



## Evaluation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union & Russia from the Public Diplomacy of Russian Perspective

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### Abstract

*This article evaluates the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and Russia from a Russian perspective of public diplomacy after the Cold War. Partnership and Cooperation Agreement is the legal basis for EU relations with Russia. It establishes the institutional and political frameworks for bilateral relations, sets the principal common objectives, calls for activities and dialogue in a number of policy areas and provides an appropriate mechanism for political dialogue. This study discusses why the relationship between the European Union and Russia has not achieved its intended aims as indicated in the documents and what the leaders says. On the other side, Russia has shown this agreement as a success in terms of public diplomacy. It is also examined the current rhetoric of Europe and Russia to build a strategic partnership. Within the context of this article it is determined that the most sensitive and vulnerable area of cooperation in the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) is the political partnership which has not realized as in the rules and the rhetoric in programmatic documents due to some trouble political issues.*

**Keywords:** European Union, Partnership and Cooperation Agreement Strategic Partnership, Russia, Russian Public Diplomacy.

### INTRODUCTION

The 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall, a symbol of long-standing ideological conflict, has led to political changes in the whole of Europe besides leading to the collapse of

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communist regimes. These unexpected events caused changes in the balance of power within the European Community which had started to redefine its strategic and geopolitical priorities like any other political actor in the international arena beginning from early 1990s.<sup>1</sup> The end of the Soviet system and the transition to the market in Russia had brought to the fore the centuries old debate about the Russia's relations with Europe. It was believed that Europe had a strong interest that a stable, democratically oriented and prosperous Russia overcomes its isolation during the communist regime. So the European Union (EU) has consistently tried to encourage the creation of more favorable conditions in Russia and to build a deeper partnership with her.

It was argued whether the EU has important strategic and economic interests in its relations with Russia. So EU had given much more importance to Russia's inclusion into the process of European cooperation in all terms. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, their relations developed within the legal, institutional and commercial frameworks, besides the cooperation initiatives of both sides on very broad menu of issues. So the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the main legal and institutional framework between the European Union and Russia, along with the political and diplomatic relations, is evaluated in this article.

#### END OF THE COLD WAR

In the late 1980s and with the onset of 1990s, a new era dawned in Europe and Russia, while the political environment changed, geography remained the same. The world entered the post-Cold War era. Many speculated in the early 1990s and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the strategic importance of the partnership would increase. The predictions of a peaceful and prosperous new world order proved to be too optimistic. It was true that the threat of an all-out war between the superpowers decreased, but new and potentially much more explosive problems emerged. Among them were a flare-up in ethnic tensions with a tendency for violent irredentism which had swept through much of the Balkans, Middle East and the Caucasus with potentially disastrous consequences for the entire region. Other risks and threats in the form of terrorism, religious fanaticism, rapid population growth of the developing countries, and pollution on a global scale, racism and xenophobia gained ground. Despite the end of the Cold War, the world did not become a safer place than it had been a couple of years ago.<sup>2</sup> In this context, the eastern borders of the European Community became more imperceptible which forced the European Community to redefine its relations with

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<sup>1</sup> David Allen and Michael Smith, 'The European Community in the New Europe: Bearing the Burden of Change', *International Journal*, Vol.47, No. 1, Winter 1991-2, p.1-28.

<sup>2</sup> See for more details; Jan Zielonka, *Explaining Euro-Paralysis: Why Europe is Unable to Act in International Politics*, (London & New York: MacMillan Press, 1998), p.25-48.

the former east bloc countries. There was a need to create firm bases for the construction of the future Europe.<sup>3</sup>

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the European Community and its member states have established various kinds of relations with the third European states with the aim of overcoming the division of the continent. It was argued that expansion to Central, Eastern and Southern Europe should not be seen as a linear process, but rather that the problems at one stage of the process can be significantly affected the chances of success at the next stage. This has also brought to the fore the centuries old debate about relations among them and question of whether Russia was a European power.

### **IS RUSSIA A EUROPEAN POWER?**

Many influential policy-makers in the EU countries hold that Russia, like Turkey, is an un-European nation, the Europe's Other.<sup>4</sup> In literature, manifold examples can be found of attempts to draw Europe's boundaries on the basis of geographical, historical and other criteria.<sup>5</sup> Since the end of the Cold War, Europe has been divided into West and East along the Byzantine line, separating countries with a Catholic and Protestant tradition from those with an Orthodox or Muslim tradition. The static and selective character of this approach leaves much to be explained. In doing so, it distinguishes between a first and second rank Europe, a genuine Europe and its opposed Eastern counterpart. An alternative approach is then to consider Europe as an idea which is being incessantly constructed and reconstructed. It is a project to which you may or may not subscribe. From this angle the question of whether Russia is a European power, is endowed with a different meaning. The question then becomes whether Russia is interested in subscribing to the European project and whether other countries will allow it to do so. It is argued that internal debate is still undecided and even largely unstructured.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Mathias Jopp and Barbara Lippert, 'Towards a Solution of the Baltic Issue: the EU's Role', in Mathias Jopp and Sven Arnsward (eds), *The European Union and the Baltic States Visions, Interests and Strategies for the Baltic Sea Region*, Program on the Northern Dimension of the CFSP, vol.2, (Helsinki & Bonn, Ulkopoliittinen Instituutti and Institut für Europäische Politik, 1998), p.9-18. See also; David S.Mason, *Revolution in East-Central Europe: The Rise and Fall of Communism and the Cold War*, (Boulder : Westview Press, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> See for more details; Iver B. Neumann, 'The Geopolitics of Delineating 'Russia' and 'Europe': The Creation of 'the Other' in European and Russian Tradition', in Tom Casier & Katlijn Malfliet (eds), *Is Russia A European Power? The Position Of Russia in a New Europe*, ( Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1998), p.17-45.

<sup>5</sup> See for political, cultural, historical and philosophical boundaries of the concept Europe; Emel Poyraz, *Avrupa Birliği'nin Tarihsel Gelişimi ve Türkiye*, Marmara Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Doktora tezi, 2009, p.91-118

<sup>6</sup> See for details: Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations (1800-1994)*, (London: Routledge Publications, 1995).

On the other hand, the collapse of communism and of the former Soviet empire has submerged Russia into a deep identity crisis. It is also claimed in public diplomacy that “since the end of the communist system, probably for the first time in Russian history, Russia is bound to be considered as a European country, as a part of a European whole, European culture and history. Likewise, it is first time in European history that Russia is considered thus way. It is also the first time, maybe because of this change in European perception that Russian leaders realize that they can afford to take some more time for adjusting themselves to this situation. It is the first time that they are willing to rely on others to transform themselves. This might be a historic change for Russia to fully recover its European identity in a Eurasian geographical reality.”<sup>7</sup> This propaganda and publicity were used successfully in Russian foreign and internal policy after the Cold War period.

The collapse of the USSR has also created a certain asymmetry in the development of relations between Russia and the European Union. By the beginning of 1990s the bipolar Europe was replaced by the mono-centric Europe: the affluent and democratic Western Europe has proved to be the only region of the continent which still is demonstrating stability and dynamism. The EU and also NATO were being the key organizations in the sphere of economic cooperation and security. On the one hand, there was an ongoing enlargement of the EU and NATO, on the other there persisted a strategically ill-defined situation in the post-Soviet space; whereas EU was using its economic might to strengthen its political influence, Russia's economic weakness significantly limited the political influence of Moscow.<sup>8</sup> In this point, the relationship between the EU and Russia is very important for the medium and long term political and economic developments in both sides. Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia gives the contractual legal framework of the EU relations. Russia's vast natural and human resources provide potential for mutually beneficial economic and political relations with the EU which would become larger if an appropriate administrative and legal framework is put in place at federal and local levels. There should be a substantial upgrading of infrastructures and the necessary actions should be taken to enable Russia to become a fully integrated member of the international trading system.<sup>9</sup> But on the other hand, whatever the situation would be, the intensification of political and economic relations between the European Union and Russia, however could not be directed towards the objective of Russia's eventual full integration or membership into the EU.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p.15. See also Yeltsin's and Putin's efforts to modernize their country; Yaşar Onay, *Rus Stratejisinin Mimarları*, (İstanbul: İlgı Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, Ocak 2008 ), p.181-249.

<sup>8</sup> Esra Hatipoğlu, 'EU-Russia: Partnership and Cooperation Agreement', *Marmara Journal of European Studies*, Vol.5, No.1-2,1997, p.209.

<sup>9</sup> *Unice Statement on Relations between Russia and the European Union*, 13 June 1997, p.1.

<sup>10</sup> H.Hohmann, C.Meier & H.Timmermann, 'The European Community and the Countries of the CIS: Political and Economic Relations', *The Journal of Communist Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, September, 1993, p.159.

According to the new post-communist administration in Moscow, the collapse of communist rule opened the way for Russia to return the Europe. The rhetoric of the new regime marked a high tide of official Westernism in the country's twentieth-century history and the policy of Andrei Kozyrev's Foreign Ministry appeared to be to achieve as close a relationship as possible with Western institutions.<sup>11</sup>

In December 1991, Yeltsin indicated that Russia seeks the membership of NATO as a long term goal. The main purpose of this statement was to bring home the decisive nature of Russia's realignment in international affairs.<sup>12</sup> When Russia as an independent power re-entered in the world area in January 1992 under Yeltsin control, Russian foreign policy was based on a post imperial and democratic relationship with the Europe at large and ex-Soviet states at specific. Yeltsin's foreign policy had its roots in Gorbachev's mutual security approach<sup>13</sup> and this stance was gone much further by his liberal foreign minister, Kozyrev who identified the major security issue of Russia as economic and political isolation, and believed that Russia could achieve security only through integration with the West.<sup>14</sup>

Accordingly, in the first post-communist period, the liberal-dominant Russian leadership aspired to move from centralized to market economy, from authoritarianism to democracy, and from an empire to modern state. This attempted to develop a new Russian statehood with a definition of the national interest that focused on domestic economic and political transformation on one hand; the release from the burden of empire and entanglement with former republics on the other hand.<sup>15</sup> Starting from early 1993, Russia has begun to face the practical difficulties in creating viable post imperial relations with the other former Soviet states. The tone and content of the debates over Russia's post-Soviet role shifted to the realpolitik thinking. Russia has begun to claim the title

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<sup>11</sup> Neil Malcolm, 'New Thinking and After: Debate in Moscow about Europe' in Neil Malcolm(ed), *Russia and Europe: An End To Confrontation?*, (New York: Pinter Publishers, 1994), p.151.

<sup>12</sup> NATO responded by extending the scope of cooperation inside the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), which all the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States belonged to by the spring of 1992. NACC helped to redistribute arms quotas among European CIS members during 1992 and to foster agreement on nuclear weapons issues among the former Soviet states. See for more information, Jane Sharp, 'Dismantling the Military Confrontation', in Neil Malcolm (ed), *Russia and Europe: An End To Confrontation?*, (New York: Pinter Publishers, 1994), p.79-94.

<sup>13</sup> Gorbachev's security concept rejects the old Soviet dogma of a struggle between two social systems by calling for collaboration with the West. See James H. Brusstar, 'Russian Vital Interests and Western Security', *Orbis*, Vol.38, No.3, Fall 1994, p.607

<sup>14</sup> See for Gorbachev and Yeltsin periods; Yaşar Onay, *Rus Stratejisinin Mimarları*, (İstanbul: İlgi Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, Ocak 2008), p.165-206.

<sup>15</sup> James H. Brusstar, 'Russian Vital Interests ...', p.608.

of great power, and its foreign policy has gained a new assertiveness in the near abroad.<sup>16</sup>

The main risks of a reversal in Russia's course lied in the domestic political arena. The fate of reform and of rapprochement with the West was intertwined. During 1992-1993 economic reforms led to a sharp decline in living standards, new and unpopular forms of social differentiation, and the threat of large scale unemployment. Democratization widely perceived to have opened the door to chaos, corruption and free play of individual ambitions. The dismantling of the old Soviet Union was seen as a national humiliation and an abandonment of Russians abroad to discrimination and persecution.

During the first years, the former Soviet states represented a continuing source of turmoil and threats such as the worsening of the living conditions of 25 million Russians abroad or the ethnic-religious violence, to Russia's own well-being. This reality was also accompanied by Russians disappointment about the Kozyrev integration strategy with the West and alienation from both democratic process and free market. The honeymoon in Russia's relations with Europe had come to an end by the end of 1992, as the weakness of the liberal wing forced Yeltsin, to shift to a more centrist position.<sup>17</sup>

However, any fundamental threat to the new relationship would come from social and economic breakdown, or the flaring up serious conflicts with the post-Soviet near abroad. These grievances of public were reflected into late 1993 parliament election, at greater extent, and 1995 parliament and 1996 presidential elections. In this sense, Russian policies were largely driven by domestic politics in which domestic and international issues were linked together in the traditional way. The result was a growing consensus among the decision making groups including many colors of Russian political spectrum and Russia pursued policies for its own security within the framework of hegemonic concept of vital interest. This stance was reflected as a governmental priority by the president Yeltsin. This assertive posture of Russian leadership wasn't meant that its early stance transformed to inherently confrontational position against the West; *"instead in the security approach was while Russia wanted to cooperate with the West on security issues, it wouldn't hesitate to pursue its own policies when its vital national interests were involved."*<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The concept of the "near abroad" suggests some sort of intermediate status between sovereign statehood and traditional dependence. See; Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, (London: Routledge, 1996), p.291.

<sup>17</sup> Elnur Hasan Mikail, *KGB Albaylığından Devlet Başkanlığına Putin Dönemi Rusya*, (İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2008), p.31

<sup>18</sup> James H. Brusstar , 'Russian Vital Interests and Western Security', *Orbis*, vol. 38, no.3, Fall 1994, p.610.

## THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS

The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) gives the main legal and institutional framework for the bilateral relations between the EU and Russia along with the political, diplomatic and economic areas. It was the first bilateral act in which Western countries consider Russia as a country with an economy in transition. PCA came into force on 1 December 1997 for an initial duration of 10 years, which would be automatically extended beyond 2007 on an annual basis - unless either side withdraws from the agreement. It sets the principal common objectives, establishes the institutional framework for bilateral contacts, and calls for activities and dialogue in a number of areas.<sup>19</sup> It covers cooperation in the areas of legal, trade, investment and internal matters and a political dialogue with provisions for consultations on all important issues. Partnership and Cooperation Agreement placed a respect for human rights and democratic processes at the very core of the relationship.<sup>20</sup>

Before the PCA, the EC signed a trade and cooperation agreement with the Soviet Union in December 1989.<sup>21</sup> After the disintegration of the USSR, the EC had to negotiate additional trade and cooperation agreements with the individual ex-Soviet republics. As Russia was the legal successor to the Soviet Union, the trade and cooperation agreement had become an agreement with Russia.<sup>22</sup> Since the new states had not fulfilled the economic and political requirements, it was obvious that there could not be any association agreements with those countries. So the Commission suggested the conclusion of an intermediate type of agreement which would provide support for the democratic process and the opening of the markets. In January 1992, the EC Council authorized the Commission to start preliminary discussions with four republics including Russia. These new trade and cooperation agreements which would go beyond the framework of the first generation trade and cooperation agreement, but would not take the form of association agreements. These new types of agreements, PCA, would remain as non-preferential agreements based on GATT principles of Most Favored Nation, which means that in principle the concerned countries would not receive a better treatment from the community than other GATT countries.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Delegation of the European Union to Russia, [http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p\\_210.htm](http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p_210.htm) (accessed December 19, 2010)

<sup>20</sup> See for full text of the PCA:  
[http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21997A1128\(01\):EN:HTML](http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21997A1128(01):EN:HTML) (accessed December 19, 2010)

<sup>21</sup> Stephen White, *After Gorbachev*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.105.

<sup>22</sup> The EC Commission, with proposal to the Council in January 1992, indicated that a new approach was required for future relations between the EC and the new republics. Then Vice President of the Commission, Franz Andriassen, pointed that the Commission considered the first generation trade and cooperation agreements to be insufficient as regards the new states transforming to a market economy. *ibid*

<sup>23</sup> Esra Hatipoğlu, 'EU-Russia...', p.200.

So the PCA was put into force in December 1997 for an initial period of ten years. The EU-Russia relations have moved into new and wider territory after the PCA which represented a visionary commitment from both sides. It was ambitious in scope, covering almost all aspects of the European Community-Russia trade, commercial and economic relations, and instituting political communication up to the highest levels. Three committees have been set up to ensure the provisions of the PCA that are observed and implemented. The Cooperation Council meets at ministerial level once a year. The Cooperation Committee, composed of senior EU and Russian civil servants, assists the Cooperation Council. The Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, made up of Members of the European Parliament and the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, has the authority to make recommendations to the Cooperation Council. The first meeting of the Cooperation Council was realized in January 1998 in Brussels. The main subject of this meeting was the developments of political dialogue on foreign policy and common interests of both sides. The aid programs to Russia and the extending of the potential cooperation areas were also negotiated in the meeting.

In June 1999, the EU Council adopted a Common Strategy on Russia, with the aim to strengthen the strategic partnership between Russia and the Union, giving it a horizon extending far into the next century. It was valid for a period of four years. It came as the first series of such strategies in response to the recognition that more coherence was needed between the EU and the member states policies vis-à-vis certain partner countries. It provides for an overall policy framework in the priority areas of consolidation of democracy; rule of law and public institutions; integration of Russia into a common European economic and social space; stability and security in Europe and beyond; common challenges on the European continent including environment, crime and illegal immigration. On its side, Russia also adopted a strategy towards the European Union proving the mutual interest of both EU and Russia in a special relationship. The Common Strategy on Russia has been conceived as means to strengthen the partnership initially based on the respective PCA with a strong political signal.<sup>24</sup>

Vladimir Putin said "*I strongly believe the full unity of our continent can never be achieved until Russia, as the largest European state, becomes an integral part of the European process. Today, building a sovereign democratic state, we share the values and principles of the vast majority of Europeans. A stable, prosperous and united Europe is in our interest. The development of multifaceted ties with the EU is Russia's principled choice.*"<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Mr. Verheugen said that Common Strategy on Russia had the purpose of the strengthened the strategic partnership between the EU and Russia; *Agence Europe*, 3 June 1999, p.3.

<sup>25</sup> Russian President Vladimir Putin in a letter to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the European Union, 25 March 2007, The Delegation of the European Union. [http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p\\_210.htm](http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p_210.htm) (accessed December 13, 2010)

It is claimed that the Russian Federation now is one of the most important partners for the European Union today and a key priority of the European Union is to build a strong strategic partnership with Russia based on a solid foundation of mutual respect. Russia was the largest neighbor of the EU, brought even closer by the union's 2004 and 2007 enlargements. The 2003 EU Security Strategy showed Russia as a key player in geo-political and security terms at both the global and regional level. It was stressed that Russia was also a key actor in the UN Security Council and, due to history, geographic proximity and cultural links, and it was one of the key players in the common European neighborhood.

In light of public diplomacy through the Delegation of the European Union claims that Russia's contribution to Europe's cultural heritage is an important element of their common ties. Russia is also the major supplier of energy products to the EU. Russia is a large, dynamic market for EU goods and services, with considerable economic growth. The EU's market, on the other hand, is by far the most important destination for Russian exports. Companies from the EU are the main investors in Russia. Today Russia and the EU Member States are all members of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe. They are all committed to upholding and respecting the fundamental values and principles of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and the market economy. These values underpin the EU-Russia bilateral relationship and its legal basis, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The EU has a strong interest in working together with Russia to foster political, social and economic stability, in the region and worldwide. Russia and the EU need to work together to combat new security threats, as terrorism, crime, illegal migration and trafficking in people as well as drugs. The Russian Federation is also a crucial partner in combating climate change. The EU and Russia are already cooperating in many ways, including the modernization of Russia's economy and its integration into the world economy, security, international issues and cooperation in the common neighborhood of Eastern Europe. The EU and Russia have an extensive dialogue on political issues around the world, including the resolution of conflicts such as those in the Middle East, Afghanistan, the Western Balkans and Sudan and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the relevant technologies, as in the cases of Iran and North Korea.<sup>26</sup> All these comments and explanations at official levels are rhetoric of their relations and is used public diplomacy. In this respects three points are usually put forward to justify the importance of the EU-Russia relationship. First, trade statistics are a strong argument in highlighting the fact that Russia and the EU 'are bound to be close partners'. The EU is the largest economic partner of Russia, accounting for 40 % of its foreign trade and a

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<sup>26</sup> Delegation of the European Union on Russia, [http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p\\_210.htm](http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p_210.htm) (accessed December 13, 2010)

significant share of the foreign direct investments, whereas Russia is an important energy supplier to the Union. Second, Russia is a natural security partner for the EU, since the European security is inseparable from and unthinkable without Russia. Third, close cooperation between the EU and Russia is needed to respond to common challenges. There are also notably three major concerns that are high on the agenda: organized crime, nuclear safety and environment.

### **POLITICAL & DIPLOMATIC FRAMEWORK**

The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement establishes also the institutional and political frameworks for bilateral relations, it sets the principal common objectives, calls for activities and dialogue in a number of policy areas. The EU has laid down its basic approach to relations with Russia in a Common Strategy of 1999. The PCA would provide an appropriate mechanism for political dialogue between Russia and the European Union. Article six of the Partnership Agreement concerning the political dialogue between the parties, closely follows the political dialogue clauses of the Europe Agreements. The parties agreed to strengthen links and political relations, to have convergence of positions on international issues of mutual concern as a rule in public diplomacy. However, the absence of rights and opportunities for the development of minorities, as part of the political dialogue, was the great deficit of the article involved. Within this framework, the parties also agreed that regular meetings will take place in principle twice a year, between the Russian president and the president of the EC/EU Council and the European Commission.<sup>27</sup>

At the ministerial level, political dialogue will be conducted through the Cooperation Council and the parliamentary level through the Parliamentary Cooperation Council. In addition, it is also specified that other procedures and mechanisms will be developed either through the use of diplomatic channels or via meetings of senior officials or experts.<sup>28</sup>

After ratification of the PCA, political dialogue with Russia takes place at the Summits, Cooperation Councils and in various meetings in the Troika format.<sup>29</sup> Meetings in this context take place at the level of ministers twice a year; political directors four times a year and experts some fifteen CFSP working groups. Troikas meet with their Russian counterparts twice a year. In addition, at

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<sup>27</sup> Articles 8 & 9, Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* Before the PCA concerning the EU-Russian political relations, there was also a political declaration signed by the Presidents of Russia, the European Council and European Commission in November 1993, which provides the basis for permanent political dialogue and a system of regular consultations. See; *Bulletin EC II* 1993, p.71.

<sup>29</sup> Troika format includes Presidency, CFSP High Representative/Council Secretariat, future presidency and Commission. For meeting documents from the website of delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee see, world wide website URL:[http:// www.europarl.eu.int/meetdocs/delegations/russ/default.html](http://www.europarl.eu.int/meetdocs/delegations/russ/default.html) (accessed January 5, 2011)

the October 2001 Summit, it was agreed that the Troika of the Political and Security Committee would meet with the Russian Ambassador to the EU on a monthly basis to discuss ongoing international issues.

All these proper programmatic documents and rhetoric as explained above, the political partnership is the most sensitive and vulnerable area of cooperation in the framework of the PCA. According to rule, the political dialogue should contribute to the strengthening of links, to an increasing convergence of positions on international matters of mutual concern and to cooperation as regards the implementation and the observance of the principles of democracy and human rights. But the political partnership has not realized as in the rules and rhetoric in programmatic documents. This prognosis is based on some arguments. First, serious controversies on economic matters covered by the agreement need political decisions. So, they are the topics of vivid discussions in the framework of political dialogue. Second, the positions and approaches of the both sides as regards the situation in Europe and other regions of the world do not coincide in many cases. Of course, a lot of international problems relate to competencies of other international organizations. But a dialogue on the top level cannot but include the exchange of views on a broad range of domestic and international matters. Parties need a long time to achieve a necessary level of mutual understanding and confidence which could pave the way for compromises. And, last but not least, there is a set of problems relating to the democratization, human rights or ethnic conflicts in Russia, as well as ethnic conflicts and civil wars in the other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) which Russia was involved in.<sup>30</sup>

As known, the first serious political crisis between Brussels and Moscow was the Chechen War,<sup>31</sup> and the Georgia War. But unfortunately, there are no guarantees that there will be no new crisis born from the violation of human rights or any events of this kind in Balkans and the other areas. Moscow has been considering human rights questions as exclusively internal affairs of Russia and no one could interfere with her. *“For the time being, the implementation of the EU’s Common Strategy and the PCA have been revised, reduced or even halted by the war in Chechnya which proved very much costly to Russia. Thus joint projects with the EU were suspended, postponed and sometimes cancelled.”*<sup>32</sup>

There has been mainly four different approaches in Moscow towards the European Union concerning Russian understandings of the EU as a model; the EU as a partner; the EU as a structure for eventually incorporating Russia as a member; and

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<sup>30</sup> See for the place of Russia in the Commonwealth of Independent States; Firat Purtaş, *Rusya Federasyonu Ekseninde Bağımsız Devletler Topluluğu*, (Ankara: Platin Yayınları, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> Paul B. Henze, ‘Russia and the Caucasus’, *Perceptions Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-August 1996, p. 66-69.

<sup>32</sup> Heinz Timmermann, ‘The EU, Russia and the War in Chechnya: What is to be Done?’, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol.5, No.1, 2000, p. 172-174.

the EU as a channel of leverage. Regarding the first model, the EU was used as a model for Moscow's own integration policies in the CIS only in a very broad and cautious way. The second model; the EU as a partner was the most developed line of thinking. It implied seeing the EU as a respected source of trade, credits, investments, but also as a potential competitor, especially if Russia recovers economically. In this respect Partnership and Cooperation Agreement can become very important which gives the main legal and institutional framework for the bilateral relations between the European Union and Russia.

The latter scenario was a rather remote, prospect and even then it might be more of an existential problem, than a real zero-sum game. The third model, the EU as a structure in which Russia would be integrated as a member, was not entirely irrelevant, but the full membership seems unrealistic. There remain Westernizers want to see no wall at all, and Russia to become just another European country, as quickly as possible. In the fourth model, several areas where the EU could be seen as a channel of leverage for Russia concerning the especially in Russo-phone minorities in the Baltic States, conflict management, and as a counter weight to the NATO-centrism of Europe. The reason for that is that Russia needs help in promoting stability in the region via EU and the EU would be less challenging than NATO involvement or US involvement.

#### **CONDITIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA**

In addition to strategic partnership, another term that is often used to describe the EU-Russia relations was engagement. The argument went that it was in the Union's interest to engage Russia. The term engagement was put forward in the early 1980s and was normally understood as a strategy to deal with unfriendly states, alternative to punitive policies.<sup>33</sup> The aims of engagement were to make the behavior of these states more predictable and compatible and to achieve certain pragmatic results by means of a broad spectrum of economic incentives. There are two types of engagement, conditional and non-conditional. The West-Russia relations during Yeltsin's era could be possibly qualified as unconditional engagement<sup>34</sup>, whereas during Putin's era was as conditional engagement.<sup>35</sup>

It can be observed later a turn towards a rather specific form of conditional

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<sup>33</sup> There is an extensive literature of the policy of engagement. For a good account, see Richard Haas and Meghan O'Sullivan, 'Terms of Engagement: Alternative to Punitive Policies', *Survival*, Vol. 42, No. 2, Summer 2000, p.13-35.

<sup>34</sup> Igor Leshukov, 'Can the Northern Dimension Break the Vicious Circle of Russia- EU Relations?' in Hanna Ojanen (ed), *The Northern Dimension: Fuel For the EU?*, Program on the Northern Dimension of the CFSP, no.12, (Helsinki: The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2001), p.121.

<sup>35</sup> See for Putin's era; İlyas Kamalov, *Putin Dönemi Rus Dış Politikası Moskova'nın Rövanşı*, (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınları, 2008).

engagement as the European Parliament and the Commissioner responsible for external relations, Chris Patten, advocate embarking on a 'double track strategy' vis-a-vis Russia: "*a strategy that combines plain speaking on issues like Chechnya with continuing effort to build an effective relationship based on values and cooperation.*"<sup>36</sup>

This turn seems to indicate that the initial tactics failed and that an unconditional engagement did not work. The more time pass after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the more difficult it is for Europe to affect Russia politically or ensure smooth democratic developments in Russia. For example, the inefficient reactions to atrocities in Chechnya and Georgia clearly demonstrated the limits of the EU's ability to respond to human rights violations. At the same time, common values as a key foundation of the declared partnership were severely watered down at these times in Caucasus and also Balkans.

It is not clear how the proposed double track strategy will cure this problem. Actually, it may become one of the political components of the vicious circle. The EU's inability to react on matters of principle like the case of Chechnya serves as additional intensive for the Russian authorities to proceed 'forward to the past' and revive many familiar features of Soviet legacy and autocracy. "*How, then, could the EU react if Russia in the future was left without an independent media? Unfortunately, no sensible strategy is foreseen. The EU would not risk the whole spectrum of its relationship with Russia for human rights sake. Thus, Russia learns from the Chinese experience and, as Clinton failed in China, the European Union is failing in Russia. Even worse, a double-track strategy might end up as a simple justification for inaction and appeasement policy.*"<sup>37</sup>

In other words, the Union is likely further to contribute to the construction of a less democratic and more totalitarian state in Russia. Thus, the declared objective of building a democratic Russia is unreachable in the current framework of the relationship. The irony is that a further deepening of the political dialogue and of the political relations will only minimize the scope for European Union's influence.<sup>38</sup>

The viciousness of the circle was reflected even on the level of some political declarations. It was shown by a comparison of two documents, the EU's strategy on Russia from 1995<sup>39</sup> and the Common Strategy on Russia of

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<sup>36</sup> Patten in his remarks to the European Parliament on 12 December 2000. See also European Parliament, 'Oostlander Report for Common Strategy on Russia', *European Parliament 2000 Report on the implementation of the Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia* (A5-0363/2000 final)

<sup>37</sup> Igor Leshukov, 'Can the Northern ...', p. 123.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p.124.

<sup>39</sup> *EU Strategy on Russia adopted by the Madrid European Council*. For the full text, see 1863 GA Council Conclusions.

1999. In 1995, the EU ambitiously formulated its mission stating that the European Union was committed to establish a substantial partnership with Russia and to achieve the full integration of Russia in the community of free and democratic nations.<sup>40</sup> Four years later, in the Common Strategy on Russia, the EU vaguely refers to the objective of integrating Russia into a "common European economic and social space" and explicitly refrains from any responsibility for Russian affairs.

As known, Vladimir Putin's determined and harsh action to repress Chechen rebels entailed his political rise into presidency in March 2000 elections. Having mixed the modern principles of reform oriented mind with Russian traditional values, he could create a new confidence to respond the desire of most Russians 'order and strong state of Russia'.<sup>41</sup>

As the known, following the election of President Putin, the new government adopted an ambitious program of socio-economic reforms. The main focal points were the reform of the social, health and education sectors, and the improvement of the business and investment climate. The program foresees, for instance, a profound reorganization of the net and a radical simplification of the taxation and customs systems.<sup>42</sup> Democratic development in Russia was based on Putin's willingness to achieve a guided democracy. Like Gorbachev in his time, Putin faced two pressure groups: the first was formed by the governors, oligarchs, a part of liberal intelligencia and the second consisted of representatives of 'power ministries' and those parts of society that were in favor of 'strong arm' policy.<sup>43</sup>

Despite Putin's KGB background and Western critique of the Chechen war, the president did his best to establish good relationships with the West. According to Russian foreign policy priorities, Russian relations with the EU have been growing increasingly. There were many reasons for this and one of them was that Russia has played the role of defense wall between the East and Europe for centuries. Islamic extremists pose threats not only to Russia but also to Europe itself. At the same time, the problem of the violation of human rights domestically by the Russian side, Chechen republic, overburdens Russian relations with the EU. While the West insists on a political solution to the problem and the need to follow international norms, some Russians refer to the Chinese and Turkish practice of fighting separatism.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> EU Strategy on Russia, same wording is used in the 1995 Action Plan on Russia.

<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth Piper, 'Russia's Putin Pushes Lenin, Stalin Out In the Cold', *Reuters*, Moscow, June 20, 2000.

<sup>42</sup> For more details see the world wide web site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, URL: <http://www.mid.ru>. (accessed: 13 October 2011).

<sup>43</sup> Asem Nauşabayeva, 'Yeltsin'den Sonra Putin'le Yeni Rusya', *Stratejik Analiz*, Cilt. I, No. I, Mayıs 2000, s.40

<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, p.42

President Putin was very active in the international arena. He managed to resume relations with the West after the Kosovo Crisis. But in relations towards the so-called near abroad, the situation has not changed. Putin has spoken to the West on behalf of Russia's interests in this area, ignoring the former soviet republics. In this respect, Russian foreign policy kept the tradition of Yeltsin's regime. But everything depends on domestic developments in Russia. The main question is whether Russia is capable of becoming a truly liberal and democratic country as the Europeans want.

It is easily said that the relations between the EU and Russia has not achieved its intended aims as indicated in the programmatic documents<sup>45</sup>, due to some political problems. Problematic is Russian foreign policy towards the former Soviet periphery including its special relationship with the Baltic States and Commonwealth of Independent States; and diverging interests of the EU and Russia in the Caucasus and Central Asia especially concerning the great game over energy politics and ongoing debate over NATO enlargement are regarded as main issues for EU's politics with the Russia.

On the other hand, the domestic variable of Russia is in a paradoxical situation where it is surviving an absolute systemic crisis under the conditions of relative stability. Moreover, despite of the current state of 'crony capitalism' in Russia, it nevertheless provides for a rather stable political field where large sections of the Russian elites have a strong vested interest in preserving the status quo, thus making an emergence of an authoritarian regime in Russia highly unlikely. Russian foreign policy was concentrated on reestablishing regional hegemony over the former Soviet republics. The foreign policy orientation of new the administration was formalized with 'Russian Federation National security Doctrine', ratified on April 2000. It was also the mainly updated form of 1993-dated doctrines.<sup>46</sup>

Even though both documents reflected the linearity of strategic perspective in Russian foreign policy, both emphasized upon the economic interests of Russia in the security doctrine in regarding the demands of energy lobbies and grand oligarchs indicated Russia could pursue much pragmatic ways by emphasizing economic means, mainly energy, over the military means.<sup>47</sup>

This orientation was a mix of narrow assertive objectives with planned pragmatic means towards the former Soviet Union. But, in the implementation of policy, Russia was forced to find out a balance when its strategic concerns clashed to economic rationality. Russia sometimes prioritized coercive methods under the cover of economic means to deter any challenger state that could demonstrate no change occurred in Russia's mind.

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<sup>45</sup> Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and Common Strategy on Russia are the most important programmatic documents.

<sup>46</sup> Hasan Kanbolat, 'RF'nin Güney Kafkasya'daki Askeri Varlığı ve Gürcistan Boyutu', *Stratejik Analiz*, Cilt.1, No.3, Temmuz, 2000, s.42

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, s. 43.

However Russian leadership is trying to adopt its policy accordance with current trends in the world.

## **CONCLUSION**

As a basic rule since the end of the Cold War, all actors in international area encountered the need to revise their foreign policy priorities, security perceptions in accordance with the new parameters. As a main successor state to former Soviet Union, Russia, also found itself at the midst of new and ambitious circumstances. After the end of the Cold War, Europe and Russia faced also new realities and new challenges too. Europe evolved from the bipolarity to the monocentrism while Western Europe had become the only region of the Old World in terms of stability and efficiency, dynamism and integration.

The Western block, mainly the European Union occupies the dominant positions in the fields of international relations in Europe. The economic integration, political partnership, security, as well as social, legal and cultural cooperation gained momentum. These circumstances were reflected into the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Russia. After the disintegration of the Soviet System, one of the main aims of Russia was to preserve and develop good relations with leading Western countries. The developing partnership between Russia and the European Union was normally promoted as a promising pattern for Russian relations with the West for a while. Politicians on both sides use encouraging rhetoric and underline the enormous potentials in public diplomacy. But later a need to strengthen the bilateral links emerged. The objective for this kind of relationship was ponderously described as 'strategic partnership'.

On the other hand, there has been a long standing habit to present the EU-Russia relations as a success story in public diplomacy and to report on the made achievements, especially when compared with the troubled relations between Russia and NATO or United States. The EU-Russia disagreements over Chechnya and ongoing trade disputes added some worrying tunes to this generally positive picture, but overall enthusiasm does prevail. The excessive use of force and violations of human rights in Caucasus and in near abroad are normally presented by the EU as a temporary phenomenon that has overshadowed the bilateral relations in late 1999 and 2000's.

The trade disputes in certain sensitive areas are viewed as if they soon would be resolved and as if they would not undermine the economic potential. However, this optimistic assessment might be misleading. It tends to water down the seriousness of the problems. The worst is that it ignores their structural and systemic character, especially on the Russian side, and leads to conclusions that are wrong in their logic. In reality, the EU-Russia relations are in a vicious circle. Both the EU and Russia lack a strategy and are currently

muddling through in their relationship. This mirrors the general conundrum of the Russia-West relations. After initial problems, the sides are confronted with growing number of problems. They find themselves in a situation where any further step forward is likely to result in further complexities. This reflects the nature of Russians reforms and led us to ask which state and which economy is actually emerging from the collapse of the Soviet Union. It also clearly demonstrates the primitivism of EU approach and limited understanding of the factors that shape developments in Russia. At the same time, the EU easily reacts in this situation by watching its hands and stating that “the main responsibility for Russia's future lies with Russia itself”. This means that the future course of development in their relations will mostly depend on the success or the failure of the attempts made within Russia to restructure its policies, its economy, and its society. In other words, the EU refrains from any accountability. This has happened now after ten years of efforts. After the post-cold war Russian foreign policy suffered from hopes, expectations, and illusions while respecting the West. There was frustration and growing pessimism, and expectations are downgraded. On the other hand, Russians in their European aspirations are also very reserved, though in a different manner. The EU- Russia relations may come close to deadlock, options are limited and hopes are rather low. The strategic partnership is in the heavy chains of vicious circle.

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