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GREATER EUROPE

PUTIN'S VISION OF EUROPEAN (DIS)INTEGRATION

Marek Menkiszak

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SUMMARY

- On several occasions since 2001 Vladimir Putin has raised the concept of Greater Europe – a partly integrated common space comprising mainly Russia and the European Union. This concept has not emerged from a void: it is a continuation of ideas championed by Putin’s predecessors: Boris Yeltsin and Mikhail Gorbachev. It has re-emerged regularly as a general political slogan, and was conceptually developed only in 2010. However, it has never been recast into a detailed political programme. It surfaced in periods of rising political dynamics in the relations between the West and Russia, which either offered hope that Moscow’s proposals could become reality, or created a perception that Russia’s interests, especially in the area of the Commonwealth of Independent States, were under threat.
- The concrete outlines of the Greater Russia project’s architecture gradually took shape between 2002 and 2011. They presented a Greater Europe that would consist of two integration blocs – the Western bloc of the European Union, with Germany in the dominant role, and the Eastern bloc, consisting of the emerging Eurasian Union, with Russia in a hegemonic position. By signing agreements and establishing joint institutions, the two blocs would form a partly integrated area of security, economic and energy cooperation, and human contacts. However, the formation of such an area would not lead to Russia and its neighbours gradually adopting European values and standards, nor would it limit Russia’s room for manoeuvre in foreign policy as a great power balancing between various global centres of power. The priority for Kremlin would be to develop the Eastern component of Greater Europe, i.e. Eurasian integration would precede all-European integration.
- In advocating this concept, Vladimir Putin’s objectives included:
 1. strengthening the potential of Russia, through capital and technology transfers from Europe, among other measures;
 2. strengthening Russia’s influence on European politics and security, and on the economies of European states, including through the creation of co-operative links and asset swaps;
 3. undermining US presence and influence in Europe;

4. consolidating Russia's hegemony in the CIS area, getting Europe to recognize this hegemony and preventing political and economic expansion of the EU, the US as well as China in the CIS area.

While it has been championed as "a Europe without dividing lines", the Greater Europe concept would in practice permanently split Europe into two geopolitical blocs.

- In recent years Russia has undertaken a number of initiatives aimed at implementing some elements of the Greater Europe concept. The most significant ones included: establishing a forum for dialogue between Russia, Germany and France (the Triangle); putting forward the initiative to sign a new European Security Treaty and proposing a draft text; presenting (together with Germany) a proposal to establish an EU-Russia Political and Security Committee; presenting an outline for a new Energy Charter; and coming up with an initiative and the draft text to sign an agreement on visa-free movement between the EU and Russia.
- However, most of Russia's initiatives aimed at ultimately creating Greater Europe have yet to become reality. This shows the limits of Moscow's efficacy in pursuing the project. Russia, it seems, has overestimated its own attractiveness and the willingness of its European partners to make concessions with regard to the future shape of Europe's security and economic architecture. Due to deepening political differences and mounting contradictions between vital economic interests of the two sides, the idea of Greater Europe, and indeed any other concept to build a common European space involving Russia, is currently a political utopia. This will not change until Russia starts an internal transformation to espouse European standards.
- In this context, one should expect Russia's policy to focus on implementing its priority project of Eurasian integration, based on the structures of the Customs Union / the Common Economic Space / the Eurasian Union. The Greater Europe project, on the other hand, will be postponed until the time when, as Moscow believes, the weakened EU will be ready to accept Russian proposals.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last fifteen years, experts, officials and politicians in Russia have been regularly referring to Greater Europe (*Большая Европа* in Russian). The phrase has been used in various meanings. It was employed, especially in the early 2000s, by those Russian experts who advocated closer co-operation between Russia and the West. In this sense, Greater Europe stood for some loose formula of Russia's integration with the European Union. High-ranking Russian state officials (including presidents and foreign ministers) have regularly used the term either as an illustration of the claim that Russia is, historically and culturally, a European state, or (often in the phrase "Greater Europe without dividing lines") as a call to the West to abandon its alleged attempts at isolating Russia or limiting its role in regulating the European order (especially with regard to security). Finally, the term has also been used in a narrow sense as a synonym of the European Union enlarged in 2004.

However, the notion of Greater Europe has also sometimes been used by Russian decision makers in a wider sense – meaning the idea to create a new economic and security community of European states, based on a mutual exchange of benefits, and with Russia as a full member. Understood in this way, Greater Europe is not a fully developed concept, but rather a slogan surrounded by loose ideas outlined in major policy statements by Russian presidents. Russia's current leader Vladimir Putin has been particularly vocal on Greater Europe in this sense.

The present paper aims to analyse the ideas and objectives behind the Greater Europe concept, to show how it evolved in recent years, and to examine its impact on the practice of Russia's foreign policy. The text ends with a brief reflection on the prospects of Greater Europe becoming reality.

I. GREATER EUROPE: ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT

1. Mikhail Gorbachev's idea of a "Common European Home" (late 1980s)

The idea of Greater Europe, which has been present in major policy statements by Russian leaders since the mid-1990s, did not emerge from a void. It clearly parallels an earlier concept in Soviet policy, that of a "common European home".

The idea of a "Common European Home" first surfaced in the second half of the 1980s as a political slogan related to the "new thinking" in the Soviet Union's foreign policy, started by Mikhail Gorbachev, the man who became Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985 and then the President of the Soviet Union in 1988. Gorbachev included the term in a number of his major policy statements in international forums¹. While the idea was never transformed into a detailed, specific and coherent concept, its general outlines can be reconstructed on the basis of Gorbachev's statements. Its point of departure lay in the realisation that the Cold War between two antagonist blocs, i.e. the West and the Soviet Union, was over, and the conviction that rivalry should give way to co-operation in the name of shared values, aimed at solving joint problems, and especially at ensuring durable security and prosperity "from Vancouver to Vladivostok". Over time, this general idea was followed by more specific proposals from the Soviet Union: to create a new co-operative security structure based on the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) process; to revise defence strategies and reduce armaments in Europe; to start co-operation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and between the European Communities and the COMECON; and to abolish existing restrictions on technologically-advanced exports to the Soviet Union and the countries of Soviet bloc (the COCOM system)².

¹ During his visits to Czechoslovakia in April 1987, to Germany in June 1989, to France in July 1989 and to Italy in November 1989, among other occasions. Cf. "Europe as a Common Home". Address given by Mikhail Gorbachev to the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 6 July 1989, http://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/archive/files/gorbachev-speech-7-6-89_e3ccb87237.pdf

² For a more comprehensive analysis of Gorbachev's concept, see: Eugene B. Rumer, The German Question in Moscow's "Common European Home": A Background to the Revolutions of 1989. A RAND note, RAND Corp, <http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/notes/2009/N3220.pdf>

Some of the Soviet proposals were gradually put into practice, e.g. the CFE Treaty on the reduction of conventional forces in Europe and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe were signed at the CSCE summit in November 1990, and in November 1991 NATO revised its defence strategy and decided on the establishment of formal contacts with the Warsaw Pact. However, the break-up of the Soviet bloc and its structures in the years 1989–1991, followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union itself in December 1991, rendered the very basis of the Common European Home concept, i.e. inter-bloc co-operation, irrelevant.

2. Boris Yeltsin's Greater Europe (1997)

In the new (geo)political conditions, the Russian Federation in fact took over some of the Soviet projects, in changed form, and concentrated its efforts mainly on preventing the geopolitical *status quo* in Europe from changing further to the benefit of the West. Such was the intent of Russia's proposals concerning a new European security architecture, presented in the first half of the 1990s, as Russia ever more vigorously objected to NATO's eastward enlargement (see below).

The idea of Greater Europe emerged in changed circumstances. Following the fiasco of its efforts to develop a new model of European security alternative to NATO, Russia seemed to have opened a new, more positive chapter in its relations with the states and institutions of the Euro-Atlantic area: it became a member of the Council of Europe (February 1996); signed the Founding Act on co-operation with NATO, which established a new format of relations between Russia and the Alliance (May 1997); and the 1994 EU-Russia Partnership and Co-operation Agreement entered into force (December 1997), establishing a basic legal and institutional framework for relations between Russia and the European Union.

The Russian President Boris Yeltsin outlined his vision of Greater Europe during a Council of Europe summit in Strasbourg on 10 October 1997. He said on that occasion:

“We are now poised to begin building together a new greater Europe without dividing lines; a Europe in which no single state will be able to impose its will on any other; a Europe in which large and small countries will be equal partners united by common democratic principles.

This Greater Europe can now become a powerful community of nations with a potential unequalled by any other region in the world and the

ability to ensure its own security. *It can draw on the experience of the cultural, national and historical legacies of all of Europe's peoples. The road to greater Europe is a long and hard one but it is in the interest of all Europeans to take it. Russia will also help to realise this goal.*"³

Some key thoughts can be distilled from this emphatic statement. Firstly, Russia should be an equal member of the emerging new community of European states. Secondly, that community should be powerful and independent, also in terms of security. Such independence would have to imply ending Europe's dependence on co-operation, and especially on security co-operation, with the United States, and working more closely together with Russia in different spheres. And this, it seems, was the subtext of this initiative.

3. Vladimir Putin's Greater Europe (2001, 2005)

Greater Europe re-emerged as a trope in the Russian leadership's rhetoric four years later. It happened in special circumstances: when the Western world was shaken by the terror attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, and a global anti-terror coalition led by the United States was forming, to which Russia also offered partial backing. At that point Russia seemed to be positively reassessing its relations with the West (the "pro-Western turn" in the Russian Federation's foreign policy)⁴, while the Western elites were starting a debate on the necessity of a similar reassessment of their relations with Russia (which resulted, in the following months, in the strengthening of the institutional frameworks of security co-operation between NATO and Russia, and between the EU and Russia)⁵.

The Russian president Vladimir Putin presented his idea of Greater Europe in an address delivered (mostly in German!) to the German Bundestag on 25 September 2011. Putin said on that occasion:

³ The text in Russian in: *Diplomaticheskyy Vestnik*, issue 11, 1997; the text in English at: <http://www.coe.int/aboutCoe/index.asp?page=nosInvites&l=ca&sp=yeltsin>.

⁴ Cf. Marek Menkiszak, *The Pro-Western Turn in Russia's Foreign Policy: Causes, Consequences and Prospects*, "CES Policy Briefs", OSW, Warsaw, October 2002.

⁵ This refers in particular to the establishment of a mechanism of regular EU-Russia consultations on security by a decision of the summit in Brussels in October 2001 and the signature, at the NATO-Russia summit in Pratica di Mare in May 2002 of the declaration "NATO-Russia Relations: A New Quality" which established the NATO-Russia Council, among other measures.

*“It is my firm conviction that in today's rapidly changing world, in a world witnessing truly dramatic demographic changes and an exceptionally high economic growth in some regions, Europe also has an immediate interest in promoting relations with Russia. **No one calls in question the great value of Europe's relations with the United States. I am just of the opinion that Europe will reinforce its reputation of a strong and truly independent centre of world politics soundly and for a long time if it succeeds in bringing together its own potential and that of Russia, including its human, territorial and natural resources and its economic, cultural and defence potential.**”⁶*

The statement in a way reiterated and elaborated on Yeltsin's idea. The difference lay in the fact that Putin left aside the liberal and democratic rhetoric, and pointed to national interests instead. He stressed what he believed were the shared challenges of Russia and Europe: the demographic development of the Muslim world and the rise of the economic might and competitive edge of China and some other Asian states. The call for Europe's independence, in fact aimed against the United States, was only slightly mitigated by the reservations made. On the other hand, Putin clearly outlined Russia's assets as a potential member of the new European community, and by doing so, identified the key areas of proposed integration as the economy, society and defence. It was no accident that Putin's statement was delivered in Germany. It was Germany, along with France, that Russia regarded as its prospective main partner in the pursuit of the idea of Greater Europe.

Indeed, Putin used the same rhetoric when addressing a French audience. In May 2005 he placed an op-ed in the *Le Figaro* daily. The context of the publication is important. Several months before, Ukraine had undergone the Orange Revolution, which the Russian leadership considered to have in fact been a Western (US-led) geopolitical offensive against Russia and Russian influence in the CIS area. The EU at that time was debating ways to more energetically build closer relations with Ukraine and the other Eastern European participants of the European Neighbourhood Policy, which was a major source of concern and vexation for Moscow. Also important in terms of the context of Putin's article was the agreement on the so-called road maps for the four common spaces between the EU and Russia, reached after months of tedious negotiations, which defined the principles, directions and some general objectives of EU-Russia co-operation in the fields of economy, security, research and

⁶ President Putin's address to the Bundestag, 25.09.2001, http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2001/09/25/0001_type82912type82914_138535.shtml

cultural exchange (the documents were officially signed at the EU-Russia summit in Moscow on 10 May 2005)⁷.

In the article, published on 7 May 2005 on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany, Putin wrote:

“I am deeply convinced: united Greater Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, and in fact all the way to the Pacific Ocean, the existence of which will be based on universally recognised democratic principles, offers a unique chance for all the nations of the continent, including the Russian nation. Europeans can fully rely on Russia in the pursuit of this chance for a peaceful, prosperous and dignified future, as they could in the struggle against Nazism. We also believe that Russia’s efforts to develop integration bonds with both the EU member states and the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States are a single, organic process which should lead to a considerable expansion of harmonious common spaces of security, democracy and business co-operation in this gigantic region.”⁸

The Russian leader suggested in the article that Greater Europe should consist of two pillars: the Western pillar, i.e. the European Union, and the Eastern pillar managed by Russia. The reference to democratic rhetoric here seems to have been designed to convince the Western audience that no export of democracy to the East was necessary, as Russia fully recognised the basic principles in this regard. However, the article was primarily a call on Europe to recognise that Russia’s hegemonic role in the CIS area did not contradict the idea of all-European integration. That thought had already been raised before in statements by high-ranking Russian officials (see below).

⁷ For the full text of the four roadmaps, see: http://eeas.europa.eu/russia/docs/roadmap_economic_en.pdf

⁸ Статья Президента Российской Федерации В.В.Путина “Уроки победы над нацизмом: Через осмысление прошлого – к совместному строительству безопасного гуманного будущего”, опубликованная во французской газете “Фигаро” 7 мая 2005 года, <http://www.mid.ru/ns-pobeda.nsf/304a70a9f8af4383c3256eda00378036/c3256eda00375761c3256fb0030159b?OpenDocument>; for the French version, see: <http://www.voltairenet.org/article17014.html>

4. Putin's concept of Greater Europe takes shape (2010–2012)

On 25 November 2010, on the occasion of his visit to Germany, Vladimir Putin published another major policy statement: an article in the German daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in which he elaborated on his concept of Greater Europe in much more detail. The context of the article was defined, on the one hand, by the efforts, especially in the EU, to find ways to avoid a new financial and economic crisis like the one in 2008–2009, which had also affected Russia, and on the other, by the process of economic integration of some CIS members, which was progressing rapidly under pressure from Russia, and which led to the creation, in July 2010, of the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Since economic challenges were seen as the most important issue of the day, and since Putin was at that time the prime minister of Russia (in charge of economic policy), the article focused on the economy.

Referring to the shared experience of the crisis in the EU and in Russia among other themes, Putin wrote:

*“Europe needs its own vision of the future. We propose to shape it together, through a Russia-EU partnership. It would be our joint bid for success and competitiveness in the modern world. (...) **To alter the situation, we should exploit the advantages and opportunities available to both Russia and the EU. This could be a truly organic synergy of two economies – a classic and established EU model, and Russia's developing and new economy, with growth factors that complement each other well. We have modern technology, natural resources and capital for investment. Above all, we have unique human potential.** Finally, Russia and the EU have ample cooperation experience. And I am happy to say that Germany, the engine of European integration, is setting an example of leadership in this area.”*⁹

⁹ Россия и Европа: от осмысления уроков кризиса – к новой повестке партнерства, article by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 25.11.2010, <http://www.inosmi.ru/europe/20101125/164480740.html>. For the German version, see: <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/putin-plaedoyer-fuer-wirtschaftsgemeinschaft-von-lissabon-bis-wladiwostok-1.1027908>. For the English version see: <http://archive.premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/13088/>

That general declaration was only a prelude to the presentation of a five-point plan for Great Europe, which Putin outlined in the article. The plan envisaged the following:

1. **“A harmonised community of economies, from Lisbon to Vladivostok”**, which in future could perhaps transform into a free trade area or even pursue some more advanced forms of economic integration.

This community would be built in gradual steps that would include Russia’s membership in the WTO, harmonisation of legislation, customs procedures and technological standards, and elimination of bottlenecks in pan-European transport networks.

2. **“A common industrial policy based on a synergy between the technological and resource potentials of the EU and Russia”**

This policy would be implemented through joint projects to support small and medium enterprises and, even more importantly, “a fresh wave of industrialisation” based on the establishment of strategic sectoral alliances in the shipbuilding, automobile, aviation, space, medical and pharmaceutical industries, nuclear energy and logistics.

3. **“A common energy complex in Europe”**

The complex would comprise extended energy infrastructure, the Nord Stream and South Stream gas pipelines, and would be governed by new regulations, including a new energy treaty proposed by Russia, which would balance the interests of suppliers, buyers and final consumers of energy. Russian and European companies would share energy assets, and co-operation would be developed at all stages (from exploration and extraction to delivery to end consumers). Co-operation would also extend to education and personnel training, creation of engineering centres, and implementation of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

4. **Co-operation in science and education**

It would include, among other measures, the implementation of joint research projects, especially for applications in high technology industries, based on a shared financing effort, as well as exchanges of researchers and students, traineeships, etc.

5. Elimination of barriers impeding human and business contacts

This objective would be achieved by abolishing visas for travellers between the EU and Russia based on a clear plan and definite time schedule.

In the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article Putin in effect presented a very ambitious strategic vision for a future integrated European space involving Russia, based on extensive industrial and technology co-operation, a common energy sphere and closer human contacts. The strategic partnership between Russia and Germany, which the two states had been pursuing for years, would be the main axis for the development of this space. At the same time Putin made it clear (by referring, rather awkwardly, to the example of West Germany's policy towards the German Democratic Republic after the fall of the Berlin wall) that the European side should not expect Russia to first adopt European standards, and should integrate with Russia as it is.

The vision of Greater Europe presented in Germany lacked a clear reference to the integration processes in the CIS area, or the place that the countries of Russia and the EU's "shared neighbourhood" would occupy in the new European architecture. Putin closed this gap in another policy article published on 4 October 2011 in the *Izvestia* daily. The text, devoted in principle to the idea of a Eurasian Union based on the already existing Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, also included clear references to the concept of Greater Europe as a space comprising two blocs.

Putin wrote:

"The Eurasian Union will be built on universal integration principles as an essential part of Greater Europe, united by shared values of freedom, democracy and market laws. (...) Soon, the Customs Union, and later the Eurasian Union, will join the dialogue with the EU. As a result, apart from bringing direct economic benefits, accession to the Eurasian Union will also help countries integrate into Europe sooner and from a stronger position. In addition, a partnership between the Eurasian Union and EU that is economically consistent and balanced will prompt changes in the geopolitical and geoeconomic setup of the continent as a whole with a guaranteed global effect. (...) For example, take the two largest associations of our continent – the European Union and the Eurasian Union, currently under construction. In building cooperation on the principles of free trade rules and compatible regulation systems, they are in a position to disseminate these principles, including through

third parties and regional institutions, all the way from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans. They will thus create an area that will be economically harmonised, but that still remain diverse, when it comes to specific mechanisms and management solutions."¹⁰

One of the main points of Putin's article was that the creation of the Eurasian Union not only did not contradict the idea of European integration (also of the "shared neighbourhood" countries), but was in fact an important element of such integration. Putin's message was addressed to the elites of EU countries but also, especially, to Ukraine. The Russian leader once again suggested that the development of Greater Europe would be of major significance for the global order (meaning in fact its ability to effectively compete with other global power centres, especially the United States and China). The novelty in Putin's article was the emphasis on the argument that Greater Europe should be integrated economically, but not politically. The Russian leader clearly suggested that the creation of a new community could not lead to any restrictions on Russia's autonomy to make its own decisions as a state and the leader of its integration bloc. The emphasis on this aspect seems to have been related to the concerns raised in the Kremlin by the revolutions in Arab states, which started breaking out in early 2011, and which Putin and his inner circle regarded as yet another attempt at Washington-instigated "export of democracy", i.e. in fact a manifestation of the geopolitical expansionism of the United States¹¹.

The Greater Europe concept was raised once more in another policy article by Vladimir Putin, published in the *Moskovskiy Novosti* daily on 27 February 2012¹². The op-ed, written as part of Putin's campaign before the presidential elections scheduled in March 2012, outlined, in quite personal and emotional tone at times, the leader's view of the international situation. The fragment on Greater Europe only briefly restated the points made in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article. It was notable, however, that the list of spheres in which the concept

¹⁰ Новый интеграционный проект для Евразии — будущее, которое рождается сегодня. article by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in *Izvestia*, 4 October 2011, <http://izvestia.ru/news/502761>

For the English version see: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/d-ru/dv/dru_2013_0320_06_/dru_2013_0320_06_en.pdf

¹¹ Cf. M. Menkiszak, Responsibility to Protect Itself? Russia's strategy towards the crisis in Syria, FIIA Briefing Paper No. 131, The Finish Institute of International Affairs, http://www.fia.fi/en/publication/341/responsibility_to_protect..._itself/

¹² Россия и меняющийся мир, article by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in *Moskovskiy Novosti*, 27 February 2012, <http://mn.ru/politics/20120227/312306749.html>

was supposed to be implemented this time did not include common industrial policy and closer co-operation in research and education. Partly, this could have been due to a different choice of priorities (in favour of energy, trade and visa-free travel), but Putin could also have concluded that the European Union, sliding ever deeper into its crisis, would not be interested in an extensive offer from Russia that would include major investments and asset swaps.

The article for *Moskovskiye Novosti* included one new thought: that the development of Greater Europe or the Union of Europe (Putin also used this alternative name of the project, promoted mainly by the influential Russian expert Sergei Karaganov¹³) was designed, *inter alia*, to **strengthen Russia's capabilities and position in its economic turn towards the "new Asia"**. Given that the article juxtaposed two contrasting images: the crisis-stricken Europe and the dynamic growth of China's might, that could be interpreted as a way to instrumentally use the Russian-European co-operation in order to further the development of Russia's economic relations with China and other Asian states (which Vladimir Putin advocated in the article).

¹³ Cf. К Союзу Европы. Аналитический доклад российской группы международного дискуссионного клуба «Валдай», 31 August - 7 September 2010, <http://www.svop.ru/files/meetings/mo10613371680911.pdf> The report claims that unless they join forces, the EU and Russia will become marginalised globally. The authors (S. Karaganov, T. Bordachev, I. Ivanov, F. Lukyanov and M. Entin) call for the conclusion of a Treaty on the Union of Europe, followed by a series of sectoral agreements to create a single energy system and common security, economic and human relations spaces.

II. GREATER EUROPE: ATTEMPTS AT PUTTING THE CONCEPT INTO PRACTICE

The general ideas present in the rhetoric of Russian leaders who spoke about Greater Europe were not detached from Russia's foreign policy practice in Europe. Russian diplomacy formulated and tried to implement initiatives that were in line with the Greater Europe concept.

1. The Russia-Germany-France Triangle: Greater Europe's core that never came into being

One of the most tangible manifestations of Russia's Greater Europe policy came with the attempt at creating a forum for regular political dialogue with Germany and France, Moscow's main partners in Europe and the two countries it perceived as the driving force of the European Union. The Russian president Boris Yeltsin put forward the initiative to establish such dialogue during a Council of Europe summit in October 1997, i.e. at the same time he announced the Greater Europe concept, which suggests that the Triangle was intended as a way to further the implementation of Greater Europe. The German chancellor Helmut Kohl and the French president Jacques Chirac accepted Yeltsin's invitation and met him on 26 March 1998 at the Bor residence near Moscow.

The Triangle was intended to not only build Russia's prestige, but also serve as Moscow's instrument to influence European politics. In Russia's intention, its meetings were supposed to take place regularly and provide a platform through which Russia could informally co-decide on important European policy issues. The partners, however, did not share this approach, which found its most visible expression in the disagreements at the Triangle summit in Istanbul in November 1999, which Yeltsin in effect broke off¹⁴. The next meeting in the Triangle format took place only in April 2003 when the similar, critical attitudes of the three states towards the US-British armed intervention in Iraq provided a good basis to resume consultations in this formula. From then on, the Triangle meetings would usually take place once a year, with the exception of the year 2005 when

¹⁴ The meeting between President Boris Yeltsin, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and President Jacques Chirac at the OSCE summit in Istanbul on 18 November 1999 formally took place, but lasted for less than 10 minutes before the Russian president ostensibly left the summit over disputes concerning the war in Chechnya.

the leaders met twice¹⁵, but were stopped in 2007 after Nicolas Sarkozy came to power in France, and resumed again only on one occasion, in 2010, when Dmitri Medvedev was the president of Russia¹⁶. During the Triangle meetings, the leaders discussed the most important international issues of the day, EU-Russia relations and multilateral economic co-operation projects. However, none of the Triangle meetings brought about any major new initiatives, and the forums only significance remained as an image-building measure.

2. Common spaces

Russia's initiatives in the spheres of security, economic/energy co-operation and human contacts were also part of the efforts to practically implement the Greater Europe concept. They largely overlapped with the four so-called Common Spaces of Russia and the EU¹⁷, which were first formally mentioned at the EU-Russia summit in St. Petersburg in May 2003, followed by the signature of the Roadmaps to the implementation of the Common Spaces at the EU-Russia summit in Moscow in May 2005.

2.1. The security space

The USSR first called for the creation of a **new architecture of European security** back in the late 1980s. The Russian Federation continued those efforts in the 1990s. Russia's concept of an all-European partnership, and its proposals for an institutional reform of the CSCE (1994) triggered a formal dialogue on the subject, which led to the adoption of the Charter for European Security at the OSCE summit in Istanbul in November 1999¹⁸. However, contrary to Russia's initial proposals, the document was not legally binding and did not establish any new institutions through which Russia could co-decide on European security issues.

¹⁵ The meetings took place on 11 April 2003 in St. Petersburg (Putin, Schröder, Chirac), on 31 August 2004 in Sochi, on 18 March 2005 in Paris (that meeting also included the new Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Zapatero, but Spain did not permanently join the group) and on 3 July in 2005 in Svetlogorsk. In the meeting in Compiègne on 23 September 2006 the newly elected Chancellor Angela Merkel represented Germany.

¹⁶ On 19 October 2010 in Deauville Chancellor Merkel and President Sarkozy met with President Medvedev.

¹⁷ This refers to: the Common Economic Space; Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice, the Common Space of External Security and the Common Space of Research and Education, including cultural aspects. Cf. footnote 7.

¹⁸ See: the Charter for European Security, Istanbul, November 1999, <http://www.osce.org/mc/17502>

Russia made another effort to change this state of affairs in June 2008 when the newly elected Russian president Dmitri Medvedev came up with an initiative to call an all-European conference with a view to signing a treaty on European security that would establish a new security system in the continent. Russia's declarations in this regard, which were initially very general, gradually gained a more concrete shape, and ultimately, in November 2009, Russia publicly presented its draft **Treaty on European Security**¹⁹.

Russia's draft Treaty on European Security

The draft is a fairly short and general document comprising fourteen articles. It commits all parties (potentially, the countries of North America, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and multilateral structures: the EU, OSCE, NATO, CSTO and CIS) to follow the principles of equality and indivisibility of security (which forbids protecting one member's security at the expense of others). Thus, the document obligates the parties to refrain, individually and collectively, from any action that could affect the security interests of other members; to refrain from using their respective territories to carry out or assist armed aggression against any other member, and from any other actions that could undermine the security of other members; to seek to ensure respect for the above principles within multilateral organisations; to provide, at the request of any Treaty member, information on any measures that could affect security; and to refrain from accepting international commitments that run counter to the provisions of the Treaty.

The draft also provides for a conflict resolution mechanism. It enables all members who believe that their security interests are or might be affected to call a consultation of the other members concerned and, once such consultations have been held, to call (at the request of at least two members) a conference of parties. The decisions of the conference are binding on the members if at least two thirds of the total number of parties participate and the decisions are unanimous. In the event of armed aggression against a member, the party that has been attacked may call an extraordinary conference of parties, whose decisions will be binding if at least four fifths of the total number of members participate and the decisions are taken unanimously.

¹⁹ For the draft text, see: <http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-dos.nsf/europeansecurity>

The Treaty would be open for signature to countries of North America, Europe and the CIS area, as well as the multilateral organisations of the EU, OSCE, NATO, CSTO and CIS, and would enter into force once ratified by at least 25 states or multilateral organisations. Other states and multilateral organisations could accede to the Treaty subject to the consent of all parties. The draft provides that any member might withdraw from the treaty if it determined that extraordinary circumstances endangered its interests.

The document contains no definition of a situation affecting a party's security, which would inevitably lead to fully discretionary and subjective assessment of threats. Thus, if the Treaty were adopted in the original form, a number of security issues which are currently considered to be internal affairs of NATO or its members and partners would become legitimate subjects of formal debate with Russia. While Moscow would not necessarily be able to block security decisions of NATO, the EU or the OSCE, it could use the mechanisms laid down in the Treaty to effectively discourage democratic Western states from undertaking initiatives it found unacceptable. Formally, the Western states could apply similar measures to Russia, but in practice that would be ineffective as the undemocratic Russian governments are much less susceptible to pressure from the West (especially as the Treaty allows a member to withdraw without any problems and without having to meet any conditions).

The Russian draft also provides for a new mechanism for conflict resolution between states, parallel to the UN conflict resolution system. However, it is doomed to be ineffective because of the – completely unrealistic – requirement of unanimity in decision-making. Such a system would not only be incapable of resolving any conflict situations, but could also hinder effective involvement of Western states and security structures in the regulation of conflicts such as the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008.

The provisions of the Treaty were controversial; hence it was not surprising that Western states generally remained reserved about the initiative. Although regular debate on the Treaty was formally launched in June 2009 under the auspices of the OSCE (the so-called Corfu Process), it has not produced any tangible results.

On the other hand, the **Russia-EU Security Dialogue**, initiated in October 2000, did gain a more institutionalised character a year later with the launch of regular meeting of the Troika of the EU Political and Security Committee

and representative of Russia. However, Russia's proposals to create a new body (council) for consultation and co-ordination of security policies between Russia and the EU, put forward after the establishment, in 2002, of the NATO-Russia Council which Moscow viewed as a point of reference, met with resistance from a large number of EU member states. It was only at the German-Russian summit in Meseberg in June 2010 that the informal discussions finally took the form of a bilateral initiative to establish a Russia-EU Political and Security Committee (meetings between the Russian minister for foreign affairs and the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, devoted to current policy and international security issues, joint EU-Russia crisis response operations and other issues requiring co-operation, including crises)²⁰. The German side expected Russia to adopt a more constructive approach to the Transnistrian crisis (the Meseberg memorandum explicitly provided for co-operation on this issues), which never happened, and therefore the chances that the initiative will become reality at some point are slim.

2.2. The economic and energy space

The idea of a **Common European Economic Space** of the EU and Russia was first put forward at the EU-Russia summit in May 2001²¹. At that time, however, the two sides run into serious difficulties trying to define it. A special working group elaborated the concept in November 2003²², however, the document it produced turned out to be very general. The roadmap signed in May 2005 provided only slightly more detail. In those two documents²³ Russia and the EU declared that they would seek to create "an open and integrated market" based on common or comparable principles and regulations. It would be based

²⁰ Memorandum (meeting between Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Dmitri Medvedev on 4 and 5 June 2010 in Meseberg, Germany). The document has been removed from the German government website, available in the author's archive.

²¹ The name was first used, to the surprise of all summit participants, by the then President of the European Commission Romano Prodi. The Russian side then took it up. The parties agreed to establish a special high-level working group to develop the concept.

²² It was the result of an intense intellectual effort, in which both Russia and the EU, drew on commissioned and non-commissioned studies and expert papers. For more information about works on the concept and the results see: Evgeny Vinokurov, *The Making of the Concept of the EU - Russia Common Economic Space*, Chair Interbrew - Baillet Latour Working Papers no.22, Catholic University of Louvain, http://soc.kuleuven.be/iieb/ibl/docs_ibl/WP22-Vinokurov.pdf

²³ See: *The Common European Economic Space (CEES) Concept Paper*, Rome, 6 November 2003, <http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2003/11/55356.shtml> ; *Road Map for the Common Economic Space - Building Blocks for Sustained Economic Growth*, Moscow, 10.05.2005, http://eeas.europa.eu/russia/docs/roadmap_economic_en.pdf

on the provisions of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between the EU and Russia (PCA) and the terms and conditions of Russia's accession to the WTO. The Common Space was to encompass selected sectors in the initial phase, and then be extended to all branches of the economy. Its implementation mechanism would be based primarily on: gradual abolition of barriers to the free flow of goods, services, capital and workers, gradual harmonisation of standards and procedures, development of transport infrastructures, and research and technology co-operation. The detailed solutions that were missing from the two documents were to be added in separate Action Plans and new sectoral agreements or protocols to the PCA.

Russia's accession to the WTO was a key element and a precondition of the future gradual implementation of the Common European Economic Space. However, the market access protocol signed by Russia and the EU in May 2004 failed to resolve all the contentious issues between the two sides, and it took many rounds of tedious negotiations and a string of unexpected turns (including a nearly two years-long impasse into which the parties ran in autumn 2009 after Russia called for the emerging Customs Union to be included in the negotiations) for Russia and the EU to ultimately reach an agreement in December 2011. That deal paved the way to Russia's accession to the WTO, formally sealed in August 2012. Still, the EU's hopes for deeper trade liberalisation and harmonisation of laws with Russia after its accession (the so-called WTO+) failed to materialise. Talks on this subject, conducted as part of the negotiations concerning the new EU-Russia legal framework, became stalemated in 2010 when the Russian side insisted that the Commission of the Customs Union (transformed in early 2012 into the Eurasian Economic Commission) should be the European Commission's partner at the negotiating table. At that point it became clear that Moscow was trying to force the European Union to recognise the Customs Union, and, in the longer term, the Common Economic Space and the Eurasian Union, as the partners for dialogue and conclude formal agreements with the bloc²⁴. For the EU, this was problematic not only politically, but also legally, as the other members of the Customs Union, i.e. Kazakhstan and Belarus, were not WTO members and the Eurasian Economic Commission could not make legally binding commitments.

Gradual harmonisation of legal regulations and standards between the EU and Russia was supposed to be at the core of the development of the Common

²⁴ Vladimir Putin publicly suggested this much during the EU-Russia summit in Yekaterinburg on 4-5 June 2013.

European Economic Space. The EU's understanding of this was that Russia would adopt parts of the EU *acquis*, or at least regulations modelled on it²⁵. Russia's position, on the other hand, was unclear. While declaratively supporting the harmonisation of regulatory frameworks, the Russian side seemed to assume that the two parties would jointly formulate new regulatory solutions and/or that Russia would adopt the more universal regulatory frameworks (especially of the WTO and the OECD). No legal or institutional mechanism was ever established in Russia to examine the compatibility of Russian legislation with the EU rules. The parties merely exchanged selected information on newly-adopted rules during irregular meetings of working groups and subgroups²⁶. Some of the meetings concerned the harmonisation of technical standards and took part within the framework of a project implemented under the TACIS programme, and after 2010 – within the framework of projects implemented under the auspices of the Partnership for Modernisation (see below)²⁷. Even though Russia occasionally made positive declarations about its willingness to harmonise regulations, the real effects of dialogue in this sphere remained very limited²⁸.

Energy issues have been the highest priority for Russia when it comes to economic relations with the EU. The reason for this lies in the objective fact that Russian exports to the EU are dominated by energy resources (oil and natural

²⁵ Such an understanding was suggested already in the EU-Russia Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA) of 1994 (especially Article 55). The PCA included provisions on possible future establishment of a free trade area between the EU and Russia (Article 1, Article 3). See: the Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation, establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of one part, and the Russian Federation, on the other part, [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21997A1128\(01\):EN:HTML](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21997A1128(01):EN:HTML)

²⁶ Such meetings should have taken place at least twice a year, but in practice some groups and subgroups failed to meet for two consecutive years, and some held no meetings at all. See: the EU-Russia Common Spaces Progress Report 2012, Brussels, March 2013, http://eeas.europa.eu/russia/docs/commonsplaces_prog_report_2012_en.pdf

²⁷ The project "Approximation of EU and Russian Federation technical regulation, standardisation and certification systems" worth € 2.5 million, implemented between August 2009 and December 2011. See: <http://eu-rf.org/> In May 2013, two new projects were inaugurated concerning technical standardisation within the framework of Partnership for Modernisation. See: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/press_corner/all_news/news/2013/20130523_en.htm

²⁸ Even the European Commission admitted this officially in its reports, which identified only one concrete achievement of the process, i.e. the harmonisation of Russian phytosanitary standards concerning the presence of 20 chemical substances in plant protection products. See: the EU-Russia Common Spaces Progress Report 2012, *op.cit.* Cf. EU-Russia Common Spaces Progress Report 2010, Brussels, March 2011, http://www.eeas.europa.eu/russia/docs/commonsplaces_prog_report_2010_en.pdf

gas) which also constitute the main source of revenue for the Russian budget²⁹. **The Energy Dialogue between Russia and the EU** became formalised in October 2000. It produced a number of agreements and arrangements, many of which were beneficial for Russia. They concerned, among other issues, support for the development of energy-efficient technologies, honouring of existing long-term contracts for the supplies of Russian natural gas and nuclear fuels to selected EU member states, and the inclusion of selected infrastructural projects backed by Russia into the EU list of priority projects.

Over time, however, the EU-Russia dialogue revealed more and more contentious issues. Russia not only failed to ratify the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) regulating the European and, in the longer term, global energy co-operation, which it had signed in 1994, but in July 2009 officially withdrew its signature under the Treaty. The Russian side was dissatisfied mainly with the Treaty's provisions on guarantees of third-party access to transport infrastructure and the absence of provisions imposing heavier obligations on the transit countries, which Russia had called for.

Shortly before, in April 2009, Russia presented its own draft outline of the projected new agreement. The document, titled *Concept of a new legal basis for international energy co-operation (objectives and principles)*, repeated a number of ECT provisions, but put more emphasis on respecting the interests of the energy-producing countries and the principle of "security of demand"³⁰.

Russia's proposals for a new Energy Charter

The short, five-page document consisted of the principal text outlining the objectives and guiding principles of the new agreement, and two annexes: a draft of new provisions concerning transit guarantees, and a list of energy resources and products. Russia's main declared objective was to create a new, universal and legally binding agreement to regulate energy co-operation, one that would be open, comprehensive, equal and non-discriminatory. It should be based, among other things, on the principles

²⁹ Energy resources accounted for 76.5% of Russian exports to the EU in 2012. For more information on EU-Russia trade, see: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STAT-13-83_en.htm Revenue from energy exports accounted for 70.4% of total export revenue, 50.5% of budget revenue and around 17% of Russian GDP in 2012.

³⁰ The document was delivered to the European Commission, as well as the G8, G20 and CIS countries on 20 April 2009. For the full text, see: <http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2009/04/215303.shtml>

of indivisibility of energy security, mutual responsibility of suppliers, buyers and transit countries, security of supply as well as demand, respect for the sovereignty of energy resources, and non-discrimination in access to energy markets and technologies, support for asset swaps and research and technology co-operation, protection of investments and infrastructure, and the obligation to consult and co-ordinate energy policies and regulations. The agreement would impose a wide range of commitments on the transit countries, including a prohibition to stop transit or interfere with it, liability for losses suffered as a result of non-performance of transit agreements, an obligation to establish bodies to regulate crisis situations with equal participation of all stakeholders, an obligation to give priority to diplomatic dispute resolution rather than judicial mechanisms, and a prohibition to make reservations to the signed agreement.

The content of the document reflected Russia's specific interests, related in particular to Moscow's conflicts with Ukraine over the terms and conditions of supplies and transit of natural gas. If adopted in the form proposed by Russia, the treaty would create an asymmetry in favour of Russia. In practice it would considerably undermine the position of the transit states, or even partly incapacitate them. It would offer Russia an instrument to interfere with the energy policies and energy legislation of both the transit states and the energy buyers in the EU. It could undermine the fundamental objectives of the EU's energy market liberalisation policy or even limit competition in that market³¹.

The EU side took note of Russia's proposals and discussed them within the framework of the energy dialogue, but the differences between the two sides could not be overcome either there, or in the wider international forum (in meetings of the ECT signatories).

Those differences were also reflected in the dispute over the implementation of the EU's third energy package, which concerned the gas and electricity markets. The Russian side claimed that the package, and especially the regulations requiring unrestricted access to transport infrastructures for third parties and at least partial separation of the ownership of energy transport and distribution businesses, contradicted the principles of investment protection and

³¹ Cf. Ewa Paszyc, Moscow's response to the Energy Charter Treaty, Eastweek, OSW, 29 April 2009, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/eastweek/2009-04-29/moscows-response-to-energy-charter-treaty>

non-discriminatory market access, and infringed the interests of Russian companies operating in the EU market³².

Despite those differences, Russia has consistently pressured the EU to develop long-term rules for co-operation in energy with a view to creating an EU-Russia common energy space (which would in fact also include the transit countries in the CIS area). Talks on the subject, launched in February 2011, led to the signature, in March 2013, of a Roadmap for UE-Russia Energy Co-operation until 2050. This general document outlined a vision for creating, within this timeframe, a pan-European energy area with integrated infrastructures and harmonised legal and technical regulations. However, it did not establish any binding commitments, and phrased the objectives and tasks in such general language that it would be difficult to assess if they have been implemented or not³³.

Russia also tried to pursue some elements of its Greater Europe concept by implementing **multilateral co-operation projects, especially in the energy sector**. The most notable examples included the construction, by a Russian-German-French-Dutch consortium with Gazprom in the leading role, of the Nord Stream gas pipeline under the Baltic Sea bed from Russia to Germany, and the creation of a Russian-Italian-French consortium led by Gazprom to build the South Stream gas pipeline under the bottom of the Black Sea, to export Russian gas mainly to the Balkan states and Italy³⁴.

As far as other, **energy-unrelated areas of economic dialogue and co-operation** are concerned, the Russian side has shown some interest in the automobile

³² See: Agata Łoskot-Strachota, Ewa Paszyc, Rosja-UE: spór o unijny rynek gazu, Tydzień na Wschodzie, OSW, 2.03.2011, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/tydzien-na-wschodzie/2011-03-02/rosja-ue-spor-o-unijny-rynek-gazu>

³³ The document outlined a vision of co-operation in the electricity, gas, oil and renewable energy sectors and energy-efficiency technologies. For the various sectors it usually provided that feasibility studies would be carried out and co-operation projects prepared until 2020, that projects would be implemented until 2030 and that an integrated energy space would be created until 2050. See: Road Map EU - Russia Energy Cooperation until 2050, Brussels, March 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/energy/international/russia/doc/2013_03_eu_russia_roadmap_2050_signed.pdf

³⁴ For more information see: Ewa Paszyc, Nord and South Stream won't save Gazprom, OSW Commentary, 28 January 2010, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2010-01-28/nord-and-south-stream-wont-save-gazprom>; Ewa Paszyc, Russia: Gazprom has activated Nord Stream's second pipeline, *Eastweek*, OSW, 10.10.2012, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/eastweek/2012-10-10/russia-gazprom-has-activated-nord-stream-s-second-pipeline>; Szymon Kardaś, Ewa Paszyc, At any price: Russia is embarking on the construction of South Stream, OSW Commentary, 7.12.2012, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2012-12-07/any-price-russia-embarking-construction-south-stream>

and light industries, and in co-operation in the areas of space technology and satellite navigation (the latter two spheres were discussed outside the framework of dialogue with the European Commission). Dialogue on fisheries and phytosanitary issues has also developed quite robustly. As for the other potential areas of dialogue, Russia has shown little or no interest³⁵.

Since it was important for Russia to implement more projects that would promote a transfer of European capital and technology to Russia and help expand the presence of Russian businesses in the EU market and create of infrastructural and co-operative links, Moscow welcomed the European Union's **Partnership for Modernisation** initiative. This co-operation programme, initiated on a bilateral basis by Germany in 2008, taken over by the EU in November 2009 and officially inaugurated at the EU-Russia summit in Rostov-on-Don on 31 May-1 June 2010, envisaged projects that would foster the modernisation of Russia's economy and promote closer economic co-operation between the EU and Russia. Since its launch, the Partnership for Modernisation has been the main framework for Russia-EU dialogue on the implementation of the Common Spaces (except for the External Security Space), and for bilateral projects with the EU member states (twenty-three of which have signed separate documents on Partnership for Modernisation with Russia). However, the practical effects of this co-operation have remained very limited³⁶.

In addition to the above, **Russian operators undertook or planned** many other **initiatives in the EU market, aimed at acquiring or exchanging assets**, which were also in line with the Greater Europe concept as formulated by Vladimir Putin in his *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article³⁷.

2.3. The sphere of human contacts

In the sphere of broadly understood people's relations, Russia's efforts have been focused on two objectives: closer co-operation in research and education, and visa-free travel between Russia and the EU.

³⁵ See: the EU-Russia Common Spaces Progress Report 2012, *op.cit.*

³⁶ See: <http://formodernisation.com/en/info/>

³⁷ The subject is too broad to be comprehensively covered in this paper. For more information, see the texts included in the CES Project Report "Aktywność gospodarcza Rosji za granicą w latach 2004-2010", <http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/raport-osw/2011-08-17/aktywnosc-gospodarcza-rosji-za-granica-w-latach-20042010>

As regards **research and education**, which accounted for the bigger part of the respective Roadmap's content³⁸, considerable progress has been made as there had been no significant differences of interests between the parties and the subject matter was non-political. In particular, Russia became actively involved in the implementation of the Bologna process (the development of a system of European educational standards, co-operation among universities, student and lecturer exchanges, etc.) and the successive EU Framework Programmes (for research projects). It has become the most active non-EU participant in the Framework Programmes, and one of the greatest beneficiaries of EU research funding. The Russian side has been mostly interested in research projects in the spheres of aviation, space research, medicine, environmental protection, new materials, and information and telecommunication technologies³⁹.

The picture is quite different when it comes to the **free movement of people (visa-free travel)** between Russia and the EU. Dialogue on this subject gained momentum only in 2002, in the course of the Russia-EU crisis over the Kaliningrad Oblast. Facing the plans of Poland and Lithuania to introduce visas for Russian nationals as of 2003, and the two countries' subsequent accession to the EU on 1 May 2004, the Russian side demanded, in early 2002, that visa-free travel should remain available to those traveling to and from the Kaliningrad exclave. This, however, would have been against the EU regulations. As the dispute between Russia and the EU escalated, Moscow unexpectedly suggested a radical way out: in August 2002 the Russian president Vladimir Putin send a letter to the European Commission President and the heads of EU states, in which he proposed opening negotiations with a view to concluding an agreement on complete abolition of visas between Russia and the (enlarging) EU. Even though a compromise on the Kaliningrad transit was reached in November 2002 (providing for a system of special travel

³⁸ Road Map for the Common Space of Research and Education, Including Cultural Aspects, Moscow 10 May 2005, http://eeas.europa.eu/russia/docs/roadmap_economic_en.pdf

³⁹ Under the 6th Framework Programme of the EU (2002–2006), Russian researchers participated in the works of 310 international consortiums, taking part in projects worth a total of € 2 billion. See: Compendium of Science and Technology Cooperation between the European Union, the EU Member States and the Russian Federation, Moscow, August 2011, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/documents/more_info/compendium_of_science_technology_cooperation_between_eu_and_russia_2011_en.pdf Under the 7th Framework Programme of the EU (2007–2013) 440 teams from Russia participated in research projects. See: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/press_corner/all_news/news/2012/20120711_en.htm According to other sources, a total of 463 Russian research institutions participated in 291 projects that benefited from a total of € 63 million of EU financing. See: the EU-Russia Common Spaces Progress Report 2012, *op.cit.*

documents that formally were not visas) the Russian side continued its diplomatic offensive for visa-free travel, hoping that agreement could be reached before the EU enlargement into Central Europe in May 2004. Although at the EU-Russia summit in May 2003 the EU agreed to set visa-free travel as the long-term objective, Russia's pressure to achieve a quick political decision proved ineffective. In May 2006, the two sides managed to sign an agreement on visa liberalisation which facilitated the visa rules for selected categories of travellers⁴⁰. It came into force in 2007.

In the years that followed, Russia set another unofficial deadline for the introduction of visa-free travel, i.e. the Winter Olympics in Sochi in February 2014. As this date approached, Russia stepped up its diplomatic offensive. As part of that offensive, Moscow presented a draft agreement of the abolition of visas for short-term stays on 1 June 2010 at the EU-Russia summit in Rostov-on-Don. However, the negotiators once again only managed to agree on further liberalisation of the visa regime and a list of “common steps” (in fact conditions set by the EU) to gradually work towards visa-free travel (December 2011)⁴¹. The signature of the visa liberalisation agreement was then delayed because of the controversies over Russia's proposal to abolish visas for the holders of service passports⁴². On the other hand, Moscow welcomed the agreement on small border traffic between the Kaliningrad oblast and selected districts of north-eastern Poland, which was signed in December 2011 and entered into force in July 2012⁴³.

⁴⁰ See: the Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on the facilitation of the issuance of visas to the citizens of the European Union and the Russian Federation, Sochi, 25 June 2006, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:129:0027:0034:EN:PDF>

⁴¹ See: Common steps towards visa free short- term travel of Russian and EU citizens, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/russia/docs/common_steps_towards_visa_free_short_term_travel_en.pdf

⁴² Russia made the signature of the agreement on further liberalisation of the visa regime conditional on the abolition of the visa requirement for the holders of service passports (around 150.000 people in Russia, mostly officials, military and functionaries of the security forces). A preliminary compromise was worked out during the negotiations, which stated that the visa requirements would be abolished only for the holders of biometric service passports (which would significantly reduce the number of eligible candidates). However, the issue remained controversial within the EU because of the potentially negative impression that such a decision could make in view of the mounting human and civil rights violations in Russia.

⁴³ See: the Agreement between the government of the Republic of Poland and the government of the Russian Federation regulating small border traffic, Moscow, 14.12.2011, <http://www.ms.gov.pl/resource/fb5bab23-463d-4be2-8c2b-2bc549a4e647>

The visa negotiations exposed a number of problems not only in the relations between the EU and Russia, but also inside the Union and in Russia. While Moscow treated the visa question as a purely political issue and accused the EU of lack of good will and double standards, the EU looked at the issue in the context of legal, security and technical problems. There was no consensus on the visa question in the EU, and the problem was exacerbated by public sentiments in a number of member states that were against any further opening of the EU borders, fearing excessive migration, including illegal migration, and soft security threats such as crime, drugs trafficking, human trafficking, etc.). Other problems concerned the differences between regulations and practices related to migration and resident registration and in the EU and Russia, and the increasingly negative European perceptions of the human rights situation and the rule of law in Russia.

3. European and Eurasian integration: convergence

Shortly after President Vladimir Putin publicly formulated his new version of the Greater Europe concept (2001) as a common space of Russia and the EU, the Russian side started sending clear signals that it did not see the project as an alternative to its own efforts aimed at economic, political and defence integration in the post-Soviet area. Instead, high-ranking Russian officials argued that the process at hand was about the convergence of two integration processes.

As early as May 2002, President Putin called for co-operation between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Community⁴⁴ (established in 2000 by Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and formally joined by Uzbekistan in early 2006). Over time, however, a different project became more important for Moscow: that of the Common Economic Space (CES) of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. The countries initiated the project in February 2003 and made formal arrangements for it in September that year. Even before that happened, in June 2003, the then Russian deputy prime minister Viktor Khristenko sent a letter to Brussels with a proposal to analyse the compatibility of integration processes in Western (the EU) and Eastern Europe (the CES)⁴⁵. At the same time, Khristenko published an article devoted mainly to this question of compatibility in the *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* daily. He wrote:

⁴⁴ RIA-Novosti, 13 May 2002.

⁴⁵ Information obtained by the author in 2003 from sources in the European institutions.

“Russia is interested in integration with its neighbours in the CIS and in developing relations with the European Union. These two are not alternative directions – they mutually complement each other: an alliance of post-Soviet republics will be better positioned to develop relations with Europe. (...) It is obvious that creating an economic space will be beneficial for Russia both in the Eastern (the CIS) and the Western dimension (the EU). These two processes could progress in isolation, or on the contrary, they could be linked, and thus mutually enrich themselves and gradually consolidate a sphere of economic integration which, in terms of the size of its population, would be three times as big as Russia. We think that for us [Russia] the second variant is preferable and more realistic. Such is the conclusion from our recent experience of consultations with our partners in the two formats – the Common Economic Space with Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, and the Common European Economic Space (CEES). (...) Integration processes involving the CIS countries may progress faster than the formation of the CEES – our countries represent more similar levels of economic development and competition, and much has already been done for the mutual opening of markets, while our economic regulations are still being made and are therefore easier to harmonise. It is therefore all the more important to carefully consider some of the necessary measures, so that in future they can be applied in dialogue with the European Union. (...) The establishment of a single economic space with Russia and our neighbours in the East and the West is a long-term objective. Its individual inter-state elements may develop faster than others, depending on the real readiness of each state to pursue deeper integration. An analogy to a ‘multi-speed Europe’ is quite justified here. (...) As this ‘trans-European space’ develops, its gravity will increase, attracting more and more CIS countries and our other neighbours. This will create a new quality of economic collaboration in the vast territory of Eurasia, which may become a key growth factor.”⁴⁶

The circumstances of Khristenko’s statement are noteworthy. It was published two months after the European Commission adopted a communication on the European Neighbourhood Policy (the EU’s first public concept document on the subject), and one day after the EU Council adopted its Conclusions on the ENP, which marked the political decision to launch this new political initiative addressed to

⁴⁶ Единое экономическое пространство: политические амбиции или экономическая целесообразность? Статья заместителя Председателя Правительства России В.Б. Христенко, опубликованная в «Российской газете» 17 июня 2003 года под заголовком «Станет ли «четвёрка» единицей?», 17 June 2003, <http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-rsng.nsf/oe82a568fbb5b2c043256a65002f56c2/c325749c004f293343256d48002acc15?OpenDocument>

the Union's eastern partners among others⁴⁷. It is clear that Khristenko had been authorised to send a clear political signal to the EU. It was intended to be read as follows: Russia does not object to contacts between the EU and the CIS countries, but such contacts should be mediated by Russia and take place under its supervision; and the Common Economic Space of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan (and in the longer term, its successive new CIS members) should be the European Union's partner for dialogue, co-operation, and subsequently, partial integration. The text of the article also suggested that in Moscow's view, Eurasian integration should come before Russia's integration with the European area.

Declarations such as this showed that for Moscow, the EU's recognition of Russia as the centre of its own regional integration project in the CIS was in fact a precondition for the formation of Greater Europe. One could go even further and argue that the very initiative of Greater Europe had emerged in part as a response to the European Union's rising activity in the eastern neighbourhood, which Russia perceived as a challenge.

This reasoning was visible in particular in the statements made by the then Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia, Vladimir Chizhov, made during the course of 2004. Chizhov criticised, sometimes harshly, the developing European Neighbourhood Policy, even to the point of accusing the EU of attempts at building a *cordon sanitaire* of subordinated countries (March 2004, Bratislava). On the other hand, Chizhov called for the synchronisation and co-ordination of integration processes in the EU and the CIS, and proposed the establishment of close contacts between the European Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States. In doing so, he repeated Khristenko's argument that the two integration processes were complementary, and that the process of creating a single space in the CIS did take EU norms and standards into account (November 2004, Berlin)⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ See 'Communication from the European Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. Wider Europe-Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours, Brussels', 11 March 2003, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/como3_104_en.pdf; 'Council Conclusions on Wider Europe-New Neighbourhood', Brussels 16 June 2003, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/cco6_03.pdf

⁴⁸ Выступление заместителя министра иностранных дел России В. А. Чижова на конференции "Расширяющаяся Европа: новая повестка дня" по теме "Черноморское и кавказское соседство Европы" Братислава, 19 марта, 19 March 2004, http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/dip_vest.nsf/99b2ddc4f717c733c32567370042ee43/5cab9ebee9ab1fb1c3256e9b0033c3ae!OpenDocument; "Европейский Союз и СНГ: Новые Контуры Сотрудничества". Statement by deputy minister V. Chizhov at the "Vision of Europe" conference, Berlin 19 November 2004, <http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-dos.nsf/162979df2beb9880432569e70041fd1e/432569d800223f34c3256f520055371a!OpenDocument>

III. CONCLUSIONS:

GREATER EUROPE – HOW, WHY AND WHAT NEXT?

1. The concept and the circumstances in which it was championed

By analysing Russia's declarations as well as its actions, one can roughly reconstruct **the Russian idea of Greater Europe**. This should be a common space founded on two pillars: the EU area, with a dominant role for Germany (the Western pillar), and the area of the Russian-controlled Eurasian Union. The two areas would be interlinked through a network of political, economic and security institutions. The partly integrated common space, founded on harmonised norms and regulations, should ensure freedom of movement for people and goods and – perhaps with some restrictions – labour force and capital. The most important decisions concerning its development would be taken unanimously (which would offer Russia the ability to *de facto* influence the policies of the 'Western sphere' countries), but at the same time the parties, and Russia in particular, would keep their freedom and autonomy to decide on internal affairs and external relations with other countries and regions.

It is worth noting the circumstances in which the Russian declarations on Greater Europe were voiced. These were moments that – from Russia's point of view – were significant, or sometimes even represented breakthroughs, in terms of its European policy, more often in the positive sense, as opportunities for Russia, but sometimes also in the negative way, as new challenges for Moscow. These included the normalisation and institutionalisation of Russian-Western relations in 1996–1997 after the temporary crisis over the wars in Chechnya and Bosnia & Herzegovina (1994–1996); the terror attacks of 11 September 2001 and the transient 'pro-Western turn' in Russia's policy that led to the establishment of closer co-operation with the West in 2001; the Russian-Western clash over the EU neighbourhood policy and the 'colour revolutions' in the CIS in 2003–2005, but also the reactivation of the Russia-Germany-France triangle against the background of the Iraq war in 2003–2005; another normalisation of Russia-West relations in 2009–2011 after the temporary crisis engendered by the Russian-Georgian war (2008–2009), and the emergence from the financial and economic crisis in 2008–2009. The declarations were voices in the debates of the day in the West, including debates on the relations with Russia.

2. Background of the concept's objectives

The concept of Greater Europe cannot be analysed in isolation from the Russian elite's perceptions of reality and its diagnosis of the international situation, or the foreign policy strategies built on that basis. In this context the following elements should be underlined:

The United States remains the main point of reference for Russia. The Kremlin considers the US as a declining global power, but one which nevertheless still poses the main challenge to the interests of the Russian Federation. Standing up to what Moscow believes to be the United States' efforts to establish global hegemony has been and remains the main imperative of Russia's foreign policy.

From this point of view, the Greater Europe concept is clearly anti-American. Its main objective is to create a Russian-European alliance to rival the United States in the political and economic dimension. It should serve to build Europe's 'independence' from the United States, which in practice should entail the erosion of trans-Atlantic relations and structures (especially NATO) and push the US away from Europe. It is no accident that Russia's declarations were mainly addressed to European countries which, like Germany and France, had distanced themselves from US policy on various occasions, seeking to reinforce their own positions in international politics.

The European Union is Russia's main economic partner, and in particular its main market for the energy resources which are the cornerstone of Russia's economy. However, Russia has never perceived or treated the EU as a real community. Rather, it has viewed the EU as a concert of European powers with Germany, France, the UK and Italy in the leading roles. Moscow has been developing particularly close co-operation with this group (in which the UK is a relatively recent arrival) while stimulating competition among its members for privileged relations with Russia. In particular Germany and France, the two countries Russia believes to be the political engine of the EU, have been given special treatment, also as the addressees of the Greater Europe concept for which the Moscow-Berlin-Paris triangle was supposed to be one of the main tools for implementation. The financial and economic crisis of 2008-9 has strengthened Germany's dominant position in Europe, and in this way also augmented the country's role as the key partner for the development of Greater Europe in Moscow's eyes.

The European powers, and Germany in particular, were supposed to be the main promoters of economic, energy, political and security deals between

Europe and Russia, due to their sway over the European structures. On the other hand, bilateral energy, industrial and defence deals with Germany, France and Italy were supposed to constitute the very network of relations which would be the substance of the emerging Greater Europe. Both were intended to help expand Russia's influence on processes and decisions in European politics, economy and security; first informally, and then (with the appropriate institutions in place) formally as well. In this way Russia hoped to expand its economic presence in Europe, gain wider access to EU markets, create and control transnational holdings by exchanging business assets with EU countries, and obtain capital & high technology transfers from the leading European countries. Interestingly, Moscow seemed to believe that such deepening Russian-European interdependence could in fact become asymmetric in Russia's favour, and that Russia would retain not only full freedom in internal politics, but also unrestricted room for manoeuvre in foreign policy. The purpose of Greater Europe was not for Russia somehow to 'dissolve' into the new political, economic and security structure; on the contrary, it was to strengthen the potential and independence of Russia as a great global power. The network of relations built as part of Greater Europe was supposed to offer Russia instruments to influence European politics in line with its own interests, while at the same time preventing European actors from trying to influence Russia's internal and foreign policy.

China is, on the one hand, a key partner for Moscow, and on the other, a major challenge to it. Russia has been observing the dynamic rise of China's power and international clout with some concern, and has opted for closer co-operation with Beijing as the main element of its political tactics. At the same time, Russia obsessively fears attempts by the United States to take advantage of the tensions and clashes of interests between itself and China. Still, Moscow has been seeking to strengthen its position vis-à-vis China and to balance the rising power of the latter. Its co-operation with the key European partners is one way of doing this, and undoubtedly the creation of Greater Europe was also intended as part of this strategy. And even though Russia never names China directly as one of the reasons for its pursuit of Greater Europe, its rivalry with the Middle Kingdom undoubtedly strongly colours the subtext of this initiative. Paradoxically, this has not changed even with Russia's 'turn towards Asia', which Moscow has been promoting particularly actively since 2012, and which was in part a response to the analogous policy of the United States. That is because in seeking to play a greater role in the Asia-Pacific region, Russia intends to strengthen its position through co-operation with Europe, among other measures. On

the other hand it is clearly noticeable, especially in the energy sphere, that Moscow is trying to play the 'Chinese card' and use the prospects offered by the Asian markets to mobilise its European partners in order to try harder to develop good relations with Russia.

Russia treats **the CIS area** as its natural sphere of influence, one of the fundamentals and hallmarks of its status as a global power. It has long sought to transform this area into a Russian-managed centre of political, economic and security integration. Most importantly, however, Moscow does not want any other actors (whether states or integration structures), such as the US, EU or China, to challenge its strategic control of the area. Russia stepped up its integration efforts in 2009, pushing for the creation of the Customs Union and subsequently, the Common Economic Space, which is ultimately to become the Eurasian Union.

The Greater Europe concept could at first seem to offer an alternative to the policy of Russia as outlined above; but this is not the case, at least in view of the concept's original assumptions. As the concept developed, it became increasingly clear that Russia's objective was not only to build links between itself and the EU, but indeed to create a two-bloc structure that would bind together two areas of integration – the European Union in the West, and the Eurasian Union in the East. Thus, the implementation of Greater Europe would in fact permanently split Europe, largely along the former Soviet borders (excepting the Baltic states). It would also legitimise and institutionalise this split. Western countries, and the EU in particular, would in effect have to give up any attempts at integrating the countries of the shared neighbourhood, especially Ukraine, into the European space based on EU legislation and standards, and accept Russia's hegemony in this area. Russia would be the one to regulate – through the bodies of the Eurasian Union – the political and economic relations of countries in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia with the European Union. In practice it would be Moscow who determined whether, and to what extent, European standards could be implemented in this area.

If implementation of the Greater Europe concept has ultimately proved unfeasible, the Eurasian Union could become a real alternative to it. Problems in creating the Eurasian Union, on the other hand, would mobilise Russia to hamper the European Union's policy efforts in the shared neighbourhood.

3. Greater Europe: a realistic programme or a political utopia?

Greater Europe has always appeared in the statements by Russian leaders, and especially Vladimir Putin, as a slogan. It has never been elaborated on in detail, in any more or less formal document. Vladimir Putin's article published in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in November 2010 remains its single most specific public formulation, but even that text offers only a general indication of the concept's objectives and methods of implementation.

On the other hand, it is evident that a number of initiatives Russia has undertaken within the framework of its policy towards the EU and European countries are in line with the declared objectives of the Greater Europe concept. Thus, Greater Europe is not merely an empty slogan, but rather a political programme, even if stated in as yet rather general terms. The idea has regularly recurred in moments of rising dynamics in Russia's interactions with the key European states, i.e. at times of upheavals and turning points in international politics and the economy.

Yet if one looks at the results of the Russian initiatives aimed at putting some elements of the Greater Europe concept into practice, one cannot help but notice that they are negligible. In **the security sphere**, no new European security system that would challenge the domination of NATO and let Russia co-decide has been created, despite many years of systematic efforts on Russia's part. The idea of concluding a new European security treaty has ended in failure.

In **the economy**, Russia finally acceded to the WTO in 2012. However, once it did so, it focused its efforts on exploiting loopholes and separate interpretations in the detailed terms of its accession to obstruct the removal of trade barriers, including barriers in trade with the EU. The prospect of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement between the EU and Russia has become even more distant, instead of coming closer. It is true that Russian and European companies have signed a number of co-operation agreements, a couple of businesses in Europe have been acquired by Russian companies, and in some cases Russian and EU companies have swapped assets. However this has not created any breakthroughs in industrial or technology co-operation.

As regards **energy**, there is a growing impression that not only is the Russian-proposed single European energy space based on rules different from the Energy Charter Treaty an impossible project, but also the energy interests of the EU and Russia are increasingly contradictory. The dispute about the

implementation of the Third Energy Package and the European Commission's investigation of Gazprom's alleged illegal monopolistic practices are only the most important examples of this clash.

In the sphere of **human relations**, a series of small steps have been made towards liberalising the visa regime between Russia and the EU, but the prospects of complete abolition of visas remains uncertain, despite immense political pressure from Russia.

Finally, **in the political sphere**, no new permanent body has been established to serve as a forum for Russia and the EU to arrange consultations and decision-making on political and security issues, despite Moscow's lobbying. The Moscow-Berlin-Paris triangle meets only irregularly, and has served more as an image-building measure than any real decision-making centre. Moscow has also failed to persuade the EU and its member states to formally recognise the Customs Unions or the Common Economic Space of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan as a partner with whom to conclude agreements. After many years of negotiations, Russia and the EU have not even been able to agree on the provisions of a new framework agreement for their mutual relations, the so-called PCA 2.

Russia's biggest frustration has probably been the attitude of the government of **Germany**, which Moscow hoped would be its main partner in the implementation of the Greater Europe project. Although Berlin has always been at the forefront of European economic and energy co-operation with Russia, tensions and differences on certain important issues have increasingly become apparent between the two sides, especially since 2012. While Germany has called for the establishment of a new consultation body between the EU and Russia alongside with Moscow, it seems that the Russians were dissatisfied with Berlin's failure to ensure consensus on this in the EU. Germany has favoured further liberalisation of the visa regime between the EU and Russia, but it has also been clearly reluctant to set any deadlines for the complete abolition of visas. Increasingly frequent German criticism of civil rights violations in Russia has also been vexing Moscow. Furthermore, the Kremlin also holds a grudge against Germany over the strong support provided by the German EU energy commissioner Günther Oettinger to Ukraine as it defended itself against pressure from Russia. The Kremlin apparently suspects that Berlin was behind the European Commission's investigation of Gazprom, seeing this as a way to force Russia to reduce the price of its gas exports. Finally, Germany was the main decision-maker during the Cyprus crisis in spring 2013, when

the deal between the Eurogroup and Cyprus (which had not been consulted with Russia) delivered a blow to the extensive business interests of Russian oligarchs and companies in that country.

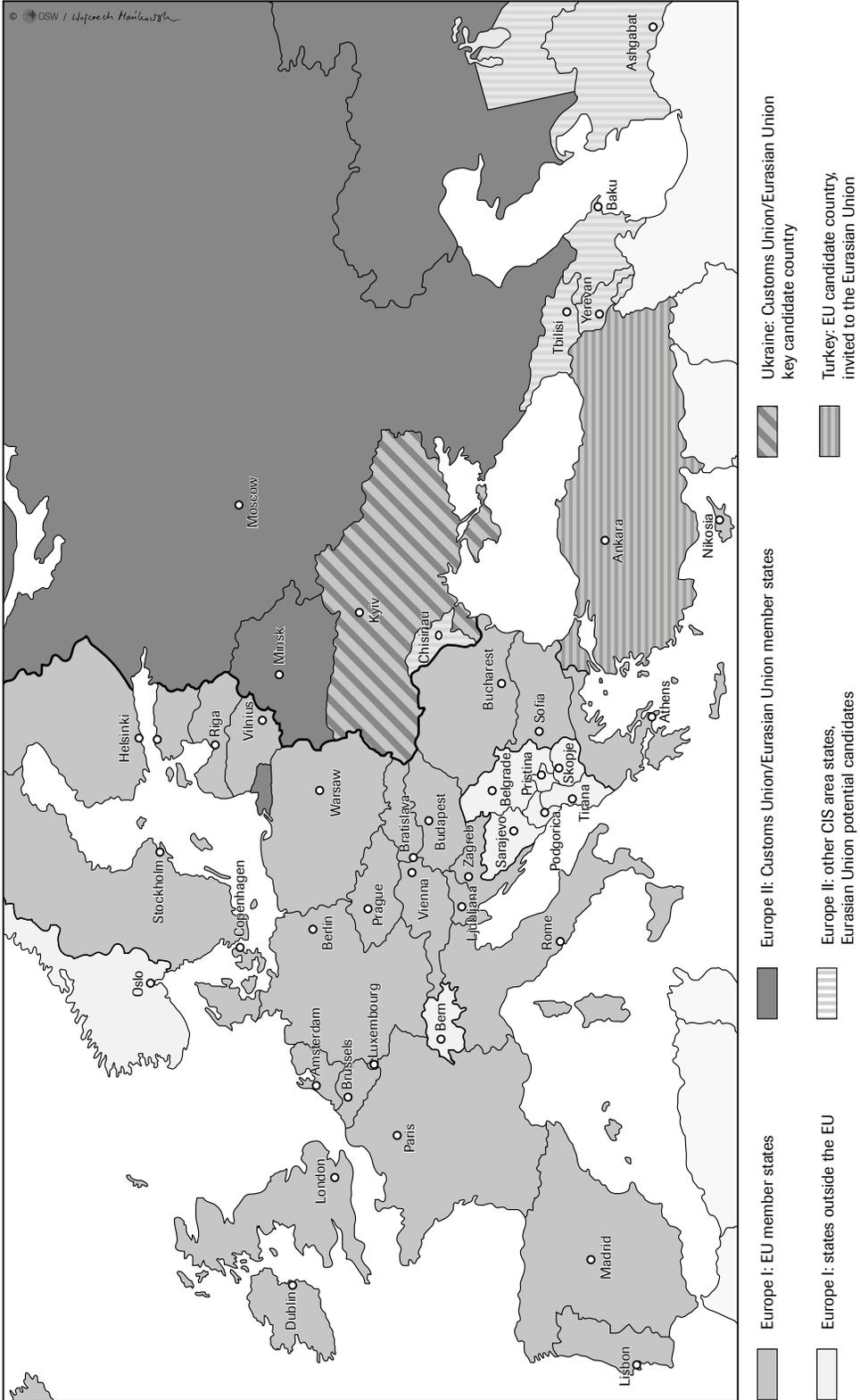
This leads to the conclusion that if the Russian leadership really believed that it would find strong partners in the EU to put at least some of the objectives of Greater Europe into practice, this was a mistaken calculation. Two different approaches clashed here. Russia sought to conclude a series of strategic agreements with the EU based on new, jointly negotiated principles, and fill them with specific content later on. Meanwhile Europe wanted to pull Russia into the European system of norms and standards, and pursue pragmatic co-operation where the two sides' interests coincided.

Moscow underestimated the strength of trans-Atlantic relations and the aversion of European states to the idea of considerably revising the European institutional order, and overestimated its attractiveness as a partner for co-operation in key spheres. Most importantly, however, even during the short periods in which it was willing to co-operate with Europe more intensely, it was not prepared to undergo real internal transformation, including political transformation, without which building a common European space with Russia is impossible. Russia's current policy course is in fact driving it away from Europe. Until that changes, not only will the idea of Greater Europe, which seems impossible to carry out in the form intended by Russia, remain a political utopia, but so will any other form of partial European integration of Russia.

In this situation, Russia is likely to focus its political energy on implementing its priority project of Eurasian integration, based on the structures of the Customs Union / Common Economic Space / the Eurasian Union. Moscow's key short-term objective in this context will be to make Ukraine part of the process. The implementation of the more ambitious Greater Europe project – unless it is scrapped altogether – will be postponed until the time when, as the Russian leaders believe, a weakened European Union will become more inclined to take up Russia's proposals.

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Map. Greater Europe in Vladimir Putin's concept





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