

**THE EU AND RUSSIA IN 2007:
NEGOTIATING A NEW RELATIONSHIP**

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Andris Sprūds. Thank you to the organizers of this excellent event. As it was said already, in aftermath of the EU- Russia Samara summit, I think that meeting in a group of people, who are academics, who are excellent experts, who are also decision makers, I think that it is a very good idea to reflect on things that happened recently. The previous speeches have been quite optimistic about what is happening in the EU and Russia relations. Probably Abram Kleckin made my job a little bit easier as he already pointed out the potential problems, which can happen, which are already taking place, elements of crisis and elements of disagreement between the EU and Russia. I would like to take the discussion from this perspective. So as not to make it too black and at the same time to point out aspects which are making relations more difficult. I would start with the words of the EU Commissioner for external relations Benito Ferrero Waldner, what she said in 2006. Russia is a strategic partner. Russia is a very important neighbor. And Russia sometimes is also an ally. But it also a more and more assertive player on the world stage. I think after Samara, after the events in Estonia, after the polonium scandal with UK, I think that interpretation could be as follows. We have a considerable number of common interests. But there is also a growing number of disagreements and diverging, not say colliding, approaches. Definitely, the mood at the moment in the EU and Russia relations is not the mood that existed in 2003 in St. Petersburg when Romano Prodi said that Russia and the EU go together as vodka with caviar. I think that vodka and caviar period is gone. Make no mistake - and I think that it was of course very rightly pointed by the previous speakers, also by my Russian colleagues - that the EU and Russia have a wide range common interests, especially in the economic matters. For EU, Russia is already third largest partner and a major energy supplier, insuring its security of supply. For Russia, vice versa, the EU provides security of demand and the EU is for Russia the major trading partner. However, there are many stumbling blocks.

First of all, there is a difference in mutual perceptions of each other, each other's intentions and moves. Relations are, in fact, as good as they are perceived. Relations are how they are being contemplated. It very much sets the psychological environment for relations. And it is very important.

And the second, which is largely the result of the first is that there is increasing number of diverging interests. And there is one aspect, which probably wasn't touched upon, because today we spoke a lot of PCA and the four common spaces and the EU-Russian more or less legal political relations, economical relations. But there is this question, which increasingly raises questions on both sides. The territory, the space, the question, which by some is optimistically called overlapping integration space, by some it is called shared neighborhood, but more commonly now as Europe's neighborhood or Russia's near abroad. First of all, a few words about mutual perceptions. As I said, Russia, I think, is largely different in its perceptual background, with respect to each other. These differences are very important, because they are socialized in public discourse. They are becoming part of identity politics. How we position ourselves, how we perceive the other, in fact it is a constituting other, in its what we become ourselves. So, for identity politics it is important. Here are some of the ideas I hear, when I watch Russian TV, when I follow the Russian debate about the EU in Russia: The EU is pretty weak. That is major mainstream opinion in the Russian Federation. As Gleb Pavlovskiy recently said : "The EU in general is a project comparable to anesthesiology hospital." Just to forget the past. So it is like anesthesia. Russia is strong and it has a

potential for civilizing mission. And it is not always loved, and it is not always pleasant that it is strong. No anymore conditionalities is accepted. And in fact if we are speaking about partnership cooperation agreement, many would said, that there is no legal motivation to revise the agreement. There is no economic motivation to revise the agreement, because the agreement can go forward, but exactly more political, more mental. Russia doesn't anymore want to accept the conditionality principle. True, the agreement of 1994 was more or less transitional. You fulfill such and such conditions and in return you receive such and such kind of benefits. Russia doesn't want to speak from this perspective.

The EU as well clearly faces dilemmas. There is enlargement fatigue. And in aftermath of enlargement fatigue one can speak of a lost mission, especially after rejection of constitution. This has been revealed also with respect to position on Russia. What today the previous colleagues were saying, that the code of conduct is still in the making, especially regarding the question of values and interests. What should be predominant? And that's why I would say that the events in Estonia, the Samara summit, the radioactive polonium affair have changed the tide. The Russians themselves admit it. Fjodor Lukyanov recently in his article admitted that the tide has turned in the EU-Russia relations. There is certain poloniumization of relations. The relations are clearly contaminated at the moment and the health of the relations is deteriorating. With respect to the approach to near abroad and to the neighborhood, I think that there are clearly differences in approach to the so called shared neighborhood. The EU usually asks the questions – do they want to be like us? Do they want to be the same? They are treated as subjects. For Russia, I think, to a large extent, it is still part of domestic politics. In a recent poll by the Levada centre, to the question: Is Belarus a foreign country? More than 60% of people said – no, Belarus is not a foreign country. The importance of developments in near abroad, has been symbolically described by Ivan Krasted. The Ukrainians' Orange revolution in 2004 has been a 9/11 for Russia. You may agree, or disagree with this statement on 9/11, that it has been so bad, but at the same time, yes, I think, it reflects a little bit different perceptions. Definitely, the Orange revolution could be described as 9/11 for the EU. It can be described partly as an event of symbolic importance for Russia. Russia approaches the world, if not the whole world, then probably the especially relations with the near abroad, with a certain element, a certain approach of zero some game, which means that stakes are higher. Russia is willing to invest more, and, if necessary, also to conflict. The EU has perceived near neighborhood or its neighborhood area more from the soft stability, soft security perspective, even recently, if you see the OSCE report about the ecological risks, about ecological threats coming from Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. So, clearly, there is asymmetry in perceptual motivation, in perceptual background of the two sides in the region. I would also like to discuss the idea, that is also is being discussed in Russia, about post- and neo-imperial. Some would say that Russia is post-imperial and you can't say that there are just elements of neo-imperialism, of course. But post-imperial - in the sense that relations with Ukraine, with Belarus, the putting straight prices might be interpreted in this way. But clearly, there are elements of neo-imperialism as well, there are elements of past in the relations, with the near neighborhood. It is a resonant issue in Russian political elite and society. Recently, the ideologist of Edinaja Rossija Morozov said: "We are a party of historical revenge". So clearly there is duality of attitude which involves quite a strong jealousy, quite sometimes a constructive approach, but there are clearly also elements of certain kind of conflict or conflictual positions. With respect to the EU, after the enlargement fatigue there is clearly also a neighborhood fatigue. The EU is quite tired of what is going on in its neighborhood.

The EU is sometimes tired of its friends in the neighborhood. For the EU, of course, for a long time Russia has been an important partner. It is an important strategic partner in terms of economy. It is an important strategic partner in terms of energy and this has led and contributed, in many countries, to the "Russia first" policy. But at the same time, for the EU there is a tendency for this neighborhood fatigue to be selective. And the answer to this selection is energy interests. The enlargement marks the end of homogeneous Eastern Europe on the EU mental map. The energy marks the end of the homogenous neighborhood ring of friends on the EU map of real politik.

If you look at the previous few weeks of conflict on energy issues, with respect to the neighborhood countries, the summit in Krakow, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Poland, being in Krakow and speaking about potential energy and trying to bypass Russia, and at the same time, in the meeting between Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. So, I would even say that there are three groups in which the EU approaches its new neighbors at the moment. The first group is Georgia and Azerbaijan, which will become more and more important. And Russia and the EU might conflict there. The EU is ready also to conflict and put its position quite straight. There is Ukraine and Belarus, even Belarus (and you can see more and more activities in this category). And there are probably countries where conflict will probably be quite low profile. It is Moldova and Armenia, because the EU has no energy interests there. If you look at what happened in January 2006, the EU immediately reacted when the supplies were cut to Ukraine and the transit was cut. When the supplies were cut to Moldova for more than a month, nobody really reacted and the EU announced that it was a matter of bilateral relations between Moldova and Russia. So, one could even say that there is a certain element new Ostpolitik in the EU's approach toward the neighborhood, toward the post-soviet space and toward Russia itself. It is an Ostpolitik which is a mixture of approaches and there is more and more realism, and there is more and more assertiveness, robust engagement, especially in territories which are perceived as increasingly vital for the EU.

My conclusions. I've been making a pretty bleak picture, in contrast to the previous speaker. Of course, I would say that, to use such description as crisis is exaggerated and I purposefully put in front those elements, which might be elements of discussion and conflict. I think there is core for a constructive conflict. Sometimes conflict is necessary to understand what are the positions of both sides. But, at the same time, the problem also is that speaking harsh language, harsh words, is an element of permanent entrapment. Entrapment in words, entrapment in discourse is important and might be quite a negative aspect. At it might also influence counterproductive mutual behavior. It also influences and escalates the situation, especially in terms of perceiving each other, also in the future. Thank you very much.