

# **The Difficult Relations Between the EU and the Russian Federation: A Complex Picture**

## **A Dossier**

By Gregorio Baggiani

Over the last 10 years or so, the fundamental relations of interdependence between the EU and the Russian Federation, set up as part of the 1997 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) and renegotiated after 2008 as a consequence of the Caucasus crisis, have been characterized by upward phases and, more frequently, by periods of difficulty, often due to intransigence by some Eastern European States, Poland and the Baltic Nations in particular, or Russia itself. This much has been witnessed during the meetings between the two parties, which have been taking place regularly. For the Russian Federation the European Union has become the most important political subject west of its borders, and issues between the two entities range from energy policy to regional cooperation, security, cultural and technological cooperation, as well as several other complex questions pertaining to international relations as a whole. This article aims to study these issues, dividing them into sectors, and to show the interactions of each within the scope of the complex relations between the EU and Russia.

### **1) The Importance of the Regional Dimension. Russia's Neighbourhood Policy**

The common border between the EU and Russia, or rather between the EU and the territories close to Russia, now ranges north from the Arctic-Finnish border up to Moldova in the south. Moldova is not part of the Russian Federation, but the latter influences it considerably, both in economic terms, because of a potential block of its exports to Russia, especially wine and agricultural products, and in political ones, with the delicate question of Transnistria, which I shall cover in more detail further down. The questions around this fundamental strategic partnership are many and complex, but I shall limit myself to listing the most important, providing an overview of the problems facing them and of the opportunities Euro-Russian relations have to offer: the rivalry, or at least the competition, in territories and States over which the Russian Federation still exercises, in decreasing order, its sovereignty or at least its direct influence.

Kaliningrad, Transnistria, Belarus and Ukraine represent for the Russian Federation both a sort of "safety belt" against possible enemy attacks and an economic and strategic investment zone, but also a fundamental cultural and emotional reference point, because of the common Slavic origins of the three. Kaliningrad in particular, the former Prussian city of Königsberg, represents one of the last relics of the "outer empire", conquered by the victorious Red Army in 1945 against defeated Nazi Germany at the end of what the Russians call the "Great Patriotic War" (over 20 million dead on the Russian side) and hence an important factor of identity and a living testimony of the Soviet

Union's, and above all the Russian people's, great victory over Nazism. A victory that, more than sixty years later, still today has an important meaning, even a symbolic one, in Putin's Russia, which appeals to new visceral, and often archaic, forms of patriotism, especially in the years following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, when vast sections of the population felt a strong sense of disorientation after the extreme liberalistic economic reforms introduced by Yeltsin in the 90s. In the case of Kaliningrad, some progress can be identified from the point of view of cooperation between the EU and Russia, as it functions as a connecting point of joint Russian and European initiatives in the fields of ecology, economics and diplomatic relations as a whole [1]. Kaliningrad, wedged between Poland in the south and Lithuania in the east, is connected to the motherland by a railway line that crosses Belarus, making it precious to the strategic interests of the Russian Federation in consideration the difficulties the latter has had with the EU in reaching an agreement on the transit of Russian citizens through EU territory. All this despite the anachronistic Lukashenko dictatorship, in power for over a decade and which arouses strong criticism by Europe because of its systematic violations of human rights[2].

For the European Union on the other hand, and in particular for the Countries overlooking the Baltic Sea and which are part of the "Northern Dimension"[3], these States represent, more objectively, rather problematic territories from several points of view: safety, emigration, social and health problems, contraband, drug-smuggling and problems deriving from the massive presence of Russian or ex-Soviet military plants (with highly polluting diesel engines) or of nuclear weapons undergoing a rapid obsolescence and thus dangerous for the surrounding environment. These are States where democracy and a market economy should sooner or later prevail at the end of a long transition period, which has been going on for at least fifteen years, and give rise to, also in view of a potential entry into the EU, growth for a good part of the continent, or at least for its eastern part, which would see the flowing in of considerable investments and even important forms of productive delocalization, due to the low cost of labour and above all to the closeness to the Russian market, which is proving to be more and more important for European exports.

On behalf of the Europeans, we find towards the Russians a consideration of geopolitical, cultural and emotional problems that is much more sober, if not emotionally detached. This is also true for the EU's attitude towards Eastern European Countries, with European authorities often failing to understand the historical and cultural problems, the real fears, but also those ancestral fears deriving from secular struggles and incomprehension between the peoples of the area. So, to some extent, the attitude is pragmatic and "technocratic" and it thus underestimates the historical and cultural aspects of this part of Europe. In the case of Poland, for example, one should distinguish its real and founded fears based on its historical experiences with Russian expansionism from those fears that

only represent highly ideologized simplifications of the events and that present Poland univocally as a "beacon", as the "bulwark" of Western and Catholic Civilization against Russian despotism, without ever mentioning Poland's own ambitions of conquest and dominion over the populations of Ukraine and Belarus. All this to say that a historical knowledge of events could somehow prove useful for a better understanding by the EU's western and northern States of the historical, cultural and, of course, economic roots of the conflicts, thus enabling them to better modulate their policies towards that complex and often convulsive geographical area. It is equally evident, as mentioned above, that a lack of historical knowledge or a distorted use of history to political ends by some eastern European countries, the so called "political use of history", often involves a demonization of other nations or the representation of one's nation as the constant victim of plots concocted by others. This is precisely the psychological mechanism that often leads to the most backward and dangerous forms of nationalism, because it allows a country to project onto another all the responsibilities for a given situation while "absolving" itself from any blame. Of course, this does not mean that there are no objective dangers or dangerous long-term trends to denounce, but this should be done avoiding any forms of sensationalism or media hysteria. It is precisely media sensationalisms, aimed mainly at influencing public opinion at home, that in some cases produces the most dangerous effects for the stability of relations between the countries in the region and in particular for the difficult political relations between Russia and Latvia due to Latvia's difficulties in elaborating its domination by the Soviets between 1940 and 1991. If Russia, the legal successor of the Soviet Union, recognized that the occupation was illegal under international law, it could be convicted by an international tribunal (from an exclusively theoretical point of view, of course, considering the political repercussions a sentence of this kind would cause) and forced to compensate the Baltic States for that occupation with the Russian minority living in the country declared liable for expulsion for having settled there following an illegal act. To this we must add the present discriminatory treatment, especially from the linguistic point of view, the Russian minorities living in Latvia are subject to, something which does not cease to fuel bitter controversy with Moscow. This dangerous and at times distorted vision of history can lead governments to taking political actions that could prove detrimental to peaceful and harmonious coexistence between European nations and also to the coherence itself of EU policies towards Russia and former Soviet republics such as Ukraine and Belarus, which are now part of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The EU thus finds itself forced to mediate between the several political and economic interests of its own members and between the respective historical and political perceptions of their relations with Russia and the European post-Soviet area in general. All this will become more and more important because the EU's relations with the post-Soviet space (and in

particular with Georgia, Armenia, Belarus and Ukraine) are inevitably destined to become stronger in the near future because of the several economic and political interests that tie the EU to those states. In this case the EU's relations with Russia will prove fundamental, as this necessarily implies close cooperation with Russia on the one hand, and competition for pre-eminence in the post-Soviet space on the other.

The European Union's dialogue with the Russian Federation takes place through the Directorate-General for External Relations[4] as part of a partnership and cooperation agreement (PCA) divided into four areas of cooperation or "spaces" (economics, security, culture, foreign policy) and also (at the moment only informally, but with the desirable perspective that this regional dialogue will be intensified and formalized) as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy[5], which involves States and territories bordering directly with the EU and on which Moscow exercises a strong influence (Ukraine) or direct sovereignty as integral parts of Russian territory.

The Russian Federation limits itself to actively sustaining, militarily too, the internationally unrecognized Russian-speaking territory of Transnistria, which illegally separated from Moldova in the mid-nineties. This is cause of great concern for the EU, which, since Romania joining in 2007, borders with Moldova, a country with a predominantly Romanian population, and also finds itself handling the delicate problem of the secessionist Russian-speaking Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic[6], a real "loose cannon" of the European continent due to the presence there of several illegal trades: arms destined to terrorist or common criminal groups, drugs, radioactive materials, trade of human beings, all managed by Igor Smirnov's local "government", which makes considerable profits from the trafficking[7].

From the point of view of the European Union, the issue consists of exploiting the many cultural, geographic and strategic resources the Russian Federation affords to contribute to building a balanced economic and geographical development in vast areas of the world which are becoming more and more important for the Europe, which is also preparing talks, within the EU's Neighbourhood Policy, with Georgia and Armenia, to solve, at least partially, the difficult issues related to the presence in Georgia of particular enclaves (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Adjara) which, with the support of Moscow, are claiming independence. Georgia and Armenia are also likely pre-candidates for future EU "membership", or at least, at the present time, for becoming partners of the EU as part of a cooperation policy related to the various common interest sectors in the Black Sea area[8]. The EU is in any case interested in a dialogue with the Russian Federation – also with the active cooperation of OSCE – to try and find a political solution to the extremely serious Chechen crisis, which has seen Russian forces committing outrageous massacres and every kind of human rights violation, as faithfully documented by the late courageous Russian journalist Anna

Politkovskaya, murdered by as yet unidentified killers, presumably Chechen ultra-nationalists linked to the local power. The entire area, strategically very important as a transit zone for energy supplies from the area of the Caspian Sea, is thus destabilized. On its behalf, Moscow has always considered the war in Chechnya merely an internal issue, going as far as including it within the wider sphere of “war on terrorism” in an attempt to join forces with other powers, in particular the United States, interested in preserving positive relations with Moscow on this one issue at least. A fundamental question, still to ascertain and that the EU will not be able to shy away from in the forthcoming years as part of its ever more crucial relations with the Russian Federation, is precisely this: to what extent should it intervene in the home affairs of non-democratic or not fully democratic states of the Russian “nearby abroad” included in the “Neighbourhood Policy”, to promote change and new dynamics of internal policy, as for example the several “Colour Revolutions”, like those in Georgia and Ukraine, which have recently taken place in the post-Soviet space, or dictator Lukashenko’s Belarus, onto which the European Union has been exercising strong pressure to persuade it to democratize its internal politics more effectively.

## **2. International Politics. The Balkans and the Post-Soviet Area**

EU-Russia relations are not exclusively limited to a strategic partnership or to the partial Neighbourhood Policy, but are more articulate and complex, as they cover fields such as security, energetic policy, the global foreign policy involving the Balkans area, the Middle Eastern and Central Asian questions, for which Russian political and military cooperation can be vital. Let us add to this already complex picture the question of technological cooperation, such as research in the aerospace sector, where the Russians have a long experience and have been cooperating with the European Space Agency for many years<sup>[9]</sup> with a base in Baikonur, Kazakhstan. For both this also means trying to compete with the overwhelming power of the U.S. in the field of space and satellite technologies and in particular developing a European version of the U.S. GPS satellite navigation system. This would significantly reduce the excessive power of the U.S. in the communications field, something it obviously is not enthusiastic about.

EU authorities are trying to modify, through an intense dialogue, a certain Russian perception with the aim of proving that in the 21st century a country’s security needs must indeed be taken into consideration, but that dated concepts such as “area of influence” or “empire” are by no means acceptable<sup>[10]</sup>. Though deeply rooted in the Russian collective conscience as centralistic and authoritarian entities, they must be replaced with effective international cooperation in the economic field and above all in that of security policy. This is particularly important in relation to the delicate Central Asian area, now in the limelight of the international scenario because of its

extensive energy resources and because of the possible development of Muslim radicalism in the area. Consider in particular Afghanistan, where Russian experience could be useful to NATO forces currently fighting in the country against the menacing revival of the Taleban phenomenon. From this point of view, Russia's expertise at the level of analysis, academic too [\[11\]](#), and its capacity for military and political intervention in the area are precious to the European Union, which is probably inadequately prepared culturally to intervene efficiently in those areas of the world, so distant from Europe historically and in terms of mentality. Areas dominated by clan loyalty and where the wealth of oil resources could soon trigger off conflicts between the clans themselves over the related profits. In addition, the Balkans too have once again become a subject of attention on behalf of Russia, not only for their strategic value, but also so that it may affirm and confirm its status as superpower and uphold a "Slavic brotherhood" with one of the most important Balkan states, Serbia, split between the desire to join Europe and its lasting passionate nationalism, which means a consistent slice of the country's population looking favourably at stronger cooperation with Russia. For the European Union this perspective, however remote, is full of dangers and uncertainties. The relationship Serbia could re-establish with Russia would be inevitably linked to the strategic value for Serbia of the Russian pipelines crossing its territory and to a political conception largely based on an age-old, irrational and highly Russophile Serbian nationalism. This could represent a danger for the European Union, because Serbian nationalism, impersonated by the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), whose ultranationalist President Vojislav Šešelj is in ICTY custody for war crimes in former Yugoslavia, could couple with the economic power of the Russian oil companies who could act as a long arm of the Kremlin, with consequences for the stability of the region which are easy to imagine. Serbia alone is now incapable of representing a threat to regional stability in the western Balkans – an essential transit route for energy supplies to Europe – but any diplomatic or economic support from abroad, and in particular from Russia, could at least galvanize its more extremist forces, in particular over the delicate question of Kosovo, the EU-endorsed secession of which – in the name of the principle of self-determination – has never been accepted by the more markedly nationalistic Serbian forces. What we see in this case too, like in that of the Caucasus, is the complex mix of ethnic rivalries, important energetic interests and regional stability. Unsurprisingly, Russian President Putin has often made comparisons, though acknowledging the differences, between self-determination in Kosovo and the claims for independence of the Georgian enclaves in Ossetia and Abkhazia, thus introducing to international law a dangerous precedent, because reference is no longer being made to the principle of the intangibility of borders as a distinctive principle in international relations, but to that of the self-determination of peoples, an apparently extremely democratic principle, but one which at the same time can easily lend itself to several

distorted interpretations dictated by the geopolitical interests of the main powers, often disguised as humanitarian intervention or forms of involvement to stabilize an area and guarantee its long-term economic and political stability, essential condition for the economic prosperity of an entire geographical area. This is particularly true in the case of the western Balkans because, as well as representing an important route for energy supplies to the EU, their instability can constitute a problem for the EU from the point of view of security, due to the illegal trade that starts from there (arms, drugs, contraband, Islamic terrorism in Bosnia-Herzegovina, human trafficking, and so on), something that the EU obviously attempts to reduce to a minimum. In this case too cooperation with Russia, which since the days of the tsars has always acted as a patron of the Serbs for confessional, but mainly geopolitical reasons, could be of some use to the EU, but not without talks aimed at comparing Kosovo to the Georgian enclaves in Ossetia and Abkhazia, or allowing Russia to strengthen its energetic presence in the Balkans to the detriment of other Western companies, which include several top Italian ones, such as ENI and Unicredit, which have strong economic interests in the Balkans. One last consideration is that, as part of these dynamics, a crucial role is obviously played by both strategic and economic factors and, at least partially, by psychological and historical ones, such as the aforementioned historical and confessional bond between Serbs and Russians, or even the love of the Serbs for Kosovo, which they consider the “cradle” of Serbian civilization and which has become a real “foundational myth”, because of the presence in the region of several Orthodox churches dating back to the dawn of Serbian history. The EU, an eminently post-national construction founded on an apparent juridical rationality, ought to do its best to take this into account in the development of policies towards the Balkans or Russia. Otherwise, as we have already seen, these policies could play into the hands of the extremist pro-Slavic forces with a presence, however minoritarian, both in Serbia and in Russia and encourage a clash of civilizations between the West and the Slavic-Orthodox world. In a world where economic globalization reigns, nationalism still remains a winning formula for populist governments and extremist groups who want to avoid subjecting a Country to heavy economic reforms while at the same time winning consensus among the population, or at least of its less educated or poorer classes, being the latter often more sensitive to nationalist and populist claims. In this case, especially in case of a future Serbian EU membership (via a Stabilisation and Association Agreement procedure) and the related economic sacrifices and financial rigour this would imply for the Country’s population, the "recovery" of territories lost during the Balkan wars of the 90s, the problematic handing over of Serbian war criminals to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, the question of Kosovo and pro-Russian pan-Slavism, could trigger off a new Serbian nationalism, at least among consistent parts of the Country’s population. The relationship between Russia and Serbia is

based on a common religious, and partially linguistic, tradition, on several authentic common geopolitical interests (the Kosovo question, the Russian commercial and energetic penetration in the Balkans, and trade between the two countries), but also on rather more irrational and emotive factors linked to vague conceptions such as pan-Slavism, conjectured by 19<sup>th</sup> century historians at the time of the reawakening of national consciousness, but which, with its fragile bases, never managed to give rise to a real political or state entity. The relationship between the two countries is therefore based partly on tangible and cultural factors, but also on rather fanciful assumptions. This is something the EU needs to be wary of when dealing with Serbian-Russian relations and in its relations with Serbia itself. Obviously, the higher the levels of economic recovery promised by the EU – also via specific assistance programmes, which until 2006 were known as CARDS – the lower the probabilities of a nationalistic drift based on a fanciful and unattainable Revanchism. The more effectively the EU is able to act in Serbia, the less the population of that country will listen to the siren's song of the SRS radicals about an unrealistic reconquering of lost territories, about the Serbian people's predestined heroic future, about economically impracticable solutions that allude to a widespread fear of wild privatisations and about the help of "our great Russian brother" in the name of an obscure and undefined pan-Slavism that the Russians are supposed to have an interest in keeping alive. Hence the need, or rather the opportunity, of some form of entente between the EU and Russia concerning the Western Balkans, but also in the Eastern part, where Russia has preserved good political relations with Bulgaria, one of its former satellites in the communist period and now a NATO and EU member, though obviously these are characterised by a minor subjection of the Bulgarians compared to the past, also thanks to the strategic role the country plays in connection to energetic supplies coming from the Black Sea. Romania, on the other hand, which entered the EU in 2007, finds itself facing the Transnistrian crisis, however indirectly, via Moldova, which sees the 14<sup>th</sup> Russian Army stationed in the self-proclaimed independent Republic, not recognized even by Russia. The grave problem Transnistria represents is one of the questions the EU will be forced to discuss with Moscow in the near future. The problem of Russian or Russian-speaking minorities represents a sort of "Troy horse" that Moscow can use to manipulate to its advantage the regional balances and so achieve a better strategic standing. Issues regarding ethnic minorities in the post-Soviet space are quite complex and cannot be interpreted exclusively in one key or according to set patterns. Problems often derive from the fact that what were once mere administrative divisions of the former Soviet Union have become state borders, as is the case of the Russian minority in Crimea in Ukraine, or from the fact that after 1991 populations of foreign extraction found themselves in a national state, like for example in Georgia, which has tried to "nationalize" them at all costs, sometimes with very invasive methods. Hence the explosion of

violent ethnic conflicts, artfully provoked or aggravated by the main powers because of the presence of pipelines to transport fuel resources to the West. The economic factor, however, cannot be considered the only explanation for ethnic conflicts, because political phenomena too, such as extreme nationalism and its potential for mass mobilisation, to demagogically distract attention from severe internal problems, as for example a stagnating economy, or attempts by governments to prevent the fragmentation of a state, are undoubtedly of great importance for Russia itself too. The slow and difficult process of moving towards capitalism along with localism and nationalism, the expression of a desperate search for an ethnic and cultural identity, make up the two main aspects – apparently in contrast, but actually very much interconnected – of the transition of the former communist world to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Spontaneous nationalism, or one rekindled by governments, often serves as an identity-making substitute for communism and in some cases as a substitute for a failed economic growth, while economic growth coupled with a more or less *soft* nationalism, one which often translates into a search for an enemy, is often used by governments of the area to disguise an absence of democracy or at least to delay its introduction. The overwhelming majority of the population in the post-Soviet area, with the exception of a few small minorities predominantly from urban areas, after the passive and plebiscitary education interiorized during communism, has an entirely agnostic or indifferent attitude towards democracy and prefers a national model founded on the marked paternalism of a charismatic and unquestioned leader. The cultural model of the virile "strong man" is still today considered a winning one in this area of the world and in this cultural context it is quite hard for a western-style democracy to gain ground. In a context where unity of purpose is considered an essential social value, individualism a non-value and political mediation a shameful sign of weakness, it is easy to see how a democracy of the kind we are used to in the West can gather ground only very gradually. Political parties themselves are interest groups rather than parties with a specific vision of the world and of society as in the western sense of the term. The idea of citizens as holders of rights and duties and individual initiative as the driving force of change is not therefore, particularly widespread, especially in rural areas. In urban areas with higher levels of political conscience, however, the trend is clearly different.

In some cases westerners are implicitly or explicitly condemned for a sort of "cultural imperialism", because of their attempt to export a western-style democratic culture which is not yet shared by the majority of the population. In some cases this is even compared by certain political executives of a certain rank as a form of colonialism under false pretences. Power, in the opinion widespread among most of the population and among a good part of the State administration, and within the party in power in particular, should be intended as substantially absolute and not politically responsible towards its citizens. The basic idea that dominates is that of the citizen as a subject of

the state rather than that of the state as a servant of the citizen. Of course these are very generic observations, but they do describe quite accurately the existing situation in many states of the post-Soviet space. These observations are not so much the result of studies, but of direct experiences deriving from my private travels or those for OSCE in these regions. In the immense area that goes from Serbia in the west to Central Asia in the east, the EU can play an important role both from the economic point of view and from that of cultural spreading. To do so, it will have to find a cooperation plan with Russia, considering that the latter country will always defend its important strategic and economic interests in the area and above all that it does not welcome the exporting of European-style democracy as it would inevitably influence Russia itself, which still today is inexorably a "guided democracy", (*upravliemaia demokratia*), with all the negative connotations that entails. Some Russian politicians go as far as asserting ideologically that "plebiscitary democracy" is better suited to Russia than western-style representative democracy, thus explicitly questioning the principle that the latter has a universal validity, as in their opinion it is difficult to apply in different cultural and historical contexts. In other words, this goes to say that in the scale of values of most Russians the internal and international power of the State, its security (*bezopasnost*), are more important than freedom of expression for its citizens. The political passivity of many citizens of the post-Soviet space can to a certain extent be attributed to an attitude of mistrust towards politics and ideology introjected during the Soviet period, but also to the wish of many citizens to shut themselves away into the private sphere and achieve a discreet wellbeing after the economic difficulties that characterized the area in the immediate post-Soviet period in 1991. The fact that the communist system tended to guide citizens and to a certain extent relieve them of responsibilities has also undoubtedly influenced this attitude of substantial lack of concern by most post-Soviet citizens for politics and democracy. This means that in the post-communist area, and more specifically in the post-Soviet, we find a considerable dyscrasia between the relatively short time span of one generation for the economic culture of a country of an entire area to change and a relatively long one, of two or three generations, for the gradual mutation of the political culture, which still strongly feels the effects of the communist period. The lack of democracy, in fact, rhetoric aside, can indeed have two grave consequences: the first is that citizens find themselves practically unarmed before abuses by the State or by the political party in power; the second is that this lack of democracy basically prevents citizens from exercising control over the management of public funds and foreign companies investing in the country from being able to rely on a legal system assuring the respect and regularity of contracts. In the best case scenario of an "enlightened" leader, the country's economic development can still be achieved even in presence of funds being subtracted for private or illicit aims, while in a worst case scenario, a bad leader can lead the

country to complete ruin, sometimes setting up a dangerous and delirious cult of personality for himself, as is actually the case in some Central Asian States. Democracy, ultimately, is not always necessarily "perfect", but at least it establishes a series of rules and institutional crosschecks that to a certain extent guarantee that abuses are not committed by organs of the State or private citizens. This, in my opinion, is the message on the importance of democracy that, without presenting it in terms too eulogistic or abstract, the West has every interest in spreading in this important area of the world. Building democracy is a slow historical process that requires decades, if not centuries, and is connected to the slow forming of an entrepreneurial bourgeoisie with liberal tendencies, as occurred in the West, that clamps down on the power of the State. But this is precisely why its advantages should be illustrated clearly and without rhetoric or arrogance, which risk irritating the interlocutor with counterproductive effects. It is important for the West to spread the message that what counts in democracy is not so much the strength or physical and intellectual vigour of a president or head of state, but rather the respect of the laws and a series of institutional checks and balances coordinating and regulating the powers of the various state organs. This because in the post-communist world generally the president or prime minister is not seen only as an important institutional figure like in the West, but rather as an incarnation of the nation, an authentic father of the country representing and protecting the nation and its citizens in virtue also of an absolute and paternalistic pre-eminence over all the other organs of the state. He is not only a strong leader who carries out an executive function, of balance between the various political and economic components of the nation, as is the case in the various countries of the West, but he often has a dual office as president and head of the majority governing party. This was the case, for example, in Russia with Putin, who was both President of the Russian Federation and president of the majority governing party "United Russia", thus making the legislative organs completely dependent upon his political will. In this context the opposition is purely nominal or reduced to a very marginal role, unable to effectively fulfil the necessary function of checks and balances typical of an advanced democracy. It is therefore the State, largely personified by the President, that governs the development of society according to a hierarchical scale called "vertical of power", while social instances only find a limited echo from the bottom towards the top of the state's hierarchic scale. The State-Society relationship in the post-Soviet space thus seems generally inverted compared to what we are used to in the West, where society organizes itself in a structured way to make sure its political and economic instances reach the legislative level. While in the West the state acts as a mediator and regulator of conflicts of interests between the various social and political parties, in Russia and in the post-Soviet space in general, it imposes its mediation on the social parties in the name of the national interest, hence depriving them of the opportunity for a free negotiation based

on the respective economic and social power relations. In this cultural context, therefore, in contrast to the West, the fact that society is divided according to economic interests and political ideas is not universally recognized, while the predominant idea, at least officially, is the corporative concept of the unity of the nation, *edinstvo nazii*, and hence the power of the state that controls and directs its developments. As previously mentioned, the very name of the "United Russia" Party unequivocally reminds us of this ideological platform in contemporary Russia, and the same can be said of the various state realities that characterize the post-Soviet space. Despite these ideological premises, it is quite clear that in Russian society, and in the post-Soviet one as a whole, social inequality is considerably emphasized because of the growth in liberalizations and lack of securities in the labour market, and also as a consequence of the strong dependence on incomes from the energy market of large sections of the state and private/entrepreneurial sectors, which make massive licit, or illicit, profits from it. It is evident that these sectors have no interest in an effective "rule of law" establishing itself in Russia or in the other countries in the area, as this could to some extent endanger, or at least help to subject to stricter checks by a magistracy no longer subdued by strong political pressures, the huge profits they make from the considerable oil incomes – essential to stabilizing and reviving the economy of the country, but in some cases also employed to purchase with illegally derived funds luxury goods on the foreign market – which have turned Russia and the post-Soviet space, and Kazakhstan in particular, into one of the fastest expanding markets in the world, with rates of development of up to 9% per annum. The restructuring of the of the post-Soviet area therefore represents a massive business for western countries from the point of view of the sale of luxury products to the *nouveaux riches* and to the state nomenclature, and from that of the modernization of important economic sectors such as, for example, oil extraction or banking. The wild economic growth of the area in the last decade or so and the hunger for consumer goods felt by former Soviet populations, due to years of economic scarcity in the Soviet period and to the subsequent difficult period of economic and social transformation in the nineties, have obviously favoured the development of trade relations between the EU and Russia, thus making it a very important market for EU exports and in particular for those of its long-time western members, i.e. Italy, France and Germany. Ukraine too fits into this picture of economic growth for the area, as a country that in view of joining the EU within the next 10 years or so, presents interesting aspects from the economic point of view: sustained economic growth, still low salaries, good education levels and a strategic geographical position directed towards the Russian market. Within this positive outlook, we have to however point out a considerably uncertain political situation, and one that will become even more so if Ukraine joining NATO becomes a concrete possibility, with the related risk of a secession by certain areas of the country, in particular in the east and the south,

respectively the Donbass basin and Crimea, where most of the population is ethnically Russian or at least Russian-speaking.

### **3. The Fundamental Link between the Economy and Democratic Development in Russia and the Role of the EU in this Process**

The EU is conscious of the difficulties in dialogue with the Russian Federation, also because of the internal divisions within the EU itself<sup>[12]</sup> which have contributed to making it even more difficult and complex. The lack of a unity of purpose between the various European partners reveals itself in the most striking sense in their relations with Russia, something which in the eyes of the Russians looks like a lack of coherence of the European Union as a political entity, and often encourages them to operate a *divide and rule* strategy with single EU partners, something which in the long run could be detrimental to the Russian Federation itself. Indeed, to guarantee its economic stability, which cannot remain bound to energy exports indefinitely in the manner of an oil state, the Russian Federation will have to develop other sectors and services to compete successfully on the world market.

For Russia three important and closely interlinked consequences could derive from such a transformation: more internal democratization, hence less military pressure from outside, and above all less dependency on controlling areas, like Georgia, which it deems essential to the control of energy resources.

This is particularly relevant to Russia, but also to some of the other oil states, considering for each the specific conditions of historical and social development. A diversification of interests often leads to a diversification of political ideas and hence to higher levels of political dialectics, no longer exclusively from top to bottom (the vertical of power that implies, for example, regional governors being nominated directly by the president with no popular investiture) as it is today, but also from the various social classes towards the top.

The EU is perfectly aware of the fact that the integration of Russia in international trade has to take place within the framework of the WTO, which will reduce its freedom of action, but would also contribute to reducing some of the significant anomalies of Russian economic development that we have seen so far: energy sector chiefly in State hands, frequent violations of industrial copyright in defiance of international trade regulations, difficulties of development for small enterprises because of the oppressive State bureaucracy which often extorts money from them, lack of an efficient legal system allowing justice to be done even in cases of abuses committed by State organisms or affluent or politically backed private entities, and so on. So, to favour the democratization process in Russian society, in my opinion the EU will have to, as after all it has already done<sup>[13]</sup>, necessarily declare itself in favour of a rapid entry of the Russian Federation into the WTO, otherwise its

exhortations for the democratization of this huge country risk being unheeded or being received only after decades and only after a changeover of the current ruling class. The European Union is therefore particularly sensitive to the issue of continental stability, while the United States, for obvious geographical reasons, are not so to the same extent but lay down conditions to Russia's entry into the WTO and this will inevitably have to become a subject of discussion between the two. Russia's entry into the WTO represents only one of the elements of disagreement between the two transatlantic partners on what policies to adopt towards the Russian Federation. There are several others, such as for example the crucial question of Ukraine joining NATO, something on which I shall not concentrate here, but that could profoundly modify geopolitical balances in Europe (the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, CFE, already suspended by Russia) and significantly increase tensions with Russia, which feels surrounded by potentially hostile forces.

Russia's entry into the WTO would represent the key to the modernization of its economy, allowing it to expand its manufacturing and services sectors (which currently represent a minimal part of its GDP, 1,2%, and even less at world level) and making it competitive with other advanced economies. This would make it possible to stabilize Russia's economy and make it independent from the cyclic fluctuations of energy products, on which it currently almost exclusively relies, thus contributing in the middle to long-term to the creation of an Eurasian zone without internal tensions and reliable from the point of view of internal democracy and towards its bordering States, which is the EU's true goal with respect to Russia. The question is therefore for Russia to attain a type of economic development similar to western countries and consequently converge on a substantially analogous form of government characterized by democratic procedures. A higher economic and political uniformity between the various states would be marked by a greater harmony in their mutual coexistence.

Indeed, economic dependency almost exclusively on energy incomes implies a form of underdevelopment of the country from the economic point of view, but also from a socio-political one, which in the long run is bound to lead to negative effects, insofar as it prevents the creation of a healthy class of productive citizens interested in developing sectors of the economy which are becoming more and more important, i.e. research (the knowledge economy) and the tertiary industry, both of which inevitably require a relationship with the state and with bureaucracy founded on simplicity and flexibility, something which is not a feature of today's Russia.

Indeed, a society can develop an internal dialectics when it is diversified and when its members are free to put forward political proposals corresponding to their interests and ideas and have a dialectical rather than hierarchical relationship with the authorities.

For this to happen it is necessary to invert checks between state and society, making it possible for the latter to punish any abuses by the former, and to make the participation of citizens in political life free, without their having to suffer pressures from police or state apparatus in general (the *siloviki*, members of the Interior Ministry, the FSB, the secret services or the armed forces). In this sense, the EU strongly recommends to strengthen the judiciary, which almost completely lacks any form of effective independence from executive power and thus makes it impossible for common citizens to uphold their rights against organs of the state or private entities with “connections in the right places” or high financial means. It is this very lack of democracy, of institutional checks and balances, and the problem of attainment of justice that the EU concretely fears and has often criticized, also from the point of view of its own economic investments. Such criticism in some cases is not too insistent, because of the fear of seeing a reduction in Russian energy supplies, which would have disastrous effects on the European Union and also because the EU itself realizes that the priority is necessarily to secure energy supplies for itself in relatively narrow periods of time while being conscious of how the problem of democratization in Russia requires an extended period of time, which is in turn, in the current condition of strong economic development in the country, inversely proportional to the availability of the Russian Federation’s energy resources, i.e. the more Russia disposes of large energy resources, the less its political class and its population will push for a rapid democratization of the country, which will hence take place only very gradually. This implies that, in absence of an adequate legislative framework guaranteeing an effective rule of law, the market too, intended above all as a community of producers, will be able to develop only very gradually. This is the very problem that needs to be solved by the EU-Russian Federation “Energy Dialogue”[\[14\]](#), which should make it possible to develop a more certain legal framework for energy supplies and to make them less dependent on all sorts of political pressure and blackmail, such as for example a country’s, or the EU’s itself, adherence to political conditions desired by Moscow, something that is notoriously “rewarded” with larger or smaller supplies of gas according to the levels of political affinity with the Russian Federation. This policy, however, is not entirely feasible because of Russia’s dependence on the EU, which represents its most important source of income in strong currency. The development and economic diversification path suggested by the European authorities,[\[15\]](#) with the basic contradictions previously mentioned, is that of a progressive modernization of the country, of its adjustment to the world reality, above all that of the West, ultimately a transformation from the current “rule of the ruler” to a state based on the “rule of the law”, which would better guarantee both the democratic development of society and the long-term economic development of the country. This would increase the overall wealth of its citizens, without the terrible social inequalities of the Russia of the 90s, the period of Yeltsin’s so-called

“wild” privatizations and of the “oligarchs”, which inevitably led a consistent part of the Russian people, disappointed and embittered by the disappearance of the Soviet Union and the awful chaos and misery it found itself in, to call for a “strongman”. The need, therefore, for a Chief capable of restoring order in the Country and re-establishing its prestige in the world. All this at the expense of democracy, which many Russians consider a useless tinsel western politicians fill their mouths with to justify their obtrusiveness in the internal affairs of Russia and of what they consider a Russian priority area of interest, the so-called “post-Soviet space” or “Near Abroad” (*bližee sarubeže*), and in particular Ukraine.

Economic diversification represents the only opportunity for the long-term growth of the Russian economy and of its democracy, but the EU will need to accompany it in its talks with the Russians, (who are very concerned about claiming a role on equal terms, “*ravnopravie*”, and very good at spotting weaknesses, divisions and incoherencies in their interlocutors) with a language that is direct, intrinsically coherent and at the same time not connoted by vainly paternalistic attitudes implying the moral superiority of “democratic values”. This could instead have opposite effects to the desired and push Russian leaders to create and further refine a model radically antagonistic to the Western one and the population to rally around it because of the notorious complex of the “Besieged Fortress”, skilfully exploited by government propaganda.

The former case would result in a guarantee of stability for the whole area and for the European Union itself, interested in the potential of the Russian market as an outlet for its quality products and also for the sale of western technology essential to the modernization of various sectors of the Russian economy. Sectors suffering from a huge technological delay and hence hardly competitive in the globalized economic outlook where slow but constant changes in production models are taking place, with several countries having opted for (the United States) or are more and more opting for (China, EU), or ought to be opting for (Russia), highly technological sectors such as electronics, communications, biotechnologies and so forth, i.e. the sectors that determine the international importance of a country. The economy, or rather the integration of the Russian Federation into the world economy, is therefore also a perfect lever to insist on those indispensable political reforms, despite the distrust of a considerable part of Russians towards democracy, which they consider inapplicable to their country, or rather, inapplicable to its specific political culture which still clings onto nationalistic political categories which in the “post-national” European West are generally considered outdated. Indeed, one difficulty in Euro-Russian talks from the cultural point of view consists precisely in overcoming the lasting heritage of the “Cold War”, of a political category based on confrontation and conflict, at least verbal, with the “enemy”, and not a category based on cooperation or even integration between states.

This will have to occur on the basis of a “community of shared values” between both partners and this constitutes one of the most difficult aspects of the question, insofar as the Russian Federation, or at least some of its more extremist representatives such as former Defence Minister and current Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration of Russia Sergei Ivanov have no intention of recognizing the universal validity of democratic principles, and hence of a rigid separation of powers, as invoked by the Western Europeans. Instead these representatives are pragmatically inclined to signing agreements with the EU on the basis of mutual interests rather than on the basis of a common ideological platform founded first of all on the rights of single individuals and not on the strength of state interests as is the Russian belief. These extremists strongly defend the organisational and coercive power of the State both against any intolerable “intrusion” (*vmešatelstvo*) of other states and from an “excessively free” national society, potentially uncontrollable and which could lead the country to chaos.

In short, the Russian leadership is in favour of cooperation with the European Union as far as certain sectors are concerned, but prefers to have a free hand in the management of its internal policy and in relations with certain countries of the “Near Abroad”, which it considers its own direct, if not exclusive, interest.

Economic cooperation and a gradual economic integration could, however, to some extent facilitate Euro-Russian cooperation in general via a partial abdication from the prerogatives of absolute State power, thus persuading the Russian government elite that it is not possible to sharply separate the two spheres of human activity, the economic and the political. The surrender of absolute state power is an idea the Russians are generally not prepared for, because they lack that sense of the need for unity that characterized Europe at the end of the Second World War when it understood that only cooperation could prevent another “fratricidal war” and allow it to re-establish a role of primary importance on the international scenario. As long as Russia is strong enough, or repute itself as strong enough, to constitute a centre of power at the international level, it will probably never consent to significantly surrendering any of its state power and hence will not see the need to tie itself to supranational entities more than strictly necessary. The case therefore concerns both a cultural perception and a realistic assessment of power balances on the world scenario. After all, the handover, or at least partial handover, of sovereignty is one of those historical phenomena that take place very gradually over long periods of time, as they imply overcoming all the difficulties linked to relinquishing national sovereignty and harmonizing legislation, as the slow development of the European Union from the fifties to the present day clearly shows.

In general, experience teaches that as long as a state is convinced it can stay on the international horizon without relinquishing any of its sovereignty, it will not do so. The Russian Federation

evidently needs the assistance of the European Union to develop from the point of view of technology, of the ever more important tertiary sector and of the civil sector, one in which it is often deficient,\* but it would like to do so on the basis of an absolute independence that also allows economic integration and political cooperation, reason why it prefers, justifiably, the far less binding bilateral agreements with individual countries rather than multilateral agreements with the EU as a whole, which obviously has a far greater normative contractual strength compared to even the largest individual state. This is clearly not possible and it will become necessary for a common platform of talks to be set up in order to regulate cooperation between the two entities as effectively as possible for the future too, also to prevent the Europeans from seeing the Russians only as potential immigrants or representatives of organized crime – which is unfortunately often the attitude of consular or police authorities in the West or of the media, always interested in shocking reports to impress TV audiences. On their part, the Russians should consider setting up a common set of regulations for the various sectors they cooperate with the EU in, softening the affirmation of their infringeable sovereignty when it comes to persecuting crimes committed by Russian citizens in the EU.

So, the problems that need to be solved in the sphere of relations between the two partners are manifold – political, economic and cultural. These relations are potentially very fertile and of great importance to the European Union itself, for which trade with Russia occupies third place after the USA and China, and with a constantly rising trend in the last 5 years.[16] While for Russia foreign trade with the EU constitutes over half of its total foreign trade, with Germany and Italy [17] high up in the rankings of its growing business exchanges[18].

In conclusion, in the course of the next years and decades relations with the Russian Federation will prove crucial for the EU, both from the point of view of opportunities and of risks, and the Europe's job will be to take advantage of the former and minimize the latter, conscious of the fact that the overall wellbeing of the Eurasian area largely depends on these relations, at once difficult and rich in opportunities for the future of the continent. Probably forms of “osmotic” contact of the Russian Federation with EU countries could convey to it a different model of political conception, a democratic one, which would imply sharing common objectives and European *best practices* in the context of political and economic action at the national and international level. The EU will find itself having to put into practice all that has been said also with respect to the new difficult task of regulating and channeling the now conspicuous Russian capital that tries to find returns in Western Europe, especially in the purchase of European industrial and financial activities, something that will force both partners to find a compromise on disciplining Russian investments and industrial acquisitions in Europe, a sector up until now tightly regulated within the Community. These

elements show how important Euro-Russian relations are for the future of the continent and how their further development would seem promising, though, as already mentioned, not lacking in difficulties and problems, also because Russian investments in Western Europe represent something completely new and will not fail to cause new tensions between the EU and the Russian Federation over the licitness and compatibility of Russian investments with Brussels's strict anti-monopoly regulations. Indeed, in the case of the acquisition by the Russians of considerable shares of European energy companies, such as the German RWE, problems immediately arise that are not exclusively commercial, but also cover national security and strategy, which obviously *cannot be left solely and absolutely to the decisions of the market*. In cases like these economics and politics inevitably intermingle to further complicate Euro-Russian relations. Agreeing on the "rules of the game" in economics will thus represent one of the most important elements of these relations. The idea both partners share to pragmatically keep the two aspects of their relations – the economic and the political – on the basis of a purely outward Euro-Russian neo-functionalism, will ultimately prove to be impossible, because the two aspects are by their very nature inevitably interconnected. Economic interests will in the future play a more and more important role in the field of Euro-Russian relations which, as mentioned earlier, remain founded above all on common political interests of international relevance, such as the war on terrorism, international crises, nuclear proliferation, the European Neighbourhood Policy, which concerns States bordering with the Russian Federation, the likely extension of NATO to Ukraine, understandably an issue Moscow is extremely sensitive to, Lukashenko's Belarus, and so on. Ultimately, it is important for both sides to recognize that Euro-Russian relations are undoubtedly marked by divergences and dichotomies, but also by significant convergences, and that in the long run the latter will end up weighing more than the former and so bring the two entities to a progressive, albeit slow, rapprochement. There exists, however, a strong imbalance between economics and politics. Economics acts as a catalyst for rapprochement between the two entities, but it moves far too quickly for politics and the legislative framework to adapt to it, hence the process to reach a higher political cohesion between the two entities will necessarily take several decades. The aforementioned difficulties in relations with Russia, but also the considerable opportunities Euro-Russian relations have to offer, could and should therefore push the EU in the future to find a greater internal cohesion so as to deal more coherently with the resurging Russian power, which has come to the light in particular with the recent events of the war fought by the Russian army against the Georgia of Saakashvili, a pro-Western leader, who is for this reason particularly in disfavour with Moscow. More internal cohesion within the EU in its approach to Russia is therefore particularly important at this time, especially because, as mentioned earlier, the "post-national" European Union lacks in Russian eyes

some of the attributes of power they consider absolutely indispensable: first and foremost the lack of political cohesion, followed by military weakness and energetic dependence, all factors that make the European Union appear relatively weak in the eyes of Moscow and hence dangerously liable to blackmail. For this reason the European habit of reaching compromises or signing agreements within a strictly legal framework will have to confront itself more and more with a resurgent Russian power that intends to also employ *force as a power tool tout court*, as we have also seen with the recent events in the Caucasus. This particular crisis was motivated by ethnic and cultural motives rooted in history and that had remained in standby in the years immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, when several Russian, Russian-speaking and Russophile minorities – some 25 million individuals, according to calculations – remained outside the borders of the Russian Federation in the strict sense and particularly in Kazakhstan, eastern and southern, a particularly sensitive area in case of Ukraine joining NATO, Baltic States, Transnistria etc. This has given rise to various ethnic tensions in several areas of the former Soviet Union of which Moscow could decide to take advantage, also to guarantee its interests in the region – energy and security interests in particular – on the basis of a sort of new " Brezhnev Doctrine" aimed at safeguarding not the ideological purity of a system that no longer exists, but, more or less spuriously and according to convenience, at protecting the Russian minorities living abroad from harassment by the states they reside in. For the European Union this is a complex challenge for which it has neither the necessary political cohesion, nor the necessary military force, and moreover it is very difficult for it to intervene in a regional context that presents itself as extremely complex from the historical and ethnic point of view, making European intervention in loco extremely difficult. Even human rights, so often invoked by the EU, are not easily determinable in the post-Soviet context, and in particular in the tormented Caucasus region, a crossroads of important strategic interests where ancestral tribal hatred, the wrongs and rights of one party or the other, intertwine more or less inextricably and contribute to a constant escalation of regional ethnic conflicts. The EU, an eminently juridical and "post-national" construction, and hence based on laws and political compromises often produced after extremely difficult negotiations between its members, risks finding itself unprepared to face regional conflicts that have their roots in history – in the Stalinist period in particular, but not only –, in racial hatred and in political interest brought forward by the various conflicting political factions with the use of violence and tyranny over rival ethnicities, a situation which also sees the intervention of the Great Game, strategic and energetic, of the great powers in the area. It is therefore easy to predict that in the near future Euro-Russian relations, mainly because of the various regional crises, will soon move from a phase of substantial stasis, or at least slow progress, to one of more dynamic confrontation, if not to conflict tout court.

This is particularly true of Ukraine, a country at a dangerous crossroads between the Euro-Atlantic and the Russian spheres, which also has important ethnic and political divisions between east and west and between the various power groups in government, which represent strong individual or regional economic interests. But it is the Caucasus that represents at the time of writing, late August 2008, the most dangerous point at issue for relations between Russia and the West. Recognition by the Russian Parliament of Abkhazia and South Ossetia constitutes an international precedent that could lead to conflict between Russia and the West, being a case of violation of the principle of the territorial integrity of a sovereign State, in this case Georgia, in favour of the principle of self-determination. If the West were to give way, this would constitute a very dangerous precedent with regard to Russia, which could give in to the temptation of intervening militarily in adjacent regions to defend its geopolitical interests. It could also, to defend its positions – and at the same time accuse the West of adopting "double standards" – cite, *not without reason*, the precedent of Kosovo, a region under Serbian sovereignty but with an Albanian majority, that recently declared its independence from Serbia with the help of the West, arousing anger in Moscow and Belgrade. The time for a clash between Russia and the West then seems to have arrived, and its results will determine geopolitical power balances in the next years, if not decades. The West's decision to "punish" Moscow could, in my opinion, consist not so much in interrupting political dialogue, a very dangerous option which could lead to a further radicalization of Kremlin policies, but rather in an intentional slowing down of, for example, Russia's membership in the WTO, something which would not fail to seriously damage its economy and its potential for growth, thus further increasing its dependence on the exportation of raw materials, which could in the long run prove unsustainable for the Russian economy itself, a problem some important Russian leaders are obviously perfectly aware of. They realize that continuing indefinitely with a statist model largely based on the exportation of raw materials is not in the long-term interests of Russia, which must instead be able to also count on its remarkable human, scientific and technological potential, the fundamental element for a country's development in the era of economic globalization. This would allow the country to lessen its dependence on the exportation of energy resources, and hence its need for tight control over its bordering states to make sure they always count on Russian infrastructures for their energy exports so as to make profits and bind them from both a political and an economic point of view in a sort of revival on a smaller scale of the defunct Soviet Union. But it is something that requires a technological development that is not exclusively piloted from above, but that also arises from the intermediate stages of entrepreneurial society, which needs to feel guaranteed in its investments by an efficient and incorrupt legal system, without finding itself in a position of weakness and inferiority before the executive power. The West, therefore, can only hope that within

the Russian leadership the moderate wing will prevail, the side favourable to a gradual integration of Russia in the international economic system, and not the extremist wing, favourable to an autarchic development based almost exclusively on profits deriving from the sale of raw materials, on hard-line internal social control and on an aggressive, or at least assertive, foreign policy. The long term consequences of the latter prevailing would be the end of Russia's cooperation with the West as it has taken place so far, even with all its imperfections and frequent oscillations, *from both sides*, in recent years and decades. The West as a whole has indeed made some serious political errors of omission, for example in the nineties, when it failed to sufficiently back minority liberal groups, such as Grigory Yavlinsky's Yabloko party, and to economically back Yeltsin during his bold economic reforms, which led Russia on the brink of the abyss in the summer of 1998. This led to the coming to power in Russia of a "strongman" who restored the internal order (*poriadok*), the international prestige and the economy of the country, but who also progressively reduced the freedoms that had come into being during the nineties. Another problem in Euro-Russian relations is the EU's lack of political unity and coherence on the theme of human rights when energetic issues, however fundamental they may be, are at stake and its lack of sensitivity for Russia's concerns about a progressive extension of NATO into what was once part of the Soviet empire.

### **The EU, Russia and the Post-Soviet Area: Cooperation and Competition**

In the end, the relations the EU will be able to establish with Russia will represent a crucial test to measure the abilities and ambitions of the European Union itself, i.e. whether they will continue to concentrate on the merely commercial level or take a qualitative leap towards closer cooperation at the political level, for example in the fight against Islam-based terrorism. The goal of fighting Islamic terrorism is common to both, but the methods used to solve the problem are quite different, if we think of the brutality used by Russia in Chechnya or its support of authoritarian regimes in Central Asia for fear of their instability. Precisely these procedures of unconditioned backing of corrupt authoritarian regimes end up favouring the growth of Islamic movements in the long run and it is on this very point that divergences may arise between Russia and EU. The EU itself, on the other hand, is not always capable of intervening effectively in such geographically and culturally remote areas and this is particularly true for Central Asia and partially true for the southern Caucasus, which is now part of ENP, the European Neighbourhood Policy. The EU, however, when it comes to those states rich in energetic resources like Kazakhstan has relatively few opportunities to influence their home and foreign policies, whilst Russia has for many years had very good partnership relations, both political and economic, with Kazakhstan. The European Union generally lacks levers to influence Central Asian countries, which often possess important energy resources

and thus cannot be threatened with economic or even political sanctions, as is the case with those states that wish to join the European Union and which Brussels can therefore pressurize or subject to *conditionalities*, to use the technical term. Brussels also ignores the mentality of these governments, which often establish preferential, but not exclusive, relations with Moscow, which thus becomes an important point of reference in the region, but which, with its policies aimed at keeping the status quo, represents an obstacle to their democratic evolution. Russia's purely economic-based and supportive approach to these dated authoritarian regimes becomes, however, a short-sighted choice in view of its future relations with the countries of the area, because the younger generations, which now lack any reference to the Soviet past, will slowly turn their backs to it and turn to other parties, both internal and external, which could also include the region's Islamic extremists. This is something the European Union could take advantage of in order to considerably strengthen its relations with these countries to the detriment of Moscow, even if a continuing dialogue with Russia on this delicate issue does in any case appear advisable as it concerns the delicate problem of security for both. In addition, the Russian Federation possesses military bases in the area – Manas in Kyrgyzstan, for example – which could turn out to be useful in case fundamentalist revolts broke out in an area where the European Union as such cannot intervene militarily because of the logistic and political limitations that make it deficient from this point of view in the eyes of the local governments that obviously seek partners capable of helping them guarantee internal order and hence that, in case of an internal revolt organized by Islamic extremists, can rapidly deploy a military intervention force in the region. To this end, the most important partners are Washington and Moscow, but for Central Asian governments turning to one necessarily means, in most cases, losing the support of the other. Hence an artful game played by local leaders with Washington and Moscow, perpetually on the balance between two contrasting, if not completely antithetical, political positions that only the common war against Islamic terrorism manages to partially reconcile.

### **Consequences of the Georgian Crisis on Euro-Russian Relations**

Russia, though certainly not a democracy and with an ideology that is under many aspects "neo-imperial", does however have the right to safeguard its "legitimate" security interests. This regards in particular Crimea, which has a Russian majority and where, according to a bilateral agreement between Russia and Ukraine effective until 2017, the Russian Black Sea Fleet is stationed in the port of Sevastopol to control traffic there. The expiry of this treaty concerning the naval base in Sevastopol in Ukraine is undoubtedly one of the fundamental points that determined the August War, because Russia needs to control oil traffic in the area and thus station its military bases in the area. Ukraine and Georgia's potential NATO membership has also undoubtedly contributed to the

Russian decision to deploy its military bases in South Ossetia and in strategically crucial Abkhazia, which allows it to comfortably control trade in the Black Sea and the energy trade in particular in the area of the Caspian Sea, rich in oilfields the produce of which travels through Georgian territory, and more precisely through the BTC pipeline (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, a Turkish port on the coasts of the Black Sea), hence bypassing Russian territory, something that is obviously cause of concern for Moscow. The August Crisis is therefore in good part ascribable to a strategic repositioning of Russia in the Caucasian area, an area that represents, within the framework of the current ever-evolving multipolar order, not only a strategic crossroads for the control of energy resources, but also represents the security interests of the Russian Federation. In this way the ancestral ethnic hatreds between the various peoples of the Caucasian area become pawns in an international context where infinitely greater economic and political interests are at play. The third important reason that pushes Russia towards an iron fist policy in the Caucasus, in addition to the aforementioned requirements to control the energy routes and to guarantee its security, is to prevent territories which are an integral part of the Russian Federation from deciding to break away, in primis Chechnya, as this could trigger off a chain reaction that would endanger the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation. These are the elements that the EU needs to bear in mind when opening talks with the Russian Federation on the recent Caucasian conflict and in general on the future order of the region, in particular on the controversial recognition by Russia of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Another element the EU needs to consider is that Russian domination in the area of the northern Caucasus, though often imposed through the use of force, does at least have the advantage of keeping under control a possible increase of Islamic fundamentalism, therefore, to a certain extent, it acts as a stabilizing factor for the area, an element that the EU must consider, because any radicalization of Islam in the area could have disastrous consequences for the region's geopolitical stability. This is of particular importance to the European Union too, which has recently inserted the region – not incidentally, given its energetic dependence on the Caspian Sea area, which holds important oil and gas fields – in its "Neighbourhood Policy", which includes Ukraine, Belarus and the southern Caucasus, i.e. Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, areas that were once part of the former Soviet Union and that still constitute a key role in the eyes of Moscow, which strives to play a hegemonic role there, also as referee in the territorial disputes between the various states of the region, for example in the Azeri area of Nagorno-Karabakh, which has a majority Armenian population. Its mediation in territorial disputes between the states of the region allows Moscow both to safeguard its interests and to obtain explicit international recognition for its role as hegemonic power in the area. In the forthcoming years the European Union will then need to strike a delicate balance of relations with its important eastern neighbour keeping three factors in

mind: the strong economic relations that tie it to Russia from the point of view of energy resources, its political relations, with the Russian Federation inevitably representing a factor of order in the region, and the delicate issue of human rights, which are often infringed in the region. A delicate and difficult balance has to be found between the economic and security needs of both parties. The Caucasian crisis therefore ended one phase of Euro-Russian relations, which from now on will proceed differently from the past. The European Union's attitude towards Russia should be one of firmness but not of "punishment", so as not to create a dangerous precedent leading to an escalation of EU sanctions and Russian retaliation, something that would ultimately be negative for both parties. Some commentators, and even some European politicians, including former Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi, talk of the need to keep an open dialogue with Russia to avoid that it may in the future give way to spiritual Euro-Asian temptations and, more concretely, that it may decide to redirect its energy exports and strategic interests towards an Asia undergoing a fierce economic growth. This is something that is actually not very likely, because the building of infrastructures to carry large quantities of gas to China would require enormous investments and would take a huge amount of time. In addition, Russo-Chinese relations are secretly marked by a rivalry concerning the effective strategic control of Russian Siberia, to which overpopulated China could one day aspire. In any case, the primary interest of the European Union as a whole is to keep an open dialogue with the Russian Federation, without internal divisions between traditionally "Russophile" countries (Germany, Italy, France, Spain) and traditionally "Russophobic" ones (Poland, Baltic States, Great Britain, in negative relations with Moscow after the killing of former Russian secret agent Litvinenko in London, but which also has important energy interests in the Caucasus with the BTC pipeline from Azerbaijan to Turkey via Georgia, of which British Petroleum holds a 30% share), which would irreparably weaken its effectiveness and give the Russians the opportunity to resort to their habitual *divide et impera* policies against their adversaries, both internal and foreign. It is therefore essential for Europe to take on the role of mediator and peacemaker in the Caucasian crisis, possibly sending in the area a mission of European observers, or OSCE observers, who have generally stood out for their objectiveness and impartiality, in contrast to their US counterparts, who on the contrary have stood out for a good amount of partiality and factiousness, thus garnering little success among the Russians and the local regimes. This derives from the fact that, because of its energetic dependence, the European Union has a primary interest in building a constructive dialogue with Russia. At the same time it also has a strong political interest in maintaining and re-establishing international law against potentially more and more dangerous violations that endanger it in the post-Soviet space. While between the United States and Russia strong tensions exist due to ideological differences, but above all because of the struggle taking place over geopolitical

predominance in the "post-Soviet space". Hence the question of respecting the law is often replaced by a mere question of power relations between the two countries, even military power, which in the case of Georgia were, however indirectly, favourable to the Russians, because the Georgian soldiers, trained and armed by the United States and other countries, suffered a resounding defeat in combat. This was also due to the imprudence of president Saakashvili, who obviously did not think he could defeat the Russian Federation with his military forces alone and confided excessively in military aid from the West on the basis of the rules of "godfatherhood", strongly rooted in Georgian culture. There exists for the West, therefore, a problem concerning the trustworthiness of post-Soviet states, in particular if any of these were to join NATO in the near future. In particular, the strong nationalism present in these states, which often leads them to denying any cultural or political autonomy to the ethnic minorities residing there, as in the case of Georgia, could frequently embarrass their western partners. This nationalistic behaviour on behalf of the local elites obviously facilitates Moscow's intervention in favour of oppressed national minorities – who can of course receive Russian passports with great ease if they so wish – which it can use also to defend its own geopolitical and strategic interests. Thus this regional conflict risks an escalation at the international level. This implies a necessary renewal of international institutions (NATO, OSCE), which in some cases seem not entirely suitable to resolving international conflicts, something Russian president Medvedev has stated in a recent interview.

Georgian president Saakashvili should have borne in mind in this case the Kaganian model of an "irenic" Europe, which without the political will or the means to embark on a long military conflict can only limit itself to confiding in the maintenance of international law, while the United States, can only in *defined and specific cases* threaten the use of military force to uphold its motives and interests, even against a potential geopolitical adversary such as the Russian Federation, which draws strength not only from its presence on a territory with huge energy resources, but also from its messianic idea of "empire" and from its being geographically bicontinental, something which understandably takes on a high geopolitical value in the current international context, even in function of the war against Islamic terrorism and because of its strategic importance for energy supplies coming from the Caspian area and directed to western Europe. It is also possible that in the forthcoming years the European Union will find in Russian president Medvedev, once the latter has freed himself from the cumbersome "guardianship" of "the stone guest" Putin, a more malleable and better disposed partner to talks and dialogue with the West and less aggressive and ideological compared to his predecessor, the current prime minister Vladimir Putin. The fact that Medvedev does not come from the former KGB like his predecessor, but from the State company and energy giant Gazprom, should to some extent help this slow transformation process of Russia's internal

and foreign policy, which after a period of adjustment shifted from an attitude of submission to the West, to one of co-operation and finally one of outright defiance, as the Iran dossier also fully proves. This is one reason why it is important, both from a substantial point of view and as a question of image, for the European Union to give its contribution to solving the Caucasian crisis, otherwise post-Soviet states, and those of Central Asia too, lacking other trustworthy contacts, could be forced to choose between a revived Russian power and the United States, which has every interest in penetrating more and more deeply into the region, which has become extremely strategic because of its enormous energy resources and its relative proximity to China and India. The European Union, therefore, could play an important role as a "third power" between the United States and Russia and prevent the formation of a sharp polar opposition in the area, in some ways similar to the old Cold War bipolarity between states oriented towards Washington and states attached to Moscow as their main ally in the region. A recurring fact in history is the formation of coalitions around the more influential states and this has usually led to serious international tensions and, in some cases, to armed conflict. In this case the latter outcome seems unlikely, considering the nuclear capacity of the two main contenders, which though reduced compared to the Cold War era, is still capable of causing horrific damage to an opponent. Europe could exert a positive influence to ease off the growing tensions between Washington and Moscow, helping to avoid another useless and expensive arms race the signals of which we have been seeing for some time, such as, for example, Russia's exit from CFE, the treaty regulating conventional weapons in Europe, following the installation in the Czech Republic and Poland of US radar bases for the localization of potential missile launches from a diplomatically speaking non-specified aggressor. Russia today could probably afford, thanks to its conspicuous revenue from the energy market, a new arms race, but this would undoubtedly have negative repercussions both on the home front and on its international relations, and in particular, of course, on those with the United States. Heavy military expenditure would clearly risk having only limited repercussions on the Russian civil sector and on the country's technological development, taking away funds from the modernization of the country's often decaying civil infrastructures, without counting the fact that it would lead to an increase of Russia's inclination to use military instruments to achieve its desired political goals, as the recent Georgian crisis shows. In fact the military instrument, rather than being employed for actual long-term conflicts, could be used by the Russian leadership to reach crucial political results (as for example preventing Ukraine and Georgia from joining NATO, insisting on the fact they lack basic qualifications for membership, i.e. a territorial integrity and hence a lack of possible territorial controversies with other states, as well as the prerequisite of a responsible and a minimally presentable national government at the international level, one that does not oppress national

minorities but that gives them instead broad political and cultural autonomy) with a relatively modest and short-term military engagement. The presentability of a government satisfies an indispensable political requirement in today's international context, i.e. a basic respect of human rights and hence of those ethnic minorities that can otherwise be used as a *casus belli* by the great powers or by regional powers to achieve long-term geo-strategic goals, as in the case of South Ossetia, where the Russians, thanks to a very clever provocation policy towards a political adversary fired with a heated nationalism, have reached their main political aim of controlling the energy trade and above all avoiding a further expansion of NATO nearer to Russian borders. Hence, to reach its political aims, Russia paradoxically and successfully uses principles that within its borders, according to opportunity, either refuses or applies in a limited and paternalistic way, i.e. respecting human rights and the rights of minorities. In the specific case of South Ossetia, it is also favoured by the fact that, compared to Georgia, it concedes a far greater cultural autonomy to the ethnic minorities living in its territory or that acquire its citizenship, thus winning South Ossetia's trust and consensus. Russian-speaking or Russophile minorities hence become the master instrument, the "Trojan horse" of a hegemonic project to re-establish Russian influence within the post-Soviet space. To this we should of course also add the crucial fact that Russia, thanks to its huge incomes from energy sales, can invest great financial resources in favour of a modest territorial entity such as South Ossetia, a factor undoubtedly viewed with favour by the population of this poor Ossetian enclave in Georgian territory, which in the Soviet era had enjoyed a relative cultural and administrative autonomy within the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic thanks to a complex game of political and ethnic checks and balances that allowed to keep a relative, albeit precarious, peace between the various ethnic groups in the region. This precarious balance came to an end in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union, which from 1992 gave way to the so-called "post-Soviet wars". The Soviet Union, so implicitly the Russians, played both the role of oppressor of a given ethnicity and that of patron of another against the other nationalities in the region within a very complex mosaic with a very unstable balance. To this we should add the fact that, according to Russia's Constitutional dictate, every citizen of the former Soviet Union has the right to apply for a Russian passport, a circumstance which has revealed to be very favourable to the people of South Ossetia and in particular to its president, Eduard Kokoiti, who has used to it request a sort of annexation of South Ossetia to Russia, an annexation that was severely challenged by the international community, because contrary to international law and to the interests of the international community (of the United States and the European Union in particular), which sent a consistent team of observers to the country. For today's Russia the restoring of a regional political balance, however unstable, seems worthwhile not only from a political point of view, but from an

economic one too, as it allows it to invest economic resources that increase Russia's GDP because of an increase in the demand for the supply of road and housing infrastructures within the territory to be rebuilt, the so-called "reconstruction benefits". The Caucasian conflict is therefore of course the subject of political judgments, but also of judgments to do with the economic cycle connected to the destruction and reconstruction of infrastructures. Hence the war paradoxically becomes a sort of Keynesian driving force of the regional economy and naturally of the Russian economy, which greatly capitalizes on it. In addition to this, it is easy to imagine that these trials of strength on behalf of the Russian army after Georgia's armed aggression against Ossetia, in turn deliberately and skilfully provoked by the Russians themselves in collaboration with the Ossetians, (a population that more than any other Caucasian one enjoys the support of the Moscow government), will have a long-lasting positive effect on Russian public opinion, which still considers the Caucasus important from a strategic point of view, but also a centuries-old and quite painful "thorn in the side" for Russia, as can be easily ascertained by the generally hostile attitude the Russians have towards the Caucasians, a hostile attitude that is generally reciprocated by the latter, though for obvious reasons not explicitly. Over several centuries of Russian domination a strong symbiosis has developed, for better or worse, between the Caucasian peoples and the Russians, one that the foreign visitor cannot help noticing. The ancestral hatred between the several Caucasian ethnicities, and in particular against the Ossetians, who in the 1940s, with Stalin's support, took over territories that historically belonged to other ethnicities accused by Stalin himself of collaboration with Nazi invaders and hence deported to Kazakhstan, from where they did not return until the Khrushchev era, paradoxically force the foreign observer to reflect upon the important role of arbitrator, albeit an authoritarian one, that Russia plays in this delicate historical and ethnic context. This expressly means that it prevents the more burning nationalistic passions from exploding, (or at least it controls their devastating effects for obvious geopolitical reasons), and that would lead the peoples of the region to fight each other with the terrifying brutality that characterizes ethnic conflicts. This because, generally speaking, a state that defines itself as having a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, can decide to resort to controlled violence to reach its geopolitical aims, like in the recent case of South Ossetia, but is evidently not interested in this force going any further than the levels necessary to the achievement of such aims. In short, it is not in its interest that the use of force be gratuitous and governed by the bloodthirsty instincts produced by the century-old hatred between the various peoples involved in the conflict. Consequently the European Union, having recently included the Caucasus in its Neighbourhood Policy, needs to consider Russian interests in the region and the role of arbiter Russia has long played in the area, because it has an essential role there from the point of view of its strategic

interests, and above all its energy interests, as a transit zone for its pipelines (and in particular the so-called del "Nabucco" pipeline, which as it does not go through Russian territory, would allow Europe not to depend on Russia for its energy supplies and is hence probably the real cause of the Russo-Georgian war) transporting energy resources from the Caspian area and Central Asia in general, an area with an ever increasing importance to the strategic balances of the decades to come as a crossroads between the energy interests of China, Russia, India, the United States and the European Union. This new "Great Game", which forces its players into a difficult struggle for strategic resources, does however contain a unifying factor: the need to fight Islamic terrorism, which represents a deadly threat for all, as we saw in India during the recent Mumbai attack, but also in China and the north-western region of Xinjiang, populated by the Muslim Uyghur. It is well-known that Russia too has a strong interest in contrasting the Islamist phenomenon in Central Asia and on its own territory, in the same way as the United States and the European Union, which does not want attacks on its own territories nor a radicalization of Islamic populations residing in Europe which central Asian Islamism could influence, especially if within the next decade Turkey, which historically has close cultural and political relations with the Turkish-speaking part of central Asia, should join the EU. In the latter case the EU's foreign policy would change dramatically compared to the past and its links with central Asia would become much stronger. In this perspective, the European Union would also find itself forced to advance the specific interests of Turkey in central Asia, which, as is well-known, are often in contrast with those of Moscow. Within a framework with such changeable contours a rethinking of the system of structures aimed at governing the international society of the future will be of particular importance. But for the time being this is a mere hypothesis. If Turkey were to join the EU in the coming years, it would act as a "bridge" for the European Union's policies in central Asia and, of course, in the Caucasus, where it would however find itself in open confrontation with Russia and also with Iran, one of Russia's important regional economic partners. As things stand now, the question is still of course entirely feasible, even though it is easy to see that a Turkish membership of the European Union would allow the latter to free itself from its European habit of mind and enter a different cultural dimension such as that of central Asia, where it would find itself forced to confront itself with very different cultural traditions and with the persistent Russian influence in the area. Confrontation with different cultures and histories would lead the Europe to let go once and for of the "post-national" European culture that has so far marked it and come to terms with states the culture and world vision of which is permeated by very different values and cultural traditions, leading it to an abandonment or considerable modification of its current generalized habits, undoubtedly characterized by a strong presumptuously self-referential euro-centrism, (or at least this is how it is often perceived by its

central Asian interlocutors), towards the founding values that should be at the root of a country's civilization, whether with a European cultural background or not. It must be said that his type of approach, founded on a presumptuous European cultural superiority that imposes political conditions such as the respect of human rights and of the law, annoys the EU's central Asian interlocutors who often prefer to talk to the Russians, with whom they share, for better or worse, a common history and language and who to their eyes, and this something that should not be underestimated, have proved able to defend their interests with the war against Georgia. The years and decades to come will then be decisive for the European Union, which will find itself more and more involved at the international level, abandoning once and for all that sort of cosy, but at the same time limiting, "protected interiority" of the cold war period, and fully taking up an autonomous role in world politics, with the risks and opportunities connected to such a new international role. A short and long-term trade-off thus presents itself for the European Union between realpolitik and an intimate coherence of its policies towards these countries, inevitably bound to an insistence on the respect of human rights and the law, which, last but not least, also has the function of guaranteeing the respect of signed contracts, a factor that is not unimportant to foreign investors, for example in Kazakhstan, where foreign investments in the energy sector add up to several million euros. This appears particularly important in these cultural contexts where a coherent behaviour on behalf of the interlocutor is decisive, as are founding cultural values such as honour, the strength shown during negotiations and hence the concept of "not losing your face" before your supporters or before your political or economic interlocutors. This reflects a general characteristic of the post-Soviet context, i.e. the strong *personalization and concentration* of power, which depends directly on the degree of strength, wisdom and popularity of a politician, well-represented in this case by Kazakh president Nazarbayev and, obviously, by Putin. Behind this attitude in post-Soviet society we find an age-old cultural heritage linked to virility and to a patriarchal conception of society summed up with the authoritarian Soviet experience. This implies a corresponding weakening of the other structures of the state, the real function of which is reduced to a sort of pure imitation of the democratic process to at least guarantee its appearance, but not its substance. The difference with the political conception of the EU, centred around the rule of the law rather than around the personality of he who possesses institutional power, thus appears dramatically obvious and fails not to cause puzzlement and sometimes mutual bewilderment, because the political cultures of the two interlocutors are completely different, if not antithetical. The historical phases of the two entities are marked by strong contrasts, and this will need to be taken into account in the development phases of European policies towards Russia, which will have to be based on a possible medium and long-term convergence of interests, favouring inclusion

processes, such as allowing Russia to join the WTO, rather than sanctions and exclusion, which generally do not lead to the effects the international community desires, but instead to propaganda at home, in the sense “an image of the enemy”, causing a further slowing down of necessary internal reforms in the field of civil and especially economic law. The latter is indispensable for the birth of a society where small and medium enterprises become the backbone of the productive system instead of economic development and technological innovation depending almost exclusively on the huge state-owned energy companies, which have the power of dialoguing from a position of strength with the various branches of the state administration. In turn, this would allow to weaken the overwhelming power of bureaucracy and guarantee more balanced power relations between state and society, building, in other words, an interaction between state and society that does not take place uniquely on the basis of a top-bottom relationship, but that will allow Russian society to directly communicate its needs to the highest government and bureaucratic levels, and not just via elections the purely plebiscitary result of which are often predictable from the very start. Putin’s bureaucratic-authoritarian model has therefore guaranteed the nation short and medium-term stability and economic growth, but it has at the same time slowed down necessary economic and institutional reforms, thus representing in the long-term an obstacle to the further economic, and above all social, development of the country. Beyond energy resources, what makes a country economically efficient is the certainty that legal rights are respected and guaranteed by a well-structured and functioning legal framework that does not allow excessive discretionary powers to the political or bureaucratic power. The Soviet experience shows that political power tends to reduce the legal framework to a minimum so as to operate as freely as possible without any obstacles placed by institutional forces that may question its decisions. And this tendency, albeit in a very different framework, continues to carry out its devastating effects. When a legal framework is not well-structured, economic activity cannot reach its potential, and consequently civil society evolves very slowly where the certainty of legal rights is weak and the certainty of a political apparatus that essentially perpetuates itself by internal co-optation rather than through free elections holding on to power is strong. This socio-political structure has remained essentially unchanged in time, also thanks to the presence of these immense energy resources, which paradoxically end up representing an obstacle to any further transformation of the country in the modern sense. The becoming an actual "curse" instead, what analysts call "the oil curse". The more sensible ruling classes try to diversify the structure of the economy so that it will not be too dependent on energy resources alone, but not all are successful in the same way, because it is a kind of income that sometimes induces rulers into a sort of mental laziness or into a misappropriation of a large part of the profits from the sector without reinvesting them in the economy of the country. This explains

why the European markets are faced with huge amounts of Russian capital seeking returns or being invested in imported luxury goods rather than in local entrepreneurship, which for this reason remains relatively weak and mainly relegated to traditional industrial sectors such as metal, wood, and the military industry. The latter, like the nuclear industry, has little effect on the civil sector, but is instead important from the point of view Russia's political relations with various states in the Middle East, including Iran, with which the country has very tight political and economic relations, also very important for Russian geopolitical interests in the area and which make Russia a member, along with the US, the EU and the UN, of the Quartet that has as its main aim to solve the complex political issues in this area.

[http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/north\\_dim/kalin/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/north_dim/kalin/index.htm)

[2][http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/belarus/intro/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/belarus/intro/index.htm)

[3][http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/north\\_dim/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/north_dim/index.htm)

[4][http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/russia/intro/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/russia/intro/index.htm)

[5][http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm)

[6]on this point see P. Sartori "Emergenza Transnistria: un < buco nero> da riempire subito" in "Limes" "Russia in gioco" 6/2004 pp.139-148

[7][http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/moldova/intro/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/moldova/intro/index.htm)

[8][http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/blacksea/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/blacksea/index_en.htm)

[9]<http://www.esa.int/esaCP/index.html>

[10]cfr. Adriano Roccucci in "Limes" "Russia in gioco" n.6/2004 pp. 59-66

[11] <http://www.carnegie.ru/> Alexei Malašenko works for The Carnegie Moscow Centre and is considered one of the greatest Russian experts on Central Asia.

[12][http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_barroso/mandelson/speeches\\_articles/sppm147\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/mandelson/speeches_articles/sppm147_en.htm) In this case commissioner Mandelson alludes to the rift between western and eastern Europe over the Russian Federation.

[13][http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/library/publications/russia\\_brochure07\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/library/publications/russia_brochure07_en.pdf)

[14][http://ec.europa.eu/energy/russia/overview/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/russia/overview/index_en.htm)

[15][http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_barroso/mandelson/speeches\\_articles/sppm147\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/mandelson/speeches_articles/sppm147_en.htm)

\* Industrial and manufacturing products and related support technologies, extraction infrastructures, the antiquated legal and financial system regarding national and international holding rights and the system of legal protections allowing the punishability of transnational crime in Russia too, without meeting strong resistances dictated by a conception linked to the inviolability of national sovereignty by organisms with a strong fear of their progressive divestiture of authority, etc.

[16][http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/bilateral/countries/russia/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/bilateral/countries/russia/index_en.htm)

[17]<http://www.informest.it/news/dettaglioNews.aspx?id=11-240507-172148N>

[18]<http://www.regionirusse.it/progetto.htm>