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EU-Russian Relations:
Evolution and
Theoretical Assessment

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I. Introduction

Since the beginning of the new millennium, various initiatives have been taken to promote EU-Russian relations. In this context, a triangle centered around the capitals of Berlin, Paris and Moscow may be of particular interest as a driving force for the evolution of EU-Russian relations. The initiatives have also been criticized for going too far in accommodating Russian interests while neglecting the interests of other EU-partners. The first triangle meeting of this kind took place in 2003 with German Chancellor Schröder, French President Chirac and Russian President Putin airing criticism of the US war in Iraq. This meeting was criticized on both sides of the Atlantic. It was followed by further triangle meetings in 2004 and 2006. Leadership changes in all three countries, the fallout of the Russo-Georgian war in 2008 and Western critique on growing authoritarianism in Russia have put further activities on hold. All the more surprising was a new meeting of the Berlin-Paris-Moscow triangle in October 2010, attended by German Chancellor Merkel, French President Sarkozy and Russian President Medvedev in the run-up to the NATO-Russia Council meeting in November 2010.

Against the backdrop of these recent developments, I will argue that the evolutionary process of EU- Russian relations has incorporated the different conclusions made by three scholars who have different theoretical perceptions. Because of this, the ongoing developments should be evaluated

using an academic approach to understand them more broadly from a critical and objective position. Thus, the literature review was also made in conjunction with the core argument of the paper.

In the main text of the paper, attention was given to three articles concerning EU- Russian relations. In accordance with their theoretical framework, their contexts were analysed. The articles present different descriptive narrations of EU-Russian relations as a result of their theoretical differences on the issue. Hence, the three articles give different viewpoints on the same subject.

However, the final analysis of this article and its conclusion are made through a general assessment of the three articles. Instead of criticising their theoretical context preferences, the consistency between the current developments in the relations and the theoretical claims of the three articles is questioned. So, this paper provides an opportunity to comprehend the current direction of EU-Russian relations on the basis of different schools of thought.

II. Key Facts on the Relations between the EU and Russia

The relations between Russia and the EU have a historical background as a result of many factors. This relationship differs from the classical understanding of foreign policy relationships because of the EU's status as a supra-national organization of 27 members. Accordingly, EU-Russian relations should be evaluated as 27 member states' individual relations with Russia. At the same time we must look at the relations between the EU Commission and the governmental structures in Russia responsible for conducting foreign affairs, i.e. the Kremlin and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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Before the EEC was transformed into the EU with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty and before the dissolution of the Soviet Union into the Commonwealth of Independent States including Russia, Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev implied the direction of the mutual relations between the European nations and the Soviet bloc. In his speech, Gorbachev put emphasis on ‘the Common European Home’.¹

In this foreign policy formulation, the Soviet strategy was based on the dimension of change in the Transatlantic relations between the USA and Europe. Due to the fact that the US has a military presence with bases in European countries, Gorbachev considered integrating the USSR into the European system while excluding the US. To benefit from the leadership competition between the US and France, the Soviet Union sought an opportunity to create friction in Transatlantic relations. Indeed, the Soviet Union tried to exploit the fact that they were geographically part of Europe while the US was not.

As a consequence of the change in Soviet strategy, countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria gained more autonomy from Moscow. The policy also eased the German question which had existed since the Berlin Blockade of 1948. The relevant process ended with German unification on October 3, 1990. The Soviet policy became a positive influence on the British, French, Italian and Scandinavian perspectives regarding the German unification.

Meanwhile, Mikhail Gorbachev focused on the internal problems of the USSR and enhanced policies to solve them in a sustainable way. However, Gorbachev’s policies of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring) did not provide a solution to the existing problems of the Soviet Union in

¹ Margot Light with Roy Allison, “The Place of Europe in Russian Foreign Policy”, in: *Putin’s Russia and the Enlarged Europe*, Edited by Roy Allison, Margot Light and Stephen White, (Chatham House: London 2006), p.2.

spite of the radical precautions taken vis-à-vis possible fundamental changes in the internal structure. Instead, the process resulted in the dissolution of the USSR on December 8, 1991 with the common decision of the Presidents of Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus. Furthermore, the USSR was replaced by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on the 11th December 1991.²

The dramatic shift in the Soviet camp instantly affected the whole international structure deeply. Not only the former members of the Soviet bloc, but also the US and Europe faced new international conditions which were influenced by the new developments. Thus, the EEC and later the EU had to formulate new policies in a variety of fields vis-à-vis Russia which continues to occupy a permanent seat in lieu of the USSR on the United Nations Security Council.

Russia in the beginning of the 1990s was experiencing a tough economic situation. The 1989 'Agreement on Trade and Commercial Economic Cooperation' granted most favoured nation status to the Soviet Union and the subsequent Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) Programme was accepted to support the transition process to an open market economy together with a democratic society in 1991, the existing arrangements between the EEC and Russia were not enough for Russia to overcome the new economic position of the country. Here political considerations had a decisive role on whether to deepen economic aid or not. To illustrate, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) was concluded between the EU and Russia to foster trade and investment, as well as create the conditions to establish a future free trade area between

² Lecture notes of 2nd March 2009 taken in the lecture by Assoc. Professor Oktay Tanışsever at Middle East Technical University.

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the EU and Russia.³ But its ratification was delayed until December 1, 1997 due to protests regarding the Russian position and policies during the War in Chechnya.

In addition to the economic aspect of EU-Russian relations, the security matters remained an open question following the end of the Cold War. Whereas the Warsaw Pact- the military wing of the Soviet Bloc- was dissolved, the rival military organization of the Western bloc, NATO, still exists. During the 1990's, the members of NATO seriously discussed the future of the alliance. According to Professor Hyde-Price, in the development of the debate, four possible forms of security for Europe were proposed: NATO and an 'Atlanticist' Europe, a West European Defence Community, the CSCE and a Pan-European Collective Security System, and *L'Europe des Etats* (the States of Europe).⁴ Regarding the final decision of the discussions, it can be claimed that Anglo-American Atlanticist view has had an edge over the others.

In line with these developments, Russia has preferred to apply the Near Abroad Policy to present its clear concentration on the regions and issues dealing with its prior sphere of influence and with the impact of the Russian minorities in the neighbouring countries in the former Soviet Republics. Russia has therefore had understandable hesitations regarding the future of NATO since it has been proven contrary to the Russian offer for a European security structure via a Pan-European Collective Security System such as the OSCE. However, the Atlanticist camp has gained some successes such as the general acquiescence to NATO enlargement.

³ Margot Light with Roy Allison, *The Place of Europe in Russian Foreign Policy*, in: *Putin's Russia and the Enlarged Europe*, Edited by Roy Allison, Margot Light and Stephen White, (Chatham House: London 2006), p.6.

⁴ Adrian Hyde-Price, *European Security beyond the Cold War: Four Scenarios for the Year 2010*, (SAGE Publications: London 1991), p.193.

Concerning NATO enlargement in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia has had worries about its security. Cooperation between Russia and NATO has however been accelerated by Russia joining the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in 1992 and then joining the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in 1997.⁵ In addition, Russia was involved within the framework of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1994 which engaged non-member states in practical cooperation with the Alliance. Nonetheless, Russia is not taking part in the decision-making mechanism of NATO. The NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council of 1997 and later NATO-Russia Council (NRC) of 2002 have been nothing more than an advisory mechanism between NATO and Russia.

In fact, a series of political differences also became influential in the security relations between the EU and Russia. For example, the dissolution of the Soviet Union helped to trigger the dissolution of Yugoslavia during the early 1990s. As a result of a bloody civil war in the region, many people were killed or displaced from their home countries. In the conflict, the leading actors showed different reactions to the development. However, NATO's role in Bosnia-Herzegovina and its operation against the Serbs and their installations in Bosnia-Herzegovina were harshly opposed by the Russian politicians. Furthermore, the Kosovo issue appeared in the international arena as an open question until its final independence on February 17, 2007. The new state was recognized by the Western powers including many EU members even though Russia rejected its independence and asserted that Western recognition was a double-standard because Abkhazian and South Ossetian claims for independence went unacknowledged by the West.

⁵ Margot Light with Roy Allison, *The Place of Europe in Russian Foreign Policy*, in: *Putin's Russia and the Enlarged Europe*, Edited by Roy Allison, Margot Light and Stephen White, (Chatham House: London 2006), p.4.

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One of the most important aspects in the security relations between the EU and Russia is the evolution of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) stemming from the St. Malo Summit of 1998 between the British and French leaders. Even if the ESDP, the successor of the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) was formulated within the context of NATO, the European side of NATO has begun to increase its role in the alliance. It has brought a new dimension to EU-Russian relations.

There have been many EU-Russia summits which have incorporated the EU Troika and Russia half-yearly meetings. In the definition of the agenda, Russia has increased its share of decision making with Vladimir Putin's rise to power first as Prime Minister and later as President. The Summits have brought several important results. To illustrate, the Seventh EU-Russia Summit held in Moscow in 2001 covered the Russian decision to change switch to the Euro from the US dollar as its unit of exchange in foreign trade especially with EU members. Furthermore there has been an emergence of a common European economic space improving the mutual economic relations. The Summits also paved the way for the concept of "four common spaces" defined as economic; freedom, security and justice; external security; science and education including cultural aspects accepted by both sides in 2004.⁶ In addition, the nineteenth Summit held in Samara, Russia from the 17th to the 18th of May 2007 concluded the preparations for a new EU-Russia agreement. At the twentieth Summit in Portugal in October 2007, investment dialogue, energy early warning system and the World Trade Organization Accession (WTO) of Russia were discussed.⁷ So, the EU-Russia Summits have played a crucial role in the definition of mutual relations so far.

⁶ V. Likhachev, Russia and the European Union, International Affairs, p.110-111.

⁷ Lecture notes of 23rd March 2009 taken in the lecture by Assoc. Professor Oktay Tansisever at Middle East Technical University.

Of particular importance to the European economies is the energy issue. According to the Working Group Report of the Centre for European Politics Studies in 2001, the foreign energy dependency of the EU will be around 70 per cent during the 2020s and 2030s.⁸ The Press Release by the EU Commission verifies the result of the Report: in 2030, the energy dependency on external countries is expected to be 65 per cent.⁹ On this point, Çağdaş Ergün underlines the energy supply security for EU-Russian relations and states that the EU energy policy requires the energy security in a sustainable way since 90 per cent of the imported natural gas, for example, comes from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.¹⁰ To support his argument, it is noteworthy to remember that almost 59.5 per cent of the natural gas need is imported from Russia to European countries such as Germany and Poland, and accordingly Russia is able to control many major energy routes such as Druzhba pipeline and Primorsk port to Europe. In addition, there are various energy projects between Russia and European countries which foreshadow long-term energy plans: For example, there is the Nord Stream Project between Russia and Germany through the Baltic States and Poland, as well as the South Stream Project between Russia and Bulgaria. Thus, Russia- the leading energy supplier to the EU - and the EU whose energy dependency is dramatically increasing regard it mutually beneficial to cooperate in the fields of energy. They prefer to have stable relations so as not to affect their vital interests in a negative manner.

Nonetheless, EU-Russian relations have also experienced conflicts of interest. Margot Light summarizes the controversial topics as the border issues, the Northern Dimension, Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) and ‘soft’ security issues, and adds general problems such as the War in Chechnya and the Extension of the PCA to the accession states.¹¹

⁸ Nyquist, C.E., Egenhofer, E. & Legge, T., Security of Energy Supply: A Question for Policy or the Markets?, Brussels, November 2001, p.9.

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/focus/energy_en.htm (accessed on 30 May 2009).

¹⁰ Ergün, Ç.E., Avrupa Birliği Enerji Hukuku, (Çakmak Yayınevi: Ankara 2007), p.10.

¹¹ Margot Light.

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First, on the issue of borders, the demarcation of the frontiers between Russia and the Baltic States which are today EU members remained a question after the demise of the Soviet Union. Additionally, the visa regime and the status of Kaliningrad became other topic points in the relations. In particular, Russia had problems with Lithuania regarding these issues. Nevertheless, a final compromise was achieved in 2002, and the Russians became able to transit Lithuania to travel to and from Kaliningrad under a Facilitated Rail Transit Document and Facilitated Transit Document scheme being free of charge to them.¹²

Second, the Northern Dimension was adopted in 1998 by the EU as an initiative to foster the relations between the EU, Russia and the Baltic States by means of priority areas of cooperation including economics, infrastructure, human needs, environment and soft security. However, the foreseen purposes have not been fulfilled because of the lack of available finance. On the other hand, some countries such as Poland focused more on the Eastern Dimension to develop their relations principally with Ukraine and Belarus. So, the Northern Dimension has become insufficient to satisfy the needs in the previously mentioned fields.

Third, illegal immigration and environmental issues were taken into account in the mutual relations in the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). The EU side assessed the soft security threats from Russia as ‘nuclear safety, environmental pollution, the fight against crime, including drug trafficking and illegal migration and the spread of diseases’ in the Country Strategy for the Russian Federation of 2003 by the European Commission.¹³ The TACIS Programme of 1991 can be thought of as a complementary instrument working in accordance with EU defini-

¹² Margot Light.

¹³ Ibid.

tions in order to overcome the emerging problems in these fields following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

As for the general problems, the War in Chechnya caused serious troubles for the Moscow administration not only within the boundaries of the Russian Federation, but also in the international arena. Its efforts to solve the problem were heavily criticized by the West.¹⁴ Accordingly, the outbreak of the War in 1994 had negative effects on EU-Russian relations. The ratification process of the PCA was postponed until 1997. Similarly, the EU preferred to use sanctions such as the suspension of TACIS when Moscow administration the second war in Chechnya. Conversely, September 11 became a turning point in the perception on the War in Chechnya. International terrorism and the fight against it were considered a sort of justification and President Putin mentioned that Russia was fighting against terrorists in Chechnya who had ties to radical Islamic groups.

Second, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement has brought about further discussions between the EU and Russia as a result of the EU enlargement in 2004 covering ten new states.¹⁵ Because the Agreement includes mutual privileges which have important economic gains, the enlargement process increased the scope of beneficiaries. Therefore, the Russian side of the Agreement claimed that there was an economic loss as a result of the expansion of the Agreement in terms of the number of countries. The Russians alleged that high standards for products including environmental protection measures and anti-dumping measures adversely affected the Russian economy; however, the EU side claimed that the lowering of customs duties on Russian goods in the new member states from 9 per cent to

¹⁴ İlyas Kamalov, *Putin Dönemi Rus Dış Politikası: Moskova'nın Rövanşı*, (Yeditepe: İstanbul 2008), p.9.

¹⁵ These states are Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Malta, the Greek Cypriot Administration, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia.

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4 per cent had a positive impact on the Russian economy regarding the exportation of products and the increasing of its trade surplus.¹⁶

Third, energy security has continued to maintain its vitality which has implied mutual dependency. A large proportion of natural gas is imported from Russia. Therefore Russia has received a large amount of income from the EU countries. However, the recent developments have accelerated energy security and its variety in terms of its import from outside of the Union. In 2006, Russian natural gas distribution company Gazprom claimed that due to a rise in the price of natural gas on the international markets, they would dramatically increase the price of natural gas sold to Ukraine. This decision quadrupled natural gas prices for consumers in the Ukraine, causing a political conflict between Russia and Ukraine to emerge.¹⁷ As a result of the crisis, the EU members demanded guarantees for energy security to avoid any kind of crisis on this issue similar to Ukraine; Russia responded to the EU with ‘demand guarantee’.¹⁸

In short, the relations between the EU and Russia have a variety of mutual dimensions which are quite useful in the formulation of bilateral relations. The dimensions are essential in comprehend the nature of relations since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR. Each factor must therefore be evaluated as it connects to other issues, and the analysis of the three articles covering with different schools of thought will be made with this in mind.

¹⁶ Margot Light.

¹⁷ Roy Ellison, Margot Light and Stephen White, *Putin’s Russia and the Enlarged Europe*, (Chatham House: London 2006), p.66.

¹⁸ İlyas Kamalov, *Putin Dönemi Rus Dış Politikası: Moskova’nın Rövanşı*, (Yeditepe: İstanbul 2008), p.346.

III. Three Theoretical Approaches to EU-Russian Relations

- (a) Paul Flenley¹⁹ presents a pragmatic way of understanding of the relations between the EU and Russia. In his analysis, basic realist assumptions are used to comprehend the mutual relations. The national interest concept plays a fundamental role in analyzing the structure/nature of the relations. The maximization of interests and needs has a top priority and President Putin's policy approach for example is named 'new pragmatism' because of these realities. To clarify, Flenley states that "To understand this article places the EU-Russian relationship in the wider context of the revolutionary changes in Russian foreign and security policy made under Vladimir Putin since 2000. In particular it examines the motivations behind and the key ingredients of Putin's "new pragmatism" in foreign policy. In spite of continuing rhetoric about "norms" and building common spaces between the EU and Russia, the contemporary relationship is based on a much more realistic understanding of mutual interest and needs."²⁰

In line with his perception, he put emphasis on Russian and the EU's interest in having good relations. In that regard, the realistic paradigm on the superior role of the sovereign state prevails because the bilateral relations between Russia and the EU member states in addition to the EU Commission reflect the nature of relations on the state level and confirms the neorealist claim that the state still has the predominant position in international relations even though there are new actors whose influence cannot be ignored. Meanwhile, the article focuses on a number of key contradictions in the relationship which prevent widespread integration between the EU and

¹⁹ Paul Flenley, *Russia and the EU: A Pragmatic and Contradictory Relationship, Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 6:3, Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden 2005.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.436.

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Russia. Thus, Flenley defines the relationship as the 'Premature Partnership'.²¹

Flenley begins his study with the relations soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The EU and Russia experienced difficulties in their new partnership. The programme of 'westernization' which contained internal economic reforms leading to a more stable market economy and reorientation in the Russian foreign policy did not have the immediate desired results. Crow explains that Russia felt it was being treated as a junior partner of the West; Russia was to be consulted but not to share in real decision-making.²²

In particular the field of security according to Flenley was perceived as a failure and humiliation. He emphasizes that those Russian expectations regarding the development of new security architecture for Europe based on such an institution as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) which had crossed the Cold war divide were not satisfied; instead, the military structure of the Western camp during the Cold War, NATO, has maintained its existence with redefined missions.²³ The European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) was derived from the ESDI within NATO. To Flenley, the Russian foreign and security policy has undergone a qualitative and revolutionary change in many ways with the coming of Vladimir Putin. He explains that there are several reasons for the situation. Initially, the crisis in relations with the West proved the old foreign policy was counterproductive and if anything had detracted from Russia's security as seen in the case of Mikhail Gorbachev's New Thinking.

²¹ Paul Flenley, *Russia and the EU: A Pragmatic and Contradictory Relationship*, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 6:3, Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden 2005, p.437.

²² S. Crow, *Why has Russia Foreign Policy Changed?*, RFE/RL Research Report, 3 (18) 6 May 1994, p.3.

²³ Paul Flenley, *Russia in the New Europe*, in *Europe: the Cold Divide*, Edited by F. Carr, (Macmillan: London 1998), p.107.

Second, the major threat to the security of Russia comes not from the West and NATO but from along her southern belt. In particular, radical transformation of regimes in the Middle East, the instability of former Soviet states, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, tension in the nuclearised southern Asia states and the threat of terrorism have been defined as primary security threats.²⁴

Third, there was a fact that US increased its unilateralism and its reassessment of the relationship with Russia in 2000-2001. To Flenley, Russia was no longer seen as an equal partner meaning the significance of the relationship could be downgraded for American policymakers. In that regard, the republican administration under the leadership of George W. Bush from 2001 on operated in a more unilateral way including its abrogation of the 1972 ABM Treaty in December 2001. Flenley noted that President Putin was not prepared for unilateral act of the US administration. So, pragmatism rather than the assumption that foreign policy could be based on Russia's past superpower status should be chosen in following foreign policy implementations.²⁵

Fourth, Flenley draws attention to the shift in the Russian foreign policy formulation from 'a gradual but distinctive shift from a geo-political to geo-economic dimension'.²⁶ In this formulation, the EU became an inspiration because it has been an economic giant and in its foreign policy has been a tendency to act as unified unit of 27 members in international settings such as at the Doha Summit of the World Trade Organization. Therefore, the economic instruments such as energy have had more priority in foreign policy.

²⁴ Paul Flenley, "Russia and the EU: A Pragmatic and Contradictory Relationship", *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 6:3, Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden 2005, p.439.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p.440.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

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Another key element in the new pragmatism to Flenley, is that the new partnership has its limits. He says “This element involves Russia’s right to pursue an independent foreign policy. Under Putin there has been a renewed confidence in Russia and pride in its past both soviet and tsarist.”²⁷ Flenley believes that understanding these elements of the new pragmatist way of Russian foreign policy provides a key to the relations between Russia and the EU. He takes the emphasis on economic priorities and the pragmatic pursuit of Russia’s immediate interests into account to explain the intensified relations since 2000. According to him, for both Russia and the EU, the European enlargement forced the mutual relations to turn from formalities and diplomatic practices into a practical way of relations to work out problems and clarify shared interests.²⁸

Moreover, individual member states of the EU believe that they are able to pursue their own individual bilateral relations with Russia. In fact, Flenley asserts that “From the EU’s point of view the realization that the next phase of enlargement would not only turn Russia into a close neighbour but incorporate the former Soviet republics of the Baltic States meant that it had to develop a more coherent policy towards Russia.”²⁹ Accordingly, the Cologne European Council in June 1999 realized this and therefore adapted the Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia. The commitment by the Council to the ESDP implied not only clarifications regarding security relations with NATO including the US, but also with European countries outside of the EU including Russia.³⁰

²⁷ Paul Flenley, *Russia and the EU: A Pragmatic and Contradictory Relationship, Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 6:3, Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden 2005, p.441.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.442.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.443.

³⁰ Paul Flenley, *Russia and the EU: A Pragmatic and Contradictory Relationship, Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 6:3, Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden 2005, p.444.

From the Russian side, Flenley analyzes Russian foreign policy noting that it was clear it had to maintain relations with the EU which at the time were not sufficient due to the enlargement of the EU and deepening integration including the monetary union. While emphasizing the Foreign Policy concept of the Russian Federation, he stresses that “With enlargement and with the development of a Common Foreign and Security it was becoming evident that the EU would have an impact on Russia in its own right. Russia would have to deal with an increasingly integrated union.”³¹

Flenley also focuses on the economic relationship and the limits of integration between Russia and the EU. To him, the common spaces are the reflection of the reality of a very practical relationship. Thus, an idea of a Common European Economic Space was a result of this kind of relationship. Flenley viewed that for President Putin the strategy of building a close economic relationship with the EU was to the mutual benefit of both. Indeed, the EU’s share of Russian exports had been approximately 46 per cent before the enlargement and right after the accession of the ten new members to the EU in 2004 was 54 per cent.³² Hence, Flenley believes that through expansion of trade with the EU, Russia will be required to move closer to EU standards of products and services.

But Flenley also points out that the potential for building anything wider in respect of a fully integrated Common Economic Space is restrained by a number of problems. In particular, the structural problems and the lack of competitiveness in the Russian economy cause problems which prevent further integrations between the Russian and European economies. Flenley says “There is a predominance of government-private forms of ownership. Business is still characterized by integrated business groups with their own internal financial structures including banks, marketing organizations and insurance companies. A whole ‘virtual economy’ exists based on webs of relationships between businesses and the government. Many businesses

³¹ Ibid.

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operate with losses , sustained by informal relationships and survival networks.”³³ Furthermore, the existence of corruption and the power of organized crime were defined as the main reasons for the limitations of economic integration in a broader sense.

In conclusion, Flenley draws a portrait of the relationship between the EU and Russia in a more realistic context. According to him, the EU seeks a coherent and reliable partner in line with mutual shared interests while Russia wishes a close relationship with the EU as a result of pragmatic and economic reasons. Russia also pursues relations independently with each European state depending on its own interests. Hence, Flenley states the Russian foreign Policy in terms of a “new pragmatism” formulated and implemented by Putin. The perception of this pragmatism is evaluated in terms of Russian national interests. These interests include but are not limited to maximization of power, economic recovery and preservation of territorial integrity vis-à-vis the EU. The perspective of Flenley in his analysis therefore reflects a realist perception regarding EU-Russian relations.

- (b) Filippou Proedrou wrote an article called ‘The EU-Russian Energy Approach under the Prism of Interdependence’³⁴ whose basic theoretical argumentation was based on the interdependence theory put forth by many leading contemporary scholars such as Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane. Under the framework of the neoliberal narration, the existence of conflict is accepted as a fundamental feature of world politics; accordingly, cooperation between the actors in the international system is to be encountered frequently

³² Ibid., p.446.

³³ Paul Flenley, *Russia and the EU: A Pragmatic and Contradictory Relationship, Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 6:3, Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden 2005, p.446-447.

³⁴ Filippou Proedrou, *The EU-Russian Energy Approach under the Prism of Interdependence*, *European Security*, Volume 16, No 3-4, September-December 2007.

and cannot be dismissed as insignificant or an interval between two wars. In fact, Proedrou claims his article is an effort to refute realist claims concerning the nature of world politics and to make obvious that cooperation has become an established feature of international politics.³⁵ Hence, Proedrou states that “It (neoliberal assumption) instrumentalizes the notions of sensitivity and vulnerability and assumes that the parties will cooperate or conflict with each other in accordance with their degree of sensitivity and vulnerability. Indeed, empirical data shows that while elements of conflict are present, cooperative schemes also take place and allow the maintenance and furtherance of the EU-Russia energy trade.”³⁶

In his article, theoretical background is given a priority before he starts his analysis on the relations regarding energy between the EU and Russia. To begin with the anarchical structure of the international system, he presents the approaches of neoliberalism and neorealism. The Neoliberal form of anarchy rejects the neorealist position on anarchy which defines anarchy as the principle of the international system, and anarchy means the absence of a supranational authority to dictate its will on states. Instead, neoliberalism claims that war is not always probable in spite of the absence of a world government.

In addition, Proedrou uses the arguments of Keohane and Charles Lipson to strengthen neoliberal discourse: “Neoliberals point to the inconsistency of the realist argument. Firstly, since realism considers states to be rational actors, it is a paradox that neo-realism expects states to act on the basis of mere uncertainty and not on the calculation of possibilities. Secondly, neoliberalism maintains that cooperation is possible, when the perceived benefits are high and perceived costs low; therefore, it is the calculation of costs and benefits and not anarchy that will determine whether cooperation will

³⁵ Ibid., p.329.

³⁶ Ibid., p.330.

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be achieved. Thus, one cannot deduce from anarchy whether conflict or cooperation will emerge.”³⁷

Following the theoretical explanations, Proedrou continues his article in order to prove that the model of interdependence fits with the energy relations between the EU and Russia because the EU and Russia are dependent. He uses Thomas Schelling’s definition of interdependence (Harvard 1960) which is described as ‘a situation where the ability of one side to fulfil its aims is highly dependent on the choices and decisions that the other side makes.’³⁸ Using this definition of interdependence, Proedrou explains the relationship between the EU and Russia. To him, the EU needs a large amount of energy which it imports primarily from Russia. Therefore, the EU is the principal market for Russia to export its energy. So, Russia makes a large amount of money and earns more valuable foreign currency which in turn boosts the Russian economy and helps it repay its international debt.

By consulting a report of the International Energy Agency (IEA), he emphasizes the increasing energy dependency of the EU on third party countries. To illustrate, the EU is expected to import approximately 81 per cent of its natural gas and 94 per cent of its oil by 2030.³⁹ He further explains the energy dependency with these numbers: The EU today imports 80 per cent of the total oil and 60 per cent of the total natural gas it consumes.⁴⁰ In view of the energy dependency of the EU, its mutual relations with Russia gains more importance. Because the Middle East has been very unstable for a

³⁷ Filippou Proedrou, “The EU-Russian Energy Approach under the Prism of Interdependence”, *European Security*, Volume 16, No 3-4, September-December 2007, p.330-331.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.333.

³⁹ Filippou Proedrou, “The EU-Russian Energy Approach under the Prism of Interdependence”, *European Security*, Volume 16, No 3-4, September-December 2007, p.334.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

long period of time, Russia's energy supplies make it an even more important strategic partner.

For the Russians, the energy sector is not only the most important source of income, but also a crucial dimension of its national security policy. Proedrou clarifies its importance for Russia in his own words: "It accounts for one quarter of its total GDP and just under one third of its total industrial production, and contributes about half the income to the annual budget. Energy exports, which account for 54.5 per cent of total Russian exports, have been the crucial factor that explains the impressive annual rise of 6.5 per cent of Russian GDP for the years 2001-05."⁴¹ Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye assert that interdependence does not always mean or necessitate cooperation between the sides. In fact, interdependence may cause serious conflicts between them. In this way, the problem of asymmetric interdependence appears.⁴² Moreover, Proedrou states that on both sides, there is the fear that the benefits they offer each other through their interdependent relationship may be reduced. This can lead them to unilateral action that will lessen their dependence on the other. This in turn accounts for the underlying conflict as these moves provoke a strong reaction from the other party.

On this point, Proedrou notes that the EU has had a tendency to diversify its energy resources which results in a decrease in the level of energy dependence on Russia. Russia perceives these attempts as a threat to its national interests. In short, the vulnerability of the EU and Russia can lead to friction, and Proedrou thinks that "The belligerent policies Russia pursues towards 'new' Europe are as a result of the latter's high vulnerability."⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 334-335.

⁴² Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, (Boston 1977), p.15.

⁴³ Ibid., p.336.

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Proedrou also focuses on the ‘Russian Sensitivity’ which implies keeping the European market because it pays the highest price for energy such as natural gas. In accordance with the priority of energy issue, Russia tries to retain the existing agreements and contracts to preserve its primary status as a leading energy supplier. Furthermore, the Russian companies such as Gazprom pay close attention to the liberalization process in the European market. They pay particular attention to the energy market including emerging spot markets. Penetration of these markets is a vital goal for Russia to maintain high margins of profit. Therefore, Proedrou alleges that “the break-up of former state monopolies in the EU member-states and the sale of their parts give Gazprom good chances for acquiring assets that will solidify its presence in the lucrative EU market.”⁴⁴

As to the oil sector, Russia attempts to control the Caspian oil in terms of both energy routes and oil productions. Therefore according to Proedrou, the Kremlin raises obstacles to alternative routes and suppliers. He claims that whenever the plans to transport energy resources through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Supsa pipelines, Moscow creates obstructions to their implementation; in addition, Russia gives its support to secessionist movements in Georgia and aims at rendering the construction and function of pipelines through Georgian territory more risky.⁴⁵ Additionally, there is a consistency in the Russian strategy to dominate the targeted and purchased oil refineries and ports throughout Europe. Here, the former Warsaw Pact countries have a priority for Russia.⁴⁶ At the same time, Russia pursues a strategy to build its own infrastructure, and to acquire stakes in the energy infrastructure of the transit countries. In conclusion, the energy exports to the EU countries are a critical dimension of the Russian strategy to maintain its geopolitical and geostrategic importance, and for its economic recovery.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Filippou Proedrou, “The EU-Russia Energy Approach under the Prism of Interdependence”, *European Security*, Volume 16, No 3-4, September-December 2007, p.337.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.338.

To Proedrou, the energy sector also has an essential role for Russia in terms of its security policy. Securing the energy routes is accepted as an indispensable part of its overall security strategy. Indeed, the use of natural resources is largely preferred in foreign policy implementation. The energy crisis between Russia and the Ukraine is a typical example. The policy can be annotated within the context of the Russian supremacy policy in ‘near abroad’. The policy also implies the restoration of the Russian status vis-à-vis the US in the international arena. In his analysis, Proedrou claims that “Russia resisted the Western inspired ‘velvet’ revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia that established regimes friendly to the West. It retains the region in the Russian sphere of influence. Hence, Russia is also using its natural resources for this cause.”⁴⁷

In line with its energy strategy, the construction of the north European natural gas pipeline has been at the top of the energy agenda of the Kremlin for a long time. With the project, Russia will be able to supply gas to the most lucrative markets of North-Western Europe bypassing transit countries such as the Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, Slovakia and the Baltic States.⁴⁸ It will reduce the Russian dependence on these countries. Meanwhile, Proedrou clarifies that “Russia expands into the European market through the purchases of assets in European gas distributions, oil refineries and ports. Gazprom now participates in gas distribution companies in a number of European countries. It boasts shares in distributors in the Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic States, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Hungary among others.”⁴⁹ Thus, shaping the future of energy plans between the EU countries and Russia as well as their relevant implementation processes have formed the primary goals of the Russian strategy.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Filippos Proedrou, *The EU-Russia Energy Approach under the Prism of Interdependence*, European Security, Volume 16, No 3-4, September-December 2007, p.340.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

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To sum up the interdependent nature of EU-Russian relations according to Proedrou, EU-Russian energy relations are in fact a cooperative relationship. To cover the energy needs, most EU member-states import significant amounts of oil and gas from Russia. Both sides benefit from this kind of relationship in a broad sense. They cooperate on infrastructure development of energy transportation projects and promote further energy projects enhancing their energy trade. However, it does not mean that there are no conflicting elements in the cooperative relations between the EU and Russia. Instead, they have mutual sensitivity due to their fears of facing an asymmetric maximization of their benefits. Nevertheless, this relationship which vacillates between cooperation and conflict can be explained through the prism of interdependence.⁵⁰ To Proedrou, neoliberalism presents a full-fledged theory in terms of co-existence of cooperation and conflict. He points out that the dismissal of anarchy can allow cooperation to be achieved. On this point, uncertainty and relative gains do not necessarily come with absolute conflict between the EU and Russia. Indeed, the EU and Russia have created expectations and preferred to have absolute gains from cooperation.⁵¹ So, Proedrou supports the interdependence concept in the context of a liberal discourse to explain the nature of relations between the EU and Russia while using the energy sector to prove his thesis.

- (c) Kristian L. Nielsen wrote an article titled ‘Opportunities and Limitation for the Baltic States of the EU-Russia Strategic Partnership’⁵² in order to explain the current mood of the relations between the EU and Russia by focusing on the experience of the Baltic States vis-à-vis Russia. Nielsen prefers supranationalism and intergovernmentalism to define the theoretical framework of his article. In particular, Nielsen’s argument benefits from the European integration history most notably, the evolution of the EEC

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.348.

⁵¹ Filippou Proedrou, *The EU-Russian Energy Approach under the Prism of Interdependence*, European Security, Volume 16, No 3-4, September-December 2007, p.348.

towards the EU. According to Nielsen, the EU has been a confusing mix of supranational and intergovernmentalist styles of integration throughout its history.⁵³ After explaining the EU experience within theoretical framework, Nielsen clarifies the ongoing relations with Russia on the basis of supranational and/or intergovernmental types of foreign policy preferences of the Baltic members. So, Nielsen concludes that a modest and multilateral kind of approach in the relations with Russia can surely bring better results for the Baltic States thus enabling them to benefit from the soft security issues that the EU provides.

In his analysis, Nielsen begins with the decision-making mechanism of the EU in the field of foreign policy. In the general structure of the EU, Nielsen asserts that there are reflections of the supranational and intergovernmentalist schools of thought. The EU consists of three pillars and each pillar is made up of a mix of different government forms: “While there are variations inside especially the first and third pillars, and while several policy fields to some extent cut across this structure, it can generally be said that pillar I, which consists of the original economic communities, is governed supranationally...In contrast, the second pillar is entirely intergovernmental, with decisions being reached by unanimity, with only a very limited role for the Commission, and none for the EP or the ECJ. The Council maintains sole control, acting through its secretariat, the Secretary-General of which doubles as the EU’s High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The third pillar is mainly intergovernmental but with a strong role for the Commission in proposing, drafting and implementing proposals.”⁵⁴ Nielsen gives a priority to the analysis of the structure of the EU particularly the foreign-policy making process of the

⁵² Kristian L. Nielsen, Opportunities and Limitations for the Baltic States of the EU-Russia Strategic Partnership, *Baltic Security and Defence Review*, Volume 9, 2007.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Kristian L. Nielsen, Opportunities and Limitations for the Baltic States of the EU-Russia Strategic Partnership, *Baltic Security and Defence Review*, Volume 9, 2007, p.111-112.

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EU. Understanding the nature of the formulation of EU foreign policy is also helpful to comprehend the foreign policy implementation of the EU.

However, it does not mean that the EU has internal unity on every issue. Instead member states may prefer to act unilaterally or independently up to certain extent in their bilateral relations with third party non-EU countries. This is seen in the case of Russia because of their national interests in the energy sector. To Nielsen, the smaller states in the EU have traditionally favoured supranationalism. To support his claim, Nielsen quotes from Krok-Paszowska and Zielonka (2005, p.154) that smaller states have a strong tendency to regard the supranational institutions as a sort of shield against being pressured by the larger countries.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Nielsen advances Andrew Moravcsik's argument that the preferences of the 'big three' of France, Germany and the United Kingdom shape the integration process in the intergovernmental negotiating environment.⁵⁶ Using Krok-Paszowska, Zielonka and Moravcsik's opinions, Nielsen summarizes the preference of the smaller states by referring to the Baltic countries desire for a supranational order to gain influence in foreign policy. Although Nielsen does not ignore past experience including the Fouchet Plan of 1962 which was perceived as an instrument towards an intergovernmental political community and blocked by the smaller members of the Community.

After focusing on the foreign-policy making mechanism of the EU, Nielsen continues his article with the EU-Russia strategic partnership. Initially, Nielsen concentrates on the various perceptions of Russia in Europe. Nielsen uses a quotation from Estonian historian Kaido Jaanson who says that there is 'one united Europe and 25 Russias'. To clarify the quotation from Jaanson, Nielsen states that "all European countries each have their historical relationship and hence their own perception of Russia, which influences

⁵⁵ Kristian L. Nielsen, "Opportunities and Limitations for the Baltic States of the EU-Russia Strategic Partnership", *Baltic Security and Defence Review*, Volume 9, 2007, p.112.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

the way that they wish to see cooperation develop in future. This important point is quite visible in the way that the European Union and its members have approached their big neighbour to the East.”⁵⁷ Accordingly, Nielsen gives the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which was signed between the European Union and Russia in 1994 to improve mutual relations, as an example. However, Nielsen reminds us that the PCA had to be ratified by all the member states of the EU, and this process did not end quickly and the Agreement did not enter into force until 1997 because some member states protested Russian conduct during the first war in Chechnya.

In addition to the PCA, Nielsen regards the European Neighbourhood Policy of 2003 as another cornerstone in EU-Russian relations because Russia was not satisfied being treated as an equal to other smaller countries such as Moldova and Belarus. Rather, Russia wanted a ‘strategic partnership’ status to the EU. Similarly, the St. Petersburg Summit became a platform at which the EU started using the phrase ‘Strategic Partnership’ to define the nature of the relations with Russia. Furthermore the strategic partnership was envisaged to cover the four common spaces: “1) the Common Economic Space, 2) the Common Space for Freedom, Security and Justice, 3) the Common Space on External Security, 4) the Common Space for Research, Education and Culture.”⁵⁸ But the definition of the relations between the EU and Russia as ‘strategic partnership’ has not been the end of all problematic issues. For example, the EU has been critical of state-owned business enterprises predominantly in the energy sector. All the while the EU has officially been supportive of Russian membership in the World Trade Organisation, and of the Russian efforts to fix its economy under the rules of market economy. To Nielsen, the EU Commission can

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.114.

⁵⁸ Kristian L. Nielsen, Opportunities and Limitations for the Baltic States of the EU-Russia Strategic Partnership, *Baltic Security and Defence Review*, Volume 9, 2007, p.115.

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only play ‘bad cop’ since the EU member states have authorised the Commission to do so.⁵⁹

Afterwards, Nielsen analyses the Baltic States, European integration and Russia in terms of their impact on each other and their relations. Nielsen uses Vadim Kononenko’s argument (2006, p.69) on the Baltic States’ perception of Russia: “The Baltic states did not fit neatly into either category. Their involuntary past association with Russia did give the Baltic States a feeling of having a special knowledge of that country and its people, which the rest of the EU would be well-advised to heed. However it would be wrong to say that this line of thinking has made the Baltic States take unduly negativist stances on EU cooperation with Russia.”⁶⁰ Based on the argument of Kononenko, Nielsen claims that the Baltic States have a tendency to externalize some of their national concerns to influence the direction of EU policy. In other words, they try to lead the EU to pursue a type of policy to satisfy their national needs or priorities. This situation implies a supranational form of foreign policy but Nielsen mentions the importance of the European Neighbourhood Policy of 2003 (ENP), the adoption of four common spaces between the EU-Russian, and the ‘strategic partnership’ nature of the relations. Thus, Nielsen emphasizes that the Baltic States have been satisfactorily successful in shaping the ENP within the framework of a strictly intergovernmental Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) context.

Yet, Nielsen adds that “the EU’s intergovernmental parts remain rather slow-moving, not easily able to take ad-hoc decisions that fall outside of long-established policies. Then again, there are no rules without exception”⁶¹ To support the argument, Nielsen focuses on the Orange Revolution

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.118.

⁶⁰ Kristian L. Nielsen, Opportunities and Limitations for the Baltic States of the EU-Russia Strategic Partnership, *Baltic Security and Defence Review*, Volume 9, 2007, p.119.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.125.

during which the EU showed some hesitations in defining the general characteristics of the policy. Instead, Nielsen says that some countries such as Poland and Lithuania took individually initiative to mediate in the crisis.

In the last part of the article, Nielsen asks if the EU provides the expected security. The membership of the three Baltic States in 2004 put focus on their foreign policy expectations. Nielsen clearly states that the realities of membership would be disappointing in some aspects, and asserts that “Even as they have moved from being the ‘Near Abroad’, relations have not quite turned to a ‘normal neighbourly’ mode either, and Russia has still been a menacing presence for the Baltic States, as some of the examples above have shown...The Baltic States have a clear interest in an as cooperative relationship with Russia as possible, and have found the EU a useful route to achieving some progress.”⁶² In accordance with this purpose, Nielsen points out that the Baltic States have in the field of energy, recommend a united EU approach to Russia. However, Nielsen warns that the inter-governmental aspects of the EU foreign policy cause looseness and leave too much room for Russia to exploit the existing situation.⁶³

To analyse the EU foreign policy framework, Nielsen believes that the member states will not be in favour of the limitations to their foreign policy preferences. It does not however mean a kind of supranationalism without any limits. Rather, Nielsen advises that “the Baltic states should aim for the EU to clarify its policy positions more thoroughly, so as to eliminate doubts about their application and reduce the scope for confusion. Especially with Russia it is prudent to expect the unexpected, and be ready to take ad-hoc decisions.”⁶⁴ Nielsen meanwhile considers that the Baltic States have

⁶² Kristian L. Nielsen, “Opportunities and Limitations for the Baltic States of the EU-Russia Strategic Partnership”, *Baltic Security and Defence Review*, Volume 9, 2007, p.126.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p.127.

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gained intra-EU diplomacy experience, and learned how to be influential in the definition of the EU policies.

In conclusion, Nielsen benefits from supranationalism and intergovernmentalism as theoretical frameworks to make his analysis on EU-Russian relations. In particular, Nielsen focuses on the Baltic States which became EU member in 2004. Consistent with European integration history which has included a confusing mix of supranational and intergovernmentalist styles, Nielsen pays attention to the three-year experience of the Baltic States. This experience has shown pro-supranational policies whereas the big three- France, the UK and Germany- have preferred more intergovernmental policy under the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Within the contexts of unilateral foreign policy based on national preferences and multilateral foreign policy, Nielsen tries to explain the contradictory nature of foreign policy approaches of the Member States vis-à-vis Russia particularly from the perspective of the Baltic States.

IV. Conclusion

EU-Russian relations have experienced a mixture of successes and failures since the end of the Cold War with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In accordance with the theoretical stances used in assessing the relations, each perspective on the relations between the EU and Russia will be evaluated separately.

To begin with, the article written by Paul Flenley, 'Premature Partnership' is widely accepted as the true nature of the relations. In the formulation of 'Premature Partnership', the national interests have the leading role in its definition. Accordingly, the fulfilment of interests is the focal point in the structure of the mutual relations. Thus, the policy approach of Vladimir Putin, the former President of the Russian Federation, is described as 'new pragmatism' in the context of realities.

However, it is noteworthy to remember that relations with Russia require long-term strategic thinking rather than just calculating short-term gains based on a cost-benefit analysis. With the recent developments of the Russo-Georgian War in August 2008, Russia again proved that the ignorance of Russia on its 'Near Abroad' can result in a serious miscalculation. It is important for any state to take Russian attitude and foreign policy preferences into account. Furthermore, even if Putin's pragmatic perception is undeniable; Russian foreign policy cannot be explained in narrow sense. Instead, Russia has an imperial tradition which has led the Russian rulers to gain a wide range of power over political events, and the formation of policies which can render the Russians successful with both short and long term goals.

Indeed, Russia has increased its foreign policy instruments. To illustrate, Russia became the eighth state in the previous G-7 consisting of the US, UK, Germany, France, Japan, Italy, Canada. Hence, the relations should not be considered only from the security perspective but also from that of energy security as well. Russia is getting stronger in economic terms, and has become important in shaping current events which have international importance. So, the maximization of power perception should not be limited to the field of security on which Flenley concentrated in his article or even to economic affairs such as the energy and security. In short, EU-Russian relations should be thought of from a broader perspective oriented not only by the pragmatic way of thinking, but also by the long-term strategic partnership.

Second, the article by Proedrou supports his interdependence thesis to prove that the EU and Russia have mutual interests in cooperating with each other. Indeed, the current position of both sides leads them to mutual interdependence. On the other hand, bilateral relations cannot be based on the energy issue alone. The EU and Russia share a large scope of interest in many fields. Though the energy and security issue are extremely critical for

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both the EU and Russia, there are other crucial factors which define the direction of the policies. For example, the security architecture of Europe following the end of the bipolar system in the world affairs has been a leading discussion topic among many actors. Despite the fact that NATO continues to exist and the ESDP has its origins in the ESDI derived from the NATO structure, there are some EU Member States such as France which wish to take more initiative in the security affairs of Europe. Following the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact, Russia preferred a common European structure like the OSCE. Today, the enlargement of NATO remains a problematic issue in the relations between the EU and Russia. In fact, the recent debates on the deployment of early missile warning systems in the Czech Republic and Poland have elevated the importance of security matters between the EU and Russia even though the conflict was primarily between the USA and Russia.

To analyse the level of interdependence, it is important to point out that some EU members such as Germany have preferred to improve special relations with Russia. Even though Germany plays a fundamental role in the formulation and implementation of the CFSP, Germany does pursue independent policies in line with its national interests. In particular, with regard to energy Germany and Russia decided to build a pipeline through the Baltic Sea to transport the Russian natural gas to Germany. This policy preference shows that the degree of interdependence changes from country to country. Portugal's preference for interdependence is different than that of Germany or the Baltic States demonstrating that preferences are relative within the Union.

Regarding the third article by Nielsen, it presents the different viewpoints of supranational and intergovernmentalist approaches in an effort to comprehend both European integration history and the nature of EU-Russian relations. The theoretical context of the Baltic States relationship with Russia is analyzed in depth. Nielsen does not concentrate on the impact of other actors instead Nielsen pays attention to either the nation-state per-

spective or institutional framework defined by the intergovernmentalist process of foreign policies. However, as seen in the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine, societal factors are also decisive not only on the national level but also in the definition of foreign policies. That is to say that there are many actors which have strong influence on the decision-making process of foreign policy within this framework the sovereign-nation state still has the predominant position. Hence, Nielsen has a state-centric evaluation of the relations avoiding the impact of other factors.

In conclusion, EU-Russian relations have been a special field of focus for many scholars, analysts and strategists in addition to politicians. The relationship incorporates different dimensions such as security and energy issues which allow for making assessments from various theoretical stances. Accordingly, this article examined EU-Russian relations since the end of the Cold War from the theoretical stance of realist, liberal, supranational and intergovernmentalist schools of thought. However, EU-Russian relations necessitate a broader perspective to understand the larger picture of relations due to the existence of the historical background of the relations as well as the capacities of both actors in terms of military power, economic potentials, and their influence in international politics. Thus, the relations between the EU and Russia have the peculiarity that each theoretical stance can be contributory to understand the nature of relations. There is no doubt that each theoretical framework should be taken into consideration in order to more broadly analyse relations. In conclusion, the issue of EU-Russian relations is currently one of the most important discussion topics in the International Relations discipline due to its dynamic nature. These relations will have a strong impact on changing international conditions, and both actors will influence the future direction of world politics.

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