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The EU, Russia and Models of International Society in a Wider Europe

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Abstract

The research objective of this article is two-fold: On the one hand, this study aims at analysing the multifaceted EU-Russia relations as seen from different theoretical/conceptual approaches. On the other hand, this article examines how the EU-Russia dialogue is organised in sectoral terms – economy, trade, visa regime liberalisation, and security cooperation. Both the promising and problematic areas in the EU-Russia bilateral relations are identified. The need for a more adequate conceptual framework applicable to the EU-Russia relations as well as a new, more efficient, EU-Russian joint strategy is explained.

Keywords

European Union; Russia; international society; inter-subjectivity; EU-Russia common spaces.

Both Russian discourse on Europe and European discourse on Russia are becoming increasingly polarised. In Moscow, pessimistic assessments of Europe's ability to play the role of the most important reference point for Russia's identity abound. Unsurprisingly, the Eurozone crisis made Russian discourse on the EU even more critical. Many Russian experts believe that Russia should wait until Europe recovers from the current economic troubles. They argue that the deep financial troubles within the EU will make it a doubtful partner for Russia and seriously damage prospects for Russia's European orientation. According to one Russian analyst,

Russia no longer sees itself as part of modern Europe. The idea of creating a common European space from Vladivostok to Brest has failed. The on-going rapid change of the European model prompts Moscow to take any long-term projects involving Europe with a big pinch of salt (Shestakov 2011).

Even among Russia's liberals Europe is under the fire of sharp critique. According to one account, at the peak of its strength Europe had based its policies on private property, a minimal state, intra-European competition, and a feeling of cultural superiority. In recent times, as soon as those principles were substituted by social distribution, regulatory state powers, pan-European unity and multiculturalism, Europe's role in the world began to decline (Latynina 2011). Yet in the meantime, Russia usually perceived the EU as a more convenient partner as compared with the USA and NATO. This explains why the Director of the Moscow-based Institute for Europe Studies deems that Russia 'is interested in preventing the EU from falling apart. We don't need a patchwork Europe. It is easier to deal with it as a unique formation which already exists' (Shmeliov 2011). The new Russian foreign policy concept (February 2013) also gives an important priority to Moscow's relations with the EU (Putin 2013).

In Europe, discourse on Russia is also split along political lines. Liberal groups within policy communities in most European countries are critical of Putin's Russia as a country deviating from the European normative order and becoming increasingly nationalistic. They accuse the Kremlin of mismanaging the country domestically (with emigration and rampant corruption as the most visible evidence of this) and creating artificial impediments for developing professional and civil society-based contacts with European partners. To foster Russian democracy, liberals require a stronger pressure on Putin's regime. Yet this scepticism is counter-balanced by those European speakers who claim that the EU – and Germany in particular –

is aware that there is no alternative to dealing with dictators ... Who gives us the right to actively interfere in the domestic affairs of another state? It is as if the

international law that we claim to revere, with its stated dictate of non-intervention, did not exist (Sandschneider 2013).

Both in the EU and Russia a kind of interdependency thinking still prevails. Brussels and Moscow understand that, economically, they are set to be interdependent and benefit significantly from a greater integration of trade, investment and technology exchange. Russia is the EU's third-largest supplier and fourth-largest client. The EU is Russia's most important trading partner by far, accounting for 50 per cent of its overall trade. The Union is also the biggest investor in Russia and 75 per cent of Russian FDI stocks come from the EU countries. As the President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso underlined, the key question is not whether the EU and Russia are interdependent on a wide range of political and economical issues, but rather how that interdependence will be managed (Barroso 2011: 1).

This plurality of divergent voices requests a more politically neutral scrutiny of Russia–EU relations. This can be done through relating them to different theoretical/conceptual models of international society. The main research questions in this article are, firstly, what these models are and how they can be problematised, differentiated from each other and used as explanatory tools for the analysis of EU–Russia relations. Secondly, we examine whether Russia and the EU adhere to similar structural understandings of international society in their specific policies towards each other or, vice versa, the two actors come from different cognitive maps and corresponding models of interaction. Thirdly, we are going to identify those models that are the most contested, and explain the sources of these disagreements.

The article consists of two parts. The first presents both a matrix of international society models that are applicable for the analysis of EU–Russia inter-subjective relations and explanation of these models. In the second part, we explain the key institutional elements of the bilateral agenda from the viewpoint of these models. The most interesting and, at the same time, representative cases/sectors of the EU-Russian cooperation are analysed. In doing so we presume that the two parties may have different visions of those models that each specific policy should promote, which may foster conflicts of interpretation and misperceptions of each other's intentions.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

Our analysis stems from an inter-subjective approach to EU–Russia relations. Inter-subjectivity connotes not only a possibility of achieving some practical effects in the altering of the policies of other actors, but of shaping their international roles and identities through a process of communicative exchanges. Political subjects are to a large extent constituted by their obligations and commitments to their partners. In light of this approach, Russia's foreign policy positioning is impossible without reference to European experiences and practices, and vice versa. Inter-subjectivity makes any subject position dependent on the outside and thus immanently fluid and unstable.

This is why inter-subjective relations are inevitably full of distortions, disconnections, asymmetries, ruptures and imbalances. The concept of 'the friction of ideas' (or 'ideational friction') makes the case for 'deep-seated cultural differences between Europe and Russia' (Engelbrekt & Nygren 2010: 3). While frequently using the same vocabulary (like multipolarity), European and Russian discourse- and identity-makers infuse different meanings in them. This study is based on an approach to inter-subjectivity as an active 'power to affect and a passive power to be affected' (Citton 2009: 122). Russia's ability to influence the EU is limited, which makes the EU–Russia inter-subjectivity apparently asymmetrical. The EU policy philosophy can be expressed as follows:

'If I act toward the other based upon principles I carry with me previous to and outside of my interaction with the other, then it is not really the other I am concerned with. I am imposing my ethical framework upon the other, rather than taking up the other in her own right' (May 2008: 149).

Nevertheless, even in its role as an object of EU's influence, Russia still can – perhaps indirectly – influence the state of debate within the EU and its choice(s) for future actions.

The variety of conceptualisations of EU–Russia inter-subjective relations sheds some light on the nature of multiple splits within both Russian and European subjectivities. The idea of divided subjects is no novelty for political philosophy, but it is important to avoid banal interpretations of Russia's identity split between the proverbial Westernisers and Slavophiles, and the EU identity fluctuating between values and interests. We take a more flexible approach: 'it is the encounter with otherness that divides' (Layton 2008: 61). It is our contention in this article that there are much deeper splits that reflect Russia's and the EU's differing orientation on a number of policy areas, each one an instrument adjustable to a certain type of international structures. In the discussion below we identify the key moments that have affected the state of EU–Russian relations in the last decade and try to see whether both parties perceive each of them in a similar manner, and if not, how strong the divergences between them are.

The data for this study was drawn from the following sources: EU and Russian official documents; interviews with and articles by EU and Russian leaders; research literature: monographs, analytical papers (produced by individual experts and think tanks), and articles; periodicals. As with any study of sensitive politico-ideological issues, it is difficult to compile a set of reliable data. Information is often contradictory, misleading or not fully reported. Research is also complicated by differences of opinion between scholars as regards methods of assessment and interpretation of sources. Moreover, research techniques and terminology vary. Therefore, the exercise of judgment and comparison of sources are important elements in compiling our database. Since the study does not just entail data collection but also data assessment, three main principles were implemented with regard to the selection and interpretation of sources. Firstly, validity, i.e. that data should represent the most important and typical trends rather than occasional or irregular developments in EU-Russian relations. Secondly, informativeness, sources that provide valuable and timely information are given priority. Finally, innovativeness, that is, sources that offer original data, fresh ideas and non-traditional approaches are preferable. These research techniques help to overcome the limitations of the sources and compile substantial and sufficient data for the study.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY MODELS AND EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS

We base our analysis on singling out several structural models of international society presented in the table below. It is formed on the basis of two kinds of distinction that appear to be crucial for our analysis, namely between a) interest-based and normative structures, and b) state-centric structures and those reaching beyond the state and thus involving a wider gamut of actors.

Table 1: Structural Models of International Society

	Interest-based structures	Normative structures
State-centred structures	1A: Balance of power 1B: Spheres of influence 1C: Great power management 1D: Technical approximation	2A: Normative unification 2B: Normative plurality
'State Plus' structures	3: Multi-regionalism	4: Multiplicity of civilisations

1A: Balance of power

This model exists as a Cold War inertia and proves unable to take institutional forms. The basic problem with the practical implementation of the power balancing approach is that the EU and Russia possess different types of power. Russia's is mostly 'compulsory power' which consists of the direct control over the policies of its 'junior partners', mainly including manipulation of energy prices and military force.¹ The EU, by contrast, relies on a combination of 'institutional power' (which rests upon decisional rules and a shared understanding of responsibility and interdependence), and 'productive power' (Barnett & Duvall 2006) (i.e. one which produces social transformations in target countries).

1B: Spheres of influence

Spheres of influence might be viewed as similar to a neo-imperialist approach, based on regional domination. In a realist vision, the EU and Russia are two power poles which compete with each other and struggle for their spheres of influence. Despite the Cold War connotations, spheres-of-influence policies are quite resilient, even if decried as allegedly obsolete. Of course, it is mainly Russia that de-facto proclaimed its sphere of vital interests, by and large embracing the post-Soviet countries (except the three Baltic republics). In blocking Ukraine's and Georgia's membership in NATO Russia has declared that there are 'red lines' that the Kremlin will not allow the West to cross in its attempts to incorporate Russia's neighbours.

Yet in some cases the EU as well is not far from pursuing policies of spheres of influence. This is, in particular, the case of the Eastern Partnership and especially its policies toward Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia that are considered the most probable candidates for economically and politically associating with the EU. Since, as we have noted above, Russia and the EU possess dissimilar types of power, the mechanisms of the competition for spheres of influence in the common neighbourhood are also different (Sergunin 2013). This not only narrows the space for positive interaction between Moscow and Brussels, but also represents a challenge for countries like Moldova or Ukraine which are the objects of two strikingly divergent sets of power instruments.

1C: Great power management

For the Kremlin, the political significance of the great power management (GPM) model is manifested in the prospect of Russia's acceptance as an equal power by the constitutive members of international society. In Russian eyes, GPM could serve as proof of Russia's rising importance for the Western countries. Yet for many EU member states,

GPM can be implemented only at the expense of small and middle-size countries, which is particularly unacceptable for Germany which builds its strategy on engaging its smaller partners in multilateral diplomacy.

Some modest attempts to implement the GPM model are observable at the bilateral level only, as exemplified by the German – Russian Meseberg initiative and the Medvedev – Sarkozy talks of August 2008, when Russia de facto officially recognised EU as a legitimate security actor in its 'near abroad'. But on a more structural level the experiences of GPM are even more modest. The ineffectiveness of the Minsk group is perhaps an illustration of great powers' inability to manage jointly a particular conflict in the absence of political will. In the G8, Russia's positions on key issues of international security differs from the West's, while in the G20 Russia is more concerned about coordinating its policies with its BRICS partners than with allying itself with the European powers.

1D: Technical approximation

Technical approximation is seen mostly from the procedural side, which fits within the neo-functional/neo-institutionalist approach to integration. This model is focused on the rather pragmatic goal of practically organising good-neighbourly relations and selecting the institutions, programmes, instruments, and procedures that better serve the bilateral agenda. The EU – Russia Four Common Spaces and the Partnership for Modernization concepts may be seen as a reflection of these kinds of largely administrative and managerial logics.

2A: Normative Unification

Normative unification is based on the presumption of Russia's acceptance of EU's values as guiding principles facilitating its inclusion into a wider Europe. In the EU reading, normative unification is a value-ridden model, grounded in a concept of the EU as a 'soft power' that ought to 'civilise', 'democratise', 'pacify', and 'discipline' its 'periphery' (Tocci 2008; Manners 2002: 235-258). Along these lines, the integration processes in Europe's new neighbourhood is viewed as an inevitable and natural result of 'spill-over' and 'ramification' effects. This model was more applicable to EU-Russia relations in the 1990s and is overtly challenged by the Putin regime.

2B: Normative Plurality

Many Russian policy makers argue that multipolarity can be successful only if based upon a normative background and deem that Russia is in possession of its own distinctive cultural profile in the world, quite dissimilar from the West (Lapkin and Pantin 2004: 39). According to this logic, each of the centres of power in the world can be viewed as a particular civilisation. Thus, belongingness to civilisation becomes one of the key criteria of sovereignty and a justification for Russia's expansion of its spheres of influence. In this reasoning, as distinct from Europe, civilisational status is regarded as a possibility for Russia to achieve equality with Europe, while the idea of Russia's belongingness to the common European civilisation is believed to be equivalent to the voluntary acceptance of Russia's backwardness vis-à-vis its more developed Western neighbours (Kuznetzova and Kublitzkaya 2005).

3: Multi-regionalism

Multi-regionalism is based on the presumed inability of one single power to tackle regional issues on the one hand, and on a plurality of 'regional orders', on the other (Mylonas and Yorulmazlar 2012). Yet there is a stark difference between the EU and Russian readings of the reorganisation of world politics along regional lines. In European discourses, regional organisations may contribute to a more peaceful world order because they prevent the concentration of power in the hands of superpowers, encourage small states to strengthen their potential through pooling resources; contribute to lowering the dangers of a sovereignty-based system by creating institutions beyond the states. Russia uses regionalist policies for a different purpose – to strengthen its exclusive sphere of influence in its 'near abroad' and to fend off extra-regional powers. Russia finds itself under the strong influence of EU policies and wishes to take some practical advantage from the EU-sponsored regional projects, yet in the meantime chooses to distance itself from those regional groupings that the Kremlin perceives as orchestrated by other great powers. Russia sees little opportunity for itself in adapting to the experiences of EU-sponsored regionalist initiatives.

The multi-regionality perspective divides the post-Soviet space into several regions that are not necessarily subdued under Russia's control. In particular, the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea regional architectures are rather the effects of EU enlargement and its neighbourhood policy. Hence, it is through the prism of multi-regionalism that the concept of an allegedly unified post-Soviet space can be deconstructed, and the policy gap between Russia and the EU identified. Indeed, the 'mental maps' of Europe's margins are seen quite differently in Moscow and Brussels. The EU deliberately invests its resources in region-building for the purpose both of pluralising Europe's regional scene and making it more adaptable to Europeanization.

4: Multiplicity of Civilisations

There are different modalities in which the idea of plurality of civilisations is actualised in Russia's political and academic discourses. On the one hand, Russia can be portrayed as a member of European civilisation. This articulation can be found even in Dmitry Medvedev's reference to the EU and Russia as two branches of the European civilisation destined to cooperate closely with each other (Pchelkin 2010). Therefore, from the structural perspective, both the unity of this wider European civilisation and the compatibility of its different territorial parts are almost taken for granted. Russia's strategy consists of neither developing policies for joining European institutions nor taking on commitments with Europeanization prospects in mind, but rather in making the West accept Russia's historical belonging to a presumably common European civilisation (Tzygankov 1996; Tzymbursky 2007).

On the other hand, Russia can be portrayed as the key to Eurasian civilisation, or as the pivot for Slavic civilisation (Pax Slavica or Pax Orthodoxa), with the concept of the 'Russian world' as part of both conceptualisations (Kobyakov and Averyanov 2008; Narochnitzkaya 2007; Shevchenko 2004). Yet the key paradox of Russia's civilisational discourses is not that of a division between pro-European and pro-Russian-specific versions, but of a certain mistrust towards the state. Russian civilisational identity is not necessarily state-bound, and the plurality of civilisations as a particular case of normative plurality does not any longer make reference to states indispensable. The civilisational resource is believed to be relatively independent of political elites and is viewed as compensation for Russia's weakness as a nation. In a wider sense, this reasoning is quite in tune with the anticipation of a gradual transformation in political subjectivity from nation states to a type of new multi-nodal composite actorness based upon durable communications between culturally, religiously and linguistically related communities (Narochnitzkaya 2007; Shevchenko 2004). Inter-civilisational

communications may take the practical forms of trade promotion, tourist exchanges, inter-urban cultural flows, the activities of NGOs, etc.

THE EU–RUSSIA POLICY AGENDA: CASE STUDIES

In this section we dwell upon a number of the most important policy moves and initiatives that are constitutive for the EU–Russia communicative framework. We include in our analysis EU policies toward Russia's neighbours (the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and Eastern Partnership (EaP)), Russia's institutional policies with implications for its relations with the EU (WTO accession), and joint policy frameworks (the Four Common Spaces, Partnership for Modernization and the on-going visa liberalisation process) because they represent priority areas where Brussels and Moscow, on the one hand, interact with each other, and where, on the other, miscommunication and conflict can happen.

The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the Eastern Partnership (EaP)

The ENP² and EaP³ reveal a deep gap in perceptions between Russia and the EU. Brussels's approach, being intrinsically contradictory, is split between normative unification and multi-regionalist models, and spheres of influence. Yet Moscow either denies or ignores the normative components in EU policies, and views them as an undue expansion into Russia's presumed sphere of interests. Meanwhile, the EU views Russia as a revisionist power trying to regain its former control over the post-Soviet space. Brussels interpreted the Russian-Georgian military conflict of 2008 and the 'gas wars' with Ukraine as evidence of Russian imperialist intentions. Yet, EU capabilities to effect serious changes in the six EaP countries and transform them into prosperous states sharing European values are quite limited. The EU might find it difficult to achieve the desired result (it has problems in 'digesting' even the so-called 'new' members of the Union), since the present generation of post-Soviet politicians is prepared only to pay lip service to democracy and liberalism rather than actually to put these values into practice (Sergunin 2013).

Against this backdrop, Russia wants to play its own game in the post-Soviet region by forging a 'community of unaccepted' to the Western institutions (Bliakher 2008: 15). On the one hand, Moscow claims that the EU plans to enlist EaP countries' support in constructing the Nabucco or White Stream gas pipelines without Russia's participation are doomed to failure. On the other hand, Russian diplomats remain either negative or sceptical about the EaP, which they see as an encroachment upon its 'near abroad' sphere of influence. Russian discourse is contaminated by a number of either highly judgmental or falsifiable hypotheses – like the belief in a 'common mentality of the majority of post-Soviet people' (Galkin 2007: 16). Russia's policies are not always in tune with its neighbours'. Moscow seems to be interested in a de-politicised form of regionalism, but its neighbours (like Ukraine) look for much more normative and value-based models of regional integration as a wider Europe. The key problem with Russia's policy of preventing its neighbours from more closely associating with the EU is that it questions the sincerity of the 'European choice' proclaimed by Russia itself.

Russia's WTO accession

Both Moscow and Brussels regard Russia's WTO accession in terms of technical/procedural integration. The EU policies on Russia's accession to the WTO were - from the very beginning - double-edged. On the one hand, Brussels tried to encourage Moscow to join this important global economic institution; but, on the other, it aimed at

protecting its member-states' trade interests in relations with Russia. Such a position has resulted in one of the lengthiest accession negotiations in the WTO's history (18 years). The two sides spent a lot of time and energy to solve numerous problems in areas such as agriculture, car- and aircraft-building industries, banking and phytosanitary control. The EU also urged Russia to adopt a stable and fair legal framework to regulate business activity properly. Moreover, Brussels insisted on the renunciation of protectionist measures taken within the framework of the Russia-Kazakhstan-Belarus Customs Union, which has led to higher consolidated tariffs. The EU was particularly worried about the alleged Russian pressure on Ukraine to join this Customs Union although Kiev has already joined the WTO and was about to sign a Free Trade Area agreement with Brussels.

Brussels claims that the success of the accession negotiations is the result of both its efficient normative policies and skilful diplomacy. Under EU pressure, Russia agreed to introduce international standards (WTO rules) in areas such as industry, agriculture, trade, customs procedures, banking, audit and accounting. According to one account, the main residual barrier to Moscow's WTO membership - Georgia's demands to put customs controls on Russia's borders with Abkhazia and South Ossetia - was removed by Gunnar Wiegand, Director for Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus, Central Asia, European External Action Service, who visited Tbilisi in late October 2011 and managed to strike a compromise (Trushkina 2011).

However, the recently released EU document assessing the state of progress in EU – Russia relations (Commission of the European Communities 2013: 28-29) stated that despite Russia's accession to the WTO, Russian sanitary and phytosanitary measures remain non transparent, discriminatory, disproportionate and not in line with international standards. In 2012, Russia introduced a number of new restrictions in the veterinary sector, and imposed a ban on non-breeding pigs and ruminants for all EU Member States. The EU Report states that Russia continues to create problems when it comes to the inspection, and refuses to withdraw the establishment listing requirement for a number of commodities (live animals, dairy products, casings, feed of animal origin, composite products, gelatine), contrary to its WTO commitments. Russia threatens to impose restrictions on nursery products from the EU without a scientific justification, and resists EU-supported attempts to further reinforce the sustainability of fisheries in the Antarctic environment. It has resisted defining effective capacity management in exploratory fisheries as well as the proposal to establish Marine Protected Areas.

The Partnership for Modernization (P4M)

For Russia, P4M⁴ is mostly about technical and procedural convergence, while for the EU the key element has to be viewed as that of normative convergence. Evidently, the EU strategic vision of P4M presupposes a certain degree of asymmetry and challenges to the mantras of Russian foreign policy – the concept of equality in relations with the West. While Russia is mostly interested in European investment and high-tech transfers under this programme, the EU side tried to develop a more normative vision of modernisation (including its legal and socio-political aspects). The EU insisted on the importance of ensuring an effective, independent functioning of the judiciary and stepping up the fight against corruption (including the signing by Russia of the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials). The EU encouraged Russia to develop further an appeals system for criminal and civil court cases. Brussels also believes that the active involvement of civil society institutions in the reformist process should be a part of the modernisation package.

Nonetheless Russia wants to avoid situations in which the EU could take the role of an example, a standard to be adapted. Russian diplomats propose to remove the issues of

democratisation and human rights as a precondition for modernisation partnership, and in its stead focus on Russia's acceptance of technical norms and rules that successfully work in the EU and can be projected onto Russia (energy efficiency, customs regulations, educational exchanges, environmental protection, etc.). However, Russia's obsession with equality in conditions of structural inequality only sustains the gap between political rhetoric and the practice of EU–Russia relations. According to the P4M progress report (Progress Report 2011), the programme has developed most dynamically in those areas where Russia pledged to adopt European rules and regulations, thus acknowledging their higher standards. Russia promised to ratify the Espoo and (similar) Aarhus conventions on the assessment of environmental impact in the trans-boundary context. The EU awarded grants for projects to non-state actors on education and awareness-raising for energy auditors, managers and engineers, and set up an EU–Russia laboratory on energy efficiency in Cannes. A project on energy efficiency in north-western Russia is being implemented within the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership. In the area of transport, a Secretariat for the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics was established.

Despite the general progress in the P4M's implementation, this programme has also evoked some tensions between Brussels and Moscow. For example, in the energy sphere the main bone of contention is Moscow's unwillingness to ratify the European Energy Charter that Russia signed under President Boris Yeltsin but later interpreted as discriminatory. The main obstacle to Russia's ratification of the Charter is Moscow's unwillingness to separate production, reprocessing and transportation of gas from each other. In practice, the Charter's requirements mean the reorganisation of monopolist companies such as Gazprom, Rosneft, Transneft, etc., and better access by foreign companies to the Russian energy sector. To counter it, the Kremlin suggested an energy charter of its own in 2009. However, Brussels did not endorse the Russian initiative, and this part of the EU-Russia energy dialogue is so far frozen (Makarychev and Sergunin 2012).

Besides, the EU and Russia have a difference of opinion on the question of energy transportation. Given the permanent Russian-Ukrainian clashes on gas transit shipments via the Ukrainian territory, Moscow favours the development of alternative routes, such as Nord Stream and South Stream. The EU member states differ in their attitudes to these projects: while Germany and the Netherlands support Nord Stream, Italy, Bulgaria and some other South and South Eastern European countries opted for South Stream. At the same time, most EU member-states prefer to diversify their sources of energy supplies and, for this reason - to Russia's discontent - support the alternative Nabucco and White Stream projects (which bypass Russia) and further development of the 'old' (Ukraine-controlled) pipelines (Yamal-Europe) (Makarychev and Sergunin 2012). Moreover, Russia made it clear that it is eager to develop further atomic energy technologies and has expressed its keen interest in participating in developing atomic projects in Europe. This intention, however, runs against the dominant anti-nuclear attitudes that are especially vibrant in countries like Germany and Italy, which are among the key Russian partners in Europe. Russia's European neighbours are particularly frustrated by Moscow's plan to build a nuclear plant in the Kaliningrad *oblast* by 2016 (Joenniemi and Sergunin 2012).

External security cooperation

In the sphere of security, the rift between the EU and Russia looks quite substantial. The EU, being short of military power, basically approaches security issues from a normative unification perspective that prioritises the normative components of security community building (adherence to common values, accentuation of soft/human security dimensions, etc.). Russia, for its part, often displays its preference to talk security business with the major EU member states, which by and large corresponds to great power management

format, with a clear emphasis on spheres of influence as a structural precondition for Russian domination in post-Soviet Eurasia (Danilov 2000).

The 2005 Road Map envisages several areas of EU-Russia external security cooperation: coordination of their activities in the framework of international organisations; fighting international terrorism; arms control and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; conflict management; civil defence (Commission of the European Communities 2005). In practical terms, along with the then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, the then French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who chaired the European Council in the second half of 2008, was a key figure in the cease-fire and post-conflict settlement negotiations in August 2008. He also played a crucial role in launching the Geneva talks on security arrangements, including the issue of internally displaced persons, which began on 15 October 2008, with the participation of Russia, Georgia, the EU, the USA, OSCE, and UN.

Yet not everything went smoothly. For example, Brussels insisted that Moscow must fulfil all of the conditions under the Six-Point Ceasefire Agreement (2008) and immediately withdraw its troops from South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Moscow also had to guarantee the EU Monitoring Mission access to those territories. The Russian side, however, insisted that it fulfilled the ceasefire agreement and that with the proclamation of South Ossetia's and Abkhazia's independence, the security situation in the region has completely changed. The EU was also discontented with the Russian position on Transnistria, particularly with the lack of progress on the conflict resolution and called for a resumption of the official 5+2 negotiations. Although both the EU and Russia are positive about the resumption of those negotiations, they differ in their approaches to their format and content. The EU favours discussing the key political issues, such as the future status of Transnistria or changing the mandate for the peace-keeping forces in the conflict zone. In contrast with this 'grand policy' vision, Russia supports the 'step-by-step' or low politics approach which is based on the resumption of the Moldova-Transnistria dialogue on concrete issues, such transportation, customs procedures, education, mobility of people, etc. (Sergunin 2012).

Moscow had expectations that with the reinvigoration of the Eastern Partnership under the Polish Presidency (2011) there could be a progress in the Nagorny Karabakh conflict resolution. However, contrary to these expectations the Baku-Yerevan bilateral relations became even worse by the end of 2011, with multiple signals of Baku's readiness to a 'military solution' of the Karabakh conflict. The roots of these disagreements go back to the different understandings of the notion of security by the EU and Russia. While the EU supports a comprehensive/multidimensional view on security – not only in its 'hard' but also in its 'soft' version (and the road map on external security suggests this perspective), Moscow still prefers a traditional, military-based vision of the concept (Sergunin 2004 and 2005).

There was also a fundamental difference between the EU and Russia in understanding another area of the EU-Russia common space on external security, namely the fight against international terrorism. For example, while Europeans have viewed the Chechen rebels as 'freedom-fighters', Moscow has seen them as terrorists, and while for Moscow Hamas has been a radical organisation, yet still eligible for further political dialogue, the EU has basically perceived this Palestinian grouping as a terrorist movement. In contrast with the EU, which prefers multilateral diplomacy, Moscow emphasises state-to-state relations (such as 'special relationships' with France, Germany, Italy, etc.), displaying a certain mistrust of supranational institutions. The Kremlin believes that bilateral contacts are more efficient than multilateral politics. In practical terms, this means that from the very beginning Moscow has not perceived the EU as a reliable security provider.

Given the lack of a proper institutional basis for EU-Russian dialogue on external security, Germany and Russia tried at Meseberg in June 2010 to provide this dialogue with some institutional support by suggesting establishing a Committee on Foreign and

Security Policy at the ministerial level (see Medvedev and Merkel 2010). France and Poland eventually supported this idea. The suggested agenda for future discussions in the committee was Transnistrian conflict resolution and the creation of a European missile defence system. Similar committees already exist at the bilateral level (for example, in Russia's relations with France and Germany). Yet the Meseberg process betrayed a deep gap in perceptions between the EU states and Russia. While for Germany this was a part of its attempt to contrive a common security agenda with Russia, based on normative principles, for Russia it was another possibility to implement a 'concert of powers' approach in conflict management.

Germany is disappointed by the ineffectiveness of the Meseberg initiative. Nowadays, it is almost dead, basically due to two reasons – a) Russia's inability to streamline political developments in Tiraspol, and b) Russia's return to a spheres-of-influence rhetoric which became obvious with the appointment of Dmitry Rogozin as Presidential Representative on Transnistria. Russia is overtly unwilling to discuss the issue of troop withdrawal and sees it not as a pre-condition for effective negotiations, but as an outcome of conflict resolution. In parallel, the Russian rhetoric appears accusatory as regards the EU's role in the conflict: in Moscow's view, the anticipated Free Trade Agreement between the EU and Moldova may become an additional reason for Transnistrian independence – yet this might be the case only if Moscow views EU integration as a threat for itself, and if it encourages Tiraspol to position itself more deeply in an Eurasian context. What all this means is that Moscow is increasingly reluctant to see the Meseberg initiative as a test case for Russia's security relations with the EU, and one should not expect too much flexibility from Russia in the forthcoming years.

Liberalisation of the visa regime

This area of cooperation exemplifies joint initiatives that are similarly assessed both in Russia and the EU as an important move towards procedural unification. For Moscow, the signing (on 14 December 2011) of the Russian-Polish agreement on a visa-free regime for the residents of the Kaliningrad *oblast* and two Polish border regions (the Warmian-Masurian and Pomeranian *voivodeships*) is one of the most important and indisputably positive outcomes of the Polish EU Presidency that took place in the second half of 2011 (Makarychev and Sergunin 2012). Notably, the initial plan was to establish a visa-free regime only within a 30-kilometer area from both sides of the border, but Moscow and Warsaw managed to extend this practice to the entire Kaliningrad *oblast* and the two mentioned Polish *voivodeships*. This agreement is seen by Russian and European experts as a model to be replicated in other border regions.

Under the Polish Presidency, the EU and Russia finalised the document on 'Common Steps towards Visa-Free Short-Term Travel' and the relevant roadmap was launched at the Brussels summit of 15 December 2011. According to it, the EU and Russia have to coordinate their efforts in four specific areas: providing Russian citizens with biometrical passports; fighting illegal migration and developing a common approach to border control; fighting trans-border organised crime, including money-laundering, arms- and drug-trafficking; ensuring freedom of movement of people in the country of residence by abolishing or changing the existing administrative procedures of registration and work permits for foreigners (Makarychev and Sergunin 2012). The EU leaders emphasise that full implementation of the agreed common steps can lead to the opening of visa-waiver negotiations. Meanwhile, Brussels and Moscow plan to upgrade the Russia-EU Visa Facilitation Agreement of 2006 and the Local Border Traffic Regulation in accordance with recent EU-Russian agreements.

However, Moscow views the list of common steps for visa-free short-term travel and the Russian-Polish agreement on local border traffic as insignificant concessions on the part of Brussels. The Kremlin insists on the intensification of the EU-Russia dialogue in this

area with the aim of promptly signing a fully-fledged visa waiver agreement. To explain delays, the European side refers to the residual technical problems related to the implementation process. For example, the EU notes that it is difficult for Russia to provide its citizens quickly with new-generation biometrical passports. Brussels also underlines that its dialogue with Russia should be in tune with the visa facilitation process concerning Eastern Partnership countries (this is both incomprehensible to and irritating for Moscow). The EU also insists that Russia must cease issuing passports to residents of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which are seen by the EU as occupied provinces of Georgia. It also emphasises the necessity of intensifying cooperation on illegal immigration, improved controls at cross-border checkpoints and information exchange on terrorism and organised crime. Contrary to Russian expectations, Brussels considers the introduction of the visa-free regime with Russia as a long-term rather than a short-term prospect.

CONCLUSION

In this article we have shown that bilateral relations between Russia and the EU are deeply inscribed in different frameworks of multilateral institutions and practices. Therefore, the explanations of deteriorating relations between Moscow and Brussels require structural analysis and can be done by unpacking a number of structural models as presented in this article. In communicating with each other, Russia and the EU often stem from different models of international society, and it is these conceptual cleavages that hinder their bilateral relationship and render them ineffective. Consequently, the most substantial problems arise when Russia and the EU stick to dissimilar visions of international society and, therefore, rely on different mechanisms of international socialisation.

Most of the empirical cases we have touched upon testify to the stark differences in attitudes to the structural underpinnings of international society of which the EU and Russia are inalienable parts. Russia presumes that in a wider Europe there is ample space for dividing spheres of interests and drawing 'red lines' that should not be crossed for the sake of stability. Russia deems that most of the security problems have to be decided by a 'concert' of major powers – if needed, at the expense of smaller states. This policy philosophy constitutes the gist of Russia's understanding of multipolarity as a pluralist structure of different norms, sometimes referred to as a multiplicity of civilisations. But the multipolar world model advocated by the Kremlin is based on an overt indifference to each other's domestic affairs and equal acceptance of each type of regime under the guise of valorisation of difference as such.

Against this background, the EU stems from a much more clearly articulated philosophy of international socialisation that does display its sensitivity to the principles constitutive for the political identities of its partners and particularly its neighbours. By the same token, the EU does wish to pluralise the area of the common neighbourhood by stimulating practices different from the dominating post-Soviet authoritarianism. Paradoxically, these attempts can be perceived as being close to reproducing Russia's spheres-of-influence rhetoric, but this only confirms that even in pursuing different strategic goals, the EU and Russia remain in an inter-subjective mode of relationship.

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¹ The Russian leaders and the new Russian Foreign Policy Concept (2013), however, position Russia as an increasingly 'soft power', particularly in the post-Soviet space (Kosachev 2012; Putin 2012a, 2012b, 2013).

² The ENP was launched in May 2004 to replace the EU's old neighbourhood policy after the Union's next round of enlargement. It suggested single standards for cooperation with neighbouring countries. Such a universalist approach has evoked a negative reaction from Russia that wanted special relationships with the EU. The EU-Russia Common Spaces concept (2005) was designed to replace the ENP doctrine and satisfy Moscow.

³ The EaP was launched at the Prague summit (7 May 2009) and involved Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. According to the Prague declaration: 'The main goal of the Eastern Partnership is to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested partner countries ... With this aim, the Eastern Partnership will seek to support political and socio-economic reforms of the partner countries, facilitating approximation towards the European Union' (Joint Declaration 2009).

⁴ The P4M was initiated by the EU-Russia Rostov-on-Don summit (1 June 2010). A Work Plan was adopted in December 2010 and is regularly updated. The programme aims at modernisation of Russia's main public sectors such as industry, transport, communications, energy, public service, health care and environment protection systems, etc.

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