

# Troublesome eastern neighbourhood: Russia as a difficult partner for the European Union

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## **The aim of this presentation is to indicate:**

- the main goals of the European Union's policy towards the Russian Federation
- the main reasons why this policy is a failure

## Genesis of the EU-Russia relations

Turning point in the EU-Russia relations: the collapse of the Soviet Union and the change of European/global balance of power in favour of the West

- For the EU: relations with Russia had a special importance in accordance with the slogan “Russia first” based on the conviction that situation in Europe depended very much on the Russian systemic transformation
- For Russia: cooperation with the EU was one of the important ways of including Russia in the re-emerging international system

As a result: in 1999 conclusion of an agreement on  
**the strategic partnership**

## Principal goals of the EU's policy towards Russia (1)

The principal goal of the EU's policy **was not** to support the creation of a full-scale liberal democracy and a free market economy in Russia and to create an alliance with this country

**The more moderate and realistic goal was** to create closer ties with Russia in order:

- to make Russia an important and credible partner on the international arena
- to push Russia to respect a "good behaviour" in its foreign and domestic policies
- establish a lasting and mutually beneficial cooperation

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## Principal goals of the EU's policy towards Russia (2)

The EU based its policy on the basic assumption that ever closer relations with Russia:

- would change Russia and make it dependent on connections with Europe
- would make Russia gradually integrated with the West
- would push Russia to adopt of basic Western standards

This way the EU wanted:

- **to protect its various geopolitical interests**
- **to act as normative power promoting "European values"**

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## **Principal goals of the EU's policy towards Russia (3)**

"European values" promoted by the EU were:

- to be accepted to a certain extent by the Russian authorities and society
- to lead to limited, but nevertheless certain Europeanization

**One could say that only that was expected and at the same time  
so much was expected**

During the first decade of the Russian Federation such a moderately optimistic scenario could be realized, but the coming to power in 2000 of President Vladimir Putin led to a real failure of the EU-Russia relations

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# The main reasons of failure of the EU-Russia relations (1)

The basic reason: **the huge role of ideological factors  
(sphere of norms and values)**

The EU and Russia base their activities on basically incompatible assumptions:

- the EU consistently supports and promotes "European values"
- Russia increasingly adopts policy of anti-democratic authoritarianism, imperialism and nationalism

Russian policy is favoured by traditions of Russian statehood based on the ideas of authoritarian governments and superpower using military strength and conquest of other lands and nations

## The main reasons of failure of the EU-Russia relations (2)

Another important reason: **Russians perceive the characteristics of Europeans as the opposite of their own Russian traits,** which in turn are glorified by them

The Russian worldview is built as the antithesis of paradigms developed by Europe and is based on ideological/political concepts like "Russian Idea", "Russian World" or Eurasianism, which believe in the uniqueness and the superiority of Russian civilization over the "rotten" Western civilization

As a result, Russians negatively and even with hostility assess the EU and its system of values



## The main reasons of failure of the EU-Russia relations (3)

Manifestations of the Russian anti-EU foreign policy:

- evolution of the “Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation”: in last document from 2016 the EU is no longer perceived as the “main” partner
- Russia’s attempts to disintegrate the EU by propaganda aimed at the European societies, interference in their political life, political and financial support for anti-EU and populist parties, using "energy weapons", etc.
- Russia’s attempts to limit the effectiveness of the EU’s Eastern Partnership and to aggravate Ukrainian crisis

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# Consequences of failure of the EU-Russia relations (1)

Growing of incompatibility in the area of basic geopolitical interests

**Fundamentally different visions of the world** and of the place that the EU and Russia do and should hold in it:

- the UE was formed in response to threats of nationalism and catastrophic rivalry between European nation states
- Russia considers the most important problems those resulting from the dissolution of the Soviet Union

## Consequences of failure of the EU-Russia relations (2)

### Incompatibility in the area of geopolitical interests:

- for the EU the main reason behind the instability in its eastern neighbourhood is the lack of democracy
- for Russia the main cause of instability of that region is the EU's policy of exporting democracy

As a result, the clash of these contrasting views of the European order in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would be difficult to avoid

## Conclusions (1)

In **the sphere of** compromise and cooperation are possible and Russians are capable of showing far-reaching pragmatism

In **the sphere of ideology** there is virtually no room for compromise since none of the parties can abandon the system of basic values and norms on which is based their functioning as international actors

Currently it is difficult to imagine overcoming such deep axiological differences between the EU and Russia

## **Conclusions (2)**

Despite fundamental controversies both the EU and Russian Federation are and will remain the key partners in the international arena

We should hope that the two partners will be able to work out a model of mutually beneficial cooperation, including calming the controversies concerning the spheres of politics and ideology

**Thank you for your attention**

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