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The Foreign Policy of the Russian  
Federation in the Era of Multipolarism:

Practical Application of the Primakov Doctrine

EDITORIALE SCIENTIFICA  
Napoli



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SOCIETÀ ITALIANA PER L'ORGANIZZAZIONE INTERNAZIONALE

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IN THE ERA OF MULTIPOLARISM:

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE PRIMAKOV DOCTRINE



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## SOME PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

FRANCO FRATTINI

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The system of relations between the Russian Federation and the West has always been and remains today one of the fundamental themes of international politics, in particular as regards European-Russian relations.

After centuries of isolation and fear, with the reforms of Peter the Great at the beginning of 1700, Russia had launched a new approach towards Western Europe, overcoming the effects of the long Mongol domination. Since then Russia has represented a constant in many of the most important political and cultural events of the Old Continent. In spite of the shock, represented by the invasion of the Grande Armée in 1812, with the presence of military units of almost all European States, St. Petersburg took part in the later anti-French coalitions with Great Britain, Prussia, Austria and other powers and then participated in the establishment of the new world order by the Congress of Vienna.

Similarly, after the troubled years, that followed the Crimean War in 1853-1856, Russia, both Imperial and then Soviet, played an essential role in the First and, above all, in the Second World War. The Cold War then saw in the Soviet Union one of the two superpowers on which the destinies of humanity and, in particular, of the then divided Europe, depended.

Everything seemed to have ended in 1991, with the disintegration of the USSR and the slipping of the “new Russia” to the level of medium power, in a unipolar US-led world. But this did not happen. Over years of weakness and political and strategic hesitation, Moscow proved to be able to face the new challenges and progressively to regain the status of global power. The doctrine of an international multipolar system, theorized by Evgeniy M. Primakov and then implemented by President Putin has highlighted even more the importance of dialogue and cooperation with Western countries and

first of all with a broader Europe from the Atlantic Ocean not only up to the Urals, but beyond up to the Pacific coast.

In this sense, also in the light of my past responsibilities in Brussels, I would like to underline the significance of the dialogue with the Russian Federation for Europe, moreover in such a context with the rising of Chinese power, Indian growth and the actual tendency of United States to concentrate on internal issues.

First of all, socio-economic: the European Union has advanced technologies, on average very effective welfare systems and represents a market of over five hundred million consumers with high spending power. The Russian Federation has one of the best scientific potentials in the world, abundant natural resources and a territory of unique dimensions. The meeting of these realities would contribute to satisfy respective needs and strengthen European position in front of world interlocutors, starting from BRICS countries. We should not forget also the potential of a common effort on the environmental front: waste management, protection of ecosystems and animal species: common problems which need to find unitary solutions and to make use of the complementary experiences gained by the EU and the Russian Federation.

A second aspect concerns strategic and security choices. In the light of the threats facing European Union member countries today, from terrorism to the risks associated with massive immigration (including integration or assimilation processes and religious pluralism), the Russian experience, its Eurasian nature and extraordinary ethnographic and religious wealth, can be a valuable starting point and, *mutatis mutandis*, a possible source of solutions also for Central and Western Europe. Furthermore, it is an issue, our American allies too could take advantage of. In this regard, it is important not to underestimate and even deepen contacts at the level of police and judicial structures, as well as security services, with information exchanges, elaboration of common strategies and political cooperation. Trans-national threats can only have equally trans-national approaches. We ought also to recognize that Russia's unique strategic and political capacities have already shown their effects. For several years, Moscow has been actively engaged in fighting Islamic extremism in the Middle East.

I just would like to briefly remember that on 18 December 1989, the then Soviet Union and the then European Communities signed the Agreement on Trade and Commercial and Economic Cooperation.

The first major step towards a closer cooperation was the conclusion of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) in 1994. The PCA established a framework for the political dialogue between Russia and the EU in a number of key spheres, including economy, energy, internal and external security.

In this framework Italy has always occupied a special position. Even during the hardest phases of the Cold War, our country was able to establish successful cooperation projects with the Soviet Union, firmly fulfilling our commitments as one of the founding members of the Atlantic Alliance. With the end of the ideological hostility, the dialogue with Moscow knew an ever broader development. We ought to remember, that the access of Russia to the G7 was proposed and supported first of all by Silvio Berlusconi in 1994. But in addition to President Berlusconi and his unique relation with President Putin, President Prodi also has always paid to the partnership with the Kremlin a very great attention, both as Italian Prime Minister and as President of the EU Commission. As Italian Foreign Minister, I had the privilege of attending, together with Berlusconi and Prodi, the fundamental passage of the agreement on four common EU-Russia spaces during the St. Petersburg Summit in 2003. Since then, a number of changes has occurred, but the significant of that dialogue and partnership has remained the same.



## RUSSIA BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

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There is no reasonable doubt that the Russian Federation represents nowadays one of the leading players in the system of international relations. Its activism in the most different scenarios, starting with the massive and decisive intervention in Syria in support of Bashar Al Assad's government, places observers before the need to understand the dynamics and determinants of Moscow's foreign policy, without stopping at superficial assessments. To this end, the present article aims to investigate "the fundamentals" of the Russian foreign policy in their evolutionary development and, at the same time, to consider the specificities of the Eurasian identity of the country, a fact that significantly influences its *Weltanschauung* and that often escapes the Western sensibility.

1. *Primakov and the multivectorial strategy* After five years of quite uncritical pro-Western attitude, personified first of all by the young minister for Foreign Affairs Andrey Vladimirovich Kozyrev, taking into consideration the widespread popular discontent, in 1996 President Yeltsin decided for a substantial change and replaced Kozyrev with Evgeny Maksimovich Primakov. He was an estimated Orientalist and Arabist, former correspondent for *Pravda* from the Middle East, in the years 1985-1989 Director of the Institute of Economics and International Relations of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and since 1991 the head of the SVR, the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> After the failed putsch of August 1991 the KGB was split into two agencies: the FSB (*Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti*), with functions of counterintelligence, domestic spying, anti-terrorism, border control and national security and the SVR (*Sluzhba Vneshnej Razvedki*), to which were attributed all the powers previously in chief at the First Central Directorate of the KGB related to espionage abroad. Primakov was appointed by Gorbachev on the advice of the new head of the KGB Vadim Viktorovich Bakatin and with the approval of the Yeltsin, head of the First Direct Central KGB (30 September) and, after his transformation, of the SVR (26 December).

This choice represented a clear break with the policy embodied by its predecessor. First, Primakov was almost thirty years older and, therefore, fully formed in the Soviet system – although he supported the reformist course<sup>2</sup>. The new minister was a determined opponent of the scheme mainly focuses on unipolar US superpower and supporter of an international horizon characterized by the dialectic between a plurality of actors: the United States, Russia, European Union, China, Japan<sup>3</sup>. Highly critical of Western interventionism in the internal affairs of other countries, Primakov complained that the spasmodic attempt to win the sympathies of Washington had lost the lighthouse of the national Russian and that any strategy would have to move from the awareness that Russia is not a European country, but Eurasian. Ie European, *but also* Eastern, Christian *but also* Muslim<sup>4</sup>, Jewish and Buddhist and this would have to be understood as a condition of strength of which rely. He believed one of the greatest interest of Russia was to limit the expansion of Western influence in Eurasia and the Middle East<sup>5</sup>, and to do this it was necessary to strengthen relations and seek partnerships with all partners useful in this purpose, beginning with China, India, Iran and, potentially, France<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, judged essential to accelerate the post-Soviet integration and to reassert Moscow's role in this forum. A foreign policy address

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<sup>2</sup> See E.M. PRIMAKOV, *Vstrechi na Perekrestach*, Pirogov Editions, Moscow, 2004, 80 ss.

<sup>3</sup> These guidelines were known to foreign observers, who hastened to paint Primakov as an anti-Western politician, pro-Asian and supporter of the Chinese model. See A.D. BOGATUROV, *Tri pokolienia vneshnopoliticheskikh doktrin Rossii*, in *Mezhdunarodnye processy*, I, 2007, 58.

<sup>4</sup> Of all the religious components of Russian society, Islam is undoubtedly the most delicate. On this theme see the interesting analysis of S. SALVI, *La mezzaluna e la stella rossa*, Marietti, Genova, 1993, in part. 86-103 and R. DANNREUTHER-L. MARCH (eds.), *Russia and Islam*, Routledge, New York, 2010 and R.D. CREWS, *Moscow and the Mosque*, in *Foreign Affairs*, II, 2014, 125-134.

<sup>5</sup> Because of the functions he had previously done, Primakov has always paid special attention to this area where he had built an excellent network of relationships and maintained personal friendship with the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, Syria's Hafez al-Assad, King Hussein of Jordan and the Libyan Rais Muammar Gaddafi. As part of the US containment, he worked for a more active involvement of Russia in the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians, noting how the monopoly of peacemaking had not been particularly effective. See E.M. PRIMAKOV, *Vstrechi na Perekrestach*, Pirogov Editions, Moscow, 2004, 195 and also E. PRIMAKOV, *Un mondo senza la Russia? Le conseguenze della miopia politica*, Pacini Editore, Pisa, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> See AA.VV. *Strategia dlya Rossii. 10 let SVOP*, Bagrius, Moscow, 2002, 18-20. There is a representation of Russia's equidistance from Western and Eastern world.

that will go down in history as “Primakov doctrine” or “multi-vectorial”<sup>7</sup> and still continues to influence the choices of the Kremlin.

As for the attitude towards the CIS, Primakov noted that the liability of Russia and the absence of appropriate policies had led to a serious loss of influence in the area<sup>8</sup>. He held to reiterate the reasons for the special attention that Moscow had to pay to what many, even in the West, now called “Near Abroad”<sup>9</sup>. First, a potent strong and stable in the CIS was prerequisite for the international recognition of the status of power. Secondly, there was the permanence of close economic and military relations legacy of the Soviet state. Third, the Russian leadership followed with great concern the series of tensions and conflicts in different republics – among others, Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno Karabakh, Tajikistan and Transdniestria – that threatened to trespass the Russian border affecting the stability of the Federation itself<sup>10</sup>.

The North Caucasus was the area that caused more apprehension to the Kremlin. As it was noticed by Migranyan: «It is unthinkable for Russia to leave the Caucasus as was the case for the Baltic or Central Asia. A withdrawal from that area would mean its disintegration and does not adversely neither peace nor stability to the region. On the contrary, there would be unpredictable consequences for Russia and its territorial integrity, because the centrifugal tendencies of some republics and regions of the Russian Federation would receive a new push towards separatism and disintegration of Russia»<sup>11</sup>. The theme of the voltages across the border included the aforementioned problem of Russian minorities in the post-Soviet space, in 2006 still more than fifteen million people<sup>12</sup>, who put two issues: protecting the safety in

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<sup>7</sup> See A. COHEN, *The “Primakov Doctrine”: Russia’s Zero-Sum Game with United States*, Heritage Foundation, CLXVII, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> See O.U. DEVLETOV, *Kurs otechestvennoi istorii*, Airekt-Media, Moscow, 2013, 399.

<sup>9</sup> The term was used in an official occasion by Minister Kozyrev talking about the relationship between Russia and Belarus and then extended to all post-Soviet countries, to which was so elaborate a new geographic-legal category, so even though they were foreign, not were similar to the rest of the world, but placed in an intermediate size. Soon diction near abroad has spread among foreign observers. Among others, F. SHAPIRO, *Near Abroad Wants to Be Far*, in *The Russian Press Digest*, 9 June 1992 e W. SAFIRE, *On Language: the Near Abroad*, in *New York Times*, 22 May 1994.

<sup>10</sup> Among the others, A.M. MIGRANYAN, *Rossiia i blizhnee zarubezhe*, in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 12 January 1994.

<sup>11</sup> A.M. MIGRANYAN, *Podlinnye i minimye orentiry vo vneshnej politike*, in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 4 August 1992.

<sup>12</sup> In 2006, a report released by the Russian Foreign Ministry increased this number, pointing to 30 million the number of Russians outside the national borders, of which about

their places of residence and manage the flow of refugees headed to Russia and especially from regions involved in conflicts, starting from Tajikistan, a phenomenon within a few years had involved about two million people<sup>13</sup>. Fourth, there was the looming threat of Islamic extremism that began to expand from Afghanistan towards the nearby Tajikistan, where twenty-five Russian border guards deployed on the Afghan border were massacred on July 13, 1993<sup>14</sup>.

Finally, the Russian leadership was obsessed by the potential enlargement of NATO to the east and even also to former members of the USSR. In this regard, the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation adopted in 1993 clarified that the deployment of foreign troops on the territory of neighboring states with Russia would be seen as a direct threat to the Russian security. Similarly, and perhaps with even greater concern, was considered the possible participation of NATO forces to solve conflicts within the CIS<sup>15</sup>. The Primakov Doctrine had in fact recovered the traditional guidelines of the Russian foreign policy and the result was a cooling in East-West relations. This cooling, however, did not prevent the signing of the *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation*, signed in Paris on 27 May 1997. The two major antagonists of the Cold War not only declared themselves «no [more] opponents», but even affirmed that «They share the goal of overcoming the vestiges of earlier confrontation and competition and of strengthening mutual trust and cooperation. The present Act reaffirms the determination of NATO and Russia to give concrete

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twenty in former Soviet countries. See *Rossiiskaya diaspora za rubezhom dostigla 30 millionov chelovek* available on the site of Ria Novosti at <http://ria.ru/society/20061012/54757915.html> (10 March 2020).

<sup>13</sup> See *Doklad-2010 "Politika repatriatsii i trudovoi migratsii v sovremennom rossiiskom gosudarstve"*, available at [http://www.archipelag.ru/download/book/text\\_pdf/doklad\\_vb\\_2010/03\\_repatr.pdf](http://www.archipelag.ru/download/book/text_pdf/doklad_vb_2010/03_repatr.pdf) (10 March 2020).

<sup>14</sup> See the article published for the tenth anniversary of the massacre on July 13, 2003 and available at <http://www.russian.kiev.ua/archives/2003/0307/030713tpt1.shtml> (10 March 2020). After this attack the journalist Mikhajl Leontiev in an article in the Kiev newspaper in Russian *Segodnya*, argued that the growing of Islamic expansionism could be considered an internal affair of individual countries in the same way of fascist expansionism, see M.V. LEONTIEV, *Stanet li Rossiya vtorym Tadzhikistanom*, in *Segodnya*, July 20, 1993.

<sup>15</sup> The commander of the military forces of the CIS, Marshal Yevgeny Ivanovich Shaposhnikov, categorically opposed to this hypothesis. In particular, there were evidences of growing Turkish involvement in the Caucasus conflict and Shaposhnikov admonished clearly Istanbul that such an action could lead directly to a third world war. See on this point D.V. TRENIN, *Integratsiya i identichnost: Rossiya kak "novy Zapad"*, Evropa, Moscow, 2006, 284.

substance to their shared commitment to build a stable, peaceful and undivided Europe, whole and free, to the benefit of all its peoples»<sup>16</sup>.

But the tension became even more acute during what turned out to be a crucial turning point in the self-consciousness of Russia after 1991: the NATO attack on Yugoslavia in 1999. The relief that the bombing of Belgrade had in the Russian policy dynamic is based on two orders of reasons. *First*, the attack was the result of a unilateral decision of Washington, without UN mandate, putting the Kremlin in front of the *fait accompli* and bringing Russia to the harsh reality of an international community that refused to recognize its major role. Primakov, Prime Minister since 1998<sup>17</sup>, was on a flight to the United States for a meeting of the Russian-American Commission with Al Gore, when the American Vice President informed him that the negotiations between the Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke and Slobodan Milosevic were failed and that at that point a military attack was inevitable. Taking note of the unavailability American to reconsider its position and to seek a political solution, Primakov refused to go to the United States and in mid-Atlantic ordered the pilot to make turnabout<sup>18</sup>. It was 23 March 1999. In the night of 24 the operation Allied Force began and for 78 days over a thousand planes and 30 ships of the Atlantic Alliance struck Belgrade and other towns in Serbia and Kosovo. *Second*, the attack provoked a wave of indignation among the Russian population that after a decade of attraction for the American way of life – especially in its more consumistic sense – became much more critical<sup>19</sup>. In the eyes of the Russians, grown, it is good to remember this, with the Soviet rhetoric, not just the United States refused to recognize the obvious status of Russia and had confirmed themselves as an aggressive power, but they directed their aggression against a Slavic people which, in addition to the traditional closeness to Moscow, was in those years to face incredibly similarities. The Serbs, like the Russians, saw the disintegration of the state of which they have been the pin and, like the

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<sup>16</sup> See the full text of the document on the website [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_25468.htm) (10 March 2020).

<sup>17</sup> At the head of the Foreign Ministry he had been replaced by Igor Sergeyevich Ivanov, who was Deputy Minister since 1995 and remained at the helm of the ministry of Smolenskaya Square until 2004.

<sup>18</sup> See E.M. PRIMAKOV, *Vstrechi na Perekrestakh*, Pirogov Editions, Moscow, 2004, 253-259

<sup>19</sup> See I.A. ZEVELEV-M.A. TROICKI, *Sila i vlianie v amerikansko-rossiiskikh otnosheniyakh. Semiotichesky analiz*, NOFMO, Moscow, 2006.

Russians, left many communities outside the borders. And above all, Serbia, like Russia, was to face a threatening separatism, that of Kosovo, infiltrated, such as the Chechen one, by elements of Islamic radicalism. All these factors meant that the inability to go to the rescue of Belgrade caused a widespread feeling of frustration in the Russian population that began to ask the political class more effort because the national prestige was safeguarded and Moscow found itself the legitimate weight on the world stage.

It was at this time of serious political and economic difficulties<sup>20</sup>, exacerbated by the attack of the Chechen terrorists against Dagestan, that emerged the problem of organizing the succession of Yeltsin, increasingly debilitated by illness and unable to cope with the activities of government<sup>21</sup>. In view of the legislative elections of 1999 a new political force was formed, the block-*Otechestvo Vsja Rossiya* (OVR)<sup>22</sup>, ie "Homeland-All Russia", led by Primakov and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov. Primakov was resigned from the post of Prime Minister in May 1999 and throughout the summer appeared the most strongest candidate to replace Yeltsin, but in August, the old president appointed Prime Minister the little-known Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, since little more than a year at the helm of FSB.

The young statesman did not belie expectations and devoted himself with determination to the most serious and urgent dossier on the table: the North Caucasus. Unlike his predecessors, who had

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<sup>20</sup> After a slight recovery, in 1998 a financial crisis hit the Russian economy hard, leading to a heavy devaluation of the ruble and the growth of inflation.

<sup>21</sup> On several occasions, both domestic and international, Yeltsin appeared drunk. See, for example, [http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/1992/maggio/16/accuse\\_Eltsin\\_ubriaco\\_Tv\\_co\\_0\\_920516139\\_58.shtml](http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/1992/maggio/16/accuse_Eltsin_ubriaco_Tv_co_0_920516139_58.shtml) (10 March 2020) and also [http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/1995/febbraio/13/Eltsin\\_ultimo\\_scandalo\\_co\\_0\\_9502134844.shtml](http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/1995/febbraio/13/Eltsin_ultimo_scandalo_co_0_9502134844.shtml) (10 March 2020). The international image of Russia in those years is evident from the views expressed by Yames Leach, chairman of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives, who in 1999 has described it as the most violent kleptocracy of the planet, even more corrupt of Mobutu's Zaire. So in *The New York Times*, 10 September 1999. The position of Dick Armey, the Republican Majority Leader in the House of Representatives, was no less *tranchant*, when he spoke of "*a looted and bankrupt zone of nuclearized anarchy*", so in A. SHLEIFER-D. TREISMAN, *A Normal Country: Russia after Communism*, in *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, XIX, I, 2005, 151.

<sup>22</sup> The block in the elections of December 19, 1999 obtained 13.3% of the vote. It was formed by the movement "Fatherland", led by rampant Moscow Mayor Yury Luzhkov and "All Russia", organized by the Presidents of Tatarstan, Mintimer Sarip uly Shajmiev, of Bashkiria, Murtaza Gubajdullovich Rachimov, and Ingushetia, Ruslan Sultanovic Aushev and by the Governor of St. Petersburg Vladimir Anatolyevich Yakovlev. Data available on the website <http://state.rin.ru/cgi-bin/main.pl?r=265> (10 March 2020).

always eased glimmers of political negotiation with Chechen separatists, Putin firmly opposed any concession<sup>23</sup>, noting that until then every concession was followed by further request and further violence: obtained Chechnya terrorists would have started to work for a “greater Chechnya” by sending militants in Dagestan and Bashkiria with the goal of a deep penetration that, licking the Tatarstan, would threaten the very survival of the Federation.

Feast of the need to defend Russia and restore order in the North Caucasus<sup>24</sup>, Prime Minister Putin ordered a massive attack that, unlike what happened in the First Chechen War<sup>25</sup>, did not stop on the river Terek – that cuts Chechnya from west to east – but pushed south to the border with Georgia, occupying Grozny and destroying all resistance leaders terrorist Basayev and Chattab<sup>26</sup>. The military campaign this time ended with the return of the region under Russian sovereignty<sup>27</sup>, but pushed the terrorists to adopt another tactic: a wave of attacks shocked many Russian cities, including the capital. But the anger and indignation made even more appreciated the harshness with which Putin was facing the problem and soon, thanks also to the support of the media empire of the Yeltsinian oligarch Boris Abramovich Berezevoski, the popularity ratings of Prime Minister flew over 60% and a growing number of Russians pointed out as the man whom the country needed. Yeltsin pointed him out as his political heir<sup>28</sup> and Primakov, which also went on about the impending economic recovery, chose to not present his candidacy, leaving the way open to

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<sup>23</sup> So in E.M. PRIMAКOV, *Vstrechi na Perekrestach*, Edizioni Pirogov, Moscow, 2004, 225 ss.

<sup>24</sup> See *Ot pervogo lica. Razgovory s Vladimirom Putiny*, available at <http://archive.kremlin.ru/articles/bookchapter7.shtml> (10 March 2020).

<sup>25</sup> See O. OLIKER, *Russia's Chechen Wars*, RAND, Santa Monica, 2001, 16 ss.

<sup>26</sup> Shamil Basayev was a Chechen terrorist, author of many operations against civilians, including the massacres of the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow in 2002 (129 victims) and of the elementary school in Beslan in 2004 (350 victims). He was killed in July 2006 during an operation organized by the FSB. Ibn al-Khattab, the Saudi extremist, already fighting in Afghanistan against the Soviets, was commander of the Salafist extremists in the North Caucasus and accomplice of Basayev in the preparation of numerous attacks. He was killed by the FSB with a poisoned letter in 2002.

<sup>27</sup> The re-conquest of the North Caucasus by the federal forces was far from painless, and there were episodes of violence also from the Russian side, also with the involvement of the civilian population. In this sense, the same results that increased the popularity of Putin in the country, provoked him also harsh criticism on the international scene, particularly in Europe. As regards the tragic side effects of the Russian campaign, see, among the others, A. POLITKOVSKAYA, *Cecenia. Il disonore russo*, Fadango Libri, Rome, 2009 e J. LITTEL, *Cecenia, anno III*, Einaudi, Turin, 2010.

<sup>28</sup> See B.N. YELTSIN, *Midnight Diaries*, HighBridge, Minneapolis, 2000, 337.

Putin. Yeltsin resigned on December, 31 1999, in advance of the expiry of the mandate and as established by art. 92 of the Russian Constitution, if the presidency becomes vacant due to resignation or other accidental cause, the Prime Minister would have assumed the position of interim President and ferried the country until the next presidential elections, to be held within three months.

2. *Vladimir Putin and the new Russian power.*- On January 1, 2000 – not yet elected – Vladimir Putin assumed the office of President of the Russian Federation<sup>29</sup>. The problems that he had to face represented for Russia the hardest test in its history, probably even more than the delicate years 1989-91<sup>30</sup>, by ensuring the territorial integrity confrontation with terrorism, the re-establishment of a situation of internal legality – with a radical contrast to the corruption and the excessive power of the oligarchs – the restoration of the country's prestige on the international scene. It must be said that in addressing these challenges, Putin was able to benefit from a favorable market circumstance for Russia, with large increases of the prices of oil, gas and other metals of which the country is rich.

From the point of view of foreign policy, there was no big break with previous administrations and while emphasizing the primacy of national interests, continued to look to the West – and in particular the United States – as a key partner. A search of feeling that became stronger after September 11, 2001. In the war on Islamic terrorism Putin's Russia emerged as the most banquet ally of George W. Bush in contrasting a phenomenon with which Moscow had had to measure well before the attack the Twin Towers. The then Minister of Defense Sergei Borisovich Ivanov reported that the Russian President, informed of the terrorist attack in New York, decided to cancel the exercises of nuclear forces already planned for September 12, as a sign of understanding towards the dramatic situation in the US<sup>31</sup>. The Kremlin guaranteed maximum sharing of information about the issue, support and supplies of arms to the Northern Alliance – the force of

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<sup>29</sup> Presidential elections took place on 26 March 2000. These were results: V.V. Putin 52,94%, G.A. Zjuganov 29,21%, G.A. Yavlinski 5,8%.

<sup>30</sup> So the same Putin answering a question of N.A. Narohnitskaya during a television interview with journalists and scholars aired on Rossiya 24 on December 15, 2012. A position reported by the agency *Itar Tass* <http://itar-tass.com/arhiv/523155> (10 March 2020). The video can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzSFuzbzOMQ> (10 March 2020).

<sup>31</sup> The fact is reported by S.B. Ivanov during the interview given to journalist Vladimir Rudolfovich Soloviyov and inserted in the film documentary *Prezident* (2015).

resistance to the Taliban in northern Afghanistan – and, with an unexpected decision and criticized by part of the political and the Russian military establishment<sup>32</sup>, he did not hinder in any way the requests made by Washington to some Central Asian republics for military bases in the region. Similarly Moscow accepted the indication of Hamid Karzai for the Afghan presidency, though they were known his connections with the CIA since the 80s, when he worked with Langley based agency in the organization of the guerrilla war against the Soviets<sup>33</sup>.

A turning sanctioned with the even more extraordinary agreement signed on May 28, 2002 at Pratica di Mare, where, under the direction of a beaming Silvio Berlusconi, was signed the Rome Declaration, that instituted a twenty Council, composed of the NATO countries and Russia. A forum to discuss and take decisions on an equal basis on nine themes: the fight against terrorism, crisis management, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, arms control and measures to strengthen mutual trust, theater missile defense, operations Lifeboat, military cooperation and reform of defense systems, plans for civil emergencies, challenges and new threats<sup>34</sup>. During the press conference after the meeting Putin issued a statement extremely revealing of the idea he had of Russia's place in the world: «Until recently, a meeting of this kind was unthinkable but today there is no alternative to cooperation and Russia cannot stay out of Europe»<sup>35</sup>.

The idyll, however, did not have long life. The war against Saddam Hussein Iraq in 2003, to which Moscow has always been adverse, and that has been moved in the absence of a UN mandate, has made a comeback doctrine Primakov and criticism of the American unilateralism. Even more worrying in the eyes of the Russians is the role assigned to the United States in supporting the series of political upheavals, passed into history as “colored revolutions” that took place between the end of 2003 and beginning of 2005 in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan.

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<sup>32</sup> H. CARRÈRE D'ENCAUSSE, *La Russie entre deux mondes*, Librairie Athème Fayard, Parigi, 2010, Italian edition, *La Russia tra due mondi*, trad. E. Cerchiari, Salerno Editrice, Rome, 2011, 64.

<sup>33</sup> See S.C. TUCKER (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Middle East Wars*, ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara, 2010, 667 and also A.U. YAN, *Afghanistan: The Genesis of the Final Crusade*, Pragmatic Publishings, Ottawa, 2005, n. 454, 323.

<sup>34</sup> See the text of Rome Declaration of 28 May 2002, available at [http://www.nato-russia-council.info/media/59487/2002.05.28\\_nrc\\_rome\\_declaration.pdf](http://www.nato-russia-council.info/media/59487/2002.05.28_nrc_rome_declaration.pdf) (10 March 2020).

<sup>35</sup> So in *Corriere della Sera*, 28 May 2002.

These riots were interpreted by Moscow as an attempt to install pro-American forces in the CIS with the aim of reducing Russian influence in the area and, potentially, to reach a large color revolution in the Russian Federation itself<sup>36</sup>. In particular, the fall of President of Kyrgyzstan Askar Akayev<sup>37</sup> in March 2005 seemed to usher in a phase highly destabilizing throughout the area, starting with the neighboring Uzbekistan. Seen from Moscow there were several reasons of great concern to which it was added the even more critical issue of NATO enlargement. In 2004 not only Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania made their entrance into the Atlantic Pact, but at the Istanbul Summit another step towards was marked for the possible entry of Ukraine, then in-depth at the Bucharest summit in 2008. There was enough because the Kremlin realised that the results of the period 2002-2004 were far from satisfactory: as it did a decade earlier, Russia had made a number of steps in the direction of the West, to the point of admitting a US military presence in the Near Abroad, but all this was not followed in any significant benefit, much less the coveted recognition of equal partners – or, at least, equal interlocutor.

The 2004 was an year of election and confirmations for both Putin and Bush and this year has risen to a turning point in East-West relations and, in particular, in the Russian foreign policy<sup>38</sup>.

The presidential elections of 2004 confirmed Vladimir Putin with the record result of 71.3% of the vote and his party United Russia in the subsequent parliamentary elections of 2007 got 64.3%, when the Communist Party, which is the major opposition force, got just 11.6% of the votes. These results form the background for the concept of "sovereign democracy". It is a definition adopted in 2006 by the then deputy head of the Presidential Administration Vladislav Juryevich Surkov who, during a conference of the United Russia party, spoke of "an aspect of political life of the society in which the powers, their organs and initiatives are formulated and directed only by the Russian nation in all its multifaceted units, with the aim of achieving material progress, freedom and justice for all citizens, social groups and peoples". This mechanism combines elements of classical democracy,

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<sup>36</sup> D.V. TRENIN, *Rossiya i strany SNG: "vzorslenie" otnosheni*, in AA.Vv. *Vneshnyaya Politika Rossii 2000-2020*, I, Aspekt Press, Moscow, 2012, 211.

<sup>37</sup> For the biography of the Kyrgyz president see further the chapter on Central Asia.

<sup>38</sup> See on this aspect R. DE MUCCI, *The Model of Sovereign Democracy, Russian style*, in *Le basi ideologiche e culturali della collaborazione tra Russia e Unione Europea*, Aracne, Roma, 2011, 37-40.

like multiparty elections and parliamentary control, with a presidential figure institutionally and politically very strong, creator of a newfound national pride based on economic success, military force and clear cultural identity. It is a vision very disputed in the West, which has denounced the restoration of many aspects of the Soviet system by simply replacing the CPSU with United Russia and Brezhnev with Putin. The American diplomat Daniel Fried, former head of the department European and Eurasian Affairs of the US State Department and then ambassador in Poland, has critically observed: «I get nervous when people put labels in front of democracy. Sovereign democracy, managed democracy, people's democracy, socialist democracy, Aryan democracy, Islamic democracy – I am not a big fan of adjectives. Managed democracy doesn't sound like democracy. Sovereign democracy strikes me as meaningless».

Since then the attention and the prospects of Moscow have returned to focus on “Near Abroad” and enhancement of its essence “Eurasian”<sup>39</sup>. In particular, Russia has focused on deepening ties with other former Soviet republics in order to create an institutional framework for the realization of the process of regional integration. In this regard Putin totally shared the line already exposed by Primakov, and referred to it as a top priority of his foreign policy. The result is a concept of international dynamics that, with certain suggestion, some have called “Putin Doctrine”<sup>40</sup>. Actually the Putin course hasn't imprinted major changes compared to the issues of the classical Russian foreign policy and reaffirmed in the Primakov Doctrine<sup>41</sup>. The main feature was and is, rather, force and decision affirming the national interests of the Russian Federation, in a Hobbesian vision of international relations, based on a strong state, able to withstand the competition of other international players. A determination often branded in the West as brutality, but that generally has met and attracts considerable consensus among Russian citizens. Among the

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<sup>39</sup> Si veda B. NYGREN, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia*, Routledge, New York, 2008.

<sup>40</sup> See, among the others, T. LOKOSHINA, *The Imposition of a fake political settlement in Northern Caucasus*, Ibidem Verlag, Stoccarda, 2005, L. PÓTI, *Evolving Russian Foreign and Security Policy: Interpreting the Putin-doctrine*, in *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, XXV, 2008, 29-42 and, more recently, L. ARON, *The Putin Doctrine*, in *Foreign Affairs*, II, 2013.

<sup>41</sup> In the first foreign policy concept formulated under President Putin, in 2000, it is underlined: «Russia must work to build a multipolar system of international relations». This line was reaffirmed by the President during the Conference on Security of Monaco in 2007, when he observed that a unipolar world was nothing more than a center with only one master in a dynamic deeply opposed to democracy and the principle of respect for the views and interests of all. See *Na chto delal stavku Vladimir Putin?*, in *Izvestia*, 14 June 2007.

“vigorous” actions there are the so-called “gas wars” with Ukraine and Belarus between 2005 and 2007, the suspension of the Treaty on the reduction of conventional weapons in 2007, citing the non-ratification by the Baltic countries and the response to the military aggression of Georgia against the autonomous region of South Ossetia in which several Russian citizens were dead, including 21 soldiers of the intervention force dislocated in this territory since 1992. The military confrontation was a lampo-operation between 7 and August 12, 2008 ended with the predictable defeat of the Georgian army and the self-proclamation of independence of the two Georgian autonomous regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia<sup>42</sup>. The events in Georgia have also shown that the change at the top of the Kremlin<sup>43</sup> had not produced changes in the route traced by Putin, however, risen to the post of Prime Minister, and that Medvedev was distinguished by his predecessor more in tones than in substance. A fact amply confirmed by official document promulgated by the new President on July 12, 2008 containing the principles and goals of Russian foreign policy<sup>44</sup>. It is in this context that in the projects of Putin the political concept of Eurasia takes shape more and more clearly.

3. *The general lines of Russian FP concepts.*- To better understand the development of the foreign policy conducted by Vladimir Putin, it is useful to analyze the doctrines adopted in 2000, 2008 and 2013. The *Kontsepsiya* of 28 June 2000 is the establishment and deepening of the new course imparted by Primakov and represents a radical break compared with the document promulgated by Yeltsin on April 23, 1993, that was focused on the already mentioned “democracy building”. The doctrine of the new millennium, identified priorities in defending the interests of the person, the society and the state.

In particular, they are recalled: (a) the guarantee of the security of the country and the maintenance and strengthening of its sovereignty, territorial integrity and position in the international community as a

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<sup>42</sup> Nowadays the independence has been recognized only by Russia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Vanuatu, Nauru and Tuvalu. The latter recognised only Abkhazia and not South Ossetia.

<sup>43</sup> Article. 81 paragraph 3 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation sets the limit at two consecutive presidential terms. Although it had been proposed to repeal this limit, in 2007 Putin announced that there would be no constitutional amendments and he would support the candidacy of Dmitry Medvedev, elected at large majority in 2008.

<sup>44</sup> *Koncepcia vneshnej politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, in AA.VV., *Vneshnyaya Politika Rossii 2000-2020*, III, Aspekt Press, Moskva, 2012, 198 ss.

great power and one of the global decision-making centers. These are indications that reflect the events of the previous five years and seem to reformulate point by point the most disputed aspects of the Yeltsin era, both internally (the disintegration of the state, separatism, strong foreign influences), and external (Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Kosovo questions). (b) Contribution to the construction of an international order based on international law, the principles of the United Nations and on the proper and equal cooperation among nations. (c) Creation of favorable conditions for the development of Russia, its economy and the standard of living of the population, democratic reform and strengthening the rule of law. (d) Formation of a belt of good-neighborliness on the borders of the Russian Federation and contribution to the prevention and resolution of conflicts in these regions. (e) Establishment of friendly relations with foreign countries, based on the research agreement and common interests. (f) Protection of the rights of Russian citizens and compatriots abroad. (g) Promotion of the image of Russia abroad, of the Russian language and culture of the peoples of Russia in the foreign countries.

Already in these first general lines it perceives a radically different approach, with frequent reference to the key concept of national interest and an express reference to the Russian diaspora. The following part, introduced in Section *Sovremennyj mir i politika vneshnjaja Rossiskoj Federacii* (The contemporary world and the foreign policy of the Russian Federation), analyzes with great clarity the evolution of international relations in recent years and almost foreshadows the events following 11 September and the war in Iraq in 2003. The text affirmed: «In the international sphere new challenges and threats to the national interests of Russia have appeared. It reinforces the trend towards the creation of a unipolar global subjected economically and militarily to the United States (...) with a weakening of the role of the UN Security Council. The strategy of unilateral actions can destabilize the international situation, provoke tensions and the arms race and deepen the international conflict and national and regional discord. The use of force in circumvention of the existing mechanisms of international law does not lead to the solution of socio-economic, interethnic, and other contrasts that are the base of the great majority of current conflicts, but blows up the foundations of the established order. Russia will contribute to the formation of a multipolar system of international relations, real expression of the pluralism of the contemporary world and the variety of his interests».

Moscow advocates maintaining consultation centered on the United Nations and in particular rejects hypothesis of reorganization of the Security Council. The latter is called for a reform that implements the effectiveness, while safeguarding the role of the five permanent members starting with the power of veto. The Council should retain, in the view of the Kremlin, the monopoly on the use of force, while they are judged unacceptable principles such as the so-called "humanitarian intervention" or "limited sovereignty", to justify interventions conducted without the authorization of the Security Council.

Later in the document, it is emphasized the role of Russia in the world and the need for it to enjoy a balanced foreign policy, consistent with its nature as a Eurasian power. This is the only one and limited reference to the Eurasian dimension, a dimension that in 2000 the Russian leadership has not yet elevated to core interest of its strategy. Among the regional priorities, the central role is still attributed to the CIS, especially with regard to the protection of the Russian citizens present in the former Soviet republics (a similar position is expressed, separately, for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), the pursuit of common goals in the field of military policy and security and the development of specific integration options such as the Customs Union, the Union State and the Collective Security Treaty<sup>45</sup>. The document continued with the examination of individual regional contexts. In this regard it is interesting to note that priority is given to the relations with Europe. Among the western partners it mentioned Great Britain, Germany, Italy and France, while for the east ones, it called the need to safeguard the economic, social and cultural rights still existing, framed in the context of the current Russian national interests. The aforementioned exchange of views between Kozyrev and Nixon on national interests have been just over seven years, but it seems another geological era. The doctrine of 2000 was the *summa* of the Russian foreign policy until 2008. Compared to the previous 1993 version it is possible to identify both continuity and radical changes. Among the first ones, there is the identification of the West as a privileged interlocutor. The main difference is the reception of the "multi-vectoriality"<sup>46</sup> and the subsequent award of priority interests towards the CIS, China and Japan. Despite this, as we have seen, the events of

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<sup>45</sup> The full text was published by several sources. See *Koncepcia vneshnej politiki Rossijskoi Federatsii*, in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 11 July 2000. Translation made by the Author.

<sup>46</sup> See on this aspect also V.A. NIKONOV, *Nazad k koncertu*, in *Rossiia v globalnoi politike*, I, 2002, [http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/n\\_15](http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_15) (24 February 2020).

September 11, 2001 gave a decisive turn to the west, to the point that the first years of Putin's cabinet coincided with the most idyllic moment of Russian-American relations, to the finish of *Pratica di Mare*. This attitude changed with the Iraqis events of 2003, that Primakov in a conversation with the Author has defined the most unfortunate among the decisions of the then American Administration. The armed intervention against Saddam Hussein represented an opportunity for a deepening of relations between Moscow and the other big opposing countries, firstly Jacques Chirac France and Gerhard Schröder Germany. It is interesting to note that the latter, and especially the French President, expressed to Washington their disappointment with much harsher tone than Putin and also in terms of public opinion, the positions taken by France and Germany sounded far more anti-American than Russian ones. It cannot be said that the Iraq conflict itself has led to a change in Russia's approach to the United States and the West. Anyway, it is true that the unilateral activism of the White House and the theories of important sectors of the neoconservative establishment helped to prevail the most critical voices within the Russian leadership, who have already criticised the strategic concessions granted by Putin in Central Asia in the aftermath of the attack on the Twin Towers. Washington's support for the color revolutions has further alarmed Moscow, but also Beijing and the Central Asian leaders "at risk", primarily the Uzbek Karimov, who have become very suspicious, if not hostile, to the attention "exporting democracy oriented" of Washington. The episode more symptomatic of the new balance was the decision of Tashkent to demand the withdrawal of American forces from the territory of Uzbekistan<sup>47</sup>. From the point of view of foreign policy's conceptualization, another significant moment was the meeting of Putin with the ambassadors of the Russian Federation on 27 June 2006. What was meant to be a reflection on the figure of the diplomat within the commemoration of four employees of Russian Embassy in Baghdad, victims of an attack on June 3<sup>48</sup>, turned out a much more detailed report on the country's goals and priorities of its international policy. Putin spoke of the

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<sup>47</sup> The decision of Karimov, subsequent to the events in Andian, was considered a masterpiece of Chinese-Russian diplomacy, whose result was a setback of American influence in the region for the first time after twenty years. So in T.A. ZAKAURCEVA, *The Current Foreign Policy of Russia*, in *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, XVI, 2007, 98.

<sup>48</sup> See <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iraq/2006/06/iraq-060626-rfer103.htm> (24 February 2020).

responsibility of Russia in the global dynamics and the need to strengthen its economic position to exert greater political influence<sup>49</sup>. So the President reaffirmed the desirability of a pragmatic approach that takes into full consideration the new difficult challenges – especially those linked to international Islamic terrorism – but avoiding Manichean attitudes, and excluding Russia any form of participation in a “Holy Alliance”<sup>50</sup>. Similar positions were reiterated by the leader of the Kremlin in other public occasions, including intervention at the Munich Conference on 10 February 2007<sup>51</sup>, the speech to Parliament on 26 April 2007<sup>52</sup> and the address to the Plenary of the Council of State of February 8, 2008<sup>53</sup>.

An authoritative very positive implementation of the principles of 2000 was expressed in 2007 by Primakov who, in an article published in the journal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, recognized the significant progress of the nation and the specific merits of the President, referring to which, he openly advocated the stay in the “grand politique” – considering the imminent end of Putin’s second term and his decision to not change the Constitution where prohibits more than two consecutive presidential terms. The aspects considered with major satisfaction by the great sage of Russian politics are having put in the center of planning the national interest and the returned of Russia to the status of great power. Then it follows a twofold criticism of the United States, accused of having unilaterally launched the war in Iraq – a fact of primary importance for the Arabist Primakov – and of wanting to push the forces of the North Atlantic Treaty on the Russian borders. A final critical reference was dedicated to the secession of Kosovo and the author did not fail to observe that the Western

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<sup>49</sup> An important signal about the strength of the country was the total payment of the debt inherited from the Soviet Union in the so-called Paris Club on August 21, 2006. See <http://www.rg.ru/2006/08/21/dolg-procenti.html> (24 February 2020).

<sup>50</sup> The full text of the speech is available on the Kremlin site at <http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2006/06/107802.shtml> (26 February 2020).

<sup>51</sup> During his speech, Putin accused *apertis verbis* Washington of seeking to build a unipolar American-led world and has harshly criticized the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe. See the full text at [http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2007/02/10/1737\\_type63374type63376type63377type63381\\_type82634\\_118097.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2007/02/10/1737_type63374type63376type63377type63381_type82634_118097.shtml) (26 February 2020).

<sup>52</sup> See [http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2007/04/26/1156\\_type63372type63374type82634\\_125339.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2007/04/26/1156_type63372type63374type82634_125339.shtml) (26 February 2020).

<sup>53</sup> See <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24825> (26 February 2020).

recognition represented an explosive precedent for many state realities crossed by separatistic phenomena<sup>54</sup>.

The next step was the promulgation of the new *Kontseptsiya* on July 12, 2008 by the new President Dmitry Medvedev. It proposes much of the principles contained in the previous version, especially with reference to the multipolarity, the centrality of the UN and the Security Council and to the looking for a leading role for Russia in setting the international agenda. More attention is paid to the CIS and other forms of integration in the post-Soviet territory, especially EvrAzES, ODKB, Customs Union. A reflection of the events after 2003 is gathered in the paragraphs on relations with Europe, where among the countries mentioned in 2000, by which entertained privileged relationships United Kingdom disappeared and Spain, Finland, Greece, the Netherlands and Norway were added. As for London, it expressed the hope that the potential of cooperation can take the course of other nations.

Starting from 2003 onwards, the British-Russian relations have been characterized by continuous tension. The year was marred not only by the strong support of Tony Blair and the British participation in the Iraq war, but also by London's refusal to extradite the oligarch Boris Berezovsky and the Chechen terrorist Achmed Chalidovich Zakayev, who have been granted the status of political refugee. In 2006 British diplomats at the British Embassy in Moscow were accused of spying and a few months later the KGB defector Alexander Litvinenko died in London in circumstances never fully clarified, but with strong suspicion of polonium poisoning by agents of the FSB. In August 2007, Russian bombers TU-95 approached the British airspace and were intercepted by the RAF and in November of that year MI5 sources have reported that by the end of the Cold War there has not been any decrease in the number of Russian agents working in the British territory. In 2010 the another MI5 source reported that the level of Russian activity in the country had returned to the levels prior to 1991.

With regard to Eastern Europe, there is no longer any reference to ties and common heritage, but a bare reference to the possibility of cooperation, *depending on the availability of individual countries in*

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<sup>54</sup> So in E.M. PRIMAKOV, *Vneshnyaya politika vo vse bolshej stepeni napravlyaetsya na vosstanovlenie Rossii v kachestve derzhavy mirovogo klassa*, in *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'*, I/II, 2007, 32-42.

*this regard*<sup>55</sup>. Just the year 2008 inaugurated an extremely eventful phase – starting with the war in Georgia to the Arab uprisings, but also the prolonged economic crisis that has further eroded the appeal of the western model of development in the Russian ruling class. The new scenario has been reflected in subsequent *Kontseptsiya*, promulgated on February 12, 2013 by Vladimir Putin, who was back to the Kremlin as President in 2012<sup>56</sup>.

Once again the general premises confirmed the setting of the previous years, as reaffirmed by the Minister Sergey Lavrov<sup>57</sup>, but the condition of Russia was emphasized with greater force. The country was presented as economically strong, politically more influential and fully returned into the category of the great global powers. Conditions that the political leadership intended to further strengthen<sup>58</sup>. This was clearly evident where together with the defense of the Russian language and culture of the peoples of Russia, it also called for the consolidation of the Russian diaspora abroad.

The Conception then devoted large space to the issue of religious movements inspired by Islam that have strongly influenced the upheavals of the previous years in North Africa and the Near East. On this background the centuries-old Russian experience in building peaceful coexistence of peoples with different cultures was highlighted and the subsequent calling of the country to help develop dialogue and cooperation among different races and religions, both in the context of the UN and in other international fora. Based on these assumptions, the element of diversity of civilizations was emphasized and the need to avoid a new ideologization of international relations, this time no longer in the key of confrontation between socialism and capitalism, but in the name of a single Western thought, with claims of global hegemony. There were also some considerations on the individual regional contexts. As for the CIS, the Eurasian Union appears, proposed not only as beneficial opportunities for economic

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<sup>55</sup> The full text was published by the *Russian International Affairs Council*. See *Koncepcia vneshnej politiki Rossiskoi Federatsii*, in AA.VV. *Vneshnyaya Politika Rossii 2000-2020*, III, Aspekt Press, Moscow, 2012, 198 ss. Translation made by the Author.

<sup>56</sup> See A. MONAGHAN, *The New Russian Foreign Policy Concept: Evolving Continuity*, *Chatham House Rep*, III, 2013.

<sup>57</sup> See S.V. LAVROV, *Vneshnopoliticheskaya filosofiya Rossiskoi Federatsii*, in *Mezhdunardonaya zhizn'*, III, 2013, 1-9.

<sup>58</sup> In fact both for 2013 and for 2014, Forbes magazine placed Vladimir Putin on the top list of the most powerful men, ahead of the US President and the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China. See <http://www.forbes.com/powerful-people/> (18 February 2020).

cooperation, but as a model for future union (in Russian, *ob'edinenie*), open to all members of the Community. Another change concerned the ODKB (Collective Security Treaty Organization); if in the version of 2008 it has been only mentioned, the 2013 version indicated it as a central element for the safety of the post-Soviet space, to be strengthened especially about the rapid reaction mechanism, foreign peace-keeping and improving the coordination of the foreign policy of the member countries. After indicating a series of initiatives designed to deepen Eurasian integration, including the involvement of Ukraine, there was a very significant passage regarding the role that the Kremlin was determined to play in the former USSR. «Russia intends to play an active role in defining the political-diplomatic conflict arisen in the territory of the CIS and in particular participate in the search for a solution to the problem of Transnistria, on the basis of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and neutrality of the Republic of Moldova, by defining a special status for Transdnistria and contributing to the adjustment of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in cooperation with other states (...)». Shortly after, an additional step enriched and somehow completed the position expressed on Transnistria «among Russian priorities there is cooperation for the establishment of the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia as modern democratic states, the strengthening of their international positions, the guarantee of adequate security and restoring social and economic».

What previously mentioned was also accompanied by a statement of interest to the normalization of relations with Georgia, *on the basis of political reality existing* in the Caucasus. This was the first time such clear statements about the involvement of Moscow in the internal situations of other states were included in the guidance document of the foreign policy. In a way, it represented the continuation of the recall to the consolidation of the Russian diaspora – broadly understood – and the intention to assert power status in the post-Soviet era. As for relations with Europe, the east was not even more mentioned, and as key partners it indicated Germany, France, Italy and the Netherlands. A similar hope that formulated in 2008, was expressed with regard to the United Kingdom. New mention regarded, however, the Balkan region, referred to as strategically important as infrastructure and transit hub for oil and gas supplies to Europe.

Turning to the United States chapter, we find reiterated the considerations of the previous years on the importance of dialogue and

cooperation in some key areas, such as international security and terrorism, but, in the light of the Arab events, it included a clear call to Washington in order to abstain from acting in violation of international law and, primarily, the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs of other countries, perhaps with the excuse of human rights violations. Cooperation with NATO was not at all excluded, providing that it should have been based on equality and awareness initiatives that conflict with the interests and security of the Russian Federation – enlargements, new displacements of troops or infrastructure, and more – would have been duly balanced with appropriate Russian counter-measures. Finally, we must report the calls to the Arctic, dealt in great detail (as was just mentioned in 2008 and only in its relations with Canada and northern Europe) and Antarctica (shorter, but very significant novelty of the doctrine of 2013)<sup>59</sup>.

In light of the important changes that have taken place on the international scene and the considerably increased weight of the country in the various scenarios, the authorities of the Russian Federation, just three years after the approval of the 2013 Foreign Policy Doctrine, promulgated a new version of it on November 20, 2016. This decision is part of a broad framework of updating of the most important policy documents and has also covered the military, security and maritime doctrines. Compared to the 2013 one, the focus has shifted from the European Union, now considered mainly in terms of economic and trade cooperation, to Asia, indicated as a key political-economic interlocutor (in particular regarding China, Indonesia, Vietnam, Mongolia, Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia). At the same time, the opportunities for dialogue in Washington were positively reconsidered and, although there was no real partnership, also because of President Trump’s difficulties with the so-called “Russia Gate”, on the whole there was no worsening of relations, not even in the light of the increasing Russian involvement on the Syrian chessboard. In particular, the document underlined the importance of Russian-American dialogue on issues such as nuclear proliferation and crisis prevention. On the other hand, the attitude towards NATO,

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<sup>59</sup> All the quoted passages, translated by the Author, can be traced in the full *Koncepcia vneshnej politiki Rossiskoi Federatsii 2013*, published on the website of the Foreign Ministry and available on the site [http://archive.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/6D84DDEDEDBF7DA644257B160051BF7F](http://archive.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/6D84DDEDEDBF7DA644257B160051BF7F) (24 February 2020).

which is still seen as the main adversary and whose possible further eastward enlargement is deprecated, has remained unchanged.

Another significant adjustment has concerned the Eurasian region. While in 2013 the development, and possibly enlargement, of regional organizations (first of all, the Eurasian Economic Union) had been indicated as a priority, the new document considers four individual countries (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), defined as the main partners of Russia. In other words, the attention towards the post-Soviet space remains maximum, but more pragmatically directed to those realities with which a close cooperation is already in place (all four states indicated are part of both the EAEU and the ODKB) and whose deepening is in Moscow's strategic and economic interests. The commitment on the front of organizations such as BRICS, SCO and ASEAN, as well as with reference to the Arctic, is basically confirmed. A last aspect worthy of mention is that of the Russian world (*russky mir*). The Doctrine reaffirms the efforts to maintain the Russian cultural, linguistic and historical heritage outside the Federation (and especially in post-Soviet space). A soft-power dynamic that must also include a strengthening of Russia's image and information policy on the international scene<sup>60</sup>.

4. *The Russian identity between East and West.*- In order to understand the importance for the Eurasian vector and Eurasian integration projects for the Russian Federation and its foreign policy, it is necessary to clarify the concept of Eurasia. It is possible to identify at least three different meanings<sup>61</sup>: one geopolitical, one eminently geographical and one ideological.

In the first case the term Eurasia is used as a synonym for the Commonwealth of Independent States. Next to that of Eurasia, there are other possible alternative names, but each presents critical aspects. First, the term "post-Soviet", did not seem satisfactory, being mainly

<sup>60</sup> For the full text see [https://www.mid.ru/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/-/asset\\_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/2542248](https://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/2542248) (10 March 2020).

<sup>61</sup> See the breakdown proposed, among others, in E.Ju. VINOKUROV, A.M. LIBMAN, *Evrazijskaja kontinental'naja integracija*, EABR, Saint Petersburg, 2012, 12 ss e E. JU. VINOKUROV-A.M. LIBMAN, *Eurasia and Eurasian Integration: Beyond the Post-Soviet Borders*, in *Eurasian Integration Book 2012*, RUAN, Almaty, 2012, 80 ss. Sul punto si vedano anche M. SCHMIDT, *Is Putin pursuing a policy of Eurasianism?*, in *Demokratizacija*, I, 2005, 200-205; AA.VV., *Evrazijstvo: ključevye idej, cenosti, političeskie prioritety*, Azbuka, Barnaul, 2007; N.A. VASIL'EVA, M.L. LAGUTINA, *Global'nyj evrazijskij region: opyt teoretičeskogo osmyslenija social'no-političeskoj integracii*, Izd-vo Politehničeskogo Universiteta, Saint Petersburg, 2012, 159 ss.

related to an element of the past and still very critically considered by the elites of some republics. An alternative, historically founded, considering the common imperial origin of several states arisen from the ashes of the USSR, would be "post-Russian" (in Russian *post-rossijskij* – and no *post-russkij*, according to the distinction made by the Russian vocabulary between the element of "Russianness" in institutional and political terms, conceptually extensive, ie *rossijskij*, and the elements connected to linguistic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds of of ancient Rus' peoples, ie *russkij*). But in light of the susceptibility of various national identities, a similar solution appeared simply unthinkable. In turn, the formula "CIS" (in Russian, SNG) was not particularly practical considering, on the one hand, the ineffectiveness of the organization and, above all, the uncertainty about its composition (moreover considering the current issue of Ukraine, which announced it would leave the Community. See A. Eremenko, *Ukraine Leaving CIS Shoots Down Kremlin's Imperial Ambitions*, in *The Moscow Times*, 27 May 2014). The issue was already place after 2008 with Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia). Compared to these assumptions, the term "Eurasia" has established itself as the best alternative. On the one hand it is sufficiently elastic in terms of geography to escape the fluctuations of politics. On the other, the initiatives of Sakharov, who had proposed on 25 September 1989 a draft of constitutional reform for the Soviet Union called "the Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia" and the first Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarabev, who launched in 1994 the idea of a Eurasian Union, assured some historical and political base<sup>62</sup>. A confirmation in this sense can be found in the re-denomination, both in the institutional, and in the academic contexts, of administrative offices and departments, dedicated to the issues previously included in the "Sovietology"<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> See A.I. IOJRYŠ, *Uroki A.D. Sacharova: gostudarstvenno-političeskie vzgljady*, USSR, Moscow, 1996, 53-54 and E.D. MALINKOVIČ, *Tri revoljucii i dve perestrojki*, IGPI, Moscow, 2008, 331 ss.

<sup>63</sup> Among the many we can mention the *American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies* (AAASS), converted in 2010 in the *Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies* (AAEEES), the *Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies* at Harvard or the *Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies* at Stanford or the PhD programme *Russian and Eurasian Studies* at King's College London, and the *Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs* of the State Department of the United States. Traditionally the focus on the area is much greater in the Anglo-American world than in Europe as, indeed, already at the time of the Cold War. As to the bodies and institutions in Russia and other

The second meaning refers to the Eurasian landmass<sup>64</sup>, and includes not only the post-Soviet world, but also China and Southeast Asia. The third conception of Eurasia, the most delicate one, constitutes a vision alternative and not infrequently openly opposed to the West. This aspect is the most considered both at the political and academic level. In the firmament of the Russian eurasism, on one side there is the current that could be called pragmatic-realist, that is, those who consider Eurasia as the natural space of Russian influence, and for socio-cultural reasons, especially, strategic, and for which the unification of the Eurasian space is necessary condition for Moscow to maintain the status of great power. Some of these considerations have been proposed in the foreign policy doctrine of Yevgeny Primakov. This does not necessarily mean the annexation of the post-Soviet republics to the Russian Federation. Instead many observers flatly deny any ambition of imperial restoration, but place emphasis on the political and military dimensions of Russia and its role as a driver of inclusion, but also as the guarantor of the security of the entire region<sup>65</sup>.

Next to this approach is the one most linked to traditional eurasism that combines ethnographic, sociological and strategic considerations<sup>66</sup>. The contacts and mutual influences between the

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former Soviet countries, the use of the wording *evrazijskij* is widely distributed and promoted by the leadership.

<sup>64</sup> It is a meaning often adopted by the Kazakh leadership. See. N.A. NAZARBAYEV, *Nel cuore dell'Eurasia*, Italian edition edited by the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Italy of the book published in 2005 by Nazarbaev *V serdce Evrazii*, Rome, 2013. Given the involvement of countries outside the Russian and Soviet cultural heritage, he privileged economic and strategic considerations, focusing more on the coincidence of concrete interests of the participating countries that the "*gumanitarnyj faktor*". This approach necessarily involves the overcoming of the Russian-centric vision. In this regard see A.N. NYSANBAEV-E.A. KURMANBAEV, *Evrazijskaja ideja Čokana Valichanova in Evrazijskoe soobščestvo*, XXVI, 1999, 26-31. Undoubtedly the changes since the late '80s, and in particular the opening of China and the European integration, together with the collapse of the socialist regimes in Europe, have fostered closer relations within the Eurasian continental mass, both in economic and political terms, culminating with the entry of Eastern European countries into the European Union.

<sup>65</sup> Among others see Ju.M. OSIPOV, *Konceptual'nye Osnovy evropejskoj meždunarodnoj integracii*, in AA.VV., *Evrazijskaja Integracija, geostrategičeskij aspekt*, Vuzovskaja kniga, Moscow-Rostov na Donu, 2014, 14-15.

<sup>66</sup> These positions are very popular in Russia, as measured by a survey conducted in 2001 by *Vserossijskij Centr izučeniya obščestvennogo mnenija* (VCIOM), which showed that 71% of respondents believe Russia a unique entity, "Eurasian" or "Orthodox", while only 13% believe that it belongs to Western civilization. This information is at <http://eurasia.com.ru/vciom.html> (24 February 2020). It should be underlined that even opponents of the Eurasian integration invariably associate it with Russia and the expansion of

populations of the vast Eurasian territory are not, however, a novelty of the past two centuries. Since ancient time trade favored the encounter of religions and philosophical currents and just after the end of the Roman Empire the region between Byzantium and China became the center of international economics at the time, till to the establishment of the famous Silk Road. In addition to trade between Latin West and East, this ferment brought about an embryonic "internal integration", which the Mongol expansion gave a first, albeit rough, form of political unification. At the center of this space is located, both geographically and conceptually, the Russian Federation «whose territory includes a special part of the world that, unlike Europe and Asia, may be called Eurasia. Eurasia presents itself both geographically and anthropologically as a *unicum*, historically called to statual unity. The state unification of Eurasia has always represented a historical necessity»<sup>67</sup>. With these words in 1925 Prince Nikolai Trubetskoy, linguist exiled in Vienna, reiterated a concept dear to eurasists and panslavists<sup>68</sup> and foreshadowed a major role for Moscow, not as the result of a pure imperial ambition, but a clear historical event.

The Eurasian space is actually extremely multifaceted and even socially very complex. Not only multi-ethnic and multi-confessional, but also marked by a mutual complementarity that can rarely be found in other realities<sup>69</sup>. A plot that came getting increasingly busy since

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its influence. See. J. BUGAJSKI, *Expanding Eurasia: Russia's European Ambitions*, CSIS, Washington DC, 2008. In this regard, it should be specified that in addition to the Russian one, there are at least other two forms of eurasism. First of all the pan-Turkish one, identifying Eurasia with the set of territories inhabited by people of ethnic and linguistic Turkish heritage (Anatolia, the Balkans, Central Asia, the Volga region and other). Today is not particularly active, but has experienced a period of great dynamism in the early '90s, shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In this regard, see A. SENGUPTA, *Conceptualizing Eurasian Geopolitics: Discourses and Debates on Heartland* in S. CHATTERJEE-A. SENGUPTA-S. BHATTACHARYA (curr.), *Rossija v Azii: Perspektivy partnerstva i Vzaimodejstvija*, SSD, Novosibirsk, 2009, 25 ss. A third variant is the so-called Caspian one, which focuses on the great Caspian basin at which they met the three great civilizations Russian, Turkish and Persian-ary and two great religions, Orthodoxy and Islam. On this point see V.A. SHRIELMAN, *To make a bridge: Eurasian discourse in the post-Soviet world*, in *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, II, 2009, 69-85.

<sup>67</sup> N.S. TRUBETSKOY, *O turanskom elemente v russkoj kul'ture*, in AA.Vv., *Rossija meždu Evropoj the Aziej: evrazijskij soblazn*, Nauka, Moscow, 1993, 59 ss. Translated by the author.

<sup>68</sup> Among other I.S. and K.S. AKSAKOVY, K.N. LEONTIEV, K.N. DANILEVSKY.

<sup>69</sup> A unified mosaic in which the famous Gumilev noted, different cultures are complementary and mutually enriching, to the point that, regardless of the differences of original costumes, the Eurasian peoples have developed a common vision of the world. See L.I. SEMENNIKOVA, *Rossija v mirovom soobščestve civilizacii*, KDU, Moscow, 2009, 29 ss.

the Turkmen state of the Khazars, was defeated by Sviatoslav of Kiev in 965 AD<sup>70</sup> and then he involved in the great conversion to Christianity undertaken by his son Vladimir the Great in 988<sup>71</sup>. The Kievan Rus' flourished for nearly three centuries, coming to comprise at the time of the Mongol conquest nearly eight million people and more than three hundred cities<sup>72</sup>. But even more than economic development, the Old Russian state<sup>73</sup>, experienced mixing ethnic and cultural elements of Slavic, Scandinavian, Turkmen, Byzantine, Greek, Ruthenian origin. It must be said that, despite the wide variety of peoples, the primitive Russian state developed as part of the European tradition, and for the Christian religious factor, both for a number of matrimonial bonds<sup>74</sup>.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century this melting pot of peoples fell prey to the Mongol invasion, and although the new rulers had allowed the preservation of language, culture and religion, the more than two hundred years of domination have left deep traces in society and in the mentality of the Russians, who remained completely isolated from the West during the crucial stage of European development that coincided with the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance.

The difficulty of managing such vast domains and inner struggle of Tartar lords allowed the Grand Duchy of Muscovy to grow up to become a hegemonic power in the region. Ivan III, called the Great, in 1480 defeated the Golden Horde and laid the foundation of the

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<sup>70</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of the assimilation of the cazara population by the Kievan Rus', see M.I. ARTAMONOV, *Istorija Chazar*, Gos. Ermitaža, Leningrad, 1962, 365 to 384 and 426 ss.

<sup>71</sup> On the subject see the interesting reconstruction of N.I. MILJUTENKO, G.M. PROKHOROV, *Svjatoj ravnoaposto'nyj Knjaz' Vladimir i krešćenie Rusi*, Izd-vo Olega Abyško, St. Petersburg, 2008, 228 ss.

<sup>72</sup> G.V. VERNADSKY, *Zolotoj Vek Kievskoj Rusi*, Algoritm, Moscow, 2012, 120-121.

<sup>73</sup> The definition of Drevnerussokoe gosudarstvo appeared in Soviet historiography in the late 30's and has gradually supplanted the name Rus' of Kiev. See in the A.O. Čubar'jan, "Normanskaja" teroija or zakone in Rossijskaya Gazeta, November 2, 2014. Among the most famous double bonds you may be mentioned those with Byzantium (Anna Porphyrogenita, daughter of the Roman Emperor II married in 988 Vladimir the Great, making him convert to Christianity), with the Capetians (Anne of Kiev was married to Henry I of France in 1051 and gave birth to Philip I), with Sweden (Cristina, daughter of the king Ingold I married Mstislav I of Kiev in 1095).

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Kingdom of Russia – Peter the Great in the eighteenth century elevated it to the rank of empire. Less than a century after Ivan III, Ivan the Terrible, assumed the title of Tsar of Russia, receiving the approval of the Patriarch of Constantinople and proclaimed Moscow Third Rome – the second, Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453. The end of Mongol domination marked the beginning of a major expansion toward east, which in a series of achievements would have brought in the late nineteenth century to the second and accomplished political unification of the whole Eurasian territory, from the eastern border of Germany until the Pacific Ocean. This great expansion, as already noted, is different from the colonial expansion experienced in those same decades by Western states<sup>75</sup>. There were, of course, several fundamental strategic considerations and power ambitions at the base of Tsarist enterprises, but also a strong moral factor. Symbolically, in those years – the conquest of Central Asia dates back to the 70s of the nineteenth century – on the monthly *Dnevnik pisatelja* Fyodor Dostoevsky urged to ignore the misunderstandings with the European nations and not to forget the Russian role in Asia<sup>76</sup>. In other words, Asia considered not only as an opportunity to spread a system of values<sup>77</sup>, strongly impregnated with the Orthodox Christianity, although not strictly theological<sup>78</sup>, but also a way for Russians to find themselves and shun on the one hand, the crisis of

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<sup>75</sup> Not without a certain amount of ruthlessness, we can say that the eastern expansion of the Russian Empire shares, rather, whether its the first Spanish colonization, characterized by a strong missionary and evangelizing. A different view on Riasanovsky, that with regard to the Russian countryside in Central Asia, identifies «considerable affinity, on the one hand with the colonial wars conducted by the Europeans and the other with the American expansion in the West». He adds, however, that the imposition of Russian rule “interfered relatively little” with indigenous customs. So N.V. Riasanovsky, *History of Russia*, Bompiani, Milan, 2013, 391.

<sup>76</sup> About misunderstandings, Dostoevsky remarked critically as his compatriots had done everything to be perceived by Europeans as part of the same European family and Tatars, while Westerners have continued to consider the Russians the same way as barbarians, alien to their culture, to point that looks even the great writer, «Turks and the Jews are spiritually closer (to the Europeans note) us». So in F.M. DOSTOEVSKY, *Dnevnik pisatelja*, in January 1881, *FM Dostoevsky, Polnoe sobranie sočinenie*, V 30 t., XXVII, Nauka, Leningrad, 1972-1987, 33-37.

<sup>77</sup> Trepavlov observed that Russia is commonly conceived in its historical dimension and that often many tend to regard as Russia all the territories which at different times have been within its borders. So V.V. TREPAVLOV, *Russkie v Evrazii XVII-XIX vv.*, IRI-RAN, Moscow, 2008, 4. This figure, when compared with other modern imperial experiences, highlights the uniqueness of the Russian phenomenon for the kind of relationship that invariably came to rise with the lands and peoples assimilated, at least those in Asia.

<sup>78</sup> There were no reports of cases of forced conversions to Orthodoxy.

values which it is traditionally attributed to the West by the most conservative sector of the Russian society and on the other hand, the difficulty of a relationship with Europe often made extremely complex by a feeling oscillating between distrust and idiosyncrasy. Without taking for granted the existence of a cause-effect relationship, undoubtedly among the so-called European *rusofobija* and the Asian component of the Russian identity there is a link<sup>79</sup>.

5. *The modern "rusophobija"*. - Relations between the West and the Slavic world are sensitive issue for nearly a millennium, when the Great Schism of the East led to the end of unity in Christianity and scored two distinct pathways in the development not only religious, but also social and institutional of Eastern Christians peoples and the Roman Catholic world. However, the fear towards Russia has become more definite and defined since the 20s of the nineteenth century, in particular through the work of two authors, the Englishman Sir Robert Wilson and the French Marquis Astolphe Louise Léonor de Custine. The first was an observer at the armies of Tsar Alexander – then ally of London – during the war against Napoleon. After returning home in 1817 he had been elected to Parliament and published a book in which he outlined an inexorable hegemonic designs, that by Peter the Great to Catherine had led to a dramatic expansion of the Russian Empire and that Czar Alexander and his successors would not hesitate to continue<sup>80</sup>. An opinion that had a number of followers also on the other side of the Channel. The Marquis de Custine after a journey through some cities of European Russia, in 1843 published a report in which, in addition to criticizing the tsarist absolutism, signaled an irrepressible Russian ambition to global dominance<sup>81</sup>. Even the great

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<sup>79</sup> The focus of discussion is whether the European approach has contributed to the strengthening of the Asian features of Russian society or vice versa.

<sup>80</sup> R.T. WILSON, *A Sketch of the Military and Political Power of Russia*, J. RIDGWAY, London, 1817, 116-119. The author pointed out with concern that only during the reign of Catherine the number of Empire's citizens were almost doubled from 22,000,000 to 36,000,000. Referring to the contemporary of Alexander I, was further observed that the number grew to 42 million as a minimum and added, «and not of Asiatic hordes houseless, wandering in deserts, but chiefly of Europeans, situated in territories, Whose military and political value Merely to Russia does not consist in an augmentation of her revenue and her number of souls, but, as will be shown hereafter, contracting in her line of defense, and at the same time affording her powers of advance to positions, That must, if properly occupied, secure the command of Europe and of Asia». *Ivi*, 128.

<sup>81</sup> A.L.L. DE CUSTINE, *La Russie en 1839*, Wouters et Co. Imprimeurs – Libraires, Brussels, 1843, 187. The text of de Custine, bitterly contested by contemporary Russian observers and banished from St. Petersburg, was the subject of an interesting essay, see G.F.

German philosopher Hegel intervened on the topic, and noted in those years that Russia was still connected with Asia and that «the socio-economic development of the Slavic peoples, which were the result of European and Asian elements, had caused that they had come more slowly than others to the universal consciousness and without taking part in the progress of freedom»<sup>82</sup>. The approach has not changed much with the advent of the new century and again in 1931 Oswald Spengler placed Russians among peoples of color, not only incapable of Faustian technique, but inevitably destined to confrontation with the Faustian civilization<sup>83</sup>. These considerations take anything but reassuring aura before the course of Russian-Western relations from 2009 onwards. Undoubtedly, the Eurasian development of the Russian state has meant that the peculiar colonizing attitude of Russia<sup>84</sup>, invariably brought to expansion "towards the sun", not only spread its uses, but ended in turn deeply affected by Eastern and Asian elements with which it came into contact. After 1917, because of internal migration, large deportations, many mixed marriages and strong centralization of Stalinist totalitarianism, the USSR became a state properly Eurasian, although officially *homo Sovieticus* had abandoned any geographic or ethnographic "superstructure". The fall of the Soviet Union, with the mentioned attraction towards Western models, seemed to be the end of the Eurasian world.

6. *Putin's Russia in Eurasia.*- On the contrary, the dismemberment of the Russian world has given new impetus to the eurasist

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KENNAN, *The Marquis de Custine and his Russia in 1839*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1971.

<sup>82</sup> G.W.F. HEGEL, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 1966, 233 ss. Another element to consider in the context of the German perception of Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century is that of the process of building national unity, for which the tsarist empire was considered an obstacle. Influential Prussian political circles were sure that Russia had an interest in keeping Germany divided to be able to better control it. On this point see D. GROH, *La Russia e l'autocoscienza d'Europa*, Einaudi, Torino, 1980, 218.

<sup>83</sup> *Für die Farbigen aber – die Russen sind hier immer einbegriffen – ist die faustische Technik kein inneres Bedürfnis. Nur der faustische Mensch denkt, fühlt und lebt in ihrer Form. Sie ist ihm seelisch nötig, nicht ihre wirtschaftlichen Folgen, sondern ihre Siege: navigare necesse est, vivere non est necesse. Für "Farbige" ist sie nur eine Waffe im Kampf gegen die faustische Zivilisation, eine Waffe wie ein Baumast im Walde, den man forwirft, wenn er seinen Zweck erfüllt hat. Diese Maschinenteknik ist mit dem faustischen Menschen zu Ende und wird eines Tages zertrümmert und vergessen sein (...).* So in O. SPENGLER, *Der Mensch und die Technik: Beitrag zu einer Philosophie des Lebens*, Contumax Verlag, Berlin, 2014, 43.

<sup>84</sup> Ž.S. SYZDYKOVA, *Evrazijskij Sojuz: k buduščemu s učetom prošlogo*, in *Teorija i praktika obščestvennogo razvitija*, X, 2012, 164.

theories, both in the field of historical and anthropological studies and in the actual political debate. In particular, considerable success was achieved by the idea that through the union of two great civilizations, the European and Asian Russia has created a *tertium genus*<sup>85</sup>.

Significant considerations in this regard are also commonly found in an article by Vladimir Putin entitled *Rossija: nacional'nyj vopros* appeared in the newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* on January 23, 2012. Following on from the growing xenophobia and intolerance that characterizes contemporary societies, including the Russian one, the President made a critical analysis of the so-called "multiculturalism", namely the recognition of a preeminent right of minorities to be different, practiced by several EU countries, giving preference to the principle of assimilation. The Kremlin commander in chief continued tracing a brief survey of the genesis and transformation of the Russian state, concluding that it is not comparable either to an ethnic state (like those in Western Europe N.o.A.), or an American melting pot where everyone is, in one way or another, an immigrant. Russia is the result of the collective effort of many nations and in this regard he cited the Ukrainians, Tatars, Jews, Belarusians, regardless of their ethnic classification, live scattered over a territory stretching from the Carpathian Mountains to Kamchatka. That is why Putin openly rejects the idea of creating a national state ethnically unified, judging it in deep contradiction with all the age-old Russian history. He observed: «When someone cries "enough funding to the Caucasus", he should consider that tomorrow this request will be followed inevitably by others: "enough funding to Siberia, the Far East, the Urals, the Volga, the Moscow region ...". This was the solution followed by those who led the Soviet Union to collapse». Putin underlined that the Russian experience of national development is unique: a multi-ethnic society, but one people, and emphasized the need to enhance common values, the only parameter that should

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<sup>85</sup> A *genus* shake by Orthodoxy and driven by a vocation that could be considered "pseudo-evangelical". It would be exactly this vocation that motivated the Russians towards the integration. Interesting in this regard the work of dissident Nikolaj Aleksandrovič Berdjaev, already critical with the Orthodox Church and then with the Bolsheviks and why exiled to France. He argued that the Communist Revolution could have happened only in Russia, but that there communism is not a social system, but a religion that, by providing answers to existential questions and moral, has tried to substitute Orthodoxy in popular culture. So in E.V. ŠELKOPLJAS, *Novaja bol'saja ideja kak uslovie bol'soj evrazijskoj integracii*, in AA.VV., *Evrasijskaja integracija, geostrategičeskij aspekt*, Vuzovskaja kniga, Moscow-Rostov na Donu, 2014, 167-168.

determine the distinction between "us" and "them". What unites this civilization is the Russian cultural element, that the authorities have the duty to promote through the teaching of the language, but also the Russian history, literature and customs. While eschewing drifts censorship, the President makes it clear that the state has the right and duty to solve social problems and public, and within these duties there is the formation of a worldview that takes the nation united, as well as ensures adequate Patriotic training and avoid that anyone put ethnic or religious considerations before the laws of the State<sup>86</sup>.

With regard to the impact that this has on the current Eurasian issues, the view expressed by Sergei Kara-Murza Georgievič is very explanatory. He affirms that not everything can be reduced to a question of exchange. The famous chemical and sociologist observes that exchanges take place in every market relation, but it does not necessary involve in itself any integration. The model should be, rather, that of a family, in which there is no exchange, but sharing ("obščego kotla"). In regards to a similar solution, he realistically mentions four obstacles: *first*, the obsession with marketing that uncontrolled 90s marketism instilled in important areas of society, both Russian and not, who opposed true integration. *Second*, the wrong setting that leads to found the Eurasian project mainly on economic steps, while the sectors to be favored should be a common school and training system, as well as a common language<sup>87</sup>. The *third* problem mentioned by Kara-Murza is the political disorganization of supporters of integration, which also would be the majority. The *fourth* and most insidious obstacle is the different way of development adopted in over twenty years by the republics so that it much more difficult to reconstruct the unity today than it was ten or fifteen years ago<sup>88</sup>. Especially since the initiative of the secession was taken by Yeltsin, despite the different positions of the Central Asian republics

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<sup>86</sup> So V.V. PUTIN, *Rossija: nacional'nyj vopros* in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 23, 2012. See also D. UFFELMANN, *Post-Russian Eurasia and the proto-Eurasian usage of the Runet in Kazakhstan: A plea for a cyberlinguistic turn in area studies*, in the *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, II, 2011, 180.

<sup>87</sup> Which can not exclude, of course, the importance of the economic dimension of integration and the fact that most of its material costs will inevitably fall on the Russian Federation itself. On this point see R.S. GRINBERG, *Formirovanie Evraziskogo soyuza: shansy i riski*, in in AA.VV., *Evraziskaya integratsiya, geostrategičeskij aspekt*, Vuzovskaya kniga, Moscow-Rostov na Donu, 2014, 24.

<sup>88</sup> S.G. KARA-MURZA, *Evrazijskaja Integracija: glavnye trudnosti*, in AA.VV., *Evrazijskaja Integracija, geostrategičeskij aspekt*, Vuzovskaja kniga, Moscow-Rostov na Donu, 2014, 20-23.

and against the opinion expressed in the referendum, held in March 1991, in which the vast majority of Soviet citizens voted to maintain the Union. This crucial decision was taken prospecting extraordinary growth and better welfare for citizens, while UN data on the index of human development report, with the partial exception of the Baltic States, a significant regression for all the former Soviet republics<sup>89</sup>.

Clearly, common Soviet citizens did not earn much from the disintegration<sup>90</sup>. But there are not only economic or cultural evaluations: in the eyes of many proponents of Eurasian integration, 1991 events were not only source of political earthquake and economic crisis, but also moral decay, opening the doors to the system of values that emerged in the West since the early '60 and already had begun to penetrate in the USSR with the Gorbachevian ideological changings. A lifestyle that many, starting with the leadership of all major political parties and religious authorities, judged negatively and severely incompatible with the values of Russian society. In this way the Eurasian vocation would also represent a way to reaffirm those traditional values, based on the communitarian dimension typical of the Slavic Orthodoxy and highly critical of Western individualism<sup>91</sup>. It must be said that one of the necessary conditions for the strengthening of Russia's position in the Eurasian dimension is the development of the Asian part of the country. Although it represents more than two thirds of the territory and contains the vast majority of energy and

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<sup>89</sup> Not to mention the socio-economic disaster of those years, in the ranking of Human Development Index published by the UN in 1994 Russia occupied the 34th position, Belarus the 40th and Ukraine the 45th. In the edition 2014 the three countries respectively occupy the positions 57, 53 and 83. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan increased from 61, 82 and 91 to 70, 125 and 116. The data can be found in the reports of 1994 and 2014 fully available to [address http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/255/hdr\\_1994\\_en\\_complete\\_nostats.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/255/hdr_1994_en_complete_nostats.pdf) for 1994 and for 2014 <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr14-report-en-1.pdf> (24 February 2020).

<sup>90</sup> Interesting in this regard the critical position of Gorjunov, according to which the tragic events of August 1991-October 1993 led Russia to the European choice, in other words the membership of the country's elite to the system of values and institutions of the bourgeoisie, and precipitated a country that had a unique education system, profound culture and advanced industry to the level of only partially developed nations. The author goes on observing that many times in the history the approaches of Russia to Europe have led to a strengthening of Asian components of the Russian identity. The window opened on Europe by Peter I to capture ideas, technology, institutions and Western goods led the Russian Empire to develop a "*civilizacionnoe obrazovanie, kotoroe po duchu, nesomnenno bliže k Mongol'skoj imperii, čem k Britanskoj imperii*". So in I.A. GORJUNOV, *Aziatskij vektor Rossii: vozmožnosti i ugrozy*, in AA.Vv., *Evrazijskaja integracija, geostrategičeskij aspekt*, Vuzovskaja kniga, Moscow-Rostov na Donu, 2014, 130-131.

<sup>91</sup> See M. MARTINI, *L'utopia spodestata*, Einaudi, Turin, 2005, 62.

mineral resources, it suffered a considerable infrastructural and socio-economic gap in comparison with the European side. Of this need the Russian governments were well aware from the Tsarist period, when they favored massive transfers of population through subsidies and tax incentives. In 1930 the Central Committee launched an industrialization programme of the Siberian and Far Eastern districts, especially in the military sector. The high wages favored settlements and still in the '70s and '80s the growth rate remained at positive levels. Everything changed with Perestroika and the development programme of 1987, which cut salaries and suspended the facilities, with the result that the population, already much lower than in the European Russia, was reduced by more than 10% (in 1989 the population of the District Far Eastern was 7,950,000 people in 2014 to 6,226,640; in the Siberian District, respectively 21,068,000 and 19,292,740). However, the Doctrine of foreign policy adopted in July 2008 has reaffirmed the priority of developing Asiatic Russia, with investments, subsidies and infrastructural projects. The effects on Siberian demography have already been felt in 2012 and the trend is a slight but steady increase. For a number of reasons the Eurasian integration is, therefore, an issue very much felt in contemporary Russia, both at intellectual, political and popular level<sup>92</sup>. However this route was not taken immediately by Vladimir Putin. In accordance with the doctrine Primakov he addressed from the beginning of his mandate a particular attention to the post-Soviet space, but the integration has started to be considered a necessity only during his second term.

A key document in this regard is the aforementioned article published by the then Prime Minister Putin in the newspaper *Izvestija* on October 3, 2011<sup>93</sup>, in view of the start of the Common Economic Space – a goal which, incidentally, had taken nearly ten years of gestation<sup>94</sup>. Putin observed that it represents in some way the culmination of the founding of the CIS after the collapse of the Soviet Union – although with the participation of only three of the ten members of the Community had in 2011 – and would contribute to the goal of preserving the many ties that bind peoples and states already

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<sup>92</sup> See. M.G. NOSOV, *Rossija meždu Evrpoj i Aziej in Sovremennaja Evropa*, III, 2013, 30-31.

<sup>93</sup> V.V. PUTIN, *Novyj Integracionnyj projekt dlja Evrazii: buduščee, kotoroe roždaetsja segodnja*, in *Izvestija*, 3 October 2011.

<sup>94</sup> The relevant agreement was signed by the presidents of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan on September 19, 2003.

part of the USSR. In this article, Putin even detecting its limits, mitigated the criticism of the CIS and affirmed the continuing need of the Community, as well as together with other organizations formed in the Eurasian area, including ODKB, Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Community. Putin then set out the main points of the integration process and in particular to enable Russians, Belarusians and Kazakhs contractors to establish their activities either in each of the member countries, to foster competition and the improvement and simplification of existing economic and trade rules. Then he confirmed the will to move forward on the integration road and in this respect he judged necessary to make some clarifications.

Primarily, he clarified that the project does not hide any restoration of the Soviet Union (considering naïve any claim to restore something now consigned to history), but aims to create a center capable of acting as a bridge between Europe and Pacific area. Secondly, it announced the gradual absorption of the existing institutions and organizations (and also the soon starting Common Economic Space) by the future Eurasian Union. Putin definitely excluded every incompatibility between participation in the Eurasian integration and eventual EU ambitions: there was no logic of opposition, but rather need of cooperation and many of the basic principles were absolutely shared: by freedom and democracy to market economy rules. In the aftermath of this article, however, many clouds have thickened the horizon of Russian-European relations, and after just three years the wishes expressed by Putin in 2011 are having to come to terms with each other's sanctions and *de facto* exclusion of Moscow from the G8. It is obvious that the article was not to be purely informative, or simply to launch proposals for cooperation with Western partners<sup>95</sup>. The message of the Russian leader was addressed primarily to the Eurasian allies, fearful that behind the flags Eurasian integration in fact a classic hegemonic designs of Moscow is hiding. That is why Putin reiterated the principle of safeguarding sovereignty, national interest and the independence of the Union's authorities. The need of such reassures is dictated by an evident situation: although the supernational organs have always followed the strict procedures specified in the statutes of the organizations – which, as it was seen –

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<sup>95</sup> The formula “our western partners” (in Russian, *nashi zapandye partnery*) is frequently used by the President, even at times of heightened tension – and therefore is used by many commentators in an ironic and polemic sense towards the European and American leaders.

almost always require unanimity or *consensus* (to the detriment of effectiveness), the Eurasian integration registers a disproportion between member countries, that is a unicum in the global scene.

Traditionally one of the most important conditions for the success of economic integration initiatives is a certain homogeneity of the countries involved. The evaluation takes in to consideration both strictly economic parameters, and also the demographic, social and geographical ones. Looking at the European Union, considered the most thorough in the current experiences of integration, it can be noted that the four largest countries, Germany, United Kingdom, France and Italy in terms of GDP represent respectively 21,3%, 15,2%, 14,9% and 11,2% of the Union<sup>96</sup>.

The Eurasian situation is quite different, with the Russian Federation which alone covers a percentage comprised between 80% and 90% of all the indicators<sup>97</sup>. Such asymmetry significantly complicates the integration plans, since the absolute primacy of Moscow, especially in the light of regional history, is perceived by the other republics as a threat to their new independence and could push them to seek alternative partners<sup>98</sup>. In this regard, it must be said that although all the Russian authorities starting with President Putin have reassured Eurasian partners strict compliance with the procedures and the prerogative of every single country, the balances and the resulting geopolitical dynamics are a fact. For countless reasons already considered, the position and role of Russia would still be a reality regardless of Eurasian integration.

This is also why some Western governments, primarily the US, express very critical positions of what they read as an operation masterminded by the Kremlin to restore its influence in an area of

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<sup>96</sup> Figures released by Eurostat for the year 2017. Note that despite the crisis that has hit Italy, the difference with other countries remains relatively low. See the report on the IMF website <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20180511-1?inheritRedirect=true> (16 March 2020). In terms of population disparities are even lower. See the data published by Eurostat in 2019 <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&language=en&pcode=tps00001&tableSection=1&footnotes=yes&labeling=labels&plugin=1>.

<sup>97</sup> All data is available on the website of the Statistical Office of the CIS at <http://www.cisstat.com/> (16 March 2020).

<sup>98</sup> On the other hand it can not be ignored the aforementioned informations about the performances, not exactly brilliant, in many post-Soviet republics in the course of two decades of independence. Not only there was no leap forward, but there was a significant worsening in comparison with the levels of the Soviet period and the disparity with the Russian Federation has become even more deep.

which, despite official statements, it would not accept the loss<sup>99</sup>. In this regard, we must not forget that the Eurasian territory, especially Central Asia, is very rich in natural resources and strategically located on the border between China, Russia and the Middle East and because of its strategic value, it has become the subject of much attention other than those in Russia. In particular, the major competitors are in the United States, China and, to a lesser extent, European Union, which on several occasions have launched projects in the Eurasian region proposing agreements and partnerships aimed at limiting the weight of Moscow and to hinder possible cases of reintegration of the post-Soviet space with the Russian Federation<sup>100</sup>.

7. *The Russian heritage as historical and political factor of influence.* - Anyway, it is not possible to ignore the contribution that Russia has given to the development of this immense region. Starting from the education systems and health care to military doctrine to the characteristics of the individual economies, everything is invariably linked to the long domination and exchange with the Russians<sup>101</sup>. Further evidence of this special relationship – sometimes despite the

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<sup>99</sup> Among the many statements about it, the best known was released by Hillary Clinton, then US Secretary of State, who in the course of an international conference in Dublin in December 2012 challenged the efforts of Russia «to promote greater economic integration in Eurasia as a move to re-sovietize the region». And she warned without any diplomatic tact «We know what the goal is and we are trying to figure out effective ways to slow down or prevent it». See the press release of the event reported by the agency RT and available at <http://rt.com/politics/clinton-russia-cis-peskov-371/> (16 March 2020).

<sup>100</sup> Among the most interesting there is undoubtedly the project for a kind of a custom pan-Turkish corridor processed by Turkey and the United States called New Silk Road Initiative and addressed to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Northern Cyprus. In this regard see the article published by the Kazakh press agency INO and available at <http://russian.rt.com/inotv/2014-06-04/Kursivkz-Rossiya-pomeshala-sozdat-tyurkskij> (16 March 2020), where there are talk about important maneuvers of Russian diplomacy to scupper the project and also Aa.Vv., *Evrazijskij integracionnyj proekt: efekty i problemy realizacii*, Moscow, IE, 2013, 54. See also the page about the initiative on the site of the US State Department <http://www.state.gov/p/sca/ci/af/newsilkroad/> (16 March 2020).

<sup>101</sup> Among the many contributions on the topic, see Aa.Vv., *Rossija i ES v Central'noj Azii, CCXXII Doklad Instituta Evropy RAN*, Russkij Suvenir, Moscow, 2008, 40 ss. According to the historian and expert on Kazakh affairs Aleksandr Vladimirovich Šustov, the exodus of Russians from the great Central Asian republic in the course of the '90s was linked to its language policy. A figure that is evidenced by the rapid collapse of emigration after the constitutional reform of 1995, which recognized the Russian the status of official language alongside Kazakh, and a new increase in 2011 when it was proposed – and quickly retracted – a change in the language policy. See A.V. ŠUSTOV, *Russkie opjat' pokidajut Kazachstan*, in *Altynorda*, November 24, 2011.

aspirations of the ruling classes – can be found in the infrastructure system: all major roads, which have greatly contributed to the unification of the Eurasian territory have been made during the Empire or the Soviet rule and consequently follow mainly a north-south line to the Russian territory. Among others, the Caspian, Siberian, Orenburg-Tashkent and trans-Mongolian railways. The same applies to the Caucasian, Caspian and Siberian pipeline systems. This explains why one of the priorities which both Beijing and Washington turn attention is the re-orientation of roads and pipelines to the east and south. Moreover, there is a still numerous slavic demograhpic presence that Moscow is understandably concerned to protect. Protection deeply linked to that sociocultural Russian (and Soviet-Russian) legacy, and this is undoubtedly one of the greatest interests of the Kremlin over the entire Eurasian project, as emerged clearly in the different conceptions of foreign policy enacted since 2000. In the early 90s, the protection was addressed directly to physical persons, ethnic Russians but not only, threatened by separatist movements in the Caucasus and the Tajik civil war (in recent years some similiraties have been observed in Ukraine after the beginning of the civil conflict). Today, after the general normalization of the situation, the context in which the protection is exercised is the cultural one and firstly as regards the Russian language. In this sense it should be said that after the collapse of the USSR, campaigns were launched in several republics to aim a de-Russification and to recovery – or develop – nationalistic elements<sup>102</sup>.

The situation of the Russian heritage improved when the Republican governments realized that the economic harm the discrimination of the Russian language was causing to their nations. Firstly, on the CIS market Russian is the only international language, nor any of the other national languages can seriously aspire to take its place. Secondly, the escape of Russian citizens, fearful of the nationalistic policies, would mean losing one of the most dynamic and specialized components of the population. At the same time the Kremlin has invested significant resources both economic and political for the promotion of the Russian language and culture abroad, including through specific structures, such as the *Russkij Mir* Foundation<sup>103</sup> and the program *Rossostrudničestvo*<sup>104</sup>, both active and

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<sup>103</sup> Established by presidential decree in 2007, proclaimed “Year of the Russian language”, on the model of the German Goethe Institute and the Chinese Confucius Institute,

in the CIS Republics and out of the post-Soviet space. Currently the Russian language has the status of official language in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and its is language for interethnic communication in Moldova and Tajikistan. Armenia and Uzbekistan have recognized Russian as the language of a national minority.

Whereas, as mentioned, Russia is far from being alone in the new post-Soviet great game. It can be said that the activism of Moscow is also a reaction to the initiative taken by the other big players: the US, China and EU. Kremlin's competitors follow different strategies. The US initiatives are mostly dictated by strategic considerations or related to hydrocarbons, the Chinese ones invest several economic sectors. Beijing's Eurasian interest are extremely varied and extend from Central Asia to Belarus and Ukraine. The main efforts are directed to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. As for Astana, the Chinese leadership considers it primarily as an important reservoir, whose rich energy resources can supply the insatiable needs of the largest economy on the planet. In particular, the People's Republic has taken advantage of the crisis to grant substantial loans (far greater than investment) and acquire almost a quarter of Kazakh oil sector. Secondly, the great Central Asian country is a growing market for Chinese products, both for domestic consumption and for transit to the rest of the Eurasian Union<sup>105</sup>.

From this last point of view, however, the main hub for Beijing is Kyrgyzstan, which in recent years, has exceeded Kazakhstan in terms of volume of imports from the People's Republic, not to mention the enormous amount of goods that enter the country illegally. Thanks to the weakness of the institutions, Kyrgyzstan is not able to address the problem. But more recently also the Kyrgyz subsoil has attracted the

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*Russkij mir* does have a more pronounced feature of soft power. The presentation of the foundation is very eloquent: «Russky Mir (literally, Russian world) are not only the Russians (*russskie i rossijane*), or only our compatriots in foreign countries and near abroad, the emigrants who left Russia and their descendants. But also foreign citizens who speak Russian, study or teach it, all those who are interested in Russia and are concerned for its future». And yet «Russky mir is the world of Russia. The appeal to everyone to help their country and to be concerned with the neighbor. Very often we hear of what the country could do for people. However it is absolutely not less important what each of us can do for the country». So in <http://www.russskiymir.ru/fund/> (16 March 2020).

<sup>104</sup> It is a federal agency established in 2008 and responsible for “the affairs of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the compatriots living abroad and international cooperation”. One of the aims is the promotion of the image of the Russian Federation abroad.

<sup>105</sup> So in D.S. POPOV, *Kazachstan – vorota Kitaja v ZA*, in *Geopolitika*, XVI, 2012, 9 ss.

ambitions of Chinese, who have guaranteed massive infrastructure investments, but subordinating them to the granting of exclusive exploitation of the deposits<sup>106</sup>. Finally, with regard to Dushanbe, China is interested above all in deposits of rare earth and in finding an outlet for the goods produced in the Xinjiang Autonomous Republic. In the latter case also the main tool in the hands of Beijing are the loans to Tajikistan, which account for almost half of the country's debt<sup>107</sup>. Also the issue of security is of great importance, particularly with regard to possible infiltration of radical Islamic movements in support of claims of Uighuri, the Turkomen population inhabiting the vast northwestern province of Xinjiang, also known as East Turkestan<sup>108</sup>. The authors, who overall expressed a favorable position on the phenomenon, enumerating a number of implications for Beijing. Among the positive ones, they include the creation of additional and promising platform for Russian-Chinese cooperation, the opening of a window of opportunity for the Chinese economy and also a factor of safety, in particular for the western provinces. There are, however, less welcome aspects. First of all, China is aware that the internal regulations of the Eurasian Union will have repercussions on the nations that export in the area. Secondly, there is the real issue which forms the background to the whole issue, namely the fact that the interests of Russia and China have often taken different directions and the Chinese leadership is aware that Moscow considers the post-Soviet region a *san* area of its prevailing influence and poorly tolerate each other presence. Considering the volume of the aforementioned Chinese interests, it is understandable that this may cause some disappointment in Beijing. Finally it is signaled concern about the fate of economic cooperation within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization<sup>109</sup>.

More difficult is to identify the goals of European policy, often unable to follow a single line and oscillating between pragmatic

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<sup>106</sup> On this point see AA.Vv., *Evrazijskij integracionnyj proekt: efekty i problemy realizacii*, Mosca, IE, 2013, 58.

<sup>107</sup> See Z.A. DADABAEVA, *Osobennosti ekonomičeskogo sotrudničestva Tadžikistana s vostočnoazijskimi stranami*, in AA.Vv. *Vostočnye sosedy SNG: faktory i problemy sotrudničestva*, Moscow, IE-RAN, 2010, 136.

<sup>108</sup> For a discussion of the position of China with respect Eurasian integration, see V. SHUZN, V. ZINSUN, *Perspektivy evrazijskogo integracionnogo proekta i ego posledstvija dlja Kitaja*, in *Problemy nacional'noj strategii*, III, 2013, 84-101.

<sup>109</sup> On this point see also D. SIAOSIN, *Evraziskaya integracija i SHOS*, in AA.Vv., *Region Centralni Azii*, RISI, Moscow, 2013, 18-19.

evaluations – primarily economic – and considerations of principle. The most significant instruments put in place by the European Union in respect of Eurasia are the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and then the Eastern Partnership (EaP). The first was launched between 2003 and 2004 with the aim of assisting a number of countries in the Mediterranean and Caucasian regions, plus Belarus and Moldova in their transition to the Western model of democracy and market economy. The ENP had not, however, great results and, blaming the inefficiency to the great heterogeneity of the countries involved, by Polish-Swedish initiative the PO started in 2009 and addressed only to the former Soviet republics of the Caucasus and Eastern Europe. The goals of the EaP include cooperation on immigration until the elimination of visas; negative integration that should lead to the creation of a free trade area; the possibility of concluding Association Agreements with Brussels. Just the prospect of such agreements has contributed to the current escalation in relations with Moscow, to the notorious Ukrainian facts. The Partnership has not brought great results, despite the huge resources involved, and determined an unfortunate distraction of the European attention from the Mediterranean situation<sup>110</sup>.

In light of the above, we can conclude that the Eurasian integration is based on various elements, economic, strategic, cultural and social, and that by now only Russia can play a realistic role as a driver and guide the integration process<sup>111</sup>. For Moscow this is an important

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<sup>110</sup> For a review of European investments in the EaP, see the handbook published by the European Commission and available at [http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/docs/eap\\_vademecum\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/docs/eap_vademecum_en.pdf) (16 March 2020). As to Russia, initially Moscow maintained an attitude of openness and Foreign Minister Lavrov came to not exclude participation in the Eastern Partnership. See the France Presse article reported at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=lavrov-russia-could-join-eu-eastern-partnership-2009-11-25> (16 March 2020). The situation has changed radically with the transition to the stage of the Association Agreements, signed in 2014 by Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, and perceived by the Kremlin as a deliberate attempt to destabilize the Near Abroad and make it, according to a formula of Helene Carrere d'Encausse, «more and more abroad and less near». Not without reason, most of the projects promoted by the EU are presented as alternatives to those related to the integration with Russia, both within the framework of the CIS and the other Eurasian organizations. Among the biggest problems there is that of free movement regime of goods which will access the associated countries, in turn benefiting from the simplifications existing within the CIS: European products in this way could avoid the duties imposed by the Federation and other member States of the Community.

<sup>111</sup> It should be mentioned the position according to which the interest of Moscow for the Eurasian integration is nothing more than the frustrating reaction to the refusal of the West to

factor for economic development and to strengthen its own position in discussions with other global players.

In 2011 Vyacheslav Alekseevich Nikonov, historian, president of the board of the *Russkij Mir* Foundation and president of the Education Committee of the State Duma, said it would be difficult to predict the timing of the creation of the Eurasian Union and that in any case the time factor is not the fundamental one, much more important, he said, would be to tighten the integration plot<sup>112</sup>. In this regard, observers lamented the lack of a clear theoretical formulation of the Eurasian project, both in Russia and in the other countries involved<sup>113</sup>. Criticism came also from the then director of the Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences Ruslan Semenov Grinberg, that drawing a parallel with the European Union, noted that the latter, despite the serious difficulties, has an idea that links the peoples while he had doubt that just as was true for Eurasia<sup>114</sup>. Leaving aside the issue of the persistence of a dimension of values and ideals within the European Union, on which, especially in the light of the last years, it is permissible to advance some concerns, observations by Luk'janov and Grinberg not seem to be fully shared. The complex of existing links, both at state and at popular level, integrate in itself a basis, that represent also an ideal dimension when it translates itself into a common *Weltanschauung*. It follows that efforts to reactivate these relationships and not waste the characters that we could define *obščerossijskie* and shared by the citizens of Moscow, Minsk, Alma-Ata, Bishkek and many other people in the near Abroad, represents a clear strategy, that even in maintenance of national specificities and sovereignty, aims to consolidate that for centuries has been one people. A circumstance even more advantageous in the current globalized world. In this regard it is often observed that the above-mentioned unity would not reflect the reality of the multifaceted post-Soviet territory, but simply a propaganda tool in the hands of some Russian circles proponents of the integration.

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recognize Russia as equal partners, and the inability to place entirely among the great Asian powers.

<sup>112</sup> V.A. NIKONOV, *Mnogoe zavisit ot Ukrainy*, in *Valovyj vnutrennyj produkt*, 2011, IX disponibile sul sito <http://www.vvprf.ru/archive/clauser508.html> (16 March 2020). Similar doubts are expressed by Chinese analysts in V. Shuzn-V. Zinsun, *Op. cit.*, 92.

<sup>113</sup> Among the others see F.S. LUK'JANOV, *Rossija javljaetsja grantom neprikosnovennosti Armenii*, reported in AA.Vv., *Evazijskij integracionnyj proekt: efekty i problemy realizacii*, Moscow, IE, 2013, 78.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibidem*.

To deny this interpretation, it is useful to quote a passage of the Kazakh scholar Laumulin: after the fall of the Iron Curtain and contacts with foreign peoples, the Kazakhs have realized that they were not at all similar to the Muslim neighbors, despite the recovery of the Islamic tradition in the republic. Inside the Soviet Union the Central Asians were considered “Asian”, but after a more thorough knowledge of the Chinese and other Far Eastern peoples has become evident that they (the Kazakhs) are not even very similar to the real Asian. They have more in common with other citizens of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and here the concept of “Eurasian”<sup>115</sup> came clearly out. Of this common character are definitely part also elements of nostalgia for the Soviet period, but even more the awareness of a common “spiritual identity” – not properly religious – and instead to seek partners for new association forms is undoubtedly much simpler to enhance what already exists.

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<sup>115</sup> So in M.T. LAUMULIN, *Vozvraščenie v mesto, kotorgo net*, in *Rossija v global'noj politike*, I, 2012, 88 ss.



DIFFERENT ACTORS IN THE DEFINITION OF  
RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY  
(ECONOMIC, MILITARY AND SECURITY CIRCLES  
AND THEIR INTERACTIONS)

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In past decade the Russian foreign policy and diplomacy are evaluated as successful and efficient from the point of view of achieving political goals and safeguarding Russian interests. Largely it is stipulated by the quality of the Russian diplomacy, verified foreign policy strategies and decisions. In this connection a question arises: which actors exert influence on adoption and implementation realization of the Russian foreign policy in the large measure?

The analysis of decisions and deeds undertaken by Russia on the international arena over the past years allows us to make a conclusion about a balanced interaction of several key groups of actors. Traditionally state-owned institutes, officials and power structures, linked with defense and security of the country play a great role in defining the foreign policy. This is typical not only for Russia, but for other countries as well.

At the same time the structure of political and economic power in Russia has been based on export of mineral resources (oil, gas, ferrous and non-ferrous metals), control over electric power energy and finance from the state budget for a long time.

The top priority development of these branches in Russian economy resulted in the fact that the companies involved in mineral resources export and the extraction of their products abroad have become the geopolitical actors, not only the economical ones. The fight for mineral resources is an undisputable fact of the present-day world process. Under these conditions the Russian energy-supply and metallurgical companies cannot remain outside the space of foreign policy tasks as they are the largest transnational companies with economical interests in many countries and which have foreign partners and share-holders. Consequently the main power industry and

metallurgical companies are becoming important actors in foreign policy decisions making.

The role of the banking institutes has increased in the Russian foreign policy due to the need of measures be taken and directed at higher competitiveness of the national currency and increasing its role in the world finance. It is imperative at the same time that ruble and other currencies different from US dollar used in calculations between Russia and foreign partners, be beneficial for business. Positive dynamics in national currencies bigger share is witnessed on the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) space, as well as it could be observed in trade economic cooperation between Russia and countries in the Asia and Pacific region and Latin America. The issues of more active usage of the single European currency in calculations for Russian power products are being studied together with partners from EU. As a state cannot forcefully bind the commercial structures to use this or that currency in their calculations with foreign partners, it is obliged to agree on politics and interests of the state and commercial structures.

Besides, the setting up of public expert, analytical, consultative counsels has been widely disseminated in the practical experience in the state bodies of power with aim of covering foreign policy key directions. In other words, the whole system of state-owned, power, public and business actors are involved in defining the Russian foreign policy. Before we will pass over to their analysis, let us consider the whole system of their interaction and powers of the state-owned institutes, as a result, it is these institutes that take foreign policy decisions and it is with them that all other actors interested in the matter strive to interact.

1. *State-owned institutes defining foreign policy of the Russian Federation.*- Higher bodies of the state power are the organizational basis for foreign policy implementation in Russia. Despite the fact that they belong to different branches of power, these institutes direct their efforts in the realization of their powers to achieve the common goal, - to secure and defend the interests of Russia on the international arena. The coordinated foreign policy of all the participants in the process is pursued with this aim in view.

The system of the state power bodies which determine and implement the foreign policy is compiled by the President of the Russian Federation, the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation

(which is comprised of two Chambers: the State Duma and the Federation Council), the Government of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Separate authorities in foreign policy issues are attributed to profile ministers and departments. These include the Ministry of Defense, the Federal Security Service, the Ministry of Economic Development, other ministries and departments, as well as state bodies of power, higher officials of the Russian Federation subjects.

*The President of the Russian Federation* is the bearer of power in the sphere of foreign policy. He determines the main directions of the state foreign policy, represents the Russian Federation inside the country and in international relations. The constitutional status of the President is sealed in the Constitution of the Russian Federation. Being a guarantor of the Constitution the President undertakes measures on behalf of the Russian Federation aimed at safeguarding sovereignty, independence, and national integrity of the Russian Federation.

The foreign policy activity of the President of the Russian Federation is concentrated on solving the main global issues of the present day situation. As a bearer of power in the foreign policy issues, the President is an actor, shaping the Russia's foreign policy and controlling its implementation by plenipotentiary bodies and officials.

Proceeding from the above, we may keynote the following main presidential functions in foreign policy leadership in the country.

- Coordinational – it is when aims and goals of the foreign policy course of the Russian Federation are defined. For example, the Annual Address of the President to the Federal Assembly contains the directions and ways of implementation of the country's foreign policy, main geopolitical interests, priorities in interaction with the states and international organizations.

- Administrative – constitutional and controlling power of the head of state. The president organizes the functioning of the specialized body of the national foreign policy implementation – The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, appoints the Minister of Foreign Affairs to his post, who is in direct subordination to the president, appoints and recalls diplomatic representatives of the Russian Federation in foreign countries and international organizations and etc. after the consultations held with the corresponding committees of the Federal Assembly Chambers.

- Military. The President of the RF is the Supreme Commander and is entrusted with a considerably large circle of powers in the area of ensuring the country's security, including the RF armed forces usage as a self-defense measure, announcing the neutrality of the country, signing a cease-fire agreement and etc. The President defines the main directions of the Russian Federation military policy, approves the military doctrine, carries out the leadership over the Armed Forces, troops and military detachments, declares martial law (in case of need), takes decisions on the usage of the Armed Forces and armaments not in their direct proper designation (in case of need), issues an order in the name of the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces on carrying out military operations, coordinates plans of the Armed Forces development, approves mobilization plans, programs of transition to the military time conditions, coordinates plans of piling up the state reserves of material values and mobilization reserve.

President is holding talks, signs international agreements, ratification documents, accepts credentials and recalls of the diplomatic representatives accredited under his authority. The right to hold talks, and to sign international treaties of the Russian Federation of the interdepartmental type without submitting the authorities, within their competence only, is included in powers vested on the Federal Ministers, heads of other federal bodies of executive power as well.

The acting constitution of the Russian Federation does not give a direct answer to the question which of the Chambers of the RF Federal Assembly and in which order ratify international treaties, agreements, signed by the President. Alongside the ratification of international of international treaties is implemented in the form of federal law, that is to be passed by the State Duma. A federal law passed by the State Duma is due to mandatory consideration by the Federation Council and after its approval by them is to be submitted to the Russian President for his signature. The order of signing the ratification documents by the head of the state is the following: the proposals on ratification are brought in by the RF President or the RF Government depending on who had made a decision to sign the document. Then a ratification document is compiled which is signed by the President of the Russian Federation and sealed by his stamp and a signature by the Foreign Minister. The procedure is being held in accordance with the Federal law on ratification of the international treaty of the Russian Federation.

The foreign policy powers of the President of the Russian Federation are characterized by active speediest action, neutrality, and unlimited application of powers from the part of other bodies of the state power. President is an independent political figure in foreign policy. It is worthwhile emphasizing that the President of the Russian Federation fulfills his powers in accordance with the RF Constitution, federal laws, interacting in the established order with the Federal Assembly and the Government of the Russian Federation and other state-owned institutes.

*The Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (Upper Chamber of the Parliament)* takes an active part in defining and implementing the foreign policy. The Federation Council considers the expenditures on defense, fixed by the federal laws on a federal budget, adopted by the State Duma; considers federal laws in defense area, adopted by the State Duma, passes the decrees by the President of the Russian Federation on introducing the martial law, and emergency situation on the territory of the Russian Federation or on its separate locations, also it considers the drawing in the Russian Federation Armed Forces, other troops, military units and bodies using armaments and fulfillment of tasks not being in their direct designation; it solves the issue of the possibility to use the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation beyond the territory of the Russian Federation. The Federation Council ratifies and denounces international treaties, cooperates with parliaments of foreign states and international parliamentary organizations, sends delegations abroad on their official and working visits, receives delegates of the foreign countries and international organization.

Two Committees of the Federation Council are directly engaged in foreign policy issues. They are: the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on defense and security.

The Committee of the Federation Council on Foreign Affairs carries out the legal support of the foreign policy course of the Russian Federation and fulfillment of international obligations on its part; ratification and denunciation of international treaties of the Russian Federation and etc. The Federation Council Committee on Defense and Security carries out a legal regulation of domestic security and security from outside, military construction, safeguarding and defense of the state border, financing of the national military structure, maintaining law and order.

*The State Duma of the Russian Federation (Lower Chamber of the Parliament)* is vested with broad powers on foreign policy issues considerations. Profiles Committees and the Department of International Cooperation of the State Duma managerial personnel within the State Duma staff are formed with the aim of carrying out international ties.

The State Duma considers expenditures on defense within the state budget; passes federal laws in the defense area; organizes inter-parliamentary cooperation with other countries; considers candidates for the posts of the Russian ambassadors, offered by the President and gives their recommendations relative to their nomination to the offered posts; prepares ratification of international treaties of the Russian Federation. Each of the interstate and intergovernmental agreements, subject to ratification in accordance with the Russian law will preliminary pass a comprehensive legal and linguistic analysis, conducted by the staff of the Committee on Foreign affairs and Legal control office of the State Duma. The conclusions prepared correspondingly will be discussed at the Committee sittings with the participants of the State Duma different party factions and are considered from the point of view of different political forces. After that only the document is submitted for consideration of the plenary sitting of the State Duma.

The main profile committees of the State Duma, which determine the foreign policy of Russia are the following: The Committee on Foreign Affairs, The Committee on CIF affaires, Eurasian integration and ties with compatriots, the Committee on Defense. Standing Committees are usually shaped at the beginning of each term of office and are acting during the whole period of the term of office of the State Duma. Such Committees allow to distribute the work load and ensure the specialization application in the work on draft laws. The profile Committees hold hearings, round-table discussions, seminars on a wide range of foreign policy issues. They are entitled to request documents and papers needed for their operation from heads of the state bodies and other organizations.

Besides standing Committees, the Upper and Lower Chambers of the Russian Parliament have the right to set up temporary controlling, united, conciliatory, investigatory and other committees:

- mixed parity (conciliatory) committees are formed with the aim of granting possibility to the parliament chambers to adopt the

texts under discussion in the identical wording, in case discrepancies arise. Their task is to elaborate the single text on debatable provisions;

- investigatory committees are formed with the aim of collecting information on definite problems and submitting their conclusions (on a given problem) to the corresponding chamber;

- controlling committees are set up to study administrative, financial or technical control for public services or state-owned enterprises with the aim of notification of the chamber that has set up these bodies about the state of things;

- special committees are used basically to consider the texts (draft bills), of wide-scope nature, covering the competence of several standing committees, or on the contrary, narrow, specialized, document but which deserves a scrutinized study due to its significance.

On the whole the Upper and the Lower Chambers of the Parliament are engaged in the work on legislative provision for the foreign policy of the country and implementation of international obligations of the Russian Federation, contribute to higher efficiency of the parliamentary diplomacy.

*The Government of the Russian Federation* is carrying out measures of securing the implementation of the foreign policy. The most important foreign policy powers of the Government are the following:

- to ensure the country's representation in foreign countries within their powers;

- conclusion of international treaties and ensuring the fulfillment of international treaty obligations, control over fulfillment of treaties provisions by other participants;

- protection of interests of the Russian citizens beyond the RF boundaries, as well as observing the fulfillment of the above treaties and obligations on the part of other participants;

- defending the geo-political interests of the country;

- monitoring and performing state control in the sphere of foreign economic policy, international scientific and technological, and cultural cooperation;

- bears the responsibility, within its powers, for the safeguards and procurement of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and other troops, military units and bodies;

- heads the activity on defense issues in the federative bodies of executive power within its jurisdiction;

- elaborates and submits to the State Duma the proposals on expenditures on defense in the federal budget;
- takes decisions on establishing the Russian Federation embassies, the RF consulates in foreign states, establishes, organizes and abolishes trade representations of the Russian Federation;
- carries out the composition of the Russian delegations for participation in the sittings of the international organizations' bodies;
- approves the candidatures of the Russian representatives to the international organizations;
- and other powers (in all 27 points in accordance with article 6 section II Law "On Defense").

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation is the most significant institute within the RF Government.

*The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation* is the specialized federative body of executive power. Its basic tasks are elaboration and implementation of the national policy and normative and legal regulation of the sphere of international relations of the Russian Federation. The functioning of the Foreign Ministry (MID) is regulated by the Regulation on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (Approved by the Decree of the President of the RF №865 of July 11, 2004).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the following powers:

- working out the general strategy of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation and submitting the corresponding proposals to the President of the Russian Federation;
- carrying out the foreign policy course of the Russian Federation in accordance with the Concept of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation and the Concept of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the sphere of promotion to the international development, approved by the President of the Russian Federation;
- procurement of diplomatic and consulate relations of the Russian Federation with foreign states, relations with international organizations;
- providing interrelations of the Russian Federation with foreign states and international organizations in the sphere of promotion to international development;
- providing diplomatic and international legal means of protection of defense of the sovereignty, security, territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, its other interests on the international arena;

- providing jointly with other federative bodies of executive power the security of citizens, organizations and other objects of the Russian Federation abroad, including those under crisis and emergency situations and situations arising as a result of threats or acts of international terrorism;
- promotion of interaction of the bodies of executive power with the bodies of legal and judicial power on a federative level and at the level of the Russian Federation subjects with the aim of providing of participation of these bodies, their officials in international activity, observing the principle of integrity of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation and implementation of its international rights and obligations;
- coordination of international activity of other federative bodies of executive power and international links of the bodies of executive power of the Russian Federation subjects with the aim of carrying out the single political course of the Russian Federation relative to foreign states and international organizations and realization of international rights and obligations of the Russian Federation;
- Promotion of the development of ties and contacts with compatriots, living abroad.

It is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that coordinates the activity of the federal bodies of executive power in the area of international relations and international cooperation<sup>1</sup>. One of the effective instruments of such coordination is *the Council of Heads of the Russian Federation Subjects under the Russian MID* which includes not only the heads of the RF subjects, but the representatives of ministers and departments<sup>2</sup> as well.

Besides the state institutes, the Foreign Ministry interacts with business, institutes of civil society and religious groups. As a rule it takes place within the framework of working groups. For example, *A Working group on interaction with the Russian Foreign Ministry and The Russian Orthodox Church* (in operation since 2003), where the issues of international interreligious dialogue, a problem of persecution of Christians in various regions of the world, safeguard of

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the President of the Russian Federation dated November 8, 2011, № 1478 “On Coordinating role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in carrying out the single foreign policy course in the Russian Federation”.

<sup>2</sup> The Council of Heads of the Russian Federation Subjects under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the RF. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/activity/coordinating-and-advisory-body/head-of-subjects-council>.

the rights of believers and traditional values and others are under discussion.

The institutional basis for interaction of the MID with business actors is composed of the Business Council under the Foreign Ministry (in operation since 2006) and agreements between the MID and commercial companies, and you will be able to read about it in the chapter related business actors issues.

The system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs comprises *the Federal Agency on the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, on compatriots, living abroad, and on international humanitarian cooperation (Rossotrudnechestvo)*. *Rossotrudnechestvo* renders assistance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in pursuing the single foreign policy course of the Russian Federation<sup>3</sup>. The activity of *Rossotrudnechestvo* is not limited by the boundaries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The promotion of international humanitarian cooperation and public diplomacy are part of *Rossotrudnechestvo* aims. With this in view the Agency actively cooperates with international and regional organizations, works out and implements programs of granting aid to different countries jointly with other departments, carries out federal targeted programs.

*Rossotrudnechestvo* has a ramified net of representations abroad (97 representations in 80 countries in the world, including 73 Russian centers of science and culture in 62 countries, 24 representatives of *Rossotrudnechestvo* within the staff of embassies in 21 countries). The tasks of *Rossotrudnechestvo* and its foreign offices include: realization of the state policy of international humanitarian cooperation, advancement of dissemination of objective image about Russia abroad, preservation of historical-memorial heritage, promotion and advancement of the Russian language and culture abroad; support and advancement of the Russian education, achievements of the Russian science. Annually *Rossotrudnechestvo* representations take part in selection of foreign students to be enrolled into Russian universities and maintain contacts with the graduates from the Russian (Soviet) Higher Educational Establishments, which number over 500 thousand people all over the world. *Rossotrudnechestvo* assists the maintaining and developing international contacts of the Russian regions in the

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<sup>3</sup> Page 105 of section V Concepts.

scientific, engineering, cultural, economic areas, in the sphere of education.

The role of *Rosstrudnechestvo* in elaboration of the foreign policy strategy and plans consists in preparing of analytical documents on humanitarian problems and working out specialized state programs and international projects. For example, since 2011 *Rosstrudnechestvo* has been the state client-coordinator of the program of the short-term familiarization trips to the Russian Federation of young representatives of political, public, scientific and business circles from foreign states, adopted by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated October 19, 2011 № 1394.

Considering the foreign policy within the categories of “soft” and “hard” power, we may say, that *Rosstrudnechestvo* is one of the important institutes of “soft” power in Russia and it possesses significant organizational resources for the development of international humanitarian cooperation.

*As Russia is a large federative state, it possesses the Institute of plenipotentiaries of the President of Russia in Federative regions (okrug). They can be enumerated as the following okrugs in Russia: Central, North-Western, Southern, North-Caucasian, Privolzhsky (the Volga-river Area), the Urals, Siberian, Far-eastern. Plenipotentiaries of the RF President pursue both the domestic and foreign policy of the President of RF on the territories of federal regions. Some of the plenipotentiaries have a direct influence on the foreign policy and security policy shaping in Russia, by being part of the Security Council of the Russian Federation (for example, plenipotentiaries of the RF President in the Siberian federal okrug, in the Southern federative okrug, in the Urals federative okrug, in the North-Caucasian federal okrug, in the Central okrug).*

Thus we have described the system of the basic state actors, participating in the work of foreign policy strategies and plans, taking foreign policy decisions and implementing foreign policy aims and goals.

*2. Military actors and actors in the sphere of security.- We will single out the main two groups in the system of military actors and actors in the sphere of security: the first group is composed of federal bodies of executive power, the second group is composed of consultative institutes.*

The first group includes the Federative Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB), the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation (SVR), the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation (Minoborona), the Ministry of the Russian Federation on Civil Defence Affaires, Emergency and Elimination of natural disasters consequences (MCHS). The RF President carries out the general control over all these departments, including the Ministry of Foreign Affaires (MID). He appoints and dismisses heads of FSB, SVR, Minoborona of Russia from their posts.

*The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB)* is a federation body of executive power and is a single centralized system of security bodies. The President appoints the FSB director and dismisses him from his post. The legal basis of the Federal Security Service is the Constitution of the Russian Federation, Federal law "On Federal Security Service" and other federal laws and Russian normative and legal acts. We must emphasize that the activity of the Federal Security Service is carried out in accordance with international treaties of the Russian Federation as well, and that fact is fixed in the law "On Federal Security Service".

*The Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) of the Russian Federation* is a system of Foreign Intelligence Service bodies, purposefully set up by the state and is a constituent part of security provision forces of the Russian Federation and is called upon to defend the security of personalities, society, and states from external threats. The legal basis of the intelligence activity is laid in the Constitution of the Russian Federation, federal laws and normative legal acts of the federal bodies of the state power, referring to the foreign intelligence of Russia.

All federal bodies of the executive power are obliged to render support to SVR functioning, if it is not linked with a change in the main directions of the activity of the above bodies of executive power. The order of this interaction is determined by the President of the Russian Federation. The conditions of interrelations of foreign intelligence bodies of Russia, with federal bodies of executive power, enterprises, institutions and amalgamations of the Russian Federation are established by the corresponding treaties. Special subdivisions are set up in some of the state-owned structures. For example, interrelations of the Federal Assembly Chambers with the bodies of foreign intelligence of the Russian Federation are maintained through the corresponding committees (subcommittees) founded in each of the chambers.

*The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation (Minoborona of Russia)* is a federal body of executive power, performing the functions of drawing up and implementation of the national policy, normative-legal regulation of defense issues. The Minoborona of Russia carries out its activity in interaction with other federal bodies of executive power, bodies of executive power of the subjects of the Russian Federation, bodies of local self-control, public associations and organizations. The President of the RF is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, he appoints the minister of defense of the Russian Federation. It is worth mentioning the fact that at the present time the Ministry of Defense and its head S.K. Shoigu have the utmost level of public trust as compared with other ministries and departments. The Public Council is functioning under the RF Ministry of Defense and it amalgamates representatives from all spheres of society, institutes of civil society and MASS MEDIA<sup>4</sup>.

*The Ministry of the Russian Federation on the Civil Defense Affaires, Emergencies and Liquidation of Natural Calamities consequences (MCHS of Russia)* is a federal body of executive power. MCHS works out and implements the national policy, normative and legal regulation, supervision and control in the area of civil defense, protection of the population and territories from emergency situations of natural and technogenic character, ensuring fire protection and protection of people on waters. The Department of International Affaires is set up within the structure of MCHS. The director of this department is simultaneously the head of the Russian national corps of emergency humanitarian deployment. The Military council of military rescue units of MCHS of Russia, the Expert Council (it carries scientific-legal, expert and informational consultative support of MCH activity when decisions are prepared and adopted) are functioning within the MCHS system. The representatives of all the above mentioned departments are part of consultation councils and consultative bodies under the President of the RF where the issues of the foreign policy are considered.

The second group are the consultative institutes exerting both direct and indirect influence on the foreign policy of Russia: *Security*

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<sup>4</sup> The Composition of Public Council of the RF Ministry of Defense. UR: <https://function.mil.ru/function/public-board/membership.htm>.

*Council of the Russian Federation and the State Council of the Russian Federation.*

*The Security Council of the RF* is a constitutional body, which implements preparatory procedure of decisions of the President of the Russian Federation in the area of security provision. The Security Council detects, analyses, evaluates, forecasts threats to the national security of Russia, organizes scientific research, prepares analytical documents and proposals on measures to ensure national security, state draft decisions for the President. These decisions refer to the issues of defense organization, military construction, defense production, military-technological cooperation between Russia and foreign states, international cooperation to ensure security, protection of constitutional system, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Russian Federation. As a matter of fact, the Security Council carries out a strategic planning in the area of ensuring security, works out and clarifies strategies of the national security of the Russian Federation, conceptual and doctrinal documents, criteria and indices of ensuring national security.

The Security Council of the RF coordinates the activity of federal bodies of the executive power and bodies of the executive power of the subjects of the Russian Federation relative to realization of decisions made by the President of the Russian Federation in the area of ensuring the national security. The Security Council analyses information on the implementation of the main directions of the state policy aimed at ensuring security, on social and political and economic situation in the country, observation of rights and freedoms of a man and a citizen.

The Composition of the Security Council is an open information, it is approved by the Decree of the President of the RF and is shown on the Council site<sup>5</sup>. It comprises ministers of the key ministries, connected with the defense system, security, foreign relations, heads of some of the subjects of the Russian Federation, plenipotentiaries of the President of the RF in the federal okrug of Russia and others.

A Consultative body is *the State Council of the Russian Federation (Gossovet)*<sup>6</sup>. It exists despite the fact that representatives of the regions are presented in the chambers of the Federal Assembly

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<sup>5</sup> The Composition of the Security Council of the Russian Federation. URL: <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/council/composition/>.

<sup>6</sup> The State Council as a consultative body is established by the Decree of the President of the RF dated September 1, 2000. № 1602 "On the State Council of the Russian Federation".

of Russia (deputies of the State Duma and senators of the Council of Federation). The Gossovet was founded in 2000 after the changes introduced into the order of forming the Council of Federation (upper chamber of the Federal Assembly of the RF). Heads of the regions ceased to be members of the Council of Federation, but became members of Gossovet, which undertook part of the work, connected with regions in Russia upon itself, including the international ties of the regions.

The chairman of the State Council is the President of Russia. The members of the State Council are the Chairman of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, plenipotentiaries of the President of the Russian Federation in federation regions, higher officials – heads of higher executive bodies of the state power of the subjects of the Russian federation, heads of factions in the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. In case a decision is taken by the President of the Russian Federation, the following officials, who had served in place of higher officials – heads of higher executive bodies of the state power – subjects of the Russian Federation and having vast experience of public (state and public) activity may be included in the composition of the State Council.

The discussion of the issues relative to the foreign policy are not directly referred to the functions of the State Council of the RF. However upon the proposal introduced by the President of Russia, these issues may be considered, as issues, of utmost state significance. The decisions of the State Council, despite their advisory nature, may influence the decisions in the area of international relations made both by the President of the RF and other state bodies, vested by the corresponding powers. The State Council of the RF is not vested by its own authoritative powers, but its decisions may be legalized with decrees, orders, instructions issued by the president of the RF.

Until recently the activity of the State Council has not been discussed much on the informational space and experts called it a faked institute. We do not agree with this position, as it is in the State Council namely, that the issues and strategies of the Russian regions development, including the issues of foreign ties and security are discussed. The utmost attention is drawn to the State Council at the beginning of 2020 against the background when amendments to the Constitution of Russia are being discussed. In the course of debates on

the issues of entering amendments to the Constitution of Russia, proposals are being tabled to introduce changes, which will enable the State Council to have the right to determine the basic directions in the domestic and foreign policy of the Russian Federation and priority directions of the social and economic development of the state. Unlike the Security Council, the State Council may become an open platform for a dialogue, where representatives of state corporations, state-owned banks, deputies and others could be invited to, not officials only. In other words if the State Council will be granted the right to determine the basic directions of the domestic and foreign policy of Russia, it means that the scope and the structure of the foreign policy will be enlarged.

Thus, the system of interaction of the state and regional institutions and officials referring to the foreign policy issues, is guaranteed by the President of the RF, executive and legislative bodies of power (their decisions are mandatory for execution) and by institutes, which activity is of advisory and of recommendation type. It is these institutes that represent expert communities, within framework of their activity the foreign policy tasks and priorities are being discussed.

3. *Groups of economic actors.*- The Concept of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation makes a note that one of the priorities of Russia's policy is the assistance for the development of the national economy in the conditions of globalization by providing equal positions of the country and Russian business within the system of the world economic ties. The solution of this task means the interaction of the foreign policy actors with economic actors.

We single out three groups of economic actors, actively interacting with foreign policy departments:

- federal bodies of executive power. Basic actors – the Ministry of Economic Development, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Ministry of Power Industry;

- state corporations. The main state corporations, interacting in foreign policy issues are: the State Corporation on Atomic Energy (Rosatom), the State Corporation for assistance to the development, production and export of high-technology industrial products (Rostech), the State Corporation on Space activity (Roscosmos), Bank for the development and foreign economic activity (VEB, RF), Russian corporation for nanotechnologies (Rosnano);

- Russian global companies, TNK. Among the most prominent TNK are the Energy TNK, metallurgical companies, financial companies. Such companies as Gazprom, Lukoil, Rosneft, Sberbank, are among the top -100 largest TNK companies in the world, as per the rating Global 2000 The World's Largest Public Companies. In addition to these companies we will single out the largest in the world producer of aluminum – the Russian company Rusal.

The interaction of the above indicated groups of actors is implemented by concluding the agreements, setting up different councils and committees, dialogue platforms, negotiations and etc.

*The Ministry of Economic Development* (Mineconomrazvetie, of Russia) elaborates the state policy in the foreign policy activity (with the exception of foreign trade), shapes the interstate and federal targeted programs, works out and implements programs of social and economic development of Russia, development of special economic zones on the territory of Russia, where international cooperation is being developed. The Ministry of economic development is guided by the international treaties of the Russian Federation in its activity, not only by the state legislative acts.

*The Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation* (*Minpromtorg of Russia*) is a federal body of executive power, carrying out the state control over the foreign trade activity, with the exception of issues of customs-tariffs regulation. Minpromtorg elaborates the state policy and normative-legal regulation of a number of spheres, including defense-industrial complex, energy saving and higher power efficiency in circulation of goods, technical regulation, standardization and ensuring the unity in measurement, science and technology within the interests of defense and security of the state, foreign and domestic trade, supervises the industry of ammunition and special chemistry, chemical disarmament, industry of conventional weapons. Minpromtorg of Russia ensures the support for the industrial products support, access to goods markets.

*The Ministry of Power Industry of the Russian Federation* (*Minenergo of Russia*) works out and implements the state policy on fuel and oil power industry, including power energy issues, oil extraction and oil processing industry, gas, peat bog, coal, and shale industry, products of their processing, renewable energy sources, the opening up the deposits of hydrocarbon on the basis of agreements on the products division and in the sphere of oil-chemical industry. The international activity of Minenergo clearly shows its role and

significance for the foreign policy<sup>7</sup>. The Ministry carries out energy dialogues between the countries Russia-China, Russia-EU, cooperation with the USA, OPEC, BSEC, Moscow Economic Forum, GECF, IRENA, ASEAN, EEC UN, SEforALL (Sustainable Energy for All), carries out tripartite negotiations on gas within the framework of Russia-EU-Ukraine.

In other words, the ministries under review in the first group of economic actors determine the foreign economic policy of Russia together with the President of the RF, the Government RF and implement it together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, subjects of the Russian Federation and other actors in accordance with national interests of Russia.

The interaction of business-actors with economic ministries and foreign political departments takes place on an official institutional basis in the interests of protection of political and economic interests of Russia abroad. For example, Business Council has been set up under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Heads of the main economic departments of Russia, major Russian companies participate in Business Council deliberations. Their composition is determined depending the issues raised at the meeting. Besides commercial companies conclude official agreements with foreign policy departments. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia has agreements on cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce (TTP) of Russia, the Russian union of manufactures and entrepreneurs (RSPP), All Russia Public organization "Delovaia Rossia" (Business Russia), All Russia public organization of small and intermediate entrepreneurship "OPORA Rossie" (Support of Russia), Association of Russian banks, the Union of Oil-Gas-manufactures, the Union of Mechanical Engineering workers, "Vnesheconombank", "Rosnano", OAO "РЖД" (Russian Railways), "Lukoil" company, "Nornikel", "Rosneft".

It should be keynoted, that more and more Russian business structures regularly inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about their strategic plans in the foreign sphere, address the Ministry for consultations and support. In turn, foreign representations of the Russian foreign policy departments grant aid to the Russian business abroad, create favorable political conditions for diversification of the Russian presence on the world markets, counteract discrimination of

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<sup>7</sup> International activity of the Ministry of the Power Energy of the Russian Federation. URL: <https://minenergo.gov.ru/node/14543>

the Russian investors and exporters, grant assistance to Russian Companies in learning the specifics of foreign markets. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs grants legal, economic and commercial information about the states of things of foreign markets; helps to organize talks, participation in tenders, acquisition of assets of promising foreign companies, realization of beneficial contracts, abroad (in such branches as, for example, mining industry, power energy, infrastructure, construction, transport, mechanical engineering).

The largest player is *Rosneft* is a public oil-gas company, which is included in the strategic enterprises of Russia<sup>8</sup>. *Rosneft* carries out processing on its own oil refinery facilities in Russia, Germany, India and exports oil to North-Western, Central and Eastern Europe, to the countries of the Mediterranean area, to China and to other directions. In Germany the company possesses the shares (from 24 through to 54 %) in *MiRO*, *Bayernoil*, and *RSK*. In India *Rosneft* possesses 49% in high technology *NPZ Vadinar*. *Rosneft* possesses 55 licenses for the areas in waters of the arctic, far eastern, and southern seas: Western Arctic, (Barents sea, Pechora and Karskoye seas (19 projects); Eastern Arctic (Laptev sea, Eastern Siberian and Chukotskoye seas (9 projects) Far East (Okhotskoye and Japanese seas (20 projects); Southern seas of Russia (Black sea, Azov sea and Caspian sea (8 projects). Resources of hydrocarbon on these territories are estimated as being 41 billion of tons of oil equivalent. Also *Rosneft* is carrying out prospecting and extracting of hydrocarbon along the shelf of Vietnam and Egypt, participates in the projects of Mozambique and Venezuela. *Rosneft* is actively participating in the negotiations on settlement of unstable situation in Venezuela.

The share of another Russian player – oil company *Lukoil* is more than 2% of the world oil extraction and about 1% of the confirmed reserve of hydrocarbons in the world. *Lukoil* is carrying out prospecting and extraction of oil and gas in the regions of the Middle

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<sup>8</sup> A list of strategic enterprises and strategic joint-stock companies is adopted by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation “On ratification of a list of strategic enterprises and strategic joint-stock companies” (with amendments of February 14 2020). The System of strategic enterprises includes: 1) Federal state unitary enterprises, dealing with production of products (works, services), having a strategic significance for ensuring defense capability and security, protection of morality, health, rights and legal interests of the citizens of the Russian Federation; 2) Joint-stock companies, which have assets in federal ownership and the participation of the Russian Federation in their control ensures strategic interests defense capability and security of the state, protection of morality, health, rights and legal interests of the citizens of the Russian Federation.

East and Central Asia, in Western Africa, in Central America, Europe (for example, in Norway and Romania).

One more of the largest players is *Gasprom* (public joint-stock company). The share of *Gasprom* is 12% in the world and 69% in Russia of gas extraction. The share of *Gasprom* in the world depositories of gas is 16% and in Russian 71%. The company is actively realizes the large-scale projects on the familiarization of gas resources of Yamal peninsular, the arctic shelf, Eastern Siberia and Far East, also a number of projects on prospecting and extraction of hydrocarbons abroad. *Gasprom* is the largest producer and exporter of liquefied natural gas (SPZ). The *Gasprom* projects have geopolitical value, not only geo-economics one. So, transnational gas pipeline "Yamal – Europe" passes through the territories of four countries (Russia, Byelorussia, Poland, and Germany). Gas pipeline "Northern stream" is rooted along the bottom of the Baltic sea and gas is delivered from Russia to Europe directly, bypassing transit states. The safeguarding of Russia's interests in the strategically significant energy sector makes the interaction of foreign policy bodies and power energy companies essential, especially when we mean the present day strategically significant projects, such as "Turkish stream" or gas pipeline "Northern stream-2", initiated by *Gasprom* PAO and a number of largest Western-European energy power companies<sup>9</sup>.

One of the largest world producers of aluminum is a joint company *RUSAL* (with basic potential in Siberia). It has factories and representations in 19 countries on 15 continents. *Rusal* is represented in Ireland, Italy, Sweden, Nigeria, Australia, Guiana, Guinea, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, China, Armenia. Presenting a serious competitiveness on the international level, *Rusal* has become one of the main objects of the US policy of imposing sanctions.

The interaction of economic and foreign policy actors occurs not only in dialogue platforms, but in committees and councils, not only within the frame work of the agreements concluded, but along the lines of realization of state programs. In this case economic actors acquire foreign policy features. For example, *Rosatom* is a participant of the state program "Foreign policy activity", which was adopted by the Government of the Russian Federation and which is being imple-

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<sup>9</sup> The interview of the Russian ambassador to Germany S.Y. Nechaev to "Izvestia" newspaper, of February 14, 2020. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/de/-asset-publisher/Ho2VLi5PHLYX/content/id/4040360>

mented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>10</sup>. Thus, Rosatom participates in realization of strategic plans of the state foreign policy activity. It is becoming one of the actors, safeguarding the interests of Russia on the international arena and creating favorable external conditions for a long-term stable development of the country<sup>11</sup>. The role of Rosatom in the foreign policy affairs of Russia has been keynoted by ambassadors to Russia more than once. A special significance is attributed to Rosatom in the development of programs of peaceful atom in the construction in centers of nuclear science and technologies.

Undoubtedly, the energy and mining sectors are connected with the foreign policy of Russia, as they are the objects of concern of foreign policy institutes, not only of the domestic political departments. It is worthwhile noting that the representatives of all the groups of actors considered may become part of the expert communities, which influence indirectly the elaboration of foreign policy strategies and solutions. Politicians, heads of business circles associations, entrepreneurs, social and public figures, representatives of defense and law enforcement agencies, of the military-industrial complex, science, education, mass media are part of the expert communities structures. The Council on foreign and defense policy<sup>12</sup>, the Russian Council on

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<sup>10</sup> On the state program of the Russian Federation “Foreign policy activity”. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/activity/state-programs/-/asset-publisher/Ov2mp2BUeZnQ/content/id/3643053>

<sup>11</sup> The interview of the Russian ambassador to Brazil S.P. Akopov to the Russian to the International informational agency “RIA Novosti” on February 14, 2020. URL: [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/br/-/asset\\_publisher/36clIsAWkPBp/content/id/4042614](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/br/-/asset_publisher/36clIsAWkPBp/content/id/4042614); Interview of the Russian ambassador to Vietnam K.V.Vnukov to the International informational agency “RIA Novosti” on February 14 февраля 2020. URL: [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/vn/-/asset\\_publisher/a6q3L9Hzzxu2/content/id/4040336](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/vn/-/asset_publisher/a6q3L9Hzzxu2/content/id/4040336); the interview of the Russian ambassador to Bagdad M.K.Marsimov to the International informational agency “RIA Novosti” on February 13, 2020 года. URL: [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/iq/-/asset\\_publisher/WizNA2SGNvS5/content/id/4037202](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/iq/-/asset_publisher/WizNA2SGNvS5/content/id/4037202); the interview of the Russian permanent representative in the EU V.A. Tchizov to the IA TASS (published on December 30 2019), URL: [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/be/-/asset\\_publisher/fQn3NAcPpHyE/content/id/3990095](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/be/-/asset_publisher/fQn3NAcPpHyE/content/id/3990095); the interview of the Russian ambassador to Austria D.E.Lubinsky to the International informational agency “Russia to-day” on December 26, 2019. URL: [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/at/-/asset\\_publisher/HNmZuc5ZYTZ0/content/id/3989063](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/at/-/asset_publisher/HNmZuc5ZYTZ0/content/id/3989063); the interview of A.V.Sternik, director of the Third department of CIS MID of Russia to the International informational agency “Russia to-day” on December 12, 2019. URL: [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/uz/-/asset\\_publisher/n9psHApVxR46/content/id/3955021](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/uz/-/asset_publisher/n9psHApVxR46/content/id/3955021).

<sup>12</sup> The Council on Foreign and Defense policy (SVOP), URL: <http://svop.ru/>.

international affaires<sup>13</sup>, and such academic communities as MGIMO, Diplomatic Academy, RANEPa under the President of the Russian Federation, MGU and other universities, including located in the Russian regions, are among such expert communities.

While preparing analytical and informational documents these organizations collaborate closely with a number of parliamentary and governmental bodies (the Administration of the RF president, MID of the RF, the Ministry of Defense of the RF, Committees of the SD of the RF and the Federation Council on the international issues, on defense, on and law enforcement ministers and agencies, with academic institutes and leading analytical centers in Russia and abroad.

The mechanism of the foreign policy documents interrelation in the process of their approval envisages several stages. At the initial stage the state departments prepare proposals and documents, in accordance with very specific foreign policy steps and actions. Among these departments are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, the departments responsible for economic ties with foreign countries, and in case of need, departments and organizations, connected with research organizations. Then, business actors, experts, are involved if required for consultations and discussions. For that purpose, special committees and councils may be set up. Then documents, prepared by these departments and structures are forwarded to the President of the Russian Federation, who takes the very concrete decisions, introducing corrections or rejecting the offered versions intended for the state activity on the international arena. The final decisions are the concluding stage in the shaping of the state foreign policy. Naturally, the most meaningful issues of strategic nature, going beyond the boundaries of some separately taken departments, are submitted for the higher political leadership consideration. As a rule, separately taken departments (within their competence) have the right to act independently within the framework of general directives, approved beforehand, which determine the Russian policy relative to this or that foreign policy issues. In other words, some actors, ensuring realization of the external functions of the state, for example, in the area of foreign policy or foreign trade relations, in security, ecology,

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<sup>13</sup> The Russian Council on International Affairs (RSMD). URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/about/>.

scientific and technological cooperation with foreign countries stand apart in some way.

Functional ties of economic, military actors and actors of the sphere of security with state institutes and foreign policy departments of Russia, represent relatively stable models of interactions, required for realization of functions and interests in the sphere of international relations. Such ties can have stable (permanent) or temporal type. Constant ties are based on normative-legal acts, but can be brought about by practical necessity or political expediency of being involved into foreign policy activity of this or that actor, whose competence is directly or indirectly connected with implementation of the Russian external relations. Constant ties constitute the basis of the foreign policy mechanism of the Russian Federation. The relations between the President of the RF and the Federal Assembly Chambers on the issues of nomination and recall of diplomatic representatives of the RF in foreign countries could serve as an example of functional constant ties.

Temporal functional ties stem, as a rule, from the general essence of different actors in the area of international cooperation and are initiated due to expediency or necessity for establishing such temporary functional ties for solution of separate issues in different spheres of relations of the RF with foreign states. The meetings of the President of the RF with the heads of the parties represented in the State Duma or with the representatives of business could serve as an example of temporal functional ties. Such consultative meetings on the Foreign policy issues are not ordered by the judicial rules, though they may be provided by the status of the consultative meetings participants proper.

4. *Resume.*- The analysis of the participants and the process of interaction of different actors, involved in determining the external policy of Russia, shows that, the government bodies, invested with the constitution and legislation, competence in the area of the state foreign policy relations play the major role. These state-owned bodies elaborate the conceptual basis of the state policy in relations with other countries, establish and maintain political relations with other states and peoples and by doing so they create the basis for multinational international cooperation in various branches of the state and social life. Inside the system of the state actors we can single out the key actors of this process:

- President of Russia, heading the whole foreign policy of Russia and approving all strategically significant foreign policy decisions;

- Upper and lower chambers of the Federal Assembly of Russia, passing laws and ensuring normative and legal regulation of the external policy. Besides the both chambers of the Parliament organize the dialogues platforms for discussions of important foreign policy issues, as a result of these events a consensus of different social and political forces on the issues of foreign policy is reached;

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, implementing foreign policy, monitoring the foreign policy processes, elaborating proposals and recommendations on corrections to be introduced into foreign policy course and its normative-legal insurance;

- Defense and law enforcement departments (FSB, SVR, Minoborona of Russia, MCHS [Emergency] of Russia partially), ensure security and integrity of Russia, they always participate in approving the foreign policy decisions, they realize independently separate foreign policy tasks, referring to spheres of their competence;

- Ministers and departments, ensuring foreign economic policy of Russia (Mineconomrazvetic, Minenergo, Minpromtorg and others);

- State corporations and departments, participating in the development of strategically important branches of industry and ensuring higher international competitiveness of Russia in separate branches of economy (Rostekh, Rosoboronexport, Roscosmos and others).

As we see the basic actors of foreign policy decisions are the state actors and actors, affiliated with the state. Among business actors are the Russian power energy TNK, metallurgical companies (Gasprom, Lukoil, Rosneft, Rusal and others). The interaction of these actors with Russian foreign political departments has considerably intensified over the past years, models of such interaction have enlarged. One of the reasons of this is the big role of energy and metallurgical sectors in the international competitiveness of Russia.

Involving representatives of the state-owned institutes, representatives of defense and security of the country, business into solving the important issues of the Russian foreign policy is usually caused by a special significance and necessity of taking a foreign policy decision in the very specific vital situation, as the adopting of this kind of decision can potentially result in serious consequences for the country or the given decision refers to the interests of political,

civil institutions or the interests of business, significant for security and interests of the country. So the interaction of all the above indicated actors took place in the course of elaborating and discussing of numerous proposals, in adopting concrete decisions and norms on such important laws as, for example: Military doctrine of the Russian Federation, Strategy of national security of the Russian Federation, Strategy of ecological security of the Russian Federation for the period through to 2025, Strategy of economic security of the Russian Federation for the period through to 2030 the Doctrine of informational security of the Russian Federation, the Doctrine of the power energy security of the Russian Federation, and other documents, determining the foreign policy of Russia.

The Russian state bodies, actors of security and defense, business actors, implementing external ties with foreign states and international organizations, are united by the common of goals and tasks. This ensures the efficiency of the external policy of Russia and achieving its main goals, despite sanctions and recurrent aspirations of some foreign actors to isolate Russia in the international cooperation space.

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## RUSSIA'S ASYMMETRIC FOREIGN POLICY: STRATEGY OR NECESSITY

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1. *Introduction.*- For Russian foreign policy institutions in their general sense continue to be the most important element for strategic vision, allowing to build any kind of active relationship. In some degree, its policy lacks flexibility and prompt effects, but it aims at long-distance activities and gets obvious advantages. Russian Federation is a stronger supporter for institutions (even though less believe them) as far as those legitimately represent people, and Russian people are likely to support those who promote common will. That is why institutions (which include public bodies and norms) are key element for any kind of policy – and foreign policy is based upon those as well.

For international relations institutions for centuries have been a kind of target landmarks to approach – crucial frameworks which allow to do something together, to formulate any common values and to build possible attitudes for what is likely to be implied as world order. Without institutions those would not be on the agenda. Such trends appear in the longer history of experience whether we observe Hanseatic League or global actors of the present day. Peace of Westphalia, Congress of Vienna or Yalta agreements have usually followed by corresponding institutionalizations.

Today traditional institutions quite often turn to get fragile and weak. And that gets a real challenge for the Russian foreign policy, which might be quite flexible, but still usually appeals to some fundamental sources. The easiest way is to blame institutions for being outdated and rigid and to search for more fashioned ones. But the problem is the lack of trust which is not so natural, but might stem from specific policies by obvious actors. From time to time the trust for institutions is volens nolens undermined by those who used to and intended to support institutions, those countries and regimes which have been always strong stakeholders for institutionalizing democratic order and do continue to pretend being pure democracies in this world.

Russia never pretends that, and is not likely to be amid those who undermine bases. This country prefers more order and discipline rather than flexible chaos and instability, but clearly shares a vision to do in Rome as the Romans do.

2. *Strategic Planning for Russian Foreign Policy.*- The key document which determines Russian strategic development – both nationally and internationally is the National Security Strategy approved by the President of the Russian Federation. That is fundamental document for any policies of the country. The basic institutional framework for Russian foreign policy is Foreign Policy Concept, which is also approved by President, but goes in line with the National Security Strategy, thus the relevance of the latter for foreign policy should not be ignored.

The current Strategy was signed by Vladimir Putin 31 December 2015. The previous one was signed into law by then-President Dmitry Medvedev in May 2009. It replaced the National Security Concept, approved by President Boris Yeltsin in 1997 and updated and supplemented by Vladimir Putin in January 2000, shortly after he became acting president.

Before analyzing either National Security Strategy or Foreign Policy Concept, there should be some general remarks about how strategic planning in Russia is made as far as such a process is also institutionalized.

A year before the present-day National Security Strategy was signed, in 2014 Russia's parliament passed the Federal Law "On Strategic Planning in the Russian Federation". The need for this law began to be broadly discussed in 2008, after another key document had been passed – the Concept of Long-Term Social and Economic Development until 2020. The Concept was viewed as a mechanism for overcoming the global financial and economic crisis, which required a more distinct correlation between various long-term documents, including the aforementioned National Security Strategy.

The Law "On Strategic Planning in the Russian Federation" establishes a system of strategic planning: it defines relevant concepts, outlines the range of government agencies to be involved, and forms a hierarchy of various kinds of documents and decision-making levels. In particular, it states that it is the National Security Strategy that "defines the national interests of the Russian Federation".

This document also delineates the powers of federal, regional and local government, and divides strategic planning into goal-setting, forecasting, planning proper, and programming. The National Security Strategy is a top-level goal-setting document. This category also includes annual presidential addresses to the Federal Assembly, the Social and Economic Development Strategy, and documents pertaining to national security.

The law stipulates that the National Security Strategy shall be developed by the Security Council “in cooperation with other participants in the strategic planning process, taking into account the long-term strategic forecast of the Russian Federation,” and shall be adjusted every six years. The six years since the present National Security Strategy was adopted will end 2021, and this would be the formal reason to update it.

Historically and by virtue of the logic prevailing in Russia’s decision-making, not only priorities are set “from above” but the initiative to pursue them also comes from the top. The nation’s interest has so far never been formulated “from within”. At the same time, recent trends – the strengthening of civil society institutions, the development of public control mechanisms, and the growing openness of the authorities – demonstrate that the effectiveness and implementability of government decisions largely depend on the participation of non-governmental institutions in their coordination. The most illustrative example of that in modern Russian practices is the work of a large number of experts on the updated Concept of Long-Term Social and Economic Development until 2020, also known as Strategy 2020.

For two years the experts discussed proposals for devising a long-term development model. This effort, which began ahead of a long electoral cycle of 2011-2012, was an attempt to formulate a consolidated view on the pressing economic problems to face new bodies of power in Russia. Although Strategy 2020 has never been officially endorsed, many of its recommendations were used in Putin’s pre-election articles and his May 2012 decrees that became the main guidelines for action at all levels of government from top to bottom, at least until the next federal elections held in 2018.

Obviously, the National Security Strategy, which is open to the general public, is intended not just to state priorities but also unite society and reflect its demands and expectations concerning the future of Russia and its place in the world. The strategy of the national

interests should be based on stable and transparent feedback mechanisms. This is stated in the law: "The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation is the basis for constructive interaction among bodies of state power, organizations and public associations for the purpose of protecting Russia's national interests and ensuring the security of the individual, society and the state".

In addition to the present National Security Strategy, there are many other documents reaching out to the future. The wide range of such documents is provided for by law. There are also various plans, not always interrelated, which were approved and adopted in previous years.

Russia's priorities which lie outside of its borders take a special place in the system of strategic planning, although they are closely associated with National Security Strategy.

In 2001, at a meeting with senior diplomats, his first as president, Putin said that "a country with a geopolitical position like Russia's has national interests everywhere". This idea was subsequently followed up in new versions of the Foreign Policy Concept, other documents, and the law enforcement practice.

The Foreign Policy Concept is the basic strategic document for Russian diplomacy. Its current version was approved by the president on November 30, 2016.

There are also some other documents that have been adopted to define Russia's priorities in the world, and they, too, have the status of strategic ones. These include, for example, the Concept of Russia's Participation in BRICS and the Concept of Russia's State Policy in the Area of International Development Assistance, endorsed by the president in 2014, Doctrine of Information Security of the Russian Federation approved in 2016.

The present situation warrants a greater role for foreign policy in the overall effort to improve the efficiency of public administration. The reason is not so much the need to overcome the traditional separateness of the diplomatic service as the growing involvement of other ministries and government agencies, as well as civil society institutions, in international cooperation. Diplomacy across the world increasingly uses modern technologies and maintains extensive contacts at various levels, engaging with more and more interested parties and non-state actors. Official institutions confidently rely on more flexible and competitive representatives of public diplomacy who, for economic or social reasons, may be deeply interested in

promoting their country's priorities and defending its national interests. Like economy, foreign policy must be more results-oriented and less isolated institutionally.

Today Russia is represented abroad not only by the Foreign Ministry but also by the Ministry of Economic Development, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and many other agencies, which are playing an increasingly growing role in the country's international activities. Russia participates in global cooperation via more than 40 ministries and other federal agencies, including the Rosatom state corporation and the Kurchatov Institute.

For the time being, as the wide array of existing strategies shows, all actors, even inside Russia, want to be able to choose and act according to their own logic, which often is at variance with the logic of the state. In this sense, the updating of the National Security Strategy, as urged by Putin, can be used to codify all existing strategies and identify national interests.

The current National Security Strategy includes the following sections:

1. General provisions.
2. Russia in the contemporary world.
3. National interests and strategic national priorities.
4. Realization of national security.
5. Organizational, regulatory and informational basis for implementing the present Strategy.
6. The main indicators for the state of national security.

National interests are defined as objectively meaningful demands of the individual, society and the state for security and sustainable development.

Strategic national priorities are to ensure national interests and include the following:

- national defense;
- state and public security;
- increase quality of life for Russian citizens;
- economic growth;
- science, technologies and education;
- health care;
- culture;
- ecology of living systems and rational use of natural resources;

- strategic stability and equal strategic partnership.

The Strategy pays much attention to challenges and risks, yet it does not have a special section for them, nor does it give their full list. It just mentions differences among major international actors, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, information warfare, extremism, and even a shortage of fresh water.

Among international formats that are of interest to Russia, the Strategy names the BRICS, RIC, APEC, Group of 20. Those are barely mentioned, whereas the CSTO, Eurasian economic union and the CSTO are expressly emphasized.

Concerning the Western direction of foreign policy the Strategy states strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation with European countries, European Union and interest for the comprehensive partnership with the USA based on converging interests. The Strategy also pays attention to unacceptability for Russia increasing military activity of NATO and its military infrastructure getting closer to Russian borders.

Observing global challenges and risks the Strategy notes that expansion of migration flows from Africa and Middle East demonstrates the failure of regional system of security based upon NATO and EU.

*3. Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation: key priorities.*- The current version of the Foreign Policy Concept was approved by a presidential decree 30 November 2016. The previous versions appeared in 2013, 2008 and 2000 years. The present-day document reflects the consequence of the Russian approach to foreign policy and accumulates most key principles and priorities of the former concepts along with relevant challenges and tasks.

Russian Foreign Policy Concept includes five sections, which allow to provide with a comprehensive view on what the present-day looks like and how to dwell upon those challenges and problems Russia faces within it. General Provisions state that Concept is based among others upon the National Security Strategy. The section on Modern World and Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation provides with the Russian vision on international relations. Priorities of the Russian Federation in Overcoming Global Challenges include shaping a fair and sustainable world order, rule of law in international relations, strengthening international security, international economic and environmental cooperation, international humanitarian cooperation

and human rights, information support for foreign policy activities. Regional Foreign Policy Priorities of the Russian Federation observe those for most parts of the world. In the final Section on Russia's Foreign Policy Formulation and Implementation it reads functions to be realized by different state institutions in foreign policy of the country: President, Parliament (Federal Assembly), Government, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Cultural Cooperation, Russian regions and their institutions.

The key feature of the Concept is that it is entirely public official document which describes quite logically and clearly the comprehensive approach to international affairs of Russia and reflects all the initiatives and policies Russian Federation has been promoting for the latest decades.

The Concept states general objectives at which Russian foreign policy is aimed at and in order to underline their comprehensiveness and openness those should be listed entirely:

- to ensure national security, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and strengthen the rule of law and democratic institutions;
- to create a favourable external environment that would allow Russia's economy to grow steadily and become more competitive and would promote technological modernization as well as higher standards of living and quality of life for its population;
- to consolidate the Russian Federation's position as a centre of influence in today's world;
- to strengthen Russia's position in global economic relations and prevent any discrimination against Russian goods, services and investments by using the options afforded by international and regional economic and financial organizations;
- to further promote the efforts to strengthen international peace and ensure global security and stability with a view to establishing a fair and democratic international system that addresses international issues on the basis of collective decision-making, the rule of international law, primarily the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations (the UN Charter), as well as equal, partnership relations among States, with the central and coordinating role played by the United Nations (UN) as the key organization in charge of regulating international relations.

- to pursue neighbourly relations with adjacent States, assist them in eliminating the existing and preventing the emergence of the new hotbeds of tension and conflicts on their territory;
- to promote, within bilateral and multilateral frameworks, mutually beneficial and equal partnerships with foreign countries, inter-State associations, international organizations and within forums, guided by the principles of independence and sovereignty, pragmatism, transparency, predictability, a multidirectional approach and the commitment to pursue national priorities on a non-confrontational basis; expand international cooperation on a non-discriminatory basis; facilitate the emergence of network alliances and Russia's proactive participation in them;
- to ensure comprehensive, effective protection of the rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots residing abroad, including within various international frameworks;
- to strengthen Russia's role in international culture; promote and consolidate the position of the Russian language in the world; raise global awareness of Russia's cultural achievements and national historical legacy, cultural identity of the peoples of Russia, and Russian education and research; consolidate the Russian-speaking diaspora;
- to bolster the standing of Russian mass media and communication tools in the global information space and convey Russia's perspective on international process to a wider international community;
- to facilitate the development of constructive dialogue and partnership with a view to promoting harmony and mutual enrichment among various cultures and civilizations.

One of the problems for interpreting Russian foreign policy seems to stem from the low attention paid to strategic priorities thoroughly consolidated in conceptual documents, and the Foreign Policy Concept first of all. On the other hand, practice tends to be wider rather than any document, and the evaluation is usually made upon actions rather than words. And still – the role played by official regulation for Russian diplomacy is very important (as in other countries though), as a result the real art for Russian foreign policy is not to do something, but to put its long-term vision in such words which would allow to have enough windows for opportunity. Traditionally it has been succeeded to do that, and options could be usually found within any circumstances.

4. *Soft Power in Russian Foreign Policy.*- UK-based consulting group Portland annually presents its global Soft Power 30 ranking developed in collaboration with Facebook. The report analyzes soft power and ranks the countries that occupy the top 30 positions.

The first ranking from Portland was published in 2015 and was seen as an ambitious attempt to clarify the soft power concept that was first introduced by American political scientist Joseph Nye 25 years before that. Over the past two decades, the soft power concept has become an indispensable part of scholarly and expert discourse, and a way of understanding why some nations are able to exercise influence in the world without regard to hard power capabilities.

While there are some ambiguities about the Soft Power 30 methodology and some questions about the project's commercial component, the ranking is a useful tool for helping researchers to think in new ways about the nature of soft power and its dynamics.

Russia's first appearance on the list in 2016 – despite the nation's ongoing confrontation with the West – attracted the attention of political experts and media commentators. However, the authors of the ranking made clear that, in their opinion, the country's 27th place had less to do with last year's progress and more with the soft power reserves accumulated over the 1990s and early 2000s. Still there is no answer why those reserves were not revealed in the last year's rating. Specific numbers are actually of secondary importance, and no one is trying to argue that this year's numbers are somehow better than last year's numbers. The most important aspect is the very existence of Russia in the Top 30 at all.

Every next year Russia's positions in the Index did downgrade – 26 in 2017, 28 in 2018 and 30 in 2019. The authors' observation might look rather biased but still enough indicial for approaching Russia's soft power as meaningful for global agenda: "If Russia was seeking return on its investment – in soft power terms – for hosting the football World Cup it will be sorely disappointed. For all of Russia's genuine soft power assets, it cannot compensate for the fact that global audiences do not see Russia as a trustworthy force for good in the world. Without a significant change in tack on its foreign policy, Russian soft power will remain in the relegation zone".

While many scholars tend to think of soft power only in foreign policy terms, it may be more useful to think in terms of how soft

power has emerged as an instrument used by the state to interact with civil society and deliver specific political messages.

Soft power helps countries to develop more efficient mechanisms that enable them to maintain a competitive edge under the current conditions. However, soft power itself greatly depends on relations between the state and people within a country. When a society can act independently and enter into negotiations with the government on an equal basis, state power transforms and exhibits the ability to soften and get smarter, thus balancing the bilateral nature of such interaction.

However, interpreting soft power can prove a daunting task. Defining hard power is a lot easier due to its linear and transparent nature. At the state level, hard power manifests itself in direct administration based on strict hierarchy and compliance with established order upheld by law enforcement. It is characterized by legitimate use of force and the state's monopoly on violence.

However, the problem with soft power is that softer governance can be perceived differently. The state's softness towards the public is traditionally viewed as a sign of weakness that questions a country's ability to resolve its internal issues without outside interference. If a government cannot enforce the application of its resolutions for whatever reason, whether it is objective obstacles or subjective doubts, it leads to the development of a crisis of sovereignty as a core characteristic of state power.

In a democracy where the public, or a multitude of people with various needs, is the source of power, the crisis of sovereignty is a fairly common phenomenon. The public is often divided on a wide range of issues, and politicians are frequently unwilling to take responsibility for unpopular decisions.

Still, the flexibility and advancement of modern democratic procedures support the state system in its search for ways to overcome such crises: in promoting the balance between conflicting interests and offering compromises, state institutions are evolving and developing new skills required for maintaining their stability.

Under pluralism and the growing self-sufficiency of civil society, dialogue with the state becomes increasingly complex. Soft power becomes an integral part of this dialogue.

When applied to internal communication, the modern state's soft power actually stands for political marketing, or the government's ability to negotiate with civil society by alluding to the competencies or resources that society lacks. In a contemporary democracy, the

people have all the power, but the channels for exercising the authority are controlled by the state through the constitution, laws, elections, referenda, parties and political rights and freedoms.

The government uses these mechanisms to channel citizens' political self-realization, their ambitions and demonstrations of will to the state's advantage. An individual's active political involvement promotes results desired by the state. That is what soft power is about.

At the same time, it is obvious that real-world politics does not separate soft power from hard power and uses any method(s) it deems effective. That is the manifestation of what is commonly referred to as "smart power."

When discussing soft power, it is important to understand that, just like hard power, it is an attribute of force and as such, maintains their coercive, compulsory nature. Bidirectional influence is a purely methodological, not substantive quality, which creates the illusion that many are involved in the decision-making process, but the sole main beneficiary is still the state that is projecting its power.

The state can also project its influence by bringing people from other countries into the discussion. The coercive nature of soft power has been emerging this decade since the Arab Spring, which started in 2011 when political instability ceased to be an internal issue of separate countries or a local matter of the MENA region.

The "manufacturers" of one state's political product directly communicate with another country's citizens and create the "demand" that leads to a conflict between the people and their national government. It is the result of the competition of ideas and values reflected in the relative attractiveness of the state. Seems like a projection of economic crises deriving from stock market game onto a political plane.

As a result, the tactics of communicating with other communities over the heads of their states is no longer just a fine gesture, but a vital necessity for any country that cares about its future. While some caution against it, others have long been acting on their own accord without issuing any warnings.

In remaining a power, albeit soft, the new influence mechanism will strive to discover new, more effective instruments for consistent softening of the force component and encouraging voluntary action on behalf of the ones subjected to it. At the moment, it is hard to understand how such effect will be achieved.

However, we can already discern that modern soft power possesses a useful quality in its ability to surprise. It employs novel, unorthodox and unpredictable approaches to attract consumers' attention, which is the first step towards building loyalty. The most effective soft power is the one that knows how to impress the target audience.

What is the surprise value of soft power? Same as it has always been: its ability to respond promptly to societal demands. Even though challenges that modern political systems are facing today are unprecedented, the competition for people's minds has always existed, albeit to varying degrees.

All regimes and rulers held propaganda, ideology and information management in high esteem. Wording, goals and priorities may have changed, but major state institutions have been actively controlling, if not orchestrating, politics as a method of communication.

The well-known technology of the Overton Window first introduced by American lawyer Joseph P. Overton is a rather vivid example of the surprise value of soft power. The Overton Window ensures the change in public opinion through managing the acceptability of certain policies within the political discourse.

The development of mass media - first printed and then electronic - incentivized the use of technology to influence mechanisms and predetermined the actualization of soft power that relies heavily on communication.

The media as the so-called "Fourth Estate" opened a Pandora's box that brought forth countless influence mechanisms that often do not require the support of formal executive, legislative or judicial institutions.

While the media work to deliver soft power, its development is the domain of conceptual institutions that are typically separated from the state apparatus. Just like instruments of hard power (weapons and military equipment) are manufactured by engineering companies, mechanisms of soft power can be created (i.e. "manufactured") by various research centers, such as think tanks.

Think tanks are similar to the media in that they are market participants and compete for state attention and funding. For the state, they are experts in the broader sense of the word capable of tying state interests with the demands of the civil society and the needs of its citizens as consumers of a political product.

Politics itself as a complex of interconnected ideas, tasks and events becomes a product that a state is increasingly struggling to produce. In doing so, the state faces a lack of the necessary competencies caused by the shortening of the electoral planning horizon.

Developed networks of think tanks make up for this deficiency. De facto politics is being outsourced by the state, and think tanks compete to show which one can utilize the least amount of state resources to create a product with specific characteristics. The authorities then only have to legitimize the product.

Thus, think tanks are a core element of global expert knowledge and help to ensure its accumulation and marketing, i.e. attractiveness and relevance. Actually, universal expert knowledge currently represents the essence of a modern state's soft power.

However, the problem is that in many countries, including Russia, political elites are not yet keen on navigating expert knowledge. Russian think tanks are quite capable to increase their role in national foreign policy choices. Moreover, Russian think tanks have their work cut out for them if they want to hold leading positions in world rankings, such as the Global Go To Think Tanks Index prepared by the University of Pennsylvania.

Still, it is important to factor in the influence of think tanks and boost their activity, for they are a key element of smart power and provide governments with the opportunity to demonstrate maximum inner flexibility. This, in turn, creates competitive advantages and shapes further global development.

If we consider the official discourse for soft power, the latter has got a meaningful point for the agenda of Russian foreign policy for the latest decade. In 2012 Vladimir Putin in his article "Russia and the Changing World" has for the first time appealed to this phenomenon, underlying that "the notion of "soft power" is being used increasingly often. This implies a matrix of tools and methods to reach foreign policy goals without the use of arms but by exerting information and other levers of influence. Regrettably, these methods are being used all too frequently to develop and provoke extremist, separatist and nationalistic attitudes, to manipulate the public and to conduct direct interference in the domestic policy of sovereign countries". According to Putin's view, "there must be a clear division between freedom of speech and normal political activity, on the one hand, and illegal instruments of "soft power," on the other. The civilized work of non-

governmental humanitarian and charity organizations deserves every support. This also applies to those who actively criticize the current authorities. However, the activities of "pseudo-NGOs" and other agencies that try to destabilize other countries with outside support are unacceptable". After that soft power has been step by step integrated into the effective tools of Russian foreign instruments.

The Foreign Policy Concept states that in addition to traditional methods of diplomacy, "soft power" has become an integral part of efforts to achieve foreign policy objectives and primarily includes the tools offered by civil society, as well as various methods and technologies – from information and communication, to humanitarian and other types.

The system of instruments to promote Russian soft power includes, on one hand, official institutions which are Ministry for Foreign Affairs and its subordinate Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo). On the other hand, it includes a number of affiliated GONGOs (Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund, Russian International Affairs Council, Valdai Discussion Club etc.) and media (Russia Today, Sputnik, Russia Beyond the Headlines etc.). All of them did contribute to Russia's image abroad and popularity of its soft power all over the world. Of course, there were many efforts from different institutions and activities in different spheres, but the listed organizations generated a network of frames to multiply Russia's emerged performance all over the world.

5. *Russian Strategy in the Middle East.*- The role Russia has been playing in the Middle East can be characterized as both quite influential (regional players are likely to take into account Russian views) and enough balanced (bilateral relations with most countries of the region are stable and respectful). Traditional approach practiced by Russian diplomacy to base on strengthening bilateral dialogue with any sovereign entity allows mostly maintaining positions in the region in terms of different cases of turbulence. Moreover, those cases contribute to better experience in complex of interests interrelated between different actors both within and beyond the region. Specific relations built by Russia with Israel and Arab counties, Egypt and Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Iran, Turkey and Syria did make a fundamental

base for Russian presence in the region with no regard to changing political agenda.

Based upon the challenges for the Russian Federation identified in the National Security Strategy the Foreign Policy Concept pays quite distinctive attention to the Middle East, which has not been enough stable for many years and decades, but got again an obvious primary arena for global geopolitical rivalry since the period of Arab Spring and its consequences.

For Russia the present-day turbulence in the region is clearly stems from the external attempts of western countries (first of all of the USA) to overthrow undesired regimes, which was fueled after the fall of Saddam Hussein and resulted in wars of all against all with explosive growth of extremism and terrorism. According to the Foreign Policy Concept, the spread of extremist ideology and the activity of terrorist groups in a number of regions (primarily, in the Middle East and North Africa) are the result of systemic development problems that globalization processes have laid bare. External interference has also played a major role. Combined, these two factors have led to the destruction of traditional governance and security mechanisms and the illegal spread of weapons and ammunition at an even larger scale. The ideological values and prescriptions imposed from outside these countries in an attempt to modernize their political systems have exacerbated the negative response of their societies to current challenges. Extremist forces have exploited these trends using distorted interpretations of religious values to promote violence in pursuit of their goals in the political, interethnic and interreligious rivalry they are engaged in.

The Concept reads, that Russia consistently advocates strengthening international security and enhancing strategic and regional stability, and in this context Moscow supports the creation of zones free from different types of weapons of mass destruction, primarily in the Middle East. In other point it focuses on that Russia will continue making a meaningful contribution to stabilizing the situation in the Middle East and North Africa, supporting collective efforts aimed at neutralizing threats that emanate from international terrorist groups, consistently promotes political and diplomatic settlement of conflicts in regional States while respecting their sovereignty and territorial integrity and the right to self-determination without outside interference.

In this context it is noted, that Russia strives to achieve a comprehensive, fair and lasting resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in all its aspects consistent with international law.

After the very start of the counter-terrorism operation initiated by Russia in Syria the mainstream external view has been that it was aimed at assisting Bashar al-Assad to keep power and continue governing in Syria. Nevertheless Russian Federation did not intervene into this country on its own – all its actions were made based on the request of the legal Syrian government. Those actions did effectively contribute to safekeeping of Syrian nationhood and defeat ISIS in this country.

Obeying norms and respect for institutions have been fully realized by Russia in this case. And again – that was made along with an open coincidence with Foreign Policy Concept, which declares: Russia stands for a political settlement in the Syrian Arab Republic and the possibility for the people of Syria to determine their future based on the Geneva communiqué of June 30, 2012, statements by the International Syria Support Group and relevant UN Security Council resolutions. Russia supports the unity, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic as a secular, democratic and pluralistic State with all ethnic and religious groups living in peace and security and enjoying equal rights and opportunities.

Russia intends to further expand bilateral relations with the States in the Middle East and North Africa, including by relying on the ministerial meeting of the Russian-Arab Cooperation Forum, and continuing strategic dialogue with the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. Russian participation as an observer in the work of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation is also considered here as an opportunity for further expanding relations with countries of the Islamic world, and promoting partnerships with them in various areas.

One of the important factors for Russian involvement into the regional development is building respective and constructive relations with Iran in terms of its own role in the Middle East. Russia has always supported and – again in line with the Foreign Policy Concept – still seeks to ensure the consistent implementation of the joint comprehensive agreement to settle the situation around the Iranian nuclear programme based on UN Security Council resolution 2231 of July 20, 2015 and relevant IAEA Board of Governors decisions, and assists this process in every possible way.

General view on Russian strategic policing in the Middle East would not be complete without looking into other elements of a geographical puzzle Russia has been drawing within its political attitudes. All the second decade of the XXI century is marked for Russian diplomacy and expert community with what was called “a pivot to the East” – an actively generated state’s ambition to integrate into, first of all, Pacific Asia economic growth trends and encourage Russian Far East to develop. Lately that was intensified with the need for alternatives to imposing sanctions political West and for substitution imports from Europe.

Of course, Middle East is another region, differs substantially and situated closer to Europe (West) rather than to Pacific (East). But for Russian political consciousness and perception, the very immersing into problems of Middle East which has become much better known and much deeper analyzed as a result of Russian anti-terrorist involvement in Syria, did contribute to get interested in what happened in the East at least no less than in the West. Middle East continues to provide Russia with lessons for being more effective both in talks and acts within permanently changing environment.

6. *Russia and the West: What’s Next.*- The present-day political agenda is still influenced by different aspects of the persisting crisis between Russia and the West. And if the case of Russian-American bilateral relations is fundamental and has deep systemic nature, and most analysts consider those in terms of searching for the bottom (whether it has been already got or not), the discourse of Russian-European relations might be observed as less pessimistic.

Even though the credibility gap between Russia as the biggest European country and EU as the most important European institution still exists, there is an obvious demand on both sides to find mechanisms to overcome, to put aside all the dissidence and to reload a path to better cooperation and collaboration, first of all in the economic sphere.

Among those examples where such a path might be identified there is Nord Stream-2 project as an illustration not only for the economic power of Germany within EU, but also of possible solutions in case when European actors are really interested in some specific form of cooperation. Another example is the consecutive activity of European politicians to get through the crisis of the Council of Europe happened after 2014, which finally could keep Russian membership in

this organization. Even though Council of Europe is not the same as European Union and even though there had been clear prerequisites for Russia to leave that organization after being discriminated for several years, there were made quite effective strong measures initiated by other countries to restore the rights of Russian Federation and continue its membership in the Council of Europe in 2019.

After 6 years of anti-Russian hysteria European Union is neither satisfied with its effect, nor has any new strategy towards Russia. During all those years European politicians were declaring that they cannot have business as usual with Russia, but what kind of business they are now likely to have, no one could still articulate.

The fact is that for Russia business as usual has also become a poor strategy. Russia looks to have equal relations with its partners based on mutual responsibility. And in this sense both Russia and the West need some new agenda which would not appeal neither to previous experience of dialogue without any results, nor to new attempts to be allowed to share any European advantages (visa-free regime, membership in some global clubs etc.)

Such a new agenda might be based on something which, of course, of interest for both sides, but also where neither of both could dominate. In terms of the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution being experienced by our common world at the moment, one of the most in demand subjects is still digitalization. All the countries are now in search for the better model of digitalization, which could put together traditional national standards with new technologies. In this sphere there are no seniors, as well as there are no juniors – all countries are equal. Moreover – all the governments together, all the sovereign unities are a competitor for new technologies, as far as the latter are not likely to follow any political will, being oriented at efficiency and better usability.

European Union has its own views and its own practices in this sphere, but those are in the process of starting-up, being tested and analyzed. The same with Russia, where those are growing up in different aspects of social activity (applications, on-line services). And that might be of interest for Europe, even in terms of being experienced there as well. For example, internet-banking, e-government, free wi-fi – for many European countries those services are still underdeveloped compared to Russian experience, and here Europe itself would be interested to get better command of.

Some examples of Russian digital instruments with perspective foreign policy effects are as following:

- On-line and mobile banking
- E-government (taxation, passports, registration etc.)
- E-visa for visiting some Russian regions and cities.
- Big data management & personal data security
- Messengers (like Telegram and other)
- Crowd-sourcing and on-line voting (ROI – Russian Public Initiative, “Aktivny grajdanin” – “Active Citizen” platform in Moscow, “Mobilny izbiratel” – “Mobile Elector” etc.)
- Digital diplomacy (pages in social networks, Foreign Assistant)

If we consider the agenda of official frameworks for cooperation between civil societies, we will see that digitalization gets one of the leading topics for them:

1. Petersburg Dialogue (Russia-Germany): April 2019 – working groups on economy (advertising through digitalization) and education (on-line education)
2. Trianon Dialogue (Russia-France): the first topic is Cities of the Future (smart cities through digital technologies)
3. Sochi Dialogue (Russia-Austria): science, education and economy (all of them are being digitalized now)
4. Forum-Dialogue (Russia-Italy): small and medium business (which drives to active application for digital technologies)

The only competing topic in terms of digitalization which should be taken into account is the search for a global approach to the cyber-security. The credibility gap here is still relevant due to the general atmosphere of instability. At the same time, once there are Russian and American approaches, there is no European one, which is in some degree a good option for not politicizing cyber security. On the other side, the obvious demand for clear rules in internet for all international community and widespread view at Russia as one of the most competent country in cyber space could lead one day to an honest and responsive approach in this sphere as well. And if the future model for world order finally would be identified, it will be based first of all on common vision of cyber threats and mechanisms for security. Cooperation in digital agenda would surely contribute to that.

Digitalization is a megatrend now. But if digital economy is getting more or less relieved in practical life, as for digital politics – there are still many doubts and challenges (for sovereignty, privacy

etc.). And how states would cope with different risks depends mostly on pragmatic cooperation, rather than Western or Eastern competition.

*7. Conclusions.*- If Russian foreign policy is observed according to global media, it might seem quite difficult to approach it with any systematic tools. For the latest decade Russia has been likely to be portrayed (at least in Western papers) as a threat rather than an opportunity for the liberal world. In terms of political context such an attitude has an obvious internal paradigm: Russian foreign policy is likely to be independent and not to go in line with any external stakeholders; for the latter it is not like others, and that gets a factor for danger. But in terms of its structural bases and rather stable institutional nature Russian foreign policy might be seen through a number of permanent principles which are much more difficult to reconfigure rather than traditional flexibility of tools and technologies practiced by the liberal West.

First, Russian foreign policy is quite predictable. It is based on a range of long-term fundamentals publicly declared and published. Those are hierarchically-organized National Security Strategy, Foreign Policy Concept, presidential decrees on strategic development (so called "May decrees"), annual presidential addresses to the Federal Assembly, state programs and so on and so forth. Russian Federation is going along with all priorities which are documentarily and institutionally based.

Second, Russian foreign policy gets more and more pragmatic. It means that it is more likely to be aimed at some added value rather than just promoting any specific principles and values, even though those might be of great importance. President Vladimir Putin has been always approaching international issues with pragmatism and performance-orienting. And that is not only about his own views, but also about sparing use for resources which might be lacking quite often – especially when compared to Russia's counterparts and their costs on soft power.

Third principle to be identified is that Russian foreign policy seems to be reactive rather than proactive. For Moscow it is not an easy task to follow a strong long-term and entirely clear positive agenda as far as it never shares that exactly – there is just a common understanding, but a devil is always in details. What Moscow usually knows exactly is its negative agenda – what should not be done and what damages its vision. In practice that means that Russia's foreign

policy does not usually provide with competitive initiatives, but it would be quite effective to mobilize against any steps from outside considered as unfriendly. Russia can have doubts about actions, but it never reflects on the very necessity to respond: its active steps are usually responsive to some other's steps.

As a result, another principle is that Russian foreign policy tends to be defensive: to defend its interests, its people, its vision for order and stability, its identity. With no regard to labels given by different external actors, Russian diplomacy considers itself in a kind of besieged fortress where the primary task is to get ready for new attacks from outside.

The final, but not the least principle appeared from analyzing Russian foreign policy might be appealed to its asymmetry, and such an asymmetry relieves in different aspects, but the crucial is that between the content of the policy and its form, its goals and results, its spirit and its letter. In contemporary world of post-truth, where interpretation of the fact means no less than the fact itself, asymmetry gets relevant for many spheres. Nevertheless, Russia has already caught much attention with its foreign policy, which could be a good prerequisite for better competence to influence minds, but still seems to prefer institutions.

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## BETWEEN HOPES OF COLLABORATION AND LOST OPPORTUNITIES: THE NATO-RUSSIAN RELATIONSHIP

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Between 1991 and the beginning of the second decade of the 2000s Russia underwent radical and profound transformations both from the point of view of domestic politics and its international projection, as never before since the October Revolution<sup>1</sup>. The dissolution of the Soviet Union definitively freed from federal ties the 15 republics that had been part of it and that, starting from the Baltic States in 1987, had clearly and repeatedly manifested their desire for independence -RSFSR (then Russian Federation) included. The latter was the official heir of all the long, tormented but also exciting Soviet experience that had marked the history of the former Russian Empire for decades: an experience that had marked the lives of millions of people with moments of revolutionary illusions and phases of deep political involution, economic modernization and totalitarian rigor, dramatic defeats and military triumphs, Soviet pax and economic growth, nuclear success and global role, socio-political crisis and stagnation<sup>2</sup>.

The new Russia maintained its federal physiognomy in the name of the approximately 190 nationalities that inhabited it and lost almost 25 million Russians, who were now living outside its borders. From the USSR it inherited a powerful nuclear arsenal, a seat on the Security Council and a large part of the great Soviet heritage, taking over almost all its debt in return. Wisdom would have wanted the process of transition from a planned economy and a one-party regime to a liberalist economy and a democratic institutional model to take place through a period of slow and adequate transition. But this was not the orientation of Yeltsin: together with his closest collaborators,

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<sup>1</sup> See on this issue F. BENVENUTI, *La Russia dopo l'Urss*, Roma, Carocci, 2013, 47-74, S. GIUSTI, *La proiezione esterna della Federazione russa*, Pisa, Edizioni ETS, 2012, 33-40, A. GIANNOTTI, *Fra Europa e Asia*, Torino, Giappichelli, 2016, 1-10.

<sup>2</sup> A. GRAZIOSI, *L'Unione Sovietica, 1914-1991*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2011, 13-20.

from Egor Gaydar to Gennady Burbulis, from Anatoly Chubais to Viktor Chernomyrdin, he opted for a very rapid conversion to the free market, which imposed immense sacrifices on a population already tried by years of deep economic crisis, and encouraged the formation of a powerful and corrupt new elite, thus opening up wide pockets of large-scale organised crime<sup>3</sup>.

Strong thanks to a Constitution with a markedly presidentialist imprint, that had been approved without the convocation of a regular Constituent Assembly and which cost him an attempted coup d'état by his opponents in October 1993, Yeltsin won the first general elections in post-Soviet Russia in December of that year; he was however under the illusion that successfully proceeding along the road of an accelerated privatization of real estate, shops, industrial plants, monopoly giants and technological companies would have made it possible to avoid a real democratic transition and therefore limit the popular discontent which, year after year, became on the contrary stronger and stronger, undermining his personal power.

However, he lacked the forces necessary to keep the federal structure in place, to the point that the very possibility of Russia's survival as a unitary state entity seemed to be questioned several times. In order to gain the support, or at least the non-hostility, of a part of the population and the political class of the regions and republics, he promoted a "segmented federalism" characterized by dozens of bilateral treaties between the centre and the peripheries, each in its own way, aimed at obtaining the maximum autonomy from the Kremlin. The result was a chaotic and in the long run ungovernable situation, as demonstrated by the Chechnya's attempt to secede, which was followed by a failed intervention by federal troops.

Proclaimed independent since 1991, without clear reactions from Moscow, then unable to bring its small republic back to order, Yeltsin thought of attacking it in 1994, opting for a military solution that – he assumed – would be quick and painless, in the hope of increasing the popular consensus that was beginning to wobble. The war was much longer than expected and, ending two years later without a real victory, it laid bare all the limits of a President now worn out not only

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<sup>3</sup> Y. GAIDAR, *Il collasso di un Impero*, Roma, Nuova cultura, 2017.

by the bad use he had made of power, but also by the abuse of alcohol<sup>4</sup>.

With popularity rates in freefall but supported by the close circle of oligarchs that he himself had favoured, Yeltsin managed to stay in power until 1999. The resurgence of the economic crisis, following the collapse of the Asian Tigers in 1998, and the humiliation of having to watch helplessly the NATO bombardments against his Serbian brothers on the Kosovo issue, to which he had repeatedly opposed, marked the end. His dolphin was Vladimir Putin, chosen as Prime Minister in August 1999 and then elected with 52% of the votes at the Presidential elections in March 2000.

In the same decade, with specific regard to foreign policy, Yeltsin decided to continue the “new course” inaugurated by Gorbachev aimed at improving relations with the USA and Europe. The will of the oligarchs who wanted to have close relations with the West in order to obtain funding and new opportunities to earn money played a big role. Thus the relationship was immediately characterized by a large influx of foreign capital<sup>5</sup>, especially through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund<sup>6</sup>.

It was certainly during the first part of the decade, and in particular with Andrey Kozyrev’s stay at the Foreign Ministry between 1991 and 1996, that the Federation’s pro-western policy expressed itself with greater conviction along three different lines<sup>7</sup>: relations with the United States, extremely favoured by Clinton’s benevolent attitude and considered by the Kremlin as main interlocutor; relations with NATO, characterised by a mutual willingness to cooperate, although not without ambiguity on both sides, such as the renegotiation of the “Treaty for the reduction and limitation of conventional armed forces in Europe” (CFE)<sup>8</sup>, the conclusion of the

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<sup>4</sup> On the Chechen Wars see the volumes of G. BENSI, *La Cecenia e la polveriera del Caucaso*, Rovereto, Nicolodi, 2005 e M. BUTTINO, A. ROGNONI, *Una guerra e una pacificazione violenta*, Torino, Zamorani, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> The total amount of funds disbursed to the Russian Federation between 1992 and 1999 exceeded twenty billion dollars.

<sup>6</sup> N. GOULD-DAVIES, N. WOODS 1999, *Russia and the IMF*, Oxford, University College, 1-21.

<sup>7</sup> M.A. SMITH, *Russian and Nato since 1991*, New York, Routhledge, 2006, 51.

<sup>8</sup> Originally the Treaty was signed in Paris in November 1990, immediately after German reunification, by the then 22 member countries of NATO and those of the Warsaw Pact, which in fact dissolved a few months later, in July 1991. The agreement imposed limits on conventional weapons needed for surprise attacks or large-scale offensive operations throughout the area from the Atlantic to the Urals. But even before it came into force in 1992,

"Open Skies" Treaty (both 1992) and the creation in 1994 of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) would have demonstrated; and finally those with the European Union, penalised in the long run by the inability of its members to develop a common position despite the "New European Order" project contained in the "Charter of Paris" approved by the CSCE in 1990, in an attempt to manage the world scenario after the fall of communism and which, in theory, should have inspired them.

The history of the relations between the Russian Federation and NATO, as well as those with the newborn European Union, was completely new and was initially marked by prudent but positive steps although characterized by uncertainties<sup>9</sup>.

The first contacts that had taken place between the Atlantic Alliance and Moscow led in December 1991, a few days before the dissolution of the USSR, to the creation of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NAC-C). The negotiating table was obviously attended not only by the NATO member countries and Russia (not yet for a long time Soviet) but also by the countries that had become independent after the fall of the Berlin Wall and to which, for the first time, a political voice was given. This body was supposed to deal with certain aspects of the defence and security of the European continent but, given the radical changes that would shortly afterwards upset the whole Soviet world, its activity remained a dead letter. It is undeniable that this first attempt at dialogue failed, but it constituted the prodromes of future Russia-NATO relations and one could feel that the agreement for cooperation was possible, even if at that time it might seem difficult to implement since the positions in Moscow and Washington were not unequivocal, as it is easily imaginable.

This was a time full of questions for the Alliance and the USA, who were reflecting on the need to remodel their tasks now that the historical enemy had disappeared; this did not mean however that the

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the disappearance of the Soviet Union and its blockade had created a radically new geopolitical situation in Europe. At the same time as the ratification process was underway, negotiations had been conducted in parallel to allow the Russian Federation, together with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Ukraine, to succeed the USSR. It was thus possible to start, on this shaky basis, the implementation of the Treaty, which produced very positive results and led to the destruction of more than 50,000 pieces of heavy armaments (tanks, armoured combat vehicles, artillery pieces over 100 mm caliber, attack helicopters and combat aircraft) over the following three years.

<sup>9</sup> M.A. SMITH, *Russia and Nato since 1991*, London, Routledge, 2006.

international situation was safer and less unpredictable<sup>10</sup>. In the United States some Republican senators did not trust Moscow and considered a possible enlargement to the East as a necessary caution against a renewed Russian threat to Central and Eastern Europe. Others, on the other hand, were in favour of this hypothesis not so much in anti-Russian terms as with the intention of enlarging the Alliance to a greater number of democratic countries able to provide their contribution to face the new challenges inside and outside Europe. On the other hand, those who opposed this prospect were divided between those who believed that an Alliance made up of too many members would make it impossible to manage, and those who believed that the United States was already too overburdened to bear further responsibilities. Among them there was the now elderly George Kennan who, although he had played a major role in building the containment strategy, said that this would have disastrous effects on relations between Moscow and Washington<sup>11</sup>.

More cohesive in the sense of continuity were the leaders of the Alliance. In 1991, i.e. even before the collapse of Soviet Union, Manfred Wörner, then Secretary General, had stressed that the end of the bipolar confrontation would not eliminate the uncertainty coming not only from Europe, but also from new dangers in areas such as the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. NATO therefore continued to be absolutely necessary in order to ensure a European pillar in the security and defence spheres, based on a system of different but complementary organisations; to further develop the dialogue with the still existing Soviet Union and the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, helping them to overcome their sense of vulnerability and isolation; to address new challenges from outside the Alliance's area of responsibility<sup>12</sup>. In essence, both the United States and Europe depended on NATO to play an effective role in a global perspective. Consequently, European nations would have to organise their collective security within the Alliance. The end of the Cold War had not changed the fact that the security of North America and that of Europe were inextricably linked and that an enlarged community of

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<sup>10</sup> Nato Heads of State and Government. *The Alliance's New Strategy Concept*, Rome, 1991.

<sup>11</sup> G. KENNAN, *A Fateful Error*, The New York Times, 5th February 1997.

<sup>12</sup> R. HENDRICKSON, "Manfred Wörner. A visionary", NATO Review, Autumn 2004, Change and continuity in the North Atlantic Alliance, in [www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/issue3/english/history.html](http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/issue3/english/history.html) (10 March 2020).

liberal democracies responded fully to the security interests of the United States.

The new Russia, for its part, was not opposed to cooperation with NATO<sup>13</sup>, but not even the more pro-Western part of the Russian Government accepted the idea of a dialogue with no guarantee that it would not expand to the East<sup>14</sup>. The Military Doctrine of the Federation adopted in 1993 made it clear that the deployment of foreign troops on the territory of neighbouring states would be considered a direct threat to Russian security<sup>15</sup>.

The positive climate created in the early 1990s opened the way to a further step forward on the initiative of the Clinton administration. In 1993, as Secretary of State Warren Christopher recalls in his book "In the Stream of History"<sup>16</sup>, there were three options on the table: dissolving NATO once its purpose had been achieved; maintaining the Alliance without change; opening a dialogue to expand it eastwards. The Secretary believed that the third was the only way forward, because this would guarantee the adoption of democratic reforms in those countries, and consequently the consolidation of an area of great stability in Europe; but this could only be achieved if the operation was carried out gradually and, above all, if, in parallel, cooperation with Russia was carefully pursued. This third road was the basis of the project for that agreement, which later took the name of "Partnership for Peace", under which NATO was to initiate new forms of cooperation with all the members of the old Warsaw Pact, including Russia. This would also make it possible to implement some form of military cooperation, with the aim of subsequently transforming the best partners into candidates for membership of the Alliance. President Clinton accepted these suggestions convinced that in this way NATO would be the driving force that would lead to the unification of Europe for the first time in modern times, thus eliminating the risk of another conflict that would inevitably involve the United States too.

The hypothesis of NATO enlargement towards East was therefore in the air, nor did the representatives of the Eastern European countries hide a strong desire for it. They argued that the United States

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<sup>13</sup> R.H. DONALDSON & J.L. NOGEE, *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*, London, Routledge, 2009, 219.

<sup>14</sup> R. D. ASMUS, *Opening Nato's Doors*, New York, Columbia University Press, 4.

<sup>15</sup> D.V. TRENIN, *Integraciya i identichnost: Rossiya kak "novy Zapad"*, Evropa, Mosca, 2006, 284.

<sup>16</sup> W. CHRISTOPHER, "In the Stream of History", Stanford University Press, 1998, 128-138.

should take advantage of the historic opportunity to reunite Europe under its umbrella, a position that gradually strengthened the so-called “fast trackers” of the American administration who wanted a rapid expansion of the Alliance in order to strengthen pro-Western reformers in Central and Eastern Europe, thus filling the security vacuum left by the collapse of the old superpower<sup>17</sup>. Many leaders of Western European countries were also of this opinion: in fact they were convinced that NATO’s priorities for the future would be no different from those of the past, precisely because they were aimed at containing Russian power if it turned out threatening the states in the area. The American Department of Defense according to which an early enlargement would protect the interests of Eastern Europe more than those of the United States, on the other hand, was more cautious: all the more so, since one could underestimate neither Yeltsin’s firm opposition to a rapid numerical and geographical expansion of NATO nor the Russian wish for its transformation into a mere political organization. Based on assurances that the Russians believed they had received during the negotiations for German reunification, Yeltsin believed that NATO expansion was not on the agenda. He therefore suggested other options to avert Eastern Europeans’ concerns by assuring them a kind of guarantee of sovereignty, territorial integrity and peacekeeping in the region. This did not rule out the possibility that Russia might join NATO in the foreseeable future, but what was most important to the Russian President was that, in whatever form, the process of rapprochement between Moscow and the Alliance would result in an equal relationship with the United States<sup>18</sup>. After all, Moscow had given something in return: it had allowed the reunification of Germany in exchange for a weak commitment to ensure that no NATO forces were stationed on the territory of the former GDR; it had left the socialist countries of Eastern Europe without firing a shot, and it was aiming decisively at the capitalist model that it had bitterly opposed for decades<sup>19</sup>. In the light of all that, the US Department of Defense was of the idea that the best way to proceed was a long-term expansion able to leave the door open to

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<sup>17</sup> J.M. GOLDGEIER & M. McFAUL, *Power and Purpose. U.S. Policy toward Russia after the Cold War*, Washington D.C., Brooking Institution Press, 1999.

<sup>18</sup> T. SHKAKLEINA & V. BATYUK, *Foreign Policy and National Security of Contemporary Russia*, vol. IV, Moscow, MGIMO University Press, 2002, 20.

<sup>19</sup> A. CHERNYAEV & A. GALKIN (eds.), *Mikhail Gorbachev and the German Question. Documents, 1986-1991*, Moscow, Ves Mir, 2006, 129.

Russia as well, thus satisfying Moscow's sense of belonging to Europe. Not everyone, however, shared this caution by underestimating both Moscow's aspirations for cooperation on an equal basis and the fact that the Russians would perceive an enlargement to the East as a threat to their national interests.

The *Partnership for Peace*'s proposal, strongly supported by the Department of Defence, was first announced to the Russians on 22 October 1994, when Christopher met Kozyrev in Moscow. Already on that occasion there was a first misunderstanding, since the Secretary let his counterpart understand that the *Partnership for Peace* could be a credible alternative to NATO by keeping silent about the fact that, according to many people within the Clinton Administration, it was nothing more than a road to expansion itself.

Russia, at that time in difficulty from many points of view, decided to join the *Partnership for Peace* in order to start a broad and strengthened dialogue and cooperation with NATO. The meetings, which were held at the level of Ministers, Ambassadors and experts, actually allowed for a number of years a considerable exchange of information and studies on important issues of common interest such as peacekeeping, environmental security and scientific research. The first opportunity to make use of the work done was the implementation of the military aspects of the 1995 Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina. Russian and NATO soldiers worked together first in the forces implementing the plan, called IFOR (Intervention Force), and then in the peace stabilization force, the so-called SFOR (Stabilisation Force), which followed the implementation plan. Russia participated in SFOR with 1,200 men out of a total of 20,000. The following year, on a Russian proposal a significant initiative was launched in a sector other than strictly military: a memorandum of understanding on civil emergency planning and disaster preparedness was signed, which led to the creation of the "Euro-Atlantic Centre for Disaster Response" and a "Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Unit". But the underlying ambiguities of the agreement never ceased: while the Russians believed that a European collective security structure should not be based on NATO, the Americans were convinced that this was the perfect way to ensure security on the continent, possibly with the participation of Russia, but certainly not on an equal basis with the United States.

Contrary to what Yeltsin had hoped, the *Partnership for Peace* would play an important role in preparing for the possible accession of

new members through joint exercises, seminars and working meetings. This evolution did not fail to provoke discontent in Moscow, where the United States was blamed for the expansion of NATO being pursued without foreseeing a radical transformation of the Alliance, and thus feeding the anti-Western forces in Russia. Kozyrev stressed on several occasions that the idea of a special relationship with NATO was acceptable only as a temporary solution, since the ultimate goal of the Russians was a collaboration leading to the construction of a truly pan-European security organization. Only then would the Russians withdraw their objection to the gradual entry of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe into NATO. However, his proposals always fell on deaf ears. Clinton himself, at a meeting with Yeltsin in May 1995, declared that the transatlantic community of the 21st century would be built by increasing security cooperation in Europe through NATO to fight the new threats of terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, despite its fears, Russia was economically too weak to dictate the agenda and the help of the Clinton administration was too important to access loans from the International Monetary Fund. Kremlin had neither the strength to oppose the expansion of NATO, renouncing all collaboration and thus risking returning to a Cold War situation nor accepting the enlargement of the Alliance without trying to influence it, thus giving the idea of unconditional surrender. The only way forward was to maintain opposition to the ongoing process and at the same time negotiate to minimize the worst consequences by trying to deepen the climate of collaboration that had been created with the *Partnership for Peace*.

With this in mind, in the mid-1990s an attempt was made to take a further step forward. In December 1996, NATO Foreign Ministers instructed Secretary General Javier Solana to explore with the then Russian Foreign Minister Primakov, who had recently replaced Kozirev, the possibility of reaching a real agreement. The negotiations led to the signing in Paris on 27 May 1997 of the “Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation”, which expressed the common intention to ensure an inclusive and lasting peace in the Euro-Atlantic area. The Treaty was divided into four sections: the first section laid down the

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<sup>20</sup> M. MIHKELSON, *Clinton Archives confirms the Need for Nato Enlargement*, Paper Issue November 28 2018, RKK, International Centre for Defence and Security, Estonia, in <https://icds.ee/clinton-archives-confirm-the-need-for-nato-enlargement/>.

principles on which the relationship between NATO and Russia was based; the second (and this was the real novelty) provided for the creation of a Permanent Joint Council which would allow for mechanisms for consultation, cooperation, decision making and concerted action between the parties; the third indicated the areas for consultation and cooperation; the last, finally, was dedicated to military-political issues, including the renewed political commitment of NATO member states to have no intention, no plan and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of the alliance's new member states. It was therefore a document that happily foreshadowed a mature time for the creation of a strong, stable and lasting partnership through the work of the "Permanent Joint Council", which was to ensure constant consultation and cooperation between the parties. This body could meet at different levels, from Heads of State to Ambassadors, and was empowered to create specific working groups on issues of common interest such as peacekeeping, security in the Euro-Atlantic region, the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and nuclear weapons management, the development of common strategies and doctrines, disarmament and arms control, search and rescue at sea, the fight against international terrorism, scientific cooperation on defence, civil emergency planning and disaster assistance and, having regard to the current relevance of the subject at that time, management of the situation in the former Yugoslavia. It met for the first time on 18 July 1997.

But it was at the very moment when new perspectives seemed to be opening up that Moscow began to understand how concrete the project was: in the space of a few years it would lead the Alliance to expand eastwards until – starting from April 1999 – it would include Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. The issue was brought to the NATO Summit in Madrid in July 1997 when all Alliance members invited the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary to open accession negotiations. The reasons in favour of enlargement had therefore prevailed: it would have made it possible to bring stability to Europe, consolidate democracies in the East, contain Russia (which, however, remained at the time the only potential rival of the USA), better regulate the old members of the Alliance by enlarging to undoubtedly pro-American countries, create large profit margins for American defence industries which would then operate in these countries. As far as Russia was concerned, Secretary Javier Solana welcomed it as a full partner in the construction of the new Europe, but it was necessary

to formalise this cooperation in an official document. From the Russian point of view, however, the most important thing remained to prepare a text defining relations with NATO in a way acceptable to both sides in order to help the Alliance transform itself from a Cold War instrument into a new organisation, thereby reducing the negative effects of expansion. Foreign Minister Primakov did not use half words to condemn the enlargement and the position of those in the American and European establishment who wanted to isolate Russia. Deep in their heart the post-Soviet elite had always hoped that, once the difficult years of transition were over, the West would support, or at least not hinder, the restoration of Russia's hegemonic role in the Euro-Asian area. The eastward enlargement of the Atlantic Alliance definitively denied these expectations: even if this measure was not perceived as a military threat, it was nevertheless seen as aimed at creating new dividing lines in Europe, moreover if read in the light of the assurances given to Gorbachev between 1990 and 1991, at the time of German reunification, according to the Russians. Yeltsin himself, worried about the impact that the news would have had on Russian public opinion, took a number of official positions against this decision, aware, however, that the only thing the Russians could do was to try to minimize the negative consequences for Russia. He announced that Russia would in any case firmly oppose any further enlargement involving the former Soviet republics and that the deployment of armed forces by individual major powers or coalitions in areas adjacent to the Russian borders would be considered a threat to national security in the future. NATO's expansion to the East and its transformation into a dominant political and military force in Europe was condemned by the head of the Kremlin as a source of instability and threats to Russia. However, he obtained little in concrete terms: on the one hand, Clinton's assurance that there would be no increase in Alliance troops permanently stationed near the Russian borders; on the other hand, the verbal confirmation that the Americans also regarded the OSCE as the only pan-European security structure. As far as the United States was concerned, however, criticism was also levelled here against the start of the accession process: many Democrats admitted that they feared that the expansion process would leave Moscow outside Europe, thus making it vulnerable to various enemies. Zbigniew Brzezinski, while noting that the enlargement of the North Atlantic Alliance was closely linked to the expansion of the European Union itself within a security system of

which the United States was also a member, and that, in view of this, the most geo-politically exposed sector of the continent - namely Central Europe- could not be removed from the transatlantic security framework, nevertheless admitted that not all the Russians' doubts were unfounded<sup>21</sup>.

Just on the eve of the accession of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary to the NATO summit in Washington in April 1999, accompanied by the official reconfirmation of the Alliance's commitment to accept further accessions, the Russians felt that they had no voice in the relationship that was more on the "19 + 1 model" than on the "20 model", i.e. all partners gathered at the same table with equal voice; that feeling was confirmed by the decision, strongly opposed by the Russians and before the authorization of the UN Security Council but equally taken by NATO, to bomb Serbia in March 1999 to induce it to return to the peace talks table and to end the war in Kosovo.

The bombardments on Belgrade had a profound effect on Russian policy for two reasons: first, because the aggression, decided unilaterally by Washington and without a UN mandate, had confirmed to the Kremlin that the international community refused to recognize its leading role. Primakov, who had become Prime Minister on September 11<sup>22</sup>, was flying to the United States for a meeting of the Russian-American Commission with Al Gore, when the American Vice President informed him that negotiations between Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke and Slobodan Milosevich had failed and that at that point a military attack was inevitable. Given the impossibility of any negotiation on the decision already taken, Primakov refused to continue the journey and, in the middle of the Atlantic, had the aircraft turned around<sup>23</sup>. It was March 23, 1999. On the night of the 24th, *Allied Force* Operation began and for 78 days more than 1,000 aircraft and 30 Atlantic Alliance naval units hit Belgrade and other centers in Serbia and Kosovo<sup>24</sup>. Secondly, the attack on the Serbs, who have

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<sup>21</sup> Z. BRZEZINSKI, *A Plan for Europa: How to expand NATO*, *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 1995, in <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/poland/1995-01-01/plan-europe-how-expand-nato> (11 March 2020).

<sup>22</sup> He was replaced at the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Igor Ivanov, Deputy Minister since 1995 and who remained at the head of the department of Smolenskaya Square until 2004.

<sup>23</sup> See E.M. PRIMAKOV, *Vstrechi na Perekrestach*, Edizioni Pirogov, Mosca, 2004, 253-259.

<sup>24</sup> S. TALBOTT, *The Russia Hand. A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy*, New York, Random House, 2003, 310.

always been considered a brotherly people in terms of language and religion, provoked strong indignation among the Russian population which, after a decade of attraction for the American model, took a much more critical attitude towards a world - the Western one - which refused to recognize their country's status as a great power<sup>25</sup>. After having abandoned in protest the Joint Council, however, in June, Moscow accepted to let its soldiers enter the international force contingent in Kosovo (KFOR)<sup>26</sup>. The Russian troops would collaborate with NATO troops in three sections of the country, together with France in the North, with the United States in the South-East, with Germany in the South. They were also to ensure the security of Slatina airport in the British control area. It was an important decision, the only one at that time to save the small steps previously taken for a real rapprochement between historic enemies<sup>27</sup>.

It was then, in the folds of these events, that Primakov, who had just been appointed Prime Minister, first put forward his concept of "multipolarism"<sup>28</sup>. According to this doctrine, the U.S.-led unipolar system resulting from the fall of the USSR, besides being conceptually undesirable in the eyes of the Kremlin, had by now demonstrated its impracticability, also because of the uncertainty of American choices: the time had come to develop a new international system. From Primakov's point of view it should have been based on a plurality of great actors, among which, in addition to the USA, he included China, India, Brazil and, obviously, Russia. Almost a decade in advance he had in fact anticipated the BRICS group that would be so fortunate in the early 2000s<sup>29</sup>. From the list of members of the new "international concert", not excluding Europe but, with a sixth sense that the future would unfortunately confirm, he believed that the Community dimension was not capable of expressing a unified line and that it was therefore appropriate to turn attention to the individual

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<sup>25</sup> See I.A. ZEVELEV, M.A. TROICKY, *Sila i vliyanie v amerikansko-rossiiskikh otnosheniyach. Semiotichesky analiz*, NOFMO, Mosca, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> The Russian contingent was 3,150 men out of a total of 40,000.

<sup>27</sup> An enlargement to the East required, among other things, a revision of some fundamental aspects of the CFE Treaty: for this reason, on 15 November 1999 in Istanbul, the Vienna Document, which came into force on 1 January 2000, was signed by the 56 OSCE member states: it provided for certain transparency measures, politically but not legally binding, agreed between the member states.

<sup>28</sup> E. PRIMAKOV, *Un mondo senza la Russia?*, Pisa, Pacini Editore, 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Acronym formed with the initials of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, whose extraordinary economic growth has made them the protagonists of the international economy for some years.

European nations. It would be improper to conclude that with Primakov the Russian-European dialogue broke down. Rather, compared with the idealism that had characterised the previous phase, the new multi-sector orientation reset relations according to the yardstick of the Russian national interest. It was not any longer the case of an almost uncritical attraction for the Western model, but rather the search for agreements that responded to the Federation's specific economic or strategic needs.

The Primakov Doctrine laid the foundations for Russia's repositioning on the international scene, based on strong national pride and a firm defense of territorial integrity and national sovereignty in a multipolar global framework. It found its full realization with the coming to power of Vladimir Putin as Prime Minister, in July 1999, and then as President of the Federation.

In the first document dedicated to the "Foreign Policy Doctrine of the Russian Federation", issued on June 28, 2000, with regard to relations with NATO Putin emphasized the need to maintain a high level of cooperation to safeguard security and stability on the European continent, provided that the Atlantic Alliance respected the principles enshrined in the agreement with Russia signed in 1997, starting with those concerning the non-use of force or the threat thereof, and the non-deployment of conventional armed forces and nuclear weapons in the territories of the new accession countries. The document however specified that on a certain number of criteria of behaviour, the political-military guidelines of NATO did not coincide objectively with Russian interests: on the contrary, on some occasions, they were in open contradiction, and this should lead to a common reflection on both sides. In particular, the now obvious tendency of the Atlantic Alliance to use military force outside its area of responsibility without the authorization of the UN Security Council was stigmatized, and this was a dangerous cause of global destabilization. More generally, Putin saw two main trends in international relations: one, positive, aimed at regionalist and multilateralist integration; the other, negative, seeking to impose a new system based on American-led Western rule characterized by the resolution of global problems through the use of force. His *Koncepciya* obviously opted for the first of the two systems within which Russia's priority was the defence of the interests of the person, society, the state instead of the "democratic edification" indicated by Yeltsin in his 1993 Doctrine. In this new context, the guarantee of the country's security and the maintenance

and strengthening of its sovereignty, territorial integrity and position in the international community as a great power fully capable of assuming responsibility for international governance became fundamental. There was no uncertainty, therefore, as it had been in the previous five years, both on the internal level (where one had to resist the forces pushing for the disintegration of the State, separatism, strong foreign conditioning), and on the external level - where no more surrender was allowed, as in the case of the Yugoslavian events, from Bosnia to Kosovo. Russia had precise objectives ahead: to contribute to the construction of a world order based on international law, the principles of the United Nations and fair and equal cooperation between nations; to create favourable conditions for the development of the country, its economy and the standard of living of its people through democratic reforms and the strengthening of the rule of law; contribute to the formation of a good-neighbourly belt on the borders of the Russian Federation with a view to preventing and resolving conflicts in these regions; establish friendly relations with foreign countries, based on the search for agreement and common interests; protect the rights of Russian citizens and compatriots abroad; promote the image of the Russian language and culture in other countries.

The Doctrine of 2000 represented the summa of Russian foreign policy until 2008, i.e. during both the first two Putin presidencies. Compared to the previous version of 1993 some elements were of continuity, others of radical novelty. Among the first there was certainly the relationship with the West which remained the privileged interlocutor of the Kremlin. The main novelty was the total adherence to the line of multi-vectorialism advocated by Primakov<sup>30</sup> and the consequent recognition of priority interests also in relation to the CIS, China and Japan.

Despite these novelties, the events of September 11, 2001 determined a decisive reconfirmation of the link now established with the West and in particular with the United States, to the point that Putin's first years in office coincided with the most idyllic moment of Russian-American relations, up to the *Pratica di Mare* goal. Putin raised no objections to the granting of American bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, guaranteed the USA the right to fly over Russian territory to supply the new military bases, and ensured cooperation in

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<sup>30</sup> V. NIKONOV, *Nazad k kontsertu*, in *Rossiya v globalnoy politike*, I, 2002, [http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/n\\_15](http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_15) (11 March 2020).

intelligence operations against the Taliban. His objectives at that time were manifold: to strengthen the collaboration with the Americans in order to avoid, on the one side, the American project for the creation of a defensive missile system, on the other, to slow down the enlargement of NATO, given that at the Prague Summit of 2002 the process of accession of Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (a solution which would bring the borders of the Alliance up to the Russian borders, watched with great alarm by the Kremlin); to obtain the American benevolence for the management of the Chechen question, something which, in fact, happened through the repeated declarations of Bush on the presence of active exponents of Al Qaeda in that country and the necessity, therefore, for Putin to intervene as he believed best; to modernize the growth of the Russian economy. In fact, in November 2001 Putin made his first visit to the United States and Bush committed to cancel 3.5 million dollars of the immense Russian debt to the United States, promising to work with Congress to normalize trade between the two countries.

The maximum point of collaboration was reached in 2002 when the SORT Treaty was signed: it provided for a reduction, albeit minimal, of the two countries' nuclear warheads and in Pratica di Mare the NATO-Russia Council was set up, an equal forum to discuss common issues that replaced the previous Joint Council. Russia was given the possibility of vetoes on issues of joint action such as the fight against the proliferation of nuclear weapons, arms control, support for peace-keeping operations and crisis management, military cooperation and the fight against terrorism<sup>31</sup>.

The idyll was brief, however. The situation changed radically with the events in Iraq in 2003, opening a period of growing hostility: Putin called the attack on Saddam Hussein unacceptable, decided without the authorization of the Security Council and conducted, according to the Americans, as part of a project to eradicate terrorism throughout the Middle East and strike at the undemocratic states that supported him, and in particular the so-called "Axis of Evil", i.e. Iran, Iraq, and North Korea, all of which were somehow close to Moscow.

Relations with NATO deteriorated irreversibly within a few years. The second enlargement in 2004 was harshly condemned by the Kremlin even more so as the Istanbul summit marked another step

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<sup>31</sup> In the following years, the Council approved a number of important initiatives including an action plan against terrorism and a series of multinational exercises to deal with natural disasters.

towards the possible accession of Ukraine. Later, with the Bucharest Summit in 2008, a real breakthrough came when the Americans confirmed that they wanted to deploy the missile defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic and vaguely announced that Ukraine and Georgia would become NATO members. In fact, the declaration was not the start of a true “Membership Action Plan”: George W. Bush said he was in favour of starting accession procedures immediately, supported by Canada, the United Kingdom and the new members of Eastern Europe<sup>32</sup>, mainly the Baltic States and Poland, but met with a great deal of resistance in many of the large Western European countries and had to settle with a vague declaration on the entry of the two countries in an unspecified future. However, the hypothesis had been put forward: Saakashvili would make it the absolute priority of his presidency, knowing that only the possible umbrella of the Atlantic Pact could give him a free hand to Georgia in Ossetia and Abkhazia.

To worsen the state of tension now emerged in the relations between Moscow and Washington, other events were added in these same years: in the colourful revolutions of Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005), born against alleged electoral fraud, activists and exponents of numerous western NGOs played a leading role. And the American affirmations made no secret of how much Washington approved those events that had allowed reformist and pro-Western leaders to come to power in the three countries.

After Putin’s re-election in 2004, Moscow’s foreign policy gradually abandoned the Western option and returned to focus on the Near East and on enhancing the Eurasian dimension of Russian national interests by focusing on the regional integration process that Primakov had already indicated as a priority<sup>33</sup>. Someone spoke in this regard of a real “Putin Doctrine”<sup>34</sup>, but in reality no substantial novelties were introduced with respect to the classic Primakov

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<sup>32</sup> The German Foreign Minister Steinmeier stated that it was not appropriate to take decisions that would be perceived by Russia as a provocation: a line also supported by France and Italy. [http://www.summitbucharest.ro/en/doc\\_160.html](http://www.summitbucharest.ro/en/doc_160.html) (11 March 2020) and V. NIGRO, *Nato, no degli europei a Bush “Georgia e Ucraina per ora fuori*, in *La Repubblica*, 2 aprile 2008.

<sup>33</sup> See B. NYGREN, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia*, Routledge, New York, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> T. LOKOSHINA, *The Imposition of a fake political settlement in Northern Caucasus*, Ibidem Verlag, Stoccarda, 2005, L. PÓTI, *Evolving Russian Foreign and Security Policy: Interpreting the Putin-doctrine*, in *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, XXV, 2008, 29-42 and L. ARON, *The Putin Doctrine*, in *Foreign Affairs*, March 2013.

Doctrine<sup>35</sup>. Characteristic of both is in fact the recourse to a much more assertive policy in affirming the national interests of the Russian Federation capable of assuming responsibility for global governance as do all other international actors: an assertive policy that is not infrequently accused in the West of excessive brutality, but which has generally met broad consensus among Russian citizens and which was expressed especially at times such as the so-called gas wars with Ukraine and Belarus between 2005 and 2007, the suspension of the Treaty on the Reduction of Conventional Arms in 2007 – on the grounds that the Baltic countries did not ratify it – and the military response to Georgia's aggression against the South Ossetian Autonomous Region, in which several Russian citizens died in 2008.

Just this year, with the election of Medvedev as President and the appointment of Putin as Prime Minister, a new "Doctrine" was promulgated. It reiterated most of the principles contained in the previous version, especially with regard to multipolarity, the centrality of the UN and the Security Council and the search for a leading role for the Russian Federation in defining the international agenda and the Eurasian dimension of the country's interests.

In that very year, on the American side, the election of Obama seemed to reopen a glimmer of collaboration. With the strategic "reset" of the United States towards the Pacific and the Far East, Europe and the Middle East were becoming increasingly marginalized and therefore there were fewer concerns about Russia. The latter seemed reassured both by the new President's premise for a disengagement in Iraq and then Afghanistan and, more generally, by his more multilateral approach. On this basis, the dossiers on the non-proliferation of nuclear power were reopened, with the signing of the "New Start" for the reduction of nuclear weapons; the Northern Distribution Network was created - a supply corridor for American troops in Afghanistan that crossed Russia - granting the USA the Ulyanovsk airport as a transit point; collaboration on Iranian nuclear power until the final agreement in 2015; the Americans postponed and then cancelled the deployment of missiles in Poland and the Czech

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<sup>35</sup> The first foreign policy concept formulated under Putin's presidency in 2000 reads: «Russia must work to build a multipolar system of international relations». This line will be reiterated by the President at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, when he observed that a unipolar world was nothing more than a centre with a single master in a dynamic profoundly contrary to democracy and the principle of respect for the opinions and interests of all. *Na chto delal stavku Vladimir Putin?*, in *Izvestiya*, 14 June 2007.

Republic while abandoning any plans for further enlargement of NATO to the East; Russia finally joined the WTO in 2012.

But here, too, optimism lasted for a short time. In the decade that had just opened, new reasons for contrast would follow one another: the very different vision of the Arab Springs, Medvedev's criticism of the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya, after the initiative of France and Great Britain, the Syrian crisis, with the Russian intervention in favor of Assad then decided in 2015, Putin's return to power in 2012, much criticized by Western public opinion because of lack of transparency, are just some of the events that led to harsh sentences against Moscow both in the United States and in many European countries. Finally, the reaction to the Ukraine crisis in 2013 and the subsequent annexation of Crimean Russia in 2014 with the adoption of sanctions by Westerners, American efforts to establish bases in Poland and the Baltics and the suspension of Russia from the G8 was very harsh.

In conclusion, therefore, since the 1990s the dialogue between the United States, and consequently NATO, and the new Russian Federation had not been taken for granted: the former were convinced that they had won the Cold War, while Yeltsin and the Russian people thought it was they who had overthrown communism and therefore wanted to be recognized as leading players at least in Europe. The objective weakness in which the new Russia debated for years dictated a prudent attitude, which some mistakenly considered almost servile to the West. A judgment that could not have been more wrong: the arrival of Putin and the return to a policy of power revealed in all its complexity how neither the Americans nor the Russians had ever been able to identify a role acceptable to their interlocutor.



## EU-RUSSIAN RELATIONS THROUGH THE EYES OF PRIMAKOV'S DOCTRINE

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«A sign of great power - when your country is needed, others want to deal with it. Russia is a great power precisely because many problems in the international arena cannot be solved without it»<sup>1</sup>

*Yevgeny Primakov*

*Introduction.*- EU–Russia relations celebrated 30 years at the end of 2019. The cooperation between Russia and EU has always been a great challenge and great opportunity for both sides. In this article we will look through the main principles of the Yevgeny Primakov's Russian foreign policy<sup>2</sup> and its influence on EU-Russia collaboration. The article includes paragraphs about the history and the evolution of EU-Russian, trade and economic trends, ongoing partnerships and projects, the visions of each other and some conclusions.

Before presenting Primakov's foreign policy approach it is important to consider Russia's foreign policy at the beginning of the 90s. After the end of the Cold War and the emergence of several new states in the post-Soviet sphere, Russia was searching its place in the new world order. In 1991 – 1996, Andrey Kozyrev was appointed Minister of foreign affairs. His answer to Nixon's question about the interests of post-Soviet Russia became famous: «One of the problems of the Soviet Union was that we seemed to be too focused on national interests, and now we think more about universal values. But if you have any ideas and you can tell us how to determine our national interests, then I will be very grateful». When Primakov replaced Kozyrev as Minister of foreign affairs (1996) it was a decisive

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<sup>1</sup> Y. PRIMAKOV. Interview to correspondent "Argumenty i F акты [Arguments and facts]", № 51 21.12.2005 <https://aif.ru/archive/1646961>.

<sup>2</sup> Primakov was Russian Foreign Minister between 1996 and 1998, but his legacy deeply influenced Russian foreign policy.

moment for Russia, as the country was rapidly losing ground in the international arena.

*Primakov and his legacy.*- Yevgeny Maksimovich Primakov (1929-2015) was an orientalist, he studied Arabic at the Moscow Institute for Oriental Studies and later worked as a correspondent for the state radio and television. He was the head of Institute of Oriental Studies, of IMEMO (Academic Institute of world economics and international relations) and a member of the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences. As well as a scientist, also his political career was extensive, and he left an important legacy in Russian foreign affairs.

When in January 1996, Primakov was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, Western countries seemed not to be very enthusiastic, due to his previous positions and experience. For instance, in 1989–1990 he was Chairman of the Soviet parliament; during a visit to Iraq Primakov openly hugged Saddam Hussein in front of the press. Primakov played also an important role in negotiations ahead of the first Gulf War. In 1991, he was appointed as Director of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR); during that time, he, for the first time, developed contacts between SVR and many Intelligence Services in the world, especially agencies of NATO countries. During the post-cold-war period serving as head of SVR, he sustained the idea that Russia's strategic interests would be better protected without imposing "diktat" on neighboring countries while ensuring security along the perimeter of Russian borders; at the same time, Primakov was concerned about the expansion of the US intelligence in Russia's neighbourhood<sup>3</sup>. USA media then wrote that Primakov was a supporter of the restoration of the Soviet Union and was trying to regain Moscow's control on former USSR states. In 1993 SVR produced a report claiming that NATO's expansion towards Eastern Europe was a threat to Russia's interests. Primakov, both as SVR director and then as Ministry of Foreign Affairs insisted on the special role of Russia's post-Soviet neighbourhood, focusing his efforts on the Commonwealth of Independent States, to strengthen Russia's influence in the post-Soviet space. One of his priorities became the creation of several integration projects in which Russia would play a leading role. In 1998, he was appointed prime minister by then-president Boris Yeltsin. The world remembers "Primakov's loop" in 1999 – the U-

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<sup>3</sup> Y. PRIMAKOV "Meeting at the crossroads/ Eugeny Primakov," Centropoligraph, 2018, 130-131.

turn over the Atlantic while *en route* to the United States on an official visit – after learning that NATO was about to start bombing Yugoslavia. It was one of the highest points of so-called “Primakov Renaissance”, or the restoration of Russia’s role in global affairs. The main aim of Primakov was to present Russia on the world stage as a global actor, refraining the other countries from capitalizing on the temporary weakness of post-USSR Russia. He started to promote the idea of a multi-polar world against the unilateral dominance of the US; for instance, Primakov opposed NATO expansion to the East. He sustained the development of cooperative relations with both West (Europe and the US) and the East (China, Japan, India), with a multipolar approach<sup>4</sup>. He resumed cooperation with Iraq, Iran and Serbia; for instance, in Iran he criticized American military presence in the Gulf. He visited many Arab countries, but also Israel. He announced the idea of creating a Great Triangle, Moscow-Delhi-Beijing, to coordinate efforts in the international arena and to promote a more multipolar world. Several years later, in 2014 Primakov commented: «The turn of the Russian economy to the East [to Asia] does not mean a break in ties with Europe»<sup>5</sup>. Another important step in Russian foreign policy was concluded under Primakov’s tenure. The “Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation, and Security between Russian Federation and NATO”, a road map for a possible NATO-Russia cooperation, was adopted in 1997. The parties, Russia and NATO, created a channel of communication where Russia could convey its concerns to the West regarding the increasing expansion of the Alliance to the East of Europe. This thrust of NATO has been since then a relevant issue in NATO and EU relations with Russia, as Primakov forecasted. Primakov’s doctrine was extremely reminiscent of the politics of one of his references, Alexander Gorchakov<sup>6</sup>. During Primakov’s era the main qualities of Russian foreign policy, as under Gorchakov, became again pragmatism and realism; today Russian foreign policy is still mainly shaped by the principles formulated by Primakov in the 90s. The establishment of a Eurasian bloc, for instance, has been another pragmatic and concrete suggestion envisioned by Primakov and then implemented several years later.

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<sup>4</sup> A famous approach supported by Primakov was the so called “turn to the East”, or increasing Russia’s attention to the Asian countries.

<sup>5</sup> Y. PRIMAKOV Interview to TASS [Primakov: razvorot ekonomiki Rossii na Vostok ne oznachajet razryva svyazej s Evropoj], 28.10.2014 <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/1538580>.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Gorchakov was the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire, between 1856 and 1882.

Vladimir Putin, current president of Russia, said that Primakov made a «colossal contribution to the formation of modern Russia», bringing back «the respect for Russia [...] in international diplomacy»<sup>7</sup>.

*EU – Russia relations background.*- Throughout the centuries, despite the cultural proximity there has been a constant confrontation between the East and the West. Trade, friendship and cultural influence were flourishing as well as there were conflicts, tensions and wars. Ancient Rus (the ancestor state of Russia) was an unknown country for many Europeans, even if Russia, as supposed successor of Byzantium, elected Moscow as the Third Rome, and a city like Novgorod was a member of the Hanseatic League. For centuries (1240-1480), Ancient Rus and several Russian Kingdoms were under the control of the Golden Horde, a Mongol empire. Despite these rulers imposed their will on ancient Russia, it protected Europe from a devastating invasion of Mongol tribes. The first significant armed confrontations between Europe and Russia started in the XVI century during the Livonian war (1558 - 1583) for the control of Old Livonia. These conflicts involved Ivan the Terrible from Rus against a coalition made of several kingdoms, like Denmark-Norway, the Kingdom of Sweden, the Union of Grand Duchy of Lithuania-Kingdom of Poland. The confrontation was also a religious clash because Ivan the Terrible fought to maintain control and Orthodox faith in Old Livonia. Baltic countries and Poland, on the frontline with Russia, were the most concerned by Moscow's initiatives.

The Tsar Peter the Great (1672-1725) decided to turn Russia towards Europe, ("opening the window to Europe", Pushkin recalled), importing many European traditions and customs. This progressive westernization of Russian traditions was difficult to implement, but when Catherine the Great (1729-1796) succeeded Peter as empress of Russia, the focus of the country was already directed to the West and the Black Sea (for instance, she conquered Crimea). Russia sustained Europe during the fight against Napoleon and sent one of Russia's best General, Alexander Suvorov, to fight in Italy; but during the campaigns of the French Emperor also Russia was directly targeted by the *Grande Armée*. The so called "Patriotic war" (1812), the war of Russia against Napoleon, had a deep influence in Russian history. Wars in the XIX century, the First and the Second World War, besides

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<sup>7</sup> V. Putin's speech at the unveiling of a monument to Yevgeny Primakov, 29.10.2019 <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/61929>.

their destruction, opened new areas of frictions between Russia and Europe: the Cold war, ended in 1989, was one of the last legacy of this sometimes bitter confrontation between the two parties. The end of the Soviet Union provided nearly twenty years of improved relations, but another standoff emerged after 2014, with the Ukrainian crisis: its bitter legacy lasts until today.

*EU – Russia relations since 1989*

*Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.*- Official bilateral relations between the European Union (EU) and the Russian Federation started to develop more than 30 years ago, in 1989. At the end of 2019, Russia and the EU marked the 30th Anniversary of the “Agreement on Trade, Commercial and Economic Cooperation between the USSR and European Communities”, signed in Brussels on 18 December 1989. There were no formal agreements between Europe and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) during the Cold War, but some of the “Eastern bloc” countries had bilateral agreements with “Western” partners. The agreement of 1989 was one of the results of Mikhail Gorbachev’s *perestroika* policy<sup>8</sup> which opened the way to rapprochement with the West. Gorbachev - as a way to show a more open approach to USSR’s foreign policy - suggested the concept of “Common European Home”<sup>9</sup> saying that «now it is up to all of us, all the participants in the European process, to make the best possible use of the groundwork laid down through our common efforts. Our idea of a common European home serves the same purpose too»<sup>10</sup>. This project was not implemented but it represented a remarkable opening in the austere Soviet foreign policy. After the collapse of the Soviet Union (1989-1991) many new states gained their independence, changing dramatically the shape of the old Soviet space. The European Communities (EC) immediately recognized these new countries, expressing the will to establish diplomatic relations with all of them. But this also implied the need of a new agreement between Russia, as a successor of the USSR, and the EC. Bilateral negotiations started in 1992 already between the already named European Union and the new Russian Federation. After a few

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<sup>8</sup> *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* began in 1985.

<sup>9</sup> M. GORBACHEV addressing the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 6 July 1989, [https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/9/20/4c021687-98f9-4727-9e8b-836e0bc1f6fb/publishable\\_en.pdf](https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/9/20/4c021687-98f9-4727-9e8b-836e0bc1f6fb/publishable_en.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

years in 1994 the new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) was signed in the island of Corfu between the Russian Federation and the European Union. The ratification of the Agreement needed three years and entered into force on 1 December 1997. At the end of the XX and the beginning of the XXI century, this agreement became the legal foundation for the comprehensive development of Russia-EU cooperation in three main spheres:

- political dialogue;
- free trade area and development of economic relations and promotion of investments;
- culture and education.

The PCA was quite general in its contents. Therefore, the meaning of "partnership" concerns:

- strengthening the political and economic freedoms which constitute the basis of the partnership<sup>11</sup>,
- promoting international peace and security as well as the peaceful settlement of disputes and the cooperation in the framework of the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and other fora<sup>12</sup>,
- the respect for democratic principles and human rights as defined in particular in the Helsinki Final Act<sup>13</sup> (1975) and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe<sup>14</sup> (1990) underpins the internal and external policies of the Parties and constitutes an essential element of the partnership of this Agreement<sup>15</sup>.

The initial duration of PCA was ten years and it has been automatically extended beyond 2007 on an annual basis. The PCA proclaimed a broad program of economic cooperation, covering more than 30 areas, including entrepreneurship, investment, science and technology, agriculture and energy. PCA promotes the development of cultural interaction in order to strengthen ties between people through the free exchange of information, a mutual study of languages and cultures, and access to cultural property.

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<sup>11</sup> Partnership and Cooperation Agreement Russia-EU, 1 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:70f7046b-4dca-476f-a80a-8438fe467bbb.0010.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:70f7046b-4dca-476f-a80a-8438fe467bbb.0010.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Conference on Security and Co-operation In Europe Final Act, Helsinki 1975 <https://www.osce.org/helsinki-final-act?download=true>

<sup>14</sup> Charter of Paris for a New Europe, Paris 1990 <https://www.osce.org/mc/39516?download=true>

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 2.

*The institutional system of cooperation between Russia and the EU*<sup>16</sup>

- Summits at the highest level (twice a year) in Russia and Brussels (according to a practice established after the Lisbon treaty came into force on 1st December 2009 and before the Lisbon treaty – in the EU member state holding the Presidency of the Council). At the summits, the President and Ministers responsible for specific areas of cooperation with the European Union represent Russia. The President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy represent the European Union;

- The Russia-EU Council (meetings in the format Government of Russia - European Commission) meets annually or when required;

- Permanent Partnership Council (PPC, in the format of line ministries), created in 2003 instead of the Cooperation Council (in the format of foreign ministers meetings);

- Senior Officials Collaboration Committee that Assists PPC;

- Political dialogue at the level of ministers of foreign affairs and senior officials;

- 18 industry dialogues based on 2005 roadmaps;

- Parliamentary Cooperation Committee;

Other mechanisms also exist, such as meetings of senior Russian-EU officials, various diplomatic channels, expert meetings and consultations.

Business relations are carried out based on the Russia-EU Round Table of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs.

In 2014, the work of most cooperation structures was frozen due to a sharp aggravation of relations. Russia and the EU have held a total of 32 summits, until the last (28 January 2014).

*Common Strategy.*- After the first step in creation the PCA, the parties decided to move on as the initial document was very general and needed several specifications. The “Common strategy” of the European Union concerning Russia was approved at a session of the European Council on 3-4 June 1999 in Cologne. It followed the Implementation of the Treaty of Amsterdam. In the Common Strategy, the EU invited Russia to establish strategic partnership relations to provide an inter-pillar policy and coherence with the

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<sup>16</sup> European External Actions Service “[The European Union and the Russian Federation. Political relations](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/35939/european-union-and-russian-federation_en)”  
[https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/35939/european-union-and-russian-federation\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/35939/european-union-and-russian-federation_en)

bilateral programmes of EU members: «The European Council decided on a common strategy<sup>17</sup> of the European Union on Russia. This first common strategy would strengthen the strategic partnership between Russia and the European Union, which is crucial to maintain peace and security in Europe and beyond and to meet common European challenges»<sup>18</sup>. The Common Strategy long-term goals were: the formation of a common free trade zone with the prospect of Russia's integration into the European economic space, as well as close cooperation between the parties to strengthen stability and security in Europe and beyond. «To this end, the European Union looks forward to working with a Russia that is increasingly open, pluralistic, democratic and stable and is governed by the rule of law, underpinning a prosperous market economy. This cooperation strengthens the partnership between the European Union and Russia, giving it a horizon extending far into the next century»<sup>19</sup>. At the Russia-EU Summit in Helsinki (22nd October 1999) Russian Federation proposed «Medium-term Strategy for Development of Relations between the Russian Federation and the European Union in 2000 – 2010»<sup>20</sup>. The main objectives of the Medium Term Strategy were «to ensure national interests and increase the role and authority of Russia in Europe and the world by creating a reliable pan-European system of collective security, attracting the economic potential and managerial experience of the European Union to promote the development of a socially-oriented market economy in Russia, based on the principles of fair competition, and the further construction of a democratic state of law». The Medium-Term Strategy «involves building a united Europe without dividing lines, pursuing a course towards an interconnected and balanced strengthening of the positions of Russia and the European Union within the framework of the world community of the XXI century». At that time there were many rumors about the possibility of Russia to join European Union, but the document determined that Russia, as a Eurasian state located on two continents, Europe and Asia, could not join the European Union. Even

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<sup>17</sup> Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia  
<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/38943c06-7e5d-4ca3-acc3-c5154bd9c04e/language-en>.

<sup>18</sup> Cologne European Council, 3-4 June 1999  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/kol1\\_en.htm#V](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/kol1_en.htm#V).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Medium Term Strategy between the Russian Federation and the European Union (2000 – 2010) [https://mgimo.ru/files2/y11\\_2013/243404/4.4.strategy\\_russia\\_relations\\_eu.htm](https://mgimo.ru/files2/y11_2013/243404/4.4.strategy_russia_relations_eu.htm).

if the two documents<sup>21</sup> seemed to be similar, there were some differences: Brussels proposed to continue the policy of promoting the economic and political transformation of Russia while Moscow sought equal cooperation to achieve mutually beneficial goals. The main objective of the strategies was to guide relations between Russia and the EU from the crisis in 1998-1999 after the economic default in Russia, the war in Yugoslavia and the accession to NATO of Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic, the first three countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Further cooperation developed slowly due to the military operations in Chechnya (between the 90s and 2000), but in 2000 the relations started to develop even more intensely. The new Foreign Policy Concept approved in 2000 by the Russian Government showed that cooperation with the European Union was one of the main priorities for Russia.

After the terrorist attack on 11th September 2001 it became clear that a *rapprochement* with the West was a priority for Russian foreign policy. In 2001, in the German Bundestag 2001 Vladimir Putin underlined that «Europe will reinforce its reputation of a strong and truly independent centre of world politics soundly and for a long time if it succeeds in bringing together its potential and that of Russia, including its human, territorial and natural resources and its economic, cultural and defense potential»<sup>22</sup>. There was a concept of Greater Europe (a Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok) proposed for the first time. Russian interests in cooperation with Europe were based on the need to create a pan-European security system, resolve local conflicts in Europe, manage EU dominance in Russia's foreign economic relations and develop a common approach on global key issues. The EU instead saw Russia as a major global player, largest neighbour, largest energy provider, a big market for European goods, and a significant influencer on post-Soviet countries<sup>23</sup>. The European Union and Russia strived to counter international terrorism. On 3rd October 2001, at the Russia-EU summit, the fight against international terrorism was included in the area of security and defense cooperation, which was later implemented in the form of consultations with the EU Political and Security Committee (PSC). But the potential of

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<sup>21</sup> The Common Strategy and the Medium-Term Strategy for Development of Relations between the Russian Federation and the European Union in 2000-2010.

<sup>22</sup> V. PUTIN, Speech in the Bundestag, 25 September 2001 <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21340>.

<sup>23</sup> European Integration. Aspect Press, 2017, 532.

cooperation in this area was not fully exploited because Russia observed that the restored cooperation Russia- NATO and the creation of the Russia-NATO Council began to develop better than between Russia and the EU. According to the adopted Seville formula (June 2002), Russia had the opportunity, like any third party, to participate in EU anti-crisis operations only under EU leadership and command, but not as an equal partner. This provided more skepticism in the relations. The military campaign launched by the United States in Iraq in 2003, despite the objections of some European states (primarily Germany and France), further strengthened in Russia the skepticism of the EU as an influential political partner. Nevertheless, the years 2000 – 2005 were characterized by significant measures implemented by Russia and EU in strengthening cooperation, trade and economics: in 1998 the Agreement on trade in textile products was signed<sup>24</sup>; in 1999 the “Memorandum of understanding on industrial cooperation in the energy sector”<sup>25</sup> and the “Council Joint Action on of establishing a programme for non-proliferation and Disarmament in the Russian Federation”<sup>26</sup> were adopted; in 2000 the “Action plan on common action on combating organized crime started to be implemented”<sup>27</sup>; in 2000 and 2003 the “Agreement on cooperation in science and technology”<sup>28</sup> was signed. But during these years also some controversial issues arose, like trade disputes, the Yukos case<sup>29</sup>, problems concerning minority rights in Baltic countries and disagreements on Kosovo. There were many misunderstandings in the case of Central

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<sup>24</sup> Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on trade in textile products. Official Journal L 169, 15/06/1998 p. 0002 – 0027 [https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/agreement\\_on\\_trade\\_in\\_textile\\_products\\_1998\\_english.pdf](https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/agreement_on_trade_in_textile_products_1998_english.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Memorandum of Understanding on Industrial Cooperation in the Energy Sector between the Ministry for Fuel and Energy of the Russian Federation and the European Commission, Moscow, 11.02.1999 [https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/memorandum\\_on\\_industrial\\_cooperation\\_in\\_energy\\_sector\\_1999\\_english.pdf](https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/memorandum_on_industrial_cooperation_in_energy_sector_1999_english.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Council Joint Action of 17.12.1999 establishing a European Union Cooperation Programme for Non-proliferation and Disarmament in the Russian Federation [https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/joint\\_action\\_plan\\_1999\\_english.pdf](https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/joint_action_plan_1999_english.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Memorandum of Understanding on Industrial Cooperation in the Energy Sector between the Ministry for Fuel and Energy of the Russian Federation and the European Commission, Moscow, 11.02.1999 [https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/memorandum\\_on\\_industrial\\_cooperation\\_in\\_energy\\_sector\\_1999\\_english.pdf](https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/memorandum_on_industrial_cooperation_in_energy_sector_1999_english.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the European Union [https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/agreement\\_on\\_science\\_and\\_technology\\_2000\\_english.pdf](https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/agreement_on_science_and_technology_2000_english.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Case of OAO Neftyanaya Kompaniya Yukos v. Russia, Strasbourg 20.09.2011 <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-106308%22%5D%7D>

and Eastern European countries joining the European Union. Russia emphasized its concern on several occasions. At the St. Petersburg Summit in May 2003, the EU and Russia agreed to strengthen their cooperation by creating in the long-term four “Common spaces” in the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

On 7th May 2005 on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany, Putin wrote an article: «I am deeply convinced: united Greater Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, and all the way to the Pacific Ocean, the existence of which will be based on universally recognized democratic principles, offers a unique chance for all the nations of the continent, including the Russian nation. Europeans can fully rely on Russia in the pursuit of this chance for a peaceful, prosperous and dignified future, as they could in the struggle against Nazism. We also believe that Russia’s efforts to develop integration bonds with both the EU member states and the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States are a single, organic process which should lead to a considerable expansion of harmonious common spaces of security, democracy and business co-operation in this gigantic region»<sup>30</sup>.

*EU – Russia Road Maps.*- In May 2005 at 15th EU-Russia Summit in Moscow adopted several “Road maps” connected with four Common spaces between Russia and EU: *a common economic space; a common space of freedom, security and justice; a common space on external security cooperation; and a common space on research, education, and culture.*

The idea of integration was in these documents. They were not just about cooperation but aiming at the creation of four common spaces with harmonised regulatory practices and technical standards. These “spaces” were considered the main drivers for EU-Russia partnership and a way to promote practical cooperation between Russia and the EU in the long term. The main aim of the Road maps<sup>31</sup> is *the common economic space*, the purpose of which is the creation of an “open and integrated market between Russia and the EU”<sup>32</sup>. Such a market, based on common or joint rules and regulation systems,

<sup>30</sup> V. PUTIN article on 7 May 2005 in Le Figaro “Les leçons de la Victoire sur le nazizm“ <http://www.voltairenet.org/article17014.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Road Map For the Common Economic Space [https://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/policy/russia\\_eu\\_four\\_common\\_spaces-%20roadmap\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/policy/russia_eu_four_common_spaces-%20roadmap_en.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

including joint administrative practice, would become the basis for cross-border trade of goods and services and movement of individuals, like the four freedoms of the European Union.

*Common space of freedom, security and justice* included some objectives like facilitating human contacts and trips between Russia and the EU (facilitating border crossing and a possible further abolition of the visa regime) and a stronger cooperation to counter terrorism and all forms of organized crime, including the development of judicial cooperation.

*Common space on external security cooperation* concerns the foreign policy cooperation of Russia and the EU. They share responsibility for maintaining international stability and order based on effective multilateralism. The Road map emphasized the equality of the parties. The common space includes the sphere of "old threats" and "new challenges", such as terrorism, national and religious extremism, drug trafficking and other similar issues.

*Common space on research, education, and culture* has the goal of developing cooperation, in particular through a wide range of exchange programs, like the participation of Russian scientists in European scientific and technological development programs. Such programs are designed to increase economic and intellectual potential and to develop contacts between people.

The road maps provided a common ground for the exchange of information, consultations and opportunities for convergence of legislation and the development of international agreements; 13 sectoral dialogues were established to implement the road maps, mainly in the field of economy. The dialogues are run by the competent ministries and departments. Besides, officials, experts and businessmen can be also involved in the working structures. Russia-EU scientific and technological cooperation is self-standing, having a separate status. This "special" field is based on the Agreement between the "Government of the Russian Federation and the European Community on Cooperation in Science and Technology" of 16th November 2000<sup>33</sup>. Cooperation in the field of veterinary and phytosanitary measures is also developing without being formalized as a dialogue.

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<sup>33</sup> Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the European Union. Sectoral dialogues <https://russiaeu.ru/en/sectoral-dialogues>.

Sectoral dialogues<sup>34</sup>:

1. *Energy dialogue*
2. *Transport dialogue*
3. *Regulatory dialogue*
4. *Dialogue on Industrial and Enterprise policy*
5. *Dialogue on information society.*
6. *Dialogue on space cooperation*
7. *Dialogue on agriculture*
8. *Environmental dialogue*
9. *Dialogue on financial and macroeconomic policy*
10. *Dialogue on regional policy*
11. *Dialogue on fisheries*
12. *Dialogue on health*
13. *Dialogue on Consumer Rights Protection.*

The use of these “dialogues” format was considered the most effective to avoid politicization of discussions and allow this framework to continue even in the case of the worsening of the political climate. Through the years, the most effective dialogues have been on space, customs regulation, trans-border cooperation, sanitary and phytosanitary measures. The EU enlargement in 2004, 2007 and 2013 brought Russia and the EU geographically even closer, increasing their interdependence, and highlighting the further need to step up cooperation in all areas. There were many changes in both Russia and the EU, like the foundation of a market economy, and a new public administration system in Russia, the EU enlargement and new integration processes. Russia-EU relations intensified significantly during these years. New challenges, technological progress, globalization and the rapid growth of developing countries, especially China required changes in the Agreement. The PCA needed an upgrade, and in 2004 Russia suggested to open a negotiation on a new document. An upgraded PCA was also necessary to reflect the will of Russia to join the WTO, to increase economic relations and cooperation.

*New Basic Agreement.*- At the following Russia-EU Summit in London in October 2005, the Russian and EU leaders reached a political agreement to conclude a New Basic Agreement (NBA), replacing the existing Partnership Cooperation Agreement (PCA) of

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

1994. However, the negotiations slowed down, because Member states like Poland and later Lithuania vetoed the start of negotiations, trying to solve their bilateral problems with Russia (for instance, the embargo on meat imports from Poland and the cessation of oil supplies to the Mazeikiai oil refinery, in Lithuania).

After the enlargement of the European Union to ten central and east European Member States, tensions increased and pressure began to surface between EU and Russia, fuelled by new EU-members. They wanted to include in the EU geopolitical decisions also their points of view, trying not only to distance themselves from Russia and slowing down the *rapprochement* between the old competitors. There was internal disagreement inside Europe, and the Polish-Baltic issue arose. Increasing barriers in negotiations were added even when parties decided to move in the direction of the new four road maps. The new EU members began to take a stronger position criticizing Russia.

The negotiations about the NBA started only in July 2008 during the Summit in Khanty-Mansiysk. Twelve negotiation rounds took place, and two-third of the Agreement was negotiated.

But the parties had a different vision on several issues<sup>35</sup>:

- format of the agreement - whether all aspects of cooperation will be noted down or whether the NBA will be a short document maybe sided by sectorial agreements
- understanding of the core values of democracy
- EU-Russia Policy in Cross-Border cooperation with countries bordering Russia
- energy cooperation strategy and its rules

At the end of 2010 the negotiations stopped because no progress was made in the field of energy, tariffs and regulatory content of the "WTO+" regime, harmonisation of technical standards and certification procedures, competition policy, public procurement regime, and government support rules. At an extraordinary meeting on 6th March 2014 leaders of the EU Member States decided to suspend bilateral talks with Russia on the New Agreement in connection with the situation in Ukraine. But it was possible to trace the deterioration of relations between Russia and EU from the second half of the 2000s. Sharp disagreements on European security created an unfavorable context, fuelled by controversial initiatives like plans to expand NATO into the CIS, a project to deploy American missile defense

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<sup>35</sup> European Integration. Aspect Press, 2017, 537.

systems in Europe, a stalemate on the adapted CFE Treaty<sup>36</sup>, recognition of Kosovo's independence.

*NATO Enlargement and EU-Russian relations*

There are many theories about NATO enlargement as a natural process. Still, even in 1997 when Primakov was negotiating about the new Russia-NATO Agreement, he reminded that in 1990, after the fall of the Berlin wall, during the negotiations about the future of the USSR, Europe and NATO relations, assurances were given to Russia that NATO would not expand to the East. This approach was shared by some important EU leaders. Helmut Kohl, for instance, was against the eastern expansion of NATO: «We believe that NATO should not expand its scope. A reasonable settlement must be found here. I correctly understand the security interests of the Soviet Union and I am aware that you, Mr General Secretary [Gorbachev], and the Soviet leadership will have to explain what is happening to the population of the USSR. It is one thing when we speak, and another thing when ordinary people speak. They remember the fate of their fathers and brothers»<sup>37</sup>. In 1991, during a visit to the USSR, British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd announced that NATO had no plans to involve the countries of Eastern and Central Europe in the North Atlantic Treaty, in any form<sup>38</sup>. During the negotiations Francois Mitterrand also underlined his concerns about the former members of the Warsaw Pact and their possible inclusion in the Atlantic Alliance<sup>39</sup>.

Despite several concerns of some Member states, no formal conclusions were taken concerning NATO expansion.

Vladimir Putin's speech in Germany on 10th February 2007 at the Munich Security Conference underlined that according to the Russian foreign policy strategy Russia under specific circumstances could be a partner of Europe, but only «if Europe ensures non-interference in internal affairs and recognizes the specifics of Russia's internal political development, takes into account the country's interests in strategically important issues of international relations,

<sup>36</sup> Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe <https://www.osce.org/library/14087>.

<sup>37</sup> Record of the conversation of M. Gorbachev with German Chancellor G. Kohl 02.10.1990.

<sup>38</sup> Y. PRIMAKOV, "Meeting at the crossroads/ Yevgeny Primakov", Centropoligraph, 2018, 130-131.

<sup>39</sup> Record of the conversation between M. Gorbachev and French President F. Mitterrand on 05.06.1991.

including its relationship with post-Soviet states»<sup>40</sup>. In 2008 a bitter crisis in the Caucasus began when on the 8th August Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili ordered the deployment of Georgian troops in South Ossetia. Despite the mediation of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, the European Union did not discuss this issue bilaterally with Russia. In January 2009, there was a gas transit crisis related with some delayed payments made by the Ukrainian government. The European Union, frightened by this possible lack of gas, intensified its policy of diversifying suppliers and pushed for a reform of the gas market (for instance the third energy package<sup>41</sup> entered into force in September 2009); the EU also tightened its long-term regulatory pressure on Gazprom, the main exporter of gas in Russia. The crisis between Russia and Europe was increasing for many reasons; besides the confrontation in Georgia, the clash about gas and other issues, Russia began to accuse the EU to interfere with its national sovereignty and to exploit human rights for exerting political pressure. Russia criticized other European actions during the so called "Arab Spring", and the interference of some countries in the Libyan conflict (based on a "broad interpretation" of the UN Security Council resolution) and in the emerging Syrian war between Bashar al-Assad and his rivals.

*Partnership for Modernization.*- The 25th EU-Russia summit in Rostov-on-Don on 31st May – 1st June 2010 announced the launch of the Partnership for Modernization (P4M) initiative to promote economic and institutional reforms between Russia and the EU, with due respect for democracy and the rule of law and to enhance growth and raise competitiveness, building on the four Common Spaces. The Joint Statement at the end of the conference pointed out the commitment of Russia and the EU to a joint search for answers to the most relevant geopolitical challenges, as well as their will in strengthening their trade and economic partnership.<sup>42</sup> Regarding the P4M initiative José Manuel Barroso, then President of the European Commission, remarked: «this Partnership is a shared modernization agenda to advance our economies and bring our citizens closer together. This

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<sup>40</sup> V. Putin's Statement at Munich Security Conference, 10 February 2007 <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>.

<sup>41</sup> Third energy package <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/markets-and-consumers/market-legislation/third-energy-package>.

<sup>42</sup> EU and Russia launch new partnership for modernization, Brussels 1 June 2010 [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_10\\_649](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_10_649).

ambitious venture will also contribute to the global recovery and stronger international economic governance»<sup>43</sup>. The Partnership for Modernization set up several initiatives like investment, innovation, small and medium-sized businesses development, technical regulations and standards harmonization, intellectual property protection, energy efficiency, judicial system effectiveness, fighting corruption, and strengthening dialogue with civil society<sup>44</sup>. A series of regular dialogues should have followed the single negotiation issues. However, the concept had several drawbacks: there were too many priorities and too many ongoing projects. Among the few concrete results, it could be noted the adoption of an Energy roadmap 2050, some small initiatives regarding judicial cooperation and the launch of a project in Russia to protect the rights of entrepreneurs from corruption.

*EU and Russian politics regarding the CIS space.*- In the beginning of 2010 CIS countries became the arena of geopolitical confrontation between Russia and the EU. The European Union considered the emergence of many new states in this region as an opportunity for spreading democratization: a weaker Russian influence would have been beneficial for democracy. The actions of the EU and especially some member states during the “Orange Revolutions” in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004) were perceived in Moscow as Western-led geopolitical offensive against Russia aimed at undermining Russia’s position in the CIS area. After the “Orange Revolutions”, the EU presence in the region has fundamentally increased through many activities that Moscow considered anti-Russian. EU policies like the European Neighborhood Policy (2004), and then the Eastern Partnership (2008), aimed not only at transforming the countries but also at strengthening relations with Brussels were openly conflicting with the interests of Russia. Moscow repeatedly explained that Russia’s interests in the region were naturally justified by historical and cultural proximity, human contacts, a high level of economic cooperation, and the need to respond to common security threats. When Russia, with several initiatives, tried to counter this European presence, the European

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Joint Statement on the Partnership for Modernisation EU-Russia Summit, 31.05-1.06.2010

[https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/2010.06.01\\_Joint\\_statement\\_on\\_PforM\\_English.pdf](https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/2010.06.01_Joint_statement_on_PforM_English.pdf)

Union began to speculate on Russia's imperial ambitions in the region.

Russia needed her own tool of economic integration to strengthen the partnership with former USSR countries due to the weakness of the CIS framework. Following an idea of Eurasian integration announced by the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev in 1994, Russia began to develop the concept of a new organization to fill the power vacuum in its neighbourhood while countering EU and extra-EU influence close to its borders. Bilateral relations of Russia with Belarus and Kazakhstan laid the foundation for an "Eurasian Alliance", proclaimed in 2009 and formally established in 2010 under the name of Eurasian Customs Union. This organization was soon followed, in 2014-2015 by the more structured Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)<sup>45</sup> which aims to establish a common internal market, free movement of goods, services, persons and capital between Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. In 2008 the EU presented the Eastern Partnership programme, (launched in 2009) and declared its incompatibility with Eurasian integration. But despite this position, there has been an exception: Armenia joined the EAEU in 2015 but signed a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the European Union in 2017, showing that it could be member of both integration processes<sup>46</sup>. Ukrainian case is different and more complicated. Due to the industrial and economic connections between Moscow and Kiev, Russia suggested multilateral negotiations with the EU about Ukraine, but the EU ignored this idea continuing a separate path of economic agreement with Ukraine; the following crisis, in 2014, slowed and then froze other possible ways of cooperation. But the European "expansion" towards the CIS countries is still limited by the inability of the EU to offer these countries a full membership in the Union, beside the different perceptions in fields like competition or opening of the markets. The EU did not recognize the EAEU pointing out that it was not a proper organization but a geopolitical instrument to consolidate Russia's post-Soviet sphere of influence. The European Union stresses the dominance of protectionism in the Eurasian market and underlines the fact that Belarus

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<sup>45</sup> Eurasian Economic Union <http://www.eaeunion.org/?lang=en#about-history>.

<sup>46</sup> EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/armenia\\_en/37967/EU-Armenia%20Comprehensive%20and%20Enhanced%20Partnership%20Agreement%20\(CEPA\)](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/armenia_en/37967/EU-Armenia%20Comprehensive%20and%20Enhanced%20Partnership%20Agreement%20(CEPA)).

is not a member of WTO. The EU also declines to recognise the EAEU as a legitimate partner until Russia meets its commitments under the Minsk agreements to stop the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Following Primakov's approach of geographical diversification of international cooperation, Sergey Lavrov, Minister of foreign affairs of Russia since 2004, underlined in a recent interview that Russia «sees the European Union as one of the centres of the multipolar world [...] EU-EAEU cooperation can become an economic basis for EU members to join this Partnership. Aligning the potentials of the two major regional markets and harmonising their trade and investment regimes will strengthen the positions of all those involved in global trade. Importantly, this will also help in the future to avoid likely situations, where our “common neighbours” will again be artificially faced with a primitive choice and have to decide whether they are with the EU or Russia»<sup>47</sup>.

#### UKRAINIAN CRISIS

“The European Union's enthusiastic support for the opposition Ukrainian forces that later took power was predetermined mainly by the desire to use Ukraine as a field of rapprochement with the Bush administration. Does the EU need again Russia as a common enemy?”<sup>48</sup>

*Evgeniy Primakov*

The Ukrainian crisis in autumn 2013 revealed all the hidden tensions between the EU and Russia. The crisis in Ukraine was a continuation of the so-called “Orange revolution” that had started earlier in 2004. The Ukrainian crisis revealed systemic defects in the European security architecture and became a reason for a severe escalation of tensions on the European soil. Active Eastern Neighbourhood policy and EU intentions of association agreements with Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine were considered as discriminating against Russian strategic interests. But despite these concerns of Moscow, the EU continued to consider Russia as a

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<sup>47</sup> Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's article “Neighbours in Europe. Russia-EU: Thirty Years of Relations”, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 18.12.2019 [https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/3960550](https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/3960550).

<sup>48</sup> E. PRIMAKOV, “Russia in 2004: the vision of the future”, Russian Newspaper, 15.01.2005 <https://rg.ru/2005/01/15/primakov.html>.

destabilizer of the regional order and an aggressive actor with its neighbours, fuelling its ambitions with "imperial" integration projects. In 2014, after the Crimean case, the EU started to accuse Russia of violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, illegal annexation of Crimea and to support the clashes in Eastern Ukraine (Donbass)<sup>49</sup>. Russia reacted accusing the European Union of supporting an armed *coup d'état* in Ukraine, violating the Ukrainian sovereignty and promoting a general destabilization of the country.

The European Union reacted to the 2014 crisis imposing sanctions against Russia<sup>50</sup>:

1. Diplomatic relations – suspension of negotiations of the New Agreement between EU and Russia, EU-Russia summits visa facilitation dialogue and most bilateral and regional cooperation programmes;

2. Individuals – Asset freeze and visa bans for 149 people and 37 entities (including separatists organisations, armed groups, and state enterprises taken over illegally on former Ukrainian soil);

3. Crimea and Sevastopol – Import ban on products without a Ukrainian origin certificate; prohibition of EU operators from offering tourist services in Crimea; total investment ban for EU companies in Crimea and ban on export to Crimea for goods and technologies related with transport, telecommunications, and energy;

4. Arms and Energy – Embargo on arms trade; export ban for dual use goods; restrictions on access to certain sensitive technologies, particularly in the oil sector;

5. Economy – Limiting access to EU capital markets for long term loans for Russian companies; stop to new operations in Russia financed by the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Russia reacted introducing countersanctions, like an embargo on food imports or some limitations to EU individuals to access Russian territory. Russia prefers to call these initiatives "unilateral restrictions" rather than sanctions, considering that sanctions could be imposed only by the UN Security Council; in any occasion Moscow underlines that sanctions are not a topic for negotiations with the EU. The Russian Federation has consistently rejected the EU accusations of the

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<sup>49</sup> EU sanctions against Russia

[https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/46624/eu-sanctions-against-russia\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/46624/eu-sanctions-against-russia_en)

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

annexation of Crimea and insists that Crimean citizens freely expressed their will at the referendum on the reunification of Crimea with Russia in 2014. Moscow stresses that there was no single death during this process, following the right to self-determination; the EU has rebuked this view affirming that the territorial integrity of Ukraine was violated. As the conflict in Eastern Ukraine began to spread, Russia denied its involvement in a “hybrid war” on Ukrainian soil and joined negotiations in Minsk to solve the issue. Despite several rounds of talks and two formats (first, the Normandy Contact Group<sup>51</sup>, second the Trilateral Contact Group<sup>52</sup>) the situation in Eastern Ukraine remains unresolved as well as the status of EU-Russia relations. In 2014, the EU canceled the EU-Russia summit and all subsequent meetings, cooperation bodies, and froze the negotiations on the New Basic Agreement. The issue of Crimea and its status is still a severe obstacle in the EU-Russia relations. The shooting down of the flight MH17 (17th June 2015) increased the pressure of European sanctions. The EU openly sustained Russia’s involvement in the shooting of the plane, refusing to consider the investigation conducted by the Russian authorities. The attempt of assassination of Sergey Skripal (former Russian military officer and double agent of the UK’s intelligence service) and his daughter on British soil (2018) further ignited the accusations between Brussels and Moscow, worsening the already complicated EU-Russia relations. In this context the EU enlarged the reach of its restrictive measures excluding Russia from the G8 and stopping Russia’s accession to the OECD and the International Energy Agency. Sanctions provoked a rapid decrease in mutual investment and trade flows. Both the EU and Russia consistently state that “business as usual” was no longer possible; from her side Russia remarks that “business as usual” is not even wanted any more. Still, there are some hopes for the normalisation of relations between the EU and Russia; recently the Russian Ambassador to the EU Vladimir Chizhov recalled that there is «a growing awareness in the EU member states of the futility of confronting Russia»<sup>53</sup>. Russia still hopes for an integration between European and Eurasian Unions, as Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov underlined in February 2020. In an interview on the Italian newspaper *La Stampa* Lavrov said that Russia

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<sup>51</sup> The Normandy contact Group is made by Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine.

<sup>52</sup> Ukraine, Russia and OSCE.

<sup>53</sup> V. CHIZHOV interview to RIA-Novosti 12.02.2020 <https://russiaeu.ru/ru/intervyu-yachizhova-ria-novosti>.

is ready for joint efforts to «promote Russia-EU cooperation on an equitable, mutually beneficial basis. We have never given up the idea of building a truly united “great Europe”, without dividing lines, which includes Russia, the EU and our neighboring municipalities. Thus, joining efforts – among other things – would contribute to the formation of an area of peace, with equal and indivisible security and broad economic cooperation from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean»<sup>54</sup>.

*Last developments in the EU and Russia foreign policy doctrines.*- On 14th March 2016 EU foreign ministers and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, agreed on five guiding principles for EU-Russia relations<sup>55</sup>: full implementation of the Minsk agreements; closer ties with Russia’s former Soviet neighbours; strengthening EU resilience to Russian threats; selective engagement with Russia on certain issues such as counter-terrorism; support for people-to-people contacts.

On June 2016, the European Union adopted “A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy”<sup>56</sup>. Beside proclaiming selective cooperation with Russia, still this country is seen as a threat to European stability and resilience of neighbours. The Global Strategy warns for Russian foreign policy and does not seem to envision a rapprochement of positions or a possible future cooperation. Moscow expects to build long-term relations with the EU based on pragmatic cooperation and real mutual interests. Russia’s comprehensive strategy for the EU is formulated in the Foreign Policy Concept adopted on 30th November 2016<sup>57</sup>. The EU is foreseen as a strategic partner for Russia (as well as in the previous Concepts).

*EU-Russia economy and trade.*- Russia and EU are very economically interdependent. Russia covers the 30% of EU need for

<sup>54</sup> S. LAVROV interview to La stampa 17.02.2020 <https://www.lastampa.it/esteri/la-stampa-in-english/2020/02/17/news/sergej-lavrov-only-the-un-can-guarantee-a-united-libya-we-need-a-new-agenda-between-russia-and-the-eu-1.38483512>.

<sup>55</sup> The EU’s Russia policy: Five guiding principles, 18.10.2016 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS\\_BRI\(2016\)589857](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2016)589857).

<sup>56</sup> Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy, June 2016, 33-34 [https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/eu-global-strategy\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/eu-global-strategy_en).

<sup>57</sup> Concept of Russia’s foreign policy, approved by the President of the Russian Federation V. Putin on November 30, 2016, Articles related with EU №30, 51, 61-69, 71, 76, 83 [https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/-/asset\\_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/2542248](https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/2542248).

energy, while Russia depends on EU technologies and investments. The European Union is still the leading trading partner for Russia (about 43% of Russia's foreign trade in 2018 was accounted for EU countries). Bilateral trade between Russia and the EU decreased in the past seven years since 2012, and Russia moved from third to fourth trading partner of the EU after the USA, China and Switzerland. Russia is the main provider of raw materials, especially oil (crude and refined) and gas, as well as metals (notably iron/steel, aluminum, nickel). Russia exports machinery, transport equipment, medicines, chemicals and other manufactured products. The main trade partners of Russia in Europe in 2018<sup>58</sup> were Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Poland, France, Finland, Great Britain and Belgium. Statistics<sup>59</sup> of Russia-EU international trade in goods show that commodity circulation between Russia and EU in 2013 was 326 billion euro, in 2016 191 billion euro, in 2017 231 billion euro, in 2018 253,5 billion euro, in 2019 249 billion euro. The data shows that the amount of trade is decreasing, and the sanctions are influencing the market.

The influence of the sanctions on EU-Russia relations were commented by Vladimir Putin in June 2019 quoting data of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund's<sup>60</sup> research: «as a result of all these restrictions, Russia has lost about \$ 50 billion over the years, starting in 2014, and the European Union lost \$ 240 billion, the United States - \$ 17 billion - we have a small trade turnover with them, - Japan - \$ 27 billion»<sup>61</sup>.

Russia is the world's largest gas exporter and competes with Saudi Arabia and the United States as the largest producer and exporter of oil. The EU, by far, is the largest trade partner of the Russian Federation and the primary consumer of Russian oil, gas, uranium and coal. Nowadays, the EU is importing more than 50% of its energy consumption. Besides politics of energy efficiency and the research on sustainable energy, the dependence on Russian imports is

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<sup>58</sup> Russian trade with European countries in 2018 [Torgovlja Rossii so stranami Evropy v 2018 g.] <https://russian-trade.com/reports-and-reviews/2019-02/torgovlya-rossii-so-stranami-evropy-v-2018-g/>.

<sup>59</sup> Eurostat. Statistic explained "Russia – EU – international trade in goods statistics" [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Russia-EU\\_%E2%80%93international\\_trade\\_in\\_goods\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Russia-EU_%E2%80%93international_trade_in_goods_statistics).

<sup>60</sup> International Monetary Fund Staff Country Reports, 2.10.2019 <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2019/08/01/Russian-Federation-2019-Article-IV-Consultation-Press-Release-Staff-Report-48549>.

<sup>61</sup> Direct Line with Vladimir Putin [Prjamaja linija s Vladimirom Putiny] 20.06.2019 <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60795>.

still very high and by 2030, some estimates of the European Commission forecast an increase in imports. The amount of Russian oil imports in Europe today are about 30% and coal 25%. According to the Russian Energy Strategy (2009), stable cooperation in the energy sector with Europe is more important for Russia than for Europe; since 2014, EU energy investments in Russia are experiencing significant difficulties. Energy cooperation is one of the main interests for Russia and EU, and the EU market is still a priority for Russia, but nowadays Moscow is also diversifying its market. In 2009 the “Sakhalin-2” project, a new liquefied gas plant, began to operate in the Russian far East. In 2009 the first phase of the “East Siberia-Pacific Ocean” pipeline was launched; in 2018-2019 “The Power of Siberia”, a pipeline connecting Russia with China was launched. Currently, this gas pipeline (Eastern route) supplies gas from the Chayandinskoye field – in Yakutia – to domestic consumers in Russia’s Far East and to China.

*Areas of ongoing cooperation.*- Beside sanctions and frozen cooperation, there are still some limited spheres for bilateral collaboration between the EU and Russia. For example, in the sphere of climate and environment there are seven Cross-Border Cooperation land-border programmes<sup>62</sup> with participation of Russia (Kolarctic, Karelia, South-East Finland-Russia, Estonia-Russia, Latvia-Russia, Lithuania-Russia and Poland-Russia). The North West regions of Russia are participating in the Interreg Baltic Sea Programme; Kaliningrad, Vologda, Petrozavodsk (in Russia) are part of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership<sup>63</sup> to combat climate change and align the sustainable development agendas. Cooperation in the field of education is a notable exception, and it is developing positively. Educational cooperation between Russia and the EU is guided by the principles of the Bologna Process. Russia remains among the leading non-EU participant countries in EU academic programmes, 9% of the European educational budget is allocated for Russia<sup>64</sup>. In 2015 – 2018 within the programme “Erasmus+”<sup>65</sup> named

<sup>62</sup> European External Actions Service “The European Union and the Russian Federation. Political relations” [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/35939/european-union-and-russian-federation\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/35939/european-union-and-russian-federation_en).

<sup>63</sup> Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership <http://ndcpartnership.org/>

<sup>64</sup> Erasmus+. Country Factsheets: Russia, January 2019 [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents/country-factsheet-russia\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents/country-factsheet-russia_en).

“International Credit Mobility” 2693 students and 3734 staff moved from EU to Russia to study and teach, and 4535 learners and 4378 staff moved from Russia to the EU.

There is also Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMDs) award, EU-funded scholarships to Master students and Jean Monnet (JM) activities aimed at developing EU studies worldwide. In 2014-2018 there were 785 applications from Russia, 115 projects were selected and there are seven networks involving partners from Russia. Other programmes, like Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions<sup>66</sup> aim at developing exchanges and cooperation between scientists and researchers, while “EU-Russia public diplomacy programme” aims at promoting cooperation among researchers, journalists and representatives of civic society.

The cooperation is ongoing in the field of science and technology<sup>67</sup>. Since 2014, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation ‘Horizon 2020’ has been the main instrument of cooperation, and Russian scientists are participating with the joint support of the Ministry of science and higher education of Russia<sup>68</sup>. Another crucial area of Russia-EU Science and Technology cooperation involves the development of global research infrastructures, including the large-scale “mega-science” projects, such as the EU X-ray Free-Electron Laser (XFEL), the Facility for Antiproton and Ion Research (FAIR) and the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER).

The civil society is another area of cooperation, but contradictions emerged as well. The EU is providing support to civil society in Russia via the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)<sup>69</sup> and Civil Society Organizations<sup>70</sup> (CSO); but Russia considers these initiatives as an interference in its internal affairs.

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Horizon 2020. Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/marie-sklodowska-curie-actions>.

<sup>67</sup> European External Actions Service “The European Union and the Russian Federation. Political relations” [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/35939/european-union-and-russian-federation\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/35939/european-union-and-russian-federation_en).

<sup>68</sup> Russia – country page, August 2019 [https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/h2020\\_localsupp\\_russia\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/h2020_localsupp_russia_en.pdf).

<sup>69</sup> European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights <https://www.euro-access.eu/programm/european-instrument-for-democracy-and-human-rights>.

<sup>70</sup> Civil Society Europe <https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/>.

Since 2012, with the so-called “Pussy Riot” case, the European Union started to express its concerns about the situation of freedom of expression and of public gatherings in Russia. Later, Russia adopted the Law on “Foreign Agents in Russia” to avoid foreign funds that significantly complicated the support of foreign donors for NGOs in Russia. Russia accused Europe of interference on its sovereignty and support of opposition forces, supplying them with grants that officially looked like projects for people with disabilities or ecological movements. After the new Law any NGO that receives foreign funding for the implementation of “political activities” had to register as a “foreign agent” or rely only domestic sources instead of external funding. In 2015 it was adopted a new law on “undesirable international organizations”, and many Western NGOs left Russia. Russia considered this Law similar, for example, to US legislation on foreign agents.

The cooperation between Russia and EU is developing in the field of migration. In 2011 a specific EU-Russia Migration Dialogue was established to discuss at expert level issues related to international protection, irregular migration, migration and development, and legal migration. The EU-Russia Readmission Agreement is combating illegal migration. Contacts are also continuing with FRONTEX<sup>71</sup>, Euro-pol, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction.

The EU and Russia hold regular expert meetings on counter-terrorism. Judicial cooperation between Russia and the EU is carried out mainly on criminal, civil and commercial matters. There is also cooperation in the field of Space, Civil protection, Crisis management.

*The vision of each other.*- General polls show that Russian society has a better attitude towards Europe than the USA and the situation is improving since the last year<sup>72</sup>. The results of the opinion poll made by Levada Centre show that the attitude towards the European Union is positive, and showed stable growth from 29% in January 2018 to 44% in January 2020, while generally negative approach steadily decreased from 33% in January 2018 to 26% in January 2020.

IN GENERAL, WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT ATTITUDE TOWARD THE EUROPEAN UNION? (*one answer*)

	Jan. 18	Feb. 19	May 19	Aug. 19	Nov. 19	Jan. 20
Very positive	3	5	4	5	7	5
Generally positive	29	37	33	45	45	44
Generally negative	33	30	30	23	24	26
Very negative	13	15	14	11	10	11
It is difficult to say	22	13	19	17	15	15

According to a 2017 study by the “Pew Research Center”, in a survey among 37 countries outside of Russia, only 21% of Polish, 26% of British and 27% of Germans perceive Russia favorably – however, a slight improvement compared to 2014, when the figures were 12%, 25% and 19% respectively. Greece is the only EU country where Russia is popular (64% in 2017)<sup>73</sup>. Among young people Russia is perceived in more favourable terms<sup>74</sup>. The EU usually tends to present a negative view of Russia, accusing Moscow and its media to spread disinformation and trying to weaken the EU cohesion. “Russia today” and “Sputnik”, for instance, are important Russian media outlet, but are labeled as “propaganda” media, even if they have many followers in Europe. The European External Action Service has created East StratCom Task Force<sup>75</sup> to fight Russian propaganda, while Russian Ministry of foreign affairs created in website a section called “Fake News - Examples of publications that contain false information about Russia”<sup>76</sup>.

*Conclusions.*- As neighbors on the same continent, Russia and the European Union should reshape their engagement to improve their relations. Primakov advocated of a main Russian focus to the East, based on a concept called “turn to the East”. This doctrine of foreign policy found its way after Primakov’s leadership in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For instance, the real development of cooperation with China and India, BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization initiatives started in the first decade of XXI century. Russia started to be the leader of the Eurasian space supporting integration processes such as the Eurasian Economic Union and today Moscow continues to play the main role in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation<sup>77</sup>. In the last years Russia restored cooperation with the Middle East, sometimes intervening directly, became a mediator in global conflicts, started to implement a policy towards Africa, Latin America and the Arctic. Russia came back as a global power when, after Primakov, the country began to follow an independent foreign policy. Common-

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<sup>73</sup> Publics Worldwide Unfavorable Toward Putin, Russia, 8  
<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2017/08/16/publics-worldwide-unfavorable-toward-putin-russia/pew-research-center-2017-08-16-views-of-russia-report/>.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> EU vs disinfo <http://euvsdisinfo.eu/>.

<sup>76</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation “Published materials that contain false information about Russia” <https://www.mid.ru/en/nedostovernie-publikacii>.

<sup>77</sup> Collective Security Treaty Organization <https://en.odkb-csto.org/>.

wealth of Independent States remains the main priority in Russian foreign policy (as Primakov declared), even if in some cases cooperation did not develop as he imagined. Cases like the conflict in Ukraine and Georgia, between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the issue of Transnistria in Moldova, political tensions in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and EU programs directed to the East and Central Asia are weakening the projection of Russia foreign power.

Russia and the EU pursue policies in line with their realities and interests, but recently there has not been a strong commitment for a deeper integration. It seems that the parties are convincing themselves that they can exist independently, but their economic interaction does not support this theory. Aspirations towards a better cooperation between Russia and the EU are challenged by geopolitical rivalries, suspicion, skepticism and regional confrontation. As members of the United Nations, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe, the EU and Russia are committed to struggle global threats and challenges, namely, terrorism, drug trafficking, organised crime, illegal migration, radicalization, ecology, health issues, and others. Restricted cooperation and continued confrontation with Russia are unlikely to improve the EU's position in the world. Russia and the EU recently had more positive examples of cooperation, for example, in the framework of maintaining a nuclear deal under the Iranian nuclear program Iran Deal – Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action JCPOA<sup>78</sup> or the participation of Russia in the Berlin Libya Conference headed by Angela Merkel in January 2020<sup>79</sup>. Emmanuel Macron has called for a "new architecture of confidence and security" in Europe that includes Russia<sup>80</sup>.

The understanding of the importance of cooperation with Russia seems to come back to the EU, especially in the field of security, even if in this area EU and Russia approaches diverge<sup>81</sup>. Another area of cooperation could be provided by the recognition of the EAEU as a

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<sup>78</sup> Munich Security Report 2020, 21  
[https://securityconference.org/assets/user\\_upload/MunichSecurityReport2020.pdf](https://securityconference.org/assets/user_upload/MunichSecurityReport2020.pdf)

<sup>79</sup> DW "Berlin Libya conference: A first step toward peace?", 19.01.2020  
<https://www.dw.com/en/berlin-libya-conference-a-first-step-toward-peace/a-52051027>.

<sup>80</sup> Politico "Macron torn between Poland and Putin" 4.02.2020  
<https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-poland-russia-moscow-policy/>.

<sup>81</sup> T. BORODACHEV, "Is EU-Russia cooperation a vital necessity or a unique opportunity?", DOI: 10.31278/1810-6374-2019-17-3-38-63, 08.10.2019  
<https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russia-and-europe-between-integration-and-diplomacy/>.

base for fostering relations between the Eurasian and the European space. EU-Russia-China cooperation can also open new opportunities within the framework of the “One Belt, One Road” program, even if the EU considers both the initiatives as a propaganda tool.

The spread of coronavirus in all the European countries could have opened a new way of cooperation, but the assistance of China and Russia to some European countries, like Italy, has been accused of being another propaganda tool<sup>82</sup>. Unfortunately, the exchange of negative comments regarding Russian assistance has fuelled other cases of “information war” and fake news on both sides: in the European press Russia seems to be a perfect “enemy” to blame. But the current pandemic is also forcing countries to reconsider bilateral and multilateral relations. There are already proposals from both sides, from Russia and some politicians in the EU, to remove all unilateral restrictive measures, except for those introduced by the UN<sup>83</sup>. Ecology, education and science are also promising global topics for cooperation. History, on the other side, is still controversial due to the memory of the Second World War; the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the conflict could have been a right moment for reconciliation but it is unlikely to bear fruits. The recent attempt of the European Parliament to compare Nazism and Stalinism<sup>84</sup> caused a great wave of indignation in Russian society. Resuming diplomatic channels (like summits) and finding new pragmatic ways to cooperate in some limited fields could be beneficial for both partners; at least this was a recent suggestion by Sergey Lavrov. In the article “Neighbours in Europe. Russia-EU: Thirty Years of Relations” for Rossiyskaya Gazeta, on 18 December 2019, Lavrov declared<sup>85</sup> «we are open to mutually beneficial, equal and pragmatic cooperation with the EU that will be in harmony with the interests of our allies and all the other Eurasian partners. Only in this way can we create a viable model of lasting relations that will meet the interests and aspirations of all

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<sup>82</sup> EU vs Disinfo “The virus to liberate us from freedom”, 19.03.2020 <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/the-virus-to-liberate-us-from-freedom/>.

<sup>83</sup> K. KOSACHEV, Council of Federation of Russia, Interfax 18 March 2020 <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/699686>.

<sup>84</sup> Resolution of the European Parliament on the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe 2019/2819(RSP) 18.09.2019 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2019-0097\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2019-0097_EN.html).

<sup>85</sup> Article “Neighbours in Europe. Russia – EU: Thirty Years of Relations” by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (published on 18 December 2019 in Rossiyskaya Gazeta). <https://russiaeu.ru/en/news/article-neighbours-europe-russia-eu-thirty-years-relations-russian-foreign-minister-sergey>.

nations on the Eurasian continent». Recalling a sentence of President Barroso in 2013 «European history and civilization would be incomplete without Russia. Yes, Russia is a European country and Russian history and civilization cannot be dissociated from Europe and the cross fertilization that happened over the centuries<sup>86</sup>». It seems that the golden age of EU-Russia relations is still a legacy of the past; but, for the development of the common space that Russia and the EU share, it would be advisable to find a way to stabilize relations and then explore new ways of cooperation.

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<sup>86</sup> International Conference materials «Russia—European Union: Potential for Partnership», Moscow, March 21, 2013, 12  
[https://russiancouncil.ru/upload/WP\\_RU\\_EU\\_8\\_eng.pdf](https://russiancouncil.ru/upload/WP_RU_EU_8_eng.pdf).