Fears of Europe:
USSR, Russia and European Integration

Guest Editor
Lara Piccardo, University of Genova

CONTENTS

ABSTRACTS AND KEYWORDS

Looking to Each Other:
Russian-European Relations among Hostility and Fear

Lara Piccardo

The collapse of the USSR, the dissolution of the Eastern bloc, and the fifth enlargement of the European Union have radically changed the political map of the "old continent". Today, "political Europe" consists of the enlarged EU, taking in three former Soviet republics and seven central European "satellites"; a few additional countries, which in some cases are candidates or potential candidates for EU membership (such as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo); and Russia.

Following the admission of twelve (and then thirteen) new countries into the EU, Russia's neighbors Ukraine and Belarus now share borders with the EU, and Kaliningrad is completely encircled by EU member States.

In modifying the geopolitical map of the "old continent" so radically, the completion of the fifth enlargement of the EU (which had two phases, one in 2004, and one in 2007) was greeted with dismay in Moscow. The Kremlin's disappointment is rooted in history, which shows how the "new" Russia shares with the "old" one and with the Soviet Union some aspects of its foreign policy. The Soviet/Russian policy toward the European Economic Community (EEC)/EU is a case in point.

Since the beginning of the European construction process, by focusing on the ideological prophecies of capitalist contradictions, communist authorities did not understand the potential significance of the efforts of people like Jean Monnet, directed at economic, financial, and cultural integration (Namazova, Emerson 2005). And although the Soviet bloc economy needed economic relations with Western Europe, its political rulers rejected the idea of any European federation or confederation on the old continent (Aleksandrov-Agentov 1994; Zubok 1996; Soglian 1997).

Even before the birth of the Soviet Union, Europe and Russia had always looked to each other with diffidence or fear. Specifically, the geographical and identity location of Russia has always suffered because of the ambiguity of being a border between East and West, between Asia and Europe. Nevertheless, it would be misleading to measure the Russian swing between East and West by the yardstick of its greater or lesser Europeanization: this view would presuppose an implicit hierarchical relationship between Europe and Russia, of which historians should "estimate" progress or involution taking "Russia's Europeanisation" as a single unit of measure (Masoero 2015: 176).

Lara Piccardo, University of Genoa, Department of Political Science, lara.piccardo@unige.it

On the contrary, the relationship between Europe – understood in different historical moments as a geographical reality and/or as European Community/Union – and Russia has from time to time been expressed by the Russians in a complex reception of European or non-European models. Moreover, Russia looks at this relationship with the ambition to be an autonomous driving force because of belief to identify itself as the center of the world and not as a periphery.

So it is important to analyzes how Western Europe and Russia, being located within a common geographical area, have historically created a web of relationships characterized by attraction and repulsion, conditioned for centuries by ideology and power logic and often degenerated into contradictions and incompatibility.

1. When Russia Discovered Europe … and Europe Discovered Russia

Russia-Europe relations started to take shape only at the end of the 17th century (Duroselle 1964: 159-160): at that time, Muscovy needed the West to establish the army, to modernize weapons, to work the mines, in order to make progress in processing and technical procedures; European art and theater were beginning to penetrate and little by little Western science slowly began to spread as well.

The beginning of these contacts and the inclusion of Russia "in Europe" do not have a certain date. If, for example, in 1492 the American continent was geographically open to European exploration and colonization, Europe historically learned about Russia through a gradual process of contact with an autonomous entity. While America became a part of an emigrated, transplanted, and transformed European humanity, Russia showed the ambiguous and disquieting characters of a Eurasian "bi-continentality", which opposed to Europe as a unique and unknown – though not even as a "non-Europe" – part of it.

Unfamiliar and mysterious land for Europeans, Russia did not present itself without history, but, on the contrary, full of an extremely intense past that until the 17th century had enabled it to create its own art and literature as part of its own civilization, which was specific but, at the same time, homogeneous with the rest of Europe.

In that moment, when Russia started to discover both itself and the West, Europe began to discover Russia (Strada 1985: 15). At the beginning, the Eastern kingdom revealed itself only to merchants and ambassadors, who wrote diaries and ethnographical reportages trying to fix the external characteristics of this land.

Collecting and classifying by topics European travelers' reports on Muscovite, the great Russian historian Vasily Osipovich Kljuchevskij noted two contradictory aspects of the European attitude towards the ancient Russia (Kljuchevskij 1958). On the one hand, given the estrangement between Europe and Russia, which lasted until the end of the 17th century, Western civilization had been left in a state of almost total ignorance on the situation and on the destiny of this remote kingdom: this is why strange ideas

on it were born and rooted. But at the same time, no place had been described in such detail way as Muscovy. Kljuchevskij explains this contradiction with the fact that the more primitive and unknown for a traveler a country is, the more strongly exited the traveler remains, sharpening observation. It is important to add that for the European traveler Russia was not what China was for Marco Polo, it was not the "wholly other", but, under its "Asian" exoticism of forms of life, it concealed and manifested a common nucleus to European civilization: Christianity. Russia, then, was for the European both different and similar.

At the beginning of the 18th century, the European "discovery" of Russia moved from this first ethnographic phase to a second more complex and careful analysis.

In the era of the two great revolutions in America and France, even Russia lived its no less radical renewal, linked to the activity of Peter the Great, Tsar of Russia from 1682 to 1725: albeit limited to a national level and therefore not as universal as the French and American ones, this Russian regeneration was a more subversive revolution in its specific area of action. It had been the first big "modernization", which carried out Russia of the Middle Ages and moved it in modern history, shifting the political, economic and cultural reference of the whole country from Byzantium to Western Europe (Strada 1985: 23).

With a series of successful military campaigns, but especially with his vast work of modernization of the country, Peter I was able to transform a backward State in an empire that could compete with the major Western nations. Under his reign, Russia became a major European power; the new ruler introduced in Russia the European scientific, technological, cultural and political knowledge.

In 1696, after the foundation of a river fleet – and the creation *de facto* of the first Russian Navy – Peter tore the Ottoman fortress of Azov, a strategic stronghold for the sea control, ensuring an outlet to the Black Sea. Concerned by the growing of the Swedish power, two years later he tried to secure control of the Eastern part of the Baltic Sea and initiated military preparations for an attack on Sweden. Although the Great Northern War (1700-1721) began under bad auspices, with a defeat at Narva in 1700, Peter did not give up and in 1709, at the end of the Poltava campaign, brought one of the most important military victories of Russian history. In 1721, with the agreements of Nystad Treaty, which ended the war, Russia gained the control of a vast zone of the Baltic shoreline, later known under the name of "Baltic provinces".

The last war campaign of Peter I took place in the biennium 1722-1723 against Persia and assured Russia a Southern coastal region of the Caspian Sea.

This foreign policy attracted the attention of Europe. The wars against Sweden and the fighting with Poland put the Tsar almost daily in contact with the West. The creation of St. Petersburg, the "window on Europe", in 1703, on a Swedish territory recently conquered and the transfer of the capital to this city, showed better than any other decision the Russian willingness to move towards the West.

Nevertheless, Peter I struggled a lot to form alliances with European princes, who distrusted him. It was the Poltava victory to force them to accept him (Duroselle 1964: 162) and his "entrance" in Europe is technically marked by the dates when the European countries recognized the Western title of "Emperor" which Peter started to use since 1721, to replace the Eastern Byzantine title of "Tsar": 1721 for Prussia and the United Provinces; 1723 for Sweden; 1733 for Saxony; 1741 for Ottoman Empire; 1742 for Austria and England; 1745 for France and Spain; finally, 1764 for Poland.

From the birth of the modern Tsarist kingdom with Peter the Great, Russia entered openly in competition with the Ottoman Empire and Persia, not only for the defense of its territory, but for the monitoring of the entire Caucasus region. It was immediately evident that the Russian penetration was not only commercial and political, but had also a strong ethnic color in the sense that the Cossacks (Russian or Ukrainian), or other nationalities began to settle more and more numerous in the Caucasus.

In domestic matters, Peter I put into effect numerous reforms, including the reduction of the power of the boyars and the transformation of the Patriarchy of the Orthodox Church in a synod controlled by the Tsar. The reforms of Peter the Great provoked such a sharp break between the old Muscovite Russia and the new European Russia, that for two centuries the whole Russian culture lived the problem of continuity and discontinuity between these two stages of development, trying to grasp what persisted of "Russian" and developed in the process of "modernization", traumatically began at dawn of the 18th century.

The renovation process, Westernization and territorial enlargement started by Peter I continued with Catherine the Great, who reigned from 1762 to 1796.

In those years, the Russian Empire expanded considerably: as a result of the two wars against the Ottoman Empire – the first from 1768 to 1774 and the second from 1787 to 1791 – and of the annexation of the Crimean Khanate in 1783 – officially sanctioned by treaty with the khan Shaghin-Ghirej –, Russia secured the control of the Northern coast of the Black Sea, while on the West the Empress proceeded to the incorporation of large territories during the three partitions of Poland.

The 18th century was a century so crucial for the Russian national spirit, which first fully affirmed with Peter's ideals and then was forged through the wars of Catherine. The climax of patriotism, however, would have recorded with the anti-Napoleonic wars of the early 19th century, which marked *de facto* the final entry of Russia into the consent of the European powers.

However, just before arriving to that moment, the great Russian intellectuals of the time, the leaders of the so-called *intelligentsja*, were divided into two opposing schools of thought, Westernism (or Occidentalism) and Slavophilism, in a fight that would never be played in open field.

The Westerners looked at Russian backwardness in the light of the Western European liberal values, such as political and civil freedom, the rationalistic philosophical

tradition and scientific progress. They insisted on the need for Russia to appropriate of the achievements of Western civilization, particularly the neighboring Europe, in front of which it seemed to be in a peculiar lagging. They considered the works of Peter the Great exceptionally important as they could open a "window on Europe" within the great Empire. On behalf of their ideals, Westerners denied any meaning to the life lived up before Peter's reforms and compared history, traditions, fairy tales, moral concepts of the Russian-speaking world with the ideals of the Roman-Germanic world.

The Slavophiles, on the contrary, enhanced the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Russian people opposing, through its political and philosophical ideas, to the liberal and industrialized culture, which characterized the European people. Looking back on the whole national history, Slavophiles would have arrived at a conception which regarded Russia as a force destined to renew not only itself, but also the whole of humanity thanks to the innate virtues of the Russian people and to the possibility of a development in a collectivist sense of the "communities" (*mir*) of the farmers, avoiding the evils of Western individualism and disruptor of industrial capitalism.

It was a debate that highlighted the typical bipolar vision not only of the Russian world, but also of those Slavic peoples located between Eastern and Western worlds. This is a vision that still appears today inevitably rooted in the speeches of the current political leaders.

The research of the Russian specificity continued during the 19th century. While Russia was trying to form its own peculiar consciousness, the West, in front of the giant which was growing visibly, began to form a new self-consciousness. Tsarist Russia became meanwhile a key player in European politics, having a crucial role in the defeat of Napoleon, the Congress of Vienna, the Holy Alliance, the Crimean War and the systematization of Eastern Europe on the eve of World War I.

2. Soviet Union and Integrated Europe

Meanwhile, in the West some precursors of the integrated Europe were thinking about a new vision of the continent. The projects for European unification began to circulate, albeit with little importance, and the future Bolsheviks analyzed their content in view of a contribution to the internationalist strategies.

The first analysis about the Russian relations with a hypothetical integrated Europe dates back to September 1914, when the continental unification question was for the first time raised in the Tsarist Empire by Leon Trotsky, who published a pamphlet *The War and the International (The Bolsheviks and World Peace)*[1].

With a far-sighted vision and in many ways forerunner of his times, the author argued that the cause of World War I was not the irredentist Serb attack in Sarajevo or the desires of independence of the rebelling nationalities in the multinational Austro-

---

[1] The pamphlet was first published in German with the title *Der Krieg und die Internationale*.

Hungarian Empire. The reason of war was the inability of the national State, as unitary and autonomous economic territory, to give a positive response to the underlying needs of the international, tumultuous, and not regulated growth of national economies and, consequently, to resolve conflicts in Europe and worldwide.

Lenin – whose antitheses against Trotsky were not yet clearly defined even about the "permanent revolution" – initially maintained a certain reserve on the question. However, on 23 August 1915, in his article "On the Slogan for a United States of Europe"[2], published in the German review *Sotsial-Demokrat*, he wrote that if on the political level there was no contradiction between European unification and socialist revolution, in economic terms, however, things changed. The United States of Europe would constitute a temporary agreement "between the European capitalists" (Lenin 1974), with the sole purpose of destroying socialism. Nevertheless, what worried Lenin the most was both the possibility of doubt that the slogan of the United States of Europe could have generated about the victory of socialism in one country, and the international relations of this new State. Lenin feared that the prospect of European unification could paralyze the revolutionary forces in a waiting condition or give a pacifist illusion on the viability of this unification of capitalist foundations (Monteleone 1975: 83).

Since then, the Soviet Union was always hostile to any form of continental integration. During World War II, on 11 January 1944, Ivan Maisky, the Soviet ambassador in London, and Maxim Litvinov, the Soviet ambassador in Washington from 1941 to 1943, delivered a memorandum to Stalin. In their view, it was "not in the interests of the Soviet Union, at least in the first period after the war, to foster the creation of various kinds of [European] federations"[3]. The consensus was that the USSR should remain an unchallenged land power in Europe, without even a shadow of countervailing power represented by another State or a group of smaller States.

When the Schuman Plan and the Pleven Plan were launched at the beginning of the Fifties, Stalin evaluated them only in the context of the process of the militarization of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Moscow did not understand the true essence of the European construction process: the political aspect of unification took second place and Soviet leaders always little discussed it. Considering the European unification as a dangerous process intended to strengthen capitalism and to support Atlanticism, a feeling of worry and anxiety prevailed in the Kremlin, especially in relation to the military nature of Western initiatives and to the delicate German question. Indeed, until the Gorbachev period the expression "European integration" was never used by the Soviet mass media, journalists and political scientists. The word "integration" was always to be written in quotation marks or parentheses, and accompanied by the compulsory adjective "imperialist" (Zaslavsky 2003: 58).

Under Khrushchev, the Soviet leadership developed a new diplomacy but, despite the initial rejection of the Stalin ways, as soon as the Rome Treaties were signed on 25

---

[2] The article is now collected in *Lenin Collected Works*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974, vol. 21, 339-343.

[3] *Majskij Molotovu*, AVPRF (*Archiv vnešnej politiki Rossijskoj Federatisi*, Archive of Foreign Politics of the Russian Federation), fond 06, opis' 6, papka 14, delo 145, p. 5.

March 1957, Khrushchev and his diplomats expressed a strong opposition to the new European Communities (Forte 1968).

The week before the signature of the Treaties, Moscow submitted a proposal to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe: the proposal included a draft treaty for an all-European economic co-operation. A Soviet Foreign Ministry statement was attached to the draft proposal: it warned of the dangers of the EEC to the world peace and stability ("Soviet Proposal" 1957: 156). In 1957 and 1962, two papers were released by a number of experts of the Soviet Academy of Sciences that accused the EEC of being the economic ground of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and a form of neo-colonialism, created for the better exploitation of the working class, based on the expansionist dreams of Germany (Dutoit 1964: 41-42).

The first paper was published on the review *Kommunist*[4] and was entitled "17 Theses on the Common Market", even if it was known with the title "On the Creation of the Common Market and of European Atomic Energy Community" as well.

The "17 Theses" stated that, under the guise of the European construction, the "imperialist" promoters of the continental integration had divided Europe into economic, political and military groups, which were opposed to each other, creating an aggressive military bloc of Western powers, directed against the Soviet Union and the other People's democracies in Europe. All these measures were taken more often on the initiative, and in all cases with the active support of US leaders, who were the head of the "imperialist camp". The document also described the contents of the Treaties of Rome, thus proving how the authors, while presenting analysis and specious propaganda, punctually knew the Western materials. Finally, the "17 Theses" prescribed to the Western Communist Parties to denounce the reactionary and aggressive character of the European Communities, in order to avert the prospect of nuclear war, and instead strengthen the peaceful coexistence of States with different social systems.

The second paper as well gave negative judgments on European integration, whose backbone was the "union between the clerical and military dictatorship of Adenauer and the authoritarian regime of general de Gaulle"[5]. Published in *Pravda* on 26 August 1962, the paper was entitled "32 Theses on the Common Market", but was also known as "On Imperialistic Integration in Western Europe". In the document the EEC was considered an ephemeral success that would collapse at the first difficulties and the contrasts among the capitalist States were destined to sharpen more and more, hampering efforts, especially Americans', to smooth them. The USSR – refusing to recognize the Communities (Lysén 1987: 84; Morawiecki 1989: 3) – and the socialist camp had on their side nothing to fear because "our countries have become (…) in such a powerful force that no 'Common Market' constitutes a threat to us" (*Pravda* 1962).

---

[4] *Kommunist*, 1957, 88-102. The document was published also in the IMEMO review (1957), *Mirovaja ekonomika i meždunarodnye otnošenija* [World Economy and Intenational Relations], 83-96.
[5] *Ibidem*.

The events of the following years did not confirm the Soviet theses. If it is true that European integration experienced a setback, it did not dissolve.

In the Brezhnev period, the same approach towards the EEC prevailed. The Soviet goals were now the fragmentation of Western Europe and its separation from the United States (Adomeit 1984: 9). The Soviets used propaganda again and in 1971-1972 the Muscovite review *La vie internationale* (published in Russian, but also in French and English in order to be addressed to a Western audience) dedicated eight articles to the European integration process, bitterly criticizing it. Other four articles expressed the Soviet position against the first enlargement of the European Communities and denounced Chinese openings to the EEC.

In the 1980s, the Soviet position radically changed mainly because of Mikhail Gorbachev (Rey 2015). Facing in 1985-1986 strong economic problems, the new Soviet leadership was for the first time willing to admit the reality of these problems and was able to look for a global solution to them. It called for a completely new attitude to international relations, the so-called "New Thinking".

Three practical ideas emerged from this innovative approach: peaceful coexistence had to be cooperative, true security had to be mutual, and the USSR and the US had to promote the concept of "reasonable sufficiency" in their strategic thinking. These principles resulted in a resumption of dialogue between the Americans and the Soviets concerning nuclear weapons as well as the end of Soviet involvement in many parts of the world (Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan first of all).

In his address to the 43rd UN General Assembly Session on 7 December 1988, Gorbachev talked of a "new world order", and on 6 July 1989, addressing the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, he outlined his idea of "a Common European Home". At that time, there was still an opportunistic dimension in Gorbachev's proposals: since the relations between the USSR and its Eastern satellites became increasingly difficult and their economic exchanges weakened, the Kremlin had a clear economic incentive to develop trade and exchanges with Western Europe.

However, Gorbachev's perception of Europe was becoming more global and ambitious. In his mind, "the Common European Home" (Casier 2018) could contribute to evacuate the bipolarity of the world, to bring in this way security to the continent, and to provide a framework in which the reformed USSR and its reformed Eastern satellites could grow. This framework would be based on a "socialism with a human face", a socialism that would be tolerant, respectful of others' values, of the principle of renunciation of force and of freedom of choice.

The concept of "Common European Home" remained an idea more than a concrete political strategy, but it did not preserve Gorbachev from the disappointments of the Soviet leadership.

Gorbachev also began the slow rapprochement between EEC and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON or CMEA). Already in 1986, the Soviet General

Secretary expressed hopes for the revival of COMECON, advanced the Soviet candidacy to the GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs) and started negotiations for the conclusion of an agreement with the European Community.

Under the aegis of Gorbachev, the CMEA accepted the so-called "parallel approach", under which the EEC could enter into bilateral commercial agreements with the members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, but not with the Western organization itself.

The new attitude of the Soviet government to the European Community was confirmed by a recognition agreement signed in Brussels on 25 June 1988 by the European Commission and the COMECON, which followed the opening of negotiations for an economic agreement between the USSR and the EEC.

Between 1988 and 1990, the European Community was then able to reach several key results. It established diplomatic relations with Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC), eliminated the import quotas applied for a long to different goods, extended the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) to the East and concluded in short the so-called "first generation" trade and cooperation agreements with Poland and Hungary in the late Eighties. Moreover, in order to provide financial support to Central and Eastern reconstruction, the EC gave birth to the PHARE program (*Pologne-Hongrie Assistance à la Restructuration Economique*, Poland-Hungary Aid for the Reconstruction of the Economy), created by the EEC Regulation no. 3906 of 18 December 1989 and in force from the following year.

Despite the pressures of Communitarian agricultural and industrial lobbies[6], these measures allowed the rapid development of trade between the Community and the East of the Continent (Pravda 1992). The members of CMEA abandoned the internal trading system (Daviddi 1992), allowing before the EC and then the European Union (EU) to become their most important economic partner.

However, these relations lasted for a short time. In Budapest, on 29 June 1991, the forty-sixth (and final) plenary session of the CMEA signed its dissolution protocol. The decision had become inevitable, because in September 1990 the Soviet Union, already proven by a long process that would lead to its collapse, announced that, starting from 1 January 1991, it would withdraw from the exchange rate system of CMEA.

3. After the Cold War

A new dimension of the relations between Russia and the EU developed following the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the advent of the new Russia on its ruins.

From that date, a new and more intense period of contact between the parties ensured relations, which confirmed the importance assigned by Moscow to its relationship with Europe.

---

[6] These lobbies insisted that the EEC states would have disadvantages without an adequate protection from the lower costs of labor and the lower environmental standards in the CEEC.

It is necessary to remember that, under Yeltsin's presidency, Moscow had continued to assign to the relations with Brussels a role that was subordinate to an agreement with Washington: this orientation was the result of the idea that, despite severe economic difficulties, Russia continued to be a superpower and had to negotiate on an equal level with the United States. In those years, Russian-European communications were able to overcome recurring tensions, due largely to initiatives by the Russian government, at international and domestic level, in breach of the standards of democratic and responsible behavior, formally sanctioned between the parties (breach of human rights, restrictions to freedom of the press, repression of minorities). Even the expansion of the EU to Eastern Europe, which was central to a lively debate in Moscow (Dundovich 2004), failed to prevent the progress of mutual relations.

The purpose of this political line was the definition of an organic and articulate system of relations, responding to the desire by Russians and Europeans to satisfy the implicit commitment in a strategic partnership. On the Russian side, the awareness that Moscow was facing a EU seeking release from the condition of "economic giant, political dwarf" contributed to the commitment with Western Europe.

The focus on the political and diplomatic relationship responded to Brussels' hopes, providing a significant contribution to the effort undertaken to acquire an important role in terms of intercontinental relations. In fact, albeit in terms that could not be compared to the type of privileged relations held with the United States, Russia was the other great power capable of offering to the EU valid cooperation at international level.

In December 1990, during a meeting of the European Council in Rome, it emerged that the Community Member States were aware of the importance of the political and economic reforms being undertaken at the time by the Soviet Union for the promotion of peace and stability on the Continent and in the rest of the world.

In order to sustain and help the new political activities launched by Moscow, in July 1991, the then twelve European Member States created the TACIS Programme (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States)[7]. This was conceived in consideration of just one partner, Gorbachev's USSR. Shortly afterwards, the Soviet Union collapsed, ending up with the independence of the Baltic States and the creation of twelve independent republics.

It was on that occasion that the EU acknowledged the importance of sustaining the reformative impetus following the creation of the new States. Their decision to opt for democracy and for an economic system aimed towards the free market meant breaking with the structures and traditions that had been consolidated over decades and introducing new legal and administrative mechanisms to affirm themselves as new autonomous States.

---

[7] Cf. EC/EURATOM Regulation no. 2157/91, 24 July 1991; EEC Regulation no. 2053/93, 19 July 1993; EC/EURATOM Regulation no. 99/2000, 29 December 1999: official European Union website http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32000R0099&qid= 1407162960667&from=EN.

The TACIS Programme was aimed at the Russian Federation, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Mongolia as well, becoming a key instrument in political cooperation between the EU and its partner countries. The first phase was completed on 31 December 1999, but a second set of regulations (99/2000), adopted by the Council on 29 December 1999, renewed the programme for 2000-2006.

Despite the role played by the TACIS Programme in supporting the transition of the Russian Federation to the state of law and free market, the milestone in Russian-European relations was the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)[8].

Signed in Corfu during the European Council held on 24-25 June 1994 and subsequently ratified by the parties – including Austria, Finland and Sweden, the three members that joined the EU in 1995 –, the PCA became effective on 1 December 1997, at the end of the hostilities in Chechnya. The Agreement was based on the principles of promotion of international peace, security and the support of a democratic society based on political and economic freedom. It also intended to create an "economic cooperation of wide scope" (PCA, art. 56, par. 1) within the context of successful political and institutional dialogue inspired by the suggestions of the institutionalist approach, but the effective commitment of both parties was required in order to produce results and not empty declarations of principles.

In 1997, the Treaty of Amsterdam introduced another instrument used in Russian-European relations: the common strategy. This was more than an act of mere and generalized address; it was a precise decision that was binding to the Council of the Union, reminding the European Council of its definition: "The European Council shall decide on common strategies to be implemented by the Union in areas where the Member States have important interests in common"[9]. In this case, the instructions were much more detailed. Targets were established, along with the duration of the strategy and the means made available. The Council of the Union was responsible for implementation, with the adoption of collective stances and actions.

The common strategy was adopted for the first time during the European Council meeting held in Cologne, on 2-3 June 1999, in order to outline the general framework of European actions in relation to the Kremlin.

The strategy should last four years and emphasized the need for communication with Moscow and the development of the programme based upon cooperation. The specific initiatives pursued by the EU within the scope of the strategy concerned political dialogue and communication on security, economic matters, trade and

---

[8] "Partnership and Cooperation Agreement". *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 327, vol. 40, 28 November 1997 (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L:1997:327:FULL&from=EN). For the Russian translation cf. *Dokumenty, kasajushchiesja sotrudnichestva mezhdy ES i Rossiej*. [Documents Concerning the Cooperation between the EU and Russia]. Moscow: Pravo, 1994.

[9] *Treaty of Amsterdam Amending the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties Establishing the European Communities and Certain Related Acts*, art. J.3, paragraph 2, p. 10 (http://www.europarl. europa.eu/topics/treaty/pdf/amst-en.pdf).

investments, energy, the fight against organized crime and twinning programmes. These actions, however, were to be drawn up within the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and be fully accomplished within it.

The PCA had a duration of ten years. Upon its expiry, in 2007, the new Russian President, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, showed no intention of entering into a new agreement, nor did the EU seem capable of offering tangible and shared counter-proposals: so far, at the moment EU and Russia share no agreement about their relations.

Meanwhile, the EU had tried to boost cooperation with Moscow, activating another "foreign policy" instrument. During the European Parliament Session held on 18 December 2002, the then President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, launched the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), developed from 2003 to establish privileged relations with the countries bordering on the EU (Alcaro, Comelli 2005), "sharing everything with the Union but institutions" (Prodi 2002). The ENP was centred on the promotion of democracy, freedom, prosperity, security and stability, while being conditioned by the reciprocal interest in respecting common values, specifically those of democracy, the state of law, human rights, good government and the principles of a sustainable development and market economy.

Having evolved after the latest expansion of the EU towards the broader formulation of the Wider Europe Neighbourhood Policy (WENP), it presented several important innovations. Firstly, the Commission's intention to bring external relations between the EU and its neighbours under a single strategic design should be seen positively. Only in this way did it become possible to create "a ring of friends" (Prodi 2002) and offer a clearer definition of the scope of the Union's external action. From this point of view, the policy of proximity made the boundaries within which to pursue the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) more visible.

The construction of peaceful and cooperative relations around the EU corresponded to a plan by Brussels aimed at the creation of an area of commercial integration and close institutional cooperation, really capable of making the old concept of frontier as a "limit" obsolete, with the foundation of a new concept of "link".

This, however, seems more of a moral philosophy than a political practice. An example is the Russian-Georgian conflict of summer 2008. Putin was Prime Minister at the time: having been elected President for two consecutive terms (2000-2004; 2004-2008), he could not stand for a third. One of his right-hand men had, however, been elected in his stead. Dmitri Anatolevich Medvedev was President until 4 March 2012, when Putin was reinstated in the highest office in the Russian Federation.

In the night between 7 and 8 August 2008, the Georgian army moved into Ossetia, which had declared its independence. The following day, on 9 August, the Russian Federation, which had had a military presence in South Ossetia and Abkhazia since 1992, as interposition force by international mandate, heavily intervened, blocking the

Georgians and occupying a very large part of the territory, advancing to within a few dozen kilometers of the capital, Tbilisi.

On 15 August, Georgia and Russia signed a preliminary agreement on the ceasefire, with the mediation of the European Union led by the President at the time, Nicolas Sarkozy. On the bases of the agreement, a mutual commitment was made to withdraw the troops to their positions prior to start of hostilities, and obliging Georgia to abstain from taking action against the two secessionist republics. After an initial withdrawal from the front, from the town of Gori for instance, Russia had decided to continue its military occupation of two buffer areas in Georgia to prevent possible attacks towards South Ossetia and Abkhazia. These areas of occupation initially included the port of Poti on the Black Sea, as well as the presence of several Russian checkpoints on the main national access routes, lasting about two months. From 1 October 2008, 200 EU military observers were assigned to the two buffer areas, as envisaged in the meetings held between Moscow and Brussels in September. The withdrawal of Russian troops from the buffer area near South Ossetia was completed on 8 October 2008.

Russia acknowledged the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia on 26 August 2008, subsequently signing military agreements with the two Republics.

It should be noted that, in this case too, crisis prevention measures had no effect and the European Union found itself having to cope no longer with a crisis, but with a war, for which it was completely unprepared. The attitudes of the Member States were not always convergent and this revealed, once again, all the weakness typical of a foreign policy, which was not "common" but, rather, "traditional".

In an attempt to repair the damages caused by the Russian-Georgian war and develop better forms of prevention, on 7 May 2009, at the Prague Summit, the EU launched six Eastern Partnerships (EPs) with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldavia, and Ukraine. For Europe, the partnership means greater security and stability along the Eastern frontiers, considering that the region has become a hive of crisis and is still suffering the effects of the well-known "frozen conflicts" (Lynch 2002).

4. The Crisis of 2013 and the Russian Annexation of Crimea

The request for ratification of the Eastern Partnership triggered the complex and delicate Ukrainian crisis. When, in November 2013, under pressure from the Kremlin relating mainly to the energy question, President Janukovych suspended negotiations with the European Union, peaceful protests began in Kiev. Janukovych, elected in 2010 thanks to strong support from the Crimean and Southern and Eastern Ukrainian electorate, condemned the protests, deciding at the end of the month to bring in the Ukrainian special forces, the *Berkut*. The protest became a situation of urban warfare and dissent began to increase against Janukovych who, on 22 February 2014, was forced to flee Kiev following his de-legitimisation by Parliament. This was followed by the liberation of the former Prime Minister, Julija Timoshenko, but, while the new

power tried to take hold, protests started up in several cities with a Russian majority, which condemned the events as a *coup d'état* and a danger to their communities.

This triggered further political crises in different Ukrainian regions, first and foremost Crimea. Here, on 27 February 2014, unidentified troops, suspected of being led directly by Moscow, occupied the Crimea Supreme Council building and that of the Council of Ministers in Simferopol, where Russian flags began flying. In this situation of increasing chaos, the Crimean Regional Parliament appointed Sergeyj Valerijovich Aksyonov, representative of Russian Unity, the Russian minority party, as Prime Minister of the Crimean Autonomous Republic. The appointment was censored as illegal by the government of Kiev, which declared Aksyonov to be wanted pursuant to art. 109 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code – an article relating to acts of violent amendment or overturning of constitutional order – and objected to all his acts. On the same day, the Crimean *Berkut* set up security checkpoints for entry to and exit from the isthmus of Perekop and the Chongar Peninsula, which separate Crimea from the mainland: in the space of just a few hours, Ukraine and Crimea were *de facto* divided.

Two days later, on 1 March 2014, Aksyonov announced that the new Crimean authorities would exercise control over all Ukrainian military installations on the peninsula and asked Putin to act as guarantor of peace and public order in Crimea. The invitation triggered immediate action by Russia and, that very same day, the Russian Duma ratified military intervention and sent troops and weapons to Sevastopol, causing protests by the international community.

Meanwhile, the Crimean Supreme Council announced a referendum on annexation to the Russian Federation. Initially planned for 25 May 2014, on 6 March the Assembly of Simferopol brought it forward to 16 March, emphasizing the fact that the consultation would involve Crimean citizens only.

Despite strong opposition from Kiev, where Parliament issued the act of dissolution of the Crimean *Rada* and the Constitutional Court declared the referendum to be illegal, the election went ahead as planned. It recorded an almost unanimous result in favor of joining Russia: approximately 96% of the Crimean voters answered yes to the question: "Are you in favor of reunification of Crimea with Russia as constituent authority?" (Rizzi 2014).

On that same day, the United Nations Security Council voted by large majority for a resolution to declare the referendum invalid. This result was a foregone conclusion, proving Russia's international isolation. The referendum was characterized by a conflict between two principles of international law. The first principle was that of "self-determination of peoples", sanctioned for the first time in the Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points on 8 January 1918 and invoked by the Crimean Republic and by Russia. The second principle was that of the "inviolability of frontiers and the territorial integrity of States"[10], proclaimed in 1975 in the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference

---

[10] It should be remembered that the established principle is not that of the non-changeability of frontiers, but that according to which the frontiers cannot be changed under threat and by the use of force (Ronzitti 2013: 81).

on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), evoked by Ukraine. These are equally valid principles in relation to which international law has still to express an opinion, opting in favor of one or the other.

On 17 March, after officially announcing the results of the referendum, the Crimean Supreme Council, renamed the Crimean State Council, declared the formal independence of the Crimean Republic, including the territories of the Crimean Autonomous Republic and the city of Sebastopol, which was granted special status within the juridical order of the Separatist Republic. The Crimean Parliament announced the partial abrogation of the Ukrainian laws, the adoption of the Russian ruble as official currency, alongside the *hryvnia* (the Ukrainian currency), began the nationalization of the Ukrainian State's assets and made a formal application to Russia for annexation.

This annexation came on 18 March, with the signing of the pertinent treaty by Vladimir Putin, the Russian President, Sergey Aksyonov, the Crimean President, and Aleksei Chalyj, Mayor of Sebastopol. The treaty became effective three days later on 21 March, with the approval of Russian federal constitutional law no. 6[11], *Adhesion by the Crimean Republic to the Russian Federation and Formation within the Russian Federation of New Authorities – The Crimean Republic and the Federal City of Sevastopol*[12].

The international community did not recognize the annexation. The United States and the EU subsequently applied the so-called "intelligent sanctions", which selectively penalize those close to the head of power, but which seem to be unable to induce a change in the Russian stance in relation to Crimea, which remains, for the moment, unchanged.

5. Conclusions

While the Ukrainian matter was still in progress, on 27 June 2014, the governments of Ukraine, Moldavia and Georgia signed Association Agreements with the EU, provoking a harsh reaction by Moscow.

Already on 10 June 2014, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Grigorj Karasin, commented the signature as follows: "Moldova's signature of the association agreement with the European Union can complicate relations with Russia and put them to a serious test"[13]. Moscow felt that the Agreements signed with Brussels were incompatible with the areas of free market, which it had created with the countries in question, threatening to apply higher tariffs and stricter border controls.

---

[11] The Russian text of the federal constitutional law is published in the *Official Website of Juridical Information* (www.pravo.gov.ru), 21 March 2014; in *Rossijskaja Gazeta* (the Russian Official Gazette), no. 66, 24 March 2014; in *Parlamentskaja Gazeta* [Parliamentary Gazette], no. 11, 28 March – 3 April 2014.

[12] At the moment, Russia has three federal cities: Moscow, St. Petersburg and Sevastopol.

[13] See *The Voice of Russia* website: http://sputniknews.com/voiceofrussia/news/2014_06_27/Ukraine-EU-Association-Agreement-will-have-serious-consequences-Russian-Deputy-FM-5411/.

Moreover, it is clear how Putin intends to keep back Russia to its great past. After having solved the principle economic problems of Russia using the energy sector[14], he moved to rebuilt the former Soviet space in Europe and he is now concentrating in coming back to play an important role in the Mediterranean Sea: Russian attitude toward Turkey and Syria is a signal of it.

Putin's plan started years ago with the gradual return to Moscow of the former Soviet Union. The realignment maneuver took place in October 2014 with the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), with the full membership of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia. The objective of the EAEU is to create a unified economic space between Europe and Asia: within it, the Kremlin obviously has a decisive role. Putin explained:

> Eurasianism is a tradition of our political thought. It has been rooted in Russia for a long time, and now it is acquiring a completely new sound, especially in connection with the intensification of integration processes in the post-Soviet space. (…) We need to adopt specific laws related to the regulation of the economy in the States of the Customs Union [it was the previous name of the EAEU] and in our common economic space. (…) An integration core has already taken place and is developing, but all our closest neighbors do not yet belong to this core, and economic logic will (…) encourage all our closest partners to participate in these integration processes (Putin 2012)[15].

Putin uses EAEU for two purposes. On the one hand, it exerts pressure on the Eastern side of Europe, proposing attractive economic partnerships to those countries "disputed" with the EU. On the other hand, it tries to guarantee to Moscow a greater political role in Asia, favoring a merger on several levels between the EAEU countries and those adhering to the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations).

By placing itself at the center of this very extensive network of diplomatic and trade relations, Putin cultivates not only relations with Beijing but also with the other great powers of the Asian chessboard: first and foremost Iran, Japan and India, States which are increasing solid partnerships in the energy and military sectors with Russia.

On relations with Moscow, the EU does not seem to have a clear strategy now. The different intensity with which the European Member States are economically linked to Russia is one of the factors behind the lack of cohesion in Brussels' policy with the East. The EU was divided once again when the Ukrainian crisis exploded and on the stance to take with regard to Moscow's annexation of Crimea. The Baltic Republics and former satellite countries would have liked the West to react more strongly and decisively to the authoritarian return of Moscow in the post-Soviet space.

---

[14] It is not a case that Putin's PhD dissertation was entitled *Mineral and Raw Materials Resources and the Developing Strategy for the Russian Economy*. An English summary is available at website http://www.theatlantic.com/daily-dish/archive/2008/08/putins-thesis-raw-text/212739/.
[15] The translation is mine.

The countries that have important economic relations with Russia in strategic sectors like energy – Italy, France and Germany – condemn Russian revanchism, while mediating within the EU to avoid exacerbating the tension and excessively isolating Russia.

Over the past years, expertise on Eastern Europe has been systematically reduced throughout the EU, to a point where it is impossible to adequately monitor political processes in Russia and the post-Soviet space. Moreover, broader political developments play a role in determining which issues absorb the attention of experts and political decision-makers. Between the Russo-Georgian war of August 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in March 2014, other major events such as the EU's financial and institutional crisis and the Arab Spring largely overshadowed Eastern Europe. The resulting policy was unable to respond in adequate detail to problems arising in the region's various States. Its self-perception as a transformative force for peace made the EU blind to the growing geopolitical tensions in Eastern Europe. Last but not least, internal disagreements within the EU also hampered the development of a consistent and proactive policy towards Russia (Fischer, Klein 2016: 5-6).

Urgent reflection by the EU seems necessary in relation to the significant rise in consensus around Putin following the annexation of Crimea and on the effects of his policies in the neighbourhood. If, on the Russian side, foreign policy can be traced back to a "new doctrine"[16] of the Putin administration, Europe proposes the ambiguous nature of the external action of the EU against Russia. The absence of a clear long-term strategy and a lack of consistency and linearity in foreign policy, together with the recent initiatives proposed in the post-Soviet space and perceived by Moscow as damaging to its interests in the area, have contributed to determining today's strong tension. The countries of the post-Soviet space are subject to offers from stakeholders who represent models of political and economic integration, which collide, putting them in a position of fragility. Their oscillations between one pole and the other, according to a logic dictated by pragmatism, have had destabilizing effects on domestic policy and have not favored democratic consolidation and good governance. In today's multipolar world, the stakeholders are no longer merely the two old hegemonic powers, as the scenarios have been diversified. This explains the European position, weakened, however, by the absence of policies that really are community wide. It seems unnecessary to say that, when the EU decided to sign an Association Agreement with Kiev, it had to expect a reaction by the Kremlin.

Perhaps the EU has overestimated its "transformative" power and underestimated the weight of traditional geopolitics, contributing to ignite a now latent crisis "in the interregnum between the 'no longer' and the 'not yet'" (Bauman, Mauro 2015).

---

[16] The highlights of this doctrine can be traced back to Putin's famous speech in Munich on 10 February 2007: V.V. Putin, *Speech at the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy*, http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/02/10/0138_type82912type82914type82917type84779_118123.shtml.

References

(1957). "Soviet Proposals for All-European Economic Cooperation". *International Affairs*, 4.

Adomeit Hannes (1984). "Capitalist Contradictions and Soviet Policy". *Problems of Communism*, 3 (May-June).

Alcaro Riccardo, Michele Comelli (2005). *La politica europea di vicinato*. Rome: IAI.

Aleksandrov-Agentov Andrej M. (1994). *Ot Kollontai do Gorbačёva*. Moscow: MGU.

Bauman Zygmunt, Ezio Mauro (2015). "Noi che viviamo nell'interregno fra il 'non più' e il 'non ancora'". *La Repubblica*, 8 May.

Casier Tom (2018). "Gorbachev's 'Common European Home' and Its Relevance for Russian Foreign Policy Today". *Debater a Europa*, 18 (January-June), 17-34.

Daviddi Renzo (1992). "From the CMEA to the 'Europe Agreements'. Trade and Aid in the Relations between the European Community and Eastern Europe". *Economic Systems*, 16/2, 269-294.

Dundovich Elena (2004). "Goodbye Europa: la Russia di Putin e il difficile rapporto con Bruxelles". *Studi urbinati di scienze giuridiche, politiche ed economiche*, 1, 540-547.

Duroselle Jean-Baptiste (1964). *L'idea d'Europa nella storia*. Milan: Edizioni Milano Nuova.

Dutoit Bernard (1964). *L'Union Soviétique face à l'intégration européenne*. Lausanne: Centre de Recherches Européennes.

Fischer Sabine (2003). *Russlands Westpolitik in der Krise, 1992-2000. Eine konstruktivistische Untersuchung*. Frankfurt-New York: Campus Verlag.

Fischer Sabine, Klein Margarete (edited by) (2016). *Conceivable Surprises. Eleven Possible Turns in Russia's Foreign Policy*. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik.

Forte D.F.P. (1968). "The Response of Soviet Foreign Policy to the Common Market, 1957-63". *Soviet Studies*, 19/3 (January), 373-386.

Groh Dieter (1980). *La Russia e l'autocoscienza d'Europa. Saggio sulla storia intellettuale d'Europa*, Turin: Einuadi.

Groh Dieter, Tschizewskij Dmitrij (Hrsg.) (1959). *Europa und Russland. Texte zum Problem des westeuropäischen und russischen Selbstverständnisses*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

Guiton Raymond J. (1992). *Die Sowjetunion in der Europa- und Deutschlandpolitik Frankreichs 1940-1954*. Rheinfelden: Schäuble.

Kljuchevskij Vasily Osipovich (1958). *Peter the Great*. New York-London: Vintage Books.

Lenin Vladimir Ilich (1974). *Lenin Collected Works*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Lynch David (2002). "Separatist States and Post-Soviet Conflicts". *International Affairs*, 78/4, 831-848.

Lysén Göran (1987). "EEC-CMEA/Eastern Europe Legal Aspects on Trade and Co-operation". *Legal Issues of European Integration*, 83-110.

Masoero Alberto (2015). "La Russia tra Europa e Asia - Russia between Europe and Asia". In

Rossi Pietro (edited by). *The Boundaries of Europe. From the Fall of the Ancient World to the Age of Decolonization*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 175-208.

Monteleone Renato (1975). "Le ragioni teoriche del rifiuto della parola d'ordine degli Stati Uniti d'Europa nel movimento comunista internazionale". In Pistone Sergio (edited by). *L'idea dell'unificazione europea dalla prima alla seconda guerra mondiale*. Turin: Einaudi, 77-95.

Morawiecki Wojciech (1989). "Actors and Interests in the Process of Negotiations between the CMEA and EEC". *Legal Issues of European Integration*, 1-38.

Namazova Alla Sergeevna, Barbara Emerson (edited by) (1995). *Istorija evropejskoj integratsii (1945-1994)*. [History of European Integration (1945-1994)]. Moscow: RAN.

Pravda Alex (edited by) (1992). *The End of the Outer Empire: Soviet-East European Relations in Transition, 1985-90*. London: Cape.

Prodi Romano (2002). *A Wider Europe - A Proximity Policy as the Key to Stability*, SPEECH/02/619 06/12/2002. Brussels: European Commission, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-02-619_en.htm.

Prozorov Sergei (2014). *Understanding Conflict between Russia and the EU: The Limits of Integration*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Putin Vladimir (2012). *Stenogramma vystuplenya na vstreche s aktivom partii "Edinaya Rossia"*. [Transcript of the Speech at the Meeting with the Activists of the Party "United Russia"]. Moscow, 24 April, http://eurasian-movement.ru/archives/2136.

Rey Marie-Pierre (2015). *From Fulton to Malta: How the Cold War Began and Ended*, www.gorby.ru/imgrubrs.asp?img=file&art_id=25031.

Rizzi Pietro (2014). "Ucraina: la Crimea dice sì a Mosca. Quali scenari?". *East Journal*, http://www.eastjournal.net/ucraina-la-crimea-dice-si-a-mosca-quali-scenari/40561.

Ronzitti Natalino (2013). *Introduzione al diritto internazionale*. Turin: Giappichelli.

Schulz Eberhard (1977). *Moskau und die europäische Integration*. München-Wien: Oldenbourg.

Soglian Franco (1997). "L'integrazione europea e il blocco sovietico". In Rainero Romain H. (edited by). *Storia dell'integrazione europea*. Rome: Marzorati, vol. 1, 525-559, and vol. 2, 573-615.

Strada Vittorio (1985). *URSS-Russia*. Milan: Rizzoli.

Trotsky Leon (1918). *The War and the International (The Bolsheviks and World Peace)*. New York: Boni & Liveright. With an introduction by Lincoln Steffens.

Vinokurov E.Yu., Kulik S.A., Spartak A.N., Chernyshev S.V., Yurgens I.Yu. (2015). *Konflict dvuch integratsiy: ES i EAES*. [Conflict of two Integrations: EU and EAEU]. Moscow: Ekon-Inform.

Zaslavsky Viktor (2003). "L'atteggiamento sovietico verso l'integrazione europea". In Craveri Piero, Gaetano Quagliariello (edited by). *Atlantismo ed europeismo*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 51-70.

Zubok Vladislav (1996). "The Soviet Union and European Integration from Stalin to Gorbachev". *Journal of European Integration History*, 2/1, 85-92.