



Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.)

From Cooperation to Partnership: Moving Beyond the Russia-EU Deadlock

Europe in Dialogue 1/2013

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Foreword

Since spring 2013 we can be certain: Europeans and Russians are flying together to Mars. However, for quite a long time nothing as positive as this has been in evidence in the political relations between Russia and the EU. The construction of a Common European Home, which started 20 years ago to the accompaniment of high hopes and a great deal of enthusiasm, has come to a standstill. Since 2008, the two sides have been negotiating a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement that is designed to replace the 1997 Agreement, which expired in 2007. When and whether these negotiations can reach a successful conclusion is a matter for conjecture. The relationship is clearly no longer as friendly as it used to be, and over the years the way in which the two sides talk to each other has become far more abrasive. In the run-up to the Vilnius summit in November 2013, at which the EU will be talking to its eastern neighbours, one has had the impression that we are back in the darkest days of the Cold War. Russia has issued a stern warning to the former Soviet republics, including the largest of them, Ukraine, and told them not to deepen their relations with the EU. Armenia has already backed down, and, instead of concluding an Association and Free Trade Agreement with the EU, now intends to join the Russian-led Eurasian Customs Union.

This volume is devoted to the questions of why the integration of Russia into the Euro-Atlantic community has failed to materialise, at least for the time being, and of what options are still available when it comes to improving relations between the EU and Russia. We asked eight noted experts on European-Russian relations from Russia and

the EU to analyse the state of mutual relations and to suggest various ways in which they could grow and develop. Furthermore, contributors from the U.S. and China shed some light on the European-Russian relationship from a global perspective.

The results of these analyses paint a sobering picture. Although the two sides could actually benefit from each other, the EU and Russia now tend to define themselves as rivals and not as partners who are looking for a joint response to the challenges of globalisation. The reasons that the contributors adduce in order to explain this state of affairs are both complex and numerous. Thus the EU member states are primarily frustrated by the lack of progress being made in the area of modernisation, and of course by President Vladimir Putin's authoritarian style of government. On the other hand, Russia now seems to find the Chinese approach to modernisation more attractive, especially since the EU displayed unmistakable signs of weakness during the euro crisis. However, the Chinese approach to modernisation has another undeniable advantage. It means that Russia is not going to be compelled to implement democratic reforms, and this in turn means that the power of the elites in Moscow is not going to be called into question. In the EU, people tend to overlook the fact that its modernisation strategy can be a success only if the political elites show a willingness to pursue long-term economic and welfare state goals and do not, as is still the case, spend all their time thinking about how to maintain their hold on power.

The Russians view the attempts by the EU to bring its influence to bear on the post-Soviet space with the help of Partnership and Association Agreements as hostile acts and have responded with an organisation of their own, the Eurasian Union, and by imposing quite specific sanctions. As a result of these developments, the EU is once again wrestling with a familiar dilemma. Should it jettison its value-based approach and, in keeping with the saying "He may be a son of a bitch, but he's our son of a bitch," conclude an Association Agreement with Ukraine without having made sufficient progress in the area of democratic reforms and the rule of law? Or should it continue to adhere to its standards, which on the one hand means that it can retain

its credibility, though on the other, as things stand at present, it may persuade Ukraine to fall into line with Russia?

Here, as the contributors admit, good advice is in short supply, for there does not seem to be such a thing as a quick fix. If the EU wishes to promote democracy, the rule of law and good governance in Russia and in its immediate neighbourhood, and that is something which it no doubt considers to be of paramount importance, it needs to interact to a far greater extent with civil society in Russia and in the states in its eastern neighbourhood. And for this reason there is in fact only one thing that it can do. It needs to overcome its fears about the influx of cheap labour and liberalise the visa regime. If the interaction between EU member states and Russia can become more intense on the level of the man in the street, it may be possible to overcome prejudice, to de-ideologise their relationship, and to embark on genuine cooperation in the area of modernisation. Quite a lot can still be achieved with youth exchange programmes and in the higher education sector, where cooperation could take the form of foreign semesters and the provision of scholarships. All this will take a long time to come to fruition. But we should start now, and not wait another 20 years.

Finally, we would like to thank the authors for their in-depth and thought-provoking analyses. We are particularly grateful to Iris Kempe, who worked tirelessly on the planning for this volume. Without her circumspect editorial support it could not have been completed.

Joachim Fritz-Vannahme
Director
Programme Europe's Future
Bertelsmann Stiftung

Political Modernisation and European Perspective

Russia and the European Union: Looking Back and Looking Ahead

Andrei Zagorski

Introduction

At the beginning of the previous decade, the European Union reviewed its policy options for the time after eastward enlargement. This process resulted in the development of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and in 2009 led to the introduction of the Eastern Partnership, which offered the countries of eastern Europe and the South Caucasus political association and economic integration with the European Union, but not full membership.

Moscow was also invited to participate in the ENP framework. If the Russian Federation had accepted this offer, it would have been able to move towards closer integration with the European Union. This in itself would not have led to an Association Agreement in the short term, but it would have initiated a process of gradual convergence between Russia and the European Union.

Despite the fact that the prospects for an association with the EU were enthusiastically discussed by the Russian political elite and experts in the field in the early years of the new millennium, in the end Moscow rejected the ENP idea and opted for the development of a contractual relationship with the EU. In 2003 Brussels and Moscow agreed to establish an EU-Russia strategic partnership based on the notion of four “common spaces,” the Common Economic Space, a Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice, a Common Space of External Security, and a Common Space of Research, Education and Culture. The decision was institutionalised in 2005 in four road-

maps endorsed at one of the semi-annual summit meetings in Moscow.

In 2003, the EU and Russia failed to develop a common vision for a strategic partnership, and since then they have construed the latter as a long-term and open-ended process. In addition to ongoing high-level political dialogue, it was underpinned by intensive multisectoral dialogues in the areas of common interest specified by the roadmaps, and in 2010 complemented by the launch of a partnership for modernisation, which Sabine Fischer discusses elsewhere in this book. In 2005 the EU and Russia agreed that their strategic partnership, which was not covered by the ENP and Eastern Partnership, had to be institutionalised in a new basic agreement that would replace the 1994 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA).

As yet, no one has challenged the wisdom of the strategic choices that the EU and Russia made in the previous decade. However, what has actually been achieved on the basis of these decisions is something of a disappointment. Of course, it all depends on how you decide to look at it. Some people will tell you that the glass is half full, and others will say that it is half empty. Igor Ivanov, the former Russian foreign minister who was involved in the decision-making process in 2003, has come to the conclusion that the development of common spaces has failed to gain momentum and has in fact ground to a halt (Ivanov 2013).

The EU and Russia are now confronted with new strategic uncertainties, and for this reason it seems unlikely that they will be able to bring about an improvement in their relations in the immediate future. If this assumption is correct, then it would seem to be a good idea to reexamine the strategic choices that were made 10 years ago, to review the policy options that are currently available to the two sides, and to ask whether there are any alternatives when it comes to shaping the strategic partnership process.

Looking Back

The nature of relations between the EU and Russia which emerged in the wake of the 2003 decisions implied that, in contrast to the ENP objectives, the anticipated convergence within the common spaces is not based on the assumption that large sections of the *acquis communautaire* are being or will be incorporated into the Russian regulatory framework.

Although the European Union has tended to define its policy approach towards Russia in normative terms, that is, on the basis of European political values and the objective of bringing the Russian regulatory framework into line with that of the EU, the process continues to be a sort of *à la carte* affair that can move ahead only if the two sides reach some kind of agreement. Moscow is not against the convergence of norms in certain areas, although it approaches the issue in a rather selective manner. This became apparent in the four roadmaps, which describe areas of convergence in which Russia and the European Union have been able to reach agreement. Furthermore, Moscow construes the strategic partnership with the European Union in terms of their common interests, and not in terms of the political values propounded by the EU.

Since the beginning of the previous decade, Russia has increasingly defined itself as an autonomous European (or Eurasian) and indeed global political entity and not as part of the Euro-Atlantic community. After turning a deaf ear to Western criticism of its increasingly authoritarian style of government, Moscow now wants to be accepted as an independent and equal partner, and not as a member of the Euro-Atlantic family.

The different approaches to the objectives of the strategic partnership continue to be a source of frustration and growing estrangement between Russia and the European Union. In the course of the past decade, this has become apparent in the growing number of disputes about a whole range of issues. Of course, it would be wrong to say that Russia and the European Union have made little or no progress over the past 10 years. They have in fact achieved a great deal in a number of areas.

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