

Paper Proposal

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The approach to new philosophy and a strategy of Russia-EU relations

*« Faire resurgir l'idéal, lui donner de la chair et de l'âme,
tel est bien l'impératif essentiel si nous voulons
façonner l'Europe de nos vœux les plus chers ».*
Jacques Delors

What is a Russia-EU dialogue today? We could recollect a great number of rather uncomplimentary and contradictory remarks made by Russian and European experts and politicians. Here are a few ones.

Vladimir Putin, 2009

"Let's make Europe a borderless continent really. Why are we constantly talking about human rights in general only? Let's enable people to visit each other without restraint. Let's issue realistic challenges and obtain theirs solutions"

Jose Manuel Barroso, 2007, 2009

"Russia is not a full, European-style, democracy and it is unclear whether it will become one"

"We cannot negotiate with nature. We cannot negotiate with physics. We cannot negotiate with science. I have asked my staff to cooperate closely with their Russian colleagues in order to work out the details of Russia's increased commitment on these issues"

Joschka Fischer 2009

"For 19 years, the West (America and Europe) has been putting off answering a critical strategic question: what role should post-Soviet Russia actually play globally and in the European order? Should it be treated as a difficult partner or a strategic adversary?"

Internal EU policy paper - drawn up by the Irish presidency of the EU, 2004

"Russia may be a difficult partner but the EU has to learn to speak with one voice, according to and discussed by foreign ministers on in Brussels"

Sergey Karaganov, Russian political expert, 2010¹

"As a result, the outgoing decade, just as the previous one, has been a time of missed opportunities for Russian-European relations. The parties declared their desire to establish partner relations but, in fact, have been bitter competitors and even rivals. Brussels sought to use Russia to prove its ability – although weakening – to act as a foreign-policy actor. Russia responded with retaliatory and preemptive diplomatic strikes. At a time, I used to keep count of these "victories" and "defeats." By that time, the score was 12-5 "in favor of Russia." Had anyone in Brussels engaged in such a stupid occupation, he might well have had a somewhat different result. But there is one thing I am sure of: the total score was nil to 17 for both parties. By scoring forgotten victories or suffering symbolic defeats, they both lost. Other parties lost, too."

It is really sad that Russia-EU dialogue comes down to counting economic profits and costs, political concessions and diplomatic compromises, while in fact we observe agenda getting petty and parochial.

In the meantime, we are united by the values of another rate. Sometimes it seems that discussions on civilization values sidetrack us real concrete business involving into philosophic discourse. However time elapses and our concrete business appears at the deadlock. Here we'd better stop and give the situation a second thought – answer the eternal classical questions «who is to blame and what should be done». And we again return to neglected philosophic discourse. Indeed scientific progress and breakthrough discoveries also require philosophic reconsideration relevant to the research field. In this context a society is not an exception - even on the contrary.

Russia and EU seems approaching to the point to raise these sacramental questions. Hopefully it is so and I would like to believe.

There is no need to dive into numerous failures at our concrete business, it was talked and written a lot. Some conceptual vacuum, current negotiation procedure and bureaucratic inertia turn our dialogue into sprint races. Even in case we sign and ratify a new comprehensive Russia-EU cooperation agreement – no one can guarantee that this paper will not appear as a formality.

Partners cannot hear each other, we observe lost in translation. There is more serious question – why?

It can be talked about difficulties in Russian political system, or not always coherent Putin-Medvedev duet. Equally we can discuss on the EU institutional system that is still a long way off from an ideal. Besides, disproportion of our economic cooperation, rift concerning energy dialogue, and different approaches to foreign policy issues can be mentioned. Thus we see problems along all the lines, total relation crisis, - I prefer applying a term “conceptual”, - which brings us back from concrete problems to their philosophic reconsideration.

To be more exact – who we are for each other? How much do we need each other? Let's conduct a short analysis of EU-Russia complementarity.

Russia for the EU is hardly limited by enormous resource potential while it is a source of geopolitical influence. Russia is a part of Europe geographically and politically, it has been one of the most important actors of international policy life since the 15th century.

We are united by a common culture, history and religious roots. Historical link between Russia and Europe lies in geopolitical and civilisation aspects. For the current EU Russia is the largest and the only additional external resource of geopolitical influence and economic and political subject in the future world

The EU for Russia is not only a large-scale European market and technology capacities. Historically Europe provided a powerful source of development and modernization in Russia; it has been a kind of engine of social ideas, and socio-economic life. Europe is one of the main sources of Russian civilization and identity as well as Russian social and cultural modernization. Separately from Europe, its tradition of political and social culture, humanism and respect to law and human rights Russia face a risk of demodernisation.

Now we are divided but not separate in the light of high degree of complementarity and belonging to a common civilization.

As an epigraph for my reflection I have chosen a very interesting remark of Jacques Delors who seems to be pragmatic and economist and whose name is related to the whole epoch of economic integration, l'Europe «*de donner une âme à l'Europe, une âme spirituelle et significative*»

Donner l'âme à l'Europe... *est bien l'impératif essentiel si nous voulons façonner l'Europe de nos vœux les plus chers* »

Contemporary globalization processes has degrading of cultural peculiarities as obverse case. Today visiting different countries we see the same picture – there is a unification of the contemporary civilization: the same cars and architecture, speaking about developed countries there is the same level of comfort everywhere.

Speaking about large-scale EU integration criticized for hurry and anticipation, it should be mentioned that it's not only and not so much a point of creating a powerful European market. It was a reintegration of the Eastern and Western Europe in its civilization meaning. It was not adjusted in full since a lot of problems are related to difficult cultural adaptation, as new member states represent a culture different from the Western European one. What is rather difficult is a question – how to create a unity founding on diversity? Unification process on the base of a common culture and civilization pattern – liberally democratic – is not the best one. It might facilitate the EU institutes management system but the beauty of multiplicity of the European civilization is unlikely to grow longer.

Cet élargissement, perçu comme une contrainte, aurait pu être un idéal, celui de la réunification de l'Europe. Il change la nature de l'Europe, qui devient plus grande, nombreuse, hétérogène, inégale.

. Et partant, comme le disait Galilée, elle « tourne »; plus, elle avance, elle progresse, elle élargit à la fois sur le plan son périmètre et son champ. mais du coup elle perd aussi, petit à petit, sa cohésion, devient plus hétérogène, plus inégale, moins gouvernable, moins lisible.

Une Europe qui cherche son identité après l'élargissement

When Europe faces a serious challenge to lose its own civilization and cultural identity, a joint search for a new opportunities to make again these values attractive for a contemporary European gains a significance importance.

How significantly similar the overlapping remarks of two spiritual leaders – the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Kirill and the Pope Benoît XVI – sound. I would like to highlight some recent comments.

Partriarch Kirill (February 2010) *«Both the West and East face an extremely hard but not so hopeless task to find jointly balance between progress in respect of individual and minorities' rights, on the one hand, and conservation of nationally cultural and religious identity of a particular peoples, one the other hand. Basic challenge of the age we are fated to live is, in my opinion, a need to develop such a civilization model of life in XXI age, which would presuppose strenuous harmonization of dramatically different directions of neoliberalism and traditionalism.»² .*

Pope Benedict XVI (May 2010)

«...contemporary culture, particularly European culture, runs the risk of amnesia, of forgetfulness and, therefore, of abandonment of the extraordinary patrimony fostered and inspired by the Christian faith, which constitutes the essential vertebral column of European culture, and not only of European culture....the East and West, and they can, more than that, must inspire a new humanism, a new season of authentic human progress, to respond effectively to the numerous and at times crucial challenges...»³

Surprisingly, the leaders of two Christian confessions are so close to fruitful dialogue as they have never been. There is a very intense exchange and hopefully it will lead to a historical meeting in the nearest future. It can be said that political dialogue runs behind a schedule a bit if we comprise steps made by both sides the last year.

This collaboration is really heartwarming and can be regarded as a quite weighty argument. We possess a capacity to develop a true dialogue between East and West, a dialogue of equally great partners of a common European civilization.

Nature of links between Russia and Europe performs intertwining of both common and distinct genetic roots, as well as combination of commonality and singularity of historical development ways. Now a dramatically new challenge urges –to design a new paradigm of the world policy, ethic paradigm of political relationship conserving and developing traditions of European civilization. There is a need to conserve diversity of European culture when ideological rivalry is pushed out by a new kind: globalism and universalism as an expression of principle of universal versus conservatism and traditionalism.

Why are we observing now the value-laden discord in EU-Russia relations – European and post-European values?

So is Russia doomed to be always the part of the European puzzle that doesn't fit? Or, to put it another way, to what extent is Russia part of Europe?

by Anthony Brenton, a former UK ambassador to Russia

Where are the points of our detachment?

There are objective historic reasons.

Russian nation, according to an opinion of an outstanding Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev, «is not a clearly European or sharply Asian people» while «there has been a struggle of two natures, Eastern and Western» in its soul. Belonging of peoples of historic Russia to European and Asian legacy facilitated to develop distinctive national features such as spirituality, religiosity and also capability to combine opposites.

One of Slavophile of the 19th century expressed it in the following lines:

We don't live with our own mind

And don't stick to any principles for long

We seek for words at European side

And act as Asians along

In the 19th century among Russian intellectuals the idea of the “universal” character of the Russian identity occurred. Started by Slavophiles, this idea was developed by Dostoyevsky “Yes, the Russian's destiny is incontestably all-European and universal.” Dostoyevsky expressed, with an amazing passion, some important features of Russian national self-consciousness of his time: its openness, supranational nature. Dostoyevsky admired Pushkin's ability to understand the whole of European culture and place it into the Russian soul.

Churchill memorably saw Russia as “a riddle wrapped inside a mystery inside an enigma”.

Objectively we are closer to Europe as we share a common civilization foundation of Christianity where there were created a diversity of European cultures. Meanwhile, Russian society is dramatically different from the Western one in social light having different principles of person-state interactions. Russia has traditionally had a strong state, and this compensated for its historical backwardness. Russia has tended to resemble an “inverted pyramid”, with the state forming the basis of society rather than the other way round as in most European countries. The Russians (71%) do not consider themselves Europeans according to the recent survey by Levada Centre.

I should add that EU and Russia occupies different stages of “national development”.

There are plenty of articles highlighted Russian “Empire ambitions”. After the sovereignty parade in the 1990s Russia has started «gathering of lands» applying traditional values of a European country in the beginning of the 20th century. Whereas EU with ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and has just started structuring a process of political building has transferred to a stage of post-European values takes efforts to give a second thought to inviolability of a national sovereignty. In this context we are at different whorls of our development.

Due to a whole range of reasons there is structuring a conceptual vacuum without any vague idea which development level we are seeking for.

And the last questions – «What should be done?».

I completely share the opinion of Russian political analyst, Chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy Sergey Karaganov that Russia and the European Union must strive not for a strategic partnership in their relations, but for a strategic alliance". [i] Alliance presupposed a long way of transformations, narrowing of economic and cultural gap, growth of mutual trust and accumulating experience of real cooperation.

Thus this form of association or a union could include a number of smaller "sectoral" agreements. Karaganov proposes to start with four ones - common strategic space and provide for close coordination of the parties' foreign policies, single energy complex in Europe, with common rules and equal access for the corporations of all countries to extraction and transportation systems, common economic and technological space, single human, cultural and educational.

In order to answer how realistic it is to implement it now it is quite enough to have a look at the **Common Space for Research** - the most advanced and the least controversial of the four spaces. We have no outstanding or vexing problems to solve in the area of research cooperation, but only a positive agenda to move forward⁴. The Russia has a very close S&T cooperation with EU, on the level of the European Community and as well on the level of the individual member states. The legal basis of EU-Russia cooperation is formed by Agreement on Scientific & Technological Cooperation between the EC and Russia, signed in 2000, concept of Four Common Spaces, including the Fourth Common Space on Science, Education and Culture. The political basis is formed by EU-Russia cooperation in the field of science and technology (Steering Bodies), Permanent Partnership Council (PPC) in Science (Ministerial level) (the first meeting was held in Ljubljana on 26 May 2008), Joint EU-Russia S&T Cooperation Committee (S&T Agreement Steering Body), Joint EU-Russia Thematic Working Groups (WG) in priority areas (DG Directorate level), Frequent meetings on expert level (EU & Russian scientists & specialists).

In April 2008 Russia made a major choice in making long-term priority in scientific cooperation - Russian Government's official request to start negotiations on an Association Agreement for the Framework Programmes. Overall political and strategic importance of a possible association to the Framework Programmes is clear, over and above the obvious scientific and financial benefits which it would entail, the European Research Area would be enriched and strengthened by Russia also becoming a full part of it"⁵. Such an enhanced cooperation in a strategic area of our Partnership will contribute to shaping a more positive EU-Russia relationship. In spite of the unanimous decision of the EU in Ljubljana to consider immediately the inquiry of Russia, negotiation of an association Agreement to the FP7 could start only after more the year. Traditionally S&T cooperation has ever been the less politicized sphere beacome now it. How could we explain such transformation? Why should such corporations as BP or Shell define policy in Russia but not the Lisbon strategy alpha and omega of political and economic success? Here there were a great number of irresistible obstacles to both sides over an Association agreement really simple in its core.

Today few Russian experts (not to mention policy-makers) talk about this quite challenging way of Russia-EU dialogue. It's a very appealing project and might become the best one from the point of view of mutual benefit and European civilization.

Do these projects have any chance to be successful?

I think so, in case we will approach to our cooperation with another philosophy avoiding demonstration of art of diplomatic and political games and rivals along post-Soviet space – we are brilliant at it – but taking as a launching point an idea of our common future of European civilization and benefits gained.

In order to achieve the goal we need time for structuring new generation of politicians and enhancing base for Russia-EU dialogue through active involvement of research community, intensifying dialogue on the level of experts, working groups and civil society aiming on basic issues of European civilization, evolution of its values and capacity to address both internal (risk to lose identity) and external challenges.

The process keeps going on gradually. Here under our discussions, in the European college, within Association activities, in our joint projects. The Association for European Studies based on Moscow State Institute for International Relations has renewed its activities after a 5-year-long break this May.(site)

One more dismal factor is historically a driver of European integration – external challenges since the EU has been building under conditions of external threat. L'Union est trop souvent dans la réaction, elle ne se construit politiquement que dans la crise, dans l'urgence, dans la difficulté. Elle ne s'approfondit que lorsqu'elle est vraiment en danger.

We've got challenges more than enough – they are around a corner – it's enough to have a look at the neighbors. Therefore I would like to conclude by a definition of a concept “civilization”, given by Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset: “Civilization is a will to coexistence”. I hope, our European civilization possess it in full.

¹ Sergey Karaganov. A Union of Europe: The Last Chance? <http://karaganov.ru/en/publications/214>

² http://www.expert.ru/printissues/expert/2010/04/russkaya_cerkov_i_evropeiskaya_kultura/

³ <http://www.zenit.org/article-29336?l=english>

⁴ Daniel Descoutures EU-Russia cooperation in Science & Technology.// International Scientific Conference “Russia and EU: Prospects of Creating Common of Research and Education”: Proceeding of the conference. – Voronezh, 2007.- P. 14-27.

⁵ Joint Statement of EU-Russia Permanent Partnership Council on Science http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0526EU_Russia_Research_Joint_Statement.html