

Multipolarity, intersubjectivity, and models of international society: experiences of Russia - EU (mis)communication

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Arbeitspapier / working paper

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Makarychev, A., & Sergunin, A. (2012). *Multipolarity, intersubjectivity, and models of international society: experiences of Russia - EU (mis)communication*. (CGP Working Paper Series, 01/2012). Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, Center for Global Politics. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-440795>

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Alexander Sergunin

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Center for Global Politics

Freie Universität Berlin

Editor: Klaus Segbers

ISSN: 1869-9243

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Introduction

Pessimistic assessments of Europe's ability to play a role of the most important reference point for Russia's identity abound. "Russia no longer sees itself as part of modern Europe. The idea of creating a common European space from Vladivostok to Brest has failed. The ongoing rapid change of the European model prompts Moscow to take any long-term projects involving Europe with a big pinch of salt" (Shestakov 2011), one author concludes. A statement that a decade ago was almost commonsensical - "Europe's importance for Russia is on the rise" (Nikonov 2002: 118) – is nowadays under a serious question mark. "A Russia identifying itself with the West and accepting its values won't ever be able to play the role it deserves as a country-civilization" (Martynov 2011), another author presumes. Even among Russia's liberal community Europe is under critical fire. As a reputed journalist of the "Novaya gazeta" newspaper opines, at the peak of its strength Europe adhered to the principles of private property, minimal state, intra-European competition, and a feeling of cultural superiority. In the recent times, as soon as those principles were substituted by social distribution, regulatory powers of the state, pan-European unity and multiculturalism, Europe's role in the world is in decline (Latynina 2011). Metaphorically speaking, Europe appears to turn into a "resort" (Mayatskiy 2009), instead of being a powerful world pole, as many Russians implicitly it wanted to be.

The power logic imbedded in such criticism is an indispensable part of Russian European discourse, yet sometimes it is not the EU weakness, but, on the contrary, its presumed ability to play a role of its own that troubles Russia. Thus, it is often claimed that the EU uses conflict resolution agenda for fostering its influence in Russia's "near abroad", and that the EU enlargement has weakened Russian influence to the west of its borders (Prihod'ko 2004). New EU member states are portrayed as hindering the effective relationship between Russia and the "old" EU states. Russian experts are also skeptical about Russia's adaption of the European educational standards (the Bologna process), and the lifting of Russian duties on the European flights over the Russian territory. Some Russia analysis accuse the EU of a "politically correct" explanation of terrorism as derivative of economic and social troubles, and in concomitant disregard of cultural and religious roots of terror in the Islamic world (Prihod'ko 2005).

Perceptual misunderstandings between Russia and the West are rather deep: "Moscow thought that, instead of helping Russia in 1990s, the West rejected Russia's

overtures and took advantage of its weakness... Yet the West thought that it did a great deal to assist Russia's transition" (Lyne 1011: 281). Russia is often reproached for inadequate understanding of Western institutions. In the upshot, the conclusion is rather straightforward: Europeans "should refrain from declaring that we have strategic partnership" (Lyne 2011: 297).

Expectedly, the crisis of eurozone made Russian discourse on the EU even more critical. A former rector of Russian Diplomatic Academy deems that nowadays it is time for Russia to say "good-bye" to Europe until it recovers from the current economic troubles (Panov 2012: 14). Another Russian author claims that the EU has fallen victim not only of financial troubles, but also of its either inability or hesitation to more clearly articulate European identity (Butorina 2011). Her colleague argues that deep financial troubles within the EU will make it a doubtful partner for Russia and seriously damage the prospects of Russia's European orientation (Karaganov 2011). Europe's weakness may lead it to more robustly team up with the United States in the policies in Syria and Iran, and thus to disregard the dangers of a possible destabilization of the larger Middle East for Europe itself (Evstafiev 2011: 150). As seen from this vantage point, the only good news for the Kremlin is that a less ambitious and a more inward-oriented Europe may eventually decrease its normative pressure on Moscow.

As Andrew Moravcsik argues, the predictions of the EU's decline are usually based on realist theory of international relations, which views "power as linked to the relative share of aggregate global resources, and countries as engaged in constant zero-sum rivalry" (Moravcsik 2009: 406). From a more liberal perspective, power has more normative connotations; concomitantly, the strengths of Europe are grounded in its civilian power tools, neighborhood policies, normative appeal, and multilateralism.

In the Russian ruling elite there are some figures that are sympathetic with the this outlook – in particular, the "Kosachov – Margelov group of latent Westernizers" accept the importance of a common platform in Russian – EU relations, modeled after the EU relations with countries like Norway, Switzerland or Iceland (Mitrakhovich 2008). What strengthens this approach is that the EU is usually perceived in Russia as a more convenient partner than NATO. In contrast with the EU, which is seen as an important supporter of international law and order, Moscow treats the US and NATO as major 'spoilers' and 'troublemakers' in international relations, who regularly breach international law and undermine the role of international institutions and multilateral diplomacy. In the most problematic cases (Kosovo, Iraq and South Ossetia) Russia appealed to the EU as a strong proponent of international law and a preferable mediator. This explains the reasons why the director of the Moscow-based Institute for Europe Studies deems that Russia "is interested in preventing the EU from falling

apart. We don't need a patchwork Europe. It is easier to deal with it as a unique formation which already exists" (Shmeliov 2011: 7). By the same token, bilateral relations with major EU countries (especially France, Germany and Italy, but not the UK) are considered as more productive – and less politicized – than relations with Brussels.

What this variety of opinions among experts elucidates is that Europe is a very tricky and ambiguous signifier for different Russian discourses. On the one hand, in most countries of Eastern Europe the slogan of "returning to Europe" contained implicit anti-Russian tones, which only distanced Russia from Europe. On the other hand, within Russia itself Europe is a divisive concept: it may be synonymous to both attraction and aversion, sympathy and jealousy.

The drastic rise of mass-scale protest activity in Russia as a reaction to electoral fraud in parliamentary (December 4, 2011) and presidential (March 4, 2012) elections caused a double-faced effects on the prospects of Russia's integration with Europe. On the one hand, the growing activism of civil groups did much more for Russia's Europeanization than more than a decade of Putin's "vertical of power" and "rising from the knees". On the other hand, as a reaction to the prospects of an "orange revolution", the Kremlin tended to move away from the European norms of democracy and human rights (Kharichev 2012) toward an even more protectionist, introvert and sovereignty-grounded regime with more nationalistic - than European - discourse. The Kremlin foreign policy philosophy is strongly based on the idea of multipolarity which – perhaps, paradoxically – is by and large accepted in Europe as well, but in entirely dissimilar connotations. In spite of a seeming concord between Russia and the EU on the prospects of a multipolar world, the very concept of multipolarity is differently understood by the two parties (Howorth 2010: 467), which makes inevitable explicit or implicit debates and even clashes between them on the essence of the concept and its institutional forms.

This study aims at analyzing the multifaceted Russia - EU relations as seen from different models of multipolarity. The key question we would like to address is how the various perspectives of multipolarity can shape the EU – Russia relations and bring different outcomes. Arguably, Moscow and Brussels have divergent ideas about the practical arrangements the idea of multipolarity implies; besides, inside Russia and the EU there are multiple competing views on multipolarity. All this plurality of voices requests a scrutiny of different models of a multipolar international society in which Russia and EU are its constitutive poles.

1. Models of Russian – EU Intersubjectivity

It is our key argument that, in spite of deep disagreements, the two subjects in communication, the EU and Russia, are mutually dependent on each other. This dependence does not exclude profound imbalances and miscommunications: thus, Russia has refused to partake in the EU-sponsored European Neighbourhood Policy and reacted with suspicion to the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy's regional offsprings, such as Black Sea Synergy (2007), Arctic strategy (2008), Eastern Partnership (2009), Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (2009), etc.

Nevertheless, in our analysis we stem from an intersubjective approach to the EU – Russia relationship. Intersubjectivity connotes not only a possibility to achieve some practical effects of altering policies of other actors, but to constitute their roles and even identities in the process of communicative exchanges. Political subjects are partly constituted by their obligations to their partners in their otherness. In light of this approach, the molding of Russia's role in a multipolar world is impossible without references to European experiences and practices, and vice versa. Intersubjectivity makes any subject position dependent on the outside and thus is immanently fluid and split. This is why intersubjective relations are inevitably full of distortions, disconnections, asymmetries, ruptures and imbalances. The concept of "the friction of ideas" (or "ideational friction"), borrowed from the Swedish colleagues, makes a strong case for "deep-seated cultural differences between Europe and Russia" (Engelbrekt and Nygren 2010: 3). While frequently using the same vocabulary of multipolarity, European and Russian discourse- and identity-makers infuse different meanings in them.

Intersubjectivity in Russian – EU relationship is hard to deny, but its interpretations may be different. For example, Fiodor Lukianov explains the predominantly negative portrayal of Putin's Russia in Europe by "the internal insecurity of the West, and the growing sense that not everything is proceeding quite as it should... Vladimir Putin... indicates to western partners their mistakes and failures. He criticizes their hypocrisy and double-standards, appearing in the role of an idiosyncratic Savonarola whose utterances are especially annoying because they are often true... He plays by the same rules as everyone else but simply doesn't see the need to dress this up in respectable ideological garb. And the fact that – whether by force of luck or by force of a more realistic calculation – he furthermore periodically outperforms his partners, compelling them to take the opinion of that same declining Russia into account, adds a mystical halo" (Lukianov 2012).

Yet instead of (mis)presenting the Kremlin as a bearer of a hidden truth for Europe (and implicitly denying a similar role for Europe in its relations with Russia), we shall take a

more nuanced approach to intersubjectivity as an active “power to affect and a passive power to be affected” (Citton 2009: 122). To put it differently, even in its role as an object of the EU influence Russia still can – perhaps indirectly – influence the state of debate within the EU and its choice(s) for future actions. For Russia this is especially important, since its ability to influence the EU is limited, which apparently makes the EU – Russia intersubjectivity asymmetrical. The EU policy philosophy can be expressed as follows: “If I act toward the other based upon principles I carry with me previous to and outside of my interaction with the other, then it is not really the other I am concerned with. I am imposing my ethical framework upon the other, rather than taking up the other in her own right” (May 2008: 149). As a reaction to the alleged universality of the EU norms, Russia’s officialdom prioritizes its sovereignty and a great power status which is not supposed to be confirmed by anybody, including the EU (Morozov 2008).

In a multipolar world, the Russian – European intersubjective interaction may take different institutional forms which we are going to flesh out in this paper, dwelling upon a distinction between pluralist and solidarist types of international society. Within the pluralist types of multipolarity we mainly focus on three models. The first two are to be located within the realist theorizing, while the third one has a neoliberal pedigree.

The first model is the *spheres of influence* politics, which “might be viewed as very similar to a neo-imperialist approach” (Kuchins and Zevelev 2012: 151), or Russia’s regional domination. “Russian elites believe that the country’s great-power status depends largely on the role it plays in the post-Soviet space – it can only be a pole in a multipolar world if it has a sphere of influence” (Judah, Kobzova and Popescu 2011: 23).

Spheres of influence politics comes in a number of versions. In a Morgenthau-type realist approach, the EU and Russia are two power poles which compete with each other and struggle for their ‘spheres of influence’. This struggle can be assuaged by a manageable competition (which appears to be very close to the ‘organized anarchy’ as described by Hedley Bull). As a sub-category of this model, the concept of ‘constructive engagement’ in the EU’s relations with Russia is possible. It depicts Russia as an ‘alien’, ‘other’, something incomprehensible and even dangerous neighbor, but claims that it’s better to engage it in some sort of interaction than keep it isolated. The degree, level and specific method of engagement can, of course, vary.

In Russia, spheres of influence reasoning may take the form of a Eurasianist/geopolitical approach which stipulates that Russia and the EU are two different types of civilizations with ‘historical missions’ of their own. Europe, in this vein, embodies technical and socio-political progress, including the ‘normative power’ aspect, while Russia ascribes to itself a self-appointed role of a ‘bridge’ between the East and West.

A second model is *balance of power*, a realist concept that dates back to the Cold War times, yet retains some vigor – though in a deeply modified form – in the beginning of the 21 century. It is mostly “driven by fear and self-help” (Sorensen 2011: 12). However, for Russia the balance of power is an idea of limited utility: it can be – though partly - applicable to the relations with NATO, still overburdened by hard security misunderstandings, but not to Russia’s relations with the EU (or China). Yet paradoxically it is the EU that has to include some balancing elements to its foreign policy arsenal – along with the dominating normative principles – while transforming the post-Soviet/”near abroad” area.

The basic problem with the practical implementation of the balancing approach is that the EU and Russia possess different types of power. Russia’s is mostly “compulsory power” which consists of the direct control over the policies of its “junior partners”, including sanctions, manipulation with energy price, military force, and so forth. The EU, by contrast, relies on a combination of “institutional power” (which rests upon decisional rules, shared understanding of responsibility and interdependence, etc.) and “productive power” (Barnett and Duvall 2006: 49-57) (i.e. that one which produces social identities by means of discourses and meanings, as it is the case of European identities of countries like Ukraine, Moldova and even Georgia stimulated by the EU and its member states).

A third model can be dubbed either *multi-regionalism*, or “regional multilateralism” (Mylonas and Yorulmazlar 2012). Both are presumed on the inability of one single power to tackle the regional issues in their complexity. There is, of course, always a need in regional leaders, but they should act in a wider context and provide rather “security umbrellas” than imposing their versions of the Monroe doctrine. The European approaches to regionalism in the EU neighborhood, as exemplified by Northern Dimension and Eastern Partnership programs, are predominantly focused on the issues of norm projection, policy transfers, and spill-over effects that constitute the essence of Europeanization as an extension of EU normative power and order. The ideas of New Regionalism and dimensionalism, widely spread in Europe since the end of the Cold War, were introduced in Russia as academic concepts, yet received lukewarm reception among political elites. In the meantime, other European concepts, like “security regions” (rooted in Karl Deutsch’s functionalist theory of security community) and “regional security complexes” (authored by Barry Buzan) were taken with more sympathy by their Russian colleagues who see regional security institutions as barriers to prevent superpowers from intervening in security situations on regional level.

As for more solidarist models, two of them can be singled out. First, this is *great power management* (or “concert” of major European actors) which envisages a depoliticized type of policing, conflict management and crisis prevention in the most troubles areas. Yet this model can be operational if and only the EU will politically elevate the status of Russia and

acknowledge its sphere of influence (Medvedev, Sergey 2006: 7). In the Russian discourse this strategy transforms into the idea of “*two empires*” which ascribes the “imperial” background of the European integrationist project. What is attractive in a “two empires” model is a potential division of spheres of influence between Moscow and Brussels (Tsymburskii 2002). In this light, some of Russian experts are positive about developing EU’s military capabilities and security activism (Danilov 2000). According to this logic, the restoration of the EU subjectivity in an imperial form is a feasible perspective for the future, since the EU potentially has its own ambitions, interests, and ideology that will push it to taking certain actions of its own (Kholmogorov 2002). This trajectory could be beneficial for Russia since it might be instrumental in balancing the U.S. preponderance.

Second, there is a scenario of *normative unification* (as epitomized, for instance, by the Common Space on External Security) based ultimately on Russia’s acceptance of the EU norms as guiding principles facilitating its inclusion into a wider Europe. In the EU reading, normative unification is a value-ridden model, grounded in a concept of the EU as a ‘soft power’ which ought to ‘civilize’, ‘democratize’, ‘pacify’, ‘discipline’ or even ‘police’ its ‘periphery’ (if necessary). Another variant for this model is a ‘Europe of concentric rings’ with the EU at its center. The ‘periphery’ (including Russia) is an object for the EU’s policies, and a ‘younger partner’. The integration processes in Europe’s new neighborhood is viewed as an inevitable and natural result of ‘spill-over’ and ‘ramification’ effects. This model was also applicable to the EU-Russia relations in the 1990s (pre-Putin era).

Yet in Russia normative unification is seen mostly from a procedural side, which fits in the neo-functional/neo-institutionalist approach within the neo-liberal IR paradigm. This approach is less bothered by the question of who the center(s) and periphery of the integration dynamics are; the main question is a rather pragmatic one – how to organize good-neighborly relations in practical terms: what institutions, programs, instruments, procedures better serve bilateral agenda. The four common spaces and the Partnership for Modernization concepts may be seen as a reflection of this kind of logics.

There is also an offspring of the neoliberal interdependency theory which has much in common with the previous approach. Russia is dependent on the EU because the latter is Moscow’s largest foreign trade partner and a major source of high tech and foreign investment. The EU is dependent on Moscow in terms of energy resources supply and because Russia is an important market for European goods and services. Moreover, Russia and Europe are tightly interconnected by numerous cultural and historical bonds. The most important task for this school of thought is to ensure such interdependency mechanism’s proper work.

Finally, within a ‘Europe of Olympic rings’ model – which is a combination of the neo-liberal and globalist approaches - each actor has an equal say and acts on the same footing. The main problem at this juncture is how to establish proper rules of the game and division of labor between the players.

The variety of conceptualizations of the EU – Russia intersubjective relations shed some light on the nature of multiple splits within both Russian and European subjectivities. The idea of divided subjects is no novelty for political philosophy, but it is important to avoid banal interpretations of Russia’s identity split between proverbial Westernizers and Slavophiles, and the EU identity fluctuating between values and interests. We take a broader intersubjective approach: “it is the encounter with otherness that divides” (Layton 2008: 61). It is our contention in this paper that there are much deeper splits that boil down to Russia’s and the EU’s orientation on several different models of policies to each other, each one being an instrument adjustable to a certain type of international society.

In this paper we shall point out the key landmarks that affected the state of the EU – Russian relations in the last decade, and will try to see whether both parties perceive each of them in a similar manner, and if not, how strong are divergences between them. The chief domains to be scrutinized are security, common neighborhood, modernization, and visa facilitation talks.

2. Security Issues in Russia – EU Relations

2.1 The Common Space on External Security

The four common spaces were introduced at the St. Petersburg EU-Russia Summit in May 2003 and endorsed at the Rome Summit in November 2003. The Road Maps to four common spaces were adopted at the May 2005 EU-Russia Summit.

The Four Common Spaces, to our mind, are consensually understood by both Russia and the EU as a combination of *great power management* and *procedural unification*. Both parties agreed – at least, in words - to approach each other as strategic partners, and signed the four roadmaps that presuppose the formation of procedurally integrated “spaces”, or areas of common interest.

To illustrate how these premises worked in practice, let’s take the sphere of external security. The EU-Russian joint peace-keeping operations in various parts of the world can be seen as one of possible venues for security cooperation between Brussels and Moscow. At

the EU-Russian summit in Nice (November 2008) the two parties decided to launch a series of joint peace-keeping operations in Africa. For example, Russian helicopter groups participated in the EU-led peace-keeping operations in Chad and Central African Republic, an experience that was positively assessed by both sides. Besides, as follows from the European External Action Service's report, some cooperation continued between EU NAVFOR Atalanta and the Russian naval mission deployed off the Somali coast, enhancing the levels of protection provided to merchant shipping (European External Action Service 2011).

Along with the then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, his French counterpart Nicolas Sarkozy, who chaired the European Council in the second half of 2008, was a key figure in the cease-fire and post-conflict settlement negotiations in the August 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia. He also played a crucial role in launching the Geneva talks on security arrangements, including the issues of internally displaced persons, which began on 15 October 2008 with the participation of Russia, Georgia, EU, US, OSCE, and UN. Yet not everything went smooth, of course. Brussels insisted that Moscow must fulfil all of the conditions under the Six-point Ceasefire Agreement (2008) and to immediately withdraw its troops from the 'occupied' (according to the EU terminology) Georgian territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia to the pre-conflict positions. Moscow also was expected to guarantee the EU Monitoring Mission access to those territories. The Russian side, however, insisted that it has already fulfilled the ceasefire agreement and that with proclamation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia's independence the entire situation in the region has completely changed and new approaches to conflict resolution should be developed.

The EU attempts to replace Russian peace-keeping forces in Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as to mediate in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict on Nagorny Karabakh were taken in Moscow with suspicion. The EU-Russian road map to the common space on external security is limited to rather vague declarations and does not provide any details on these issues.

The roots of these disagreements boil down to the different understandings of the notion of security by the EU and Russia. While the EU supports a comprehensive/multidimensional view of security – not only in its 'hard' but also in its 'soft' version (and the road map on external security suggests this perspective) - official Moscow still prefers a traditional vision of the concept, focused on its military aspects. Few Russian experts profess views that are close to the European vision of security (Helsinki Plus... 2010).

There was also a fundamental difference between the EU and Russia in understanding another area of the EU-Russia common space on external security, namely the fight against international terrorism. For example, while the Europeans have viewed the

Chechen rebels as “freedom-fighters”, Moscow has seen them as terrorists. By the same token, while for Moscow Hamas has been a radical organisation, yet still eligible for further political dialogue, the EU has basically perceived this Palestinian grouping as a purely terrorist movement.

Besides, in contrast with the EU’s preference of multilateral diplomacy, Moscow still emphasises bilateral (state-to-state) relations (such as ‘special relations’ with Germany, France, Italy, etc.) instead of a EU-Russia dialogue, thus displaying a certain mistrust to supranational institutions. Moscow believes that bilateral contacts are more efficient than multilateral politics. In practical terms, it means that from the very beginning Moscow has not perceived the EU as a reliable security provider.

2.2 Russia’s New Security Architecture Proposal

The Russia-promoted idea of a new European security treaty (EST) elucidates one more perceptual gap between Russia and the EU: what is seen by Moscow as a gesture of promoting a *great-power-management* type of security interaction which presupposes procedural unifications (playing by a set of common rules), for Brussels is feasible only on a different *normative basis*, i.e. under the condition of accepting the validity of a wider version of security, to include its societal and human dimensions.

There are some disputable points in the Medvedev’s EST initiative that provoked some critical comments from the part of the European experts. First, it is doubtful that the suggested approach to international security is of really innovative character. For example, the idea of indivisibility and equality of European security, which is key to the Russian blueprint, has featured in the CSCE/OSCE documents since the early 1970s. The most recent international security concepts (e.g., the ‘cooperative security’ doctrine) have been basically ignored by the Kremlin. Innovations that can be found in the document are of technical rather than conceptual nature (for example, an early prevention mechanism).

Second, it is hard to ignore the obvious contradiction between the title of the proposed agreement (*European Security Treaty*) and its actual geographic framework: Eurasia and the North Atlantic space (Medvedev, Dmitry 2008). For instance, it is unclear whether China, Japan, or India, which are parts of Eurasia, can claim the membership in a new treaty, or only the Asian post-Soviet states are invited to join the new security regime.

Third, the very concept of ‘space from Vancouver to Vladivostok’ seems quite ambiguous and journalistic (Trenin 2009). One can draw a historical analogy with the Gorbachevian *perestroika* and ‘New Political Thinking,’ when this idea was popular but failed due to its internal inconsistency.

Third, even though the document proposes a conflict prevention mechanism, it does not explain, which specific instruments can be used for peace-keeping and peace enforcement. According to the EST draft, it is the UN Security Council that must play a decisive role in conflict prevention, management, and resolution. In practice, it leads to diminishing the status of the EST regime, limiting its sphere to preventive diplomacy instead of comprehensive conflict resolution.

Fourthly, according to some accounts, the EST enforcement mechanism is quite weak: the Extraordinary Conference of its members, to be convened in case of a crisis, can make decisions only if more than four-fifths of the treaty signatories are present. This provision is, in fact, more favourable to NATO, which could, in a crisis, simply boycott the conference. Russia, which has no reliable allies, would have trouble doing likewise (Tsytkin 2009).

Fifth, some experts believe that Article 2 of the EST draft has a debatable clause: "A Party to the Treaty shall not undertake, participate in, or support any actions or activities affecting significantly security of any other Party or Parties to the Treaty". The document lacks the exact definition of what can be considered as a 'significant' and 'non-significant' threat to security of a signatory state (Doctorow 2009). Thus, any party could complain about almost anything. For instance, a signatory could assess as a 'significant' threat the decision of a neighbouring state to join a military alliance; any improvement in defence forces also might be construed to be a threat by one party. As one expert stresses, this is a highly subjective matter depending on supposed intentions, which can be open to irrational suspicions (Emerson 2009). Therefore, there is no clear-cut line between the sovereign right of one state to conduct independent domestic and foreign policies and the intention of another state to influence the political course of its neighbour (Sushko 2009). For this reason, the EST looks dysfunctional and inefficient.

Sixth, article 7 also looks quite ambiguous: "...every Party shall be entitled to consider an armed attack against any other Party an armed attack against itself. In exercising its right of self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, it shall be entitled to render the attacked Party, subject to its consent, the necessary assistance, including the military one, until the UN Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security". On the one hand, each state has the right to protect victims of aggression but, on the other hand, the EST is designed to unite states that are not necessarily bound by collective defence agreements (only NATO and CSTO members have such obligations). According to some assessments, if this clause is included in the text of the treaty, it could be a pseudo-legitimate ground for selective military interventions without the UN Security Council's sanction. As one analyst notes, under the terms of Article 7, the

Kremlin could theoretically have demanded participation of other nations' forces in its conflict with Georgia in August 2008 (Cartwright 2009).

Seventh, many experts doubt that it is possible to bring together such different international organizations as NATO, the EU, the OSCE, the CIS, and the CSTO to implement the EST regime. Even if it does happen, it would be very difficult (if possible at all) to coordinate their activities within the EST framework, since these bodies often have diverging or conflicting interests and different approaches to European security.

Eighth, some analysts are puzzled by the fact that only two organizations from the post-Soviet space (the CIS and the CSTO) are invited to participate in the EST, while other sub-regional organizations such as, for instance, GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) and OBSEC (Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation) are ignored. There are some well-grounded suspicions that Moscow seeks to promote Russia-controlled international organizations, while side-lining institutions where Russia does not participate or has no major say. Besides, it remains unclear how member states of the above-mentioned international organizations should accede to the EST regime: whether they should ratify the treaty individually, or a formal approval of the EST by the top bodies of these institutions would be enough. Certainly, in the latter case the agreement presupposes a very different kind of responsibility and loyalty of member states, rather than joining the treaty on an individual basis. It is also clear that effectiveness of the future security regime will greatly depend on the manner of the EST's ratification.

Ninth, many Western and East European countries as well as Georgia and Ukraine were unhappy that the EST was initiated by Russia. In their understanding, Moscow was far from being a responsible and peaceful international actor (Ken 2009). On the contrary, Russia is often portrayed as a revisionist power seeking to restore its former status of a world leader, and thus often presented a source of instability. Moreover, many European experts believe that in the August 2008 war with Georgia Russia breached Helsinki principles III (inviolability of frontiers) and IV (territorial integrity of states), although the EST proposal claims the revival of the 'Helsinki spirit'. Hence, Moscow's moral right to generate that sort of initiative is dubious. That's why both the Medvedev Plan of 2008 and the EST draft got a rather cold reception from key international players.

Tenth, some experts interpret the EST initiative as Russia's propagandist action rather than a sincere aspiration for peace and stability. For them, the Medvedev initiative is a sort of a repetition of the Soviet-like 'peaceful offensive,' which was a popular diplomatic instrument of the Communist regime. They believe that now it is important for Moscow to demonstrate its peaceful intentions and reverse the image of an 'aggressive' and 'imperialistic' power (especially after the Caucasian war of 2008).

Eleven, according to some analysts, the EST can eventually lead to Russia's de-facto veto on NATO decisions, and justification for Russia's intrusion into NATO's decision-making processes, while at the same time maintaining a Russia-led Eurasian bloc and potential sphere of influence (Socor 2009). It also could give Russia more leverage to block NATO's activity on the territory of its members in Central and Eastern Europe. Other experts believe that the ultimate goal of the Medvedev initiative was to replace NATO by a new pan-European security organization (probably on the basis of a transformed OSCE).

Twelve, some analysts believe that Moscow seeks to kindle a competition between NATO and the EU for being the principal European security provider. As it has been mentioned, the EU has an ambition to become the main security guarantor in the continent but still lacks proper resources. According to this group of experts, Moscow hopes that such a competition will result in weakening of both organizations and strengthening the alternative organizations, such as the OSCE, the CIS and the CSTO where Russia has a more authoritative say.

2.3 The Meseberg Process

The Meseberg process is seen by both Russia and Germany as a potential example of *great power management* type of approach to the particular region in the EU – Russia neighbourhood.

Given the fact that the EU-Russian dialogue on external security lacks proper institutional basis, in June 2010 Germany and Russia tried to provide this dialogue with some institutional support by suggesting establishing a Committee on Foreign and Security Policy at the ministerial level (Memorandum 2010). France and Poland have eventually supported this idea. The suggested agenda for future discussions in the Committee was the Transnistrian conflict resolution and creation of a European missile defence system. Similar committees on foreign and security policy already exist at the bilateral level (for example, in Russia's relations with Germany and France) and have proved to be efficient. This experience can be successfully used in the framework of a similar EU-Russia institution. To date, however, such a committee is still an idea.

From the part of Germany, the Meseberg declaration was an element of its attempt to contrive a common security agenda with Russia, based on normative principles. Yet Russia simply was short of political resources to exert due influence on political process in this break-away territory.

The differences between Russia and the EU (or, more specifically, Germany) are apparent. The EU favours discussing some 'serious business', such as the future status of

Transnistria or changing the mandate for the peace-keeping forces in the conflict zone. In contrast with this 'grand policy' vision, Russia supports the 'step-by-step' or 'low politics' approach which is based on the resumption of the Moldova-Transnistria dialogue on concrete issues, such as transportation, customs procedures, education, mobility of people, etc.

3. EU – Russian Common Neighborhood

3.1. European Neighborhood Policy

The case of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) unveils another perceptual gap between Russia and the EU: what for Brussels is a move to a closer *normative unification* and a *multi-regionalist* approach, for Moscow represents an undue expansion of the EU into Russia's presumed *sphere of influence*.

In March 2003 the European Commission presented its Communication on "Wider Europe Neighbourhood: A new framework for relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours", outlining the basic principles of ENP. The purpose of the ENP was to build friendly relations with the EU's new neighbours in the post-enlargement era. In October 2003 the European Council welcomed this initiative and urged the Commission and the Council to take it forward. Since then, the Commission has also held exploratory talks with partners in Eastern Europe and the Southern Mediterranean, which already had Partnership and Cooperation Agreements or Association Agreements in force.

In the 1990s Moscow was mostly positive about the EU regional and sub-regional initiatives and encouraged Russian border regions to participate in various trans- and cross-border collaborative projects – mostly within the Northern Dimension (ND) framework. Russia was also eligible for participation in the ENP project, yet declined the proposal to join, arguing that the ENP failed to provide Moscow with a special status in its relations with Brussels. Russia felt that, because of its previous intense cooperation with the EU and its geoeconomic and geopolitical role in Europe, it deserved more than a position of merely one of many neighbours of the Union.

In 2002-2003, when Poland tried to launch the Eastern Dimension initiative, aimed primarily at engaging Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova and, only in the second place, the Russian region of Kaliningrad (Kuznetsov 2004), Moscow became more suspicious of Brussels' regionalist projects on its doorstep. Some Russian strategists tended to believe that such initiatives had a secret goal of undermining Russia's positions in its traditional sphere of

influence. For this reason, Moscow received them rather coldly. It was also unhappy with the universalist approach of the ENP: the point was that Russia did not want to be treated in the same way as Belarus or Morocco, and rather claimed a special status and special relationship with Brussels. Likewise, Moscow was also discontented with the ENP concept in that, in contrast with other regional co-operation projects, it leaves almost no room for Russia in setting the bilateral co-operative agenda. The concept, as viewed from Moscow, seemed to be based on the assumption that the EU's neighbours should simply accept its rules and upgrade their legislation in accordance with the European standards, rather than the EU developing specific models for each country.

Against this backdrop, Russia became very suspicious of any attempt to put regional 'soft' security initiatives (such as the ND, EU's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, Eastern Partnership, Black Sea Synergy and other projects) in the context of region-in-the-making processes in Europe (especially in the Baltic/Nordic area) and had been keen to ensure its control over the Russian regional authorities involved (Kaliningrad, Karelia, Murmansk, Pskov, etc.). This reflects Moscow's concerns over regional separatism. However, such actions may well have an adverse impact on the very spirit of regional co-operation projects.

3.2. Eastern Partnership

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) represents another case of disagreements between Russia and the EU. From the EU part, this program is a combination of *normative unification* and – to a much lesser extent – (soft) *power balancing*, yet for Russia it is a mix of *spheres of influence* politics and regional *balance of power*. The key problem with Russia's explicit or implicit discontent with the EaP is that the policy of preventing Russia's neighbours from participating in EU-sponsored projects is tantamount to the negation of sincerity of the "European choice" proclaimed by Russia itself.

Moscow reacted to the EaP with both caution and scepticism, because it was not sure about its "real" goals: is the EU serious about making its new neighbourhood a stable and safe place, or is it some kind of geopolitical drive to undermine Russia's positions in the area? Moscow is particularly sensitive to the EaP because Russia has interests in the region that range from strategic and political (confederation with Belarus, military-technical cooperation with Belarus and Armenia, military conflict with Georgia, support of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia) to economic (investments, trade, energy supply, etc.) issues. That is why Russian diplomacy considers EaP as a political project ultimately aimed at undermining Russian positions in Eastern Europe (Sediakin 2010: 70). Such an attitude is sustained by few pro-Kremlin voices in Europe who claimed that this program "could easily be

interpreted as an attempt to return to the policy of containment of Russia” (Rahr 2011: 309). In the meantime, Russian deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko assumed that EaP may be acceptable if it is confined to soft power matters (Schlangenbaden Gespräche 2009).

Voices of those experts who are positive about the convergence of the German and Polish visions of the EU “Eastern policy”, presuming that it is these two member states that are the most interested in pushing for some dynamics in the area of the EU – Russian common neighborhood, are in minority (Tarasov 2008: 27-28). The same goes for those who deem that Russia has nothing to fear: “Both the EU and its Eastern partners are merely imitating an integration process, playing this game without focusing on achieving the goal and without any hope of implementing it – Brussels in order to avoid an evident failure and cover up its weakness, and Eastern European countries in order to exploit this process for domestic political reasons and in relations with Russia” (Karbovskiy 2012: 16).

By exaggerating the importance of EaP, the Russian diplomatic discourse ascribes to it inimical connotations.

- Some Russian specialists believe that the EaP’s ‘hidden agenda’ includes an EU plan to undermine Russia’s geopolitical dominance in Eastern Europe and Caucasus. The EU views Russia as a revisionist power trying to regain its former control over the post-Soviet space. Brussels interpreted the Russian-Georgian military conflict of 2008 and the ‘gas wars’ with Ukraine as evidences of Russian alleged imperialist intentions. In this sense, the EaP is seen by some Russian experts as the EU’s attempt to detach six post-Soviet states from Russia’s sphere of influence (Gorbunov 2009).
- Many Russian experts believe that the main EU interest in the EaP is the construction of alternative oil and gas pipelines bypassing Russia, e.g., Nabucco or White Stream (Shenin 2008). Georgia and Ukraine are considered important transit countries, while Azerbaijan can serve both as a source of, and transit point for, energy supplies. Russian and some foreign specialists, however, doubt that these plans are realistic and believe that any new energy transport schemes without Russia’s participation are doomed to failure (Crooks 2008: 7).
- Other Russian analysts suspect that Brussels intends to use the EaP to bring the Kaliningrad question back on to the EU-Russia agenda on Brussels’ own terms (Sergunin 2009: 7-11). They refer to a number of statements by Polish diplomats that some EaP-related programmes could cover the Kaliningrad Region. Yet these suspicions only reflect Russian fears and a feeling of insecurity in its “near abroad” and even within the country itself, which makes Russian attitudes not only wary and confrontational, but dramatically different from the EU policies.

In the meantime, other experts, to the contrary, try to diminish the importance of EaP. They express doubts in the EU's capability to inflict serious changes in the existing regimes of the six partner countries, by transforming them into prosperous states sharing European values and ideals (one of the main official EaP objectives). The EU might find it difficult to achieve the desired result (it has problems in "digesting" even the so-called "new" members of the Union). The present generation of post-Soviet politicians is prepared only to pay lip service to democracy and liberalism rather than to actually put these values into practice.

Thus, most Russian experts remain either negative or sceptical about the EaP which they see as an encroachment upon Russia's "near abroad" sphere of influence. Russian discourse is contaminated by a number of either highly judgmental or falsifiable hypotheses – like the belief in a "common mentality of the majority of post-Soviet people" (Galkin 2007: 16), their "lust for sovereignty", etc. Not always Russian policies are in tune with its neighbors: Moscow seems to be interested in a de-politicized form of regionalism, but its neighbors (like Ukraine) look for much more normative and value-based policies. Russia wants to play its own game in the post-Soviet region by forging a "community of unaccepted" to the Western institutions (Bliakher 2008: 15), yet quite often emotional and subjective assessments prevail, as well as assessments that are not supported by solid empirical evidence. It seems that the lack of a sound Russian strategy toward EaP is one of the sources of misunderstanding in the EU-Russia bilateral cooperation, which sometimes contributes to derailing the Brussels-Moscow dialogue. As a result, both EU's and Russia's policies often give the impression of haphazard muddling on, rather than a sound and forward-looking strategy.

Yet do all inconsistencies of EaP facilitate the Russian policy of reabsorbing and reassembling what is dubs its "near abroad"? Not really. The zero-sum-game approach fails to work here. If we take the most typical targets for the EaP criticism, we'll see that Russia can hardly take any political advantage of each of them. Of course, there is no consensus on the importance of EaP within the EU, the countries covered by the program are highly diverse, etc. – but all this can be hardly exploited by Moscow and turned into its own benefits. Attempts of some Russian authors to claim that the real priority for the EU is Russia are unconvincing. Some of the utterances of Russian experts can be taken only as ironical reverberations of wishful thinking: "security cooperation, a joint energy road map and a modernization partnership has gained a rapid momentum", one author believes (Karbovskiy 2012: 13). Yet the facts are opposite: security dialogue is moribund after the indifference to EST in Europe became clear; the concept of modernization is drastically differently understood by Moscow and Brussels, and cultural and educational "exchanges" are way far from reciprocal at all, since all major programs are financed by the EU or its member states. We shall turn in more detail to some of these issues in the next section.

4. Partnership for Modernization

The PfM programme is consensually understood by both parties, Russia and the EU, as a normative (*procedural*) *unification* model of inter-subjective relations. It was initiated by the EU-Russia Rostov-on-Don summit (1 June 2010). A Work Plan was adopted in December 2010 and is being regularly updated. According to the PfM progress report of December 2011 (Progress Report 2011), there was a dynamic development of the programme under the Polish Presidency. The EU-Russia PfM is complemented with “modernisation partnerships” between Russia and individual EU member-states. 23 bilateral memoranda on establishing such ‘partnerships’ have been signed by the end of 2011 (Chizhov 2012: 5).

For example, Brussels and Moscow are engaged in a dialogue on a Roadmap on energy cooperation for the period until 2050. To promote a low-carbon and resource efficient economy, they agreed to enhance an exchange of experience in the regulation of industrial activities. A laboratory of joint Russian-European business projects on energy efficiency was established in Cannes. A project on energy efficiency in north-western Russia is being implemented within the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP). The EU awarded grants for projects to non-state actors on education and awareness raising for energy auditors, managers and engineers.

The ‘environmental pillar’ of the PfM is under development as well. For instance, the Russian component of a shared environmental information system has been launched. A seminar on applicability of the Convention on assessment of environmental impact in trans-boundary context (the Espoo Convention) to the Nord Stream gas pipeline and other similar projects has been held. Russia promised to ratify the Espoo and (similar) Aarhus conventions.

In the area of transport, the secretariat for the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics was established. An EU-Russia Aviation Summit was held in St. Petersburg in October 2011, discussing potential venues for bilateral cooperation.

The EU-Russian cooperation on public health is now focused on specific/practical issues, such as clinical trials of pharmaceuticals, fight against counterfeit medicines and communicable diseases. Russia and the EU have agreed to continue the harmonisation of sanitary and phytosanitary norms in 2012, with a focus on food safety standards, on animal health requirements and on audit.

There is some dynamic in the EU-Russian research cooperation as well, above all in space cooperation. For example, on 21 October 2011 the Russian Soyuz vehicle that has been launched from the European spaceport at Kourou in French Guyana put into orbit the

first two satellites of the “Galileo” global navigating system. The Russian Roskosmos and European Space Agency plan as many as fifty joint launches.

The private business sector and international financial institutions are being engaged in the PfM as well. Vnesheconombank of Russia, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank have committed to provide financial support (up to €2 billion) for the PfM projects.

Yet while Russia mostly insisted on European investment and high-tech transfers under PfM programme, the EU tried to develop a more general vision of modernisation (including its legal and socio-political aspects). The EU underlines the importance of ensuring an effective, independent functioning of the judiciary and stepping up the fight against corruption (including the signing by Russia of the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials). The EU encouraged Russia to further develop an appeal system for criminal and civil court cases. Brussels also believes that an active involvement of civil society institutions in the reformist process should be a part of the modernisation ‘package’.

Russia’s problem is that it wants to avoid situations in which the EU could take a role of an example, a standard to be adapted. Moscow also suspects that the EU tries to use the modernization partnership to make Russia to comply to the “ideology” of Eastern Partnership. Even liberally minded Russian experts propose to remove the issues of democratization and human rights as a precondition for modernization partnership, and in its stead focus on Russia’s acceptance of technical norms and rules that successfully work in the EU and can be projected on Russia (energy efficiency, customs regulations, educational exchanges, environmental protection, etc.) (Kulik and Yurgens 2011: 20-22, 35).

5. Liberalization of visa regime

This area of cooperation exemplifies joint initiatives that are similarly assessed both in Russia and the EU are important moves toward *normative (procedural) unification*.

For Moscow, the signing (on 14 December 2011) of the Russian-Polish agreement on visa-free regime for the residents of the Kaliningrad *oblast* and two Polish border regions (the Warmian-Masurian and Pomeranian *voivodeships*) is one of most important and undisputable positive outcomes of the Polish EU Presidency. Notably, the initial plan was to establish a visa-free regime only within the 30-kilometer area from both sides of the border, but Moscow and Warsaw managed to extend this practice to the entire Kaliningrad *oblast* and the two mentioned Polish *voivodeships*. This agreement is seen by Russian and European experts as a model to be replicated in other border regions.

Under the Polish Presidency the EU and Russia finalised the document which was titled “Common Steps Towards Visa-Free Short-Term Travel”, and the corresponding roadmap has been launched at the Brussels summit of 15 December 2011. According to this document, the EU and Russia have to coordinate their efforts in four specific areas: providing Russian citizens with the so-called biometrical passports; fighting illegal migration and developing a common approach to border controls; fighting trans-border organised crime, including money-laundering, arms- and drug-trafficking; ensuring freedom of movement of people in the country of residence by abolishing or changing the existing administrative procedures of registration and work permits for foreigners.

The EU leaders emphasise that the full implementation of the agreed common steps can lead to the opening of visa-waiver negotiations. As President Barroso stated, “Our common goal is to have a visa-free regime between Russia and the European Union.” (Barroso 2100). Meanwhile Brussels and Moscow plan to upgrade the Russia-EU Visa Facilitation Agreement of 2006 and the Local Border Traffic Regulation in accordance with recent EU-Russian agreements. However, Moscow views the list of common steps for visa-free short-term travel and the Russian-Polish agreement on local border traffic as insignificant concessions from the part of Brussels. The Kremlin insists on the intensification of the EU-Russia dialogue in this area with the aim to promptly sign a full-fledged visa waiver agreement. To explain delays, the European side refers to residual technical problems related to the implementation process. For example, the EU notes that it is difficult for Russia to quickly provide its citizens with new-generation biometrical passports. Brussels also underlines that its dialogue with Russia should be in tune with the visa facilitation process concerning Eastern Partnership countries (this is both incomprehensible and irritating for Moscow). The EU also insists that Russia must cease issuing passports to residents of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which are seen by the EU as occupied provinces of Georgia. It also emphasises the necessity to intensify cooperation on illegal immigration, improved controls at cross-border checkpoints and information exchange on terrorism and organised crime. Contrary to the Russian expectations, Brussels considers the introduction of the visa-free regime with Russia as a long-term rather than a short-term prospect.

Conclusion

Several *policy conclusions* emerge from the above analysis:

- Regrettably, none of the partners – either the EU or Russia – was able to develop an adequate and forward-looking approach to their bilateral dialogue. These concepts

mainly oscillate between the antagonistic 'pairs' such the highly ideological or purely pragmatic approaches, hostile or friendly attitudes, pessimistic or optimistic scenarios.

- At the moment, the sentiments of mutual disappointment and pessimism prevail. On the one hand, the Russian strategists blame Europe for its selfish and simplistic approach to Russia as well as for its inability to abandon the 'teacher-pupil' model in relations with Moscow. On the other hand, the EU is discontent with the lack of progress in Russia's socio-economic and political reforms. For example, a recent report from the European Council on Foreign Relations concludes that the EU is missing out on opportunity to turn Russia into a partner on issues of mutual concern: "Europeans have gone from thinking of Russia as a 'big Poland,' that it can encourage towards liberal democracy, to a 'small China,' which it can do business with but little else" (Norman 2012).
- However, there is a growing feeling that the EU-Russian dialogue badly needs a 'reset'. However, it is unclear how to do this: who could and should take a lead, what specific instruments are needed, how much it could cost, what timing should be, etc.? The 'EU-Russia four common spaces' concept and its derivatives such as, for instance, the Partnership for Modernization have proved to be helpful instruments but they are too technocratic/functionalist and lack a strategic vision. The domestic situations both in the EU and Russia are often unfavorable for developing well-balanced strategies. Rather, internal pressures permanently reproduce xenophobic sentiments which cannot be ignored completely by the European and Russian ruling elites. The ongoing global financial-economic crisis also forces Brussels and Moscow to make uneasy choices which not always have positive implications for another partner.
- At the same time, many European and Russian theorists and practitioners realize that the EU and Russia are doomed to keep looking for most efficient forms of cooperation, because they are strongly interested in and dependent on each other and simply cannot avoid a further dialogue. In reality, they have to choose between the 'minimalist' option (limited cooperation in certain areas such as economy, trade, environment, visa regime, research, education and culture and no or a minimum of dialogue on political, security, human rights issues) and the 'maximalist' one (full-fledged cooperation on the whole range of bilateral issues, cooperation which is based on shared values and norms). The 'muddling on' scenario cannot be excluded as well.

As far as ***theoretical conclusions*** are concerned, this study unveiled that that three out of five models of international society we have presented on the outset – balance of power, spheres of influence and multi-regionalism – play only limited roles within the framework of bilateral EU – Russia relations. Russia's conception of *spheres of influence* is

contested by the EU which, however, has to recourse to *balancing* and containment mechanisms to prevent Russia from monopolizing its “near abroad” (Rahr 2011: 309). This tactics confirms that “balance-of-power politics better explains dynamics in the periphery” (Goldgeier and McFoul 2004: 236) than on a global level, though, of course, the practical implementation of this model may be questioned by the multiplicity of forms of power which can’t mechanically balance each other. As for *multi-regionalism* – a direct opposite to both balance of power and spheres of influence models - it is constrained by a number of factors, above all – by the competitive relations between Russia and the EU in their common neighborhood, as well as by conceptual uncertainty of the Moscow-led integrative project which may be interpreted either as an alternative to the European integration, or as an imitation of the EU success.

The two remaining models – *great power management* and *normative unification* – seem to get greater currency. Yet each of them is enmeshed in its own controversies. Firstly, Russia’s great-power-style of behaviour is problematic for Europe due to a couple of reasons. From a geopolitical viewpoint, Russia’s attempts to intervene in the European ‘concert of great powers’ – in particular, by way of participation in the Berlin – Paris – Moscow axis – “almost split up the trans-Atlantic alliance” (Rahr 2011: 306) and reduced the chances for a common EU foreign and security policy. On a more conceptual level, Russia’s understanding of the great power qualities (strategic independence from cooperative commitments, indisputable sovereignty, free pursuit of interests abroad, etc.) and attempts to portray all of them as “genuine values in international relations” (Trenin 2011: 411) are not completely shared by its European interlocutors who pay much greater respect to the ability of great powers to use multilateral tools and soft power resources as vindications of their ambitions in the world.

As for the normative unification model, it is subject to two competing and highly divisive interpretations. Russia sympathizes with norms as procedural commitments that basically touch upon the sphere of foreign relations, while the EU favors norms as value-based concepts that require adaptation and adjustment of domestic rules to the internationally dominating ones. A good illustration of the importance of such a perceptual gap between Moscow and Brussels is our analysis of security domain, where we have seen a meaningful difference between the Common Space on external security (which was agreed upon by both parties) and the EST project (proposed unilaterally by Moscow). The Common Space – at least, in words – was a typical element of a solidarist type of international society, grounded in a combination of great power management and procedural unification. Medvedev’s proposals on new security architecture in Europe were grounded in the same solidarist logic which, however, was regarded as insufficient by the EU which requested Russia’s adjustment to a

much more explicit value-based commitments (in particular, Russia's acceptance of human security approach). The EU insistence on Russia's acceptance of European values was a perfect pretext for Russian speakers to dub the European approach to Russia "extremely ideologized" (Zimnie besedy... 2011: 104). Yet the Russian stand, self-defined as "pragmatic", is largely perceived by its Western neighbors as "an ideological enterprise" as well (Bogomolov and Lytvynenko 2012: 15).

Even when Germany – the key EU member state – abandoned the expectations of a common normative background and offered to Russia the continuation of security dialogue in exchange for Russia's closer cooperation in the resolution of Transnistrian conflict, this deal also failed to work – firstly, because of Russia's insufficient leverages to foster the political changes in Tiraspol, and secondly, because of Russia's rollback to old approaches, as exemplified by the appointment of Dmitry Rogozin as presidential representative on Transnistria in 2012.

Both in Russia and in the West there were many enthusiastic assessments of Putin's foreign policy as "pro-Western, and especially pro-European" (Golggeier and McFoul 2004: 253). Usually the utterances of this sort – which intensified in the Kremlin discourse after Putin's comeback to the Kremlin for his third presidential term – are usually not more than exercises in political rhetoric. Foreign policy analysts should have taken a more sober and less politically-motivated outlook at the prospects of the EU-Russian relations which boil down to the pace and tempo of Russia's Europeanization. In this paper we have shown that the disagreements between Russia and the EU on seemingly technical and procedural issues are deeply political, since both parties adhere to different interpretations of power – perhaps, the key concept that frames the relations between the subjects in communication. As Stefano Guzzini rightfully observed, "deciding what power really means has obvious political implications", since the very acceptance of non-military (and non-material, in a wider sense) forms of power may advocate "a more varied foreign policy strategy sensitive to claims of legitimacy and cultural attraction" (Guzzini 2007: 36).

Political gaps are usually the most difficult to bridge; that's why we don't expect intense dynamics in relations between Moscow and Brussels. Some progress, however, is feasible under two scenarios. First, the chances for Russia and the EU to find a common language directly depend on a more or less consensual understanding of the obsolescence of traditional state instruments that regulate foreign policies. Thus, it is the comprehension that visas in principle fail to perform their regulatory functions and thus need to be either upgraded or substitutes by other "disciplinary" mechanisms, that can lead to the attainment of visa-free regime that Russian strives for. Equally, it is the recognition of the immense importance of non-state actors and their resources (private investors, international NGOs specializing in

policy transfer practices, etc.) that can make possible the implementation of the EU – Russian modernization partnership.

Secondly, as the experience of the NATO-Russia relations (including the Russia's consent to make its airport facilities near the city of Ulianovsk available for the Western coalition troops on their way from Afghanistan) makes clear, Russia's susceptibility to act in unison with the Western institutions directly depends on external threat perceptions and financial benefits that Russia can earn. It is quite thinkable that in the future the combination of these two factors may create foundations for pragmatic Russian – EU agreements.

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