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Russia and the EU in the context of multilaterial foreign policy

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Participants: Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Nadezhda Arbatova (Institute for International Economy and International Relations), Andrey Ryabov, Editor in Chief of journal "World economy and International Relations", Grigory Yavlinsky, leader of Yabloko.

Cohn-Bendit. It was an old idea to come here with the Green/Group; we wanted also to have contacts with the official part of Russia but they asked us to choose between the "official Russia" and the non official; this is the reason why the official side is not present; everyone is in favour of a multilateral policy but this is in reality one-sided often; some use multilateral policy with an anti-American attitude; Russians is using the multilateral policy to be considered like the US and go back to old times when Russia was a superpower; today in the context of a multilateral global economy Russia is a big player with regard, in particular to energy; there is no solution in the main conflicts without an agreement with Russia; which type of conflict management is possible with Russia without imposing a solution? what is the interest of Russia in Kosovo? is Kosovo to be frozen for the next years? Putin made a reference to the Cuba crisis but then he clarified that today's situation is different.

Arbatova. EU-Russia relations are undergoing a period of creeping stagnation; mutual distrust and dissatisfaction about each other; we have a lot of problems but cooperation could be sound; nothing to do with energy security; our partners only care about gas and oil and this bears negative consequences for our economy; politically in Russia there is an authoritarian model; stability in Europe cannot be achieved without close cooperation with Russia; EU-Russia relations should be regarded in a wider context; Putin's speech in Munich was not an ultimatum but a message: we want to reconsider our relations of the nineties which were made of unilateral concessions; in first place Russia wants to be recognised as an equal partner, nothing tragic about this and secondly it wants to be recognised in its own interests; as regards to Kosovo this is one of the main questions to understand our interests; some of our interests are mutual and not at odds with EU interests; Kosovo has to do with the situation in the post soviet space; Russian dilemma: how to react to Kosovo independence? We don't want to be more Serbs than the Serbs; it would be at odds with the basic principle of respecting international borders; we have a special interests in the post soviet space; Russia wants the West to recognise the right to implement the reforms without imposition from outside after the shock therapy of the nineties.

Ryabov. There is the widespread opinion that Russia is always criticising the Western approach; Russia would like to find a new place, a new instrument to influence EU-Russia relations; Russia is now formulating its own interests; Russia's position on Kosovo is conservative; Russia is inclining towards the status quo; Kosovo's independence is undermining the status quo; this undermines the stability in the post soviet space, it undermines the basic principle of coexistence in this space and the sustainability of the relations inside this space; this also bears problems for the unrecognised states like South Ossetia; some say that right after Kosovo's independence we will recognise unrecognised states; the approach is to delay

Kosovo's independence as long as possible in order to define better Russian strategy; the West is trying to solve this problem in the previous agenda of nineties; we have to explain people living in frozen conflicts areas why Albanian Kosovars can become independent and Abkhazians or Ossetians cannot; why EU addresses only Kosovo and says nothing about the frozen conflicts? A multilateral framework also for security in the Black sea could be a good proposal with a new agenda for the post soviet space; maybe we should decide a new principle for the recognition of unrecognised states; sooner or later we should solve this contradiction; in which context we can recognise the unrecognised states?

Cohn-Bendit. What would you do if you were Foreign Minister?

Yavlinsky. Russian officials refused to participate in this panel so there are only people of Yabloko or close to Yabloko; the situation after March next year will be clearer; six points; first policies based on values of freedom and human rights; third, policies of nineties (half cooperation and confrontation) were not fruitful and must be avoided in the future; fourth, what kind of a strategy you have for Ukraine, Belarus and Russia for the next 25 years? The strategy of 1947 was a success story but what is the new strategy? There is no new strategy, the language of Barroso is "Polish meat and pipelines"; today in Russia there is a nationalistic and authoritarian system but what is your strategy for the future? Freezing relations on Polish meet and not on human rights makes a farce of European policy; five, next year is the last year of the Start 1 treaty, what can we do for the future? Necessary to come back to negotiations between Russia and the US on offensive and defensive weapons; anti-missile defence is necessary but it can't be done this way; sixth, as to the democracy 99% of the job should be done by ourselves; Europeans have excellent journalists in Moscow but your politicians come here they are a disaster, they don't understand anything about Russia's politics, structure etc; no alternative to cooperation but it must be carried out in a fruitful way; in 25 years Russia will be part of Europe but not in the Brussels way; Russia cannot be a member of Europe as it is now; as for Ukraine I am very disappointed by the EU; in the gas crisis Russians had the right to say something; 80 million people in Russia have no gas; EU should have been willing to buy the gas at market price and then sell it to Ukraine, EU should have taken the responsibility; the agreement between Ukraine and Russia on gas should have been made clear and not made at 3h in the morning with a joint company based in Switzerland with the EU saying "great"; until today this is a shadow story with a company of 30.000 dollars supplying gas to the whole of Europe; no will by the EU to be inside the story; it brought oligarchs to interstate levels with the approval of the EU; it became counter-productive to be a pro-western politician when NATO decided to bombard Kosovo in 1999; no doubt that Milosevic was a criminal but it was possible to avoid such scenario; in September and October 1998 the West should have said Yeltsin to fire Milosevic instead of excluding Russia; only at the end of April Western countries did that and Yeltsin called Milosevic and fired him.

Cohn-Bendit. What is your opinion about the Iran question?

Questions also by **Rebecca Harms**, **Gisela Kallenbach**, **Michail Cramer**, **Ulrike Lunacek**, **Heidi Hautala** and **Paolo Bergamaschi** on Iran, Kosovo, democracy and human rights and the future of the OSCE.

Arbatova. We must get involved in the Black sea region but without deep and radical changes in Russia there can only be a limited and selective cooperation in the Black sea; it is a boomerang effect, regional cooperation is possible only if we solve our internal problems; it should be suggested a new cooperation with Ukraine and Belarus; as to Iran NPT allows its member for the civilian use of nuclear energy; there is the willingness to cooperate but asserting our interests; nuclear energy in Iran is conceived as a Russian product but before it started as a cooperation by US and France; the solution: multilateral partnership nuclear enrichment through an international consortium to provide fuel for Iran and get back the spent fuel; Russia cannot stop cooperation on Busher nuclear plant; why do you want Russia to stop cooperation? Why EU countries don't stop buying oil from this country? If would make more sense instead of sanctions.

Ryabov. Georgia's possible future NATO membership is perceived as a threat; as regards to Iran this is not perceived as a threat to Russia; Pakistan is more dangerous than Iran because it is a nuclear country and it does not control the whole territory; Iran wants to have bilateral negotiations with the US in order to be recognised as a regional policy; the EU could help this to happen.

Yavlinsky. As to Kosovo what should I say to Abkhazians and Ossetians if Kosovo becomes independent? I can't accept the American attitude that Kosovo is a complete different story; I accept Merkel's position that this region should be gradually absorbed into the EU.

Arbatova. Why Kosovo is so urgent now? Peace-keepers could not stop violence in spring 2004; what will be the impact of Kosovo independence on Serbia? no genocide in Kosovo, 2000 people killed before the war and not proved that they were all killed by the Serbs; there will be lots of problem in case of unilateral recognition; my solution is postponing the decision and in the meantime integrate the region in the EU; there is no functioning democracy in the post-soviet space, too short a period to judge, only 15 years; still in a period of transformation; the EU cannot judge our situation as the final product of this transformation; the EU needs an inclusive strategy towards Russia; EU is right in criticising human rights in Russia.

Ryabov. EU can contribute in the field of education, health and environment; this will be a real contribution in the process; we have to prepare people on democracy because people are today convinced that they have democracy, thet here the things are the same as in France, Germany and so on; EU speaks about democracy but accepts the dirty Russian money; international community should work out a plan applicable to all the conflicts in the world; every conflict is unique; as for Transnistria the EU should elaborate an attractive plan for both communities.

Yavlinsky. EU should speak openly and friendly to Russia and not only on Polish meat; EU should be the example; Abu Graib, Guantanamo, secret detention centres, killing innocent people in Iraq does not help to make understand our people that EU is better; Russian corruption is a joint venture because you know perfectly where Russian capitals are; 99% of democracy is our job, 1% is our job; I would never undermine OSCE but when in 2003 OSCE said that elections in Russia were not fair your presidents the day after congratulated with Putin; the first ones undermining the OSCE, therefore, were Western leaders; in 2001 Putin offered NATO secretary Robertson the ABM treaty and there was no answer; Russia is an authoritarian regime with no independent judiciary, no independent parliament because of no free and fair elections, state clans running the country; we can criticise Russia but you should also criticise Bulgaria or Romania; Russia is a European country and its future is in Europe; Russians understand democracy and can understand democracy like all the other Europeans, this should be the message and EU should not simply accept an authoritarian regime.

Cohn-Bendit. Just to conclude this panel I want to stress that you are not Russia's foreign minister as we don't represent the EU; Schroeder's words were a scandal; I am in favour of setting up a common institute on human rights in Europe in order to agree to a common definition and implementation of human rights; I agree that Russia must not be considered an underdeveloped country and that it is perfectly able to understand what democracy and human rights mean.

Report by Paolo Bergamaschi, Greens/EFA adviser on foreign affairs

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