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Putin's European Policy

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More or less a decade after the change of regimes, with the dissolution-disintegration-divorce of states in Eastern and Central Europe and the end of the Cold War, Europe has expanded eastward via the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and has also decided on further expansion and its serious internal reform via the European Union (EU). Yet the biggest entity in Eastern Europe—Russia—has consolidated itself internally, reached a broad consensus on foreign policy, and is keen on ensuring itself an appropriate role both in world and European politics.

At this point, it is appropriate to make a balance sheet of how relations between these two parts of Europe have evolved, with the emphasis on where Russian policy toward Europe stands now. This chapter is aimed at the analysis of the following questions: How do Russia's policies toward Western Europe differ from its policies toward Eastern and Central Europe? Is there a basis for a future Russian partnership with the European Union, and is President Vladimir Putin seeking a real partnership, or is his policy mere propaganda? Does Russia view relations with the European Union in economic terms alone? Does Moscow seek to drive a wedge between Europe—most notably France and Germany—and the United States? What are the consequences for Russia of EU enlargement to Central Europe? Does Russia have a strategy to counterbalance possible negative consequences? Will Moscow propose a deal accepting EU enlargement in lieu of NATO expansion?

First, President Putin has brought about a marked shift in Russian foreign policy toward Europe, but it is not a return to the pro-Western course of the early nineties. Second, although Russian policy toward Eastern and Central Europe (primarily the ex–Warsaw Pact countries) has undergone a process of standardization during the last decade, there are still a number

of specific features that color Russia's European policy. Third, Russia-EU relations are characterized by a double asymmetry: while Russia's basic interest is in the economic domain, the European Union is mainly interested in political and soft security matters. Moreover, within the area of economics, Russia is clearly dependent on the European Union, while the reverse is not the case. Fourth, it is of little analytical value to use the so-called "wedge-driving scheme" to study Russia-Europe-U.S. relations—that is, to view any growing closeness in Russia-Europe relations as a way for Russia to drive a wedge between Europe and the United States. Fifth, the perceived negative consequences of EU enlargement by Moscow are partially real, but to a great extent intentionally exaggerated to achieve extra benefits. Sixth, there have been some nicely formulated Russian ideas to "counterbalance" the perceived negative consequences of EU enlargement, but they have not been transformed into a strategy. Finally, Putin's policy toward the European Union is definitely not mere propaganda, but it may not be considered as a policy aimed at full-fledged partnership either.

BACKGROUND OF RUSSIA'S EUROPEAN POLICY

In order to provide adequate answers to the questions posed in the introduction, a brief discussion of the theoretical and conceptual evolution of Russia's new foreign and security policy is in order. First, how does Russia's foreign and security policy relate to international relations theory? Second, what has been the outcome of the grand debates about Russia's international orientation? And third, what is the end result of the official establishment of concepts and doctrine during the 1990s?

At the level of international relations theory, the formation of Russia's new foreign and security policy is a story of gradual movement from the idealist/liberal paradigm to the realist one.[1] The roots of the policy lie in Mikhail Gorbachev's "new political thinking," which promoted creation of a new global community in a more interdependent world, on the basis of common universal values.[2] It attached great importance to international organizations and regimes, and regarded cooperation as the main characteristic of international interaction. By contrast, Russia's new policy relies increasingly on realism, has put national interest at center stage, and has emphasized different types of state interests in a multipolar world. As one analyst put it, "Russian decision-makers appear more prone to perceive the outside world in terms of conflict, clashes of interest, and a zero-sum game than through the lenses of mutual interest and common approaches … thinking in terms of spheres of influence, windows of opportunity, and power vacuums has gained an astonishing degree of respectability."[3]

With regard to Russia's international orientation, during the early years, the main dividing line was between two schools of thought, whose debate

relatively soon resulted in a kind of synthesis that has become the mainstream school of thought determining the official course as well. The first approach can be labeled as Atlantist, Westernizer, or liberal internationalist. According to this school, Russia is an organic part of European civilization; its interests are close to or identical with the West; the quickest possible integration into the European and world communities is desired; relations with the West should be accorded the highest priority; Russia does not have any enemies; and it does not want to be a global power. The second school of thought—usually labeled as Eurasianist—claims that Russia is neither part of European nor Asian civilization, but is a special mixture of the two; its interests differ from the West; and Russia should not be integrated into Europe, but rather it should be the center of integration itself for the region surrounding it. Relations with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries should be its top priority; Russia should stick to its great power status; and it does have enemies. The debate between these schools of thought has brought about a synthesis of the two philosophies called "geopolitical realism," which by 1993–94 had begun to dominate political discourse.[4]

The representatives of this approach do not identify themselves with either the Atlantists or with the Eurasianists. Rather, they take in elements of both. The representatives of this somewhat amorphous approach start from the proposition that the basis for Russia's new foreign policy should not be any mythic or abstract concepts but should derive from pragmatism and rationality. They rely on the "geopolitical realities," since their theory is based on securing Russia's interests, first of all, in a certain geopolitical space. Some of the "realists" even call for a kind of "reductionism" in Russia's desired foreign policy behavior, calling for a "continental strategy" for Russia because the basis for Russia's influence in the world has significantly decreased.[5]

The representatives of this school[6]—adopting a kind of Russian Monroe Doctrine—regard the post-Soviet space as a sphere of vital Russian interest. They argue that Russia has its own interests that run counter to the interests of the West. These interests can—but do not necessarily—lead to conflicts. The geopolitical realists try to achieve balance between Europe and Asia, want to avoid isolating Russia, and strive to reach great power status only in the long term.

President Putin does not seem to fit into any of these three main schools of thought, but he comes close to the last, synthesizing one, with an added pragmatic tone.

Since the formation of the Russian Federation there have been three waves of official foreign and security policy doctrines. In addition, a number of semi-official policies have been promulgated in which Russian policy toward Europe has been formed as well: the foreign policy concept and military doctrine in 1993; the national security concept in 1997; and the

national security concept, the military doctrine, and foreign policy concept in 2000.

As to Europe, three more or less constant features of the Russian approach can be observed. First is the priority given to relations with multilateral institutions, as opposed to bilateral relations, in channeling Russian interests into the continent. Second, at the institutional level, there is an obvious preference for the all-European organizations as opposed to the western European institutions. Third is the intentional, or unintentional, identification of NATO with the West, while the European Union has remained more or less neglected. To the extent that the European Union receives any attention, it has been perceived positively.[7] From its original "neglected" position, the European Union gradually gained more importance from the Russian perspective. The organization first began to be regarded as one of the centers of the multipolar world, and then as a desired "equal and constructive" partner for Russia. Current foreign policy directives, however, do not contain any conceptual elaboration or any kind of distinctive place for the European Union in Russia's foreign policy hierarchy. The most relevant document, the foreign policy concept, limits itself by stating that "relations with the European Union have key importance," it is an "important political and economic partner" of Russia. The few paragraphs dealing with the European Union are descriptive and not at all innovative or ambitious. Moreover, they are quite defensive in making repeated references to Russia's expectation for "taking its interests into account in the process of enlargement." With regard to the European Union's establishment of a common security and defense policy, the document presents a wait-and-see position.

However, it would be misleading to end the discussion of mainstream Russian perceptions of Europe at this point. The last one and a half years have witnessed further important changes both in Russia's perceptions of Europe and the recommended policies. At a minimum, new proposals arose for building relations with the European Union that would lead to "permanent association,"[8] or even "setting the long-term goal—two to three decades—of the accession of Russia to [the] European Union."[9]

Even if these propositions have not yet become a full part of official discourse, important shifts have been observed recently. Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, evaluating ten years of Russian foreign policy in April 2001, reaffirmed the second place of Europe in the foreign policy hierarchy, and called the European Union a "natural and very perspective partner … [Russia's relations with which] have been given [a] new quality in recent months."[10] On another occasion he revived the notion of building a "strategic partnership"[11] with the European Union. The language of Russian-EU joint statements has systematically used this latter notion since the sixth summit in October 2000.[12] In April, in his annual address, President Putin stated, "the importance of further efforts to form [a] partnership with the

European Union is growing. The course of integration with Europe is becoming one of the key directions of our foreign policy."[13]

The Russian interpretation of the notion of integration differs significantly from the Western and Central European interpretations of this term. In Western and Central Europe, integration means—in its classical sense—formation of a community of states in which national sovereignty is relative, in order to reach a new quality of relations among the members. The Russian interpretation is much looser, meaning not to be left out of international (European) organizations; that is, to avoid isolation. (It should be noted here that in public international discourse, the term "integration" is often used improperly—e.g., it is used in connection with NATO, which, strictly speaking, is not integration.)

An analysis of the theoretical-conceptual background of Russian foreign policy reveals that attention to Europe decreased at the levels of international relations theory and grand debates of different foreign policy schools. At the level of official concepts and doctrines, there appears to be no place identified for Europe in Russia's foreign policy hierarchy. Finally, at the level semi-official inputs and recent policy discourse, there is a marked shift toward Europe.

THE NATURE OF RUSSIAN-EUROPEAN RELATIONS

Formally and institutionally, Russia-Europe relations have been well-elaborated and structured. The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) signed in 1994, which took effect in December 1997, not only substituted for the old Soviet–European Community agreement, but also went beyond simple trade regulation and increased and widened the scope of interaction between the two entities. In 1999, both Moscow and Brussels further concretized their respective policies by adopting the European Union's Common Strategy on the one hand, and the "Medium-term Strategy for the Development of Relations between the Russian Federation and the European Union (2000–10)" of the Russian government, on the other. Both sides have arrived at the mutually positive conclusion that Russian-EU relations have reached a "new quality." The PCA regulates trade relations on the basis of most-favored-nation (MFN) treatment. The gradual elimination of quantitative restrictions enhances economic cooperation in the field of energy, transport, environment, etc., and promotes justice and home affairs cooperation in the areas of drug trafficking, money laundering, and organized crime. Finally, it introduces increased and institutionalized political dialogue at all levels.[14] As for trade, the European Union represents Russia's largest partner, accounting for 36.7 percent of Russia's imports and 33.2 percent of its exports. Russia is the European Union's sixth-largest partner, with 3.3 percent of its imports and 1.9 percent of its exports.

Indeed, judging by the basic documents regulating Russian-EU relations, other high-level declarations, and the ongoing practices, it can be concluded that the basis for a future partnership exists, and this basis consists of profound interests on both sides. However, there is a striking asymmetry between each side's focus. While Russia wants the partnership predominantly for economic reasons, the European Union's main interest lies elsewhere, in the fields of security, stability, democracy building, and ecology.[15]

It is important to note that, although the increased Russian interests in the European Union have coincided with the latter's move in the direction of the Common European Security and Defense Policy (CESDP), it would be misleading to interpret it as a main driving force for increased Russian interest in the European Union. The first attempt to frame some kind of cooperation in the security field came from the European Union, in its Common Strategy. It laid down very ambitious plans including the creation of "a permanent EU/Russia mechanism for political and security dialogue," and even the development of "joint foreign policy initiatives."[16] During the Paris summit in October 2000 the two sides issued a joint declaration on "strengthening the dialogue and cooperation on political and security matters in Europe." Both mainstream Russian analysts and politicians have attached great attention to the evolving CESDP, and during the last summits the Russian side tried even to institutionalize the cooperation, but the move was rejected by the EU "troika."

Russia's first and foremost goal of partnership with the European Union is to adopt a modernization model that will help Russia become an integral part of the "European economic and social space." However, it must be noted that there is a strong asymmetry vis-à-vis economic relations, which is quite obvious from the above-mentioned trade statistics: the asymmetry of dependence. Russia badly needs the EU market, but Russia is marginal for the European Union. Yet we must not overlook that in the field of energy, where the European Union is highly dependent on Russia.

There are two economic issues in which the European Union is directly interested in further developing relations with Russia: the energy sector and the euro. In 2000, the European Union launched a "strategic energy partnership" with Russia, in which the European Union intends to double its energy import from Russia within twenty years. As of today, Russia covers 20 percent of the European Union's gas and 16 percent of the European Union's oil consumption.[17] According to Russian estimates, gas consumption in Europe could increase by 40 to 70 percent by 2010, and Russia will try to preserve 25 percent of that market in the forthcoming decades.[18] In connection with the other issue, the EU troika put forward a proposal during the last Moscow summit in May 2001 to introduce the euro instead of the dollar in EU-Russian trade.

The Russian approach to NATO enlargement has gone through different phases since the issue was placed on the agenda. Moscow's approach has not always been a priori negative. It started with a short period of hinting at the idea of potential membership; continued by going to the other extreme (vehement rejection of the enlargement); and in 1997, ended up reaching a compromise in the form of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, and NATO's self-obligation on nondeployment of troops and nuclear weapons in the new member states. Up until now, the Russian approach that reached this kind of compromise avoided the repetition of both pro-Western illusions and Soviet-type arrogance, and remained within the realm of typical behavior between countries.

NATO's 1999 air campaign against Yugoslavia resulted in a considerable cooling down of relations with Russia, but by a year later Moscow had returned to business as usual. However, the second wave of enlargement, to be announced in 2002, will seriously test Russia's approach.

The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington had two types of positive effects on Russian policy toward Europe. First, they reaffirmed the trend of further strengthening of Russia-EU relations; second, they brought about the possibility of a breakthrough in Russia-NATO relations. As to the first, the EU-Russia summit—scheduled prior to the September events—held in October resulted in establishment of a permanent body that further institutionalized bilateral relations and has become a kind of parallel to the already existing NATO-Russian Joint Permanent Council. In addition, Moscow seemed to soften its tough approach toward Chechnya by hinting at a possible nonmilitary solution to the problem. This move may prove Moscow's desire to deal with this delicate issue in a more European-like manner. As to NATO-Russian relations, the most obvious elements of Russia's new attitude are: 1) within weeks Moscow changed from being a rival of the United States to becoming a key ally; 2) the possibility of Russia's accession to NATO has ceased to be perceived as something unrealistic and only a kind of political rhetoric; and 3) the importance of NATO enlargement has been relativized from Moscow's perspective. All in all, paradoxically the terrorist attacks brought about a number of positive developments in key areas of European and international politics.

MOSCOW'S POLICIES TOWARD CENTRAL EUROPE

Terminologically it is interesting to note that the region of eastern and central Europe (ECE) has been called in Russian political discourse the "far abroad" (*daln`eye zarubez`ye*), "middle abroad" (*sredn`eye zarubez`ye*), and "near West" (*bliz`niy zapad*). All three terms are rooted in the well-known expression "near abroad" (covering post-Soviet space) and refer to some kind of special status of the region. Russian foreign policy divides

ECE into three subregions: the central European (ex–Warsaw Pact countries), the Baltic, and the Balkans, with each having a specific image and role for Russia. As regards the first region, the evolution of Russia–eastern/central Europe relations in the 1990s has been a process of "standardization."[19] This has included the following elements that characterize the present state of affairs as well. First, Russia's policy toward ECE is no longer a special part of Russian domestic policy but a normal part of Russian foreign policy. Second, ECE has fallen greatly in prestige and has found its naturally low place in the system of priorities of Russian foreign policy.[20] This means that, as opposed to Soviet times when the ECE region represented an artificially high priority in the priority system for Soviet foreign and security policy, Russia's new leadership has gradually distanced itself from such an evaluation. From Moscow's perspective, the region has lost its direct value. As a matter of fact, Moscow typically approaches the ECE region—i.e., within the context of Russia-Europe policy.

The term "direct value" is used here to point out how differently the ex–Warsaw Pact countries were viewed in Soviet times than by Russia now. While in those times this region did have an autonomous, direct value for Soviet foreign and security policy, that is not the case with Russia. For Moscow the ECE countries represent a certain value primarily in the wider context of its European policy. By contrast, the countries of the former Soviet Union, such as the Baltic states or Ukraine, still represent direct value for Moscow, as was the case during Soviet times with the Warsaw Pact countries.

The third change is that instead of the previous bloc approach, Russian policy handles these countries individually or regionally; that is, differentiation has come to the fore. Fourth is that relations with these countries have been demilitarized and de-ideologized, as well. Finally, all major problems that had to do with the Soviet past (the Warsaw Treaty, Soviet interventions, the consequences of troop withdrawal, and the inherited debts) have been settled.

Thus, one might conclude that the already standard relations with ECE do not make Russian policy toward this region different from Russian policy toward western Europe. Yet there are some factors that set apart Russian policy toward ECE. First, although the "bridge concept" of the ECE region vis-à-vis western Europe and Russia is gone, there still remains a role for this region as an entity that unites Russia with the rest of the continent. This is seen mostly in economic terms, with ECE serving primarily as a transit route for delivery of Russian goods—especially energy—to western Europe. Second, in a wider security context, the ECE countries are of special importance to Russia from the point of view of their ongoing accession to the Western institutions that Russia is not part of, because Moscow fears being isolated from the continent.

The importance of the central European countries—most of which will gain entry to the European Union in a few years—has considerably grown in Russian eyes. This is embodied, first of all, in the growing amount of Russian economic activity in these countries. Therefore it is proper to label the current Russian policy toward ECE as "economized."[21] With the disappearance of the traditional political and military means for asserting will, and the forthcoming perspective of the ECE countries' accession to the European Union, Russia gradually switched to developing economic ties with these countries. The main fields of this new "economized" Russian policy are, foremost, the energy and finance sectors. The existing Yamal pipeline in Poland, another planned gas pipeline through Poland and Slovakia, and increased Russian share in Hungary's chemical industry offer good examples.[22] According to press reports from all over the region, Russia's secret services have stepped up activities in the ECE in recent years. The aim of these actions would be to slow down or to stop the rapprochment of the countries in the region with western European institutions. Obviously we know quite little of these actions—due to the nontransparent character of secret-services activities—but if we judge by the results of these operations, they do not seem to be very effective.

The Baltic region still plays a special role due to the common past, its geopolitical position, and the Russian minority living there. The Balkans have preserved their traditional role as a region of special Russian interest, primarily in security terms. Furthermore, with the ongoing Balkan crises, this region's importance has even increased, which is well-illustrated by Russia's active involvement in the peacekeeping efforts of the international community, and by Russia's own numerous acts and initiatives to solve the conflicts.

RUSSIA, THE EUROPEAN UNION, AND THE UNITED STATES

When analyzing Russia-Europe-U.S. relations, it is quite common to apply the "wedge thesis," that is to describe Russia's strategy as wanting to drive a wedge between Europe and the United States, in order to loosen their strong alliance and, thus, to decrease U.S. influence in Europe. It is easy to support the idea that Russia wants to drive a wedge between the United States and Europe (the European Union, France, or Germany). An analysis with an emphasis on the elements of continuity of Soviet/Russian power behavior, the conflicts in Russian-U.S. relations, converging positions of some European powers with the Russian stance on certain topical issues (National Missile Defense, Iraq), as opposed to the American stance would support the case. Though it is undeniable that Russia will always point out and make use of the differences between U.S. and EU positions, the "wedge thesis" is not convincing enough.

First of all, it is not correct that transatlantic relations are a system of links in which each side has identical interests. Such a perception would very much resemble the first period of Russia's foreign policy, characterized by a misperception of interests between Russia and the West. As a matter of fact, it is often the western European countries that initiate interactions that give the impression that Russia–Western Europe rapprochment is being achieved to the detriment of Europe-U.S. relations. The best examples have been provided by the French, who from time to time come up with proposals aiming at defense industry cooperation. Second, the Russian foreign policy worldview has gone through a rather substantial evolution, and by now it has reached a stage that can be regarded as relatively stable and consensual. Russian foreign policy has gradually shifted from the original U.S. orientation toward Europe/EU, due to the recognition of Russia's decreased international status, its economic needs, and the rise of the European Union in world politics via deeper integration and readiness for enlargement. In this sense Russia's increased interest in Europe should not be perceived in anti-American terms but rather as a more balanced approach to both of them. Third, in general, the wedge thesis seems to be of little analytical use in the post–bipolar world order, because it made the most sense in the conditions of a two-bloc system, where gains and losses were interpreted as zero-sum games. Finally, if there can be any analytical use of the wedge scheme, then it should be applicable to all actors of international relations; it should not be limited to the description of Russian behavior and motivations vis-à-vis the United States, because that would mean a biased approach.

Official Russian declarations try to avoid giving the impression that increased Russian interest in Europe would hamper Russian-U.S. relations.[23] Indeed, the spectacular evolution of Russian-European relations in recent years can be interpreted not as part of Russian strategy against the United States, but rather as a reflection of both sides' recognition that there is an elementary need for establishing and maintaining business-like relations that would help solve inherited problems (debts), and develop existing or evolving projects (e.g., energy).

The relations within the Russia-EU-U.S. triangle differ qualitatively. The Russia-U.S. dimension is characterized by "quarrelsome" dialogue, the EU-U.S. by alliance, and the Russia-EU by "strategic" partnership. Obviously, dialogue and partnership are very different categories. The first refers to a state of affairs between states where there is more dissimilarity than similarity of interests, while partnership refers to more common elements in the interests of the two sides.

There are two more points that do not support the wedge thesis. First, the erosion of the United Nations' position in world affairs and the strengthening of the European Union's position have led to a situation where the roles of European institutions have increased from the Russian

perspective. If we add to this the recent diversification of Russia's ties with individual western European states (in addition to the traditional orientation toward Germany and France), such as Great Britain, Spain, and Italy, the importance of bilateral relations with the states of traditional importance seem to have decreased in relative terms. Second, Russia has been in favor of some kind of "triangularization" of U.S.-EU-Russia relations.[24] Both Russia and the European Union have expressed their intentions of continuing this format and possibly giving it a permanent character.[25]

Although the different Russian foreign policy concepts and other guiding documents do not refer to any special role of Germany and France, these two countries stand out as distinguished partners for Russia. At the risk of some simplification, it can be argued that the Moscow-Berlin "axis" is based upon primarily economic interests, while the Moscow-Paris "axis" is on security calculations. Germany has more or less been Russia's number one trading partner (with 10–12 percent of Russian trade turnover), and Germany is also Russia's biggest creditor with some U.S.$30 billion out of U.S.$150 billion in overall Russian foreign debt. (Some suggestions have held that part of the debt could be repaid by offering shares of Russian companies to Germany. Among others, Ruhrgaz is keen on increasing its share in Gazprom to 5–10 percent.) In terms of energy, Germany is much more dependent on Russia than the European Union's average. In 2000, Russia provided 35 percent of Germany's gas and 33 percent of its oil. For 2002 Germany plans to increase Russian oil deliveries by 13.4 percent.[26] In comparison to the Helmut Kohl–Boris Yeltsin era, a certain shift has been observed from both Chancellor Gerhard Schröeder and President Putin, from a kind of emotional policymaking toward more pragmatic attitudes.

During the French presidency of the European Union, a spectacular activation of Russian-French relations was witnessed. Putin attended the EU-Russia summit in Paris in November 2000, where the already mentioned "strategic energy partnership" policy was launched. However, the main domain in which Paris and Moscow can count on each other is traditional security policy. The sharp French criticism with regard to Chechnya does not prevent the two sides from occupying similar positions on some important issues of world politics, of which National Missile Defense and Iraq are the most obvious examples. Parallel to the closeness of positions on such issues, bilateral ties have also been activated, especially in the sphere of defense. During the visit of French defense minister Alain Richard, in the beginning of this year, an agreement was reached on such matters as high level military visits, joint exercises, and exchange of students in military education facilities.[27] The recent visit to Moscow of President Jacques Chirac of France once again reaffirmed the close relationship between the two countries.

CONSEQUENCES OF EU ENLARGEMENT

The original, neutral-positive Russian attitude toward EU enlargement remains basically unchanged, but it has been become more sophisticated. Moscow has identified both positive and negative consequences vis-à-vis its own interests. Positive consequences include the following:

- The widening of the zone of political and economic stability in Europe;
- Increased attractiveness of the European part of Russia for investors;
- The contribution that Russia's integration will make to the all-European economic space, especially to the united transport and communication systems; and
- Increased potential for trade due to simplified and unified customs procedures, and accounting.

Possible negative consequences can be divided into four groups:

- Trade and investment, i.e., the continued reorientation of the new members toward EU markets, further decrease of Russian–new EU member trade, especially in terms of Russian energy deliveries; and redirection of foreign investment to the new members at the expense of Russia;
- Movement of people, i.e., crossing borders will be more complicated due to the visa regime to be introduced;
- Kaliningrad, i.e., communication, supply, and transportation with and through Kaliningrad will be more problematic; and
- Political isolation, i.e., Russia will not only be pushed further to the edge of the continent, but the number of those opposing the European Union's closer cooperation with Russia will increase by the enlargement.

It is very clear that both the perceived negative and positive consequences of EU enlargement have to do, first of all, with economic considerations, and political or security policy fears have emerged only marginally or indirectly.

As a matter of fact, the problems put forward by Russia in the context of EU enlargement do not seem to be real ones. For example, concerning the first point, average industrial tariffs are currently higher in the acceding countries than in the European Union itself. In addition, the new members will have to apply the MFN regulations, while in the field of energy there is little room for maneuver for alternative sources of supply. As to the visa issue, although the prior Russia-ECE regime was formally visa-free, it was a de facto visa regime.[28] The issue of Kaliningrad seems to be the most real

in terms of possible negative consequences, but even with its unique exclave/enclave status, it remains marginal when considered against the entirety of Russia-EU relations. The last concern is not convincing either, for the new members will have to apply the union's Common Strategy, which stimulates relations with Russia.

In the beginning, Russia's strategy (when the issue of enlargement became apparent) was defined as the "minimization" of negative consequences. Originally (as early as the beginning of 1997), Moscow was considering another trilateral format, namely Russia's direct involvement in the accession talks of the candidate countries and the European Union. When this turned out to be impossible, the Kremlin changed its tactics and began to follow a two-track policy. On the one hand, it began to take relatively active steps to establish economic and financial bridgeheads in the countries of the expected first wave of enlargement. On the other hand, it has tried, in the different fora of Russia-EU dialogue, to ensure that special Russian interests are taken into account during the accession talks.[29]

Russia's current strategy with regard to EU enlargement departs from the consideration that it has no means for changing the strategic choice of the ECE countries to join the EU, and that it is not useful to regard the European Union as a rival of Russia in the region. Instead (goes the Russian logic) Moscow should pursue a policy of trilateral engagement. The original "damage-limiting" course and the idea of trilateral accession talks have been substituted for a more realistic approach. Its core is, instead of a formal involvement in trilateral negotiation formats, the implementation of trilateral EU-ECE-Russia economic projects. The idea is to avoid presenting the EU and Russia as two opposing poles, but rather as "complementary parts of the European economic unity."

Not negligible is the question of the possible consequences of EU enlargement on Ukraine and Russia-Ukraine relations. It is important to note that the Ukrainian and Russian perceptions of the two enlargements have been very different since this issue came to the fore. After initial hesitation, NATO enlargement was accepted and supported by Kyiv, but EU enlargement was found to be more problematic (first of all, for fear of changing the visa regime). The Russians had an opposite reaction, because Moscow vehemently opposed the enlargement of NATO while it accepted that of the European Union. Kyiv's opinion of EU enlargement and negligence on behalf of the union, therefore, will probably result in a growing uncertainty regarding the proclaimed Ukrainian integration course into Europe, and correspondingly will lead to more intense and close ties with Russia. There have already been signs of such a shift recently.

Will Moscow propose a deal of accepting EU enlargement in lieu of NATO expansion? Generally speaking, Russia has always proposed all kinds of alternatives to the alliance's expansion, including EU enlargement, and there is no reason why it would not insist on this further. At the same

time, Moscow has experienced the difficulties of making these ideas acceptable. However, the lesson learned from NATO enlargement is that deals can be concluded not with the involvement of another institution (e.g., the European Union) but within the given institution. In other words, based on previous experience, the probable Russian deal will be aimed at: 1) in the context of NATO enlargement, asking for further guarantees and additional institutional measures; and 2) in the context of EU enlargement, pushing for mechanisms or incentives for trilateral projects through which Russia can reach the desired level of involvement and influence.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Russia's basic interest in Europe is not just to avoid isolation from the continent, but also to maintain a considerable level of ability to assert its will in European politics. From this point of view, the last decade for Russia has meant a constantly deteriorating position. Interpreting this phenomenon in a wider context, we might say that Russia has faced a major dilemma in Europe, what might be called the dilemma of the "missing middle." This means that if we want to understand Russia's problems in Europe, it is worth putting it in a wider context, and to compare Russia's capabilities of asserting its will at three levels: global (permanent Russian membership in the U.N. Security Council), at the medium level (Europe), and at the regional level (post-Soviet space). While at the global level, through its veto right in the U.N. Security Council, and at the regional level, through the bi- and multilateral mechanisms in the post-Soviet space, Russia has managed to assert its basic interests; in Europe, at the medium level, it completely lacked the same kind of means. Russia has lost what the Soviet Union used to possess in Europe: a bloc with its own institutions that used to have a say in European affairs. As a result of the developments in the second half of the nineties, the solution for Russia's European dilemma seems to have been brought about not by catching up in Europe to the universal or regional level of power assertion, but rather, by the erosion of Russia's position both in the U.N. Security Council and in the post-Soviet space. At the same time, Russia has indeed achieved certain improvements in its involvement in European affairs by signing the Founding Act with NATO. The perspective of developing something similar with the European Union would be an additional element of going beyond the dilemma of the "missing middle."

In theory, various patterns of Russia-EU relations could develop in the future. The list of the possible patterns of Russia-EU relations is long, ranging from being enemies of each other, through rivalry, neutral/low priority relations, partnership, distinguished partnership, permanent associate membership, to full-fledged membership. The current accent on Europe

favored by President Putin is leaning in the direction of some kind of distinguished partnership with the European Union. It is much more than just mere propaganda, but it can hardly be qualified as a strategy aimed at full-fledged partnership either. Though it is based on pro-Western pragmatism, it is not a return to the original pro-Western course of the early years of Russian foreign policy. It can be regarded rather as a tactical element in a much wider and ambitious strategy; i.e., to rebuild Russia internally, and to re-create Russia as a great power. On the road to this aim enhanced relations with the European Union are very helpful.

NOTES

1. In international relations theory the idealist/liberal and the realist paradigms are considered to be the two main competing schools of thought. As scientific terms, they should not be identified with the common meaning of "liberal" or "realist" policy courses. Furthermore, none of these paradigms characterizes the policy of a certain state, but rather they offer different perspectives about world politics. They differ substantially on such questions as who are the main actors of international politics, the role of conflicts and cooperation, the role of ideas versus capabilities, whether international relations are characterized by anarchy, etc.

2. Typical universal values include the rule of law, democracy, the primacy of international law, etc. Although Gorbachev has never abandoned his reform-communist views, at the end of his rule his policy followed converging socialist and capitalist systems of values.

3. Mette Skak, *From Empire to Anarchy: Postcommunist Foreign Policy and International Relations* (London: Hurst and Company, 1996), p. 174.

4. The term "geopolitical realism" was coined by Olga Alexandrova, a senior researcher of the then Cologne-based Institute for East European and International Studies (now in Berlin), and cited by O. Lazebn'ikova in her excellent analysis on early Russian foreign policy debates, *Zapad i borba v polit'icheskih i nauchnih krugah Rossiyi po voprosam eye vn'eshn'ey polit'iki v Evrope (1991–94)*, Dokladi Instituta Evropi, no. 16 (Moscow, 1995).

5. Lazebn'ikova, *op. cit.*

6. The main representatives of the "geopolitical realist" school centered around the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy led by Sergei Karaganov.

7. The European Union has typically been regarded by Russia's leadership as an entity that did not bring about any security threat to Russia, and the European enlargement process has been regarded as an international organization that could substitute for NATO enlargement.

8. "Rossiya i osnovniye inst`ituti bezopasnost`i Evropi" (Russia and the main security institutions of Europe), www.pubs.carnegie.ru/books/2000/06dt/toc.asp.

9. Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, "Strat`egiya dlya Rossiyi: Povestka dlya prezid`enta—2000" (Strategy for Russia: Agenda for the president—2000), www.svop.ru/book2000_chapter2.htm.

10. Lecture delivered at the meeting of the Russian Association of International Studies entitled "Foreign Policy of Russia Today," in Moscow, April 20, 2001, available at: www.ln.mid.ru.

11. See www.strana.ru/state/foreign/2001/05/11/989528534.html.

12. See www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/russia/intro/index/htm.

13. See www.strana.ru/state/kremlin/2001/04/03/986299751.html.

14. This latter includes annually two summits of presidents, cooperation councils at the ministerial level, cooperation committees at senior official levels, and subcommittees on technical issues. The latest (the seventh) summit took place in Moscow on May 17 and 18, 2001.

15. The priority areas of the Action Plan for implementation of the EU Common Strategy are: foreign policy, economic dialogue, civil society, rule of law, democracy, and the "Northern Dimension;" www.eurunion.org/news/speeches/2000/001116/c.htm). Chris Patten, EU commissioner for external relations, in a recent speech summarized the areas of cooperation: trade and investment, health and environment, organized crime, and Russia's place in the world; www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ceeca/news/ip_01_72.htm. Finally, the European Union's proposed agenda for the latest summit lists the following topics: investment climate, WTO accession, trade issues, environmental protection, nuclear safety, organized crime, stability in Europe, disarmament, and nonproliferation; www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/russia/intro/index.htm.

16. *Common Strategy of the European Union* (Official Journal of the European Communities), June 24, 1999.

17. *Alexander's Gas & Oil Connections,* vol. 5, no. 21 (November 16, 2000), www.gasandoil.com/goc/news.

18. "Rossiyskiy Institut Strat'egicheskih Issledivan'iy," *Rossiyskiy vektor—2000,* Informatsionno-Analit'icheskiy Bullet'en', no. 3.

19. The expression belongs to Gerhard Mangott (Austrian Institute of International Relations), "Russian Policies on Central and Eastern Europe: An Overview," unpublished, 1999.

20. For example, as opposed to the 1993 version of the foreign policy concept, the 2000 version does not refer to eastern and central Europe as a region of vital Russian interest. See *Diplomat`icheskiy Vestn`nik,* no. 3 (1993) and no. 8 (2000).

21. The recent statement of Foreign Minister Ivanov, that "energy diplomacy" is becoming a new direction of foreign policy, is also applicable in ECE: www.strana.ru/state/foerign/2001/05/23/990626595.html.

22. For a detailed analysis, see Margarita M. Balmaceda (ed.), *On the Edge: Ukrainian-Central-European-Russian Security Triangle* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2000).

23. See Prime Minister Kasyanov's statement at a press conference in Stockholm: "There is no cooling down of relations between Russia and the United States, but Russia intends to reinforce its relations with its European neighbors.... [This] does not mean the reorientation of the Russian interests toward Europe." Available at: www.strana.ru/print/988116138.html.

24. March 2000 marked the first trilateral U.S.-EU-Russian meeting. It was held in Lisbon, where the sides discussed a wide range of issues of international politics.

25. *Diplomat`icheskiy Vestn`ik*, no. 4 (2000), p. 5.

26. *Alexander's Gas & Oil Connections,* vol. 6, no. 7 (April 5, 2001) www.gasandoil.com/goc/news.

27. See www.strana.ru/worldwide/press/2001/02/15/982247749.html.

28. The essence of the visa-free regime is to enter another country with a valid passport for a given time without any additional pre-arranged documents. However, this was not the case in Russian-ECE relations. In order to enter Russia—and vice versa—one needed either a "voucher" (an official document, e.g., from a tourist agency), attesting that the bearer was entering the country in an orderly way, or an invitation legalized by notary public. It is also telling that of the approximately 20 million foreigners visiting Hungary annually, Russians account for approximately 12,000.

29. There exists a nonspecified list of Russian desires that was officially handed over to the European Union in 1999. See www.strana.ru/state/foreign/2001/03/21/985195824.html.