

The EU-Russia Relations Against the Backdrop of the 'Ukrainian crisis'

Analysis, Recommendations for the EU and Outlook

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Introduction: Foundations of the EU-Russia Relations

The current legal basis for EU-Russia cooperation, the 1994 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), mentions "common values" that the EU and Russia share.¹ At the St. Petersburg Summit in 2003, the both sides agreed to reinforce their cooperation by creating in the long term four 'common spaces' in the PCA framework "on the basis of common values and shared interests". The 'common spaces' are: economy and environment; freedom, security, and justice; external security (including crisis management and non-proliferation); research and education (including cultural aspects). The EU-Russia Moscow Summit in 2005 agreed to develop the instruments to put these common spaces into effect. Established following the 2010 EU Russia Rostov Summit, the Partnership for Modernisation should cover all aspects of modernisation – economic, technical (including standards and regulations), the rule of law, and the functioning of the judiciary. Also the EU and Russia have agreed to reinforce their cooperation in external security

"as they both have a particular responsibility for security and stability on the European continent and beyond. [...] The EU has a strong interest in engaging Russia in strengthening stability on the European continent, notably in regions adjacent to EU and Russian borders – their common neighbourhood."²

The regional conflicts in Moldova (Transnistria) and the South Caucasus (Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh) were regularly subjects of discussions. However, it came never to common conflict settlement efforts, as Russia was reluctant to permit EU "interference" in its "zone of vital interests" in the Commonwealth of Independent States, or CIS. And this did not change regardless of Russian President Vladimir Putin's 'special

¹ Agreement on partnership and cooperation establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of one part, and the Russian Federation, of the other part - Protocol 1 on the establishment of a coal and steel contact group - Protocol 2 on mutual administrative assistance for the correct application of customs legislation - Final Act - Exchanges of letters - Minutes of signing, <[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:21997A1128\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:21997A1128(01)&from=EN)> (5 October 2015).

² EU Relations with Russia. External Action, <http://eeas.europa.eu/russia/about/index_en.htm> (4 October 2015).

personal relations' which some EU Heads of States and Governments, as German Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, and French President Nicholas Sarkozy.

Russian Attitudes to the EU

The sometimes downright adjuratory assertions (or hopes) in Western Europe that 'the Russians' are 'the same Europeans as we' are contrasted by the dominating moods within the political elite as well as in Russia's society: According to numerous public opinion polls, a clear absolute majority of the Russians do not consider themselves as Europeans, but as representatives of a 'special civilization', which is called to pursue its 'own, independent path' between Europe and Asia.

Russian voices from politics, political science, and the media not only since the beginning of the 'Ukrainan crisis', but a long time before on many occasions have accused the EU (not to mention NATO) that it "under the influence of Poland and the Baltic states" has elaborated and implemented an "anti-Russian policy", that it intends "to squeeze Russia out of the CIS" and to expand to the East at the expense of Russian interests etc. According to the firm conviction of the decision makers in Moscow, EU puts all this into practice using initiatives such as the European Neighborhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership (launched in 2004 and 2009 respectively). EU's assurances that its policy is not about 'spheres of influence' in a geopolitical sense at all are not taken seriously in Moscow. Russian sources go on to complain that the EU "contests Russia's positive role" and "overemphasizes the differences between the peoples in the CIS states and the Russian people."³

Therefore the EU as an organisation would be mistaken to count on a more favorable treatment than the in Russia traditionally highly unpopular NATO with the abhorred U.S. as its leading power: According to up-to-date opinion polls, approximately two-thirds of the Russians have a negative opinion about the EU, which therefore is only insignificant 'more popular' than the U.S.⁴ Putin and the entire Russian establishment do not only not care about their image in the EU: As Hans-Georg Heinrich, profound specialist on Russia and founder of

³ T. S. Guzenkova: Politika Evrosojuza v otnošenii stran postsovetского prostranstva v kontekste evrazijskoj integracii. Problemy nacional'noj strategii, no. 2, 2015, pp. 9-51, here p. 48.

⁴ Il'ja Jablov, Feinde, Verräter, Fünfte Kolonnen. Osteuropa, no. 4, 2015, pp. 99-114, here p. 99.

the Vienna-based think tank ICEUR, stresses, Putin even "despises" the EU.⁵ The 'Ukrainian crisis' gave the Russian political elite one possibility more to ridicule what it likes to label as 'Gayreupa' not only in the eyes of the Russian, but also the world public. An open secret is the Kremlin's support for left- and right-wing extremist or, at least, populist opponents of the European project alike, who, on their part, send 'declarations of loyalty' to Moscow.

The Current Crises in the EU-Russia Relations

Military force is not only a minor item in Putin's political toolkit. Thanks to a wave of popularity at the occasion of the (after 1994, second) campaign in the breakaway North Caucasian republic Chechnya since summer 1999, he became the successor of the sick and weak President Boris Yeltsin. However, it took the Russian army several years to crush the armed Chechen resistance. In August 2008, Russia launched an intervention against Georgia and temporarily occupied even parts of 'inner Georgia', i.e. areas far outside of the two breakaway provinces South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which Moscow recognised in the same month as "independent states", thus changing Georgia's borders by force. The reactions from the Western capitals and in EU and NATO to this clear violation of international law as well as to Russia's breach of the conditions of a 'peace plan'⁶ were very restrained and left the Kremlin without any negative consequences. A report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament asserted that

"in reaction to and despite Russia's violation of Georgia's territorial integrity in 2008, the ongoing occupation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, and the non-fulfilment by Russia of all its obligations under the 2008 ceasefire agreement, the EU opted for an increased cooperation model as a way to continue the engagement with Russia, for their mutual benefit; whereas, rather than taking restrictive measures, a series of initiatives for deeper cooperation – such as the common spaces, the Partnership for Modernisation, the negotiations on a New EU-Russia Agreement, and the Human Rights dialogue – have been launched or deepened."⁷

⁵ Cited in: Eduard Steiner, Putins Faible fürs Bilaterale. Die Presse, 6 June 2014, <<http://diepresse.com/home/politik/aussenpolitik/3817881/Putins-Faible-furs-Bilaterale?from=suche.intern.portal>> (13 September 2015).

⁶ It was signed by the Presidents of France (in his capacity as President of the European Council) and Russia, Nicolas Sarkozy and Dmitri Medvedev, on 12 August 2008. According to the document, the Georgian and Russian troops have to return to their positions before the outbreak of the fighting, but Moscow did not fulfil its part of the deal.

⁷ Gabrielius Landsbergis, Report on the state of EU-Russia relations. Committee on Foreign Affairs, European Parliament, 13 May 2015, <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A8-2015-0162&language=EN>> (20 September 2015).

In other words: The EU responded to Russia's increasingly assertive and aggressive behaviour not with less, but even with more 'cooperation'. This has almost for sure made Putin's decision to shift Ukraine's borders by force much easier:⁸ Russia in March 2014 used a 'power vacuum' in Kyiv after the ouster of President Victor Yanukovich, annexed the Crimea peninsula and shortly afterwards unleashed a war in the Eastern Ukrainian region Donbass.⁹ And in late summer 2015, it became a matter of common knowledge that Russia supports the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad not 'only' politically, diplomatically (as with the use of the right of veto in the UN Security Council against 'unwanted' decisions), economically and with arms shipments, but also with 'military advisors' and soldiers for combat operations – albeit before Moscow had warned the West on many occasions not to support the post-Yanukovich Ukrainian Government because this would "fan the flames of the civil war".¹⁰

In response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and continuing destabilisation of Ukraine the EU in 2014 has suspended talks on visas and a new EU-Russia agreement. Most EU-Russia cooperation programmes have been suspended. Targeted measures have been taken against Russia in areas including access to capital markets, defence, dual-use goods, and sensitive technologies (including those in the energy sector). The European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development have suspended the signing of new financing operations in Russia. A trade and investment ban is now in force for Crimea, bolstering measures taken to mark the EU's non-recognition of the annexation of the peninsula. In response to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and continuing destabilisation of Ukraine the EU has suspended talks on a new EU-Russia Agreement, which were launched at the 2008 Khanty-Mansiysk summit.¹¹ Russia has taken retaliatory measures, including a ban on the import of certain foods from the EU and several non-EU countries.

Russia is a completely revisionist power working literally every day with diplomatic, economic, propagandistic and military means in order to change the international balance of

⁸ Jan Claas Behrends, *Ein Jahr der Gewalt. Russlands Staatskrise und der Krieg gegen die Ukraine*. Osteuropa, no. 3, 2015, pp. 47-66, here p. 56.

⁹ Martin Malek, *Moskaus Schlachtpläne. Hintergründe zu Russlands Krieg in der Ukraine*. Osteuropa, no. 9-10, 2014, pp. 97-117.

¹⁰ Russian air strikes in northwest Syria on 30 September 2015, which Moscow said targeted Islamic State fighters, in fact they hit the Free Syrian Army, a Western-supported rebel group; Dasha Afanasieva, *Syrian rebel commander: There is no ISIS where Russia is bombing, but there are civilians*. Reuters, 30 September 2015, <<http://uk.businessinsider.com/no-isis-where-russia-is-bombing-but-civilians-2015-9?r=US&IR=T>> (30 September 2015).

¹¹ The new Agreement should have included substantive, legally binding commitments in all areas of the partnership, including political dialogue, freedom, security and justice, economic cooperation, research, education and culture, trade, investment and energy.

power to its favor.¹² Russia considers the entire international relations as a 'zero-sum-game': everything which is at advantage for it is harmful to an imagined (and very often incorrectly portrayed largely as a closed unity) 'West' – and *vice versa*. This, too, determines Russia's relations with the EU, which are effected to a certain degree by the conflict in and around Ukraine. Not only the well-known historian Andreas Kappeler, but many other observers as well stated that Moscow "systematically" attempts to "devide" the EU.¹³ Even further went American historian Timothy Snyder, who assigned to Putin "with his war in Ukraine" the intention to destruct the EU "as a universalist project that Ukraine could join."¹⁴

The starting point of this paper is the recognition that the 'truth' of the conflict does not lie somewhere in the 'middle' between Kyiv's and Moscow's official positions. It is an indisputable fact that Moscow has used military force against a neighboring (and sometimes even today called "brotherly") country since February 2014 and that it officially annexed parts of its territory. And contrary to numerous statements from Russian politicians and Kremlin-controlled mass media, there is no "civil war" or "conflict between different political platforms" (as the Russian MP Konstantin Kosachyov stated) in Ukraine at all, but a poorly disguised intervention of Russian military and secret services. However, many politicians, businessmen and 'opinion leaders' in the EU and its member states wish to return to 'business as usual' with Putin as soon as possible.¹⁵ He is, of course, totally aware of this – and makes use of it to full capacity.

'Integration Rivalry'?

The main priority of the Russian foreign and security policy is indisputably devoted to the post-Soviet space, and this will not change in the foreseeable future. From Moscow's point of view, the post-soviet republics have only limited sovereignty. The Kremlin strives for a maximum degree of 'integration' in all areas – politics, economics, military, but also culture,

¹² Roland Freudenstein, Facing up to the bear: confronting Putin's Russia. *European View*, no. 2, 2014, pp. 225-232, here 227.

¹³ Andreas Kappeler, Die Ukraine – ein Land zwischen West und Ost. *Infoaktuell (Informationen zur politischen Bildung)*, no. 28, 2015, p. 22.

¹⁴ Timothy Snyder, Edge of Europe, End of Europe. *The New York Review of Books*, 21 July 2015, <<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2015/jul/21/ukraine-kharkiv-edge-of-europe/>> (4 October 2015).

¹⁵ An especially telling example is Joe Kaeser, CEO of the German engineering conglomerate Siemens, who met Putin in the last days of March 2014 in Moscow. Kaeser said that the only "met a customer" and that he had no intention to pay too much attention to "short-term turbulences" [meaning the annexation of Crimea and the beginning unrest in Donbass] in his business planning; cited in: Darya Korsunskaya: Siemens chief says supports ties with Russian companies. *Reuters*, 26 March 2014, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/26/us-ukraine-germany-siemens-idUSBREA2P2DB20140326>> (2 October 2015).

media and science – under its guidance. In doing so, Moscow tries to associate its 'integration initiatives' in the CIS with a 'global trend' and sometimes in this context even refers to the EU. However, 'integration' in the CIS shares with European integration not more than the name.

The term 'integration rivalry', allegedly unfolding between the EU and Russia, has been used by a lot of Western European scholars and pundits in order to explain the origins of the current conflicts in Ukraine.¹⁶ However, this term has been chosen more than unfortunately. Thus, it implies that the EU and Moscow advocate the same or, at least, a similar understanding of 'integration', but this is certainly not the case. In particular, the term hides the numerous and huge differences between the EU's and Russia's 'integration concepts' (for the CIS). To begin with, there is no single country in the EU whose economic, political, military etc. potential exceeds the weight of all other member states combined as this is the case with Russia in the CIS. And 'integration' in the CIS from the Russian point of view must not imply a voluntary cooperation of equal participating states, but subordination of as many as possible other former Soviet republics under Moscow's demands and interests. Furthermore, the 'integration' in the CIS happens between more or less authoritarian states (only Kyrgyzstan can be considered as 'democratic exception') – and not solely between democracies as in the EU. 'Closer integration' results in a greater control of the political course of the other CIS republics by Moscow,¹⁷ whereas there is no single country in EU pressing for 'integration' with the goal to control the other members as tightly as possible.

Interlockings in the Realm of Energy Policy Against the Background of the 'Ukrainian Crisis'

EU dependency on energy imports increased from less than 40 percent of gross energy consumption in the 1980s to 45 percent in 1995 and 54.8 percent in 2008; in 2012 (more recent data is not available) it was 53,3 percent. The highest energy dependency rates are recorded for crude oil and for natural gas. This means that more than a half of the EU energy consumption is imported. EU-28 dependency on crude oil and petroleum products grew from 77.3 percent in 2001 to 86.4 percent in 2012, dependency on natural gas increased by about 40 percent in the 2001-12 period. The situation is getting even more complicated since the

¹⁶ See, for example, Egbert Jahn, *Neuaufgabe des Ost-West-Konflikts? Friedenspolitische Herausforderungen durch die neuen Kriege in Europa*. Osteuropa, no. 3, 2015, pp. 25-45, here pp. 26, 30.

¹⁷ See Martin Malek, "Integration" in der GUS und die Politik Russlands. Landesverteidigungsakademie (Ed.): *Integration in der GUS*. Schriftenreihe der Landesverteidigungsakademie, no. 3, 2010, pp. 21-67.

EU, as the European Commission's first Green Paper of 29 November 2000 put it, has "very limited scope" to influence energy supply conditions.¹⁸ This has not changed in the last 15 years and especially applies to Russia: Notwithstanding official declarations, there is no real "strategic partnership" between Brussels and Moscow in the sphere of energy politics. *De facto* the EU is powerless to persuade Russia to bend to treaty-backed disciplines Moscow sees as detrimental to its national interests. And this is especially noteworthy considering the fact that it is the most important supplier of solid fuels (2012 – 25,9 percent), crude oil (33,7 percent), and natural gas (32 percent).¹⁹

According to the will of the leadership in Moscow, Russia's claims of being a superpower and global player should not only rely on ostentatiously drawing attention to the military potential, but also on the – unofficial – concept of an 'energy superpower': Russia wants to turn as many countries as possible inside and outside the CIS into customers of its oil and gas industry, buy shares of energy companies and, finally, control the supply chain up to the end users. Thus, the official EU position that the relationship with Russia in the energy sphere "can be best characterised as mutual interdependence of supply, demand, investment and know-how"²⁰ is debatable.

What some European Foreign Ministries are striving for, namely a "rapprochement through entwinement" ("Annäherung durch Verflechtung", as the German Foreign Ministry put it especially in Frank-Walter Steinmeier's first tenure as Minister from 2005 to 2009), also and particularly with regard to energy, implies a logic which is far removed from the present behaviour and mentality of Russia's elite and, furthermore, ignores the principle question about the desirability of an "entwinement" of a union of democratic states (as the EU claims to be) and Russia, a country ruled by an authoritarian regime and whose economy is listed in international ratings as highly corrupt.

Gazprom, one of the world's largest energy companies, plays a key role in Russia's 'new energy foreign policy', also beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union. Russian media outlets sometimes compare the international importance of Gazprom with Russia's nuclear weapons arsenal. As a matter of fact, Gazprom (as well as Rosneft, Russia's leading oil extraction and refinement company) is no independent market-oriented supplier, but a political actor in the hands of the Kremlin. In the context of relations between the EU and Russia in the realm of energy policy, a "liberal, consumer-oriented EU energy sector faces a

¹⁸ Green Paper. Towards a European strategy for the security of energy supply. European Commission, 2000, <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52000DC0769&from=EN>> (6 October 2015).

¹⁹ Energy, transport and environment indicators. 2014 edition. Eurostat, Brussels, 2014, pp. 69, 76.

²⁰ EU Relations with Russia, *ibidem*.

Russian monopolist, which focuses rather than a win-win transactions on a political control of its business partners."²¹ Some EU efforts for a more stringent enforcement of its competition rules and criticism of Gazprom's unfair pricing policy in several EU member states always met the Kremlin's harsh resistance, combined with threats to "turn to the East", meaning expanding cooperation with China. However, rerouting Russia's oil and gas flow to China was impossible at short notice, due to insufficient pipeline capacities. So the two countries agreed on several new projects to broaden their energy partnership. Thus, in May 2014, Moscow and Beijing signed a 30-year, 400-billion-dollar deal for Gazprom to deliver Russian gas to China. Aled Jones, director of the Global Sustainability Institute at Anglia Ruskin University (Great Britain), warned that this "will increase competition for natural gas from 2018 and will most likely increase the cost we pay for natural gas here in the EU."²²

According to the EU's official position, the energy it buys from Russia "contributes very significantly to Russia's current economic growth and the improved living conditions of its population."²³ Only a few Western observers with the Kyiv-based German political scientist Andreas Umland among them pointed out that the EU is an "involuntary sponsor of Moscow's foreign policy adventures in Ukraine as well as Georgia and Moldova". Also, the 'Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung' brought oneself to the insight that "Europe is through its gas and oil imports from Russia de facto the largest financier of Russia's policy of conquest"²⁴, without, however, affecting the discourse in the EU on its energy relations with Russia.

Some Recommendations to the EU

The current situation is also a consequence of failures in the past. So, there was little interest in the EU for many years in the fact that huge parts of Russia's political elite and mass media consider Ukrainians only as *subethnos* of the 'great Russian nation' and explicitly deny Ukraine's right to be an independence country in the borders of 1991.

²¹ Jaroslaw Cwick-Karpowicz / Jakub Godzimirski / Zuzanna Nowak, Macht aus der Pipeline. Russlands Energiepolitik und die EU. Osteuropa, no. 3, 2015, pp. 151-161, here p. 159.

²² Cited in: Alec Luhn / Terry Macalister: Russia signs 30-year deal worth \$400bn to deliver gas to China. The Guardian, 21 May 2014, <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/21/russia-30-year-400bn-gas-deal-china>> (6 October 2015).

²³ EU Relations with Russia, *ibidem*.

²⁴ Konrad Schuller, Der Westen liegt heute im Osten. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 18 September 2015, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/denk-ich-an-deutschland-1/ukraine-krise-der-westen-liegt-heute-im-osten-13794914.html?printPage&article=true#pageIndex_2> (18 September 2015).

The EU officially accused Russia of an "aggression by Russian armed forces on Ukrainian soil" – and states at the same moment: "The EU and Russia work to strengthen the roles of the United Nations, OSCE and Council of Europe in building an international order based on effective multilateralism."²⁵ Such inconsistencies harm the entire EU policy toward Russia. And in many places still popular phrases like "You can ensure security in Europe only together with Russia and not confronting it" ignore that Moscow is not a part of the solution, but of the problem. The supporters of slogans like this have so far failed to propose a strategy to 'engage' a country which changes borders by force.

It is high time to admit that the idea of Russia as a "strategic partner", which dominated in the EU for a long time, is not longer feasible. Deriving from the insight that not all conflicts of interest between the two sides can be solved by compromises and that the relations will remain cool in the years to come, there is a need for practical consequences by initiating a proactive policy of the EU instead of demonstratively very restraint and delayed reactions to the most recent political, economic, propaganda and military actions of the Kremlin.

As Winfried Schneider-Deters already before the events since the end of 2013 has pointed out, EU's Ukraine policy is contradictory: on the one hand, Brussels promotes Kyiv's 'European Integration' not only in a lot of its programmes, but also the adaptation of Ukrainian legislation to European standards; but on the other hand, "EU blocks any Ukrainian membership prospect and its institutional integration." This was EU's tacit recognition of Moscow's claim that Ukraine belongs to Russia's "sphere of vital interests".²⁶ Kyiv's full participation in the European integration process very likely would contribute to the promotion of democracy, rule of law, respect for human and civil rights, values of a civil society as well as to the consolidation of the Ukrainian nation. In particular, 'pro-Western' voices in Ukraine assured that "Europe [...] is today the most important factor promoting our nation building."²⁷

Putin's Russia has used military power to prevent the expansion of the 'European model' to Ukraine. During his actions in Crimea and then in Donbass he did not meet any significant Western resistance. Thus, German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and U.S. President Barack Obama

²⁵ EU Relations with Russia, *ibidem*.

²⁶ Winfried Schneider-Deters, *Die Ukraine: Machtvakuum zwischen Russland und der Europäischen Union*. Berlin 2012, p. 86.

²⁷ Ukraine's former President Victor Yushchenko, see his interview: Gerhard Gnauck, "Russland will uns kolonialisieren". *Die Welt*, 27.11.2013, <<http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article122297200/Russland-will-uns-kolonialisieren.html>> 27.9.2015).

"have already in 2014 so quickly and clearly assured that there will be no military response to Russia's aggression [in Ukraine] that Moscow could understand this only as a source of encouragement. Consequently, the Russian military operation of utmost importance in Ilovaisk in August 2014 started only ours after Merkel's visit in Kiev where she had repeated her mantra that 'there is no military solution'."²⁸

Economist and Former Polish Vice Premier Leszek Balcerowicz warned in the same context: "If we take game theory as a basis for analysis, we see that a weak response usually produces bigger risks."²⁹ It is therefore possible that Putin sometimes again could 'engage in audacious adventures' – perhaps even with respect to EU-members, what would create the most serious challenge for the EU in its history.

The three Baltic republics Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are especially exposed: they are small and command only tiny armies; they are located in the immediate vicinity of a considerable Russian military potential; and they host (with the exception of Lithuania) sizeable ethnically Russian and 'Russian-speaking' minorities respectively. The EU should, therefore, elaborate a clear strategy for the case of a 'hybrid war' against the Baltic republics (which can start tomorrow or only in several years; it should be kept in mind that five and a half years lied between Russia's military interventions in Georgia and in Ukraine).

The widespread Western European response to scenarios of Russian military action against the Baltic republics – "we cannot imagine this" – is clearly insufficient. If the same experts in January 2014 would have been asked whether they can imagine that the Crimea in a couple of weeks will be 'Russian', almost all of them would have denied such an option. Or in other words: the 'unthinkable' is often only as long as 'unthinkable' as it in actuality occurs.

The situation also creates huge problems with respect to the EU's values: the authoritarian-ruled Russia annexed territory of the (more) democratic Ukraine, plunged the Donbass into a bloody war, and wages an economic and information war against the 'Slavic brother' – and the EU, which claims to embody values of democracy, human rights, and peace, remains largely passive. By this means, it loses not only credibility as an organisation, but also makes it easier for Russia (and other non-democratic regimes) to mock EU's values as 'meaningless cliches'. Snyder ruled that

"the underlying message of Russian propaganda is that working for Europe, whether inside the European Union or beyond it, makes no sense, since democracy and

²⁸ Schuller, *ibidem*.

²⁹ Igor Lyubashenko, A Weak Response Produces Bigger Risks. *New Eastern Europe*, no. 3-4, 2015, pp. 137-143, here p. 140.

freedom are nothing more than the hypocrisy of a doomed order, and history has no lessons other than those of power."³⁰

Therefore EU should scrutinise its official position that cooperation with Russia is being "carried out on the basis of common values such as democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms"³¹ and, at the same time, unequivocally adhere to its foundation of values – especially now, when this is difficult and many politicians and opinion leaders in the EU call for 'pragmatism' ("Russia will not change its behaviour because of the sanctions anyway, so they should be lifted") and/or a "different way of dealing with Russia" (meaning even more appeasement). EU's credibility is at serious risk – not only in the eyes of its own citizens, but also of these people in Ukraine as well as in the Russian opposition, who pin their hopes on an European, non-authoritarian future of their countries.

The German political scientist Stefan Meister warned the EU about making the inviolability of borders and the sovereignty of the post-Soviet Republics a subject of negotiation with Russia. Engagement in this would mean that EU has "failed as a value-based player". Value orientation should also prohibit "to negotiate the future of Europe with [Putin's] authoritarian regime."³² Signs of Ukrainian frustration in view of EU's 'caution' toward Moscow and of the resulting impression that it can rely only on its own strength are reflected in slogans like "We have searched for Europe and found Ukraine".

Putin has to understand that the forcible removal of the *de facto* borders of several neighbouring countries has a price – in the truest sense of the word: In order to narrow his future economic basis for wars and coercive action not only against former Soviet republics the EU should prepare and implement a programme for the reduction of the dependencies from Russian natural resources as soon as possible. One of its components may be found in the import of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from other countries, for example the U.S.: Until recently, it was one of the largest importers of energy resources in the world, but today, due to the shale gas revolution, it is a global leader in the production of oil and gas. It would be a big chance for the EU to make use of this new state of affairs.

According to the EU Policy Aims in the framework of cooperation with Russia in the sphere of external security, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, strengthening export control regimes and disarmament belongs to the five priority

³⁰ Timothy Snyder, *Edge of Europe, End of Europe*. The New York Review of Books, 21 July 2015, <<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2015/jul/21/ukraine-kharkiv-edge-of-europe/>> (4 October 2015).

³¹ EU Relations with Russia, *ibidem*.

³² Stefan Meister, *Politik der Illusionen. Ein Ausgleich mit Russland auf Grundlage einer EU-EWU-Partnerschaft ist irrig*. *Internationale Politik*, March/April 2015, pp. 76-81, here p. 78, 80.

areas.³³ Thus, the EU should against the backdrop of the 'Ukrainian crisis' take special care of the fate of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It has been damaged massively due to Russia's military intervention against Ukraine, because Moscow was (together with the U.S. and the UK) a 'guarantor' of the Budapest Memorandum, signed in 1994, which promised Kyiv 'security' after it had handed over the remnants of the former Soviet nuclear arsenal on its soil to Russia. Umland concluded:

"If a guarantor of the international non-proliferation regime [meaning Russia] with ostentation contests the inviolability of [Ukraine's] borders, the message to all incumbent and future statesmen is clear: Only an own nuclear deterrence potential is an effective tool for the enduring protection of political sovereignty."³⁴

In the view of the events in Ukraine since 2014 it is not surprising that the question came up in which forums discussions and talks with Russia could be held. However, there always was a considerable amount of such forums – the OSCE, the Council of Europe³⁵, the NATO-Russia Council, the Group of Eight (G8). They were complemented by numerous bilateral initiatives (for example, the annual Schlangenbad Talks or the Petersburg Dialogue with Germany). It was astonishing to hear about proposals like "confidence-building measures could be discussed with Russia within the OSCE framework"³⁶: As if that had not happened since 1975, when the Helsinki Final Act of CSCE was signed! But Russia anyway prefers to keep the main issues of international politics in the UN Security Council because of its veto right there. However, the problem was never that there was a lack of forums for talks and common initiatives with Russia (or a lack of talks in these forums). The annexation of the Crimea and the war in Donbass definitely do not root in 'misunderstandings', which could have been avoided with 'more talks' and/or 'more forums' with Russia. Therefore the question what EU could do to improve relations with Moscow remains open – not because of a lack of interest in Brussels, but due to Moscow's unwillingness to compromise. And this will not undergo a change until the Kremlin is convinced that it has more to gain from the violation of international rules than from their adherence.

³³ EU Relations with Russia, *ibidem*.

³⁴ Andreas Umland, *Eigene Atomwaffen? Lieber behalten!* Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, 2 August 2015, p. 3.

³⁵ In April 2014 Russia was stripped of its right to vote in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council. In January 2015, the Assembly decided not to restore Russia's voting rights until April 2015. In turn, the Russian delegation decided to boycott the body at all until (at least) the end of that year.

³⁶ Meister, *ibidem*, p. 81.

Outlook

It is highly questionable whether the Minsk Protocol, an agreement to halt the war in Donbass, signed on 5 September 2014, and the 'Minsk II' documents with a new package of peacemaking measures, agreed upon on 12 February 2015, will contribute to a durable settlement of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Not only German historian Karl Schloegel³⁷, but many other observers as well complained that Russia does not fulfill its part of the peace terms, resulting from the Minsk agreements. And even in the long run it is very unlikely that Kyiv by means of the Minsk agreements (or other, future documents, talks and conflict resolution initiatives) will regain control of the now occupied parts of the Donbass; and the Crimea is not even effected by the Minsk documents. From Moscow's point of view, Crimea and the Donbass are some kind of an 'anchor', holding Ukraine back from joining EU or even NATO. In general, EU should get ready for a long period of instability in Ukraine even if the Donbass conflict gets 'frozen': Thus, the 'frozen conflicts' in Moldova, in Georgia and Azerbaijan are still far away from being settled even 25 years after they have started (when the Soviet Union existed yet).

Without a significant technology breakthrough, electricity generation in the EU will be heavily dependent on gas, and oil will continue to dominate transport even in 2030. Therefore, security of supply of these fuels will continue to be paramount to EU's economy. The Union and its member states would be well advised to take this into account already today, especially after the abortion of the project of the Nabucco gas pipeline, stretching from Erzurum in Turkey to Baumgarten an der March in Austria, in 2012. A modification, called Nabucco West, which would have started from the Turkey–Bulgaria border, was considered but dropped in 2013. A Trans-Adriatic Pipeline to carry natural gas from the Shah Deniz II field in Azerbaijan, starting from Greece via Albania and the Adriatic Sea to Italy and further to Western Europe, is under discussion now as are other projects.

The 'Russia first' policy, pursued by the EU for many years, was obviously not sufficient and very likely even counterproductive for its energy security: Although Russia depends on the EU as its largest oil and gas customer, currently Moscow and not Brussels sets the rules of the game. Gazprom aspires to a dominance over natural gas supply and distribution networks in Europe. By obtaining control over the infrastructure in transit countries, Russia limits access to markets for other potential suppliers. Without resolute

³⁷ Irina Scherbakowa / Karl Schlögel, Putins Fantasievolk "die Russen" gibt es gar nicht. Die Welt, 5.10.2015, <<http://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article147241928/Putins-Fantasievolk-die-Russen-gibt-es-gar-nicht.html?wtrid=newsletter.wasdieweltbewegt.newsteaser...standard-news>> (6 October 2010).

action, the EU could find its energy security largely under Russian control long before 2030, which would give Moscow an undue and possibly dangerous amount of political influence over European decision-making.

However, it will be very difficult within the EU to agree upon a comprehensive programme on the reduction of dependencies on Russian energy resources. Thus, energy policy is predominantly still not a matter of the entire EU, but for its individual member states, which Moscow can play off against each other and/or bait with 'individual' (i.e. bilateral energy) relations with Gazprom. And in the EU, there are numerous influential lobbyists for 'cooperation with Russia' (Gerhard Schroeder is only the most well-known), who have their own reasons to strongly oppose every initiative which could scale back the EU's energy dependence on Russia.

So far, a strategy of the EU or of its members to reduce this dependence did not become apparent. And how "far-reaching"³⁸ are the economic sanctions of the EU against Russia, if they do not even prevent a big deal between the German company BASF and Gazprom, according to which the first sells all his gas storages (which should have promoted a reduction of Germany's dependence on Russian gas) to the latter?³⁹ The same question could be asked with respect to plans to expand the Nord Stream pipeline between Russia and Germany: On 4 September 2015 at the Vladivostok economic forum, with Putin in attendance, two binding agreements were signed that will dramatically increase Germany's reliance on Russian natural gas for consumption, transit and storage.⁴⁰ But instead of this, the EU would need a plan for *real* diversification of its gas supply.

The EU sanctions are rather a symbol than a real lever to influence Russian policy. Certainly they are completely incapable to "destabilise" Russia (as the German Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel worried), and they have by no means caused or only contributed to Moscow's current economic troubles: these were provoked by the low oil prices and the huge Russian spending for the military and other security-related purposes, which, consequently, stressed other budget items like social welfare, healthcare, education, etc. However, there can be no doubt that Moscow accurately pursues the demands for the abolishment of the sanctions, which time and again are put forward in many EU countries and from entirely different political camps. But Balcerowicz empathically warned:

³⁸ Ulrich Schmid, UA – Ukraine zwischen Ost und West. Schriftenreihe der Vontobel-Stiftung, Zürich 2015, p. 91.

³⁹ BASF verkauft alle deutschen Gasspeicher an Russen. Die Welt, 4 September 2015, <<http://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/energie/article146029254/BASF-verkauft-alle-deutschen-Gasspeicher-an-Russen.html>> (6 September 2015).

⁴⁰ Vladimir Socor, Nord Stream Expansion Agreed, Wintershall Swapped to Gazprom (Part One). Eurasia Daily Monitor, 10 September 2015, Volume 12, Issue 162.

"If the West lifts the sanctions, it de facto recognises Russia's aggression. This would have negative consequences not only for Ukraine, but also for peace in the world. It would simply mean that aggression pays off. What Putin did is a violation of one of the principal rules of the modern world – respect for territorial integrity."⁴¹

The Polish journalist and commentator Adam Krzeminski said that Ukraine is a "test case for Europe."⁴² It is difficult not to agree with him, as the way of EU's dealing with the 'Ukrainian crisis' will have a crucial impact on security and stability on the entire continent (i.e. not only for the Union).

⁴¹ Lyubashenko, *ibidem*, pp. 140-141.

⁴² Adam Krzeminski, *Emanzipation und Selbstbehauptung. Die ukrainische Frage, der Westen und Russland*. Osteuropa, no. 3, 2015, pp. 3-23, here p. 23.