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Integration of Russia into Europe: Realistic or Superficial?

It is necessary to start with a preliminary explanatory remark. Integration as discussed below does not mean the membership of Russia in the European Union (EU). Such an option is very dim and most probably completely unreal. The term integration is used here in a wide geopolitical, social and cultural context meaning a growing interaction and interdependence between Russia and the other Europe, bringing all its parts closer to each other.

In the process of analysis a series of immediate questions arise. Should Russia be integrated into Europe? If so, why? Is it in the interests of Russia? Is it in the interests of the rest of Europe? What is the correlation between the assets and liabilities for both? What prevails? The answers to all these questions are not a hundred percent obvious. Especially because both in Europe and in Russia political forces exist which prefer to avoid such an integration.

This is not at all a new phenomenon in Russian society. For centuries the Russian elite could not agree on what would prevail in Russia's fate: its specific role and the peculiarities of its political, social and other life or its participation in Western civilization. In the 19th century the arguments between "Zapadniki" (Westerners) and Slavophiles (preachers of a specific chosen role for Russia) were often in the center of all political debates. Later, in the 20th century, there were attempts to blend both tendencies in an Eurasian movement which eventually boiled down to the idea of Russian uniqueness.

Russian leaders of the past – be they monarchs or general secretaries – wavered between these two extremes. In the Soviet Union the absorption of an ideology which was born in the West and Western technology was combined with the utmost xenophobia imposed by the ruling elite.

But in spite of arguments and disagreements still the majority of Russian society traditionally deemed itself to be a part of Europe and European culture and civilization, although the social and political structure of the Russian state (even more so of the Soviet State) had extensive, often striking dissimilarities with the European model. Still Russians were always proud of their contribution to European culture. Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Chaikovsky, Skryabin – to name only a few – always were and will be an integral part of the culture and civilization of Greater Europe and not of any other continent.

History had bound Russia with other Europe in a positive as well as in a negative sense: Russia was active an participant of both World Wars which started in Europe. The Soviet Union made a gigantic contribution to the defeat of Hitlerism. But later it was the Soviet Union which created its own zone of influence in countries of Central and Eastern Europe by imposing on them – against the will of the peoples – an alien political system.

With the end of the Cold War and the start of economic, political and social reforms in Russia the majority of society turned to the industrial democratic world in search of experience and support. This was often done overenthusiastically and carried out at the expense of Russia's national interests and its relations with other parts of our planet in the first years of the new Russia's foreign policy. The result was public disappointment and sharp criticism by the opposition (sometimes for its own political purposes). The change of course in the Russia's international relations in the mid-1990s to a more balanced "all-azimuths" approach to the outside world led to a successful foreign policy and a restoration of public support.

It is necessary to stress that all these transformations did not affect the substance of Russia's relations with Europe, particularly in the economic sphere. In the contemporary post-Cold war world, in spite of all the complexities in political and security areas, including ethnic and

other conflicts, the economic interaction between Russia and Europe plays a growing role. Traditional problems of security which preoccupied both for decades are slowly fading away. Moreover the economic fabric of this interrelationship is gaining a growing security and strategic significance.

The economic dimension of relations with the rest of Europe was historically of utmost importance for Russia. At present it is even more so. About 40-45 percent of Russian foreign trade turnover in the 1990s was concentrated in the EU (in its current 15-nation composition). It is calculated, that Russia's total annual trade with the EU increased sevenfold over the figure for the EU trade with the entire Soviet Union in the last years of its existences.¹ About half of all foreign investments in the Russian economy are European. The Russian interest in further enlarging its economic integration with Europe is quite obvious.

At present Russia and Europe are at the beginning of a new stage in their economic interdependence. On 1 December 1997 the Agreement on partnership and cooperation between Russia and the EU came into force. It is the most comprehensive of any such agreement between Russia and developed countries; it envisages more than 30 areas of joint activities.² The swiftness with which both sides started its implementation vividly demonstrates the mutuality of interests. On 27 January 1998 the main organ envisaged in

the Partnership and cooperation agreement – the Cooperation Council (at ministerial level) held its first meeting. A little later, on 22 April 1998, the Cooperation Committee, which consists of senior civil servants and carries on more permanent work, including preparation of meetings of the Cooperation Council, also started its activities. It immediately created seven sub-committees which deal with a wide spectrum of mutual interests, including trade, industry, energy, nuclear issues, ecology, science and technology, agriculture etc. The Parliamentary Cooperation Committee was also established at the meeting in Brussels on 1-3 December 1997. These quickly emerging structures assure a steadiness of this new stage of interaction between Russia and the EU.

It is true that its economic parameters are not so vivid for Europe as they are for Russia. Still, Russia by mid-1990s occupied the 6th place among the EU trade partners. But, after the present crisis is overcome the Russian market of about 150 million people will inevitably constitute a pole of attraction for all kinds of European goods.

Slowly but steadily the other mutually advantageous sphere is developing: scientific – technological – industrial cooperation in the most advanced high tech fields like space, aviation, nuclear energy etc. This has an important security dimension, because not only civil, but military-industrial actors of both sides cooperate.

Naturally economic relations of Russia with other Europe are not without problems, including serious ones. Disagreements with the European Union center around the EU's complaints about Russia's excessive protectionism and the instability of its economic and legal systems; and Russia's complaints about the EU's use of anti-dumping procedures and its reluctance to recognize Russia's economy as a market economy. But it is necessary to stress that these and other problems of such kind constitute a rather normal feature of economic life; they are solvable and are not antagonistic by nature.

An excellent example of economic interaction between Russia and Europe which proved to be of geopolitical and strategic significance is cooperation in the field of energy. Russia owns the largest explored gas resources in the world (a third of the world's total), huge oil and coal

¹ Christopher Piening: *Global Europe. The European Union in World Affairs*. Boulder-London, 1997, p. 66.

² Y. Borko/V. Zhurkin/V. Shemyatenkov (Ed.): *Evropeysky Soyuz ("European Union")*, N 6 (11), Moscow 1998, pp. 5, 7.

deposits. Europe was, is and will be one of the greatest energy consumers. It has advanced achievements in technology, in particular in the fields of safety and ecology which Russia needs. A long term mutually complementary state of affairs.

The most successful and impressive cooperation is in Soviet gas supplies to Europe which marked its 25 anniversary in 1998—the first pipeline which brought Russian gas to Germany started operating in 1973. Since then an elaborate network of pipelines was constructed bringing Russian gas to 17 European countries and raising the Russian quota in West European gas import to 36 percent and in consumption – to 19 percent.³ More than a quarter of Russian gas supplies is consumed by Germany, another quarter by France and Italy. Austria with its 5 percent occupies the 9th place. Russia is the largest gas supplier to Europe and will continue to be the major supplier in future with the completion of the newly constructed and huge Yamal – Europe gas pipeline the planned Northern Gas Pipeline System to Scandinavia and the subsea pipelines Russia -Turkey and UK – Continental Europe.⁴

Like any massive endeavor, the Europe – (Soviet) Russian gas cooperation developed as a complex system of successes, problems and difficulties. But one dimension of this interaction was always clear and stable: the supply of the Russian gas was permanently assured and never interrupted. It was, is and will be a classic example of interdependence and Russia's integration into Europe, a factor of stability both in economics and politics.

Gas is not the only sphere of energy cooperation. Though not as spectacular, the system of oil pipelines operates and is another strong and binding link between Russia and Europe. The Russian oil industry suffered enormously because of the global decline of prices. But the oil flow to Europe is steady and stable.

A comparatively new area is collaboration in nuclear energy. It covers the growing number of fields including such innovating ones as joint endeavors in the creation of new reactors for atomic power stations, where European assistance in solving safety problems is of great importance. Nowadays Russia is creating the new generation water-water reactor WWER-640 (in German: neuer Generation neuartigen Druckwasserreaktor WWER-640) in collaboration with Bayerwerk AG, Siemens AG and other German firms, with participation of French and Finnish organizations. Joint actions in nuclear energy have a productive future as another option in mutual Russian-European integration.

A very promising large-scale option is emerging in another novel sphere of energy cooperation-electricity exchange. Even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia shares with China 2nd and 3rd places (after the USA) in the production of electricity. Europe is in growing need of electricity. The European demand will most probably increase for an undetermined period of time.

The German think-tank “Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik” organized in 1998 two well attended conferences at Ebenhausen near Munich (on 30-31 January and 10-11 July) on prospects of cooperation in the field of electricity between Russia, Germany and other countries of Europe. The participants, including ministers and other high officials, experts, bankers, heads of corporations, discussed a wide range of energy cooperation topics. In “*Ebenhausener Thesen zur Elektrizitätswirtschaftlichen Kooperation zwischen Deutschland und Rußland*” they stressed: “*Stromwirtschaftliche Kooperation ist Ausdruck einer besonders sophistizierten und vertrauensvollen Zusammenarbeit, da Länder, die sich gegenseitig bedroht fühlen, zwar miteinander Handel treiben können, dies aber nicht im empfindlichen Bereich der Stromwirtschaft tun, weil hier Abhängigkeiten entstehen und Know-how-*

³ R. Vyakhirev/A. Makarov (Ed.): Strategic Development of the Russian Gas Industry, Moscow 1998, p. 108

⁴ Ibid., p. 112.

Transfer Bestandteil des Geschäfts ist... Gleichzeitig dient die Kooperation im Stromsektor dem politischen Interesse der Einbindung und Stärkung Rußlands durch die Schaffung ökonomischer Interdependenzen".⁵ One could see at the second conference (with a larger attendance than the first one) that this thesis was widely shared by the audience.

The programmes for electricity exchange which are in preparation or under discussion are awesome. In project "Strombrücke" between Russia, Belarus, Poland and Germany the first stage of the techno-economic study is completed. The "Baltic ring" project which should cover 11 countries (Scandinavia, Baltic States, Russia, Belarus, Poland and Germany), is being prepared. Plans for a "Black sea ring" and probably for a Sea – Caspian sea energy system are being analysed.⁶ Other ideas go further, like the proposal to connect the electric systems of Europe, Russia and North America by a line built over the Bering strait and thus create in future the global electric network.⁷ The importance of energy cooperation is obvious and cannot be exaggerated. But it is not completely exceptional. Russia is a source of various kinds of natural resources. Even after it overcomes its crises, restores itself as a modern industrial state and increases its industrial exports, it will still continue to be an indispensable supplier of important minerals for the rest of Europe.

The end of the Cold war and the start of economic and political reforms in Russia broadened prospects for international political and security cooperation, Russia's participation in joint European endeavors, pan-European structures and their varying activities.

Russia from the very beginning took a very energetic (maybe sometimes too energetic) role in the OSCE, which by all-European consensus is an important actor in the system of interlocking structures and institutions in the Euro-Atlantic space. Although the Soviet and later Russian attempts to turn the CSCE-OSCE into the paramount Euro-Atlantic body failed due to the resistance of most of the members of that organization.

With the development of a more realistic approach to the potential and role of the OSCE, the road was paved for a quite pragmatic cooperation. The result were numerous OSCE missions undertaken in cooperation with the UN and the Council of Europe in various parts of the OSCE space. These missions had a varying degree of success but were generally quite effective. Russia is an active supporter and participant of such activities. It will continue to insist that all military operations be undertaken only under the mandate of the UN or the OSCE. Probably the importance of the OSCE mandate will even grow with time.

Unfortunately the general public usually overlooks the significance of the particular aspect of the OSCE – its conceptual role in formulating rules and political laws for European security (similarly the same public generally underestimates very important conceptual and pragmatic activities of the Vienna OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation). This "lawmaking" dimension of the OSCE was pushed to the forefront once again at the Lisbon summit of the organization (2-3 December 1996), which adopted the Declaration on a common and comprehensive security model for Europe for the 21st century. Russia was initially one of the principal champions of the idea of the European Security Charter, which should contain the renewed legal foundations of the security system for the OSCE area, a kind of Helsinki Final Act for the 21st century. It should contain among other elements a system of provisions aimed at coordinating the functions of the existing European and Euro-Atlantic organizations and institutions.

⁵ Andrei Kuxenko (Hg.), Anforderungen für ein integriertes Europa: Die deutsch-russische Kooperation im Elektrizitätssektor, Ebenhausen 1998, S. 9.

⁶ Ebd., S. 100f.

⁷ Rudolf Botzian/Andrei Kuxenko/Friedemann Müller/Klaus Schröder: Transformation und Globalisierungsdruck in Europa, Ebenhausen 1998, S. 11.

Russia contributed very seriously to the meeting of the Council of Ministers of the OSCE held in Copenhagen on 18-19 December 1997. The Ministerial Meeting adopted the guidelines of the Document – Charter on European Security and stressed in its decision that it is aimed at “contributing to a common security space within the OSCE area”.⁸ The meeting worked on an essential element of the future Document-Charter-the Platform for Co-operative security. It agreed on a Common Concept for the Development of Cooperation between Mutually Reinforcing Institutions which lays down the foundation for the Platform for Cooperative Security. These continuous conceptual efforts constitute an important intellectual, political and legal framework for activities aimed at strengthening European security in the 21st century.

One may note that in spite of words of recognition of the OSCE’s role expressed by all major European and Euro-Atlantic bodies this organization still lacks the proper capabilities for becoming a kind of “umbrella” structure, as was repeatedly proposed by the former Soviet Union and then by Russia in the first years of its independent existence. Later, a more pragmatic attitude emerged in Europe recognizing the OSCE as one of the important interconnected Euro-Atlantic bodies. Probably in future Russia will attribute more importance to the OSCE than the other members of the organization, at least some of them. In any case the OSCE will definitely be for Russia both a symbol and a practical means of its integration into the European political and security space.

One particular element of this space which, absolutely cannot exist without Russia is the CFE Treaty which, in spite of all the problems, complexities and tiresome negotiations, led to elimination from the European scene of about 60.000 weapon systems. When it is adopted after the successful conclusion of negotiations which started on 21 January 1997 in Vienna, the Treaty will be assured a long life as one of the pillars of, European security.

It was noted above that the cooperation Russia - EU played a significant role in the economic integration of Russia into Europe. But the Partnership and Cooperation agreement, which started working on 1 December 1997, has quite a noticeable political dimension. Actually it starts with a chapter devoted to political relations which states that the political dialogue “shall bring about an increasing convergence of positions on international issues of mutual concern thus increasing security and stability”.⁹ The vitality of the Agreement is confirmed by the fact that the EU-Russian summits it envisaged started long before the Agreement came into force (6-7 September 1995 and 3 March 1997).

The Cooperation Council established in accordance with the Agreement at its first meeting at foreign ministers level on 27 January 1998 adopted an extensive joint Work Programme which devotes a lot of attention to political and security issues. In the final communiqué the Council stressed that “the European Union and Russia are strategic partners for peace, stability, freedom and prosperity in Europe and that they share a responsibility for the future of the continent and beyond”.¹⁰ One could recognize with a good degree of certainty that political and security cooperation between Russia and the EU will develop to mutual advantage.

It seems that a large-scale political interaction is mostly a phenomenon of the future. Partly because of Russian crises, partly because a common foreign and security policy (CFSP) of the

⁸ “The Helsinki Monitor”, The Hague, 2/1998, p. 61.

⁹ Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation. Full text signed in Corfu on 24 June 1994 by the European Union and the Russian Federation. Delegation of the European Commission in Moscow, no date, p. 6.

¹⁰ Dmitry Danilov/Stephan De Spiegeleire: From Decoupling to Recoupling. A new security relationship between Russia and Western Europe? A study by the Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Institute for Security Studies of Western European Union. Chaillot Paper 31. Paris 1998, pp. 14-15.

EU is being established with great difficulty. Though the Amsterdam Treaty introduced some innovations into CFSP the accomplishment was far from what was expected.

The relationship between Russia and the Western European Union (WEU) develops, but it has a broad unutilized potential as well. The practical achievements include the supply of Russian satellite imagery to the WEU Satellite Centre in Torrejon, an agreement on the provision of Russian long-haul air transport capabilities to the WEU for use in the Union's operations, mutual analysis of the European security situation. But prospects are much wider.

The joint study undertaken by the Institute of Europe, of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Institute for Security Studies of the WEU proposes a range of possible new ventures, like a new framework – Forum of Consultation, on the lines of the forum which existed between the WEU and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, between the Petersburg WEU Council (19 June 1992) and the Luxemburg WEU Council (9 May 1994) – it was abolished, because nine CEE countries were offered to become Associate Partners of WEU: In addition, cooperation in developing tactical ballistic missile defense; joint exercises; cooperative initiatives in dealing with “new risks”.

A novel idea in the field of operational cooperation is a possibility of future Russian participation in the Petersburg-type missions the tasks of which were defined by the WEU Council on 19 June 1992 at Petersburg and recently re-confirmed by the EU in the Amsterdam Treaty (2 October 1997): “Humanitarian and rescue tasks, peace-keeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis-management, including peace making”.¹¹ Such missions may be “of the NATO CJTF type (i.e. with Russian participation in an operation under WEU's “political control and strategic guidance” with the inclusion of NATO assets and capabilities), an operation led by a WEU country, or an autonomous WEU operation”.¹² Such new ideas are mostly envisaged for the future but it is significant that they clearly foresee the increase of interaction and interdependence.

Political relations between Russia on the one hand and the EU and the WEU on the other are developing evenly, though such deeds like the war in Chechnya are able to freeze them. In conventional conditions problems arise periodically in the economic and not in the political sphere. There exists an evident difference between Russia's attitude to the enlargement of the EU and NATO. Politically Moscow reacted rather quietly to the EU plans of accepting the CEE countries. It confirms once more the stability and durability of the EU- and WEU-Russia interaction and in a larger sense the degree of Russia's integration into Europe.

The political battle around NATO's expansion to the East constitutes the largest and most prolonged crisis of the post-Cold war period in relations between Russia and the West, including the European members of NATO. The opposition to NATO enlargement is based practically on a consensus in the Russian society, which expects, that the expansion will result in the new division of Europe, or squeezing Russia out of Europe. The protracted negotiations which led on 27 May 1997 to the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation were tortuous and tiresome.

In the summer of 1998 both sides were evaluating the results of this compromise. In the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC) created in accordance with the Founding Act in the first year a series of important problems were dealt with jointly: nuclear weapons including doctrine strategy and nuclear security, peace-keeping, measures against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, military doctrines, budget and programs of infrastructure

¹¹ European Union. The Treaty of Amsterdam. Luxembourg 1997, p. 126.

¹² Op. cit., p. 46.

development. An individual program of partnership with Russia in the framework of PFP is also materializing. Military liaison missions are being prepared on the basis of mutuality.

At the session of the PJC held in Luxembourg on 28 May 1998 both sides adhered to a balanced positive assessment. In a joint statement foreign ministers of NATO and Russia pointed out that they “stress qualitatively new relations started by the signing of the Founding Act”.¹³ Russian Foreign Minister Evgeny Primakov noted that there is “a very large potential for interaction which should be used in the interests of stability in the Euro-Atlantic region”.¹⁴ At the same time he confirmed Russia’s objections against NATO’s enlargement.

The enlargement, especially its “open-ended” character, continues to worry Russia and the Russian society. It creates needless strains in relations between Russia and the West at a time when interaction is needed.

This was proven by a long cooperation in peace-keeping in Bosnia where the Russian brigade is quite effectively acting as a part of the “North” division with an intricate command system (Russians fulfil only those orders which are approved by the Russian deputy commander of SFOR). The cooperation is successful and on 28 May 1998 it was agreed that it would continue after the expiration of the mandate of SFOR.

What will be the future of the ambivalent situation when on the one hand Russia develops relations with NATO, but on the other hand continues to worry about expected negative consequences of NATO’s enlargement? Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeev after stressing the negative attitude to NATO’s expansion remarked that “development of ties with NATO can, in our opinion, minimise this danger, and prevent remilitarization of inter-state relations in Europe”.¹⁵ This hope, if it materializes, may straighten up the state of affairs in European security.

Thus Russia in reality and in spite of problems and complexities is integrating into Europe more and more. In Russia itself this process is getting increasing support. A new development of the last couple of years is a growing appeal from experts and politicians to accord a higher degree of priority than at present to Russia’s relations with the rest of Europe.

These appeals are expressed in various forms: “Priority of relations with the European countries”,¹⁶ “only the European way” – a destiny for Russia,¹⁷ “gradual, thoroughly thought over and in compliance with Russian specificity, unification of Russia with Great Europe”.¹⁸ It would be premature to say that this trend is prevailing. But its emergence is symptomatic.

Summing up, it is essential to note that international life itself gives answers to the questions put in the beginning. Both Russia and Europe have extensive mutual interests in Russia’s further integration into Europe. The other well known reasons for increased cooperation in preventing and solving deadly conflicts, fighting terrorism, mafias, spread of narcotics, improving ecology – to name only a few - should not be overlooked.

¹³ Novosti NATO (=NATO’s News). Moscow, 2/1998, p. 3.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie (= Independent Military Review), Moscow, 26/1998, p. 3.

¹⁶ Kontseptsia nacional’noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii (The Concept of national security of Russian Federation). A group of authors. Moscow 1998, p. 34.

¹⁷ I.F.Maximichev: Rossiya kak sostavnaya chast obscheevropeyskogo tzivilizatsionnogo prostranstva. (=Russia as an integral part of pan-European civilizational space). In: Obschestvennye nauki i sovremennost’ (=Social sciences and contemporaneity. 6/1997, p. 95.

¹⁸ A.G. Arbatov. Rossiyskaya natsional’naya ideya i vneshnyaya politika. (Russian national idea and foreign policy). Moscow 1998, p. 57.

Russia's interaction with the rest of Europe is bound to prevent negative continental tendencies and above all the new division of Europe. It is not in the interests of Russia to land outside Europe. But it is also in the interest of Europe to have Russia pushed out of Europe and become a trouble spot from which Europe (and not only Central and Eastern but Western as well) could suffer and suffer quite seriously.

The process of growing interdependence is not limitless. It has its boundaries in several dimensions. On the one hand this process should not endanger the equilibrium, but to the contrary, increase stability. The limitations are often imposed by the objective state of affairs (e.c. crises in Russia). The limits may be interposed by policies (like the enlargement of NATO).

The system of limits is not static. It may change with time as the international system itself is develops. Both Russia and Europe have a profound common interest that these changes should be for the better.

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