EU-Russia relations revisited:
where 'shared values' end, and energy begins

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ABSTRACT

The European Union is finally assessing the consequences of its long-term efforts in relations with its proximity neighbourhood: the intersection of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the new enlargements have plotted a complex map of interactions with the southern and eastern borders, which is entitled to the spread of the European governance and *acquis*, together with the promotion of democracy and human rights. Russia is curiously 'external' to conventional instruments of cooperation, and has then adopted several peculiar features for what we can call a 'privileged partnership'.
These tools (Common Spaces, a Common Strategy on security issues, Road Maps, Energy Dialogue) are founded upon an acknowledged economic interdependence, since Russian crude oil and natural gas are the main energy import for the EU, while European products are the main commercial import for Russia.
The new domestic dynamics of power and authority under Putin's Russia, though, have crystallized a dimension of reiterated negation of human rights and basic civil and political freedoms: nonetheless, European governments continue to choose energy overdependence from Russia, neglecting the inward collapse of Russian society, and ignoring all requests from EU institutions to change the terms of the relations towards a more ethic fashion. This paper tries to analyse the consequences of such an interdependence on the credibility of the external relations of the EU; the weird relation between the political will of Russia, the member states and Brussels's institutions; the possibility for a turn, in the domestic dimension of 'political space' in Russia, thanks to the efforts of a democratising and ethic economic partner such as the EU.

Keywords: **energy security**; **pipeline diplomacy**; **European Neighbourhood Policy**; **energy dialogue**

Introduction. EU external relations and its 'proximity'

The range and depth of the European Union (EU) external relations widened, since the traditional attitude for international trade policies evolved into a more politically concerned relation with the bordering regions of the Mediterranean basin and eastern Europe – touching but not encompassing the Russian political giant. The ideology underpinning such an action by the European Union is enshrined in a coherent and effective market-guided political system ranging from Gibraltar to the Urals while embracing North Africa – ignoring threats of political incompatibility, social intolerance and economic inequity under the aegis of guided harmonisation.

Such an ideal landscape sees Russia approaching within a disquieting proximity, swinging between the two poles of a self-centred attitude: on one hand, an imprudent management of the huge amount of raw resources Russia is disposing of; on the other one, a reluctant exposition to foreign policy, collecting the legacy of its Cold War position without necessary change for a full 'market-oriented' acceptance of a wider global governance. Any step *broader*, then, looks like *threatening* the European political patrimony. This is why the external action of the European Union has been focused mainly on building an area of economic security for the member states, while defending the *ethics* of its foreign policy in order to create *consensus* and acceptance to its deployment. Is the European Union successfully managing and shaping this cumbersome partnership? Or is political interest – and economic *need* – weakening European coherence as a value-founded entity and a normative power for its neighbourhood?

1. How Europe addresses its political neighbourhood

The EU currently acts on three different neighbour stages: «the enlargement process, the European Neighbourhood Policy and the four 'common spaces' with Russia» (Vahl 2006, 12). So far, enlargements have thickened the *belt* that divides the «core Europe» (Emerson 2004b, 1; Hubel 2004, 347) from the surrounding neighbouring states, for one reason or another still afar from the *acquis communautaire*.

On what we can call the 'southern border', the European Union faces the unavoidable weight of specific differences of language, culture and religion that emerge when confronting with the Arab world: an Islamic region which produced a strong pan-Arab and pan-Islamic narrative, which tightened after the creation of Israel and is broken only by occasional local conflict on local disputes. On the 'eastern side' the hardest hurdle is represented by the heavy post-Soviet inheritance in public administration and political culture, and structural deficits with market economy. The emergence of several repressed nationalisms[1] must be taken into account as well: this is currently infesting with internal conflict many European bordering regions – such as the Balkans and the Caucasus – and destabilising the whole area surrounding the EU.

[1] These must include all those movements veiled by the multinational "recipients" under the Warsaw Pact and the Yugoslavian constitution.

Russia is still trying to control and manipulate this scenario, holding the least possible share of political responsibility while exerting the whole of its influence.

The European Union has developed several institutional tools to deal with such a puzzled geopolitical conformation: the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) remains the most long-sighted instrument currently available – even though its effectiveness seems conversely proportional to the EU enlarging tension.

Dividing EU and Russia: an ENP 'buffer strip'?

The European Union and Russia are currently geographically divided – on most of their common border – by the extension of the countries involved in the European Neighbourhood Policy, which is comprised in the External Relations of the EU. The ENP may be interpreted as a «dilemma», halfway from both enlargement and good-governance promotion. It shows that the EU is going to «damage… its effectiveness as a union fatally» by walking the way of enlargement, and on the other it implies that formally stopping enlarging would mean contradicting a «democratic» prerogative of the EU initiative (Emerson 2004b, 1).

On a normative side, the ENP replied to growing interest by both the European Council and the European Commission (2003; 2004b; 2006b) in extending the cooperative environment to the eastern border, towards the «proximity» area around the EU (European Commission 2003, 3; 2004b, 10). The European Neighbourhood Policy lies on a quite complex network of bilateral agreements (the 'Action Plans') which entered into force by submission to the partners and «supplemented but did not replace» (K. Smith 2005, 759) previous agreements within the EU External Relations: namely, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) with the Former Soviet Union (FSU) countries, and the Association Agreements which the Mediterranean countries already subscribed within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership[2]. Only on December the 4th, 2006, the European Commission (2006b) eventually published its first report on the progress of the ENP: this was meant to be the final step of the route triggered by the Commission's 'country reports' and then implemented through the Action Plans.

The policy stands upon the merging of various geographical and sectorial financing programmes, which were already up and running early before the 'Wider Europe' strategy paper:

- the southern neighbours already enjoyed MEDA funds[3] since the 1995 – structurally linked with the Barcelona Process;
- the TACIS fund programme[4] provided assistance to the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); besides main funding to all participant countries, further bilateral assistance is provided as far as

[2] A cooperation framework under the aegis of the Barcelona Declaration, and an attempt for regional multi-lateral cooperation in security, economic and cultural policies with the southern neighbourhood. For further details on the EMP and assessments of this policy as a pioneering attempt for coordinated action in the Mediterranean, see also Attinà (2003), Joffé (2005) and Panebianco (2007).

[3] Introduced by Council regulation no. EC/1488/96.

[4] Provided through Council regulation no. EC/2000/99.

progressive reform is undertaken – i.e., the celebrated 'positive conditionality' for aid accession[5].

Both financial programmes covered their budgetary period only until 2006.

They are eventually merging[6] into one single financing framework, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The assertion of a «policy-driven instrument» marks a continuity in the conditionality as a policy of 'financing through benchmarking' (see also Panebianco 2007). Merging these previously independent financial tools has a peculiar meaning when referring to the Russian *status* in a neighbourhood perspective: financing the partnership with Russia will – from now on – depend more on different and country-specific, tailored *criteria*, rather than on multilateral and encompassing *fora*.

Politically speaking, then, the ENP represents the EU's attempt to grant its neighbours necessary resources in order to perceive the influence of the European normative grid. Though, no membership expectation is granted to participant countries[7]: the EU begun a selective process in order to exploit the economic integration of its neighbourhood, while promoting values and principles – with no destabilising enlargement foreseen. Two main political issues must be firmly emphasised:

- firstly, the ENP marked a step backwards for EU cooperation policy in the neighbourhood; the failure of the institutional arrangement granted by the Barcelona Process and the EMP implied a reassessment of any other attempt to regional agreement and multilateral «joint ownership» (K. Smith 2005, 763); if the EMP was the last «holistic» approach to «social, cultural, political and economic aspects» (Joffé 2005, 1), the Neighbourhood Policy meant a U-turn back to bilateral cooperation, in a sort of new «pragmatic» approach (Panebianco 2007, 17);
- secondly, Russia did explicitly refuse any engagement through the ENP Action Plans – since it considered the offer inadequate and supported a «more 'equal'» basis for negotiation (K. Smith 2005, 759). This was the first manifestation of the touchy Russian attitude towards the western neighbourhood.

Since the beginning, Russia marked a bold distance in goals and means from the European Union and its comprehensive attention to the neighbourhood. This frame symbolises the dual relationship between two heavy-weighted actors, reluctant to any renunciation and – in a way – «rivals in the region» (Fischer 2007, 7). What is the

[5] As stated in the official proximity policy website of the European Union, «More flexibility in the way that TACIS is structured allows potential technical assistance to be mobilised and implemented according to the capacity of each partner country».

[6] Through the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council, no. 1638/2006.

[7] Even the official discourse in institutional strategy frameworks features considerable amounts of compliant rhetoric concerning membership ambiguities when dealing with eastern/southern partners: «For our partners, considerably enhanced cooperation with the EU is entirely possible without a specific prospect of accession and, for European neighbours, without prejudging how their relationship with the EU may develop in future» (European Commission 2006b, 2).

balance point of this everlasting negotiation? When does politics *give way to* economics, and ethics *to* interests?

Uniting Russia and EU: a path towards an arrangement

The history of the relationship between EU and Russia has been «reactive» (Hughes 2006, 2) to events since the beginning of the 'post-communist' change in the region. In the end, as the result of a 'climax' of politico-economic interdependence, the EU-Russia relation resulted in «three overlapping stages» (Hughes 2006, 3). In the first phase (just after the collapse of the soviet bloc) Russia suffered from the political isolation of the whole FSU/CIS region, which was incompatible with any political conditionality[8]. The weight of the energetic resources controlled by the Russian area still sort of *scared* European governments not to involve such a destabilising supplier within the common market.

During the '90s, the EU eventually acknowledged Russia and the CIS of their real political mass: relationships were institutionalised through the PCAs, and also Russia subscribed its own. In the late nineties, the EU recognised both:

- the energetic dependence from the Russian region above all, which finally led to the four 'Common Spaces' of cooperation and consultation[9]; the EU starts to barter power-supplying for political assistance;
- and the need for a quiet transition towards security cooperation in the area, since a *peaceful* Russia was needed to maintain order among the emerging nationalities and on the Eastern window on Asia: this was crystallised in the Common Strategy on Russia[10], which – in the end – collected just two loose-termed objectives, such as 'stable democracy in' and 'strengthened cooperation with' Russia.

Also, a more 'regional' pattern was conceived (thanks to efforts of the Finnish government) through the Northern Dimension, a «regional co-operation programme» which involves Nordic and Baltic countries: small economic success from its action plans is outweighed by difficulties and indifference from the other EU countries, «suspicious… [on the] diversion of scarce resources from other neighbouring regions» (Barysch 2004, 50). At the end of the '90s, anyway, both Russia and the FSU countries are equally seen as unstable and de-structured political objects.

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[8] Economically, in this earlier stage TACIS funds from the EU could not even compare to PHARE programmes for Central and Eastern Europe countries (CEECs).

[9] The Joint Statement from the EU-Russia Summit in St. Petersburg, on May the 31st 2003, viewed to create «in the long term a *common economic space*, a common *space of freedom security and justice*, a space of *co-operation* in the field of *external security*, as well as *a space of research and education*» (emphasis added).

[10] This document emerged from an interesting political bargaining: the French proposal on the four Common Strategies (Russia, Ukraine, Balkans and the Mediterranean) reignited the «deadlocked» negotiation on the Qualified-Majority-Voting in the Common Foreign and Security Policy. The Common Strategy on Russia, though, was a political success of the German presidency in the European Council of Cologne (1999) and the first to be subscribed.

This was fairly not enough for the XXI century scenario. On the one hand, recent years marked an acceleration for the accession of the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs), headed by former Warsaw Pact countries such as Czech Republic and Poland, and the Baltic countries; on the other hand, Putin's presidency in Russia brought back on the scene an authoritarian view of dealing with domestic issues, and an arrogant projection of power when dealing with a «zero-sum game perception of international relations» (Vahl 2006, 21).

This is – essentially – the third (and current) phase of the relationship. Institutional flaws[11], vagueness in coherence and objectives, overlapping and juxtaposition with the TACIS programme were all part of the collapse of the 'Common Strategy on Russia'. The Russian counterpart granted no credibility to the project, and eventually relied exclusively on the implementation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement – whose economic concessions were subjected only to the 'article 6 guarantees'[12]. Any premature attempt to co-opt Russia in an unbalanced relation with the EU, ended up in a failure: a «classical Hill's 'capability-expectations gap'» between the «expectations generated by the CFSP» (Hughes 2006, 7) and the deluded results in the security planning on the eastern border.

Due to this divergence of intents, the EU split in two opposing positions, since many new member states became reluctant in concessions to the Russian giant as much as human rights and steps towards democratisation were eloquently neglected in both domestic affairs and on the Chechnyan border. Yet, broader states (including Germany, France and the UK) still appear condescending with Russian insistence. Putin's presidency opened a debate, and a structural issue, for the EU: whether to join a pragmatic position on the EU-Russia interdependence, or deepen the effectiveness of its democratising efforts. As far as the Commission (and the image of the EU as a norm/value-exporter) is concerned, such a choice has been made: and it supposedly rewards democracy, while *appeasing* energy.

Shifting the balance: no more 'Russia first' strategies

Russia turned to be an uncomfortable neighbour. It can feel further «perceptions of exclusion and potential isolation» creeping in (Light *et al.* 2000, 87), as long as the relations with the FSU countries become even more profitable for the EU: the «de-democratising trends» (Emerson *et al.* 2005, 20) in Putin's leadership then strongly collided with the «renewal of Ukraine's democratic transition» through the Orange Revolution in 2005 (Emerson *et al.* 2005, 17). The new EU member states were given the opportunity to support accession for Ukraine and other virtuous states within the CIS, while censuring Russian behaviour.

[11] Every rotating presidency «drew up a separate work plan on how to implement the Common Strategy» (Hughes 2006, 5).

[12] Article 6 of the EU-Russia PCA states, «The *political dialogue*… shall foresee that the Parties endeavour to cooperate on matters pertaining to the observance of the principles of democracy and human rights».

Politically speaking, the Action Plans submitted to FSU countries were not «in structure and… in substance» (Vahl 2006, 13) different from the Road Maps subscribed during the EU-Russia summits, except for one clause: *political conditionality*. Deepened bilateral cooperation with the EU is subjected to fulfilling a «detailed list of political criteria» on democracy, rule of law and human rights, which the FSU countries accepted just in order to move from co-operation towards integration[13]. No mention of these issues is made by even one of the 'common spaces' with Russia.

Economically, the only aim of the PCAs with the CIS countries is to gain free trade movements through implementation and regulatory approximation to the *acquis communautaire*, which is not mentioned in the Road Maps with Russia – where 'international standards and agreements' prevail. When we talk about 'efforts' by the former Soviet Union countries, we definitely mean it. They are effectively and constantly 'Europeanising' their laws and their economic structures, far from a Russian giant which claimed and eventually obtained a less ambitious framework – insufficient to reach an equidistant and mutual cooperation in the long term. Russia prevaricates at least as much as the FSU countries gain results.

This is why the EU started to select and rationalise the funding to assistance in the region. As far as Ukraine – for instance – pushed for transition with the Orange Revolution; or Moldova was the second partner (after Ukraine) to sign the Action Plan of the ENP; or 'reforming' states such as Georgia and Armenia[14] increasingly accepted harmonisation, the EU took 'Europeanisation' as a main criterion for allocation of financial assistance to the region. The allocation of funds – even when measured in euros pro capita – shows that the most willing and virtuous countries gather much higher income from economic assistance by the EU, and this connection seriously penalises the «authoritarian regimes» in Central Asia and Belarus, which are «the only countries to receive less EU assistance than Russia» (Vahl 2006, 15, graph adapted in *Figure 1*). Russia did benefit much less contribution from TACIS funds as long as Putin's presidency developed his authoritarian backlash in the region: the difference from the early '90s becomes sharp, if compared to the increasing assistance granted to Ukraine (Vahl 2006, 14, graph adapted in *Figure 2*). Finally, the relationship between EU and Russia looks less effective on both substance and form. High-level summits, pondered diplomacy, exclusive Road Maps, 'common spaces', Common Strategies linking external security to CFSP: all these recipients lacked substance since Russia exploited the lever of energy supplying for unconstrained autonomy in its domestic affairs and its international projection.

[13] Not to mention pervasive control upon domestic dynamics in electoral democracy, since e.g. Moldova and Ukraine had to guarantee for the effectiveness of political elections, while parliamentary and presidential elections (with Putin scrambling for constitutional change for a third mandate) in Russia within 2007 and 2008 are not even mentioned in official documents.

[14] Whose efforts have linked democracy *adaptation* to «re-branding [themselves] as Black Sea state[s] and therefore more European and less Caucasian» (Emerson 2004b, 8), to the extent that 72% Armenians admit that «their country's future lay with the EU» (Emerson 2004b, 17, sourced by http://www.ankam.org).

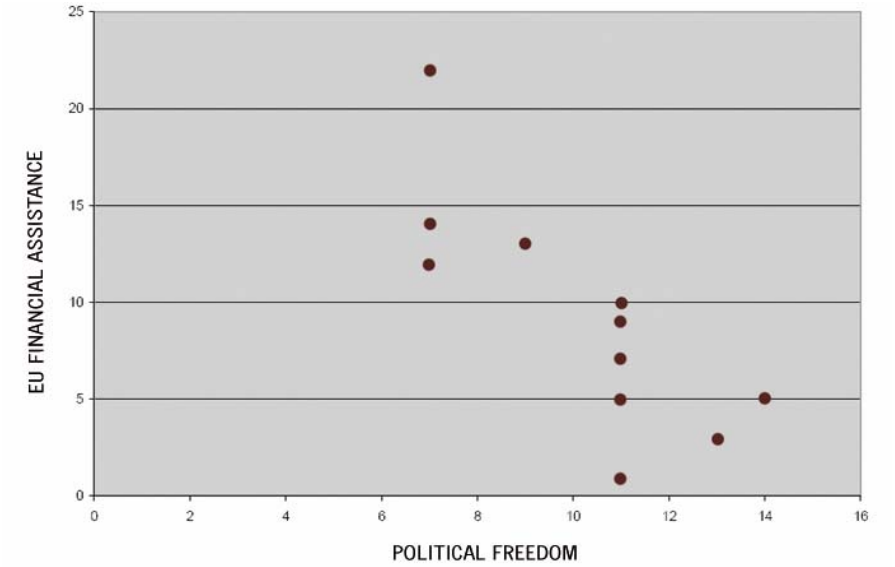

Figure 1. Correlation between EU financial assistance to FSU countries, and their endeavours in adopting EU standards for partnership

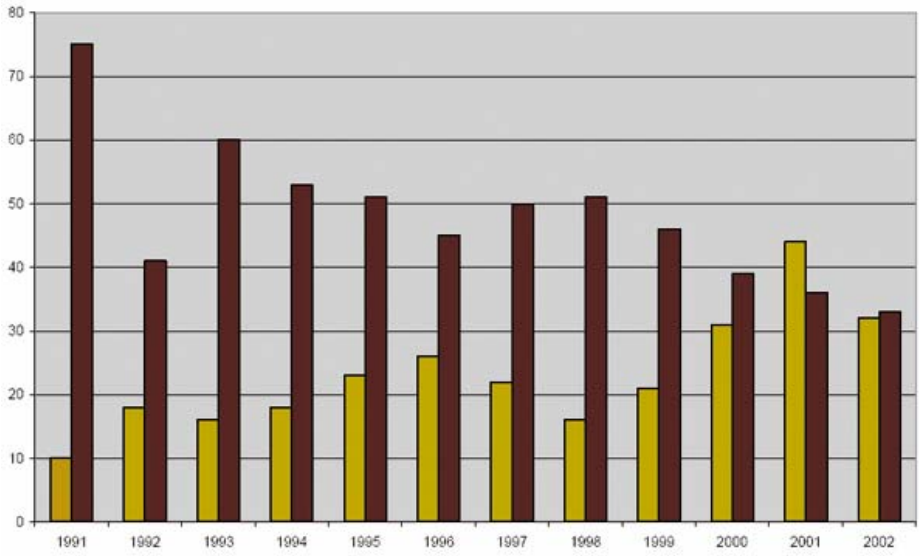

Figure 2. Shifting trends: financial support correlation, to Russia (dark red) and Ukraine (dark yellow)

The second chapter will seek a *chance* for a step forward: whether the EU has the opportunity to heal Russian deficits in democracy and rule of law (and what it has done so far), or such a *consensus*-building strategy is not *interesting* when dealing with Russia, as long as the import/export (energy/products) balance remains satisfactory for all parties in the game.

2. EU, democracy promotion and human rights: is Russia kept apart *again*?

Whenever we talk about the external projection of the EU, the dimension of democracy and human rights promotion cannot be kept aside. Democratisation through values and norms has been fully recognised as a typically European feature, even though «the extent to which the *rhetoric* is translated into political *practice*» (Balfour 2006, 114, emphasis added) is yet to be assessed. The EU institutions appear sincerely confident in the potential of the projection of the EU as a democracy-promoter. A communication by the Commission (2001), on one hand emphasises the «substantial political and moral weight» the EU draws from the state-of-the-art democratic experience of its members; on the other hand, it shows the means («a substantial budget» above all) to deploy what it calls the «internal and external policies» of assistance to democratisation and human rights.

Indeed, this 'inside/outside', 'internal/external' distinction is substantial to the EU perception abroad: those who are 'outside' may challenge a closer relationship and – in the end – the perspective of accession *only* when successfully dealing with democracy and respecting high EU-based standards in human rights policies. But how can eventually Russia place itself even *outer* than the 'outside'?

Internal/external dimensions, democracy promotion and conditional assistance: the paradigm of 'Europeanisation'

According to the theoretical dimension adopted by Emerson *et al.* (2005), Europeanisation helps conceptually defining the external activity of the EU as a democracy promoter, to the extent that «democracy and Europeanisation are overlapping categories», but definitely «not the same thing» (2005, 4). This paper follows the indications by the new institutionalist approach[15] about democracy promotion in the Eastern boarder and Russia as «the export… of distinctively European political organisation and governance *beyond* the territory of the EU» (Emerson *et al.* 2005, 4 in footnote). Thus, when Olsen asks «what are the political processes through [which they] spread?», we do consider *conditionality* as a proper reply, and we recall *energy* as one of the «factors [which] determine the» peculiar «rate and pattern of diffusion» when referred to Russia (Olsen 2002, 17).

By simply intersecting political conditionality as the structural element of an EU/neighbour relation, with the degree of potentiality acknowledged to a membership expectation, we see «differences in the intensity of pressures and incentives for compliance with EU values» (Emerson *et al.* 2005, 5):

- whenever *interested* in bounding a relationship to the extent of accession as a purpose, the EU will act through the highest possible pressure upon

[15] In the terms developed by Olsen (2002), who differentiates the Europeanisation paradigm into five categories: «changes in the external territorial boundaries of the EU, development of institutions of governance at EU level, central penetration of national and sub-national systems of governance, export of forms of distinctively European political organisation and governance beyond the territory of the EU, a political project aiming at a unified and politically stronger EU» (Olsen in Emerson *et al.* 2005, 4).

«full compliance». And as soon as membership becomes eventually negotiable, then the 'neighbouring' relation turns into an 'internal' issue, which must satisfy all points out of the *Copenhagen criteria*[16];

- countries whose membership expectation is not fully acknowledged – such as those in the ENP, can just rely upon a 'positive' conditionality through the *benchmarking* by the Commission. This is currently translated simply into a proportional adjustment of financial assistance through the instruments of the policy (i.e., the ENPI).

What we learn is that whenever the relation that the EU wants to tighten moves along the *continuum* of membership/cooperation, so moves the Europeanisation point as well. It's clear that – as far as democracy promotion is concerned – the ENP system is, in a way, «derivative» of the more selective and severe mechanisms connected to accession. When the question on floor is *external*, the distance from the 'core' Europe is paid through a looser Europeanisation.

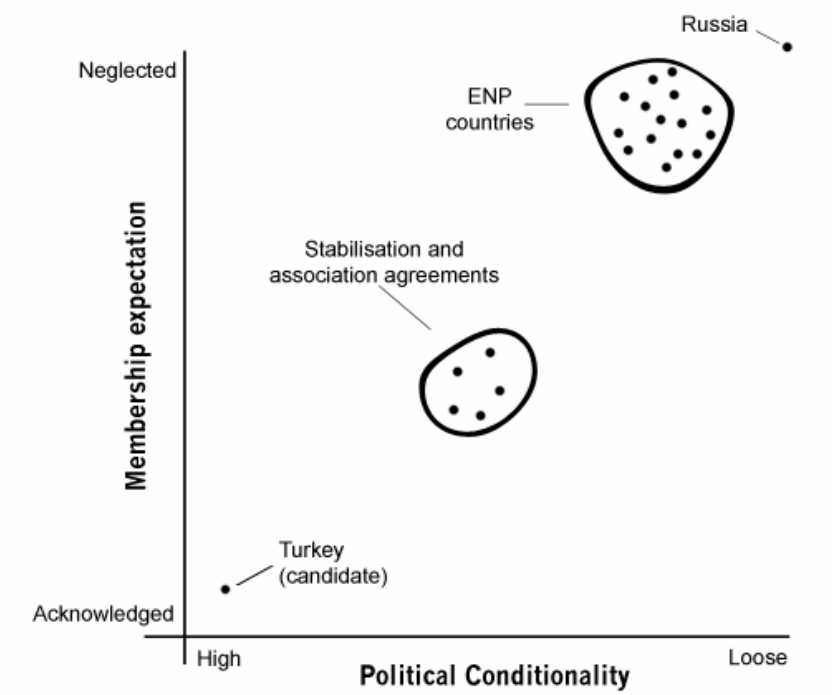

Figure 3. Correlation between membership expectations of neighbouring States, and the weight of political conditionality imposed to partnerships by the EU

[16] The so-called 'Copenhagen criteria' were laid down by member governments during the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, and they're assumed to be the *least* to start negotiating the accession to EU. Therefore, every country wishing to gain membership of the EU must comply with«institutional stability, understood as a guarantee of democratic order, the rule-of-law and respect for human rights; the protection of minorities; a functioning market economy; and the acceptance of the obligations of membership, namely political, economic and monetary union» (Schmid 2003, 19).

But before producing such a result, it must be noticed that a more structural cleavage between supranational and intergovernmental tendencies emerges as well. Indeed, the role of the Commission and its continuous activity in the field of External Relations have eventually favoured a *path dependency* process, wherein the Commission managed to export to the ENP relations all the «expertise… in EU law… and developed very important mechanisms of economic and technical aid» (Emerson *et al.* 2005, 5) similar to those adopted with accession candidates. At a glance from the member states, this appeared as a reallocation of resources to something *too* 'external'. That's why both the Commission's role and its regulatory experimentation were severely constrained in form and *substance*. Hence, we suggest to re-elaborate the Europeanisation paradigm just for democracy promotion as an external projection of the EU: we may assume that a model of «democracy gravity» is more fitting for the former-Soviet Union countries and – without any doubt – for Russia. In the 'gravity model', the EU is assumedly the centre: and in order to make its eastern satellites converge to its own model, it just relies «on the reputational quality and attractiveness of its democracy, its geographic and cultural-historical proximity and its openness to the periphery». Thus, further steps towards «more intrusive» conditionalities may not be ever considered *convenient* (Emerson 2004b, 5). At least for Russia, then, this is quite afar from Europeanisation as the «institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms» (Radaelli in Emerson *et al.* 2005, 4), and will be definitely not enough in the long term.

Authority and democracy: a Russian perspective

It is possible to see an interconnection of «rising income from energy exports, de-democratization and stagnation» (Fischer 2007, 18). Buttressing the «autonomy of the political» (Makarychev 2007, unpublished draft) transformed the post-1991 situation of structural weakness of the state, onto a scenario of «apparent strength» (Fischer 2007, 18): traditional state sovereignty of «political subjectivity» must be *restored* through the «clarity» of the «borders of the political domain» (Makarychev 2007). The conventional priority – borders need sovereignty to be drawn – is eventually conversed, and now «border-making appears to be *constitutive* for the… identity of the Russian State» (Makarychev 2007, emphasis added). Again, a dichotomy between 'internal' and 'external' becomes essential to the political discourse. And finally the determination of an 'outside' *creates* the 'inside'. When dealing with 'human rights' and 'democracy', Russia is usually questioned about Chechnya on one side, and its domestic policy on economic and social freedom on the other. Putin engaged himself on Chechnya with a «personal commitment»[17] (Nicholson 2001, 874) which is unusual for somewhat a

[17] Nicholson (2001, 869) quotes directly from the «Otkrytoe pis'mo Vladimira Putina k rossiyskim izbiratelyam» (Open letter by Vladimir Putin to the Russian voters), emitted for the 2000 Presidential elections, which tangled all sensitive points of the domestic policy of the Federation. The aim of the Russian strategy sounds even disconcerting when referred to as «grapple directly with the bandits, destroy them… for the supremacy of justice, towards the dictatorship of a law that is equal for all» (Nicholson 2001, 874).

'shadowed' and bureaucratic leader of such an intelligence-derived ancestry. The Russian action on the soil of the independentist guerrilla was pillared by the certainty that no further space was allowed «for a political solution», and that pre-emptive «control of free press» was necessary to tackle Chechen resistance down (Nicholson 2001, 874). These were considered two important changes against «prime causes of failure» of previous attempts to solve the issue in the North Caucasus. With no domestic opposition in the political debate, and with an astonishing «recognition of Putin's huge popular legitimacy by the EU leaders» (Emerson 2004b, 9), the President was able to arrange a great bureaucratic construction upon funds and assistance for Chechen reconstruction and to settle only Russian office holders, without any loss in terms of troops deployed on field. The situation was taken into account also by the Council of Europe, whose attitude joined and supported those already expressed by large-numbered (but yet light-weighted) delegations of the national Parliaments and by the European Commission and the European Parliament as well. All technical and political substance was given to the argument of «the failure of Russia to stop human rights violations by its security forces and the absence of any process of dialogue that could lead to a political solution» (Emerson 2004a, 10).

This also shows the ability of the Russian officials to «turn [the] internal contradictions and complexities» of the multi-levelled governance of the EU into their own advantage upon a system «simply too complex for them to deal with» (Barysch 2004, 53). EU-Russian relations on this issue appear then discomforting. The leaders of the EU member states continue to keep ambiguous tendencies to compromise, especially whenever they're induced in obtaining favours from Russia and at the same time contradicting the position of the Commission or the EU Parliament: as soon as the Commission made more «wide-ranging demands on the energy sphere», Russia seduced UK to sign bilateral energy agreements *beyond* the official negotiation. Germany «promised to speed up Russia's entry into the WTO»[18] (Barysch 2004, 54), no matter that trade external negotiations are a monopoly of the Commission. No additional words are worth to be spent on the burlesque representation of a 'defence lawyer' given by Berlusconi in the 2003 EU-Russia summit about Chechnya and the Yukos affair; as well as on the «Annex 1 is confidential» label which heads in the «Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on relations with Russia» (European Commission 2004a): it pushed for a «tougher and more consistent line» (Barysch 2004, 56) by the EU when dealing with Russian misbehaviours and was then secreted by state leaders.

Looked through the lenses of «authoritarian practices of the State administration… the development of a viable democracy in Russia is far from accomplished» (Panebianco 2006, 136). This is the case of the peculiar and perverted relation of Putin's administration with civil society, mass information control and economic hegemony. All these elements tie together in the «oligarchs» (Nicholson 2001, 878) *dossier* in the administration's to-do list. Civil society, press and mass information maintain linkages to both economy and politics: there's a recurrent step-by-step itinerary, which leads

[18] All this happened in 2003, profitable year for foreign diplomacy on human rights issues, during the 'European campaigns' by Putin's deputies.

large banking-investments or industrial groups to manage and control mass medias or newspapers, and eventually sell to the best offer room and resources for political bids and initiatives. This occurred for both 'Gusinsky'[19] and 'Khodorkhovsky'[20] affairs, and discouragingly showed the «deficiencies» of any kind of feasible reform in Russia's notion of democracy. There is a huge gap between the European conception of a 'stable democracy' founded upon the bases of «civic institutions as well as media pluralism» (Panebianco 2006, 136), and the peculiar idea of «sovereign democracy» (Makarychev 2007) developed by Putin's intellighentsjia – far from the 'managed' democracies of the American West, as much as from the 'non-sovereign' democracies of the newly independent states, subjected to NATO/EU rule. This emotional «autonomous historical subject» (Makarychev 2007) ranked roughly 5—5 in the Freedom House charts[21] in 2003, was labelled 'Partly free' and missed the opportunity to gain «higher credentials as an EU partner» (Panebianco 2006, 136), like the Balkan countries and the EU accession candidates did (improving their rankings in the interval 1999-2003[22]).

No membership expectation, and the heavy constraint of a needed oil/trade relation make this «strategic friendship» – in the words of Chris Patten – sincerely awkward and hazardous. Even the «idealistic soft power» (Vahl 2006, 21) of the EU crumbles, in front of «strategic interests and political priorities» (Panebianco 2006, 136). Energy is the Gordian knot of a privileged partnership which sounds appropriate even with the authoritarian taste of such a blinded trust in the oil/gas supply from Putin's Russia.

3. Russia as the main pillar of an 'European energy security'

«Sufficient resources at a reasonable price». Gawdat Bahgat (2006, 965) explores the multiple dimensions of the problematic issue of energy security in the EU economic and geopolitical environment. Energy supplying and non-renewable resources are on the top of several political agendas in most developed and developing countries: they all face the «sense of vulnerability in respect» of their dependence from hydrocarbons (Bahgat 2006, 961). Generally, we sum up three key points from a wider and technical definition of energy security:

- *'geological'* vs. *'geopolitical'* – energy security depends both on the physical availability of crude oil and natural gas, and on worldwide economic conjunctures, given that prosperity in international exchange and investment flows helps price stability and trade certainty;
- *foreign investments and domestic appeasement* – no matter the amount of natural reserves, financial inflows are necessary to exploit them. This

[19] Vladimir Gusinsky, head of the conglomerate Media-MOST, eventually 'discharged' by Putin's administration for supporting competitor Luzhkov's campaign in 1999.
[20] CEO of the oil and gas company Yukos, denounced the brutal means of Putin's presidency on political and civil freedoms, and the linkages between Russian technocracy and the Gazprom monopoly in the Russian hydrocarbons market: he has been eventually arrested and imprisoned for political crimes and became symbolic of contestation against the sharpness of the collusion with the oligarchs' movement.
[21] Russia scored 5 in civil liberties, and 5 in political rights (the index ranged from 1 to 7, best to worst).
[22] See Emerson (2004b, 4) for detail.

creates an interdependency between oil producers (who just have oil in their land) and foreign investors, who will be interested in funding only when political and social conflict is severely limited and economic stability granted;

- *the goal of diversification* – the market of raw materials has been stabilised by the emergence of many new producers and suppliers. This allows importers and consumers for «an overall diversification of supply» to reduce the risks of an «overdependence» from one single producer. One important feature is the converse situation of a «demand security» (Bahgat 2006, 966) for oil producers, when weakened by emerging competitors in the same area – which is clearly the case of Russia, in the Black Sea/Caspian Sea basin.

The efforts of the European Commission (mostly through the DG Energy and Transport) in dealing with such a complex issue were satisfactory and effective, and sharply collide with the idleness of the final political decision by national leaders. Nonetheless, the key points of two Green Papers by the Commission (2000, 2006a) were surprisingly similar in addressing the main strategic lines of the EU in order to achieve «security of energy supply». This showed no remarkable step ahead in «the characteristics of Europe's energy sector» (Bahgat 2006, 964) in the last six years: time again, the EU is dependant on fossil fuels, and the guidelines for further action rely on «diversification» (European Commission 2000, 22) of supply, and – most significantly – on a «new energy partnership with Russia» (2006, 20).

A «Gulliver in chains»: the deadlock of the 'Energy dialogue' with Russia

Energy is sure one of the «areas of common interest» for both Russia and the EU (Grant and Barysch 2003, 1). According to the data published by the Directorate General Energy and Transport, in 2005 EU-27 depended from imports for 82.3% of its oil consumption, and 57.6% of its gas consumption. Russia accounts for 29.9% of imported oil to EU-27, as well as for 45.1% of total EU-27 gas imports (DG *TREN* 2008). Conversely, Russia «exports exclusively towards Europe» about 30% of its gross energy primary sources production: tax revenues on energy trade, though, account for almost 20% of overall Russian federal budget (Finon and Locatelli 2008, 424).

This interdependence forces the EU to seek for Russian condescendence, and Russia to manipulate consensus among EU leaders in order to preserve a lucrative income. Both parties attempted to formalise the relationship: the 'Russian Energy Strategy until 2020' on one side, the forecasts by the Commission and the 'Energy Dialogue' on the other.

The 'Energy Dialogue' was launched in the 6th EU-Russia Summit in Paris, 2000, and its objectives mix political needs («the recognition of certain new transport infrastructures as being of 'common interest'», or «the necessity of jointly examining

any constraints to the trade in primary energy»)[23] and ideal perspectives on technical development and environmental safety – including a *really* soft diplomacy about Russian misconduct on Kyoto's protocol. Nonetheless, Russian attitude has been non-cooperative. The Commission underlined several concerns «about Russia's refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol on climate change… and the lack of Russian interest in the several pilot projects that have been established on energy conservation». This makes the way to a paradox: «self-interest» is still essential to both parties, but makes it unaffordable to «drop the dialogue» (Grant and Berysch 2003, 3).

We want to emphasise two opposing expectations from the 'Energy Dialogue'.

Optimistically, there's a wide movement among both EU officials and Russian delegates that wishes for a formalisation of the current interdependence through a Treaty or an equipollent agreement – i.e., re-vitalising the 1994 Energy Charter Treaty[24]. This would buttress the cooperation, the game of import/export necessary to both economies, and would push for «solidarités de faits» - in a functionalist/Monnetian manner – that could lead to «rules on investment, security of supply, competition, technical co-operation and free circulation of energy» (Grant and Berysch 2003, 4; Westphal 2007b). More realistically, «several factors may constrain the EU-Russia energy dialogue» (Bahgat 2006, 970). The political behaviour of Russia is severely undermined by unreliable reserves of both crude oil and natural gas[25], and its ability to blackmail the EU with the threat of an energy undersupply *technically* covers the uncertainty of a long-term capacity to sustain such an interdependence with the European neighbour. Furthermore, Russia looks unreliable and upsetting politically as well: this damages its credibility as a 'dialoguer' and enhances the opportunity for a diversification of supply.

Against a consistent EU energy policy: a threefold threat from Russia

Apart from the formal arrangements and the legal bases of this 'privileged' partnership, or mutual interdependence between the EU and Russia, we need to emphasise the role of informal constraints upon the political discourse in the EU-Russian energy policy bargaining. Our main assumption is that the EU resorts to 'soft power' instruments[26] in its geopolitical proximity in order to «conceptualis[e] its dependence in terms of interdependence» (Finon and Locatelli 2008, 426), whereas the

[23] Quotes from the 'Issues' concerned in the Energy Dialogue, taken from the website of the European Commission (http://ec.europa.eu/energy/russia/overview/issues_en.htm) under the indications of DG TREN.

[24] The Treaty – entered into legal force in 1998 – focuses on «the protection and promotion of foreign energy investments; free trade in energy materials, based on World Trade Organization (WTO) rules; freedom of energy transit through pipelines and grids; reducing the negative environmental impact of the energy cycle through improving energy efficiency; and Europe's energy security mechanisms for the resolution of state-to-state or investor-to-state disputes» (Bahgat 2006, 968). It may be considered the (fragile) basis of successive steps in the EU-Russia cooperation on energy issues.

[25] According to Bahgat (2006, 970), Russia currently accounts for 12% of oil world production, founded upon only 6% of known reserves.

[26] We refer to the basic definition given by Joseph Nye, who describes 'soft power' as «a means of obtaining desired outcomes… through attraction rather than coercion» (2004, 256-257).

balance of this relationship actually favours Russia in a threefold perspective: physical security; member states' preferences; private entrepreneurs.

With regard to the physical security of energy supply, Russian reserves have a coercive effect on the political course of several EU member states: in 2005, at least six countries among EU-27 entirely depended on Russian exports for 100% of domestic natural gas consumption (mainly in Northern Europe and bordering states). Yet, Russia is fostering several projects for the exploitation of the Yamal (close to the Pechora region) and the gigantic Shtokman (500 km off Murmansk in the Arctic Sea) gas fields. The latter, in particular, will be connected directly to a German gas terminal through a pipeline under the Baltic Sea, bypassing all Baltic countries (that is, 100%-importers of Russian gas). Conversely, the Russian oil industry is currently «boosting... existing fields» with limited investment in «exploration and renewal of reserves», which have been thoroughly «ignored» (Locatelli 2006, 1074-1075). Despite being the sole provider of primary energy resources to many EU countries, Russia does not appear as a reliable exporter in the long run, and opposes somewhat a *random* strategy to the needs of EU importers.

The position of the EU in its relationship with Russia is further weakened by the inconsistent or ambiguous behaviour of many of its member states. Whereas UK, Ireland and several (both *core* Europe or newly accessed) members support recent developments of an 'energy package' by the European Commission[27], bigger states such as Germany, France and Italy still pursue egoistic preferences that eventually differ from or even collide with common EU interests on energy security. Above all, Germany's state-centred attitude towards political bargains on energy security emerged from the scarce attention devoted to energy[28] throughout the 6-month EU Council Presidency in 2007. This contradicted the expectations raised by public statements from the Federal government[29]. The controversial behaviour of the German diplomacy became of public domain when former-Chancellor Schröder got «sworn in at Russia's Gazprom» (DeutscheWelle 2006) to supervise the project for the Baltic Pipeline «in the interests of Germany» explicitly.

In the aftermath of the complex process of liberalisation and privatisation of the European energy market, corporate interests of EU and Russian energy companies have

[27] The 'package' may be regarded as a set of normative acts and background documents that challenges Member states on industrial carbon emissions, on greenhouse gases (20% cut in emissions), on a 13% reduction of primary energy consumption in 20 years. The Irish government claimed that the objectives outlined by the package «are… in line with Ireland's ambitious and challenging renewable energy commitments». As for its mandate as EU Council President, the Slovenian government declared that the package «has become one of the EU's top priorities», while stressing the role of «fairness and solidarity» among Member states. The British government enthusiastically admitted that the Commission's plan «shows exactly what we are aiming for globally».

[28] It might be considered, for instance, that the issue of polish meat at Latvian borders was given greater concern during the works of the Samara EU-Russia Summit in 2007, held during the German Presidency of both the EU Council and the G8. Only 7 words out of 6,200 in the official transcript of the joint press conference at the end of the Summit are somehow related to 'energy'.

[29] On October 4, 2006, the German State Secretary Silberberg declared that «[e]nergy policy will be a special focus of our Presidency». In the same speech, he also cleared out that «Brussels must respect Member states'… national energy mix», defending what – as a German federal secretary – he addressed as «our energy foreign policy» (Silberberg 2006, emphasis added).

diverged significantly. On the one hand, Russian private investors are «tied to the complex network of domination and subordination» (Locatelli 2006, 1075) set up by the federal state and its regions. The Russian energy market, therefore, suffers from an inner contradiction between a long-term strategy pursued by the federal government in order to save increasing revenues from energy industry taxes, and the short-term strategy of «immediate liquidity through exports, with the aim of rapidly increasing the value of existing assets» (Locatelli 2006, 1077) pursued by private companies (a «cash and asset stripping» tactic). Furthermore, especially with regard to natural gas, the state-controlled (51% share) gas giant Gazprom is by all means monopolising the market through a massive strategy of acquisitions in the upstream chain and diversification. Gazprom receives orders from the government in respect of its geopolitics of investments: it is not unfair to assert that the federal state is reasserting its «sphere of influence» on Central Asia through Gazprom's policies (Finon and Locatelli 2008, 426).

On the other hand, the 'core Europe' countries (be they massive importers or not) are blamed to let their national companies negotiate with Gazprom on a bilateral basis, weakening the prospects of a common EU voice to overturn EU's import dependence. This is, for instance, the case of ENI (Gazprom's biggest world client), the champion of Italy's energy industry, which has bilaterally negotiated larger gas imports in exchange of preferential access to fields and assets in Western Siberia. This is also the case of BASF, chemical German giant, which subscribed a preferential agreement to obtain gas at fixed prices proportional to the shares it owns in a downstream joint venture with Gazprom. And lastly, it is the case of E.ON, a German distributor operating in the UK, who traded access to Russian fields for Gazprom's entry on the British energy market, a rather straightforward «asset swap» (Watson 2007). Private companies are somehow trying to free ride on the opportunities connected to a liberalised energy market, even in spite of national interests of the governments they are supported by: this allows us not to agree with Finon and Locatelli when they define domestic operators as «guardians,… 'gatekeepers',… in coordination with governments» (2008, 438). Russia is therefore «driving a wedge» between EU member states and breaking the EU into «separate markets» for energy security (Finon and Locatelli 2008, 430).

We assert that the European Union is currently unable to pursue a policy *tout court* in the field of energy security. A policy stems from a consensual compromise between private interests, national preferences and economic efficiency: and the EU – to date – cannot afford such a synthesis on energy issues. Nonetheless the EU is able to exert a common action on energy, within a multilateral, subsidiary and market-led framework for cooperation in its geopolitical proximity. The examples of the Energy Charter Treaty, or the cooperative relationship with BSEC and GCC alongside the Baku Initiative, have contributed to the creation of «an all-EU legal framework» (de Jong and Weeda 2007, 44) for the internal markets of gas and electricity. Alongside this action, the EU still fosters radical innovations in democracy, rule of law, political stabilisation and social development within its proximity – in the wake of its market-oriented normative power. This 'energy community' might become a forefront «kind of network-based governance structure… evolving in a creative way» (de Jong and Weeda 2007, 7). It breeds norm 'contagion', liberalisation, political participation.

Pipeline diplomacy and geopolitical alternatives for EU's energy security

One feasible escape from overdependence is to seek alternatives to Russian oil and gas near in the region. The geopolitical earthquake ignited by the collapse of the Soviet Union roughly coincides with the geological inner value of the divided lands. It is a fact that newly independent states such as Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan see «hydrocarbon resources as the cornerstone of their economic prosperity» (Bahgat 2002, 322), and this is usually the only item to barter with political condescendence from the shadowed influence of Moscow – «as an investor… a transit country… a competitor» (Bahgat 2002, 316). The Russian Federation is indeed tightly linked to the fortunes of its closest neighbours, since they share most of the infrastructures needed to transport raw materials to consumers. Russia needs to pass through these territories with its pipes, but at the same time the Central Asian and Caucasian producers *do need* Russian sea and harbours to keep connected with their oil demand.

We need to emphasise two different features of the Russian policy on pipeline diplomacy in its neighbourhood. Firstly, Russia enjoys a legal monopoly for infrastructures in oil and gas market, which are managed by the state-controlled Transneft corporation. Transneft is responsible for many of the geopolitical decisions in the distribution of power in the oil and gas market: its tight linkage to the government and its monopoly legitimate its choices as Russian ones. Thus, aiming at isolating the potential competitors of the Caspian basin, Transneft promoted only pipeline networks to the Baltic sea[30] and towards the USA through the Barents Sea[31]. A more investment-attracting option to China developed by Khodorkhovsky's Yukos was ignored, favouring a line to East Siberia and Japanese coasts: the lack of an overall strategy makes way for a policy «driven by pragmatic considerations» (Bahgat 2002, 316).

Secondly, Putin's government chose a kind of 'low profile' engagement in the Caspian area due to pressing factors: growing US influence in terms of private foreign investments, and the political appeasement of the many «troubled areas… these routes pass through» (Bahgat 2002, 323). Russia agreed on further involvement of American private investors in the area[32], in change of the political stabilisation of the region through diffused economic potential and prosperity. Putin also played the 'co-operative option', proposing explicit diplomatic experimentation such as the 'Eurasian Alliance of Gas Producers' – but at the same time favouring a corporate trust (Yukos, Gazprom, Lukoil) to monopolise the infrastructural relation between Russian and Centro-Asian supplies. What we know is that – at any time, in any point of its network – Russia can «obstruct pipelines», turning off all of the alleged autonomy in the Caspian region.

Thus, institutional, structural and economic assistance to the development of an autonomous and sufficient system of oil production and distribution in the Caspian basin – farther from Russian influences and barters – is an unconditional interest of the European Union:

[30] The BPS, 'Baltic pipelines system'.

[31] Through the line Murmansk-Barents.

[32] The Russian President eventually accepted an enhanced cooperation with a long-time enemy like Turkey – for the reciprocal disposal of seaports and pipelines for natural gas transportation (culminated in the ongoing initiative of the 'Blue Stream' under the Black Sea).

- *stabilisation of supply* – energy security for a main consumer and importer such as the EU structurally depends on «multiple export routes» that make deliveries «less vulnerable to… political disruptions» on any single route;
- *economic feasibility* – Caspian networks must be ultimately valuable on an economic deliberation, given that private investments can only be attracted more through reasonable and effective «commercial merit», than «strategic concerns» (Bahgat 2006, 973).

The EU may then consider the Caspian basin as an alternative, and invest on an «incremental production» for the achievement of its own energy security, though the stabilisation of the export markets and the diversification of politically autonomous suppliers and geopolitical players. Therefore, the EU has fostered cooperation through the INOGATE[33] programme, whose Umbrella Agreement was ratified by 16 countries in 1999. This agreement created the first institutional arrangement that stretched to comprise a large area, from the Western Balkans to the Caucasus, through expertise transfers and investment attraction. The INOGATE projects aim at improving the transit system of Russian gas across many INOGATE partners, while engaging some members (i.e., Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan) with new, first-hand suppliers' responsibilities. It has a relevant role in planning alternative prospects for EU's energy security, and also helps the EU build *consensus* upon its external relations in the region. The INOGATE programme has further developed into the so-called Baku Initiative, «a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework governing an integrated EU–Black Sea–Caspian Sea common energy market cooperation in the field of energy security» (Gültekin-Punsmann 2008, 11). Relevantly, Russia agreed to participate in the initiative: this might well be regarded as the first significant *forum* between Russia and its closer neighbours on energy issues.

Russia is also a member of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), «the only multi-purpose arena for regional cooperation» in the Black Sea area (Emerson and Vahl 2002, 5). The BSEC has championed a model of 'institution building' on the example of the EU, and contributed to the creation of a complex and efficient institutional apparatus governing the dialogue among member countries. Yet, a «dynamic process» of Europeanisation (Yannis 2008, 3) in the energy sector is currently at stake: boosts in inclusiveness (being Russia one of the founding countries), «local ownership» and collective support by emerging political elites (Manoli 2006, 4) make the BSEC one of the most interesting prospects for EU's pipeline diplomacy in the closest future – and a positive assessment of EU's strategy for diversification as well.

[33] The INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe) Programme was officially launched in 1995 under the aegis of the TACIS funds. To date, INOGATE members are 21 (five more signed the agreement in 2000 and 2001): Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Greece, Slovakia, Turkey, Serbia, Latvia. It must be noticed that Russia has *not* been engaged in the programme since the very beginning.

Conclusions. Sparks of an *ethic* interdependence?

We can argue that the process of '*securisation*'[34] of EU external relations now completely concerns energy. The entire industrial and political chain (from extraction to consumption) of fuels now enjoys the status of a «security matter» – with all due consequences in terms of political strategy: every step of the chain can be «positioned within a security framework» (Makarychev 2006, 1), which usually lacks for accountability of power, and responsibility for the political decision.

There's a need to restore *transparency* in the energy policy of the EU, and it may arise from a clearer and more technical (or «ostensibly depoliticized») relationship with the Russian partner (Makarychev 2006, 4). Transparency and political responsibility in the environmental policy related to fuel and hydrocarbon transports; anti-corruption strategies to defeat any attempt to uncompetitive trust and corporations economy in the energy sector, and to attract foreign investments; effective struggle to an «illegal market» for oil products escaping the licensing regime: this is eventually the result of a de-securitised Russian diplomacy in the energy sector. Even the 'gravity' effect of the European Union as a partner may not «spill over automatically» to accountability and democracy «because domestic demand for transparency… is weak» (Makarychev 2006, 3). The EU – as a value bearer – joins and supports many lively initiatives in the energy security sector, together with many mainstream financial institutions[35], but Russia «prefers to stay aloof». There are consistent efforts to be made at the highest political level on both sides of this peculiar partnership. «Reversing… the stark opposition between security and transparency» (Makarychev 2006, 2) in the mind of Russian officials and in their diplomacy would be even more coherent with the aim and scope of the 'virtuous' and 'ethic' rationale behind the foreign and energy policy of the EU towards its neighbourhood. There's a need for Russia to be predictable. Reliable. The EU can keep a-pace with its values of norm exporter, and can eventually mix the promotion of more responsible political developments in Russia and the former Soviet Union, with no compromises on the huge amount of interests on the floor for the EU as a whole, and for every single government as well.

An *ethic* initiative of the EU in the energy sector cannot consider security and responsibility as «mutually exclusive» (Makarychev 2006, 2): competition, economic prosperity, spread of good governance and values for free market and social development are the key-words for a new political strategy. And in the end, they can positively fuel the composite interdependence between Russia and the EU.

[34] The concept is meant in the terms developed by Ole Wæver, the Copenaghen School, within the constructivist paradigm of international relations.

[35] Makarychev (2006, 2) lists the EITI and PWYP cases: the 'Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative' and the 'Publish What You Pay' coalition constitute a network supported by the EU as well as the World Bank. The networks includes many FSU countries (Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine).

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