “available to anybody”.

This phenomenon is also linked to the internal development in Russia after 2012. It is possible to notice growing tendencies to limit pluralism in public

¹⁸ Bretherton and Vogler 1999.

All this shows on the one hand the existing problems in the compatibility of the EU and Russia as international actors. On the other hand, it also shows problems of the EU's “actorness” in the international dimension as such.

In 1999, Bretherton and Vogler identified several requisites for actorness:¹⁹ the shared commitment to certain principles and values; the ability to identify policy priorities and to formulate coherent policies; the ability to effectively negotiate with other actors in the international system; the availability and capacity to utilise policy instruments; domestic legitimation of the decision processes and priorities in the external policy. And finally, possessing external perception and recognition as a *relevant* actor of international politics represents another, special external requisite of actorness. The example of factual non-participation of key representatives of the EU's CFSP at the negotiations about the resolution of the Ukrainian conflict shows that despite the Lisbon reform, the EU's actorness in the international arena still has limits.

and political life. A typical example is the so-called “foreign agent” law from 2012¹⁹ which is targeted at non-profit organisations that receive financial support from abroad and engage in political activities. Even more harsh is the Federal Law of 23.05.2015 N 129-FZ “On amendments of some legislative acts of the Russian Federation”²⁰ according to which some foreign and international organisations operating within the RF may even be declared “undesirable” and shut down. In case they do not abort their “undesirable” activities, they may be fined, and their representatives and sympathisers in Russia may even be arrested. The latest example of such a regulation is the Russian law concerning the registration of foreign

¹⁹ Федеральный закон от 23.05.2015 № 129-ФЗ “О внесении изменений в отдельные законодательные акты Российской Федерации”.

²⁰ Full name: Federal law “On Amendments to Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation regarding the Regulation of the Activities of Non-profit Organisations Performing the Functions of a Foreign Agent”. (Федеральный закон О внесении изменений в отдельные законодательные акты Российской Федерации в части регулирования деятельности некоммерческих организаций, выполняющих функции иностранного агента).

media operating in the RF as “foreign agents”²¹ signed by president Putin in 2017.²²

Examples of the oppression of various opposition figures or simply common people who present inconvenient information on the regime, the real conditions of life in Russia, and its political system in negative light are numerous. For instance, we may mention the death of Sergei Magnitsky, a tax accountant who uncovered a \$230 million fraud involving Russian tax officials. Mr Magnitsky died in 2009 after a mistreatment in a Moscow prison after being falsely accused of committing the fraud himself. There have been cases of detention of such opposition leaders like the former chess champion Garri Kasparov, the investigations and sentences against Alexei Navalny, and the case of the murder of Boris Nemtsov in 2015 to name just the most well-known.²³

Activities of the opposition figures on social media as well as events surrounding the Ukrainian conflict highlighted the importance of the internet (cyberspace) from the security and political point of view. In 2016, already amid of what is sometimes called the “information war” related to the events and conflicts in the Eastern Europe since 2013, the Russian government launched the new Doctrine of the Information Security of the Russian Federation. It explicitly discusses the information sphere as another sphere of national security where Russia has its national interests. It mentions such things as the protection against internal and external information threats, specific measures and structures invented to address the information security issues, and “applying information technologies to ensure the national security of the Russian Federation in the sphere of culture”, “promoting the interests of the Russian Federation’s allies in information sphere”, and “countervailing information and psychological actions, including those aimed at undermining

the historical foundations and patriotic traditions related to defending the homeland”.²⁴

In case of the current Russia – EU (or more broadly Russia and the “West”) relations, this negative element has been strengthened in the context of the Ukrainian conflict. Some authors openly speak about this conflict as a case of a modern “hybrid war” accompanied by a massive employment of the “information war” instruments.²⁵ They point out to the so-called Gerasimov doctrine, named after the current Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Army and the first Deputy Defence Minister. The doctrine puts emphasis on the importance of information as non-military means that might play crucial role in current conflicts. An escalation of the employment of military means in conflicts that involve nuclear powers could lead to a massive destruction. In this situation, various psychological and asymmetric methods of fighting may lead to achieving political goals at the cost of smaller material losses (compared to conventional conflicts). And such instruments as propaganda, subversion, misuse, and manipulating the protest potential of the population in different countries may also support the usage of conventional methods of fighting and the achievement of particular goals.

There is a polemic about the usage and meaningfulness of such “new” concepts as a hybrid war or an information war, whether these really exist and do not label something which has been a natural dimension and an accompanying element of military conflicts since the ancient times. Experts also deliberate what the so-called Gerasimov doctrine really means, whether it is a phase of preparation for a military conflict (which of course would not be anything new) or if it rather means a new kind of fighting in war itself.²⁶ The truth is that especially after the outbreak of the Ukrainian conflict, these terms have been spreading to the media, analytical texts, and academic literature. Various analyses²⁷ could be found focusing on different kinds of media manipulation, propagandist strategies, and influencing public opinion by fake news spread through various

21 The EU openly condemned this law with the Statement by the Spokesperson of the EEAS. (EEAS 2017)

22 On the other hand, some authors mention that these “foreign agents” legislative measures have been inspired by similar measures found in other, even Western countries. They especially mention the U.S. Foreign Agent Registration Act. For the polemic with discourse, see e.g. Pavlíková and Mareš 2017.

23 Despite the conviction and sentence of five Chechen men in connection with the murder, the real background of the crime still stays unclear. See e.g. BBC News 2017.

24 Doctrine of the Information Security of the Russian Federation. Approved by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 646 of December 5, 2016.

25 E.g. Rácz 2015.

26 See Galeotti 2018.

27 See e.g. Bērziņš 2014; Lucas and Pomeranzev 2016; Giles 2016; Paul and Matthews 2016 etc.

means (social media, hoaxes, paid trolling, degrading e-mails targeted against people etc.). And there also are numerous suspicions that the Russian government has sponsored the above-mentioned activities to influence the political and public discourse in selected countries, the public attitude to various events, and even elections or referenda in several countries (from the USA and Western Europe to former Soviet CEE satellites to countries like Moldova). A potential Russian sponsoring of such political parties as Marine Le Pen's Front National and some other political movements with strongly Eurosceptic platforms is just another example.²⁸

To fight with disinformation campaigns and fake news, especially in connection with the Ukrainian conflict, the European Council tasked the High Representative to submit an Action Plan on Strategic Communication in cooperation with other EU institutions in March 2015. In accordance with the objectives of the Action Plan, the special East StratCom Task Force was established as the main instrument to promote EU policies in the Eastern Neighbourhood and also to "address and respond to disinformation activities by external actors".²⁹ The East StratCom Task Force is supposed not only to "report on and analyse disinformation trends" but also to develop its own campaigns aimed to explain the EU activities and policies in the EaP countries. Moreover, similar structures, centres, and groups for monitoring and revealing of disinformation and hybrid threats are have been set up in recent years in member states, e.g. the Centre against terrorism and hybrid threats was set up in 2017 as a special office at the Czech Ministry of Interior.

On the other hand, if we look at articles and commentaries in Russian media, like the TV Channel Russia Today's website³⁰ or the news agency Sputnik (former RIA Novosti), both financed by the Russian government, we could find a somewhat similar picture, just mirrored. A typical example could be the case of the attempted murder of Sergei Skripal (who worked in the past as a double agent for both Russian and British secret services) and his daughter Yulia. They were poisoned by a nerve agent of Novichok type in Salisbury in March 2018. British authorities expressed suspicion that the nerve agent as well as the possible offender came from Russia. The UK and some other countries both within and outside the EU subsequently expelled a certain number of Russian diplomats. The Russian side and their media (including Sputnik and Russia Today, which operate in English and have thus the potential to address the audience all over the world) were portraying these steps as a part of a systematic anti-Russian campaign and as a series of false accusations coming from the West against Russia.

28 See e.g. Laruelle, Krekó, Györi, Haller and Reichstad 2015.

29 EEAS 2017.

30 Russia Today was directly established by the Russian government in 2005 as a TV channel with one of the main aims targeted at the "improvement of Russian image in the world".

The current atmosphere is thus characterised by mutual blaming and zero-sum-game thinking that could evoke a “new Cold-War”, although it is necessary to be cautious with using such terms. The “information war” led with modern communication means, e.g. social media that are available to anybody, evokes the impression that the “battlefield” is everywhere and almost everybody behind a computer screen may become a “soldier” (who helps, sometimes unintentionally, to spread the disinformation) or a “victim” (a target and addressee of the disinformation). To a certain extent, this atmosphere should be understood as a reflection of our time. Information technologies have changed a lot: on the one hand, they can be misused quite easily in the above-mentioned ways, on the other hand, the border between protection against modern “hybrid threats” and unwanted control or even restriction of the freedom of speech is quite thin. It is one of the most serious dilemmas of today’s democratic states to find an acceptable, democratic, and liberal balance between these two requirements (in the true sense of these terms).

Another alarming thing is that liberal democracy as a system and regime is seriously vulnerable to this sort of contemporary threats. The current structure of the EU also plays a role in this danger, with its problematic and criticised features (like the bureaucratic and technocratic character, over-regulation, and feeling of disconnection from the lives of ordinary people, regardless the amount of injustice in this accusation). The EU probably failed to “take roots in the hearts and minds” of its people (as Coudenhove-Kalergi required in the past),³¹ at least in some EU member states, a soft spot which could be easily misused in various propaganda campaigns. The way out of this vicious circle is quite complicated. The effort to reveal possible fake news and teach readers to critically assess their information sources is extremely important in the current digital age. On the other hand, resorting to self-propaganda could be counterproductive.

³¹ See e.g. Stirk 2016.

WHAT SHOULD EU DO AS AN ACTOR? PROBLEM OF THE EU'S EXTERNAL POLICY COHERENCE

To generate recommendations what the EU should do as an actor and what policy options it currently has in relation to Russia, it is necessary to understand its special character and its unique manifestations in relation to Russia.

4.1 VERTICAL COHERENCE OF THE EU: ONE FOREIGN POLICY OR 29 FOREIGN POLICIES?

The problem of EU's actorness in the international relations system results from its special character. EU as an organisation is based on pooling sovereignty of its members, with some additional specifics in the Common Foreign and Security Policy. The development of the integration process in the areas of foreign policy and security has been different in comparison to, say, the external trade policy. It has been marked with unsuccessful attempts to build a supranational entity (e.g. the failed projects of European Defence Community and European Political Community in the 1950s) or with intergovernmental projects failing because of the reservations of the Community members fearing that stronger member states would aspire to dominate the organisation (e.g. the so-called Fouchet projects of Political Union initiated by de Gaulle's France in the 1960s). And even today, more than 25 years after the establishment of the European Union, the rather intergovernmental character of the CFSP has been preserved (especially due to unanimity as the prevailing decision-making principle, mainly in the security and defence area, due to the way of engagement of EU institutions into the policy-making process etc.). This continues to be the case despite important reforms and changes brought by the Lisbon Treaty.

On the other hand, this preservation of the intergovernmental character often clashes with the EU's aspirations to achieve the so-called vertical coherence, that is an "overall consensus or common position at the Union level"¹ and a coherence of the real foreign policy positions and actions of the EU member states with this common position. This often evokes the question whether we may speak about one unified, visible, and coherent policy in the EU CFSP at all, or rather about 29 different "foreign policies", i.e. foreign policies of (still) 28 EU member states plus one "formally unified" EU Common Foreign Policy. This problem becomes even more visible in case of sensitive and complex relations with such world powers as the Russian Federation where the member states follow their specific external policies influenced by their security and economic interests and historical experience. Therefore, both specific interests of some EU member states in trade relations or energy policy and a rather cautious approach of other member states based on their historical experience must be considered.

At the same time, the reality is not black and white. It would be oversimplified and false to see a clear dichotomy between "pro-Russian" and "Russo-phobic" countries in the current EU. The reality is more variable and heterogeneous. Already in 2007, Mark Leonard and Nicu Popescu published their influential study where they divided (back then) 27 EU member states into no fewer than five categories according to their external policies and relations to

¹ Gebhard 2017: 129

Russia in the overall context of the EU foreign policy.² Of course, Leonard and Popescu mostly reflected the situation in the EU in relation to Russia before such important events like the Russian-Georgian war in 2008, the Ukrainian gas crisis in 2009, the annexation of Crimea and the events in eastern Ukraine coming in 2014, and later, the Skripal case in 2018. All these issues have influenced the relations to Russia, not only of the EU but also of the member states. But even before these events, there were certain long-term tendencies in the external policy conduct of states which demonstrated a disunity and existence of multiple directions in the EU policy towards Russia. Several factors must be considered if we explore the foreign policies of the European states towards Russia. The factor of energy security is just one of them. On the one hand, there has been an important cooperation of some EU countries and their energy companies (Gaz de France, Total, ENI, ÖMV) with Russian companies like Gazprom or Rosneft (significant shares of which are held by the Russian state). Gas and oil transport projects have been planned and realised, which required or supposed a close cooperation between Russia and other European states: These include the Nord Stream and Nord Stream II (with the participation of Germany), the South Stream (with a significant involvement of Italy, Greece, and Bulgaria), the Burgas-Alexandroupolis (Greece, Bulgaria) etc. On the other hand, the factor of a relatively high dependency on the Russian energy resources in some EU countries (Hungary, Slovakia, and Bulgaria as just the most prominent ones) is another important fact which needs to be considered. And it is not just a problem of traditional fossil fuels like gas and oil. Russian nuclear fuel and technologies are no less important issues for those Central and Eastern European countries where nuclear energy constitutes an important part of their energy mix and in the countries planning new projects in this area (Hungary, the Czech Republic).

Not only the energy security but also the general economic context of political relations plays a major role in case of Russia. Already during the first decade of the 21st century, Germany represented the

Russia's largest trading partner as well as the "most important market for the Russian gas".³ Cyprus, one of the smallest EU member states, has represented both "the hub for Russian offshore companies" and "formally the biggest investor in Russia"⁴ which should definitely not be underestimated. And this is not just a question of European energy giants but also of European financial or banking companies operating on the Russian market (e.g. Austrian banks).

In sum, there are various and diverse interests of European state and non-state actors in relation to Russia which complicate significantly the possibility of the articulation and observance of a common position, especially in sensitive cases. And there is one another important element: In Chapter 2, I already mentioned the strategy of bilateralisation as a specific instrument of the Russian foreign policy in relation to Europe and the EU. It means a tendency to build warmer political relations with selected individual countries, both in Eastern and Western Europe, through approaching state representatives inclined for various reasons to support and share the Russian positions in the international politics. These attempts started already in the second half of 1990s with the era of the minister and later prime minister Primakov and it has been particularly upgraded after 2000 with Vladimir Putin as the Russian president. The examples include quite warm relations between Russia and France in times of the presidency of Jacques Chirac as well as with Germany during the times of Chancellor Schroeder. The "special relations" were manifested e.g. by the French opposition to the American hegemony and to "unilateral steps" of the USA in the international politics which were also criticised by Russia.⁵ It is also possible to mention the cordial personal relations between President Putin and some European politicians in the early 2000s (with an example of the Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi who defended the conduct of the Russian government in the Chechnya war). There have also been both "older" and "newer" EU member states which simply shared the Russian positions to various issues because of their internal reasons (this is the case of countries which had not officially recognised Kosovo's independence, like Spain or Slovakia). Moreover, there

2 "Trojan horses" comprising Greece and Cyprus; "strategic partners" including Germany, France, Italy, and Spain; "friendly pragmatists" consisting of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Portugal; "frosty pragmatists": the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Sweden, Romania, and the United Kingdom; "new Cold-warriors" represented that time by Poland and Lithuania. Leonard and Popescu 2007.

3 Ibid.: 34.

4 Ibid.: 29.

5 A typical example is Chirac's critique of the involvement of some EU candidate countries from Central and Eastern Europe in the US lead coalition operation in Iraq in 2003. Smith 2003.

have been the approval of the Russian conduct in relation to some post-Soviet countries expressed by the representatives of other EU countries (e.g. Spain's conformity with the Russian conduct in Georgia before the war in 2008). And let us not forget the initially colder position of some EU countries (Cyprus, Spain, Austria, Italy, and even France) to the EU's policy of strengthening relations with the countries of the Eastern neighbourhood.⁶

On the other hand, there were visible disputes between some EU member states and Russia and cases of foreign or security policy steps incompatible with the Russian interests, even before 2014. It is possible to name the already mentioned clashes surrounding the US missile shield project which especially concerned the Czech Republic and Poland. Another set of problems concerned the policies supporting human rights protection and democracy promotion in post-Soviet states (the "near abroad" as seen from Russia), including Russia itself, and the programmes of EU's support to the Eastern neighbourhood (the Eastern Partnership programme). States like Poland, Baltic states, Sweden or the Czech Republic were among the visible supporters of these policies. Some other specific disputes include energy issues (between Russia and some Central and Eastern European states, like disputes concerning oil supply to the Baltics), problems with Russian-speaking minorities and their civil rights (again especially in Baltic states), and historical burdens (in Poland, Baltic countries, Romania, and partially also the Czech Republic and Hungary). And even long before the Ukrainian conflict or the Skripal case, there were examples of bilateral problems and disputes with Russia concerning the so-called hybrid threats (cyber-attacks, spying affairs), strange cases of deaths of Russian expats within the EU territory etc. The examples include Estonia (cyber-attacks in 2007) and the UK (in connection with the murder of Mr Litvinenko etc.; Leonard – Popescu, 2007: 43-49).

4.1.1 RUSSIA: A PARTNER OR A PROBLEM FOR EU COUNTRIES? (THE WESTERN-EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE)

The Ukrainian crisis and the events of 2014 and following years had an undeniable effect not only on the EU-Russia relations but also on the relations between individual EU members and Russia. A relative consensus on the sanctions policy is one of the rare

examples of the EU's ability to achieve a unified position despite the divergence of member states' policies towards Russia (Orenstein and Kelemen 2017). On the other hand, a deeper analysis shows that the reality has not been so clear as the positions of the member states towards Russia differ substantially. Gediminas Vitkus who made another attempt to categorise the EU countries according to their positions towards Russia on the EU level (after the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis) identified a group of "hawks", i.e. "constant critiques of Russia" which is a somewhat broader category than the previous group of "new Cold-warriors" identified by Leonard and Popescu. Besides of Poland and Lithuania, this group also includes Romania, Estonia, and Latvia where the cautious attitude towards Russia is caused by their negative experience with the Russian aggression (according to Vitkus).⁷

Yet there are other EU members with a different historic experience whose relations to Russia have got colder in recent years. Vitkus mentions especially Sweden which has always been active in human rights affairs, criticising authoritarian tendencies in contemporary Russia. On top of that, the recent growth of tensions between both states is connected with the Swedish concerns about Russian military activities in Eastern Europe and also in the Baltic Sea area which has inspired Sweden, the country staying outside NATO, to increase its defence budget.⁸ Another Western European country, touched by the Ukrainian conflict in an unexpected way, is the Netherlands, which was significantly hit by the tragedy of the Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 in July 2014. And finally, the UK case cannot be omitted. Despite the Brexit process, it still officially remains the EU member state with an interesting and often complicated development of relations to Russia after the Cold War. While it was possible to see some attempts to build the "strategic partnership" in the economic sphere in the era of Prime Minister Tony Blair (as a part of an overall effort of Putin's Russia in the first decade of the 21st century to establish mutually beneficial relationships with Western-European states, especially in economic, trade, and energy areas), it was impossible to overlook the controversial points and tensions connected with the efforts. These especially concerned the British position on several international security issues (the British

⁶ Leonard and Popescu 2007.

⁷ Vitkus 2015

⁸ See e.g. RFE/RL 2018.

role in the Iraqi war, UK's support of further NATO enlargement and building new relations between NATO and countries like Georgia and Ukraine, or a rather cold stance of the UK to the proposals of the Russian president Medvedev concerning a new security architecture in Europe).⁹

In 2008, there was a rhetorical and diplomatic dispute related to the Georgian-Russian war (that time minister of foreign affairs Milliband was criticising Russia for a "one-sided attempt to redraw the borders in the post-Soviet area"¹⁰, the Russian conduct was also sharply criticised by the prospective conservative Prime Minister Cameron). Other sources of tensions related to several examples of the refusal of the British to extradite requested people to Russia (like the former representative of the unrecognised Chechen Republic of Ichkeria Akhmed Zakayev and former Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky who committed suicide under suspicious circumstances in his exile in London in 2013). And then there were of course the well-known cases of poisoning of former Russian agents (Alexander Litvinenko, who died in 2006, and the latest affair surrounding the attempt to poison Sergei Skripal and his daughter in 2018). In the energy sphere, there were disputes between British Petrol and Gazprom concerning the gas condensate field in Siberian Kovykta.¹¹ The history of recent British-Russian relations is thus a mix of attempts to cooperate (not only in economic and financial areas) and moments of disputes, mostly resulting from both diverse perspectives on international security affairs (with the Middle East, Syria, and the Russian policy in the post-Soviet area as the most prominent examples) and the so-called hybrid threats. The Skripal case and the rhetorical and information war surrounding it may serve as the most recent illustration.

A complicated and often ambivalent development of relations with Russia after 1991 may also be observed in Germany and France. We already mentioned the periods of "special relations" and personal sympathies between Russian and German key representatives. There were quite good personal relations between the former Russian president Yeltsin and the

⁹ Leonard and Popescu 2007.

¹⁰ Borger and Traynor 2008.

¹¹ BP complained about pressures on the British-Russian joint venture TNK-BP. These pressures reportedly led to the final decision of the BP to sell its interests in Kovykta field to Gazprom in 2007 and resign from the previous plans to develop the field for a lucrative export of gas to Asian markets. (Bergin and Mosolova 2007)

former German Chancellor Kohl (with some sources mentioning that Kohl was the closest Western leader to president Yeltsin in the 1990s).¹² Moreover, the former German Chancellor Schroeder¹³ (after leaving the position in German government) even became a chairman of the board of the Nord Stream AG consortium¹⁴ and of Rosneft, an oil company 50% controlled by the Russian state. This was of course heavily criticised; the word "*Schroederism*"¹⁵ even became a symbol of this "Russia first" or "Russia-Big-Friend" policy, often supported by personal positions or interests of certain politicians, a typical thing of big European countries like Schroeder's Germany, Chirac's France, and Berlusconi's Italy.

The situation somewhat changed in Germany after the accession of the grand coalition government of the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats in 2005. In individual cabinet members coming from different ideological camps, it was often possible to observe differing perspectives on the future of the German policy towards Russia.¹⁶ On the other hand, Germany has always been one of Russia's most important trade partners due to German exports to Russia and their imports of Russian energy resources (especially gas). Certain tensions in the mutual political relations in the era of minister Westerwelle (2009-2013) were caused e.g. by his open support to the Belarusian opposition and the Ukrainian opposition against president Yanukovich in 2013.¹⁷

¹² Stanley 1996.

¹³ The cooperation between Schroeder and Putin manifested itself not only in energy projects like the Nord Stream but also (maybe surprisingly to somebody) in the foundation of the so-called Petersburg Dialog at the beginning of the 21st century, a forum for a promotion of a dialogue and deeper understanding between Germany and Russia and a dialogue between civil societies in both countries. The existence of the forum and its regular meetings continues until these days. (Petersburger Dialog, n.d.)

¹⁴ The constructor and operator of the Nord Stream gas pipeline, the building of which Schroeder promoted during his period as a chancellor.

¹⁵ Shevtsova 2010.

¹⁶ For instance, the current German president and former Minister of Foreign Affairs Steinmeier (SPD) used to be supporting the policy of cooperation and integration while Chancellor Merkel had more cautious approach and her relations to president Putin have always been more reserved than compared to her predecessor Schroeder. Cautious approach to Russia and the tendency to put more emphasis on human rights, democracy promotion, and the support for the EU's development policy in the Eastern neighbourhood were even more visible in the foreign policy of Steinmeier's successor, minister Westerwelle (FPD).

¹⁷ The Russians criticised this open support expressed not only by the German minister Westerwelle but by the Polish Minister

Nevertheless, there were attempts to cooperate, even in the security area, including the era of Chancellor Merkel. An example from a group of half-forgotten initiatives from this area is the so-called Meseberg Process, a proposal to establish an EU-Russia Political and Security Policy Committee which was supposed to deal with problems of the European security, like frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet area (including the conflict in Transnistria).¹⁸ The impulse for the initiative came from Germany during the Medvedev's era (2008-2012). These years were marked not only by the Russian-Georgian war and the Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis but also by attempts to give new impulses to the Russia – EU cooperation (such as the Partnership for modernization, see chapter 2.1).

After the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis, Germany started to play the role of a de facto leader defining the common EU policy towards Russia (Vitkus 2015). It has also been a participant in the Normandy contact group for the resolution of the Eastern Ukraine conflict. This means that despite the apparently colder atmosphere (with a mark in mutual relations between the leaders of both countries), Russia keeps recognising Germany as one of the most important EU members and leaders of the European foreign policy (regardless the existence of structures and offices that should officially represent the EU's CFSP).¹⁹

As for the current policy towards Russia, the German government tries to keep a relatively stable political position to the Ukrainian situation, current sanctions against Russia, and the official EU position as to the observation of the Minsk agreements. On the other hand, top-level bilateral negotiations on the controversial project of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline continue, one of the prominent recent topics. The gas pipeline should link Germany and Russia through maritime zones of Finland, Sweden, and Denmark. The construction works started on the German side

of Foreign Affairs Sikorski as an intrusion into the internal affairs of a sovereign state and a provocation of riots against legally elected government in Ukraine. See Reuters 2013.

¹⁸ The critics of this initiative pointed out to the danger that the potential establishment of that structure would de facto open the doors for Russia to decision-making on European security. See Socor 2010.

¹⁹ Especially the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and (to a certain extent) also the President of the European Council who is supposed to „ensure the external representation of the Union on issues concerning its common foreign and security policy, without prejudice to the powers of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy” (Article 15 of the Treaty on European Union).

in 2018, while Poland, Baltic states, and Ukraine together with the European Commission²⁰ criticise its construction – not so much because of the political problems in the mutual EU-Russia relations but rather as a matter of concerns that the energy security of Ukraine and other EU member countries might be endangered. All these facts illustrate that it would be really oversimplifying to attribute a certain characteristic, “unified”, and even invariable position towards Russia to individual EU countries. It is necessary to consider the differing positions on their internal political scene, different interests external policy activities, and the overall context.

France is an example of a European country characterised by bilateral cooperation in the economic, financial, industrial, trade, and energy areas in its recent relations with Russia.²¹ The above-standard political ties during the Chirac's era were already mentioned, based on more or less shared preferences for the concept of a multipolar world where the American influence should be counter-balanced by other world powers. Chirac's France was one of the main promoters of the development of a more independent ESDP where the French found a common stance at the turn of the 21st century with the Russian representatives. At this time, both countries also found a common ground in the issue of the fight against terrorism. The new Russian president Putin often defended widely criticised proceedings in the Chechen war using the argument of an anti-terrorist operation while the French President Chirac inclined to recognise the Chechen conflict as Russia's internal affair.²²

The entry of the new French president Sarkozy into office in 2007 provoked concerns on the Russian side that Sarkozy would promote closer cooperation with the USA as a foreign policy priority of his government. However, the emphasis on the need of cooperation with Russia did not diminish with the new French president in the end. There definitely was more cautiousness, for instance in the response to the already mentioned President Medvedev's proposal to build a new “pan-European” security pact (see chapter 2.1). On the other hand, it is necessary to take into account that during this very presidency

²⁰ See Rettman 2018.

²¹ The cooperation between the Gaz de France company and Gazprom concerning energy projects both within and outside of Europe; the attempts to cooperate in the automobile industry, financial sector, and even in research and space.

²² Leonard and Popescu 2007.

France and Russia signed the controversial contract on selling two Mistral warships to Russia (in 2011). And it was Sarkozy's France who presided the EU during the Georgian-Russian war in 2008.²³ It is also worth mentioning in this respect that France usually had a quite reserved position to the EU's engagement in the Eastern neighbourhood. President Sarkozy did not take part at the Prague summit in May 2009 where the Eastern Partnership programme was established. France preferred the development of the southern dimension of the EU's neighbourhood instead (the French initiative to establish the Union for the Mediterranean in 2008 was one of the most illustrative steps in this direction). The reasons were obvious: their long-term geopolitical and economic interests and their colonial past. A preference for decent relations with Russia were playing a role in their foreign policy as well, though. The situation changed before 2013 when the outcomes of crises in the eurozone, together with a certain disillusion with a worsening security situation in the Mashrek and Maghreb countries, led some Western and Southern European states to revise their priorities in the EU neighbourhood policy. Then, they started to devote more attention to the preparation of association agreements and free trade agreements (DCFTAs) with some post-Soviet states (especially Ukraine but also Moldova, Georgia, and even Armenia). The French President Hollande took part at the Vilnius Eastern Partnership summit in 2013 where the association agreements with Ukraine and two other countries of the EaP were supposed to be signed.²⁴

When the Ukrainian crisis fully broke out, followed by the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in the East, France backed up Germany in the formulation of the sanctions and supported them during the

²³ The French diplomatic intervention in summer 2008 has been praised as a "great moment" of the French diplomacy which contributed to the quick end of the hot phase of the conflict and prevented its escalation. It involved personal meetings between the French president and the Russian representatives (Medvedev and Putin) leading to the six-point plan for the ceasefire. But the role of the French president was also criticised. The critics pointed out that he sometimes adopted the Russian rhetoric and the Russian stance in the conflict and they also emphasised that the EU's mediation did not prevent the occupation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia by Russian troops (who are controlling both areas until now). See Aver 2011.

²⁴ At the summit in Vilnius, the EU signed the AAs/DCFTAs with Moldova and Georgia. The Ukrainian government of president Yanukovich announced several days before the summit that the signature of the AA/DCFTA would be postponed (indefinitely). This was subsequently followed by the so-called Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine.

Minsk negotiations and within the framework of the Normandy Contact Group. According to Vitkus, the "sacrifice" on the French site (represented mainly by the cancellation of the contract on the two Mistral warships, for the French had to pay a compensation) helped the country to join the leading European diplomatic powers again (Vitkus 2015). Nevertheless, the new president Emmanuel Macron still keeps appealing to the EU that it should revise its "post-Cold-War" policy towards Russia and revive the efforts to build a strategic partnership.²⁵

According to Orenstein and Kelemen, the Ukrainian crisis "caused a convergence of perceptions and interests" concerning the threats of a potential Russian intervention in Eastern Europe among the members of the "Big Three" (**Germany, France, and the UK**). The Big Three's position towards Russia was supported especially by the "hawks" (**Poland, Sweden, and the Baltic states**; Orenstein and Kelemen 2017; Vitkus 2015). On the other hand, the policies of France and Germany towards Russia were fluctuating in the past, with the periods of special relationship building followed by key events that modified this course for a period. We thus may ask whether the current crisis in the Russia-EU relations is really that deep and serious or whether this "convergence of perceptions" is a rather temporal phenomenon dependent to a certain extent on policy preferences of the current European leaders.

On the other hand, the sole fact that the convergence of positions of a group of member states may influence the formulation of the EU policy towards Russia in such a crucial way confirms the persisting importance of the intergovernmental character of the CFSP. In the post-Lisbon era, the common institutions are cumulating competences and strengthening their powers. New structures are being constantly established to enhance the coherence in the EU external policy. And even though the EU can determine and formulate a common position from time to time (as was the case in the decisions on the sanctions against Russia), it "cannot prevent Member States from pursuing their own independent foreign policies".²⁶ These foreign policies are results of various external and internal factors. For example, Spain belonged to countries with a rather reserved position to EU sanctions but never sympathised with the annexation of Crimea, the separatism in Eastern

²⁵ E.g. Kauranen 2018.

²⁶ Orenstein and Kelemen 2017: 99.

Ukraine, and referenda organised to legitimise such revisions. And their motivation is simple to decipher if we look at the problems with the country's territorial integrity.

4.1.2 RUSSIA: A PARTNER OR A PROBLEM FOR EU COUNTRIES? (THE CENTRAL-EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE)

Among the EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe, it is possible to find states with specific (and often complicated) relations to Russia whose unpleasant historical experience clashes with their conviction that Russia can be an important prospective partner, especially in the areas of economy and trade. In this context, some authors²⁷ point out to the recent behaviour of countries like Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic.²⁸ The current portrait of Hungary as a pro-Russian oriented country follows especially from the political steps and general discourse of the Hungarian President Orbán who has criticised the sanctions introduced against Russia and called for their abolition for a long time. Another important element to consider is the openness of Hungary towards the cooperation with Russia in the energy sphere, especially concerning the nuclear energy, as demonstrated by the Hungarian decision to upgrade the Paks power plant **in** cooperation with the Russian company Rosatom (the Paks II Project). The decision was disputed by the European Commission, not so much because of political reasons, but rather because the Hungarian side did not abide by the standard procedure of a public tender and instead awarded the contract directly to Rosatom because of the “technological exclusivity” of the Russian offer.²⁹

27 Bai, 2015; Mudde, 2014; Marušiak, 2013; Liedekerke, 2014

28 Vitkus and Gressel wrote about a “Russland-versteher’s Club”, comprising a group of states the representatives of which usually underline that constant critique and ostracism of Russia is unacceptable. In their view, it necessary also to try to understand Russian behaviour, actions, reactions, interests, and motivations (Vitkus 2015; Gressel 2015). Vitkus included the former “Trojan Horses” in this group named in the study by Leonard and Popescu (Cyprus and Greece) and added Italy, as one of the opponents of the sanctions and at the same time one of the countries which was relatively significantly hit by the almost 50% scratch of its exports to Russia (European Parliament 2017). Another country often sympathetic to Russia is Austria. Finally, he included also the three Central European countries: Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic (concerning especially the discourse of president Miloš Zeman).

29 Other potential applicants, especially the American company Westinghouse Electric, complained about the practice and the European Commission started infringement procedures

In the Czech Republic, pro-Russian steps and generally favourable discourse of president Zeman has been often criticised. On top of that, there are people in the president's circle and those who were involved in his electoral campaign with proven links to Russia and Russian economic subjects, especially Martin Nejedlý, the president's advisor and at the same time an executive officer of LukOil Aviation Czech, a daughter company of LukOil. Besides, occasional criticisms of sanctions and their reported impact on the Czech economy has been heard recently,³⁰ expressed by politicians from various parties (oftentimes by those from the Communist party but also by some members of the government³¹, e.g. the former social-democratic Minister of Industry Mládek. Finally, there was a populist pro-Russian rhetoric used by new political actors like the SPD party who entered the Parliament in 2017. On the other hand, it is necessary to point out that in the Czech (and Slovak) case, the rhetorical criticisms of sanctions have never materialised in their vetoing

because of a suspected breaking the internal market and competition rules. In 2017, the Commission decided to approve the deal, though. <https://www.politico.eu/article/hungarys-russian-built-nuclear-plant-powered-by-politics-in-brussels/>

30 The Czech Republic has been affected by some negative impacts of the sanctions, especially in combination with the overall decline of the Russian economy and with the outcomes of the Russian policy of the import replacement, mainly in the food industry. The relative decline of export was not negligible in the Czech case (around 45% in the first half of 2015) (European Parliament 2017). On the other hand, in 2013 (before the crisis), the export to Russia represented less than 4% of the overall Czech export (declining to less than 2% in 2016 and increasing again to around 2% in 2017). It is also necessary to consider that Putin's Russia started the strategy of supporting its own producers already before 2014 in the effort to diversify its economy, to support the domestic industry, and to decrease the dependence on the primary sector (Kuchyňková 2015). Mostly because of the overall orientation of the Czech export on the EU markets, there were no direct and significant negative impacts on the Czech economy in general. Some companies which could have been hit by Russian countermeasures used the opportunity to shift their production to Russia. Yet certain impacts of the loss of the Russian markets did occur in the recent years, mainly in the industrial sectors which have a long-term tradition of cooperation with the Russian markets and a low level of diversification in their external trade relations. On the other hand, there are EU countries which were hit much more. There were countries with a relatively great share of agri-food exports to Russia before 2014 (around 40%-50% shares in total exports) which have experienced a significant decline of their exports under the influence of the Russian countermeasures. Cyprus and Greece are among such “losers” (European Parliament 2017).

31 One can also mention the ambivalent position and discourse of the key representatives of the former government of Bohuslav Sobotka (ČSSD), including the Prime Minister himself.

on the EU level. Therefore, if we explore the policies towards Russia and the relevant political discourse, it is necessary to consider the following important aspect: The rhetoric which targets the citizens, the opponents on the domestic political scene, and also to the opponents within one's own political party sometimes differs considerably from the rhetoric and the practical political steps made on the EU level by official representatives of the country.

The example of Germany and other states has already shown that it would be too simplifying to attribute certain characteristic, univocal position towards Russia to the European countries. Similarly, the cleavages and disputes on the domestic political scene also play a significant role. Especially in some Central and Eastern European states, the relations to Russia have for a long time represented a difficult and controversial topic for discussion in its political and even the socio-cultural dimension. The **Czech Republic** may serve as a good example which will be explored to a greater detail in the following section.

Russia as a controversial issue in the public and political discourse: The case of the Czech Republic

Different perspectives of Russia and the Czech-Russian relations have emerged in the post-Cold War era not only in the political discourse, but also in a broader discussion within the Czech society. On the one hand, there has been a rather cautious and critical approach seeing Russia as a potential threat, not only in the political-security dimension – especially after 2000 with the consolidation and strengthening of Putin's regime. On the other hand, a plea for a more positive attitude towards Russia and for cooperation with this country became visible, paradoxically also especially after 2000, with an emphasis on the economic diplomacy striving for diversification of foreign trade relations and the return to markets abandoned by some post-communist Central European countries after the end of the Cold War.³²

In the second half of 1990s, the cautious approach reflected especially the critical attitude of Russia towards NATO's eastern expansion. After 2000, with Vladimir Putin's rise to power, the condemnations

have become stronger, criticising typically the increasing authoritarian tendencies in the new Russian political regime, the human rights situation in Russia (for instance in connection with the conduct of Russian forces in Chechnya or with the oppression against journalists and critics of the regime), the Russian neo-imperialistic tendencies in the post-Soviet area, the Russian hostility towards the deployment of US missile defence system in Central Europe, and later the aspects of the modern hybrid threats reportedly employed by Russia, especially in the post-Soviets states and countries formerly controlled by the USSR. Besides, threats have also been seen in the Russian activities not directly connected with (hard) security fields, like the economy energy, science, and other strategic areas. A typical example was the case of the public procurement connected with the planned building of new reactors at the Temelín nuclear power plant, resonating in the Czech public discourse especially in the period 2011 – 2014. A Russian-Czech consortium with the participation of JSC Atomstroyexport, a member of Rosatom concern, was one of the most serious applicants in the tender. This provoked a debate about the potential overdependence of the Czech energy sector on Russian technologies and supplies (taking into account both the important role played by the nuclear sector in the Czech energy mix and also the risk that due to technological reasons, the Russian company TVEL, again a part of the Rosatom group, is effectively the only supplier of nuclear fuel to the Czech Republic). These concerns, upheld by occasional statements of various Russian political or business representatives openly supporting the victory of the Russian-Czech consortium,³³ opened a debate about the political-security connotations and consequences of such steps for the Czech Republic. The Temelín tender was thus understood in the public discourse not just as a purely technical or economic issue but also as an important matter of security and energy security.

This debate generally reflected the broader Czech socio-political discussion about Russia, Russian influence, and the optimal attitude towards it. On the one hand, there were warnings against a potential penetration of strategic sectors of the Czech economy by Russia which continues to see the Czech Republic as a part of its "sphere of interest".³⁴

³² Kuchyňková, Kratochvíl and Shmelev 2015.

³³ E.g. ČTK 2010a.

³⁴ ČTK 2010b.

On the other hand, there were voices criticising the geopolitical concerns in such highly technical issues and welcoming more cooperation with Russia in economy, trade, and investments.³⁵ The involvement of top-level politicians (like the former presidents Václav Havel and Václav Klaus, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg, and the current president Miloš Zeman³⁶) has not been negligible and contributed to the overall politicisation and a controversial character of “the Russian topic” in the Czech public and political debate. The Temelín tender was cancelled in 2014, reportedly mainly for economic reasons. In recent years, though, the Czech energy giant ČEZ has started to study the possibility to build new reactors at another Czech nuclear power plant, Dukovany.³⁷ And so, the controversial and possibly politicised debate about the future of nuclear energy in the Czech Republic is probably not over yet.

It has always been significant in the Czech political debate that different positions towards Russia have always related to concrete political figures or to particular opinion “streams”, and less so with particular political parties. That is why the topic has been crosscutting the cleavages in the Czech party system. The exceptions from this rule could be the central-right-wing party TOP09 on the one side, representing rather critical voices towards Russia relatively consistently, as this party was connected for a long time with the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Schwarzenberg, one of Václav Havel’s sympathisers and followers. On the other side, there is the Czech communist party (KSČM), a party characterised by an overall opposition to the “hegemony” from of Western capitalist powers in the post-Cold War world, who is showing the consistent support and sympathies towards Russia and its positions in the international politics. KSČM has also been known for the disagreement with the attempts to “rewrite history”, especially the history of the WWII and the glorious role of the USSR in it, and the history of the second half of the 20th century, including the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact forces in 1968, directed from Moscow. Another motivation for KSČM could be found in their disapproval of the reorientation of the Czech trade and economy relations in favour to the Western

Europe and the abandonment of the previous “partner” markets in the East.

A certain support for partnership with Russia, especially in economic and trade relations, could be also found in the statements of the Freedom and Direct Democracy party representatives. SPD is usually characterised as a right-wing populist movement expressing fondness for such figures as Marine Le Pen, the leader of the French Front National. In this case, their positions are usually connected with their strong criticism of current “multiculturalist” EU combined with their respect and admiration of today’s Russia (e.g. its successes in the fight against the so-called Islamic State and terrorism in general). Therefore, the party representatives often support the position of president Zeman in Russia-related debates³⁸ and criticise anti-Russian steps (like the expulsion of Russian diplomats in the Skripal case).³⁹ Interestingly, an open support or praise for Russia is relatively rare in the official statements of the party representatives, but their positions to relevant political steps or actions are often in accordance with the Russian perspective and its key foreign and security interests (as demonstrated e.g. by the disapproval with the sending of the Czech soldiers to the Baltic area as a part of NATO forces in 2017⁴⁰ and the sharp critique of Ukraine and its current political regime.)⁴¹

Besides these relatively strongly defined examples, various modifications of both the critical and the sympathetic perspective in relation to Russia can be found through the Czech party-political scene. For example, a more positive attitude towards Russia and the preference of cooperation with this country have become visible within the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD), especially after 2000. This was influenced by the strive for diversification of foreign trade relations and the return to markets abandoned after the end of the Cold War. However, the Ukrainian crisis, the Russian annexation of Crimea, and the events in Eastern Ukraine provoked criticism within ČSSD, like from the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Zaorálek,⁴² who has been

35 ČTK 2010c.

36 Pravec, Břešťan, Němec and Tramba 2013.

37 World Nuclear News 2016.

38 SPD 2017a.

39 SPD 2018.

40 SPD 2017b.

41 SPD 2017c.

42 Lidovky.cz 2014.

among the supporters of the “europeanisation” of Russia and stronger EU-Russia cooperation. Both supporters of the EU’s position in sanctions against Russia (former minister Zaorálek and the former Prime Minister Sobotka) and people expressing a reserved position to the sanction policy and sometimes even openly pro-Russian positions⁴³ can be thus found in one party, a party which is currently in government at that.

As for the other ruling party and the currently strongest party in the Czech Republic, ANO, it would again be difficult to find a consistent position here towards Russia and the Czech-Russian relations. This might relate to the nature of the party itself. ANO is often called a one-man party (the party of the chairman Andrej Babiš) but it is also a heterogeneous conglomerate of people not anchored ideologically. The leader and the party have been attracting popular figures on the basis of a mutually shared desire to change the political situation in the country and to oppose the system of traditional political parties, rather than by a real ideological compatibility. It was thus possible to find really diverse personae among the members or sympathisers of the party, including the former Minister of Defence and Foreign Affairs Martin Stropnický, whose rhetoric towards the Russian conduct in the international affairs in recent years has been quite critical.⁴⁴ The party platform from the last parliamentary elections in 2017 declared a rather pro-Western orientation, foreign policy priorities emphasising the EU and NATO membership, and almost no direct references to Russia. At the same time, the discourse of the party chief Babiš about Russia tends to be very careful. He has often avoided⁴⁵ not only criticising, but actually any direct expression of opinion in recent Russia-focused debates.

43 E.g. the current deputy chief of the social democratic party, Jaroslav Foldyna, who often strongly criticises the “anti-Russian campaign” of Czech public media or the attempts to “redraw the history” (to diminish e.g. the merits of Russia, or former USSR, in the liberation of Czechoslovakia from Nazi Germany in the end of the WWII). See e.g. Prague Daily Monitor 2018

44 E.g. in the cases of the reported Russian interference in political situation of other countries, the Russian sponsoring of disinformation campaigns, and the Novichok case (BBC 2018).

45 The reason could also be his effort to maintain good relations with president Zeman who strongly supported the establishment of the new government with Babiš as the Prime Minister.

The currently strongest opposition party (according to the results of the parliamentary elections in 2017), the right-wing, liberal-conservative Civic Democratic Party (ODS), is another complex case. The attitude of ODS towards Russia has sometimes been a controversial topic, with the representatives’ positions influenced in the past by critical events and the overall context of international relations. Especially before 2014 and the events in Ukraine, there were relatively strong opinion camps within the party promoting a rather pragmatic attitude and refusing the portrait of Russia as a threat and underlining the economic importance of this potential partner. This opinion was influenced by the position of Václav Klaus, the former party chief and the Czech ex-President, who was frequently opposing his predecessor Václav Havel including his position towards Russia. Klaus has been opposing normativity in Czech-Russia relations and the tendency to evaluate or “teach” Russia as a nondemocratic regime failing its political transformation (a rhetoric which was often typical of the first Czech president Havel).⁴⁶ He has been often portraying Russia as a country with which the Czech Republic as well as other (Western) international actors should lead a dialogue, concentrating on the perspective of future cooperation. Reminiscences of the past were found useless and opening problematic issues was supposed stay an internal business of Russia in Klaus’s view. Klaus has been mostly consistent in his position, including after the events of 2014 in Ukraine and after he left the office of the Czech President. This has often been provoking criticisms of his pro-Russian orientation.

On the other hand, it would be a great oversimplification again to project these attitudes towards Russia on the whole party. The positions within ODS have often been conditioned and influenced by a specific context. For example, the period of Mirek Topolánek’s cabinet (2006–2009), Klaus’s successor as the Chairman of ODS, was affected by important international events like the Georgian-Russian war, the US project of an anti-missile defence system in Central Europe, and the Czech presidency in the EU (simultaneous with establishing the Eastern partnership programme and also the time when the Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis occurred). This period was thus quite atypically full of sensitive issues concerning the Czech-Russian

46 E.g. Havel 2001.

and EU-Russian relations. In this period, some government members (some of them from ODS like the Minister of Defence Alexander Vondra) presented quite tough and critical positions towards Russia. Some positions supported by the former Prime Minister Topolánek probably were not in accordance with Russian interests either, including his open support for the Nabucco and the South-Corridor energy projects.⁴⁷

The global financial crisis and the eurozone crisis at the end of the first decade of the 21st century had an impact on the Czech economy and brought another opinion shift, especially in the emphasis on the “economic diplomacy”. It was typical of Petr Nečas’s government (2010–2013), yet another Chairman of ODS. It included the government support for the revitalisation of trade relations with eastern European markets including Russia. The efforts to increase the Czech exports and investments to Russia, not only in “traditional” fields of machinery, automobile, and energy industry, but also in other areas like the agri-food industry, brought about an increased frequency of visits of Czech governmental, parliamentary, and regional representatives to Russia. And in the framework of the EU’s Partnership for Modernisation, President Medvedev signed a series of bilateral contracts concerning the Russian cooperation with Czech transportation and energy companies during his visit in Prague in 2011.⁴⁸ On the other hand, this was the time when media started to report cautiously that the investments and exports to Russia were not risk-free (concerning e.g. the examples of unpaid loans of the Czech export bank and EGAP which have supported exports to the so-called priority countries including Russia).⁴⁹

After the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, the new party leadership headed by the current chairman Petr Fiala has also frequently expressed a rather cautious approach in connection with the Russian

activities, although their position is usually not a direct criticism of Russia and its president. The current leadership⁵⁰ has especially criticised the steps and attitudes of president Zeman and his sympathisers which they consider as threatening to the generally pro-Western foreign policy orientation of the country, sometimes even colliding with the very interests of the Czech Republic in the foreign and security policy. (A typical example was the case of poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter and subsequent speculations published by Russia that the nerve-paralytic agent of the Novichok type used in this operation could have been produced in the Czech Republic. President Zeman partially supported these speculations by his public misinterpretation of a secret service report in media, which was in turn sharply criticized by ODS.)

47 E.g. Týden 2009.

48 Podnikatel.cz 2011.

49 The problems of Czech investors and exporters on Russian market had existed even before 2014 and the risk grew with the economic problems that started at the end of 2014. On the other hand, according to the current EGAP barometer which evaluates the risks of exports of goods, services, and investments to different countries, Russia is among medium risk countries. (EGAP sees more substantial risk in some African, Latin American, and Eastern European countries like Ukraine were the situation is complicated by the military conflict in the East and the overall instability of the internal political situation; EGAP, n.d.).

50 Or at least the main part of the leadership. Prominent representatives of the party are of course not fully unified in their positions to national and international affairs. Typical examples are occasional opinion disagreements between official positions of the current leadership and the opinions of Václav Klaus jr., the son of the former president. See Echo24.cz 2018.

The previous mini-analysis of the development of the political and public Russia-related discourse in the Czech Republic as well as the other above-mentioned examples of EU member states showed that the attitudes of the EU members towards Russia are quite diverse and based on a complicated development influenced by many variables, both of an external and internal origin. Of course, it was not possible to present a detailed analysis of all EU member states here. I just wanted to illustrate and support the argument that it is very tricky, if not false to simplify the reality and to label individual EU member states as either pro-Russian or anti-Russian. The reality is much more complex, with nuances and specific aspects even within one country. The historic experience, specific socio-political and geopolitical context, various incidents, and the undeniable importance of internal political situation and influential personalities are all playing their role in forming the public opinion and discourse. All these variables must be considered if we assess the EU policy towards Russia and the EU-Russia relations. This is the case as the intergovernmental character of the EU foreign policy continues to be an undeniable reality, even in the post-Lisbon era. Moreover, the above-mentioned elements complicate the achievement of a full vertical coherence in the EU foreign policy, not only in the sense of formulation of common positions but also concerning the observance of these common positions in the everyday foreign policy conduct of the member states.

Diverse positions of the EU member states and their development must be also considered if we want to think about the future of the sanction measures. There are pressures on some member states to rethink the EU policy towards Russia, including the current appeals of the French President Macron. In connection with the sanctions, the EU has a simple benchmark: the full observance of the Minsk agreements. On the other hand, the EU as an organisation is not in a very strong position as it does not participate in the negotiations about the situation in Eastern Ukraine. This further underlines the intergovernmental nature of the CFSP, especially in the relation to Russia. As a result, the EU plays a role of a rather passive actor who has accepted the Minsk agreements conditions in connection with

the sanction mechanisms, without the possibility to directly influence the form of the conditions (especially in case of Minsk II). This limits EU's manoeuvring space because a sudden resignation on these conditions could further challenge the EU's profile in the Ukrainian case. Consequently, despite the fact that the sanctions are often considered an example of the EU's ability to achieve the vertical coherence in the CFSP, the other dimensions of actorness⁵¹ are not without problems, which is unfortunately noticeably reflected in real policy-making.

4.2 PROBLEM OF HORIZONTAL AND INSTITUTIONAL COHERENCE IN EU EXTERNAL POLICY BEFORE AND AFTER LISBON

When analysing EU-Russia relations, we must consider not only the problem of vertical coherence but also the intricacy of the EU's external activities and the complexity of its external policy as such. The issues concern the mostly intergovernmental dimensions of CSFP and CSDP but also other policy areas of a more supranational character, considering the division of competence between the EU institutions (especially the role of the European Commission) and the member states as well as their decision-making modes. The problems and interests in the CFSP area are often closely interrelated with the problems of EU's external trade relations and policy. Moreover, they are also influenced by other concerns and aspirations declared by the EU both in its neighbourhood and in the international arena. Trade policy (especially what concerns the trade with sensitive and strategic commodities like energy resources) has both an important economic and security dimension (as shown in the previous chapter). Yet another important dimension is formed by the EU's aspirations to operate as an actor actively promoting democracy. That is why the relations with a third country tending to authoritarianism (see chapter 2.1) naturally often bring dilemmas as foreign policy pragmatism is confronted with the concerns and aspirations in human rights protection, development policy, and normative actorness.

Since the establishment of the EU and the CFSP at the beginning of the 1990s, i.e. shortly after the end

⁵¹ See Bretherton and Vogler 1999.

BOX 12

Civilian power: a power that *concentrates on non-military means to secure its goals*

- preferred instruments: *political conditionality, mediation, cooperation with other regional and international actors, economic support, financial assistance etc.*
- foreign policy goals and conduct are often led by such *principles as the international law, human rights, regional stability, collective security, multilateralism, solidarity, sustainable development etc.*

Normative power: a power which does not only aspire to *spreading certain norms and principles outside its borders* but which itself is *based on common norms and was established with such intention*

- With this *raison d'être* the EU not only has the *ability (and even duty) to act on the basis of these norms in the world politics* but it also should *help to change and transform norms existing in the international politics* (including the EU neighbourhood).
- *Norms themselves are sources of influence.*

Sources: *Orbie 2006; Manners 2002*

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

of the Cold War, the spectrum of the Union's external activities has broadened substantially. The EU wants to play the role of the "world's biggest trader (accounting for 16.5% of the world's imports and exports)"⁵² which requires an extensive network of trade relations, special partnerships, and contractual relations (including the current DCFTAs with countries in the EU eastern neighbourhood, Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova). At the same time, the EU acts as one of the world's leading actors in the policy of development and humanitarian aid, human rights, and democracy promotion⁵³ (a normative dimension of the EU's neighbourhood policy) and it also portrays itself as a global actor in environmental policy.⁵⁴ However, the spectrum of security challenges has broadened towards trafficking, illegal immigration, terrorist attacks, cyber criminality, and the so-called hybrid threats, with many these challenges featuring not only the internal but also external security dimension. The aspirations, goals, policies, and activities of the EU in the external dimension are not always compatible, though, so the problem of coherence could occur here as well.

Hand in hand with the complicated development of the CFSP/CSDP, there has been an ongoing debate on the character of the EU as a foreign policy actor: What

kind of international actor is it and what kind of actor does it want to be? How is the EU seen and perceived from outside and how does it want to be seen? In the 1970s, Francois Duchêne applied the concept of a civilian power on the then European Communities.⁵⁵ Later, especially after the end of the Cold War, the Common Foreign and Security Policy was established by the Maastricht Treaty and the EU started the process of the Eastern enlargement, opening closer relations with its neighbouring countries. The principal assessment of candidate states and partners has included not only rational criteria connected with their economic potential and competitiveness but also their ability to adopt EU's norms. These norms comprised the *acquis communautaire* and basic principles and values which have been gradually incorporated into the EU primary law with time. These aspirations of the EU to change the norms in the international politics and in its closer neighbourhood correspond with the concept of Normative Power Europe invented by Ian Manners.⁵⁶

On the other hand, with the establishment of the Common Foreign and Security policy, the Maastricht Treaty for the first time put the provisions concerning security and defence into the EU primary law (concerning both the Union and its member states).

52 Europa.eu: EU by topic: Trade, n.d.

53 Europa.eu: EU by topic: Development and cooperation, n.d.

54 Europa.eu: EU by topic: Environment, n.d.

55 See e.g. Orbie 2006.

56 See Manners 2002.

In June 1999, the European Council in Cologne formally adopted the goal to establish the ESDP. The Amsterdam Treaty promised to build battlegroups to carry out the so-called Petersberg tasks.⁵⁷ In this way, the EU assumed another bulk of new duties related to conflict-prevention, crisis management, and peacekeeping. During the last 20 years, the EU has expressed new aspirations in the security area in its strategic documents (the first European Security Strategy, 2003,⁵⁸ and the recent EU Global Strategy introduced in 2016).⁵⁹ Besides, there has been an academic debate on the “end of the EU as a civilian power”⁶⁰ and on its “militarisation”. This criticism may seem exaggerated if we consider the fact that the majority of the CSDP missions realised since the beginning of the 21st century has been non-military. Nevertheless, the debate shows that the EU is still searching for its new optimal role both in the international arena and in its neighbourhood.⁶¹

Both concepts of a civilian and normative power represent ideal types. On the other hand, the constructs do reflect the reality to some extent, concerning both real foreign policy actions and the general way the EU declares the ideals about its role in the international politics. And vice versa, these concepts have influenced to some extent the real conduct of the EU in the foreign policy area. If the EU declares that it pursues a strategy of a (political) transformation in its neighbourhood, if it supports and spreads certain norms using various instruments of a political and economic integration and assistance, these activities naturally show their limits and clash with competing actors. These happen despite the EU’s preference to use “soft power” instruments and despite the EU’s declarations of the multilateral character of such cooperation. These competing actors often realise the geopolitical aspirations and security motivations behind the declaratorily civilian goals or are simply afraid of losing their political and economic influence, advantages, and

competitiveness in a particular area. Russia may serve as a prominent example of such a competing actor that has not fully accepted the post-Cold war reality in the post-Soviet area (now identical with the EU’s eastern neighbourhood). This was probably not fully discerned and understood in the West during the first years after the end of the Cold war. With a gradual consolidation and crystallisation of the Russian political regime after 2000, though, and in the context of the events in Central and Eastern Europe (the eastern enlargement of NATO and the EU, the establishment of the Eastern Partnership programme etc.), the Russian perception became clearer.

This was especially visible in connection with the establishment of the Eastern Partnership programme which does not include Russia (Russia voluntarily stood aside, just as in the case of the European Neighbourhood Policy). The initial, rather neutral Russian position to the European Neighbourhood Policy changed with EU’s preparation of new activities and initiatives in the Eastern neighbourhood. Both the representatives of the Russian government (like the Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov) and the Russian press were blaming the EU for the expansion to the Russian “zones of influence” and for building new divisions in Europe.⁶² The fulfilment of the aims of the Eastern Partnership directly collided with the Russian interests and projects both in the post-Soviet area⁶³ and with its own aspirations and ambitions in relation to the EU. But as already mentioned in chapters 2 and 3, the clashes of interests, perspectives, and aspirations in the post-Soviet space was not the only source of disputes at that time. The first problems between the EU and Russia began already shortly after the EU Eastern enlargement, based on bilateral disputes between Russia and (usually “newer”) EU member states. These concerned various political, security, economic, and energy topics and gained multilateral dimension when they started to concern the EU as a whole. All these dimensions connected with different areas of EU’s external policy must be considered when assessing the quality of the EU-Russia relations.

At the same time, the development and broadening of the EU’s external activities brought about a growth of capacities, new instruments, and institutional structures which were (paradoxically) often established to solve the existing problems with the

57 Vanhoonacker and Pomorska 2017: 114

58 A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy. Brussels, 12 December 2003.

59 European Union Global Strategy

60 E.g. Smith 2000.

61 As Howorth wrote, most of these missions were deployed in the EU neighbourhood, including the eastern neighbourhood (European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia EUMM, European Union Advisory Mission in Ukraine or EU Border Assistance Mission operation in Ukrainian-Moldovan border area). This again highlights the importance of the EU as a regional actor (Howorth 2017: 350).

62 See e.g. Pop 2009.

63 Especially the project of the Eurasian Economic Union.

BOX 13

The most important changes brought by the Lisbon Treaty in the CFSP/CSDP area are as follows:

- The EU gained single legal personality (Article 47 TEU)

It can conclude and negotiate international agreements in accordance with its external commitments, become a member of international organisations, and join international conventions.

- The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy represents both the head of the Foreign Relations Council and the Vice-President of the European Commission. At the same time, they are also the head of the European External Action Service (EEAS).

The HR/VP has the rights to call extraordinary sessions of the Foreign Relations Council and has the agenda-setting initiative. They represent the EU in the CFSP, should keep political dialogue with third parties, express the EU common positions in international organisations and conferences, organise the coordination of positions among the member states. They also have the responsibility for the implementation of the CFSP (including the duty to inform the EP regularly) and have the right of initiative. The HP/VP should represent a sort of “bridge” between the institutions and among the member states.

- The European External Action Service has been established as another “bridge” between intergovernmental and supranational institutions responsible for the EU’s external policy.

The EEAS staff came from three different sources: the officials from the General Secretary of the Council, the officials from the European Commission (esp. the former DG Relex and partially of the other DGs⁶⁴), and the diplomatic staff from nation states. The main tasks of the EU’s diplomatic service are to enhance the EU’s role as the international actor and to support the capacities of the HR/VP and the cooperation between the states’ officials and EU institutions. It should also play an important role in strategic decisions about the EU’s external policies.

- The common security and defence policy is established as an integral part of the common foreign and security policy. (Article 42 TEU)
- The Solidarity clause both on the general level and the CSDP level – the assistance provided to states endangered by natural catastrophes, terrorist attacks etc.

In accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, other Member States shall help and assist by all the means in their power to the Member State which is the victim of an armed aggression. (With regard to the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States, like the membership in NATO, or neutrality on the other hand; Article 42 TEU)

- Possibility of the Permanent Structural Cooperation in the CSDP

It enables a cooperation among a group of member states that fulfil special criteria and adopt specific commitments to each other concerning military capabilities. The concept of flexibility, newly introduced to the area of CSDP, thus enables to build common battlegroups or to cooperate in the defence industry (Articles 42-46 TFEU; Protocol N. 10 on permanent structured cooperation established by Article 42 of the Treaty on European Union).

Sources: Treaty on European Union (Consolidated version 2016); Koutrakos 2012; Kováčová and Kuchyňková 2014

THE MOST IMPORTANT CHANGES BROUGHT BY THE LISBON TREATY IN THE CFSP/CSDP AREA

64 Esp. the DG DEV and DG Near.

so-called internal (or intra-) institutional and horizontal coherence. After all, Gebhard lists the shortcomings in the institutional and horizontal coherence among the most challenging problems in the EU's international relations.⁶⁵

The common principles and objectives listed by the Treaty on the EU concern various dimensions of the EU external policy (the Common Commercial Policy, development policy, economic, technical, and financial cooperation with third countries, humanitarian aid, and the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Defence and Security Policy of course). They should contribute to the horizontal and institutional coherence in the EU's external policy as well as to establishing of new structures and posts (especially the High Representative and European External Action Service).

On the other hand, some authors point out that the reality is a little different. The CFSP (and especially the CSDP) have retained its special status, they rely on specific rules and decision-making procedures, and they have maintained the prevailing role of unanimity. Therefore, the achievement of the declared aims in the area of coherence, consistency, and the strength of the EU's position as an international actor heavily depends on the ability of the member states to cooperate and to find converging positions in a wide spectrum of different problems related to the EU's external policy.⁶⁶ The EU policy towards Russia is one of the most visible and also most complicated examples of these phenomena. The problem of the horizontal coherence, let alone the institutional coherence, spans various dimensions of the EU external policies which may contradict each other in case of Russia. The Lisbon Treaty created new structures but also opened new questions related to the complexity of the whole institutional architecture in the CFSP/CSDP area, to the cooperation among the institutions, and to overlapping competences and responsibilities. Typically, we have seen quite vaguely delimited competences of the HR (and the president of the European Council) in the area of EU's external representation and the complicated process of the EEAS creation that caused new inter-institutional disputes.⁶⁷ Besides, the EEAS formed just simultaneously with the outbreak of the Ukrainian

crisis which became a big test of new structures' operability, cooperation, and alignment in crisis situations (which were not always perfect in the first months).⁶⁸

Another very important (and already mentioned) aspect is the external recognition of new mechanisms and new EU's aspirations in the foreign policy area. As underlined above, the EU gained single legal personality which allows EU to negotiate and make international agreements. Moreover, it effectively has a "minister of foreign affairs", i.e. the High Representative and even the President of the European Council (who shares some competences in EU's external representation). On the other hand, the EU as such is absent from negotiations in the Ukrainian conflict and replaced by the representatives of two powerful member states. And this was allowed to happen to a large degree because Russia, the external counterpart, prefers this format. This shows that the Lisbon Treaty and its reform could not change the rules of the game overnight because the "chessboard" is much broader and does not include only the players from the EU. In addition, the EU member states are not a fully harmonic group either. The consensus about the sanctions is sometimes cited as a "positive" example of the vertical coherence in the CFSP, on the other hand, some divergent voices have occurred including within the Franco-German tandem.

The weaknesses of the EU's external policy after Lisbon especially follow from the fact that any attempt made simplify its structure and achieve a better coherence is implicitly accompanied by new ambiguous measures (e.g. not clearly delimited and overlapping competences) which not only cannot contribute to the reform but even blur the situation achieved. Another weakness typical of the EU-Russia relations is the prevalence of strong intergovernmentalism and the lack of the external recognition of the EU and its structures. Yet this situation can be hardly solved quickly and clearly. It is not possible to force an external actor, especially an unwilling one, to respect something. On top of that, rapid changes in internal structures and mechanisms requiring fundamental changes of the primary law

65 Gebhard 2017: 123-142.

66 See e.g. Koehler 2010.

67 See e.g. Missiroli 2010, Batora 2013, Kováčová and Kuchyňková 2014.

68 The interview with one of that time officials of the European Commission revealed e.g. problems with the lack of experienced personnel DGs after the formation of the EEAS and a temporal lack of communication between the Commission's structures and the HR's staff. Interview from the 1st November 2016.

are less probable now, when the EU has severe problems with its public support in some member states. Attempts like this could be easily misused in populist campaigns. That is why the most probable scenario in short term horizon could be to work with the status quo (concerning the primary law and the current institutional structures) and to make use of the instruments currently available. That means to choose respectable people for the key CFSP offices and to keep efficient relations among the structures and their representatives. They need to facilitate smooth everyday work, information sharing, strategic planning, and possibly testing new instruments which might bring progress in the CFSP/CSDP area in the future.

Rapid changes in the EU-Russia relations also cannot be expected in the short-term horizon. The EU should closely cooperate both with the members of the contact group and with other EU member states to prevent any escalation or worsening of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and the general security situation, at least by diplomatic means.

In the mid-term horizon, any fundamental change in the sanction regime should be preceded by a careful discussion on the EU level. Both the EU and its member states should be aware of the reputation and role of the EU as an international actor, paying close attention to the situation in the conflict area. On the other hand, the idea that individual member states might be fully prevented from their bilateral cooperation with Russia in areas like energy is rather naïve.

In the longer-term horizon, the EU should consider a modification of its primary law to further enhance the coherence in the external policy area, its external recognition as an actor, and its abilities in the security area. It should also rethink its long-term strategy towards Russia in the context of the current world. Today, hybrid conflicts comprise an engagement of countless state and non-state actors, the usage of various new instruments (cyber-attacks, information war, espionage) but do not exclude direct warfare as well. This complicates all inter-state relations and requires the reassessment of the role of the EU as an international actor even further.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AA/DCFTA	Association Agreement/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement	ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
CBSS	Council of the Baltic Sea States	KSČM	Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy (Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia)
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe	LDPR	Liberal Democratic Party of Russia
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy	NEFCO	Nordic Environment Finance Corporation
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States	NSS	National Security Strategy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy	ODS	Občanská demokratická strana (Civic Democratic Party)
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization	OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
ČSSD	Česká strana sociálně demokratická (Czech Social Democratic Party)	PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union	SGC	Southern Gas Corridor
EUAM	European Union Advisory Mission	SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
EaP	Eastern Partnership	SPD	Svoboda a přímá demokracie (Freedom and Direct Democracy)
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	TANAP	Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline
EIB	European Investment Bank	TAP	Trans Adriatic Pipeline
EEAS	European External Action Service	TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy		

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