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## Foreword: Two Sides of the Same Coin

Russia and Europe are, like two sides of the same coin, completely different yet ideally matching. Their differences are rooted in centuries of latent enmity and a fundamental lack of mutual understanding of such basic notions as justice and law. Their unique compatibility is ensured by the fact that they were melted from the same metal in one sociopolitical furnace of the feudal “big Europe” of the ninth to thirteenth centuries. It is that same metal – deep, yet often unconscious kinship, common cultural and civilizational roots – that, even in times of difficult diplomatic relations, leaves opportunity for rapprochement of the highest quality. As of now, however, Russia and Europe are unprepared to grasp this opportunity.

In recent years, the slow but steady decline of European power on the world stage and the underlying crisis in relations between Russia and its primary economic partner, the European Union, have become common topics of both Russian and European analysis. The author of this foreword is no exception. Times, however, do change. The new historical reality, sometimes bloody and tragic, proves that Russia and Europe are inevitable and mutually indispensable partners. Especially now, when peace in Eurasia is in the balance.

Over the last 23 years relations have been through ups and downs. It is important to realize that Russia and Europe have not arrived at this point overnight. On a practical level, the opportunities to create a united community of two principle components of modern Europe – Russia and the EU – and to ensure Russia’s entry into Euro-Atlantic politico-military space on equal footing have been missed at least twice (in 1991–1994 and in the early 2000s). Nonetheless, the demonstration by both parties of political will to create such community could permit the other European countries to join it, creating a vast area of common humanistic, economic and energy interests, coordinated foreign and security policy, and a strategy regarding the Shared Neighbourhood.

In 1991–1994, Russia, now free from communism, with the reformist wing of the political elite in power, was ready to integrate with Europe and the West even as a junior partner. At the turn of the century, in the beginning of Vladimir Putin’s first presidential term, Moscow once again made a bid for a large-scale rapprochement with the EU, this time, however, on equal footing. The West hesitantly refused these first opportunities, deciding to confine itself to integrating only the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Thus began the enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and, subsequently, the EU. Russia was treated politely as a defeated country and was offered an agenda of converting to conform to a European image and likeness, rather than the status of ally. However, Moscow did not consider itself defeated. It voluntarily decided to abandon confrontation. And this contradiction has formed a foundation for many subsequent difficulties.

The attempts at rapprochement made in the beginning of the 21st century had no clear common goal and were thus doomed to fail. Europe itself, crawling into a period of deep internal crisis and transformation, had neither the strength nor desire to engage in rapprochement with Russia. In the absence of strategic imagination, narrow and short-term interests prevailed – the outstretched hand hung in mid air. Many in Europe hoped to preserve the “master-slave” model of relations with Moscow, established in the 1990s, not willing to consider a joint approach to designing rules of coexistence with Russia (and not unilateral rules, based on the principles of the EU and NATO). Meanwhile, Russia, which began to restore its strategic and socioeconomic potential, categorically rejected this model, sometimes acting recklessly and overly harsh. At this point, the fundamental differences between the parties were exacerbated by

subjective factors – substantial degrees of arrogance, unwillingness to compromise and intention to have one's way at all costs.

Now, in 2014, Russia and Europe wander in the increasing chaos of the modern world, submerged in the darkness of their own fears, preconceptions and egoistic behaviour. In recent years, engagement between them has been reduced to attempts to gain the maximum at the expense of the partner under the guise of strategic partnership. The zero-sum game, in which one party's gain inevitably means the other's loss, became the ruling principle of Russian-European relations. Europe seeks salvation beyond the ocean. Russia is increasingly confident in its Asian aspirations, establishing its own alternative to the EU in the form of the Eurasian Economic Union, which, with every passing month, becomes more and more distinct. The danger appears that, in the mid term, deep and broad commercial and economic ties will no longer serve as a safety net for international relations.

For this very reason the time is right to discuss Europe seriously. Not the Europe we perceive, however, but the real one, institutionally embodied in the European Union, which in its turn is searching for new pathways into the future and new means to enhance its competitiveness. A new start in relations between Russia and the European Union could be part of the agenda.

The author of this foreword, HSE and MGIMO University professor Oleg Barabanov, CCEIS Junior Research Fellow Anastasia Likhacheva and a group of brilliant students from the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs obviously could not cover all the aspects of such a multifaceted topic in one volume. However, in this issue of the International Organisations Research Journal, we have attempted to study at least some of these aspects on both the theoretical and practical levels: the issues pertaining to the internal transformation of European Union and its most important, institutional element; the theoretical aspects of a systems analysis of Russia – EU relations and the impact of cultural factors and national decision-making mechanisms on them; the interaction between these parties in troubled regions, such as Central Asia; and, finally, competition in the European part of the Post-Soviet space. The results of this work are presented here to the esteemed readers.

*T.V. Bordachev*

Academic Advisor of the Scientific Study Group on Russia – EU Relations System Analysis  
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# Rethinking Russia – EU Cooperation

## Russia and the European Union: Wasteful Competition

*T. Bordachev, E. Ostrovskaya*<sup>1</sup>

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*Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's potential to contribute politically and economically to the stability of the Russia – European Union Shared Neighbourhood has been systematically undervalued. The regional integration initiated by the governments of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia has created a new institutional and ideological reality. However, the increased risk of political and economic competition with the European Union threatens to split the region into separate competing blocs, potentially limiting further regional development.*

*One of the negative factors is the long-term decline of the institutional tools that the EU can apply to sustain its presence in the region. As a consequence of previously used unilateral mechanisms, current European regional policy is ineffective. Because no prospects of membership can be offered to the countries in the Shared Neighbourhood, regulatory convergence with the EU depends increasingly on individual political regimes. This principle prevents a multilateral regional framework from emerging. The process is aggravated further by the increased role of irrational factors in EU regional policy, as opposed to security interests, since the mid 2000s.*

*However, since the beginning of Eurasian integration, the Shared Neighbourhood has entered a new phase of political and economic development, where irrational competition can only jeopardize the strategic goals of Russia and the EU. In the long term, both actors are interested in creating a coherent regional subsystem, based on multi-lateral formats of regional cooperation.*

**Key words:** Eastern Partnership, Russia – EU relations, post-Soviet space, Eurasian integration, Shared Neighbourhood, European Neighbourhood Policy

## Introduction

The formation of the new independent states after the end of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s was accompanied by significant political, economic, social and regional changes. Today, a complex interplay of economic and political relations, both within national borders and on a region-wide scale, remains a main characteristic of the Russia–European Union Shared

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<sup>1</sup> The results used in this paper are obtained within the research grant № 13-05-0052 under the support of the National Research University Higher School of Economics Academic Fund Program in 2013.

Neighbourhood. As a result, the inevitable fragility of the emerging regional subsystem carries significant risks for successful national development.

A strong institutional basis for all members of the Shared Neighbourhood could be the key to regional stability and integrity. It would require the active participation of two key actors – Russia and the European Union. However, the EU is increasingly focused on its own internal development problems, rather than on reforming its regional policy to ensure a long-term regional presence and multilateral institutional instruments.

The conceptual vagueness of current EU external policy for the Shared Neighbourhood stands in stark contrast to its proactive strategy for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that characterized the 1990s. In the absence of functioning institutional mechanisms for multilateral cooperation, the EU has sacrificed regional integrity for short-term unilateral gains in terms of its own regional influence, not taking into account the qualitatively new stage of development achieved by the region in the second half of the 2000s. Attempts to differentiate members of the Eastern Partnership according to their value-convergence with the EU threaten European security interests by increasing the role of irrationality in its regional policy, and raise the risk of increased competition with Russia.

However, the logic of regional development does not necessarily imply an emergence of regional competition between Russia and the EU in the Shared Neighbourhood. The goals of the regional policies of both actors are defined by different priorities, although Russia and the EU are equally interested in multilateral forms of regional cooperation, which increases demands on the institutional design of any political projects in the Shared Neighbourhood.

## The regional subsystem after the collapse of the USSR

In 2006, Boris Yeltsin, the former president of Russia, said that the independence of the republics from the USSR “happened without any conflict or bloodshed, which is important” [Russia Today, 2006]. The establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 1991 marked the collapse of the existing political system rather than a possible sustainable mechanism for cooperation among the former Soviet republics.

After this “civilized divorce,” the CIS had no sufficient institutional capacity for the co-development of its member states. According to experts, the main economic and social indicators showed that intraregional trade dramatically declined by one third of the level from 1990 to 1993 [Williamson, 1992]. In 1999, trade among CIS members accounted for only 27.3% of total regional exports [Zhukov and Reznikova, 2007]. One of the main problems resulted from the exceptional heterogeneity of the states, not only in terms of economic development but also in terms of national political priorities [Trenin, 2009]. In the early 1990s, political uncertainty was intensified by a number of domestic and international conflicts accompanied by ethnic clashes. Many of these conflicts have still not been fully settled.

However, during this period, western countries limited their policies toward the former Soviet Union mainly to regional security. For the more than two decades after the end of the 1980s, European efforts focused almost entirely on the internal enlargement of the EU and the addition of Central and Eastern European countries, which predictably reduced the EU’s activity in other areas [Georgiadis, 2008]. “Europe and the challenge of enlargement,” a report prepared by the European Commission for the 1992 European Council in Lisbon, did not contain any political statements about post-Soviet countries. The EU’s program of Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (Tacis), which functioned from 1991 to 2006, also aimed largely at developing cooperation on the priorities of EU nuclear and energy security. In addition, according to European estimates, even with this limited cooperation with



CIS countries, the partners lacked the basics at the start: “The European Commission’s Tacis Programme had to be built up from scratch. Internally, no adequate procedures, no adequate rules and regulations, no common corporate culture were in place” [Frenz, 2006, p. 2].

In 2002, Romano Prodi, president of the European Commission, officially voiced the position:

Let me reiterate. The current enlargement is the greatest contribution to sustainable stability and security on the European continent that the EU ever made. It is one of the most successful and impressive political transformations of the twentieth century ... I do not deny that this process has worked very well. But we cannot go on enlarging forever. We cannot water down the European political project and turn the European Union into just a free trade area on a continental scale.

Thus, in the absence of any intention to include post-Soviet countries in the EU’s internal structure, relations between them were historically defined by security interests. The existing mismatch between the goals of European policy and the practical tools of its implementation on a multilateral institutional basis became increasingly important.

For Russia, by contrast, regional relations over the 20 years since the collapse of the USSR have been gradually transformed from passive, weakly institutionalized interaction with neighbouring countries to more active forms of organized partnership. Early in the 21st century, several regional projects were launched to enhance the economic and political integration with a small number of stakeholders. In 2000 the Treaty establishing the Union State of Belarus and Russia came into force. In 2000 the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) was established; in 2003 the leaders of Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine signed a letter of intent to create a single economic union. Parallel attempts aimed at rethinking the organizational capacity of the CIS to foster cooperation among the participating countries. In 1999, the CIS reformed its institutional structure to boost sectoral economic cooperation. In 2002, the Collective Security Treaty was transformed into a full-fledged intergovernmental organization.

However, by the mid 2000s, regional integration in the post-Soviet space did not take the form of the so-called “spaghetti bowl,” as in the Asia-Pacific region. In contrast it was characterized by a growing risk of isolation emerging among different regional blocs as opposed to a system of crisscrossing economic commitments.

As a result, for several Shared Neighbourhood countries, manoeuvring among the centres of regional influence became the most rational way to gain additional political and economic benefits. The low level of implementation of intergovernmental agreements constituted a common problem, which even led some researchers to talk about inertia and the fact that “despite the obvious absence of economic and political gains governments still continue initiating new projects of regional integration and ‘imitating’ integration activity” in the post-Soviet space [Libman, 2007, p. 402].

The risk of increased competition between Russia and the EU has grown since the start of a new phase of regional cooperation in the mid 2000s.

## The Shared Neighbourhood region since the mid 2000s

Events of the second half of the 2000s marked the conclusion of a period of political and economic transformation in the post-Soviet space and the formation of the Shared Neighbourhood region between Russia and the EU. As Sergey Karaganov [2013] wrote about Russian-European cooperation, “the idea of creating a union of Europe – a single economic, energy and humanitarian area stretching from France’s Brest to Vladivostok with the inclusion of ‘undecided’ states such as Turkey and Ukraine – objectively meets the interests of all. It would create a third

pillar of the future world order, which would strengthen European as well as international stability ... along with China and the U.S.”

However, positive trends emerged in the regional reality of practical difficulties associated with the lack of multilateral institutions that would involve all actors of the Shared Neighbourhood equally. Those difficulties were reflected in the increasing discrepancy between the EU's regional security objectives, which implied multilateralism, and the existing unilateral mechanisms of their implementation.

By 2004, after an ambitious enlargement process that included Central and Eastern European countries, the number of EU members increased to 25 and its external relations became more heterogeneous. The EU now needed to develop relations with its bordering regions, which included other countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean.

In 2003, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) contained the notion of a “ring of friends” along the European borders that would represent a single strategy in EU external relations. It would build security in neighbouring regions by creating a group of “well governed countries” [European Council, 2003, p. 8]. Limits were set on enlargement as a means of interaction with partner countries.

It was assumed that this policy would provide a universal incentive for the development of EU relations with its neighbours and facilitate voluntary regional economic integration and political stability at its borders [Harris, 2004]. As a result, EU external relations concentrated on cross-border relations in the areas of the economy and investment, as well as security in a broad sense. The EU was declared responsible for developing interregional and subregional integration in border areas, which was considered a precondition for political stability, sustainable economic growth and the levelling of social distinctions in the bordering countries. The prospect of gradually including those bordering countries into a single internal market similar to the Barcelona process was meant to encourage relations with the countries in the Shared Neighbourhood.

However, a multitude of regional contexts raised the issue of the effectiveness of a single format for interaction. As Karen Smith wrote [2005, p. 771], the ENP was “a policy based on strengthening the bilateral links between the EU and each neighbour – a policy for neighbours rather than a neighbourhood policy.” Indeed, the two regions faced significantly different internal challenges, which contributed to a gradual diversification in EU external policies, as well as to the increasing domestic contradictions among EU members in relation to their common policy priorities.

The first response to the problems related to the eastern region came in the “European Neighbourhood Policy Plus,” the initiative launched during the German presidency of the European Council in 2007. A key component aimed at a greater differentiation among the policy packages offered to partner countries by the EU in an advanced system of incentives for legal convergence.

Security and economic development lay at the centre of the German vision of the new regional policy for the east. German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier stated [2007, p. 51] that “the European Union has a vested interest in strong, stable partners and friends in its immediate neighborhood ... if Europe does not strengthen security, prosperity, and the rule of law in its own neighborhood, it will end up importing instability.” Germany proposed expanding the single European market by through free trade agreements. The EU's readiness, demonstrated by differentiating areas of cooperation in the interests of European security, reaffirmed this pragmatic approach. In particular, there were attempts to strengthen Russia's involvement in regional cooperation on energy.

By the mid 2000s, the rhetoric of the Shared Neighbourhood countries' adaptation to European standards had been saved and strengthened, although without any multilateral mechanisms for implementation. The progress report on the presidency submitted to the EU Council in 2007 refers to the need for the EU to “focus on partners' comparative advantages and thus feature elements of asymmetry in their favour as appropriate. In return, partners must continue opening their economic systems and selectively adopt relevant parts of the EU *acquis*” [General Affairs and External Relations Council, 2007, p. 7].

In the continuing evolution of the ENP, several important adjustments were introduced in 2008. The EU regional strategy began to emphasize the political aspects of regional cooperation. In June 2008 the EU Council supported a joint Polish-Swedish initiative to develop a special relationship with the countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. At the first Eastern Partnership Summit, held in Prague in May 2009, the parties confirmed that the new EU regional policy for the east should be “a clear political message about the need to maintain and bolster the course towards reforms” [EU Council, 2009, p. 6].

To enhance the reform process, the EU offered to assist in developing effective governance mechanisms in the partner countries, including providing support for changes in the financial sector, regional development and social systems. Additional institutional mechanisms were introduced for four thematic platforms: democracy, good governance and stability, economic integration, and convergence with EU policies, energy security, and contacts among people. Priority areas of cooperation were also institutionalized in “flagship initiatives.” The areas of greatest cooperation included managing joint borders and liberalizing visa regimes.

A new system of association agreements supported a more active way to extend the EU's regulatory influence on a bilateral basis. Comprehensive free trade areas would be developed “where the positive effects of trade and investment liberalization [would] be strengthened by regulatory approximation leading to convergence with EU laws and standards [in general]” [EU Council, 2009, p. 7].

However, the Eastern Partnership initiative has not brought any substantial institutional change to the implementation mechanisms of the European Neighbourhood Policy. No multilateral regional framework has been created. The traditional instruments of the EU's regional policy have instead been supplemented by political conditionality. As a result, since the beginning of the 21st century, the political discourse has been dominated by an emphasis on the political solidarity that neighbouring countries should demonstrate with the EU.

In 2010, Polish foreign minister Radoslaw Sikorski and Swedish foreign minister Carl Bildt [2010] issued a joint letter on the importance of establishing a clear mechanism for the economic integration of the neighbouring countries, emphasizing the long-term character of this process. Economic integration with the EU had acquired an increasingly important feature of political conditionality, which had transformed ENP priorities. In the medium term, the EU encouraged more active bilateral interaction, accompanied by a strengthened role of individual governments, both within the EU and with its partners.

This trend suggested negative consequences in terms of any long-term institutional cooperation, and as a result undermined the initial goal of stabilizing the EU's external relations in the Shared Neighbourhood. As Karen Smith [2005, p. 759] writes, “Russia's relations with its ‘near abroad’ are particularly sensitive, and the absence of Russia from the framework that is supposed to address difficult cross-border issues leaves a large hole in the middle of the policy.” The EU still has no institutional tools either to control or to stabilize individual countries in its surrounding region. For the development of EU – Russia relations, the growing inclusion of irrational factors in EU regional policy increase the possibilities of competition and unpredictability in that region.

The significance of constructive and multilateral regional participation on the part of the EU has been increased since the Eurasian integration project began. The inefficiency of the Eastern Partnership institutional format, aggravated at the end of the first decade of the 21st century by the added irrational factor of a “commitment to shared values” as a key indicator of cooperation, has had negative consequences for the Shared Neighbourhood.

In 2010, the process of regional integration with Russia reached a new level. The customs union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia was initiated and then supplemented by deeper trade and economic integration as part of the Common Economic Space. The supranational Eurasian Economic Commission was given more capacity to control the implementation of intergovernmental agreements than ever before in post-Soviet history. As stated at that time by Russian prime minister Vladimir Putin:<sup>2</sup>

The integration project is entering a qualitatively new phase, opening up broad prospects for economic development and creating a competitive advantage. Through this joint effort, we will be able not only to fit into the global economy and trade, but also to participate meaningfully in the decision making that defines the rules and determines the contours of the future.

However, in the absence of multilateral mechanisms that would foster intraregional dialogue and cooperation, competition between the EU and Russia has increased. This situation, made worse by irrational factors in the EU’s regional policy, does not lead to the effective implementation of the strategic objectives that both actors pursue.

The EU is forced to sacrifice the integrity of its regional system, making the development of security relations with neighbouring countries conditional on the regulatory cooperation with the specific political regimes within the Shared Neighbourhood. The continuing heterogeneity of the regional system in fact prevents the EU from creating a consistent multilateral strategy for its regional relations, as well as from comprehensively assessing ongoing results [Bosse, 2009]. For Russia, competition within the Shared Neighbourhood also raises the risk of artificially accelerating the pace of Eurasian integration, which could jeopardize its future prospects.

## Conclusion

Competition between Russia and the EU for individual countries in the Shared Neighbourhood must give way to effective multilateral mechanisms for cooperation between the two institutionalized integration blocs.

During the large-scale political and economic transformations associated with break-up of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the EU made an unprecedented contribution to regional stability by integrating several Central and Eastern European countries into its structure. However, in the current stage of regional development, the institutional impact of that process on the EU’s policy toward its neighbouring countries is now in turn breaking up the EU – Russia Shared Neighbourhood.

In the years after the EU’s 2004 enlargement, regional security was the main topic of European discourse. Since then, while preserving the traditional shortcomings of the institutional structure, there has been an attempt to promote political integration based on value-convergence.

<sup>2</sup> Putin V. (2011) Novyj integracionnyj proekt dlja Evrazii: budushhee, kotoroe rozhdaetsja segodnja [A new integration project for Eurasia: the future is born today]. *Izvestia*. Available at: <http://izvestia.ru/news/502761> (accessed 29 November 2013).

As a result, the maturity of the EU's legal system contrasts ironically with the stagnant state of cooperation between the EU and its external region. The EU is facing the unpredictability of its partnering countries, without any adequate institutional arrangements, which are currently based on the contradiction between the security goals and proclaimed convergence of values. Under the circumstances, with Russia having achieved its potential as an additional provider of security and economic growth in the Shared Neighbourhood, the process of Eurasian integration has been artificially and irrationally politicized.

Because of the EU's longstanding diminished participation in the Shared Neighbourhood, Russia's efforts to engage both European and Eurasian integration blocs in a constructive dialogue are attracting growing significance. The fact that today Russia and the European Union are interested in creating multilateral forms of intraregional relations bodes well for the prospects for cooperation in the long term.

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# Россия и Европейский союз: конкуренция от недопонимания<sup>1</sup>

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*Потенциал России как контрибутора безопасности и проводника экономического роста в регионе общего соседства России и Европейского союза долгое время был недооценен. Сегодня интеграционный выбор национальных элит Белоруссии, Казахстана и России создает в регионе новую политическую и институциональную реальность. Однако высокий риск развития конкуренции с Европейским союзом создает угрозу разделения региона на отдельные конкурирующие блоки, что может существенно ограничить его совокупный потенциал.*

*Одним из негативных факторов является снижение ресурсов конструктивного долгосрочного присутствия в регионе общего соседства Европейского союза. Последствием доминирования односторонних механизмов во взаимодействии ЕС с внешним окружением в предыдущий исторический период стала недостаточная эффективность современной европейской политики соседства. В отсутствие перспектив членства нормативное сближение стран-партнеров с Европейским союзом было поставлено в зависимость от политических режимов отдельных стран и не способствовало созданию многосторонних форматов регионального взаимодействия.*

*С началом процессов евразийской интеграции регион вошел в новую фазу политического и экономического развития. Однако стратегия ЕС по более дифференцированному подходу к странам-партнерам, возникшая в данный период, не смогла решить основную проблему недостаточности инструментов регионального присутствия ЕС, увеличив в ней роль нерациональных факторов.*

*В результате риск конкуренции за страны общего соседства не способствует эффективной реализации стратегических целей России и Европейского союза. В долгосрочной перспективе оба актора заинтересованы в создании целостной региональной подсистемы, опирающейся на многосторонние форматы регионального взаимодействия.*

**Ключевые слова:** Восточное партнерство, российско-европейские отношения, общее соседство России и Европейского союза, евразийская интеграция

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# The Influence of Institutional Decision Making Mechanism in Russia on the Relations with the European Union

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*This article examines the influence of internal factors (such as decision-making processes, political culture, and the connection between government and society) on Russia's foreign policy toward the European Union in the context of neoclassical realism. Excessive personalization and a closed decision-making structure do not encourage effective reactions to emerging challenges and affect the possibility of cooperation in the post-Soviet space. Institutional mechanisms and their impact on a country's foreign policy are extremely important in the theory of neoclassical realism. This article also analyses EU – Russia relations over major periods and the role of internal factors in Russian policy.*

*Despite an orientation toward long-term cooperation between the EU and Russia, a contradiction remains between Russia's over-centralized decision-making structure and the EU's decentralized system. In addition, political leaders and elites play less of a role in the EU, where there is a real separation of powers and competencies. These factors hamper EU – Russia cooperation because Russia prefers to establish bilateral relations with each state. As a result of all these factors, long-term relations may be at risk. However, the decentralization of power, increased efficiency of political institutions and the active participation of civil society will improve the level of mutual trust and overcome the current issues in EU – Russia relations.*

**Key words:** foreign policy, mechanism of decision making, neoclassical realism, Russia, the European Union

## Introduction

Historically, the policy-making process in Russia has been extremely private and personalized. Since the times of the Russian Empire and the USSR, the head of state personally sets the priorities for foreign policy, bearing personal responsibility for these decisions, with other institutions having less significance and performing mainly an auxiliary function. Despite the change of political regime in Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union, there has been a clear trend toward democratization and increasing the role of different actors in the foreign policy discourse. Most experts say that foreign policy making remains one of the least-developed areas of governance [Yakovlev-Golani, 2011, p. 8]. The post-Soviet legacy is clearly evident in the structure of the existing hierarchy, the main characteristics of which are excessive centralization and the role played by personal relationships at the level of political elites.

This article looks at the impact of the political decision-making process in Russia on relations with the European Union according to the theory of neoclassical realism, which allows an

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analysis of the effects of external factors on foreign policy. The study examines the hypothesis that the process in Russia is highly centralized and personalized communications. In addition, differences in the nature of foreign policy-making processes in Russia and the EU have a negative impact on the relationship between the two partners.

The purpose of this study is to show how intervening variables (political decision-making institutions, political culture, and the relationship between the government and society) define the dependent variable (Russian foreign policy) in relations with the EU within the framework of neoclassical realism. The study first explores the importance of institutional arrangements and their effects on the conduct of foreign policy in the framework of neoclassical realism. Then it analyzes stages of EU – Russia relations and the influence of domestic factors in Russia. In conclusion, it assesses the current transformation of the institutional mechanism toward improving its efficiency and presents possible ways of implementation.

## The role of intervening variables in the framework of neoclassical realism

In 1998, Gideon Rose [1998] used the term “neoclassical realism” for the first time in a review of scientific monographs by authors proposing a new approach to the analysis of international relations. Continuing the notion of neo-realism regarding the key role of systemic and structural factors in the international arena, the adherents of neoclassical realism focused mostly on analyzing the foreign policy behaviour and decision making of certain states. Despite some similar characteristics and parameters within the existing system of relations, however, actors may follow radically different foreign policies that show the influence of certain internal forces.

Also, unlike neoclassical realism, the neo-realist approach does not consider states’ behaviour to be homogenous, given that the internal factors that help determine the real strength of a country are affected by external forces and drive foreign policy [Schweller, 2004, p. 164]. However, according to neoclassical realism, with regard to the role of domestic political decisions, the purpose and scope of foreign policy are determined primarily by the position of the state and its relative power in the international system [Rose, 1998, p. 58]. This is the main difference between neoclassical realism and liberalism, where the internal politics are completely dominated by external causes.

As Tatiana Romanova [2012] explains, neoclassical realism consists of three parts:

- the independent variable, which includes the external environment and the system of international relations;
- the intervening variable, which represents the complex set of domestic relations, including institutions, the relationship between state and society, public perception, and ideology. Neoclassical realism allows for the role played by individual personalities, their image as leaders, ideology and specific features that affect the policy-making process; and
- the dependent variable, which is the country’s foreign policy.

The analysis of the effect of the intervening variable on the dependent variable requires considering several factors emphasized by neoclassical realists. First, the actions of those involved in political decision making are not always rational, but are based on existing paradigms of thinking, personal views and experience. Rose [1998, p. 147] rightly stressed that “foreign policy choices are made by actual political leaders and elites, and so it is their perceptions of relative power that matter, not simply relative quantities of physical resources or forces in being.” There is a clear link between neoclassical realism and constructivism.

Second, states are heterogeneous and differ on the basis of “their ability to extract and direct resources from the societies they rule” [Schmidt, Juneau, 2009, p. 15]. The higher the

level of skill and data consolidation between state and society, the stronger and more effective the state and its pursued foreign policy become. Therefore, the established system of political mechanisms, with a clear division of roles and responsibilities, provides a positive impetus for the foreign policy-making process. A well-developed bureaucracy, coupled with democratic procedures, does not allow the process to be concentrated in the same hands; local elites and individual leaders carry markedly less weight in domestic politics. However, good governance requires the development of institutions as well as the mobilization of existing resources. When trust in government is at low levels, there is no single, unifying ideology. In contrast, shared values not only improves communication between civil society and the state, but also automatically enhances the country's image in the international arena.

Thus, according to the theoretical foundations of neoclassical realism, the intervening variable affects foreign policy. Moreover, all the internal factors are interrelated, and changing some factors, such as political ideology or institutions, can affect those internal factors, as well as the dependent variable, namely foreign policy.

## The formation of Russia's foreign policy and its impact on relations with the European Union

Foreign policy making in Russia is traditionally a closed and personalized process with little involvement of experts and business communities. The key figure is the president, who, according to the constitution, defines the main directions of foreign policy. Therefore, the analysis of different periods of EU – Russia relations must start with the specific figure of the president of the Russian Federation and the direct action of the Kremlin.

The breakup of the Soviet Union and the rise to power of Boris Yeltsin led to the creation of a new system for formulating national foreign policy. It was in this period that the constitutional basis was created for a strong presidency that emphasized the president's central role at the strategic level. Other existing institutions, mostly inherited from the Soviet Union, played only secondary and coordinating roles, as their direct influence was severely restricted. This is most clearly reflected in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was forced to close 36 embassies and consulates all over the world between 1991 and 1993 [Checkel, 1992]. Nevertheless, the ministry continues to implement the Kremlin's foreign policy ideas, is fully aligned with the president of the Russian Federation and is embedded in a hierarchical power structure [Biberman, 2011, p. 670]. Other executive bodies involved in foreign policy making include the Security Council and the Office of the Foreign Policy of the Presidential Administration. However, as Anatoly Torkunov [2004, p. 264] notes, the lack of a highly efficient mechanism for a common foreign policy strategy in practical terms leads to contradictory results in the international arena. This inconsistency is reflected in current EU – Russia relations.

After the breakup of the USSR, Russia had to find its place in the changing world order and entered a new stage of cooperation with its partners. At the beginning of the 1990s, its foreign policy echoed the country's internal turmoil. The lack of clear national interests and solidarity with the West significantly weakened Russia's position on the international stage. Russia, along with the EU, supported the formation of new actors during the initial breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991–92. It refused to intervene in the events in the Balkans, which also contributed to the inconsistencies in foreign policy pursued by Andrei Kozyrev, the foreign minister whom critics nicknamed "Mr. Yes." In particular, interventions of the United States in Eastern Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Bosnia in 1996 met no resistance from Russian elites.

A key moment in EU – Russia relations came in 1994 with the conclusion of the legally binding Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. It proposed a model that emphasized the fact that Moscow could become an equal partner only if it committed to the shared values of respect for democratic rights and freedoms and the liberalization of its economy. However, the agreement's entry into force was delayed for three years due to the negative impact of the first Chechen campaign on Russia's image abroad.

Meanwhile, the Russian president's popularity was declining at home, where anti-western sentiment was growing, due to the fact that Russians were openly dissatisfied with the lack of progress of the ongoing internal reforms and with inconsistent foreign policy, which adversely affected Russia's position in the world.

The results were Kozyrev's resignation and appointment of Yevgeny Primakov as foreign minister in 1996, the end of "blind" solidarity with the West and foreign policy aimed at protecting national interests. Alexei Bogaturov [2007, p. 61] notes that Russian foreign policy became both pragmatic and principled, insofar as partnership and cooperation with the U.S. and the EU were not in doubt. Nevertheless, Russia was able to maintain some pragmatism and independence by keeping its support flexible and based selectively on national interests. At the same time, another unilateral humanitarian intervention by NATO in Kosovo exposed the limited use of Russia's foreign resources, which meant its position was often ignored. In response to NATO and the EU's expansion, Russia's independent foreign policy had to become more complex to defend its national interests in the region and the world, which influenced Russian elites.

In the 21st century, the major developments in Russian foreign policy have been connected with the personality of Vladimir Putin, who still plays a key role in the political decision making. Although Yeltsin's influence continued for some time, as a new president Putin took active steps to establish a centralized hierarchy not only in domestic affairs but also in foreign policy. By 2004, a new institutional system had developed, by which time most of the former ruling elite were gone [Averkov, 2012].

In 2000, Russia published the "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation," which highlighted cooperation with the EU as an important political and economic partner. At the same time, Russia clearly indicated its intention to pursue its own national interests by moving toward a strategic partnership that would not be defined by the EU. During Putin's first two terms as president, Russia's position in the region and the world was strengthened. The notion of common values is gradually disappearing, periodically arising on the agenda and becoming less useful as a tool to solve any pressing problems.

In 2003, EU – Russia relations entered a new phase, with four common themes: economic issues; democracy, governance and the rule of law; security; and culture, science and education. Two years later, "road maps" were developed that determined the main directions of cooperation, such as energy regulation, transport, crime and migration issues. In addition, both parties became strategic partners, which meant that "Moscow moved closer – albeit formally – to the position of a European insider" [Karaganov et al., 2005].

Elected president in 2008, Dmitry Medvedev almost immediately faced his first serious test – the armed conflict in South Ossetia, which directly affected relations between Russia and the EU. Despite harsh criticism and minor measures taken by the U.S. and EU, Russia's victory reaffirmed it as a regional leader in the post-Soviet space, ready to fight for its national interests. From a geopolitical point of view, the EU had failed to develop a tougher stance on Russia, having not imposed any specific political or economic sanctions. Its only action was to stop negotiating the new Partnership Agreement with Russia; those negotiations resumed two months later, however, despite the fact that Moscow had not complied with the EU's condi-

tion of a full withdrawal of Russian troops. Nevertheless, the efforts of the European Union, in particular France, translated into conflict at a diplomatic level.

Several trends are important in the context of political decision making and institutional dynamics with regard to foreign policy. Despite Russia's foreign policy being unconditionally strengthened by constitutional powers and Medvedev's personal meetings with heads of state, as prime minister Putin also remained active on foreign policy issues and met with political leaders, focusing particularly on Eurasian integration. During this period Russian foreign policy fell under the portfolio of both the president and the prime minister, resulting in some overlap. Russia's foreign policy has always involved a relatively high level of personal relationships with western leaders, including European ones. If this was a critical factor under Boris Yeltsin, those personal relationships remained equally important for Putin.

Since the departure of Medvedev as president, foreign policy making has become clearer and more predictable, as Putin as president has assumed the key role [Turkowski and Ćwiek-Karpowicz, 2012, p. 73]. The 2012 presidential elections did not change the balance of power, as the institutional arrangement proved once again that the EU remained a key partner for Russia. Shortly after his inauguration, Putin signed the decree "On measures to implement the foreign policy of the Russian Federation," which paid special attention to relations with the EU. In particular, it set out the following urgent tasks for Russian foreign policy:

- Advocate for the strategic objective of creating a common economic and humanitarian space from the Atlantic to the Pacific;
- Seek an agreement with the European Union on the reciprocal abolition of visas for short-term trips of their citizens;
- Uphold the principles of equality and mutual benefit in working on a new strategic partnership agreement between Russia and the EU;
- Contribute to the effective implementation of the "Partnership for Modernization" initiative; and
- Develop mutually beneficial partnerships to establish a single European energy sector, strictly complying with existing bilateral and multilateral treaty obligations.

Obviously, with Russia's increasing role in the international arena and in the region and its willingness to defend its national interests, the EU could no longer dictate its terms. However, Russia and the EU lack a certain incentive to resolve problems in a way that would strengthen their cooperation [Turkowski and Ćwiek-Karpowicz, 2012, p. 80]. Russia's long-term plans focus on the rapidly developing Asia-Pacific region, and those plans generally do not interfere with EU – Russia relations because of differences in the nature of their decision making. Despite Moscow's pronouncements to modernize, it has not kept up. The EU expresses its dissatisfaction with the Kremlin's unfulfilled plans to modernize, but because of the worsening situation in the eurozone, its relations with Russia have moved gradually to the sidelines. However, for Russia, the crisis in Europe is "a chance for a qualitative leap forward in relations," an opportunity for further developing a strategic bilateral partnership despite the continuing distance them [Lukyanov, 2012].

Thus, the foundations of today's foreign policy-making process were laid under Yeltsin's leadership, maintaining a clear focus on the primacy of the president despite changing political priorities. Its centralized nature increased Russia's ability to mobilize resources at critical moments, with the increased importance of the perception of specific elites, coupled with an emphasis on personal bilateral relations with political leaders rather than on institutional interactions that may adversely affect the stability of relations with Europe. Of course, the president should make decisions on key foreign policy issues; at the same time, the lack of involvement of

other actors, the excessive centralization and the hierarchical power structure have significantly reduced the efficiency of Russia's foreign policy-making process [Kortunov, 2004].

One of the key problems of modern relations between Russia and the EU is the different levels of centralization in political decision making. Consequently, Russia prefers to establish relations bilaterally with individual European states, while the EU involves a wide range of actors in its foreign policy, which is challenging for Russia's highly personalized foreign policy.

## Conclusion

The theory of neoclassical realism, with its emphasis on the intervening variable, is an effective tool for analyzing Russian foreign policy making, because throughout modern history, it has been shaped and defined by a key political leader in the person of the president. Neoclassical realism also helps explain Russia's use of various tools in its dialogue with different actors, according to its national interests.

The EU has traditionally been considered the main political and economic partner of Russia, despite the EU's shift in foreign policy toward Russia, which has also been under scrutiny in Europe. Russia's commitment to the strategic goal of creating a single economic and humanitarian space from the Atlantic to the Pacific has a large long-term and positive impact on the dynamics of the whole European region. However, to achieve this objective, the parties must overcome several areas of disagreement, which include not only issues of an economic or ideological nature, but also differences in decision-making systems.

The main disadvantages of the Russian political decision-making process – a high degree of centralization and institutionalization, coupled with the dominant role of individual leaders and elites – jeopardize Russia's long-term relationships with its partners, in particular with the European Union. However, in Russia there is a clear tendency to complicate domestic political realities and ideologies and to engage civil society and business in some form of interaction with the state. The broader involvement of interest groups can become a catalyst for change in Russian foreign policy and will allow for more active grassroots cooperation in the future, and also shows the willingness of power to engage in a new form of dialogue. In order to realize the opportunities, the partnership between the EU and Russia must overcome some challenges: a surge in the EU's capacity to guarantee security in the region and the involvement of a broad range of players in the process of foreign policy-making in Russia.

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# Влияние институционального механизма принятия политических решений в России на формирование курса внешней политики в отношениях с Европейским союзом

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*В статье анализируется влияние внутренних факторов (таких как институты принятия политических решений, политическая культура и связь между властью и обществом) на формирование внешней политики России в отношениях с Европейским союзом в рамках неоклассического реализма. Излишняя закрытость и персонализированность сложившегося процесса принятия политических решений в России не позволяют эффективно реагировать на возникающие вызовы и негативно отражаются на возможных долгосрочных перспективах сотрудничества. Особое внимание уделено важности институциональных механизмов и их влиянию на проведение внешней политики государств в рамках теории неоклассического реализма. Также выделяются и анализируются основные этапы российско-европейских отношений и роль внутривнутриполитических факторов России, влияющих на данный процесс.*

*Безусловно, Россия и ЕС нацелены на долгосрочное партнерство. Однако существуют определенные трудности во взаимодействии между российским централизованным и европейским децентрализованным механизмами принятия внешнеполитических решений. Кроме того, чрезмерная концентрация власти в узких кругах российских элит не способствует развитию диалога с государствами Европы, где зачастую политический вес конкретной личности ниже и существует эффективное распределение полномочий среди институтов в данной сфере. Учитывая излишнюю централизованность российского механизма принятия политических решений, выстраивание долгосрочных отношений с партнерами, в частности с Европейским союзом, становится трудной задачей. Децентрализация власти, повышение эффективности институциональных механизмов и более активное участие гражданского общества смогут повысить общий уровень доверия и вывести диалог с Европой по ключевым вопросам на новый уровень.*

**Ключевые слова:** внешняя политика, механизм принятия политических решений, неоклассический реализм, Россия, Европейский союз

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# A Systemic Analysis of the Interaction between Russia and the European Union in the Post-Soviet Space

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*This article analyzes post-Soviet relations between Russia and the European Union using the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism. It finds that the post-Soviet level of competition between Russia and the EU is higher than required by the international system. The reason is rooted in the influence of a number of internal factors (or intervening variables). Consequently, elites in both Russia and the EU are not able to adequately understand the signals sent by the international system.*

*There is a wide variety of intervening variables; for example, there are factors caused by the political elites' perceptions of each other's intentions and of the international situation, factors related to inadequate information, factors related to the complex institutional structure of the EU and factors related to domestic political issues. In addition, the current international environment, characterized by a high degree of uncertainty, increases the effects of these intervening variables.*

*These effects result in inaccurate and incorrect processing of the signals of the international system by Russian and European elites. As a result, a subsystem of international relations has arisen in the post-Soviet space, featuring a highly competitive environment. However, there are only two major actors in the region: Russia and the EU. Small countries are too weak, so must choose to align themselves with one or the other. This causes a rivalry between Russia and the EU for influence on small and medium-sized countries in the post-Soviet space.*

**Key words:** neoclassical realism, international system, subsystem, Russia, European Union, post-Soviet space

## Introduction

The post-Soviet space is a vast region that, according to the traditional definition, includes the territories of former Soviet republics. However, in this article the post-Soviet space is understood not as the territories of all former Soviet republics, but of only twelve of them. It excludes the Baltic countries that are now members of the European Union.

The post-Soviet space invariably attracts the attention of politicians, scholars and journalists. It is evident that the interests of many countries of the world are interwoven in this region. But in most cases analysts emphasize only two actors: Russia and the European Union, which is an alliance that integrates the majority of European states.

Unfortunately, until now the relationship between the EU and Russia has been analyzed only from the perspectives of realism (neo-realism) and liberalism (neo-liberalism). Yet these approaches do not reveal the full specificity of Russia – EU relations in the post-Soviet space.

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The analysis in this article thus uses the new theory of neoclassical realism, which should allow the research to produce as fully as possible objective results to help understand the key features of those relations in the post-Soviet space.

The hypothesis of this study is that the level of competition between Russia and the EU in the post-Soviet space is higher than required by the international system, and that this phenomenon is caused by the fact that, for a number of reasons, the political elites of Russia and the EU do not properly process the signals sent by the international system. As a result, a subsystem of international relations emerges in the post-Soviet space, characterized by a highly competitive environment.

This article first analyzes the key points and propositions of neoclassical realism and, second, attempts to prove this hypothesis. In addition, it outlines a systemic model of Russia – EU interaction in the post-Soviet space. It concludes by discussing the key characteristics of this model and major causalities that contribute to the current development of Russia – EU relations in this region.

## Neoclassical realism: the further development of realism

Neoclassical realism is a relatively new theory first formulated by Gideon Rose [1998] in his review of books by Randall Schweller, Thomas Christensen, Fareed Zakaria, William Walford and Michael Brawley. The authors in these books used a similar approach for analyzing subjects of their studies. Rose called this approach neoclassical realism.

Neoclassical realism takes into consideration not only the general principles of neo-realism (in particular, the influence of the international system on the actions of states), but also internal factors that influence foreign policy through the decision-making process inside a state or an alliance of states.

However, in accordance with most adherents to this theory, the influence of the international system is decisive. For example, Tatiana Romanova [2012] writes that in neoclassical realism the pressure of the external environment and systemic factors remain crucial elements influencing a state's activities. This is especially true in the context of globalization, which is increasing rapidly, and of the disastrously reduced predictability of global changes. For these reasons, neoclassical realism resembles neo-realism.

Nevertheless, there are significant differences between these two approaches. For example, neo-realism, unlike neoclassical realism, emphasizes neither processes occurring within a state nor factors causing foreign policy or other decisions. As Rose [1998, p. 145] writes, neo-realism “is a theory of international politics; it includes some general assumptions about the motivation of individual states but does not purport to explain their behavior in great detail or in all cases.” Neoclassical realists try to explain the foreign policy of a state or particular foreign policy decisions – why a state acted exactly in that way, but not differently, not in direct accordance with signals sent by the international system.

In *Theory of international politics*, Kenneth Waltz [1979, p. 71] says that neo-realism could explain the impact of the international system on one or another international actor, and the opportunities this system provides to actors, but it cannot explain in what way and to what extent actors react to these limitations and opportunities. Neoclassical realists try to overcome this limitation of neo-realism.

Although neoclassical realists partly return to the key tenets of classical realism, neoclassical realism differs noticeably, even from a classical realist approach. Neoclassical realists emphasize the influence of the international system; moreover, they explain that the foreign policy decisions are driven not only by human nature but also by a host of internal factors, domestic

processes and the institutional structure of actors. In this sense, neoclassical realism closely approaches neo-liberalism.

Thus neoclassical realism is a qualitatively new theoretical approach to foreign policy analysis. It incorporates the features of many previous approaches, yet is distinguished from them. Romanova [2012] capaciously defines neoclassical realism as the search for an answer to the question of why the pressure of global and regional factors is transformed into one and not another foreign policy; in other words, it is a research into the “transmission belt” of foreign policy.

Neoclassical realism is also characterized by a strong emphasis on studying the mechanisms of the development of a state’s foreign policy, but not on studying interstate relations. However, this article attempts to use the key positions of this approach to explain the subsystem of international relations that has formed in the post-Soviet space.

Political scientists distinguish three main components of neoclassical realism: independent variables (the international system and its structure), intervening variables (internal factors) and dependent variables (external policy). Most neoclassicist realists study the influence of an intervening variable on an independent one or the process of determining a dependent variable.

Intervening variables can be divided into two categories. The first category includes factors related to the specificity of perception (by elites) of signals sent by the international system and an international environment, as well as factors related to a lack of information and the inability to make absolutely rational decisions. According to Romanova [2012], no one possesses all the information, and therefore everyone relies on available data and guesses the rest. Moreover, notions about the right and the real, about connections between the well known and the secret – as well as about the world in general – are conditioned by the personal experience of politicians and bureaucrats, and by knowledge and paradigms, where they have formed and exist.

The second category of intervening variables includes factors related to the institutional structure of a state (or a union of states – for example, the EU) or civil society, as well as factors related to the relations between elites and masses. Romanova [2012] asserts that the more complex interactions within a state, the more sophisticated and unpredictable the functioning of that transmission belt.

Neoclassical realists focus on studying how such intervening variables contribute to interpreting the signals of the international system; in other words, they study how intervening variables influence a state’s foreign policy. As Rose [1998, p. 152] notes, to understand the way states interpret and respond to their external environment “one must analyze how systemic pressures are translated through unit-level intervening variables such as decision-makers’ perceptions and domestic state structure.”

At the same time, political elites are limited by domestic policy factors as well as by the external environment. In other words, an external environment can turn out to be a factor that strengthens the influence of one or another intervening variable. For example, Rose [1998, p. 152] writes that “neoclassical realists assume that states respond to the uncertainties of international anarchy by seeking to control and shape their external environment.”

Schweller has an interesting theory, which he has confirmed by examining many case studies (he has also developed a theory of threats in which the basic principles of neoclassical realism are outlined). According to Ariel Ilan Roth [2006, p. 486], Schweller identifies four intervening variables: “(1) elite consensus about the nature and extent of the threat; (2) elite cohesion, that is, the degree of persistent internal divisions within the central government’s leadership; (3) social cohesion in the balancing society; and (4) regime or government vulnerability to political opposition.” Schweller attaches the great importance to consensus between representatives of various social groups of masses, as well as elites.

Schweller's approach is interesting also because it concedes a decisive role of intervening variables in the process of forming foreign policy. For example, state-level variables define if a (relatively weak) state will or not will attempt to restore the balance of power [Roth, 2006, p. 486]. In fact, it means that intervening variables can nullify the significance of signals sent by the international system.

Neoclassical realism has already begun to produce several trends. For example, Tudor Onea [2009, p. 854] notes that *Neoclassical realism, the state and foreign policy*, edited by Steven Lobell, Norrin Ripsman and Jeffrey Taliaferro, suggests that neoclassical realism has evolved into "a family of neoclassical realist theories." These trends are distinguished by their approaches to assessing the impact of intervening variables on an independent variable, specifically the influence on the international system.

In the context of this article, the most appropriate approach sees international and domestic variables as "almost equally influential in shaping foreign policy so that the two cannot be considered separately," as argued by Steven Lobell, Mark Brawley, Jennifer Sterling-Folker and Benjamin Fordham [Onea, 2009, p. 855].

This approach holds that neoclassical realism can be used for a systemic explanation of some foreign policies, unlike Schweller's approach, which focuses only on explaining why a foreign policy did not correspond to the requirements of the international system. Schweller attaches decisive significance to the international system, but recognizes that states often do not choose the best strategies of behaviour. He studies individual cases (a breakdown of the policies of England and France in the 1930s, for instance) and concentrates on explaining the errors of particular states, but does not do a global analysis of their relations. For this reason his approach is not used in this article.

According to Lobell [2009], Brawley (2009) and Sterling-Folker [2009], intervening variables can exert influence not only on the choice of the tool of foreign policy, but on the nature of processing of system impulses as well. Benjamin Fordham [2009] goes further and states that intervening variables have an impact on forming national interests and conducting policy to realize those interests. This assertion is already incompatible with realism and Fordham's approach is on the verge of realism and liberalism. That diminishes its explanatory power, but Fordham notes that his theory is useful for explaining various actions of a state. However, it is not intended for analyzing the interaction among actors in the international arena.

This article attempts not to explain the process of forming the foreign policy of Russia or the EU but rather to conduct a system analysis of relations between these actors. It is thus based on a realistic paradigm and rests on the approach of Lobell, Brawley and Sterling-Folker. (While Lobell's approach is flexible and similar in some aspects to Schweller's, in general Lobell's approach is more universal.)

According to Lobell, Brawley, Sterling-Folker and others, the international system provides sufficient and clear information about existing threats and opportunities – including information about changes in the balance of power – but it does not give clear information on how the states should act to respond appropriately to these threats and how they should take those opportunities provided by the system [Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2009, p. 298]. In fact, this approach develops realism and neo-realism further. Like these two theories, it presupposes that the national interests of states are defined by the international system, and does not deny the great significance of the role of the international system. At the same time, it tries to overcome the weaknesses of neo-realism and explain the paradoxes that arise when, having received clear systemic signals, states conduct highly controversial foreign policy from a neo-realist point of view.

Proponents of this approach place emphasis on different intervening variables. For example, Brawley [2009] attaches special importance to the lack of information, as well as to do-

mestic policy factors. Sterling-Folker [2009] emphasizes the importance of forming a national identity within the state (in the context of this chapter, the aspect of forming a single European identity and the impact of this process on the EU's foreign policy, including the policy that the EU implements in the post-Soviet space, is particularly interesting). Lobell [2009] highlights the significance of social and domestic political and institutional factors.

The approach of Lobell, Brawley and Sterling-Folker appears the most appropriate to the current analysis because it allows a clear explanation of the relations between Russia and the EU in the post-Soviet space. Emphasizing the role of intervening variables (where the cultural, domestic political and even social factors are considered institutional) in forming foreign policy can be decisive, this approach does not deny the great significance of role of the international system, sometimes linking a successful foreign policy to the correct processing of signals sent by the international system.

Based on the intermediate results, neoclassical realism can hardly be called the direct continuation of classical realism or neo-realism. As Onea [2009, p. 855] writes, "neoclassical realism has gone too far in shedding the assumptions of neorealism." In the United States and Western Europe, neoclassical realism is considered an independent theoretical trend in international relations, although, without a doubt, it remains still well within the realist paradigm. In addition, some individual trends in neoclassical realism are in some ways similar to neo-realism.

Some researchers see in neoclassical realism an attempt to surpass the explanatory power of other theoretical approaches to the study of international relations. For example, Onea [2009, p. 854] notes that neoclassical realism "claims to offer the best of both worlds": on the one hand, it is more practical than neo-realism, because domestic political factors are taken into consideration; on the other hand, it takes into account the influence of systemic factors, and this fact makes it superior to liberalism. But the versatility of this approach is also one of its weaknesses: the explanatory power of neoclassical realism is put in doubt by both neo-realists and neo-liberals.

## Russia and EU relations in the post-Soviet space: from agenda setting to cooperation to open competition

According to several indicators (analyzed below), the current policy conducted by Russia and the EU in the post-Soviet space can be characterized as competitive. It is not an open confrontation, but there is rivalry, as well as various disputes and an absence of constructive interaction, often disguised by fine and laconic wording – at least in the political sphere.

In the 1990s, relations between Russia and the European Union were relatively productive. There were hopes for future constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation in a wide range of areas. But although the 1990s were an "era of optimism" in Russia – EU relations, the beginning of the 2000s was already characterized by a reduction of real cooperation and the rise in the number of hidden latent conflicts that, by the end of 2003, had begun to turn more explicit [Bordachev, 2008b, p. 373].

A kind of competition in the form of a diplomatic game (preventing the development of constructive interaction) has developed between Russia and the European Union. As Sergei Karaganov wrote in 2010, the competition was quite tough, sometimes even fierce. Brussels wanted to prove that Russia's foreign policy agency had weakened. Russia made retaliatory and preventive diplomatic "strikes." Karaganov believes that competition between Russia and the EU is increasing in an artificial way, and that it is conditioned by systemic impulses and thus often does not have real grounds.

In the 2000s, as Russia grew more developed and stronger, Russia – EU relations in the political sphere became ever less productive. For example, Bordachev [2008b, p. 373] notes that relations between 1991 and 2007 underwent a transformation from optimism at a forthcoming rapprochement under a single ideology and political and economic space to statements about the presence of insurmountable differences in values and attempts to move to “pragmatic cooperation” mainly in the economic sphere.

However, there are a number of issues over which Russia and the European Union still disagree significantly – especially regarding economics and energy. Currently, as Dmitri Suslov [2008, p. 150] notes, the European Union pursues a policy of diplomatic and economic deterrence, openly countering the rise of Russia and China; it impedes the adjustment of rules in the global energy industry in favour of Russia and other producers.

In particular, the EU’s plans to develop new energy technologies, including energy generation and the use of biofuel instead of traditional energy sources, as well as the search for alternative energy sources, show that the EU intends to diversify its sources of energy, perhaps to show Russia that it can decrease its dependence on Russian energy.

Russia’s policy toward the European Union is notable for firmness, hardness, pragmatism and the desire to neutralize any possible expansion of the EU in the post-Soviet space, including by exerting a negative influence on the level of confidence in relations with the EU members themselves. For instance, Thomas Graham [2010, p. 72] argues that Russia prefers not to deal with the EU as a whole, but with European countries on a bilateral basis, to set them against each other in order to advance Russian interests.

Thus at present Russia – EU relations – on the whole, as well as in the post-Soviet space – are characterized by a high level of competition, which, in the last decade, has been gradually increasing.

## Russia – EU relations in the post-Soviet space through the prism of neoclassical realism

In order to analyze Russia – EU relations in terms of neoclassical realism, first the main signals of the international system must be defined, then briefly (because the goal of this article is to make a framework analysis of intervening variables rather than detailed one) the internal factors that do not allow Russia and the EU to react to those signals appropriately must be defined, and then, last, the key features of Russia – EU relations in the post-Soviet space can be determined.

The modern international system quite likely does not send Russia and the EU signals to increase competition. Moreover, a range of systemic factors indicates that competition between them in the post-Soviet space should diminish. The following factors should be mentioned: the high ambitions of the United States and China, the international political crisis, growing instability in almost all spheres of international relations, and the inability of states to use international organizations and institutions effectively to maintain order in the world and implement their own interests.

The United States is still the largest and strongest state in the world (at least in terms of arms – in quantitative as well as qualitative terms). It has interests in all regions of the world that represent at least some geopolitical importance. One goal for the U.S. is to restrain the growth of influence of both Russia and the EU. For example, Suslov [2008, p. 341] argues that one of the provisions of U.S. policy in Europe is the soft counteraction to European integration (especially in the spheres of foreign policy and security), to counteract the EU from becoming an independent pole of force.

China is the second largest economy in the world. It seeks to increase its influence in many regions of the world – smoothly, but steadily. According to Fareed Zakaria [2009, p. 108], China becomes more “energetic” and forceful, and already exerts great influence in the region as well as globally. The post-Soviet space attracts China, and this fact makes this power a real competitor to the EU and Russia. Its huge population and steadily increasing economic power make the possibility of China seizing the opportunity a real threat.

In the foreseeable future, China will achieve a high level of global influence and occupy a top place in the international hierarchy – not only in economic terms (which, in fact, it has already achieved) but also in political terms. Zakaria [2009, p. 112] posits that although China will hardly take the lead over the U.S. in the next 10 years according to economic, military and political indicators, step by step it is becoming number two in the global hierarchy. This process adds an entirely new element to the international system.

The intentions of both the U.S. as well as China are quite serious. Moreover, these states have a broad spectrum of opportunities for implementing these intentions. As Bordachev [2008a] writes, the behaviour of the U.S. and China is relatively predictable and consists in strengthening their power regardless of the consequences for other actors. Karaganov [2010] argues that if Russia does not pool its efforts with Europe, it will inevitably drift into the role of an appendage to China.

U.S. and Chinese expansionism, as well as China’s rising position in the international hierarchy, are those systemic factors that should reduce competition between Russia and the European Union in the post-Soviet space. China likely represents a noticeably greater threat for Russia than the EU, which is weaker militarily and politically, possesses much smaller population and has noticeably less expansionary potential. The United States, which is also showing interest in the post-Soviet space, is potentially not as dangerous, but it remains a real competitor that could interfere with the ability of both Russia and the EU to implement their interests.

Despite the need (for Russia and the EU) to withstand the U.S. and China in the post-Soviet space, the international system will not likely require a political or military alliance between Russia and the EU. It is more likely that more constructive interaction in the region would be required, to assess systemic trends and signals objectively and accurately, but not to initiate full-blown and large-scale cooperation in all spheres.

Another factor that indicates a signal to reduce competition between Russia and the EU in the post-Soviet space is the international political crisis, primarily in the diminished ability of the leading centres of power to exert influence on smaller states located in geopolitically important regions. Large countries cannot control processes effectively in neighbouring (and weaker) states and, correspondingly, lose the ability to exert efficient influence on the foreign policy of these states. In several cases, actors should work together to solve problems where their interests are similar. There is no need to create full-scale unions; such a situation requires only the ability to make reasonable concessions in order to implement at least some of a state’s interests.

There has been a significant increase in instability in the world. At the end of the bipolar period, the international system entered a so-called transition phase, and is likely still in this phase. This period of transition is characterized by an increase in anarchy and uncertainty, the absence of a clear hierarchy of states, and a trend toward a significant redistribution of power among large actors.

The instability complicates the structure of the international system and reduces any predictability about its development. Accordingly, the process of solving foreign-policy tasks becomes more complex as well. As Henry Kissinger [1997, p. 734] notes, the components of the international order, their interaction with each other and the tasks they need to solve have never before changed so quickly and been as deep and global as they are today. This situation once



again calls for more constructive interaction between Russia and the EU, to work together to resolve issues that are important to both.

In addition, in recent years states have been unable to use international organizations and institutions effectively to implement their interests. Karaganov [2012] notes that most institutions of global management in the last two decades have become weaker. The “unipolar” dreams of American reactionary idealists in the 1990s, on the offensive after the apparent victory in the Cold War, faded almost instantly by the beginning of the next decade.

It has become evident that a state must develop its own self-reliant policy with only partial reliance on organizations such as the United Nations. As a “self-help system,” according to Waltz [1979, p. 106], the international state dictates a need for bilateral interaction, which is more effective because it is easier for two actors to negotiate an agreement than, say, for ten actors to do so. Consequently, there is a systemic impulse to develop constructive and efficient interaction between the EU and Russia, *inter alia*, in the post-Soviet space, including in the political sphere.

Thus at present the international system does not contribute to the rise of competition between Russia and the European Union in general, nor does it aggravate the contradictions between these actors in particular. At the same time, in practice, the opposite situation exists: competition does not weaken, but rather increases. Some influencing factors exist – as was noted in the first section of this article – which neoclassical realists call intervening variables, and these factors exert significant influence on processing of the international system’s signals by the political elites of Russia and the European Union.

### ***Intervening variables***

As discussed, intervening variables fall into two groups. The first group includes factors associated (to some extent) with the peculiarities of the human psyche and, accordingly, even with human nature. It is interesting that classical realists believe it is human nature that causes competitiveness and anarchy in international relations. Hans Morgenthau [1998, p. 5], a founder of the theory of realism, which forms the basis for the theory of neoclassical realism as well, asserted that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature: “human nature ... has not changed since the classicist philosophies of China, India and Greece endeavoured to discover these laws.”

The first group of factors deserves slightly more detailed consideration. According to many neoclassical realists, this category includes, first and foremost, the possible irrational activities of politicians (because they, like anyone, can make erroneous decisions, or make decisions under peer pressure, sometimes even under the influence of emotions, stereotypes, principles, etc.). Another important factor, which also belongs to the first category, is a lack of information. Very seldom, all the information necessary to make the right decision can be collected. In addition, often the human mind subconsciously discards some information and facts that it does not “want” to acknowledge; these facts may seem absolutely unnecessary, while in reality they can be extremely important.

Intervening variables in the first category are extremely diverse, so their analysis can be very long and deep. They include cultural, civilizational, historical (in particular, historical memory) and psychological (the peculiarities of perception, for instance) factors among, probably, many others. However, this category is not useful for the purposes of this article, which is reviewing the overall picture of relations between Russia and the EU.

The second group of intervening variables includes such factors as the institutional structure of states, relations between elites and masses, relations between the ruling elite and any

opposition, and civil society. Some neoclassical realists – for example, Schweller – give the second group of intervening variables decisive importance, paying noticeably smaller attention to the first group.

For this article, only the influence of the second category of intervening variables is considered, because the goal does not require a detailed discussion of the effects of intervening variables. This category plays an important role in the ability of the elites of the European Union to process the signals sent by the international system.

The EU is characterized by a complex institutional structure, and it is composed of independent states, each of which possesses its own institutional structure, developed civil society and complex domestic political relations. There are many contradictions within the EU, and these contradictions prevent forming a coherent and rational foreign policy in the post-Soviet space, a policy that would fully reflect the requirements of the international system. Therefore, there is nothing surprising in the fact that the signals sent by the international system undergo tremendous changes and “materialize” sometimes into an unexpected foreign policy (from the viewpoint of neo-realists).

Russia is a much more monolithic actor compared to the European Union. The strong “vertical power” established by Vladimir Putin is notable for its forethought and solidity; however, it does not exclude the probability of a significant distortion by systemic signals in the way of forming foreign policy.

In addition, there is another factor that relates to neither the first nor second group of intervening variables. This factor consists of the specific features of external environment, namely the international system. For example, Romanova [2012, p. 10] asserts that the pressure of the system and the globalizing world can increase the influence of certain domestic policy factors. The current high degree of anarchy and uncertainty and the instability of the international system contribute to the high competitiveness between Russia and the EU in the post-Soviet space. Their political elites do not possess sufficient information about what can happen even in the near future, and consequently prefer not to take any risk but to take measures solely to strengthen their own positions rather than engaged in constructive interaction.

Uncertainty causes elites to fear interaction with anyone – in order to avoid defeat. For example, Bordachev [2008a] believes that in conditions “where the world is dangerous in a different way every new day ... foreign partners are viewed either as potential predators or potential prey.” There is no understanding that the partner faces the same challenges and has to decide the same problems.

Thus the elites of Russia and the European Union cannot adequately process the signals sent by the international system because of the large number of intervening variables related to the psychological peculiarities of humans, as well as to the complex institutional structures of both actors (especially the EU) and the lack of information. The influence of these intervening variables is strengthened even more because of uncertainty and instability in the international environment.

## The subsystem of international relations in the post-Soviet space

The significant distortion in processing the systemic signals by Russian and EU elites has produced a subsystem of international relations in the post-Soviet space. The signals are processed and transformed and fed into various activities and measures taken by those elites, in their interactions with each other as well as with other countries in the post-Soviet space. A new local reality has developed, which can be considered a subsystem of international relations in the post-Soviet space.

This subsystem is a kind of a miniature coordinating system with its own laws. The international system affects the post-Soviet space and its subsystem indirectly – by signals, which it sends to the Russian and EU elites. The impact of those signals is not always decisive, because it passes through filters – namely, intervening variables.

The subsystem, which is (to a significant extent) shaped by the foreign policy decisions of the Russian and EU elites, likely has both direct and indirect impacts on these elites. Somehow the results of the interaction between Russia and the EU in this subsystem are deposited in the minds of ruling elites, as well as in the minds of the opposition and civil society, and then deliberately or subconsciously taken into consideration when those elites decide on subsequent foreign policy. It is a manifestation of the indirect impact of the subsystem.

The direct impact of this subsystem is expressed in the impulses themselves. These are formed as a consequence of those or other foreign policy activities in the post-Soviet space. Such foreign policy actions can affect the international system as a whole. Receiving new signals from elites (or, to be more precise, in the process of interactions among elites), the international system adjusts and complements the impulses, which it sends back to the elites.

The subsystem of Russia and EU relations in the post-Soviet space can be characterized by certain patterns that can be conventionally called rules or even laws. These patterns require more study, but it is already evident that a competitive environment is the key feature. In addition, the basic “laws” of the international system (anarchy, struggle for survival, etc.) function within this subsystem.

The countries in the post-Soviet space (of course, except Russia) play the role of objects rather than subjects of international politics; more precisely, they can be considered the objects of the competition between Russia and the EU. These countries are too weak to offer and promote their own projects, and can only choose on whose side to stand.

This situation seems to be typical. All the countries in the post-Soviet space are small or medium-sized states. Only Russia is a very large power, maybe even a superpower, according to some experts. As Alexei Bogaturov [2006, p. 12] writes, bringing together the efforts of “small and middle powers” countries is still not enough to impose their will on stronger players. In other words, even if the former Soviet republics set aside their own ambitions and want to create some form of organized integration or union, without Russia or any of the European powers, such a union will not be viable or will have little influence in the post-Soviet space.

In this situation the former Soviet republics have no alternative than to seek close cooperation with Russia or the European Union. Accordingly, some lean toward joining Russia (such as Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) and the others toward the EU (such as Ukraine and Moldova). There are also “undecided” states, and Russia and the EU struggle for influence over them. Moreover, the various political elites within these states also struggle. Ukraine is one such example.

Ancillon, the tutor of Frederick William IV and Prussia’s state secretary for foreign affairs, argued that each state has only one purpose when implementing its foreign policy: to cooperate with natural allies against natural enemies (quoted in [Haas 1953, p. 470]). Natural allies are states whose power is necessary to balance the power of the natural enemies. This is the only maxim that should be considered in international relations. Ancillon’s principle seems to work in the post-Soviet space as well.

Thus it makes no sense to consider the «small and middle powers» countries in the post-Soviet space separately: their activities must be analyzed solely in the context of the interaction between two key actors – Russia and the European Union – within the subsystem of international relations in the post-Soviet space.

## Conclusion

Interaction between Russia and the European Union in the post-Soviet space takes place within a subsystem of international relations with its own specific characteristics. This subsystem must be considered in the context of the overall interaction between Russia and the EU, which, in turn, can be most effectively analyzed on the basis of neoclassical realism. Several connections characterize that interaction in the post-Soviet space.

First, the international system sends signals to the elites of Russia and the EU. These signals do not call for active competition between Russia and the EU in the post-Soviet space; on the contrary, they most likely encourage less competition.

Second, intervening variables (for instance, those related to lack of information, the complex institutional structure of the actors, the peculiarities of the human psyche) influence the foreign policy decision-making process by the Russian and EU elites. These factors constitute a mechanism for processing the international system's signals and – at present – stimulate the political elites to conduct competitive policy in the post-Soviet space. Furthermore, the significance of these factors is likely strengthened by a high level of uncertainty, which is one of the key features of today's international environment.

Third, after processing the signals sent by the international system, the Russian and EU elites (influenced by the above-mentioned factors) make decisions concerning interactions with each other as well as with other countries in the post-Soviet space. The interactions of these countries – «small and middle powers» states – with Russia and the EU are also influenced by a wide range of factors, some of which are discussed above as well. As a result, this subsystem of international relations in the post-Soviet space sends signals back to the elites of Russia and the EU and participates in the transformation of those factors (intervening variables).

Fourth, the activities of the elites (expressed in the Russia – EU interaction in the post-Soviet space) influence the international system. At present this influence is rather nominal and has little impact on the either structure of the international system as a whole or the essence of the signals that system sends to Russia and the EU.

In sum, the interaction between Russia and the EU in the post-Soviet space is characterized by a high degree of competitiveness, which is contrary to the signals sent by the international system and which is caused by the influence of various intervening variables (domestic policy, psychological and other factors) on formation of foreign policy by Russia and the EU.

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# Системный анализ взаимодействия России и Европейского союза на постсоветском пространстве<sup>1</sup>

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*В статье анализируются отношения России и Европейского союза на территории постсоветского пространства. В качестве теоретической базы используется сравнительно новый и комплексный подход — неоклассический реализм. Согласно результатам исследования, уровень конкуренции России и ЕС на постсоветском пространстве выше, чем того требует международная система. Это происходит потому, что элиты Российской Федерации и ЕС из-за влияния ряда внутренних факторов, называемых неоклассическими реалистами вмешивающимися переменными, не в состоянии корректно обработать импульсы, посылаемые международной системой.*

*Число вмешивающихся переменных весьма велико, среди них необходимо отметить факторы, связанные с восприятием политическими элитами намерений друг друга и международной обстановки; факторы, связанные с недостатком информации, а также со сложной институциональной структурой акторов и различными внутриполитическими проблемами. Кроме того, текущее состояние международной среды, характеризующееся высокой степенью неопределенности, способствует усилению влияния этих вмешивающихся переменных на обработку импульсов международной системы.*

*В результате не совсем корректной обработки этих импульсов на постсоветском пространстве возникает подсистема международных отношений, ключевой характеристикой которой является высококонкурентная среда. При этом главными акторами на постсоветском пространстве остаются Россия и Европейский союз, а остальные страны, будучи слишком слабыми, вынуждены выбирать, к какому из акторов примкнуть, и это вызывает соперничество между Россией и ЕС за влияние над данными странами.*

**Ключевые слова:** неоклассический реализм, подсистема, Россия, Европейский союз (ЕС), постсоветское пространство

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# Russia – EU Cooperation in Socio-Economic Area

## EU – Russia Relations Regarding Water Resources in Central Asia

A. Likhacheva<sup>1</sup>

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*In Central Asia, the water deficit and water-energy problem have been among the most acute and conflict-ridden challenges for the sustainable development of the region and for regional security. Key trade and investment partners, including Russia and the European Union, could play a considerable role in influencing this issue, due to the long-lasting status quo, the inability to find a solution through intra-regional dialogue and the region's rising dependence on foreign trade. Indeed, water-related interactions between Russia and the EU have been developing in a complementary manner. The EU possesses new technologies and its members have access to long-term capital markets, while Russia carries influence through providing security, regulating migration and holding a favourable political position for offering mediation services to the republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.*

*This article examines EU – Russia relations regarding water issues in Central Asia over the medium term. By analyzing cooperative and non-cooperative strategies used by the major stakeholders in the water conflict (the five republics and the third parties of Russia and the EU), it confirms the continuous complementary character of EU and Russian activities in this context. Russia will take responsibility for moderating the principal questions (as with the construction of big dams such as Rogun or Kambarata), as they relate to the provision of security guarantees. The EU will act through providing support for water companies from small and medium-sized enterprises, and promoting the European Water Initiative principles and by developing its investment policy. The intersection of interests is possible if Russia attracts an independent arbiter, such as an actor available to provide guarantees related to the values of professional objectivism, human rights support and environment protection. These issues inevitably arise with relation to big infrastructure projects.*

**Key words:** water resources in Central Asia, EU-Central Asia relations, Russia-Central Asia relations, post-Soviet space, EU – Russia relations

### The water problem in Central Asia

Traditionally, water resource issues are considered under the framework of sustainable development, with regard to environmental protection, water and sanitation, and human rights (as

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approved by the United Nations General Assembly on 28 July 2010). What makes Central Asia unique is the pivotal role of those resources in the systematic development of the economies of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and they are key for Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan as well [Smith, 1995]. Table 1 summarizes the main aspects of the water-energy nexus in Central Asia.

*Table 1:* Key aspects of water-energy nexus in Central Asia

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Kazakhstan/Uzbekistan/Turkmenistan</b>	<b>Kyrgyzstan/Tajikistan</b>
Peak demand	• Spring/summer	• Winter
Water withdrawal industry	• Irrigation	• Energy production
Energy sources	• Hydrocarbons	• Hydropower
Consequences of non-cooperative actions	• Winter floods • Water deficit for irrigation period • Degradation of environment (salinization and erosion of soils)	• Energy deficit in winter (blackouts, central heating cuts) • Economic pressure and trade blockade

*Source:* Based on Eurasian Development Bank [2008].

In Central Asia, for the last 20 years the world has been watching the grave consequences of the decentralization of systems that were integrated and complementary under the Soviet Union. It was a unified energy network, not only for Central Asia but also for the whole USSR, with a system for controlling the water flow of Syr Darya and Amu Darya.

The water system was designed in the Soviet era to provide extra water during periods of high demand through a system of cascading hydropower plants, so that when the upstream republics needed extra power in winter, they received it via an energy “ring” made up of the other republics. Thus, all five managed to have water throughout the spring and summer. With the collapse of the USSR, the system broke down and produced a conflict of interest that has still not been overcome [Guseynov, Goncharenko, 2010].

No Central Asian actor has been capable of taking the leadership on the hydro energy conflict. The authoritarian governments of the five new republics have been unable to establish an efficient supranational institution to act as mediator. First, to do so would require the transfer of sovereign rights to such an institution and, second, it would deprive both upstream and downstream countries a powerful resource in domestic politics. In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, taking an uncompromising attitude on water issues has almost become a national idea [Pannier, 2009]. It is no coincidence that these two countries are mentioned: the acutest conflict is between Uzbekistan (with the highest population) and upstream Tajikistan and, to a less extent, Kyrgyzstan. It also touches on the leadership ambitions of Uzbekistan, which cannot be realized because the water comes from upstream, and Kazakhstan [Smirnov, 2009]. The Kazakh economy depends much less on agriculture than the Uzbek economy, and has additional water resources from Irtysh and some small northern rivers. Turkmenistan receives considerable income from the export of hydrocarbons, has the smallest population among the five republics and depends less on flow allocation.

As a result, the region remains in an irrational deadlock. On the one hand, the circumstances are ideal for bartering (water for energy) [Shatalov, 2008]. On the other hand, neither the upstream nor the downstream states are ready for such negotiating. The situation is worsened by general tensions among them, their uncompromising positions and a high degree of attention paid to independent regional policy [Likhacheva, 2014].

For a long time, Central Asia was considered the “black hole” of Eurasia, and no one was eager to get involved in regional problem solving. But a few years ago the situation reached a breaking point [Ashimbayev, 2005]. Several factors – the region as a source of resources, increasing integration in the post-Soviet space, its physical location as a buffer between Afghanistan and other countries, the risk of being a potential source of instability for China and Russia – led to Central Asia rising on the international political agenda for neighbouring Russia, China and Iran and for other global actors such as the United States and the EU [European Council on Foreign Relations, 2011; Laruelle, Peyrouse, 2013]. Traditionally, the Central Asian states have implemented multi-vector foreign policies, so the involvement of these actors opened up new opportunities for strategies and political tactics.

Any country attempting to play an important role in Central Asian affairs will inevitably encounter the importance of water in the region and engage in a mediation process. With regard to the theory of hydro politics, it is a remarkable case study, closely involving external actors that are economically, demographically, military and politically much more successful and located well beyond the river basin.

This case also has the interesting aspect of EU – Russia relations in the post-Soviet space, given a different set of rules that apply to the European parts of Central Asia. While European and Russian policies in the region often diverge in many areas (such as politics and energy), the water issue is one of a few where interests do not contradict each other. Although European and Russian actions have not been coordinated for a decade, they have been complementary.

This article is divided into two parts: the first analyzes the evolution of EU and Russian policies on water for the last decade, with a focus on the economic aspects, and the second draws conclusions for the medium term. It does not cover issues related to the Aral Sea, which is a human-made, irreversible disaster now related only to environmental protection, on which much has been written by many international experts.

### ***Supranational solutions for water in Central Asia***

It would be incorrect to say that the Central Asian republics have not made any collective attempts to resolve the water situation through international organizations. The first such attempt was made after the Tashkent conference in October 1991: three months later, in February 1992, all five states signed the Agreement on Cooperation in Joint Management, Use and Protection of Interstate Sources of Water Resources. Later, in 1998, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan signed a water-energy agreement on Syr Darya. Some bilateral agreements were also concluded between 1998 and 2004 but turned out to be inefficient. The winter of 2008 – the coldest for many decades – was a point of no return, however, and as a result the region entered its deepest water-energy crisis [Libert et al., 2008].

The well-known Aral Sea Foundation unites all five republics. However, it is difficult to consider it effective, and it has been stricken by numerous international scandals [Ferguson, 2005]. The Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia (ICWC), with its Scientific Information Centre, formally under the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, is an important structure for resolving disputes over operational water distribution related to Amu Darya and Syr Darya under the 1992 agreement. But the influence of international projects and organizations has been minimal and inefficient with regard to any major issues. They cannot solve the core question of how to optimize opposite seasonal water demand.

A single successful example of the efficient regulation of transboundary water resources between upstream and downstream states in Central Asia is an agreement between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, signed in 2000, on the use, repair and maintenance of dams and other water infrastructure used by both countries on the Chu and Talas rivers [Mamataliev, 2012]. Kazakh-

stan confirmed its obligation to co-fund the repair and maintenance of a number of canals, dams and water reservoirs owned by Kyrgyzstan but that are part of the common water distribution system serving both countries. This agreement has been successfully implemented. The Chu-Talas Water Management Commission, established by the two countries with assistance from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, is based on two crucial principles:

- both countries agree to follow inter-country water allocation schemes and schedules applied in the Soviet era; and
- the downstream country, i.e., Kazakhstan, must reimburse the upstream country (i.e., Kyrgyzstan) for part of the maintenance and operating costs of water infrastructure relative to the volume of water delivered by that infrastructure.

Any attempts to conclude a similar agreement between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have not yet succeeded.

## Russia

During the post-Soviet period, most interaction between Russia and the Central Asian republics was developed bilaterally, despite joint work in international organizations within the Commonwealth of Independent States. Until 2001, Russia was considered a major partner in the region and guaranteed external security [Cherniavsky, 2010]. But the Afghanistan campaign increased instability in the region and created new opportunities for the Central Asian republics to develop multi-vector policies. Increased hydrocarbon exports from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to China and the EU also weakened Russia's position.

Meanwhile Russia remains a unique country capable and ready to provide security guarantees for the Central Asian states (based mainly on its own national interests of protecting its borders), and anything dealing with water is intimately connected with these guarantees [Borishpolets, 2010]. This is one of the main reasons why China – a major trade partner of Central Asia since 2010 (overtaking the EU according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) with vast experience in building dams and water channels (such as the Three Gorges Dam and the Black Irtysh channels) – neither participates in controversial hydro projects in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan nor seeks to mediate in negotiations on this issue.

After decreasing its regional activities in the 1990s in order to focus on domestic problems, Moscow returned to the water-energy issue in the Central Asian republics and started taking some notable initiatives [Chufrin, 2010]. Russian companies were mainly oriented toward large-scale infrastructure and investment projects: the construction of the Rogun Dam (in Tajikistan) and the Kambarata-1 and -2 Dams (in Kyrgyzstan). As a result, it became necessary to regularly attempt to soften the position of the downstream states (beginning with Uzbekistan). A brief comparison of these two dams is presented in Table 2.

The tension between Russia and Tajikistan over the Rogun Dam has lasted since 2004, when international agreements on Russia's participation in the Tajik hydro market were signed. Russia initially planned to develop Tajik hydropower through the enormous Rogun project (at an estimated value of \$2.2 billion) and the Sangtuda Dam (estimated at \$200 million and finished, although at three times over its budget) [Kurtov, 2013b].

The project failed because of a range of factors, such as the global economic conditions and Tajikistan's multi-vector policy, which at one point became its main preoccupation. The Russian company RUSAL, a Rogun contractor, planned to send the energy to an aluminum plant in Tajikistan [Ibid.]. But the Tajik partners, encouraged by booming aluminum prices that rose from \$1,500 to \$2,575 per ton between 2004 and 2008, reconsidered the terms of the contract several times. In the end they made RUSAL forget about the aluminum plant, which

Table 2: Comparative analysis of the Rogun and Kambarata Dams

	<b>Rogun</b>	<b>Kambarata-1, -2</b>
Location	Tajikistan	Kyrgyzstan
River	Vakhsh	Naryn
Main purpose	Original purpose: irrigation Current purpose: power generation	Power generation
Characteristics	Planned as a highest dam in the world; work started before the collapse of USSR	Part of the Naryn-Syr Darya Cascade, situated above the Toktogul Dam and other power stations
Estimated capital expenditure	\$2.2 billion	\$2 billion
	Very high risk of exceeding the budget (by more than 50%)	
Power capacity	3,600 megawatts	1,900+360 megawatts
Current situation	Tajikistan is looking for investors	Treaties between Russia and Kyrgyzstan signed in 2012; technical expertise to be launched soon
Transboundary disputes	Uzbekistan continues opposition and demands international guarantees; World Bank expertise is in progress	Downstream states invited to participate; Uzbekistan primarily concerned about how long it takes to fill the period of filling the reservoir

achieved the status of a strategic site, making private ownership forbidden. As a result RUSAL abandoned the project.

Despite trying, Tajik authorities were unable to attract new investors, given the inefficient Tajik economy, increasing protests by Uzbekistan, its trade blockade, unprotected property rights in Tajikistan and the global financial crisis.

In 2012, there was an intensive development in the water-energy issue in Central Asia. Of course, a number of steps to address this imbalance had been attempted over the previous 20 years, but 2012 was a turning point. During his visit to Central Asia, on 20 September, Vladimir Putin signed agreement with Kyrgyzstan to cooperate in the field of hydropower.<sup>2</sup> Russia announced its intention to build a new water-energy balance in Central Asia. Two features of Kambarata-1, which had been planned during the Soviet years, are its position at the top of the cascade of existing hydroelectric power stations in Kyrgyzstan and its initial focus on generating energy instead of regulating flow and irrigation (as had been planned for Rogun). Thus, it would be technically possible to drain the water in winter to generate electricity and to hold it downstream – in the reservoirs at Shamaldy-Say, Uchkurgan and Toktogul. This system would prevent winter floods and allow spring runoff to be adjusted during irrigation in the downstream state. This project would improve Russia's reputation, as well as RUSAL's, after the decades-long controversy over the Rogun project [Kurtov, 2013a, 2013b]. In August 2013, during an official visit to Moscow, the president of Tajikistan also confirmed the interest of the republic in the construction of four hydroelectric power plants with Russian participation; these projects are significantly smaller than Rogun and have not been involved in any international scandals.

Obviously, any active expansion into Central Asia cannot be without some complications. Russia faces the problem of limited resources – financial, political and human. Countries in the region do not completely orient their policies toward Russia, realizing the benefits of co-

<sup>2</sup> Kremlin (2012) Visit to Kyrgyzstan. 20 September. Available at: <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/4428> (accessed 1 August 2014).

operation with several partners, such as Chinese investment and inexpensive loans, European participation, and the interests of India, Iran, Turkey and the United States.

## European Union

The first remarkable step in the institutionalization of the EU's relations with Central Asian countries was made in 1996, when it signed the Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In 1998, a similar agreement was signed with Turkmenistan and, finally, in 2004 – with Tajikistan [Dadabaeva, 2011].

Since 2001, in response to the Afghanistan campaign, the West has paid much more attention to Central Asia. European countries began to try strengthening their own energy security by diversifying their gas suppliers in the 2000s, actively pursuing the idea of building the Nabucco pipeline from Turkmenistan to Europe, bypassing Russia. In 2007, the EU and the Central Asian states launched a strategy for a new partnership [Council of the European Union, 2007]. This medium-term strategy, adopted for six years until 2013, included six priorities: security, economic reforms, energy dialogue, environment, human rights and education reform. Most relevant to this article is the reform of the water system and participation of European investment institutions in Central Asian infrastructure projects. Although the energy component remains the main interest of the EU, Brussels pays attention to the water issue, understanding its systemic impact on the entire region. In a broad sense, the implementation of the strategy institutionalized relations between the EU and the countries of Central Asia: EU representative offices were opened in the region, a system of meetings between EU representatives and the heads of republics was established, and investment and educational programs were launched, as was the promotion of the rule of law, antidrug campaigns and so on [Bolgova, 2010; Granit et al., 2010].

As the EU's role in water issues, especially in its early years, was mostly as an intermediary, the first steps in this direction were made at multilateral meetings in Tashkent, Paris and Ashgabat. On 3 December 2008 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan co-hosted a high-level meeting with Italy, as the coordinator of the EU's regional initiative, with the support of the European Commission; the meeting was attended by representatives from all the republics of Central Asia and the EU member states, after which participants discussed a draft document on strengthening EU-Central Asia regional coordination on the environment and water resources. In 2010, a multilateral seminar on management of water resources in the region was again held in Ashgabat.

Today, the EU is trying to participate in regulation through the European Water Initiative (EUWI), which includes a project on Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA). The initiative's objectives relate to the UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on access to clean water and sanitation, and focus on the concept of integrated water resources management (IWRM) introduced at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. At the 2013 meeting in Brussels, there were discussions on the adaptation of national water policies in Central Asia to EUWI principles and the development of cooperation in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan investment plans [EUWI, 2013].

As noted in “The European Union and Central Asia: a new partnership in action,” regarding the development of water resources, the EU intends to promote the use of “transboundary river basin management” and environmental initiatives (in particular the Caspian Sea Environmental Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, the UN conventions on biological diversity and desertification, cooperation with the Central Asian Regional Environmental Centre), priority projects to implement water-saving technologies and water efficiency, and the integrated use of transboundary water resources [Council of the European Union, 2009]. The readiness to

increase investment in such projects by attracting funds from third parties is emphasized, although there is no mention of direct financial support from the EU. Finally, the EU declares its support of the development of regional hydropower.

Both hydropower development (a strength of Russia) and new technologies (an EU strength) are fundamentally important because the implementation of such projects could significantly reduce possible conflict over water issues. Today up to 79% of the regional withdrawal for irrigation is used inefficiently, i.e., it is simply lost [European Union External Action, 2009]. Channel beds do not have cover, so water soaks into dry soil; it also evaporates from the uncovered channels, and drip irrigation is not utilized on a large scale. As a result water intake is high. The controversial Karakum Canal in Turkmenistan is a global symbol of the inefficient use of water: irrigation efficiency is about 0.6–0.9%. That is, for every litre needed, 110–170 litres are wasted [Kuvaldin, 2006].

In 2010 the Investment Facility for Central Asia was launched, which covers the period from 2010 to 2013. Some of the €65 million allocated to it was directed to improve water sanitary systems in Tajikistan [European Commission, 2012]. The EU also financed the construction of hydroelectric power in Tajikistan and developed bilateral dialogues within the EUWI. One of the most fruitful projects, between the EU and Kyrgyzstan, was launched in 2008. The dialogue was interrupted by political change in the country, but resumed in 2010 in the context of water legislation, management and implementation of joint projects, in particular, on Lake Issyk Kul [United Nations Economic Commission on Europe, 2011]. National medium-sized projects are the most effective for the EU: throughout the post-Soviet period, the EU has never participated in major multilateral projects in Central Asia, with the exception of environmental initiatives.

## Russia – EU relations in the 2000s

In the post-Soviet years, the EU and Russia addressed water-energy issues at different levels, and as such bilateral relations did not arise. After 2000, the EU's role in regional water issues was indirect and not very important. However, in 2007, with the adoption of several agreements and cooperation programs, the situation started to change, and the period of 2010–12, to some extent, became a turning point. The EU promotes the principle of IWRM in the framework of the EUWI and has tried to encourage the establishment of a supranational multilateral organization for basin management, but these efforts have been limited by environmental agenda.

Russia has focused on bilateral negotiations and participation in infrastructure projects. It significantly increased its participation in 2012, when it entered into several hydropower agreements with Kyrgyzstan and conducted successful talks with Tajikistan, openly supporting projects in those countries to control nearly 100% of river runoff in Central Asia.

In addition, the withdrawal of U.S. coalition forces from Afghanistan scheduled for 2014 poses a serious threat to stability in Central Asia, and worsening water conflicts could have unpredictable consequences. These factors increase concerns for both Russia and the EU, although neither has made any statements on this issue yet.

## Central Asian strategies and the opportunities for Russia and the EU

A matrix of cooperative and non-cooperative water-management strategies of the five Central Asian republics illustrates the degree of participation of other countries. China has distanced itself from water issues (preferring to the role of economic rather than political partner) [Swan-

ström, 2007]. Thus the third parties in Central Asia include Russia and the EU [Borishpolets, 2010; Peyrouse et al., 2012]. The United States does not get involved in the republics' conflicts over water, and other powers that might be interested in the region – such as India, Iran and, to a lesser extent, Turkey (which is active in the internal affairs of Central Asia) – have too little influence [Ashimbayev, 2005].

This analysis has focused on the basic criteria for assessing the potential for conflict over international watercourses proposed by Aaron Wolf [1998] and Peter Gleick [1993], the concept of virtual water proposed by Tony Allan [2001], and works on water wars by Miriam Lowi [1993] and Claudia Sadoff and David Grey [2002]. To analyze the strategies within concept of hydro-hegemony, the methodology of Mark Zeitoun and Jeroen Warner [2006] has been used. Note for the purposes of this article conflict refers to unarmed conflict. Armed conflict developing into full-scale war is not considered a valid strategy, despite the statements by the Uzbekistan president Islam Karimov that “all of this could deteriorate to the point where not just serious confrontation, but even wars could be the result” [Nurshayeva, 2012]. No global and regional actors are interested in a war in Central Asia, with growing instability in Afghanistan. Moreover, attempts to destroy hydraulic structures in Tajikistan, which controls a large part of the water flow (80%), will inevitably cause serious damage in Uzbekistan, severely affecting irrigation systems. In this regard, Karimov's statement is considered as a form of political bargaining. Non-cooperative strategies are shown in Table 3.

*Table 3: Non-cooperative strategies of Central Asian republics*

	<b>Upstream states</b>	<b>Downstream states</b>	<b>Other stakeholders</b>
Short-term political bargaining	Transit pressure	Economic pressure on upstream neighbors	–
	Provision of international guarantees for projects on international rivers	Rely on powerful partners outside the basin to bloc upstream initiatives	Direct political impact
Long-term real solutions	Construction of independent sources of electricity	Construction of water reservoirs	Investments, technologies, demand, provision of security
	Barter water-energy trade with new partners	Exploitation of groundwater aquifers	

*Source:* Based on the author's research.

Non-cooperative strategies can be divided into two types, one with tactical objectives and the other with strategic objectives. The strategies are aimed at either the upstream countries (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) or the downstream countries (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan). With regard to downstream countries, there are two basic short-term options: “transit tactical withholding” (thanks to the growing importance of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as a logistics hub for China on the route to Afghanistan and Iran) and one-sided support for international guarantees for projects on transboundary rivers.

China considers Tajikistan to be the missing link for establishing full relations with Afghanistan: it is too difficult to obtain a clear trade route [Peyrouse, 2012]. Most Chinese goods go through Tajikistan to reach northern Afghanistan. The republic's recent role as a transit corridor allows it to attract more investment in infrastructure, mainly roads and railways [Vinson, 2012].

Tajikistan has begun implementing international guarantees for projects on transboundary rivers. In 2012 the World Bank launched an independent review of the Rogun project. A non-

cooperative strategy can have a positive effect (it is not necessarily a conflict), but its implementation may still displease the second party. Thus, Uzbekistan de facto undermines efforts to engage in a multilateral dialogue on Rogun, organized by the World Bank, which is the main stumbling block in Tajik-Uzbek relations. The World Bank review has remained one of the few unpoliticized forums for assessing the prospects and security of the Rogun project, without which is impossible to reconcile the conflicting parties. Representatives of the World Bank met with officials from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in Alma-Ata on 6–7 November 2012. Uzbekistan participated only on the second day of the meeting, at the level of civil society organizations and local authorities. In September 2013, the first of the World Bank reports was published [see World Bank, 2013]. In essence, the assessment neither recommended construction nor justified a ban on it: it suggested that with complex stabilization measures to ensure the safety and capacity of soil barriers, construction could safely continue [Hashimova, 2013]. Thus, the debate remains ongoing.

For the downstream republics, the tactic of political bargaining is much broader. The method, regularly used by Uzbekistan, is to apply economic pressure on Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, including economic blockade, delays in the delivery of energy, especially in winter, and blocking the main railway. The “efficiency” of such measures is associated with the markedly superior economic resources of downstream countries. However, apart from absolute figures, the structural underdevelopment of the Tajik economy plays an important role, as does the mutual dependence of both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on these energy imports. Structural underdevelopment, particularly strong dependence on aluminum exports, becomes an effective lever for bargaining because aluminum production is carried out in a continuous cycle. It must remain in cooling smelters for more than 16 hours, which costs up to \$200,000. A complete recovery cycle costs up to \$500 million and can take up to three years.<sup>3</sup> Poor countries’ dependence on energy imports not only has economic consequences, but also has enormous social consequences: the downstream country is forced to reduce water-intensive crop production (mainly cotton) in favour of plants (grains and forage plants) that use less water and are cheaper – only economic water use suffers. In the case of a resource blockade, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan do not only stop production, but also residents must live without electricity and in unheated buildings in winter, when the temperature drops below zero.

The second tactic, which is certainly available for downstream states, relies on having external partners that are capable of blocking upstream projects [Holoden, 2010]. Due to the absence of a clear leader in Central Asia itself, there is significant room for external actors to participate in the region’s internal affairs. However, this is problematic for the downstream countries for three reasons: Russia clearly supports the development of the hydro potential of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, China has distanced itself from controversial investment projects that require security guarantees and the EU has also committed to supporting the development of hydro in the region as well as the integrated management of international watercourses. The United States has distanced itself from this issue. The only cause for it to get involved would be the risk of instability in the region due to the Rogun conflict, against the background of the withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014. The U.S. is more likely to use its influence to prevent such a conflict than to align itself with Uzbekistan and put pressure on Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan [U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 2011].

<sup>3</sup> Mirzayan G. (2012) Kak possorilis’ Emomali Sharipovich s Islamom Abduganiyevichem [How did Emomali Sharipovich fight Islam Abduganievich]. *Ekspert*, 15 (798). Available at: <http://expert.ru/expert/2012/15/kak-possorilis-emomali-sharipovich-c-islamom-abduganievichem> (accessed 23 August 2014).



Thus, the tactics either do not involve third countries (such as during economic disputes) or lie in the sphere of direct political influence. In reality, because the republics have primarily used tactical tools for the last 20 years, the inefficient status quo has prevailed. The situation has gradually worsened because of exogenous reasons. The Aral Sea continues to affect the entire region negatively; intense salinization, soil erosion and melting glaciers (covered by Aral salt) are the result of the biggest anthropogenic disaster of the 20th century. Simultaneously, climate change in Central Asia manifests in a sharp increase in periods of drought and cold and harsh winters [Eurasian Development Bank, 2008]. It has also led to an intense melting of the Pamir glaciers. Glaciologists estimate that the glaciers' volumes fell by a quarter in the second half of the 20th century, and by 2025, the area of glaciers in Tajikistan will decrease by 20%, resulting in a reduction of glacial runoff by 25% [Tajik Met Service, 2007]. Today, Tajik river flows have decreased by 7%.

The strategies of upstream and downstream states require the active involvement of third parties in the form of investment, technology, demand for goods and security guarantees. There are four main options for such a strategy.

To counteract the downstream states, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan must resolve the main problem of dependence on energy imports from the other Central Asian countries. This can be done in two ways: by developing its own hydropower potential (according to UN estimates, Tajikistan ranks eighth in the world on this indicator) or developing to barter water for energy with new partners such as Iran, in the long term, and Afghanistan. While such barter trade may seem like a very distant prospect, reports of negotiations between Iran and Tajikistan on the possibility of importing 1 billion cubic metres of water per year appeared in the spring 2012 [Tehran Times, 2012]. The presence of a common language and a simple and clear program of cooperation (water in exchange for energy and infrastructure) create favourable conditions for Iran's participation in the Central Asia on a large scale. In addition to the political aspects, Iran requires substantial amounts of fresh water for the development of nuclear energy and its diversification of water sources is severely limited compared to the capabilities of China and Russia to diversify their fuel trade.

Another country that may be interested in the development of this form of cooperation is China, which could revive its decision to develop hydropower along its border with Tajikistan. However, this program is not popular because of its remoteness from existing and planned hydropower projects in China – electrical transmission lines must be located on inaccessible highlands. China is more likely to be interested in investing in Tajik hydropower plants, which will provide energy for Chinese companies as it had already started to do with the Nurobad plant [Stern, 2008].

The strategic non-cooperative solutions for Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan lie in the effective management of water resources and the development of independent regulation of watercourses. In addition to the use of water-saving technologies, the construction of water reservoirs and the development of underground aquifers are needed. These three tools are gradually being introduced, but the countries have neither the technology nor the personnel nor the investment to expand those projects intensively.

## Cooperative strategies in Central Asia

The full independence of the upstream and downstream republics in water and energy issues is a virtually unachievable and expensive utopia. Thus the sustainable development of the region requires strategic cooperation or pooling efforts in order to great a stronger player. With regard to cooperative strategies, a Soviet-type agreement that regulates the balance of water and

energy today seems to be a missed opportunity. After 20 years of conflict, even the theoretical possibility of such a comprehensive agreement is impossible, and the gradual diversification of economic partners and the entry of new ones have rendered such a closed' agreement less attractive. Table 4 illustrates the relevant decision matrix.

*Table 4:* Cooperative strategies for Central Asian stakeholders

	<b>Upstream states</b>	<b>Downstream states</b>	<b>Other stakeholders</b>
Lost opportunity	Soviet-style agreement for water and energy in all five republics		–
Possible current opportunity	Investment in other projects		Mediation
Future challenge	Sustainable cooperation demanded by neighbouring powers		Political pressure

*Source:* Based on the author's research.

The opportunity for cooperation exists today in the form of participation in investment projects. It could be co-financing of hydropower projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan or investment in water infrastructure downstream on international rivers. One example of a small-scale but successful interaction is the agreement between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on the Chu and Talal rivers, signed in 2000; a similar scheme is used in the Mekong River Basin, where Laos has contracted a Thai national construction company to build a hydropower plant and attracts funding by Thai banks [Mekong River Commission Secretariat, 2011]. In addition to the proportional distribution of income from the use of dams, investors can claim some of the electricity generated. In Central Asia, energy could also be bartered, as could water withdrawal (hydropower is much inexpensive and could be used domestically, and hydrocarbons could be exported by Uzbekistan). A payment system for withdrawing above the specified quota, as applies in some rivers such as the Nile, would not likely work in the medium term in Central Asia, because the downstream states possess effective tools for tactical control, which allows them the ability to block any discussion over fair water prices for a long time.

Finally, the most favourable scenario in terms of IWRM in the region and the optimization of the withdrawal and settlement of water and energy problems is a "forced cooperation," initiated by external actors. Such external actors could be interested in national security (as in Russia) or economic stability in the region and the continuity of imports (as in the case of China and the EU as well as Russia), or – if the water issue leads to large-scale military action – a threat to stability and global security (which would fall within the scope of the United States). The participation of international organizations is possible, but such participation would be an instrument of the major powers seeking their own interests, because such a campaign for cooperation itself is a very expensive and resource-intensive undertaking.

## Bilateral formats of EU cooperation with Central Asian countries on water issues

Given EU energy interests in Central Asia, Brussels has put some effort into promoting the values of the EU [ECFR, 2011]. Those values include the rule of law, education, the fight against drug trafficking and direct humanitarian assistance. Environmental policy and water resources occupy a particular place. The promotion of the EUWI principles had a positive effect on the

agenda by creating a constructive discourse. While such actions are not quite remarkable, they have nonetheless had a gradual effect, multiplied by investment by EU members in the water sector and by attracting the attention of international financial institutions. However, the region is not a main strategic partner for the EU, and it is unlikely to make large-scale investments in the medium term [Bolgova, 2010]. By comparison, the entire EU investment program to support small technology projects in the field of water resources and conservation for the period of 2008 to 2010 was worth €65 million. The estimated value of the Rogun and Kambarata projects exceeds \$2 billion.

There is a good chance for the support of small and medium-sized hydropower plants in Tajikistan, which would have quick and direct effects on the welfare of local residents, as well as the development project on Lake Issyk Kul. In general, the EU recognizes the need to plan and fund for national water dialogues through the EUWI's EECCA. An important factor in future will be recognition of the EU's political leadership in the Central Asian water dialogue: its ability to persuade the republics to subordinate national problems for the benefit the broader goals (such as the MDGs, the development of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the EU strategy with Central Asian countries) [EUWI, 2013].

The EU can offer technology rather than investments in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, where the development of underground aquifers and construction of reservoirs are very costly and not very effective, especially in hot and sunny Uzbekistan, because the water evaporates very quickly, and indoor or underground reservoirs are very expensive. For the downstream republics, cooperation with the EU offers great potential for water-saving technologies: opportunities for increased efficiency of water use in the region are among the largest in the world today, where almost 80% of water is wasted. The only region with a higher level of loss is sub-Saharan Africa.

In light of the EU's efforts to promote the EUWI, in the medium the EU may come up with a broad statement that will unite all the basin countries, confirming the importance of water resources for the region. However, that would be mostly declarative, as the EU does not hold sufficient leverage to create effective supranational regulation for the Central Asian basin.

## Bilateral cooperation between Russia and the Central Asian countries

Water issues cannot be excluded from the broader context of Russian foreign policy in Central Asia [Chufrin, 2010]. Having invited Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to join a customs union, Russia pays close attention to the most acute problems of the republics' hydropower potential. As for developing hydro projects, Russia is highly unlikely to resume the construction of the Rogun Dam, but will likely contribute to external expertise to strengthen cooperation with Tajikistan. Apart from political concerns, low aluminum prices (and the absence of any sign of imminent recovery of that industry) make this business project extremely expensive to build an enormous hydropower plant, which would produce energy to be used mostly in the production of cheap aluminum. The financial situation for major Russian steel companies also is far from what it was before the global financial crisis; moreover, the Rogun project is technically very complex, risky and expensive. The initial cost, according to experts, may be exceeded as much as two times.

The project in Kyrgyzstan is in better shape, with intergovernmental agreements already signed, but the next two or three years will be dedicated to preparing project documentation, project coordination and expertise. In general, the protests of Uzbekistan are unfounded, while Russia's indirect participation in the Rogun project is on similar grounds. Protests in connec-

tion with the construction relate mainly to two factors. First, the high seismicity of the region may lead to irreparable disaster. Rogun's reservoir is very large, and given the height of the dam – the highest in the world – if the structure cannot sustain an earthquake, the flow would simply wash away everything for hundreds of kilometres. Second, the time it takes to fill the reservoir negatively affects the water discharge, which will damage the Uzbek economy. It can take as long as ten years to fill, and the lack of transparency in the project's implementation (thus reducing the extent of discharge) and the controversy over the Rogun Dam have had a negative impact on Uzbekistan. If Moscow supports the project, any negative aspect (not to mention disaster) would be directly associated with Russia and discredit it in the international arena.

## Institutionalizing basin management

As a precedent, Russia can serve as mediator to conclude additional agreements between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and issue joint statements by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on the application of modern technologies for hydraulic engineering to minimize downstream damage. The conclusion of bilateral agreements with the Central Asia countries will likely remain an element of Russian foreign policy in the region, as with the October 2012 intergovernmental agreement to construct four medium-sized hydropower plants in Tajikistan, tied to a treaty on the deployment of a Russian military base.

Although the Kazakhstan – China – Russia water axis is outside the scope of this article, in the future, within the framework of the Eurasian Union, Russia may attempt to adopt a common statement to regulate the use of transboundary rivers so as to function as a single unit in negotiations with China on the use of the waters of the Irtysh. Once Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan accede to the Eurasian Union, such a statement would set an important precedent and would shift the water issue toward a legal context. However, it is extremely difficult to do at present, because neither Tajikistan nor Kyrgyzstan recognize any rivers flowing through their territory as international and, accordingly, maintain their sovereignty over them, which does not require harmonizing their water policies with other countries.

As for scientific cooperation, technology and expert support are important for all five Central Asian republics, and Russia is engaged on this front. Russian hydrologists, ecologists, glaciologists and climate change experts are actively involved in projects in Central Asia. This is also an area of cooperation with the EU, which can provide grants for such research.

## Conclusion

This article analyzes the major strategies of all the stakeholders in the Central Asian water conflict. This analysis was used as a tool to estimate prospective Russian and EU policies in the sector. The main outcome is that Russia and the EU will continue to act in different areas using complementary tools, although they could apply almost any strategy. Consequently, as during the period from 2001 to 2012, no EU – Russian interaction can be expected in the medium term. The EU does not direct enough resources for political impact on this issue, and its interest in the region is not strong enough for it to get involved in resolving any conflict over water. It cannot provide security guarantees or sustainable demand for regional agricultural products and cotton from Central Asia. The EU can thus be expected to continue to support independent projects in particular countries in the region through investments and technologies for small and medium-sized enterprises and to support mediation for the participation of downstream states as in Tajik and Kyrgyz hydropower projects.

Russia can participate at any level, but is more likely to engage in resource-intensive policies in the region, given its strategic interests. Among possible instruments at its disposal are direct political pressure, international guarantees for infrastructure projects with its participation, security guarantees, demand for local goods (and trade benefits in a wider context of Eurasian integration), technology, and human resources for large-scaled infrastructure and construction. If the crisis becomes more acute, as a regional hegemon Russia could act as mediator, using appropriate economic and political instruments to stimulate cooperative interactions among the republics.

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# Российско-европейские отношения в урегулировании водно-энергетической проблемы Центральной Азии в среднесрочной перспективе<sup>1</sup>

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*В Центральной Азии дефицит воды и водно-энергетическая проблема остаются одними из самых острых и противоречивых вызовов как устойчивому развитию региона, так и региональной безопасности. В силу затянувшегося статус-кво, неспособности пяти республик выработать консенсуальное решение самостоятельно и растущей зависимости региона от внешнеэкономической деятельности, возможности ведущих акторов и ключевых торговых и инвестиционных партнеров, в том числе России и ЕС, влиять на эти сферы играют важнейшую роль. Более того, взаимодействие внешних игроков обусловлено комплементарным характером ресурсов России и ЕС в данном направлении. Европейский союз обладает передовыми технологиями и его страны-члены имеют доступ на рынки долгосрочного капитала, в то время как Россия располагает рычагами влияния, лежащими в сфере безопасности, миграционного регулирования и обладает значительным политическим весом для оказания посреднических услуг всем пяти центральноазиатским республикам.*

*Цель работы состояла в определении перспектив российско-европейских отношений по данному направлению в среднесрочной перспективе. Рассмотрение предмета в первом приближении уже демонстрирует, что деятельность России и ЕС сильно отличается по уровню и инструментарию. Сравнительный анализ возможностей России и ЕС показал, что в среднесрочной перспективе комплементарный характер отношений сохранится. Россия будет брать ответственность за модерацию принципиальных вопросов (строительство Рогунской и Камбаратинской ГЭС), что сопряжено с предоставлением гарантий безопасности. ЕС будет действовать через механизмы поддержки малых и средних проектов, популяризацию принципов Водной инициативы ЕС, инвестиционную политику. Пересечение интересов России и ЕС возможно в ситуациях, когда России будет необходимо участие внешнего арбитра, т.е. субъекта, способного предоставить гарантии, связанные с ценностями: соблюдение прав человека (при переселении больших групп населения), поддержка экосистем, экспертиза – все эти вопросы неизбежно возникают при реализации крупных инфраструктурных гидротехнических проектов. На эту роль ЕС претендует и в более широком спектре вопросов.*

**Ключевые слова:** водно-энергетический баланс Центральной Азии, отношения ЕС – Центральная Азия, отношения Россия – Центральная Азия, постсоветское пространство

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# EU – Russia Cultural Relations

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*This article analyzes the link between culture and diplomacy between Russia and the European Union, and shows the importance of cultural relations. It examines the common space of science, education and culture introduced at the 2003 EU – Russia Summit in St. Petersburg and the application of the principles of this concept that were established at the 2005 EU – Russia Summit in Moscow. It then considers EU – Russia collaboration on humanitarian action and the challenges that both parties face in this sphere. It also explains the formation of EU domestic and foreign cultural policy, and the role of European institutions and states in cultural affairs and diplomacy, as well as key elements and mechanisms of contemporary Russian foreign cultural policy. In addition, the article focuses on the European side of post-Soviet EU – Russia cultural relations. This cultural collaboration is defined as a competitive neighbourhood. EU and Russian interests collide: while Europeans try to promote their values, norms and standards within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, Russia seeks to culturally influence and engage in this region for geostrategic and historical reasons. Finally, the article assesses the prospects for the EU – Russia cultural relations and emphasizes the role of ideology in improving such relations.*

**Key words:** culture, diplomacy, Russia, European Union (EU), European Partnership, European Neighbourhood Policy, humanitarian

## Culture and diplomacy

International relations and the dialogue among civilizations cannot be imagined without culture. With policy and economy, culture forms a classic triad of factors that determine the nature of a government's foreign activities and are an integral and unalienable part of the geopolitical strategy of any country. The comprehensive and effective development of international cultural relations contributes to the protection of the related interests of a state, and its society and individuals.

Cultural diplomacy is an important diplomatic activity for many countries. Countries that base their foreign policy on the principles of peaceful coexistence and goodwill use cultural diplomacy to promote their cultural heritage, including their national achievements in culture, science and education. Cultural diplomacy also serves applied objectives such as strengthening geopolitical positions or solving foreign policy and economic problems.

The world has become more interdependent, thanks to globalization. At the same time, new problems and challenges have arisen that are common to all humankind. On the one hand, global interdependence among national economies has increased, while, on the other hand, the gap between the standards of living in developed and developing countries has grown. As a result, global society today faces a new challenge that requires new effective strategies for

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dialogue to foster mutual understanding. Cultural diplomacy, as one such strategy, has broad potential for negotiations; dialogue strategies, which include a cultural component, can minimize the “friend-or-foe” principle that can divide human society, can bring together national cultures, can promote mutual understanding and can intensify the multilateral dialogue among countries.

Cultural diplomacy can be considered a public institution that temporarily transmits values to other countries to promote peace and understanding between peoples [Gurbangeldyev, 2012]. One traditional form is the organization of international and regional exhibitions, forums, festivals and conferences. Cultural diplomacy as a diplomatic activity is related to the use of culture as an object and a means to achieve the fundamental goals of a state’s foreign policy, the expression of its national interests and the creation of a favourable image of that state abroad. Hence, as an instrument of foreign policy, culture may have a destabilizing effect on the international system in general and on the nature of international relations in particular [Lebedeva, 2012].

Relations between Russia and the European Union occur not only in the spheres of policy and economy, but also in the cultural sphere. A cultural component helps identify similarities and differences between Russian and European societies and directly or indirectly affects the overall character of Russian-European relations. Cultural ties between Russia and the EU bring the two parties together on some key issues of bilateral cooperation, and deepen understanding, mutual respect and the mutual acceptance of ideas, values and cultural differences. However, Russian-European dialogue encounters cultural and civilizational difficulties in both the EU and Russia [Loginov, 2008, pp. 274–5].

As a political entity the EU has not decided on common basic social and political values. The European identity remains in an early stage of formation, and the prospects of forming a supranational European identity become increasingly vague. In other words, on the part of the EU, Russian-European cultural dialogue is hampered by the fact that EU countries do not always recognize a universal European culture and assert the primacy of their individual national cultures within the common European culture.

In Russia, there is also no public consensus on key social, political, cultural and civilizational values and beliefs. Russia does not identify itself fully with either the West or the East, and claims a unique place among world cultures and civilizations. Thus, there is a certain value gap between Russia and the EU that destabilizes their bilateral relations in the cultural sphere and, as a result, adversely affects the overall character of Russian-European political and economic dialogue. In addition, cooperation between Russia and the EU is politically motivated: Russia’s natural resources are important for Europe, and Russia needs European technologies, high-tech products and investments. Cultural factors in relations between Russia and the EU are secondary to the political agenda and economic ties. However, under certain conditions, cultural diplomacy can both improve and worsen the bilateral dialogue.

## The common space of science, education and culture

At present, relations between Russia and the EU develop along the concept of four “common spaces,” which were agreed upon at the EU – Russia Summit in St. Petersburg in May 2003. “Road maps” were developed at the Moscow EU – Russia Summit in May 2005 as special tools for implementing the common spaces concept.

The four common spaces cover the following areas:

- the economy, including environmental issues;
- freedom, national security and justice;

- international security; and
- research and education, including cultural aspects.

The fourth common space, which includes science, education and culture, is regarded by many experts as the most promising area of Russian-European cooperation [Busygina, 2013, p. 50–51]. It is considered the least controversial and the most useful and practical for both parties. It strengthens cultural, scientific and educational ties through various exchange programs, which reinforce the combined intellectual potential of the parties, allow to stable contacts to be maintained and improve understanding between Russians and Europeans.

Indeed, Russia – EU cooperation on science, education and culture benefits both parties. Russia, as the successor to the USSR, holds leading positions in many scientific fields, such as rocket science, nuclear energy, and the development and use of outer space. Russian classical literature, music and art are not only part of European cultural heritage, but also belong to the world. Europe, in turn, is a global leader in technical and computer innovation and has huge creative, scientific and educational potential. Therefore, the development of a variety of forms of integration and cooperation between Russia and the EU in science, education and culture has a solid foundation of mutual benefit and interest. However, cultural cooperation is often burdened by political crises that introduce an element of instability in the partnership of Russia and the EU.

The road map that guides Russia – EU relations in the common space of research, education and culture is divided into three parts [Entin, 2006]. The first part is devoted to cooperation in fields of academic research, science and technology. Tasks that Russia and the EU have to accomplish in this area include constructing in Russia and Europe a society based on knowledge, increasing competitiveness, sustaining high rates of economic development, modernizing national economies and improving the efficiency of venture activities. Particular attention is paid to ensuring organizational cooperation. A permanent partnership council acts as the supreme body for coordination and decision making. At the working level, there is a EU – Russia joint committee, formed under the Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology signed in 2000 and extended in 2003. This part of the road map emphasizes the importance of sustaining existing national, regional and international research programs, such as the framework programs of the EU, the International Association for the Promotion of Cooperation with Scientists from the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union (INTAS), the International Science and Technology Centre (ISTC), the Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) program, and the Eureka and Russian federal research programs. It expresses the hope that these programs can form the basis for a common space of research between Russia and the EU.

The second part of the road map addresses building a common educational EU – Russia space. In the field of higher education, cooperation between Russia and the EU focuses mostly on the Bologna Process. For this reason, the agenda here is determined by the requirements of the reforms in the participating countries. Although the Bologna Process is voluntary, it will gradually transform the Russian system of higher education. Most universities have introduced bachelor and master degrees, and some universities have switched to the European system of credits, introduced a module-based education system, started to support various joint programs for EU academic mobility (for example, the Erasmus Mundus program), issued a European supplement to the diploma of higher education and introduced quality control for higher education (with ranking systems for students and professors). However, Russia has not yet switched to a single degree of doctor of philosophy (PhD). The institutional implementation of this second part of the road map lies in holding regular EU – Russia ministerial meetings and international meetings of the Bologna Process.

The third part of the road map touches on the EU – Russia cooperation in the field of culture. One drawback is that neither party recognizes the feasibility of establishing specific control mechanisms and institutional bodies, which makes it difficult to create a common cultural space. In 2006 Russia proposed a permanent partnership council for culture. The EU's governing bodies are still considering this proposal. The objectives of Russia – EU cultural cooperation include improving the knowledge of each other's culture, strengthening the European identity and searching for bilateral synergies in the field of culture.

In general, the road map for the common space of science, education and culture is rather vague and very general, and its role should not be exaggerated. The document has no force to bind the parties formally. Nonetheless, it should not be underestimated, since it represents the common view of Moscow and Brussels on how Russian-European cooperation should look like. In addition, the road map is compact, logical and easy to understand. As a goal, the preamble states that Russia and the EU should use their rich intellectual heritages and the knowledge gained throughout generations to promote economic growth and enhance the competitiveness of their economies, as well as to assist networking and academic exchanges [Entin, 2006]. The fact that the main task is to improve economic ties confirms the applied character of this common space. In other words, the political elites of Russia and the EU use culture and science as a means to achieve other political and economic goals.

Apart from building a common space of science, education and culture with the EU, Russia actively develops bilateral cultural relations with individual EU members. However, not all EU countries show equal interest in cooperating with Russia. Thus, the 28 members can be divided into five groups depending on what position they hold in relation to Russia [Loginov, 2008, p. 264]. The first group is called *Trojan horses*, and includes Cyprus and Greece. These countries, which have economic, cultural and religious affinities with Russia, support close ties and a positive attitude toward Russians. The second group is called *pragmatic friends*. This group consists of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Finland. Countries from the second group are loyal to Russia and closely economically associated with it, but sometimes can act unfriendly. The third group is called *concerned pragmatists* and comprises the United Kingdom, Denmark, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden, the Czech Republic and Estonia. These states benefit from cooperation with Russia, but do not like its dominance in bilateral relations. The fourth group is called *strategic partners*. This group includes Germany, Spain, Italy and France, which maintain strategic relations with Russia based on their objectives and benefits. Finally, the fifth group is *soldiers of the Cold War*, and consists of Lithuania and Poland. These two countries do not welcome building long-term partnerships with Russia, but due to their close proximity to the Russian border are forced to cooperate with Russians.

## EU – Russia humanitarian cooperation

One component of cultural diplomacy is humanitarian cooperation. The EU and Russia define humanitarian cooperation differently [Zonova, 2013]. Europeans understand measures aimed at combating human rights abuses and violence, and assisting in emergency situations. In Russia humanitarian cooperation covers a wide range of activities, including the establishment of cultural relations, intercivilizational dialogue and the dialogue among civil societies, as well as the maintenance of ties with compatriots who live abroad. Despite these differences in interpretation, Russian-European relations in the humanitarian sphere have developed quite successfully. Russia and the EU cooperate in combating organized crime, drug trafficking, the financing of terrorist organizations, illegal migration and cybercrime. Russian authorities support the

creation of a common European legal space and a unified system for protecting human rights on the basis of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms signed in Rome in 1950.

Russian-European humanitarian cooperation is carried out to some degree in the road map for the common space of freedom, security and justice. The rationale is explained by the fact that Russia and the EU face common challenges (terrorism, international crime, illegal migration, human trafficking and drug trafficking), an adequate response to which implies the need to work together not only at the level of civil society but also within a special judicial and legal framework. So far, the highest achievements in the common space of freedom, security and justice include the entry into force of the simplified visa regime (an agreement signed in 2011) and the agreement on readmission in 2007. At the same time both sides are convinced that the pursuit of security should not create barriers to legitimate interaction between civil societies in Russia and the EU. To encourage direct dialogue, at the 2003 EU – Russia St. Petersburg Summit the EU political leadership proposed a fifth common space – one of democracy and human rights. Russian authorities rejected this proposal, illustrating Russia's unwillingness to expand and deepen the partnership in the humanitarian sphere.

Currently, most Russian-European projects in the humanitarian field, as well as in the cultural sphere, are initiated bilaterally because there is no consensus among EU members on the feasibility of a long-term humanitarian partnership with Russia. The absence of a single, pan-European strategy for EU – Russia humanitarian relations indicates a lack of trust of the European countries toward Russia, which is caused by several reasons.

First of all, the polls held regularly in the EU demonstrate that a significant number of Europeans take a cautious attitude toward Russians. For example, in 2010 the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Serra* published “stereotype maps” developed by the Bulgarian artist Yanko Tsvetkov, who lives in London. These maps are based on the results of public opinion polls in Europe conducted by various academic institutions and statistical agencies. They show Europeans' perceptions of each EU country and some neighbouring ones. Russia, in particular, is associated with such stereotypes as “paranoid oil empire,” “gateway to gas,” “dream of Napoleon,” “Gazprom” and “big brother” [Tortora, 2010]. Stereotypical perceptions of other peoples and cultures exist all over the world, but European attitudes toward Russians in particular are shaped by concern about the possible termination of deliveries of Russian gas in the middle of a cold winter, human rights abuses for sexual minorities in Russia, corruption scandals in the Russian ruling elite and highly monopolized sectors in the Russian economy. In Russia, on the contrary, many do not accept European political values and do not trust European tolerance for a multicultural society [Tyulin, 2004]. In general, stereotypes seriously hamper the development of EU – Russia relations not only in the humanitarian sphere, but also in other areas of cooperation.

Second, public diplomacy pursued by both governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) plays a huge role in the development of humanitarian cooperation. Among Russian NGOs, the Russian International Affairs Council, the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund and the independent EU – Russia Centre are active in this area. Their main purpose is to enhance the interaction between Russian and European civil societies and create a positive image of Russia abroad, at the level of the EU political elite as well as among European citizens. Theoretically, public diplomacy helps gradually eliminate stereotypes and improve conditions for closer cooperation between European and Russian citizens. However, in practice organizations engaged in public diplomacy often represent the interests of their national political elites, which may not be interested in building sustainable partnerships and indeed may benefit, for domestic political reasons, from continuing uncertainty and instability in their relationships with the other party.



Third, the European lack of confidence toward Russia can be explained by inadequate knowledge of modern Russian society and contemporary culture. On the one hand, most European students show little interest in the Russian language, economy, politics or culture, because they believe there is no demand for this academic field. On the other hand, some European students specialize in Russian studies, but often cannot gain objective knowledge about Russia because of the high degree of politicization of the scientific literature. The scientific and expert community plays a significant role in disseminating knowledge about Russia. For this purpose, the Russian government launched a program to promote the Russian language for 2011–15 [Zonova, 2013]. This program involves the participation of Russian academics, teachers and experts in the European educational system, as well as distance teaching for European students on the basics of Russian language and culture. The direct exchange of ideas and knowledge in the short term may help overcome problems caused by cultural differences between Russians and Europeans. However, in the long term, prospects of cultural convergence between Russia and the EU remain unclear.

## The EU as a cultural project

For a long time, cultural issues have occupied a secondary place in the European integration project, where economic integration was the undeniable and obvious priority over other aspects of social activity. Meetings between the heads of state and government of the members of the European Economic Community – where the cultural agenda was discussed – began only in the 1970s. In 1974 the European Parliament formed a special committee on culture. In the 1980s, the EU launched the “European Capitals of Culture” initiative and a huge restoration program “Emblematik” were launched. The turning point in the institutional and legal framework for a pan-European cultural policy was the European Commission’s 1987 report on “A fresh boost for culture in the European Community,” which emphasized the importance of culture in the European integration project [European Commission, 1990]. Cultural policy received official status in the EU treaties of 1992 (Maastricht Treaty) and 1997 (Treaty of Amsterdam), which define the place and role of the EU in the European cultural space and set out the following four shared objectives in the field of culture:

- promoting the development of EU members’ national cultures, which reflect their national and regional diversity and at the same time emphasize their common cultural heritage;
- supporting contemporary cultural creativity;
- taking into consideration the realities of cultural policy in all areas of EU policy; and
- promoting cultural cooperation between EU members and other countries, as well as with international organizations [Vodop’yanova, 2008, p. 116].

The EU aims to enhance cooperation among artists from different members and supports their initiatives in the cultural area, but it does not require states to harmonize their national cultural policies. Thus, according to the Lisbon Treaty of 2007, EU culture policy takes an intergovernmental approach with cultural policy remaining within the limits of the competence of members under the additional control of the EU. In practice, the EU can only co-finance cultural projects undertaken by governments, companies, associations, regional authorities, universities, research centres, non-profit organizations from EU members. Responsibility for implementing cultural policy is concentrated in the hands of the states, which in this case manage their own financial resources as well as those from the EU. Notwithstanding, the EU cultural policy actions can take the form of specific measures developed by the European Commission’s Directorate General for Education and Culture. These measures cover four areas:

- the improvement and dissemination of knowledge about European history and culture;
- the preservation of European cultural heritage;
- the support of non-commercial cultural exchanges; and
- the development of artistic and cultural activities, including the audiovisual sector [Vodop'yanova, 2008, p. 117].

In general, the EU is not only the result of economic, political and legal integration, but also a large-scale social and cultural project. Today's goals for its cultural policy include supporting and developing Europe's immense cultural heritage, enhancing the sense of belonging of every European to this heritage, and treating cultural, ethnic and religious differences within the EU with understanding and respect. This approach reflects the foundations of European integration and the fundamental cultural values and mentality of Europeans themselves. Europeans say that culture is central to the development of human civilization and European society. It stops the growth of inter-ethnic tensions, stimulates intercultural dialogue and opens the way for "unity in diversity." Culture is considered a catalyst for creativity and innovation.

Europeans seek to ensure that European values are reflected in the EU foreign policy and diplomacy tools. Officially, the European Union differentiates among four strategies of the export of European norms, values and standards [Potemkina et al., 2012, p. 620–21]. The first strategy is to export norms and values through the EU's expansion and promote the internal transformation in states that intend to join the EU at some point in the future. The second strategy is to export norms and principles to neighbouring states that have no prospect of EU membership. This strategy applies to the European post-Soviet countries (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) and the former North African colonies of Europe. The third strategy is to support the regional integration by promoting subregional economic integration based on the principles of economic liberalism in Latin America and Africa. The fourth strategy is to export norms and values through international organizations to increase the EU's influence in existing international organizations and promote European interests at the international level. However, none of these four strategies applies to Russia.

## The specificity of Russian culture

Russia's culture expresses its identity and its spiritual and aesthetic originality. It embodies the universal values of the global community and is part of the world's cultural heritage. Indeed, Russian culture is inconceivable without global culture, and global culture is unimaginable without Russian culture.

At different periods of history, the union of diplomacy and culture served Russia's national interests. After the collapse of the USSR, Russian foreign policy in the field of culture aimed to strengthen the country's prestige and reputation abroad and to demonstrate the openness of Russian society. It was evidence of Russia's revival and its development as a free and democratic state. The growing importance of culture produced a new term in the Russian diplomatic lexicon – "foreign cultural policy" [Shmagin, 2002, p. 63]. In the 1990s and 2000s, several legal acts were passed to regulate the Russian Federation's international policy in the field of culture, starting with the decision in 1995 "On the main directions of cultural cooperation between the Russian Federation and foreign countries." Then in 2001, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved "The main directions of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the development of cultural ties between Russia and foreign countries." This document is the first such statement in the Russian diplomatic service. It is based on an analysis of Russia's positive experience of participating in international cultural exchanges and sets out goals and objectives, forms and

directions, priorities and mechanisms to implement Russia's foreign cultural policy. In 2010, after revising the concept of foreign cultural policy and the new international political realities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs produced "The main policy directions of the Russian Federation in the field of international cultural cooperation." This legal document explains the main priorities and implementation of contemporary Russian international cultural policy.

Today Russia feels, thinks and acts primarily as a European power [Gromyko, 2012, p. 84]. When developing a foreign policy, Russian policy makers consider the fact that the most developed and densely populated part of the country is located in Europe and that for the last three centuries Russian political, diplomatic, economic, scientific and cultural history has been associated with this part of the Eurasian continent. However, the European character of Russia and, as a consequence, the corresponding nature of its foreign policy does not mean that it fully shares European values promoted by the political elite of the EU or that it has no interest in other regions of the world. Unlike other European countries, Russia is unique because most of its territory lies in Asia, which is home to dozens of indigenous non-European people who speak non-European languages and practise religions that may be less common in Europe. The fact that Russia in the 21st century perceives itself as European is indisputable. At the same time there are many different ethnic groups, cultures and religions in Russia. Therefore, Russia has its own cultural identity [Karaganov, 2012]. It does not fully belong to either Europe or Asia and has a unique opportunity to pursue independent foreign policy goals in the field of culture and develop cultural relations with other countries based on its own related ideas and interests.

## EU – Russia cultural relations in the European part of the post-Soviet space

The interests of Russia and the EU collide in the field of culture in the European region of the former Soviet Union. This region is the only one where their cultural relations can be described as a "competitive neighborhood" [Bolgova, 2013] Russia and the EU vie for influence in the European post-Soviet countries thanks to two culturally conflicting integration projects, which involve some of those countries.

Since 2003, the EU has been carrying out the so-called European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which involves a special relationship between the enlarged EU and the adjacent countries. The aim is for those countries to adapt to European norms and standards gradually without prospective membership in the EU. Through the ENP, the EU intends to accomplish its mission to Europeanize its neighbours. According to policy makers, Europeanization must ensure the stability, security and prosperity of the continent. In total, the policy involves 16 countries, including Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Since 2008, EU foreign policy regarding these particular states has sought a special relationship through the special ENP category of the "Eastern Partnership." The purpose of this partnership policy is to prevent a regional alliance from forming between the newly independent (after the collapse of the Soviet Union) countries and Russian leadership, and to deter and collectively resist Russian domination in the territories of the former USSR. From a cultural point of view, the Eastern Partnership works to create a positive image of the EU in the European part of the former Soviet Union and to promote European cultural traditions, ideals and values. The EU deliberately excludes Russia – the central state in the geopolitical structure of any integration group in the post-Soviet space – from the ENP, and all bilateral talks between Russia and the EU are carried out independently of it [Potemkina et al., 2012, p. 630].

Russia, in turn, is concerned about the EU's cultural policy in the European post-Soviet countries, as it can destabilize the cultural ties between Russia and some former Soviet repub-

lics, such as, first and foremost, Ukraine and Moldova. In addition, Russia plans to create the Eurasian Union by 2015, which will definitely include Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, and possibly Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Armenia (these three countries are official candidates for membership). To create an effective and stable integration group in the post-Soviet space, the Eurasian integration project must include a component to unite the citizens of the countries of the future Eurasian Union culturally and ideologically. The concept of Eurasianism is one such unifying cultural factor.

Classical Eurasianism, which originated in the 1920s and was founded by the economist P.N. Savitsky and the geographer and philosopher N.S. Trubetzkoy, is a complex concept of the historical, geopolitical, cultural and ethnographic unity of Russia and Eurasia. The basic idea is that Russia should not be a province of European civilization. A European way of thinking is designed for an entirely different type of psychology. Russia's objective is to realize and create an independent and self-sufficient Russian-Eurasian culture on grounds quite different from the cultural foundations of the European civilization [Glinkina and Orlik, 2012, p. 4]. Contemporary Russia uses the classic concept of Eurasianism for the spiritual and ideological integration of the Eurasian Union and to justify the inclusion of the post-Soviet states from a cultural standpoint. Neo-Eurasianism is also the justification of Russia's cultural and philosophical domination in Eurasia as a new pragmatic interpretation of Sovietism, which replaces the Marxist-Leninist doctrine [Malashenko, 2012, p. 20]. Neo-Eurasianism illustrates the special nature of the post-Soviet space and, as a consequence, the privileged role of Russia. In general, the modern idea of neo-Eurasianism has little in common with the classical concept of Eurasianism. The contemporary use of the term "Eurasianism" is instrumental and can be explained by the absence of another, more attractive ideology that would foster cultural and educational integration between Russia and other post-Soviet countries.

The European post-Soviet countries are simultaneously the object of EU cultural foreign policy and Russian cultural diplomacy. Consequently, these two competing international actors have a destabilizing effect on the state of the international system and hinder the overall development of Russian-European dialogue.

## Prospects for EU – Russia cultural relations

Moscow and Brussels officially support the long-term strategy of partnership in the field of culture, science and education, as well as in the humanitarian sphere. On the one hand, the future of Russian-European cultural relations looks promising: such cooperation will not only complement cultural and scientific relations between Russia and the members of the European Union, but will also encourage the expansion of those relations. On the other hand, Russia and the EU make many claims against each other in the field of culture and in the political and economic spheres. At the level of perception, stereotypical thinking is a particularly pressing problem. Stereotypes distort reality and erode trust in EU – Russia relations, which, as a consequence, destabilizes bilateral relations. Russia and the EU also follow competitive cultural policies in the European part of the former Soviet Union. Perhaps, to overcome differences and strengthen bilateral cooperation, Russia and the European Union should establish a common ideology that would bring together the two cultures and societies, reduce the degree of uncertainty and politicization of EU – Russia relations and contribute to the stability of the international system as a whole and cultural and humanitarian relations between Russia and the EU in particular.

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# Культурный фактор в отношениях России и Европейского союза

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*Работа посвящена анализу культурного фактора в отношениях между Россией и Европейским союзом. Актуальность исследования обусловлена тем, что культурный компонент помогает выявить сходства и различия между российским и европейским обществами, прямо или косвенно влияя на общий характер российско-европейских отношений. В работе показывается связь между культурой и дипломатией. Исследуются особенности общего российско-европейского пространства науки, образования и культуры, а также основы гуманитарного сотрудничества России и Европейского союза. Рассматриваются основные составляющие внешней политики России в области культуры и этапы формирования культурной политики в Европейском союзе, анализируются культурные отношения России и Европейского союза на европейской части постсоветского пространства, изучаются перспективы сотрудничества России и Европейского союза в области культуры и в гуманитарной сфере.*

*В работе подчеркивается, что Россия и ЕС официально придерживаются долгосрочной стратегии партнерства как в области культуры, науки и образования, так и в гуманитарной сфере. Автор приходит к выводу, что, с одной стороны, будущее российско-европейских культурных отношений представляется перспективным. Однако, с другой стороны, в области культуры, как и в политической и экономической областях, у России и Европейского союза есть немало претензий друг к другу.*

**Ключевые слова:** Европейский союз, отношения России и Европейского союза, сотрудничество в области культуры

## Литература

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# Regional Integration Processes

## The European Commission in the Power Relations of the European Union after the 2004–2007 Enlargement

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*Applying a comparative perspective, this article argues that the current crisis of European Union integration cannot be resolved by member states either transferring additional competences to the EU level or strengthening the intergovernmental dimension of integration. The systemic character of the ongoing process is weakening the institutional structure, which affects both the institutions and their power relations. The European Commission (EC), once a highly independent supranational actor on the eve of the integration process in the 1950s, now faces growing competition from intergovernmental elements in the institutional balance. The theoretical approach of historical neo-institutionalism offers new, useful insights into this research area. The article uses this theory to analyze the EC's evolution since the time of its creation in the form of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community, focusing on the links between the gradual changes in its internal structure and its institutional position.*

*Although the phenomenon of “path dependence” was initially present in the EC's internal systems, the later development of its competences in the institutional balance provoked member states to limit the commission's activities in the second half of the 1960s. First attempts were made mainly by appointing weak presidents, but the later reform of the EC's internal structure, undertaken by Neil Kinnock in the beginning of the 21st century, directed its further structural development as a more technocratic institution. Consequently, the EC was not able to pursue its aims effectively in preparing for its enlargement to include Central and Eastern Europe. The increased heterogeneity of the member states after the 2004–2007 enlargement also weakened the EC's position in the institutional balance, diminishing its traditional function as the “engine of integration.”*

**Key words:** European Union, historical neo-institutionalism, 2004–2007 EU enlargement process, European Commission

### Introduction

The enlargement of the European Union in 2004–2007 was the most ambitious in the history of integration. With 12 new member states, the membership almost doubled. The population increased by 100 million people and the capacity of the internal market was significantly expanded, positively affecting the economic dynamics and competitiveness of the European countries. A much more significant role could be attributed to the political side of the enlarge-

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ment. As Fraser Cameron [1996], a former senior official of the European Commission (EC), stated, a process of enlargement presented a political imperative for the EU:

The enlargements which brought Greece, Spain and Portugal into the European Community has as a basic motive the consolidation of democracy and stability in countries which had abandoned totalitarian regimes. For the countries of central and eastern Europe, membership of the Union has a similar significance. There can be no question of accepting applicants who do not fulfill the criteria for membership. But assuming they do not fulfill the criteria, the efforts required to integrate the applicant countries are well within the capacity of the Union.

The accession process of the former eastern bloc countries marked the restructuring caused by the global changes experienced by the international system after the Cold War. The EU took a more independent role as a regional security guarantor and set a cultural and civilizational benchmark for other countries on the European continent that declared their intention to join the integration project. It is no coincidence that in the European academic and political discourse it is very common to consider the 2004–2007 enlargement as one of the most significant achievements in the history of EU external relations in general, and in the Europeanization of policy in particular [Lavenex, 2004]. Internal European norms and values were distributed most effectively during the accession process of the 12 new members [Sjursen, 2006]. For most candidate countries, this process took 11 years; for Bulgaria and Romania, it took 14 years. The reform process was difficult and resulted in restructuring national economies from a planned basis to a market basis, as well as in democratizing existing political and social structures. However, as Yuri Borko [2006] writes, the greater degree of heterogeneity that characterized the new members compared to the traditional core of the West European members meant the 2004–2007 enlargement had a substantially different impact from earlier integration. Another contributing factor was the considerable heterogeneity among the new member countries themselves.

This heterogeneity of the integration bloc raised the question of combining the processes of extending and deepening the integration within the European Union. Flexible mechanisms of integration, which were originally given a supplementing role “to serve as a locomotive to pull the whole train” in the enlarged EU, turned into the main tool for developing cooperation [Borko, 2007]. Contradictions emerged within individual institutions as well as within the institutional balance, resulting in a general deceleration of integration and a greater emphasis on informal coordination of interests among the member states. Timofei Bordachev [2013] writes, “the EU did an impressive job ... to eliminate the immediate effects of the end of the Cold War. However, the price the integration project participants had to eventually pay for that tactical success has turned out to be too high.”

As a result, the integration process in the European Union cannot be characterized solely within neo-functional or intergovernmental approaches. Delegating additional competences to the supranational level or increasingly formalizing intergovernmental negotiations does not fix the inefficiency of the institutional structure of the enlarged EU, which has not met its objective of successful interaction among its various institutional elements. Thus, the observed crisis can be considered systemic.

This article focuses on one of the most important supranational EU institutions – the European Commission, which is traditionally conceptualized as the “engine of integration.” Using the theory of historical neo-institutionalism, it analyzes the EC’s role in EU power relations before and after the 2004–2007 enlargement. It assumes that a relative decline of EC influence is not caused by the reduced importance of supranational cooperation compared to

the intergovernmental cooperation in the EU institutional balance. To the contrary, the trend is a consequence of institutional practices that have emerged during the EC's development.

This article explores the following questions: Can the current evolution of the EC be explained by the theory of path dependence? To what extent are the reforms carried out from 2000 to 2004 a reaction to the scandal connected with the EC's financial activity in 1999 – were they the result of prior institutional development or do they constitute a critical juncture in the institution's history? How have the institutional reforms affected the EC's ability to help the newly acceded EU members to adapt to the existing European norms and values and to play an active role in a newly enlarged union?

To prove the hypothesis, this article will briefly discuss historical neo-institutionalism as a theoretical approach to the study of European integration. Then it will analyze long-term trends in the EC's development, as well as the challenges this institution faces as a consequence of the enlargement. In its conclusion, the main findings will be summed up and further prospects for the EC development and its future role in the power relations of the EU will be identified.

## Historical neo-institutionalism as a theory of European integration

“Grand theories” of European integration have traditionally focused on either supranational or intergovernmental aspects of EU integration. The intergovernmental theory describes state actors coordinating their positions based on rational interstate bargaining. As Andrew Moravcsik and Frank Schimmelfennig [2009, p. 68] write: “The EU, like other international institutions, can be profitably studied by treating states as the critical actors in a context of anarchy ... The European Community is best seen as an international regime for policy coordination.” The neo-functionalism theory, by contrast, emphasizes the independent role of supranational dynamics in the EU integration process [Niemann, Schmitter, 2009]. In the late 1960s, Ernst Haas [1958, p. 16], analyzing the previous period of integration, stated: “Political integration is the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities to a new center, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over pre-existing national states. The end result is a new political community, superimposed over the pre-existing ones.”

Although in previous periods of EU development, the integration theories of either intergovernmental bargaining or neo-functional “spillover” provided structure to the overall logic of the EU development, a much more differentiated approach is needed today. The context of multidimensional integration raises the question of whether it is possible to develop a “universal logic” of integration in any of the areas in the enlarged EU and, consequently, within a more complex institutional environment. The European Union, as an entity combining features of an international organization and a sovereign state, has created a unique system of institutional practices that can independently influence interactions among all participants in the integration process.

Theoretical complexity is defined by the need to take into account not only the unique nature of the EU institutions, but also the general logic of institutional interaction. That logic originates from earlier political and social processes [Sweet, Sandholtz, Fligstein, 2008]. One theory with sufficient research tools to resolve this puzzle is historical neo-institutionalism, which assumes that any EU integration process can be analyzed as a historical phenomenon that combines the supranational dynamics and the constraints imposed on the integration process by intergovernmental bargaining in a particular case study.

According to historical neo-institutionalism, institutional choices made in the past may persist or be blocked, which will define and limit the future behaviour of actors. Institutions

have the ability to resist changes (the so-called stickiness of institutions) [Pollack, 2008]. This phenomenon is associated with a range of factors caused by a) the partial autonomy of supranational institutions that, from the moment of their creation, seek to protect and expand their competences; b) the limited time horizon of political leaders, who often make decisions related to the development of European integration based on short-term internal political dynamics; and c) the effects of unintended consequences provoked by previous integration solutions that resulted from the complexity of interactions within the EU [Pierson, 1996]. These factors lead to a situation where established institutions are only partially controlled by national elites of the member countries. Changing current practices faces the high costs of new intergovernmental negotiations, as well as the negative reactions from the pre-existing supranational bureaucracy.

Mark Pollack [2008, p. 3], in describing Paul Pierson's analysis of this phenomenon, says that "politics will be characterized by certain interrelated phenomena, including: *inertia*, or *lock-ins*, whereby existing institutions may remain in equilibrium for extended periods despite considerable political change." This concept has emerged relatively recently and argues that the earlier dynamics of EU institutions (as a result of the lock-in effect) can have a negative impact on the process of integration in a changed political context, thereby further undermining the institutional credibility [Streeck, Thelen, 2005].

The question remains, however, under what conditions can the institutional dynamics of past integration periods be redefined. This question also presents an important theoretical challenge in relation to the European Commission.

If the assumed change of the EC's position in the EU power relations can be explained by the structure of established practices, it may be the result of the negative effects ("feedback") of existing EC institutional practices on the interaction of actors under the conditions of the enlarged union. If confirmed, this hypothesis means the institutional dynamics continued during the reforms in 2000–2004. If not confirmed, however, the structural change of the EU institutions may be the result of extraordinary circumstances where changes in the environment (e.g., actors' preferences or the macro context) are so significant that they can overcome the effect of institutional stickiness [Christensen, Vanhoonaeker, 2008]. The historical neo-institutional theory labels this phenomenon a critical juncture.

If confirmed, this hypothesis means that the collapse of the USSR and a security imperative to integrate the countries of Central and Eastern Europe into the EU's institutional structures represented the extraordinary conditions that resulted in a critical institutional change experienced by the European Commission during the reforms initiated by EC vice-president Neil Kinnock between 2000 and 2004. In this case, there would not likely be any radical reform of the European Commission or a restoration of its traditional role as the engine of integration. An appropriate research strategy would be a detailed analysis of new institutional practices emerging within the European Commission and their correlation with the previously mentioned aspirations of European bureaucracy to maintain its position in the power structure and institutional balance of the EU.

## European Commission: critical juncture or path dependence?

### ***The European Commission's development within the process of EU integration***

The modern European Commission was preceded by the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), established by the Treaty of Paris in 1951. In the period after the Second World War, the unique historical conditions of European integration favoured the substantial autonomy of the newly created supranational regulator. The problem of estab-

lishing control over the German regions of Ruhr and Saar, where significant reserves of strategically important natural resources were located, was a reflection of a wider European dilemma over including West Germany in the regional balance of power or stoking fears of its possible remilitarization, which were particularly strong in France.

A unique supranational regulatory body in the steel and coal industry – created by the six European countries of France and West Germany joined by Italy, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg – offered an effective solution. As a result, one of the most important success factors depended heavily on the political independence of that body, which became the ECSC. The members chose to create an institution that favoured independence, flexibility (its bureaucracy consisted of only nine officials) and the authority of the chair. Its founding president was Jean Monnet, a political activist with unique experience and an extensive network of personal contacts both in Europe and the United States.

The next stage was the spillover of the integration experience into the functional areas of economic and nuclear energy cooperation. Based on the success of the ECSC High Authority, the Treaties of Rome were signed in 1957, creating similar administrative bodies for new areas of integration, known as European communities. These institutions were characterized by increased accountability to members, especially in the European Economic Community. The basic institutional functions that would be performed by the single EC, created later, were also formed during this period. Those functions included initiating legislation and making recommendations to member states on a wide range of issues, which would enable the EC to act as a supranational engine of integration; controlling compliance with the European arrangements on part of both the members and other EU institutions (the so-called guardian of the treaties); and representing the EU internationally within a framework of delegated competences.

During this period, the basic institutional characteristics were preserved: a small administrative staff, the largely informal nature of institutional activity and the “team spirit” shared by the European bureaucracy. In particular, Walter Hallstein, the first president of the European Commission, enjoyed significant political influence and possessed strong leadership skills.

However, despite the widely recognized successes of economic integration, the “empty chair crisis” of the mid 1960s (when France boycotted council meetings and insisted on a political agreement on the role of the European Commission and majority voting if it were to participate) and the Treaty of Brussels that merged the three existing communities in 1967 marked the beginning of structural changes in the inherited institutional practices.

The initiative promoted by Hallstein, which proposed delegating a budgetary autonomy to the EC and took a generally federalist position, was met with a strong reaction by members (by France in particular). The situation resulted in a significant decrease in the EC’s independent role within the integration process. The position of president was passed to the less prominent political figure of Jean Rey. A process of extending the bureaucratic apparatus of the European Commission began, and institutional practices were to a large degree formalized. As a result, the initial culture of informal interactions among a narrow circle of like-minded European officials committed to a “single Europe” inspired by Jean Monnet in the early 1950s was gradually replaced.

In the late 1970s, after a period of relatively low activity on the part of the European Commission, Britain’s Roy Jenkins became president. He prioritized building a consensus among members on the establishment of a pan-European monetary system and the expansion of foreign representative functions of the EC through its participation in the Group of Seven summits. The initial success was fully developed during the presidency of France’s Jacques Delors. From 1985 to 1995, significant progress was made on harmonizing the parameters of economic integration, reflected in the Single European Act adopted in 1986. In 1989 important arrangements were made for currency union. The EC’s competences were expanded indirectly by ap-

plying qualified majority voting procedures in the Council of Ministers. Delors also enjoyed considerable personal authority.

However, as the integration processes became increasingly complex, the long-term limits of the EC's influence became evident. The pillar system of the Maastricht Treaty in 1991 was based on a strict division between the supranational and intergovernmental dimensions of interaction. Internal security and a common foreign and security policy were reserved for intergovernmental activity. The desire of members to restrict the EC's competences further resulted in the appointment of Jacques Santer as president. He was expected to be less active in those policy areas than his predecessor and to focus on effective use of EC resources [Peterson, 2012].

Ironically, Santer's EC was accused of inadequate management efficiency. He set an important precedent in EU history when he resigned in 1999 after an independent report was submitted to the EU Court of Auditors. The report contained information related to the EC's weak accountability in managing the EU's financial resources, and described abuses in the personnel policy and corruption. In a broad sense, these charges were also aimed against the institutional practice developed during the Delors presidency.

The appointment of former Italian prime minister Romano Prodi as president of the European Commission took place under difficult conditions, as negotiations were beginning on a seven-year EU budgetary framework and the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. Prodi used new competencies delegated to him in the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 to reorganize the commission by focusing on the professional expertise of the commissioners and increasing the informal accountability of the College of Commissioners to the president through assessments of effectiveness [Peterson, 2008]. Under the leadership of a British politician – Neil Kinnock – a large-scale internal reform was initiated.

The reform process significantly affected the functioning principles of administrative services at the level of the EC, as well as the level of interaction with members and other EU institutions. The main goal was to improve the delineation of administrative and political functions, which mainly resulted in the transformation of the EC into a professional bureaucracy. Considerable attention was paid to increasing the accountability to the members, the European Parliament and citizens.

One of the major innovations represented the implementation of centralized strategic planning, which de facto limited the role of the EC as an engine of integration channelling its legislative activity toward previously agreed objectives (i.e., core tasks). The concept of strategic planning was not strictly defined in the legal framework and limited EC activity to the area of the single market [Hooghe, Nugent, 2012].

Formally, the reform was justified by giving the EC officials more time to develop political initiatives for European integration by delegating some of their routine duties to the national administrations. However, this tendency can be interpreted differently, especially given the fact that the EC engaged in no significant political activity during or after the reform period [Hooghe, Nugent, 2012].

The political role of the EC in opening up accession negotiations between the EU and the 12 candidate countries of the former eastern bloc was actively contested by intergovernmental EU institutions. Early in the 21st century, during the negotiations on the Treaty of Nice and the declaration on the future of the EU, which later formed the basis of the failed 2005 treaty to establish a constitution for Europe, the EC was pushed into a marginal position during what de facto represented a definition of future functioning rules in the enlarged EU. Its isolation within the EU political process was clearly reflected in its contradictory position during a key negotiation phase on the declaration on the future of the European Union in 2002.

The appointment of a rather controversial Portuguese politician José Manuel Barroso as president in 2004 reaffirmed the downward trend in the EC's role in the EU institutional balance and the European integration process as a whole.

In addition, the enlargement represented a strong challenge to the EC's effectiveness, since it nearly doubled the number of members in a short period. The negative effects attributed to the expansion of the College of Commissioners and directorates general as well as other EC services were complicated by various political cultures and the lack of experience of members working together. According to John Peterson [2008, p. 765], "the College was obviously too big: a collection of strangers that was too large to have many meaningful political debates (whatever other factors limited them in number)."

The growing gap between the administrative staff and the college in the enlarged EU further undermined the effectiveness of the European Commission. In 2005 the accession of 10 new member countries into the EU created 200 units within the EC bureaucracy structure. The role of the EC's technocratic wing increased. However, despite the assumed greater freedom in promoting its initiatives playing on interstate relations in an extended format, the EC was not able to use this advantage effectively due to changes in its internal institutional structure at earlier stages of its development.

### ***The EC's institutional evolution***

Throughout its development, the European Commission has undergone a number of controversial changes.

Initially, the EC was established as a central regulator enjoying considerable autonomy from national governments and with strong political leadership embodied in the figure of the president. Over time, the members began to fear any kind of institutional dynamics that threatened to excessively expand the competences delegated to the commission. Consequently, a number of measures have been taken to limit its powers formally and informally in the EU power relations. Its activities are severely restricted by members in case of any potential threat to national sovereignty.

Moreover, even the dynamics in the areas of recognized competences are undermined by the negative effects caused by Kinnock's reforms in 2000. The reform process increased the bureaucratization of EC structures and services, which shifted its main institutional activities toward technocratic interactions, with greater accountability and a strengthened the role of the president (with the appointment procedure of the president now indirectly left to the members). With the EC's traditional role of the engine of integration now reduced, the EU's institutional system was partially blocked by the results of the quantitative expansion of its membership in 2004–2007.

To conclude, in its current stage of institutional development, the EC is at a critical juncture, overshadowed by the negative effects caused by the external shock of the 2004–2007 enlargement.

In this regard, the EC's use of flexible mechanisms of integration can be expected in the future, as can the intensification of the power struggle among the members for the use of its institutional resources.

## **Conclusion**

The evolution of the modern institutional practices of the European Union took place under conditions of significant changes in the international context. The emergence of a bipolar international system in the aftermath of the Second World War and the need to reintegrate West

Germany in the regional security system based on growing fears of German militarism created a unique environment of supranational cooperation in the form of the European Coal and Steel Community.

The ECSC's main political resource resided in the High Authority and was based on independent technocratic expertise prepared by a narrow circle of like-minded officials led by a highly influential president. However, as integration spilled over into other areas of cooperation, opening up the opportunity for the European Commission to acquire more supranational competences, members actively sought to limit the initial institutional dynamics. Subsequently, the EC's function as the supranational engine of integration was increasingly challenged either directly by members or within the institutional balance of the EU.

A series of appointments of rather weak political figures to the EC presidency, as well as accusations of inefficient management, resulted in reforms early in the 21st century. These in turn led to changes in the institutional role of the EC itself. As the institution evolved, the choice was made in favour of a more bureaucratic model with increasing accountability to members. As a result, even the regulation of those areas in which the EC traditionally had its own institutional dynamics based on path dependence, such as the single internal market and the European Monetary Union, was vulnerable to the external shock caused by the enlargement of 2004–2007. The reduced internal effectiveness of the EC and the negative consequences of EU enlargement resulted in problematic inter-institutional interactions, causing the current systemic crisis of integration.

Thus, the EC is unlikely to return to its historical role as the engine of integration. Rather, it is more likely to favour flexible mechanisms of integration.

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# Трансформация роли Европейской комиссии в системе властных отношений Европейского союза по итогам расширения 2004–2007 гг.<sup>1</sup>

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*В отличие от предыдущих периодов «евроскептицизма» текущий кризис ЕС, продолжающийся с 2008 г., не может быть разрешен странами-членами в рамках выбора между передачей дополнительных компетенций на наднациональный уровень или усилением межправительственного начала интеграции. Системный характер кризисных явлений выражается прежде всего в деградации институциональной структуры Европейского союза. Принятие большого количества новых стран-членов с различным уровнем социально-экономического развития и различной культурой политической жизни в ходе расширения 2004–2007 гг. ставит вопрос не только о трансформации институтов ЕС, но и связей между ними в качестве главного фактора современного интеграционного процесса.*

*В данной статье с точки зрения теории исторического неинституционализма рассматривается Европейская комиссия (ЕК). Предполагается обзор исторического развития данного института с целью выявления феномена «зависимости от выбранного пути» (path dependence) в ходе современного этапа его эволюции. Рассматривается как внутренняя динамика Европейской комиссии, так и внешний контекст, в качестве которого выступает положение ЕК в системе властных отношений ЕС. В результате делается вывод о том, являются ли текущие институциональные изменения в ЕК следствием первоначального институционального дизайна или же принципиально новой стадией развития истории данного института. В завершение статьи формулируются перспективы дальнейшего развития Европейской комиссии и проверяется тезис работы об «адаптивной способности» ЕК к условиям институционального кризиса европейской интеграции.*

**Ключевые слова:** Европейский союз, исторический неинституционализм, расширение ЕС 2004–2007 гг., Европейская комиссия

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# Challenges of Eurasian integration after the Ukrainian Crisis

A. Skriba

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*The regional situation in Eastern Europe changed significantly by the end of the first decade of the 21st century. Competition between Russia and the European Union increased during the 2000s, while at the same time both actors were changing their approach to the six states of the former USSR that lie between Russia and the EU – Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. In order to widen and deepen their influence on those territories and to reduce uncertainty about their regional politics, Moscow and Brussels developed their own integration projects and demanded those post-Soviet states define their position in the EU – Russia competition.*

*Russian and European scholars, when trying to analyze the future of the Post-Soviet Six, mostly examine the attractiveness of the two integration projects. While important, such an approach is insufficient, as it ignores the individual internal environments. To assess the prospects for Russia's Eurasian Economic Union and the EU's Eastern Partnership, however, one must look inside the six states, which are so important for both Moscow and Brussels.*

*This article explores the aspects of the European and Eurasian integration projects that may be attractive to the six states. Within this framework, it considers what and how elements of those states' internal environment might influence their choice by examining and comparing both integration projects. It proposes focusing directly on the countries that are currently facing the dilemma of integration and are expected to choose. Despite a number of internal factors influencing the states' integration behaviour, research has shown that in such circumstances, a choice (whether it is made) cannot be considered final, given the individual internal environments of the Six. Their further integration will require additional mechanisms of stimulation, which will need to be developed by the centres of integration – namely, Moscow and Brussels.*

**Key words:** regional integration, integrations dilemma, Eastern Partnership, post-Soviet area, Eurasian Economic Union, Post-Soviet Six, European Union

## The institutionalization of post-Soviet Eastern Europe: why did it happen?

For almost two decades, the young post-Soviet states in Eastern Europe have successfully maintained their recently regained sovereignty and skillfully balanced between the European Union and Russia.<sup>1</sup> They have tried not to get involved in the increasing tension between the two regional powers and have expressed a deep interest to develop collaboration (particularly economic) in both directions.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this article, the Eastern European post-Soviet states refers to the three Eastern European countries – Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine – and three states of the Caucasus – Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. These six states (or the Post-Soviet Six) are currently included in the European Union's Eastern Partnership program.

Such a dualism in the regional politics of the six Eastern European post-Soviet states can be well explained by their transition from an administrative-command economy that followed the decisions of the Soviet Union centre (Moscow) to a market economy that required building an independent state almost from scratch. On the one hand, the transitional post-Soviet states were interested in cooperation with Russia – maintaining production and trade ties, which had been formed over many decades. There were also important social and political reasons for these ties, as they provided thousands of workplaces, which was extremely important in terms of electoral support for the state's authorities. On the other hand, the post-Soviet states were broadly understood to be technologically inferior to the West. From this point of view, economic collaboration with another regional partner – the European Union – became extremely important too, as it offered an opportunity to attract investments and new technologies.

However, despite the importance of both vectors, the possibilities of striking a balance between the EU and Russia have become substantially limited for the Post-Soviet Six since Moscow and Brussels shifted their previous bilateral approaches to regional relations in favour of a new multilateral and systemic approach by the end of the first decade of the 21st century.

For Russia, the change in its policy in Eastern Europe was caused by a failure to protect and implement its own interests in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Russia's attempts to build a long-term bilateral relationship with the Eastern European post-Soviet states in the 1990s resulted in trade and economic imbalances that were not in its favour. Moscow provided them with substantial economic assistance as they still depended on external resources. For many years, the Russian market was the main importer of their uncompetitive products, and offered cheap resources to some of the six states (Belarus, Armenia and, less frequently, Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova).

However, any attempt to expand (or, from a historical perspective, restore) the political influence of Russia's leadership as a form of payment for economic preference met with opposition from the newly independent states. They strongly objected to any exchange of resources for their political alignment, and characterized the Russian approach as imperial ambition and a desire to restore the Soviet Union.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the new Russian leadership began slowly to reduce its preference for the post-Soviet economies. This shift caused various bilateral conflicts at the highest political and state levels. Moscow found itself in a kind of trap. On the one hand, maintaining economic support conflicted with its own interests and did not bring any economic or political dividends. On the other hand, abandoning this support frequently resulted in economic instability among the post-Soviet authorities and in some cases led to the rise to power of pro-European politicians whose policies in many cases threatened Russian interests and security.<sup>2</sup>

To Russian authorities, the step-by-step systematization of economic relations with CIS members seemed a good way out of this trap. Indeed, such a policy could not support the long-term interests of both the politicians and the people of the former Soviet states in a rapprochement with Russia (which only soft power could achieve). However, this policy let Moscow preserve the privileged terms of trade and economic collaboration with those states that consistently participated in Russian integration projects. In other words, Moscow tried to insure itself against the instable behaviour of its regional partners through an institutional limitation in the form of new regional integration.

Russia called its own integration project the Eurasian Economic Union, in opposition to the already existing European one. This step was provoked by growing tensions in Moscow's political dialogue with the EU and the West in general. In the 1990s, in both the Russian

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<sup>2</sup> Some post-Soviet elites could not maintain their power without an appropriate level of external support due to their lack of internal resources.

and EU academic and political communities, the prevailing view was that Russia was a much more European state than a Eurasian one [Timmerman, 2002]. Both Russia and the EU had a chance for a rapprochement.<sup>3</sup> In the 2000s, the Russian leaders reached the understanding that “the great powers do not dissolve in integration unions – they create their own” [Ivanov, 1998, p. 22–3]. In this view the Eurasian project was a response to Europe’s expanding political and economic integration, whose numbers more than doubled (to include, among others, three post-Soviet states) in the two decades since the end of the Cold War. By 2004 it had reached the Russian border.

For the European Union, systematizing relations with the countries of Eastern Europe was a logical continuation of previously used and generally successful soft power instruments, rather than a correction of past errors.

From the beginning of the 1990s, the EU did not offer the Eastern European states any short-term economic benefits. Instead, it focused on strengthening its civilizational and political attractiveness. In contrast to the fallen Soviet Union, association with Europe was positioned as more democratic with less centralized power, where the voice of every state – even the smallest – is always heard and taken into account. This approach seemed very effective in the 1990s and the 2000s, as many post-socialist (not only post-Soviet) states saw European integration as the most obvious means for quick and efficient political and economic reforms.

However, in several countries in Eastern Europe, post-communist democratization and economic transformations did not lead to a political consensus about the inevitability of European integration. For example, for Azerbaijan, which did not suffer from a lack of resources and did not need any external support, the idea of integration in any form was unacceptable, as it did not provide any benefits to its authoritarian regime. For Armenia, integration with the EU would be difficult (for example, to create a customs union) because of its geographical remoteness. In addition, there were unresolved internal conflicts in Armenia, Georgia and Moldova, which could be aggravated by integration with the EU, as had happened in Cyprus. As for Belarus and Ukraine, these two countries were too close to Russia historically and culturally, which did not encourage a pro-European political stance.

As a result, the European Union and in particular some of its members (Poland, Sweden and Lithuania) started to exert influence on these states using soft power. They stimulated the development of a politically active civil society and promoted the strengthening of political competition and implementing of economic and political reforms. One of the valuable components of this soft policy in the early 21st century was the European Neighbourhood Policy, which sought to deepen EU cooperation with the countries of the region in various spheres, such as education, culture, energy, ecology, policy, economy and transport. A number of European (as well as American) non-governmental organizations and funds that financed research programs and public actions in the post-Soviet area also played an important role.

The “colour revolutions” that occurred in the mid 2000s revealed effectiveness of the EU’s soft approach. On the one hand, they resulted from the further democratization and liberalization of the Post-Soviet Six, moving them even closer to the “European family.” On the other hand, they strengthened the pro-European political parties, which had a strong impact on the regional policy of certain states. For example, Ukraine and Georgia, which became the symbols of those revolutions in Eastern Europe, declared their desire to join the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as soon as possible.

<sup>3</sup> Karaganov S. (2010) Soyuz Yevropy: posledniy shans? [The union of Europe: the last chance?] *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 9 July, p. 13. Available at: <http://www.rg.ru/2010/07/09/karaganov.html> (accessed 28 September 2014).

Nevertheless, European soft power alone led neither these two countries nor the more politically stable Belarus and Armenia, nor any other members of the Six, to enter any real long-term integration with the EU. The results of the European policy were thus ambiguous. The post-Soviet leaders continued to find a balance between the EU and Russia either voluntarily or by force (under the pressure of political opposition) and tried to prolong their “intermediate” regional position. In general, by the end of the first decade of the 21st century none of the six states had chosen (rather than just declared) integration with the EU as a long-term priority, and many were finding it less easy to ignore Russia’s growing power and its interests.

Consequently, the institutionalization of relations with the EU within the new project of the Eastern Partnership could help to strengthen a European vector of regional politics with the six post-Soviet states as partners and to encourage them to choose integration. As the Council of the European Union [2009] declared, the main goal of the Eastern Partnership was “to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration” with interested partner countries.

So, while soft power encouraged pro-European thinking of people and the power of the pro-European political parties, the Eastern Partnership was developed to expand soft power capabilities, to give Brussels’s policy more initiative, to strengthen and develop relations between the EU and the Six, and to create a long-term trend of integration of the political and economic future of both sides. In other words, the European Union, as well as Russia, was ready to develop political dialogue and economic cooperation with the Eastern European CIS, although only in case of a further rapprochement on its own terms (as happened earlier with other Eastern European countries, which had already become EU members).

Thus, by the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century the Eurasian and European integration projects appeared in Eastern Europe to attract the post-Soviet states either to Russia or the EU. Both projects offered potential participants different benefits, as well as different costs if they chose to ignore them.

## Economic union with Russia

Compared to the EU, the Eurasian integration project is a recent process of rapprochement for the post-Soviet states.<sup>4</sup> It is not the first such attempt. The idea of “Eurasianism” was preceded by, for example, the CIS, the Union State of Belarus and Russia, and the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (GUAM), among others. However, all these forms of integration have had little success, and many agreements never came into force.

For example, after 14 years the Union State still has not reached its declared level of development – a union with strong supranational institutions. Moreover, since the beginning of the 21st century the process of Belarus-Russia integration has developed very slowly, and even stagnated. The CIS, originally created as a kind of “civilized divorce” for the post-Soviet states rather than a basis for future (re)unity, effectively became just a platform for political negotiations, one that was very unstable and often unable to prevent or resolve conflicts. It is no wonder that CIS economic agreements were very fragmentary and weak. At the same time any other attempts to create regional groups or unions without the main and the most powerful player – Russia – were even less successful (for example, GUAM).

Given the shortcomings of these organizations, Eurasian integration differs favourably from them, in stronger institutionalization and in its role for supranational bodies. Thus, within the Eurasian Economic Union (EaEU), which will include the existing Customs Union and

<sup>4</sup> Eurasian integration currently consists of the three steps made during since 2010: the Customs Union (2010), the Common Economic Space (2012) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EaEU, May 2014).

Common Economic Space as of 2015, the Eurasian Economic Commission will have a role as a national operating authority (for example, it will regulate customs duties). Such an institutionalization and broad legal framework for trade and economic cooperation make the Eurasian form of economic relations more long term and stable than previous post-Soviet organizations or instruments for bilateral negotiations.

The procedure for secession from the EaEU is another important stabilization mechanism. According to article 118 of the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, secession from the EaEU will automatically result in the termination of membership in all the Eurasian economic treaties [Russian Ministry of Economic Development, 2014]. Thus, the EaEU works on the all-or-nothing principle, when participating in integration (and therefore benefiting from this participation) requires choosing the Eurasian project as a regional priority.

Another strength of this all-or-nothing approach is that it provides additional motivation to join the EaEU. If a post-Soviet state with profitable economic ties with Russia refuses to join the EaEU, it could lose all these ties, such as comparatively low prices for Russian raw materials and energy resources, free access to the Russian market and migration opportunities (thousands of people from the Six currently work in Russia as migrant labourers).

The fact that Eurasian integration is at the very beginning of its development also increases its attractiveness. First, because of their “youth,” EaEU supranational institutions do not dominate state sovereignty (in contrast to, for instance, the EU). That is why many of the issues that arise in the elaboration of a coherent economic policy are resolved in the EaEU by consensus among all participants. The main body of Eurasian integration – the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council – consists of the heads of all the EaEU members, and the Eurasian Economic Commission contains an equal number of representatives from every member. This representation is especially important for small states (in terms of economic potential), as their voices are always considered in the decision-making process.

Second, as Eurasian integration is in the early stages of development, all its members are equally involved in the creation of a new legislative and institutional environment. Therefore, the earlier a state joins the project, the faster its position will be taken into account. Potential candidates for joining the EaEU – Armenia and Kyrgyzstan – will have to adapt to the existing integration environment, but once they have the status of member, they will be able to influence its further development.

One main advantage of the Eurasian integration project is that its participants create a common market rich in natural resources and with a well-developed transport infrastructure. Among the current EaEU participants this is primarily important for Belarus, whose economy depends heavily on importing Russian raw materials (including energy resources), and Kazakhstan, which is highly interested in gaining access to the European energy market through Russian transit pipelines. Thus, economic union with Russia will allow Belarus and Kazakhstan to receive direct economic benefits in the short term. According to the Eurasian Bank of Development [2012, p. 88–9], the proper use of these advantages will enable the two states to ensure additional growth of gross domestic product at 15% and 4% respectively (by 2030, compared with the base scenario without the Eurasian economic integration). Low prices for Russian raw materials can attract other post-Soviet states in great need of external economic and financial support.

At the same time, in the long run, while these strong arguments for Eurasian integration create the conditions for more competitive economic growth for members, they do not guarantee this growth. Since members retain a certain freedom to choose their own economic policies, their development in the context of Eurasian integration relates closely to and depends largely on state authorities.

The disadvantages of Eurasian integration for the countries of the former USSR include a lack of a long-term vision or specific goal for integration, as well as any agreed (by current members) strategy to achieve such a goal. From this point of view, Eurasian integration in many respects remains amorphous and inert. Thus, in the absence of the idea (or ideology) of Eurasianism, many authorities and academics in post-Soviet countries see in the EaEU echoes of the old Soviet idea, and therefore consider the economic union an attempt and aspiration of Russia to restore control over the newly independent states of Eastern Europe.

The benefits from access to inexpensive Russian raw materials and energy resources can also be considered a disadvantage of Eurasian integration. While the short-term benefits might solve many problems of post-Soviet economies, they do not stimulate states (or, in some cases, their authoritarian leaders) to continue economic reforms and improve governance, thereby preserving current shortcomings. While authorities can benefit, avoid certain social shocks and maintain power, some parts of society (primarily youth) and business may protest against such stagnation and unfinished economic and political reforms, which would decrease public support for the Eurasian project.

## Association with the European Union

At the end of the first decade and beginning of the second of the 21st century, the EU's Eastern Partnership became a very competitive alternative to the Eurasian integration project. Several aspects of it were also very attractive to the post-Soviet states of Eastern Europe.

First was the idea of "Europeanness" itself. This idea includes not only economic integration (which was already implemented by most of the EU members by the end of the 20th century), but also a cultural community with shared living standards, personal values, and so on. The goal of building a democratic union of states, led by the imperative of respect for private property, human rights and freedom of discussion, was very appealing to the newly independent states of Eastern Europe, whose citizens were looking for a better life, as well as to the elites interested in political legitimization (authorities) and guarantees of property rights (business).

The primary advantage of European integration thus lies in its economic component. The establishment of a free trade area with the EU (through Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas [DCFTA], which are part of the Association Agreement) would decrease or eliminate existing trade barriers and simplify access to the large European market. In addition, convergence with the EU would offer the possibility of increased foreign investment and new technologies from EU members. In the long run, these could have a positive impact on the competitiveness of the Association Agreement participants [Aslund, 2013].

However, European integration assumes cooperation not only in economic areas, but also on political and humanitarian issues, which may be very attractive for some interest groups. For example, the Agreement on Political Association indicates the willingness of partners to align their foreign and defence policies with the EU's and to accept European values; the Agreement on Mobility and Security will gradually liberalize visa regimes (primarily to enhance academic and cultural exchanges as well as labour migration) and will join partners in the fight against illegal migration, corruption and organized crime [Kosikova, 2012].

The Comprehensive Institution Building Program is also worth mentioning. According to it, the Eastern partners must gradually revise their national legislation and adopt European standards. The EU, for its part, is ready to finance programs to improve governance in Association Agreement members, to develop further cooperation in various fields and to provide technical assistance [EuropeAid, 2014]. The six post-Soviet countries may be very interested in



such assistance as it could help them continue their economic reforms and encourage prosperity. At present, the unfinished reforms hinder such growth, so that a more reformed Ukraine significantly lags behind Belarus (which still has a administrative-command economy) in economic development (per capita) [Melville et al., 2012, p. 93].

Nevertheless, despite the obvious benefits, European integration has also certain disadvantages and in some aspects seems less attractive than the Russian Eurasian project.

First, European integration obliges the countries that conclude an Association Agreement to accept already existing norms and rules (in such areas as standardization, licensing, sanitary standards and other legal bases), despite the fact that these countries did not participate in their development [see EU, 2014]. The acceptance of these standards, as well as a reduction in customs barriers (after the creation of the free trade area), can lead to crisis and even the disappearance of some business as well as even industries unable to compete with EU companies. Thus, in demanding certain reforms, Brussels takes into account neither the national specificity of the partnering states nor the fact that the adoption of the relevant law does not mean its implementation in practice.<sup>5</sup>

The form of alignment with the EU – political and economic association – strongly limits the sovereignty of the young post-Soviet states. After signing an Association Agreement, a state must not only create a common economic territory, but also reform its policies and legislation in a short period of time, as well as rely on the Association Council in its internal and external actions.

Second, the Association Agreement includes integration in various areas in addition to economic integration. Armenia's experience has shown that a partner is not allowed to refuse any part of this package (for example, to accept economic and political reforms but not to form a common security policy with the EU).<sup>6</sup> However, such an integration of post-Soviet states with the EU in all spheres at once will most likely lead to the deterioration of relations with Russia, not only on economic issues, but also on political and humanitarian issues. Thus, European integration based on the traditions of European institutionalism is less flexible and constitutes a kind of ultimatum for the young post-Soviet states, which clearly reduces its appeal for most of them.

Finally, the EU's Eastern Partnership is very vague in terms of its ultimate prospects ("limits of convergence"). The EU's approach fosters an internal "European order," combining norms and values related to democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as well as the economic model of governance – however, without any membership guarantees [Dragneva and Wolczuk, 2012, p. 9]. Despite the fact that the EU does not deny the possibility of associated partners achieving the status of membership in the future, the current Association Agreements do not provide such an opportunity. Thus the EU sends very inconsistent signals. For example, while Brussels actively supports the EU's further enlargement by attracting new members among the Six, many EU members do not yet support this idea and are therefore not ready to talk about a timeframe for such a development.

<sup>5</sup> For example, by 2006 the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs harmonized its position with the EU's on foreign policy and security policy in 549 of 589 cases. However, in practice implementation was far from reality [Wolczuk, 2009].

<sup>6</sup> In September 2013, Armenia announced its intention to join the Customs Union and thereby rejected the creation of a free trade area with the EU. Despite this fact, Armenian authorities remained interested in engaging in a political dialogue with the EU concerning, for example, governance reform, and did not refuse political association only (without a DCFTA). However, the EU commissioner for enlargement and neighbourhood policy denied the possibility of any kind of "decoupled" integration [see Commonsplace.eu, 2013].

## The dilemma for the six Post-Soviet states

Both integration projects have attractive advantages for the post-Soviet Six and therefore are appealing.

On the one hand, by the end of the first decade of the 21st century, most of these states had come to understand that avoiding integration with either the EU or Russia was not a viable alternative. First, such behaviour would limit the external economic support from Moscow and Brussels, neither of which would provide any kind of support for free. Second, even in the case of abandoning both options, a state would have to adapt to the European or Eurasian regulatory and legislative frameworks, without any possibility of influencing it [Bordachev, 2013].

On the other hand, as competition between Moscow and Brussels in the post-Soviet area increased and became institutionalized, balancing between the two projects became less possible. As a result, at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century the main challenge for the Six became deciding whether to integrate with the EU or Russia or whether to reject integration altogether and try to continue their economic development on their own, relying on internal resources without any external support or benefits from integration. For most of the Six, however, rejection was not a choice, as discussed above. Thus they had to choose one integration project and limit further association with the other.

This situation of competitive forms of integration in Eastern Europe has been called the integration dilemma, similar to the security dilemma described by Robert Jervis [1978]. Samuel Charap and Mikhail Troitskiy [2013, p. 50] characterize such a situation as follows: the integration dilemma is faced by a state that perceives its neighbours' integration into various economic groupings or military alliances that are unavailable to this state as a threat to its own security and prosperity. When two or more centres of integration compete, such a competition becomes a zero-sum game.

This interpretation holds to some degree. First, the security concept includes military as well as economic aspects, which is why economic integration, or the integration dilemma, is an integral part of the security dilemma. Second, although military and economic integration in Eastern Europe are *de jure* divided, they often *de facto* involve each other. For example, Belarus is a member of both the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO); Armenia – a current CSTO member – has already announced its wish to join the EAEC; Ukraine and Georgia, by contrast, prefer to join both the European integration project and NATO.

Nevertheless, according to this line of reasoning, it is difficult to analyze the prospects of the development and enlargement of both the European and the Eurasian projects as the integration process includes but is not limited to the policy and politics of each centre. Such an approach was typical during the Cold War, when the regional affiliation of small and medium-sized states was usually determined by the Great Powers. However, in the 21st century, the choice of whether to align or not, and, if so, with which centre (Moscow or Brussels) depends more on the integrating states than on the integration centres. In Eastern Europe, to understand the reasons and prospects of such a choice, it is necessary to study the interests and policies of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

If the focus shifts from the integration centres to the integrating states, including potential participants, the integration dilemma in Eastern Europe takes on a different meaning and becomes a dilemma of what form the integration takes – the necessity to choose either association with the EU or a Eurasian economic union with Russia. Thus the definition of the dilemma includes the regional environments, formed by Moscow and Brussels with benefits and dis-

advantages as discussed above, as well as the interests of the states facing such a dilemma as a necessity. Thus, to study the preferences of the six post-Soviet countries still in transition from socialism to capitalism and democracy, for each one it is necessary to consider the economic and political development, the political powers and economic interests, and its society and its influence on its integration policy.

## The factors for choosing either the European or Eurasian project

In the context of the dilemma of integrating, each of the six post-Soviet states can be characterized as a potential participant in one of the two projects. By mid 2014, they were members of the Eastern Partnership while maintaining close economic relations with Russia. In many cases, they depended heavily on these relations and were already members of the EaEU.

Over the last two decades, the political and economic transformations in the six post-Soviet states were different. Despite their geographic proximity and CIS membership, they retained their essential distinctions. Indeed, this fact explains precisely why their current regional and integration policies are so individual and sometimes in opposition to one another.

In terms of choosing European or Eurasian integration, the general requirements for economic integration itself must be assessed. Some countries that need external economic and resource support require economic convergence with more powerful international actors. In international relations theory, such a policy is known as “bandwagoning for profit” [Schweller, 1994; Skriba, 2013]. At the same time, other states that have their own resources and do not suffer from financial difficulties can distance themselves from regional integration without any adverse consequences.

Five of the six post-Soviet states belong to the group that cannot do that: Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Their painful transition to a market-based relationship with Russia (in particular, concerning energy costs) and the consequences of the global financial crisis have adversely affected their economic development. Only Azerbaijan, with its oil revenues, can refuse regional integration. Thus, in theory all six countries confront the dilemma of how to integrate, but in practice the issue is urgent only for five of them.

Also on the theme of economics, the level of dependence of the post-Soviet states on present conditions of trade and economic relations with Russia is also worth considering. As was noted, the refusal to create an association with the European Union would not result in a significant deterioration in the economic dialogue between a post-Soviet state and the EU, while distance from Eurasian integration would very likely result in increased prices for Russian resources and reduced access to the Russian market. Therefore, the larger and deeper economic cooperation and the level of dependence on economic relations with Russia, the more likely that the state will prefer to join the Eurasian Economic Union or will at least refrain from creating an association with the European Union.

At the same time, the economic issues in the post-Soviet countries should be examined in the context of the political situation. Any movement toward the European or the Eurasian project will entail a change in domestic economic environment, which will affect the interests of various social groups. For example, integration with the EU will require unpopular economic reforms. Joining the Eurasian Economic Union would avoid these reforms. However, it could create a negative attitude toward the authorities by economic groups, who fear the arrival of more powerful Russian capital. These economic groups greatly influence public opinion in some states. Ignoring these circumstances, as demonstrated by Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko and Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili, inevitably leads to loss of power. Their experience will undoubtedly be considered by future politicians in the five post-Soviet states.

Given such pressure on authorities from within, it becomes important to study the features of the political and economic systems in these states. A strong authoritarian state, concentrated on self-legitimization, can more freely choose an integration vector without fear of pressure from less powerful economic groups or political opposition. In contrast, in an oligarchic democracy, as has resulted from the large-scale privatization of state assets in many post-communist countries, the authorities must consider the oligarchic groups and take into account their possible gains and losses from participation in the integration project.

In the context of the internal struggle for power among various political and economic groups and its influence on state's regional policy, the level of public consensus on the integration choice must be considered. If the consensus is strong, as it was in the Baltic states, the country will engage in stable and long-term participation in the economic project. In the absence of such a consensus, the choice often becomes a subject of political speculation by government, opposition and other interest groups.

Internal territorial conflicts are a relatively new factor in the integration choice. In some cases, they can become a deterrent to the association with the EU, which could further destabilize internal relations in countries such as Moldova (with Transnistria) and Georgia (with Abkhazia and South Ossetia). The recent conflict between Kyiv and the southeast part of Ukraine is another example. In other cases, internal territorial conflicts have strengthened the Eurasian integration vector, as happened in Armenia, which needed certain security guarantees that could be provided only by Russia.

In general, the dilemma over integration, as it has developed over the last decade, clearly does not benefit all six post-Soviet countries. It does not help solve their internal problems and even reinforces existing contradictions. For five of these countries, there are reasons for one or the other integration solution and, therefore, the choice that is made with a minimum advantage of any of two projects, given the countries' ongoing internal transformations, cannot be considered as a final one that will never be revised.

## The interim results

Two main conclusions can be drawn regarding the influence of internal factors (the list of which is not even final yet) on the integration policy of the post-Soviet states in Eastern Europe. First, the choice is influenced by the integration centres and their policy toward potential members of the union, and also by such members' policy, as well as their internal economic and political situation. Second, the choice cannot be made once and forever. The dilemma exists until an alternative vector of integration presents itself. Thus, the integration choice continues to be made even after the state joins an integration project.

For the six (or at least five) post-Soviet states, these conclusions mean that today they cannot be considered long-term integration participants, even if they have chosen either the European or Eurasian project. They occupy different regional positions between the EU and Russia, due to the special aspects of their internal political and economic environments and their differing levels of development. Further changes in their internal environments can transform their view of the pros and cons of integration and they can therefore change their earlier choice.

For example, for Belarus, the most active participant in the regional integration, joining the Eurasian Economic Union was a largely opportunistic step to provide resources to legitimize its authoritarian political regime. Unlike the others, for Belarus there was no alternative to Eurasian integration, due to a crisis in the political dialogue with the EU and the West in general. Nevertheless, even in the case of such a "consistent supporter of integration," there exists

the possibility of joining the European Union in the long term, according to Vladimir Makei, the Belarusian minister of foreign affairs.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, Armenia's intention to join the Eurasian integration, expressed in 2013, can also be evaluated. After joining the Eurasian Economic Union, Yerevan will gain access to Russian resources and markets, as will other members of the association. Thus its interest in deepening integration will depend largely on the consensus of political and economic elites.

Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova are choosing European integration for now. They signed Association Agreements with the EU in June 2014 and will implement them over the next ten years. Nevertheless, of these countries only Moldova has good prospects for real, long-term European integration (despite the problem of Transdnistria), as Eurasian integration is not a full-fledged alternative because of its geography. As for Georgia and Ukraine, an association for them would mean new economic and social upheaval, the political consequences of which can hardly be predicted confidently. In other words, even after creating (or starting to create) an association with the EU, the future of this alliance would be very uncertain and will largely depend on the ability of the authorities of these countries to make the required political and economic reforms at the legislative level, and to put those reforms into practice.

In summary, as long as the post-Soviet states need external economic support, they will seek to integrate, but until there is no internal consensus on the direction of integration, how long any integration will last will remain a question, and the choice of integration will be vulnerable to revision.

In such a situation, the institutionalization of the regional environment by Moscow and Brussels only partially solves the problem. Of course, it restricts the form of relations with all the countries in the region and forces them to take more responsibility in choosing the direction of their integration. But at the same time the institutionalization itself provides stability and ensures against excessive volatility in the regional policies of the post-Soviet states, yet does not create the conditions for the long-term, sustained development of recently created economic projects. The creation of such conditions will require the clever use of soft power by Russia and the European Union. However, how that might be used is the topic for another study.

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# Вызовы и перспективы евразийской интеграции после украинского кризиса

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*Конец первого десятилетия XXI в. сопровождался важными изменениями региональной среды в Восточной Европе. По мере возрастания конкуренции между Россией и Европейским союзом менялся подход двух международных акторов к «промежуточным» государствам бывшего СССР — Азербайджану, Армении, Белоруссии, Грузии, Молдавии и Украине. Стремясь, с одной стороны, закрепить свое влияние на их территориях, а с другой — снизить спекулятивность их региональной политики, Москва и Брюссель предложили институциональные интеграционные проекты, требуя от постсоветских стран занять более определенную позицию в собственной конкуренции.*

*Пытаясь прогнозировать региональное будущее шести постсоветских стран, российские и европейские исследователи фокусируются на анализе привлекательности европейской и евразийской интеграций.*

*Такой подход является весьма полезным, однако недостаточным, поскольку он не учитывает внутригосударственные трансформации шести государств, которые в неменьшей степени влияют на интеграционный выбор. Таким образом, анализ внутренней среды интегрируемых стран видится крайне важным при определении перспектив развития Евразийского экономического союза и «Восточного партнерства».*

*В статье рассматриваются различные аспекты привлекательности евразийской и европейской интеграций для шести постсоветских стран, а также факторы внутренней среды указанных стран, способные оказать влияние на интеграционный выбор. Для этого прежде всего проводится сравнение двух конкурирующих интеграционных проектов с точки зрения их интеграционной привлекательности. При анализе перспектив присоединения шести государств к той или иной группировке автор предлагает перенести акцент с интеграционных центров на страны, перед которыми сегодня как раз и стоит дилемма интеграций. Помимо собственно факторов, влияющих на интеграционный выбор, исследование показало, что даже сделанный выбор в условиях дилеммы интеграций не может считаться окончательным, а продолжение интеграции может потребовать новых дополнительных механизмов ее стимулирования.*

**Ключевые слова:** региональная интеграция, дилемма интеграций, «Восточное партнерство», ЕАЭС, постсоветское пространство

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