

# EU-Russian Cooperation in the Return to Great Power Competition

A Monograph

by

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## Abstract

EU-Russian Cooperation in the Return to Great Power Competition, by MAJ Jan in het Veld, 43 pages.

Within three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world is witnessing a global power shift from West to East. While the world is increasingly starting to look like Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which was dictated by the "European concert of powers" in which European countries always played to the balance, this monograph explores the possibility of EU-Russian cooperation to remain relevant within a return to Great Power Competition. Employing a Policy Analysis Methodology, an historical analysis provides insights into the relationship between Russia and Europe since the rise of nation-states during the Napoleonic era. Contemporary literature from various Foreign Affairs and Political Sciences experts describes the EU and Russian position in a world returning to Great Power Competition. Lastly, the need and desirability of EU-Russian cooperation is viewed from a Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic perspective. The author discovers there is a lot of economy driven potential for EU-Russian cooperation, to foster EU ambitions to reform the current structure of the international system towards a multipolar world, while spreading its values through equality and patience, and by acting as the intermediate great power motivating other great powers to become more willing to compromise as well. The EU will have to make a tradeoff, however, between the benefits of this cooperation toward securing the EU's place in a return to great power competition and the possible political damage concerning the legitimacy of that cooperation domestically, and towards its closest ally: The United States.

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## Abbreviations

ASEM	Asia Europe Meeting
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
DoD	Department of Defense
DIME	Diplomatic Informational Military Economic
EU	European Union
ICC	International Criminal Court
LOC	Line of Communication
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSR	Northern Sea Route
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation
SSR	Southern Sea Route
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

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# 1. Introduction

The Secret of Politics? Make a good treaty with Russia.

—Otto von Bismarck, First German Chancellor

In his 2020 *NDS Implementation: First Year Accomplishments*, US Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper stated the world has returned to an era of Great Power Competition and that the US Department of Defense's (DoD) near-term objectives should focus on integrated action towards China first, then Russia, while preparing once again for high-intensity conflict in the future.<sup>1</sup> Remarkably, the European Union (EU), the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest economy in the world, is not even mentioned as an actor. Countries in the EU are instead referred to as allies and like-minded nations, many of whom should commit to sharing more of the burden for their capabilities and capacity, as well as the security and stability of their regions and the world under American leadership. Great Power Competition is therefore arguably framed as being bipolar. From a perspective of the current US political climate in which “America First” seems to prevail, this is hardly a surprising message.<sup>2</sup>

What might be surprising, however, is the way the EU views its position within this return to Great Power Competition. Former Secretary-General of the European Commission Martin Selmayr already clarified the EU's stance as early as March 2019 by saying:

“Great Power Competition, we Europeans are skeptical about this. We don't think that competition is about power. We think competition should be a win-win situation. We think competition should be fair. If it's only a game of power, then everybody will lose in the end. That is something we have learned from history. There can be no power without values. That is a European Union belief which is written in our treaties. We know that we are in an increasingly multipolar world. But we believe we should not give up on working together in this increasingly multipolar world. Europe is a strong voice in the concert of

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of Defense, Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper, “NDS Implementation: First Year Accomplishments,” (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> White House Statement, 30 January 2018, “President Donald J. Trump's Foreign Policy Puts America First,” accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trumps-foreign-policy-puts-america-first/>.

powers for values, for democracy, for fair competition, and a rules-based international system.”<sup>3</sup>

Within this quote, two distinct differences with the US point of view become apparent. The EU regards the world as multipolar instead of bipolar, and it prefers to stay clear of power competition while playing to a balance of power.

Within the context of a return to Great Power Competition and the EU’s desire to seek out the balance, the research question this monograph examines is: “Should the EU consider Russia as a partner instead of an opponent to remain relevant within a return to Great Power Competition?” Employing a Policy Analysis Methodology using the Strategic Evaluation Method within a qualitative research approach, this monograph answers the proposed research question through historiography, contemporary literature, current doctrine, and theoretical frameworks. A historical analysis will provide insights into the relationship between Russia and Europe since the rise of nation-states during the Napoleonic era. Contemporary literature written by various experts on Foreign Affairs and Political Sciences is then used to describe the EU’s and Russia’s position in a world returning to Great Power Competition. Lastly, this monograph will view the need and desirability of EU-Russian cooperation from a Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic perspective. Within these perspectives, this monograph explores possibilities in current doctrine for military cooperation between the EU and Russia. Throughout all this, various theorists, including Daniel Kahneman, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, and John Lewis Gaddis, inform the theoretical framework and conceptualization of the monograph.

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<sup>3</sup> Brookings Institution, “Europe, Multilateralism, and Great Power Competition,” 6 March 2019, video, 1:15:18, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/events/europe-multilateralism-and-great-power-competition/>.

## 2. Historical Perspective

Between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and WWI, the Concert of Europe was the balance of power that existed in Europe. It was also known as the Congress System. It was the result of a custom, following the era of Napoleon and the French Revolution, adopted by the old great powers of Europe of meeting from time to time in an International Congress. It intended to provide a solution by mutual agreement for preventing conflict (hence “concert”), whenever a problem arose that threatened peace between European nations. European countries always played to balance. If Paris got together with Berlin, Britain got together with Vienna and Moscow to provide a counterbalance.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, the Concert of Europe split itself into the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente, which eventually became the principal groups of belligerents at the start of World War I in 1914, which ended the Congress system for good.

Some might argue the Concert of Europe is the ancestor of the League of Nations or the current United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Others would describe the Concert as the “opposite of an international organization trying to work within the limits of international law” since it “lacked a secretariat and rules of conduct.”<sup>5</sup> The fact the Concert had lacked a formal mechanism indeed led to the belief that such an arrangement, including the means of enforcing it, would be better suited to prevent war. However, in the same way, the Concert could not prevent WWI, and The League could not prevent WWII, the UNSC was not able to avoid the many proxy wars between the Soviet Union and the United States. In all three examples, fixed coalitions, fueled by nationalism instead of cooperation, eventually led to a bipolar world resulting in armed conflict.

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<sup>4</sup> Paddy Ashdown, “The Global Power Shift,” TEDxBruussels, 2011, video, 09:44, accessed September 15, 2020, [https://www.ted.com/talks/paddy\\_ashdown\\_the\\_global\\_power\\_shift#t-849728](https://www.ted.com/talks/paddy_ashdown_the_global_power_shift#t-849728).

<sup>5</sup> Amos Yoder, *The Evolution of the United Nations System* (Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis, 1993), 4.

In Europe, a remarkable counter-trend was set in motion following World War II with the express intent of permanently banishing war from the European continent and of nurturing a culture of peace and solidarity. Eventually, this led to the establishment of the EU and European citizenship when the Maastricht Treaty came into force in 1993. Like the Concert had demonstrated before, governments of Europe could collaborate if they chose to, even if what was achieved was modest and came at a price. Today the EU is the pinnacle of a stable Europe, which favors balance above domination.

The Cold War prevented this newfound European balance from spreading globally. Three generations of US leadership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) during the Cold War, has understandably made Europe accustomed to regard Russia as an enemy rather than a competitor. It has become institutionalized in European society, which carries with it the inherent psychological trait that it narrows perception of available choices.<sup>6</sup> In the eyes of the Russian oligarchy, however, the real threat is the EU and its promotion of democracy and the rule of law, threatening the stability of Russia itself. The Russian and European systems have, therefore, become fundamentally incompatible, representing contradictory values and vastly different approaches to foreign and domestic policy.<sup>7</sup> Now, merely three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world is again witnessing a global power shift from West to East in which the rising power China and the declining power Russia on the one hand and the United States and Europe on the other, begin to form the two poles in a bipolar world, with the potential of leading to a new Cold War. Balance over domination on a global level, currently seems hardly imaginable. Or does it?

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<sup>6</sup> Peter L. Berger, and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), 53-57.

<sup>7</sup> Joshka Fischer, "What's Freezing Europe-Russia Relations?" Project Syndicate, 25 September 2019, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/frozen-europe-russia-relations-by-joschka-fischer-2019-09>.

To many countries in Europe, Russia has historically been an Ally for far longer than it ever was an enemy. Ever since the 1683–1699 War of the Holy League, in which Russia allied with Prussia against the Ottoman Empire, Russia has come to the aid of various European nations in many different conflicts.<sup>8</sup> In the nineteenth century, Russia even became known as the “gendarme” of Europe and played its role in the Concert of Europe.<sup>9</sup> And in the twentieth century, it was Allied with Britain and France against German claims on European hegemony in WWI and WWII, giving Russia a 200-year “track record” of working towards maintaining the status quo in Europe, which seems to make historical Russian Grand Strategy innately revisionist. A revisionist state, namely, always seeks to change the balance of power when it assumes that the balance of power does not adequately guarantee a state’s security.<sup>10</sup> Confronted with the potential disruption of the current balance of power from West to East with unpredictable consequences for the security of the Russian state, Russian “neo-revisionist” strategy in a return to Great Power Competition on a global level, might seem possible after all. Perhaps even more so when considering the bulk of the Russian culture and elite derive from European rather than Asian heritage.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “Great Turkish War,” New World Encyclopedia, accessed August 11, 2020, [https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Great\\_Turkish\\_War](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Great_Turkish_War).

<sup>9</sup> Stanislas Jeanneson, “The Concert of Europe,” *Encyclopédie pour une histoire nouvelle de l'Europe*, 21 November 2016, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://ehne.fr/en/article/europe-europeans-and-world/organizing-international-system/concert-europe>.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Sakwa, “Greater Russia: Is Moscow out to Subvert the West?” Springer Nature Limited, July 2020, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7362607/>.

<sup>11</sup> “Russia.” *Countries and Their Cultures*, accessed August 7, 2020, <https://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Russia.html>.

### 3. The Position of the EU and Russia in the Return to Great Power Competition

#### 21st Century Great Power Competition

For many people, returning to Great Power Competition may be intuitively compared to the Cold War. A world in which two major powers competed for global dominance. As recently as December 2019, a leading US think tank, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) hosted Defense 2020, a podcast examining critical defense issues in the United States' 2020 election cycle, in which defense experts from across the political spectrum discussed US military strategy.<sup>12</sup> In this podcast, four US great power experts roughly define the current Great Power Competition as a US-China competition only. Chris Preble, (Vice President for Defense and Foreign Policy Studies at the Cato Institute) even goes so far as to state that he: “struggles to think of Russia as a great power with maybe one or two key exceptions, which are thousands of nuclear weapons and UN Security Council permanent membership.” All four experts conclude furthermore that China is attempting to displace, rather than replace the United States, by gaining political and economic power rather than military intervention to leverage other countries. Fascinatingly enough, no mention is made of the EU during the entire podcast.

Perhaps this fascination with a bipolar world is only natural. It might be a human instinct to try to find that dichotomy between “good and evil” in global politics as we tend to do in religion, ethics, and philosophy. It could simply be how our minds like to think and how our realities are socially constructed and fed by our biased views of our own and rival's countries.<sup>13</sup> Admittedly, history has provided us with many examples of that bipolar struggle for dominance:

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<sup>12</sup> Center for Strategic and International Studies, “Defense 2020: Great Power Competition,” Transcript by Rev.com, Recorded 3 December 2019, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/great-power-competition>.

<sup>13</sup> Berger and Luckmann, 53-57.

Athens and Sparta, Rome and Carthage, France and England, and of course, the United States and the Soviet Union.

Various experts on Foreign Affairs and Political Sciences, like Sven Biscop (Director of the Europe in the World Program at the Egmont–Royal Institute for International Relations in Brussels) and Robert J. Guttman (Director of the George Mason University’s School of Policy, Government and International Affairs, Center on Politics & Foreign Relations in Washington DC) argue the 21st century will be different. To them, we are entering an era of multipolarity in which the interaction between great powers determines the course of world politics. Currently, those powers are the United States, the established power; Russia, the declining power; China, the rising power; and the EU, the power that does not know whether it wants to be a power.<sup>14</sup> While US diplomatic rhetoric at the end of President Trump’s first term as president, often recites the need for US protection of Europe from Russia by military means, Europe does, however, have important strengths to bring to a new Atlantic relationship. It has become experienced in nonmilitary foreign policies, such as the use of development and aid and trade diplomacy. As the world’s leading donors of aid who are accustomed to deploying it in strategic support of a broader Western policy, the Europeans do not come empty-handed to the negotiating table. With the “ethical” foreign policy that has been pioneered by the EU, its stress on human rights, good governance and control of conventional arms sales, with its nuclear power and permanent seat at the UNSC, and combined with the fact that four of the G7 countries are EU members and that the Euro is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most influential currency worldwide, the EU has gained a strategic advantage with regard to “softer” areas of foreign policy.<sup>15</sup> With this “softer power” and growing military cohesion, the EU has the means to pursue a distinctive great power strategy, a middle way

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<sup>14</sup> Sven Biscop, *European Strategy in the 21st century: New Future for Old Power* (Abingdon, Oxon, New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 149.

<sup>15</sup> Robert J. Guttman, *Europe in the New Century: Visions of an Emerging Superpower* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Pub, 2001), 78.

between dreamy idealism and unprincipled pragmatism, and can play a crucial stabilizing role in this increasingly unstable world.

So, with the United States and China as the undisputed 21st century great powers, and the EU contemplating its international position as one, where does that leave Russia? Internationally characterized as the “declining power” due to its dwindling economy and high corruption, Russia still possesses some formidable hard and soft power alike. Apart from its obvious vast nuclear arsenal and UNSC veto right, Russia has mostly spent the last two decades carving out its own niches within a new geopolitical context. Energy diplomacy, hybrid warfare, and arms sales have become the cornerstones of Russia’s new drive for increased influence in the world. Russia possesses the world’s largest known natural gas reserves (28%), which put it ahead of Iran and Qatar. Gazprom alone controls 17% of the gas reserves of the world. Russia holds the eighth-largest proven oil reserves in the world and is the second-biggest producer and exporter of mineral oil. Russia also holds the second-largest coal reserves in the world after the United States.<sup>16</sup> Being the second largest military products exporter after the United States, Russia is also a significant player in the global arms market, which provides it with the additional possibility of security cooperation with historical allies such as Iran, Syria, Venezuela and Cuba. Russia’s markedly active foreign policy is, therefore, principally a combination of said energy sector and arms dealing in order to increase its sphere of influence. Several cultural and historical factors, together with economic interdependency and EU need for energy security, have already contributed to closer bilateral cooperation between Russia and its more prosperous EU neighbors such as Germany and France. Recently, in conflicts such as Georgia, the Crimea, Ukraine, and Syria, Russia showed the world, it is still capable of projection power across its borders, using military means below the threshold of armed conflict through hybrid warfare employing

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<sup>16</sup> Fraser Cameron, “Prospects for EU-Russia Relations,” Facts and Findings Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, nr 50, April 2008, 3.



propaganda, disinformation, information warfare, special forces and paramilitary organizations such as the Wagner Group. In doing so, Russia has opposed the EU and the United States on several major international issues, leading it to pursue closer cooperation with China and India concerning energy trade and arms dealing, respectively. Having avoided open confrontation with the West, Russia placed itself in the political and geographical position of a possible mediator of different civilizations and a bridge between the West and the rest of the world. This has given Russia the option of aiming for a global power strategy as an independent center of power, doing its best to establish equally distant or equally close relations with other centers of power, within a 21st-century multipolarity Great Power Competition.<sup>17</sup>

## Russia's Ambitions

The question remains whether or not Russia actually intends to pursue this course of action as well. In his book *Landscape of History*, Gaddis pointed out patterns can exist where there appear to be none when looking through the lens of history to find causal relationships.<sup>18</sup> So, when British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin in 1947 said: "Beggars can't be choosers," when the United States proposed the original Marshall Plan and then Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov tried to haggle over the terms and issues of national economic sovereignty, the West could have anticipated Russia would again insist on being choosers in 1998, when President Clinton believed Russia could be forced to follow US policies and would eventually learn to like them.<sup>19</sup> Today in 2020, Russia's economy is again suffering devastating blows due to the imposed EU sanctions in the aftermath of the Ukrainian crisis and the worldwide drop in oil demand because of the global Covid-19 pandemic. And yet again, Russia refuses to become a

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<sup>17</sup> Lilia Schevtsova, "Post-communist Russia: An Historic Opportunity Missed," *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, N.5, 2007, p. 902.

<sup>18</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 97.

<sup>19</sup> Serena Giusti and Tomislava Penkova, "Russia: Just a Normal Great Power?" *Istituto Per Gli Studi Politica Internazionale*, Working Paper issue 34, October 2008.

“beggar.” In Russia’s case, classical neorealism would have accepted regional hegemony, with offshore balancing by the West as an adequate mechanism to ensure that Russia did not mount a global challenge. However, the liberal internationalism that predominated after 1989 and continues to expand into Eastern Europe, makes no provision for regional hegemony of any sort. Therefore, Russia was unable to exert the kind of influence to which it felt entitled, and hence its revisionist strategy manifested in attacks on Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine and the Crimea in 2014. As Anne Clunan (Former director of the NPS Center on Contemporary Conflict) explains, there are many layers to Russia’s foreign policy identity. Still, there is a clear evolution away from an initial enthusiasm around the turn of the century for all things European and alignment with the West, towards the stronger articulation of a great power version of Russian national interests. These great power aspirations have been interpreted as a type of aspirational constructivism directed towards the identity needs of domestic audiences though, rather than the expression of an aggressive policy towards the historic West.<sup>20</sup> According to Richard Sakwa (Professor of Russian and European politics at the University of Kent), Moscow perceives national populist insurgency as a struggle for ideational pluralism within the liberal international order, but above all, as allies in the struggle for geostrategic pluralism against the monism of the Atlantic power system. Russia supports these movements, but not to the extent of jeopardizing the existing structures of the international system. He argues that Russia indeed prefers the tempered challenge of neo-revisionism over the insurrectionary behavior that would characterize a genuinely revisionist power.<sup>21</sup>

In January of 2020, The Russian ambassador to Croatia, Anvar Azimov, seemed to acknowledge this strategy to a certain extent, by stating: “Moscow needs European technologies,

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<sup>20</sup> Anne L. Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia’s Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 61.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Sakwa, “Greater Russia.”

investments, and even loans. Europe, on the other hand, offered Russia only and exclusively a vassal-senior relationship, which resulted in the worsening of the relations. The EU should normalize and restore recently broken relations with Russia. Moscow and Brussels remain important trade and economic partners and largest neighbors, capable of independently bearing a shared responsibility for peace, prosperity, and security in Eurasia.”<sup>22</sup> Because this is a segment from a heavily politicized and overall anti-American opinion article, it requires some “Thinking slow” rather than “Thinking fast” to digest.<sup>23</sup> Whereas some readers will immediately categorize an item like this under Russian propaganda, it is essential to realize, it is published on an otherwise reasonably unbiased news website. Therefore, in an article like this, the populist rhetoric directed at Russian’s domestic audiences should be considered vastly inferior to the actual political signal of the article, which seeks cooperation with the EU. A real policy example of this strategy occurred in 2019, when Russia was invited to resume full voting rights in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). The Kremlin embraced the opportunity, even though powerful domestic neo-traditionalist and Eurasianist voices counseled against it and while Russia had already been involved in Eastern European frozen conflicts, since 2014. The combination of these two clearly indicates the desire for geostrategic pluralism without jeopardizing the existing structures of the international system.

This brings us to the fundamental question: is Russia interested in cooperating with the West as equals? This cooperation would resemble an idea former Soviet leader Gorbachev already mentioned in April 1984 by stating: “We assign an overriding significance to the European course of our foreign policy. We are resolutely against the division of the continent into military blocs facing each other, against the accumulation of military arsenals in Europe, against

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<sup>22</sup> Anvar Azimov, “USA Is Increasingly Problematic, EU Should Restore Ties with Russia,” Euractiv, 29 January 2020, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/opinion/usa-is-increasingly-problematic-eu-should-restore-ties-with-russia>.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 32.

everything that is the source of the threat of war. In the spirit of the new thinking, we introduced the idea of the “all-European house,” which signifies, above all, the acknowledgment of a certain integral whole, although the states in question belong to different social systems and are members of opposing military-political blocs standing against each other. This term includes both current problems and real possibilities for their solution.”<sup>24</sup> For Russia today, this almost four-decade-old statement still seems to be the way out of the current perceived geopolitical impasse. It offers a common developmental global power strategy as an independent center of power between West and East.

## EU: Ambitions and Trends

Unlike Russia, the EU is not a superpower in the traditional sense and does not cherish the ambition to become one. Yet its unique experiment with deep integration of independent countries has made it one of the most influential players on the world stage. Step-by-step, it has become a global actor, driven by a growing stock of common interests and by the expectations of its partners worldwide. The international community wants the EU to share its experience and to use its wealth and influence to help prevent conflicts, manage crises, protect human rights, and promote economic and social development. Simultaneously, however, French President Macron openly pursued improved relations with Russia in 2019 to secure NATO and EU member states’ borders, to allow for a more productive relationship with the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union and to offer ways to manage regional conflicts.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, many German politicians believe that, in light of the current adversarial relationship between Russia and the United States,

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<sup>24</sup> Milan Svec, "The Prague Spring: 20 Years Later," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1988, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/czech-republic/1988-06-01/prague-spring-20-years-later>.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Leonard, “Inside Macron’s Russia Initiative,” *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 4 October 2019, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/inside-macrons-russia-initiative/>.

it is impossible to ensure European security without Russian participation.<sup>26</sup> This participation is sought and found in the ongoing construction of Nord Stream 2, and the drive for renewal of the 2010 German-Russian partnership for modernization program. But also in the shared interest between Moscow and Berlin in other regions of the world such as Iran, where Moscow and Berlin, unlike the United States, both committed to upholding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreement adopted in 2015.

Combined with Martin Selmayr's statement that Europe is a strong voice in the concert of powers for values, for democracy, for fair competition, and a rules-based international system, the EU seems to have become a blend of neorealism and neoliberalism. Effectively uniting a rational stance towards Russia specifically and great power competition in general, but combined with EU morals and internal positivism. Both neorealism and neoliberalism are state-centric structural theories, using state actors as basic units of theoretical analysis. Through the state-centric approach, both theories try to explain the behavior of states with reference to the material structure of the international system. Whether concerned with relative-gains or absolute-gains, there is common agreement that states act within the rational choice model.<sup>27</sup> Seemingly slightly balanced towards neoliberal institutionalism, the EU places great emphasis upon environmental and economic issues. This became apparent through the 2016 Paris Agreement, under which each country must determine, plan, and regularly report on the contribution that it undertakes to mitigate global warming. Neoliberal institutionalists also suggest that states act in their own interests, yet hold a much more optimistic view on cooperation. This characteristic has become apparent in German-Franco interaction with Russia, where all sides argue that interdependence,

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<sup>26</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "Russia and Germany: From Estranged Partners to Good Neighbors," Carnegie Moscow Center, June, 2018, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://carnegie.ru/2018/06/06/russia-and-germany-from-estranged-partners-to-good-neighbors-pub-76540>.

<sup>27</sup> Ward Thomas, *The Ethics of Destruction: Norms and Force in International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 2001), 10.

particularly economic interdependence, is now an important feature of world politics and that states could potentially benefit from cooperative strategies.<sup>28</sup> This realistic assessment of the current strategic environment interconnected with the idealistic aspiration to advance a better world is defined as “Principled Pragmatism” in the 2016 EU Global Strategy.<sup>29</sup>

So, aside from these bilateral initiatives by Germany and France, does this mean the EU has evolved into a new form of great power? And what is its intended position in return to great power competition? To answer this question, the current Covid-19 pandemic provides an interesting insight. In June 2020, the EU impressed friend and foe alike, by closing a landmark deal of short- and long-term funding of close to \$2 trillion, designed to help the bloc recover from the Covid-19 pandemic as one, rather than abandoning poorer countries to their fate as wealthier nations surged back. Where China, by not being open enough about the outbreak, and the United States through poor crisis management and abandoning the WHO, both lost international soft power, Europe rose to the occasion.<sup>30</sup> As a result, the EU stool finally has all three legs: a common currency, one central bank, and a credible commitment to a unified fiscal policy legitimacy. Previously, the legitimacy of EU foreign affairs had already been established through swift consensus by all member states on invoking economic sanctions on Russia in response to the crisis in Ukraine. To use this soft power within great power competition, however, is has to be incorporated into a Grand Strategy. Sven Biscop described a way to do that in his book. He argues equality and sovereignty can be the core of a new EU Grand Strategy with the fundamental purpose of maintaining the European equality-based model of society and improving

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<sup>28</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (New York, Longman, 2001), 87.

<sup>29</sup> European Union, “A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy,” June 2016, accessed September 15, 2020, [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eugs\\_review\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> Daniel W. Drezner, “The Tortoise of 21st-century Great Power Politics,” *The Washington Post* July 2020, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/07/28/tortoise-21st-century-great-power-politics/>.

it.<sup>31</sup> The best way of doing that in a peaceful and non-confrontational manner is by cooperating as equal partners with other countries, regardless of the political nature of their regime, on those dimensions of equality (security, economic, political) in which the EU and the others countries both see a win-win situation. Without obliging others to commit to steps they are actually not willing to take, and without the EU committing to goals in will never achieve, over time, increased equality in other dimensions will induce the citizens of the countries we cooperate with to demand more political equality too. The steady expansion of the EU into Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and more recently, the outcry for more individual rights in former traditional communist oriented states like Ukraine in 2014 and Belarus in August 2020, are proof to this. In essence, the EU has exchanged the uncompromising strive for democratization by promoting universal rights and ethical foreign policy choices.

Though the EU has become experienced in nonmilitary foreign policies to support a broader Western policy through use of development aid, trade diplomacy, and ethical foreign policy, soft power is not enough. This too has been proven by the resulting frozen conflicts after the revolutions in Eastern Europe and the Arabian Spring through soft power alone. As a great power competitor, the EU cannot afford to be dictated to by other great powers to choose sides in such conflicts. Therefore, Russian, US, and Chinese pressure on Europe to do just that, and essentially become a great-power dependent, have encouraged it to move toward greater unity across a wide spectrum of issues, ranging from trade and industrial policy to security and defense cooperation to secure its periphery. Popular support for the EU has strengthened efforts to carve out an independent position that allows the EU to cooperate with both Washington, Moscow, and Beijing. In doing so, European policies are increasingly based on values rather than principles, enabling Europe to accept the existence of authoritarianism, enabling it to cooperate with states

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<sup>31</sup> Sven Biscop, *European Strategy*, 256.

such as Iran, while working towards a better world for all.<sup>32</sup> As a more self-reliant, value-based entity with an ethical foreign policy, Europe has become a safe partner for those countries beset by the more uncompromising US principles, Russian rhetoric, or Chinese lack of openness. Realizing this advantage, the EU is influencing international stability through engaging all sorts of governments and institutions, while spreading its values through equality and patience and by motivating other great powers to become more willing to compromise as well.

#### 4. EU-Russian Future Cooperation

##### Advantages of EU-Russian cooperation in a Multipolar World

Having established the role of the EU and Russia in a multipolar rather than bipolar world, the last question which needs answering is whether or not cooperation between Russia and the EU could benefit both great powers. To answer this, the monograph will examine the reconcilability of both states' grand strategies and possibilities for future cooperation.

As discussed, Russian grand strategy seeks an end to their geopolitical impasse and to remain an independent center of power between the West and East. The EU desires to enhance international stability while spreading its values through an ethical foreign policy based on equality and patience. The EU has a major interest in a stable, peaceful, prosperous, democratic Russia that is a reliable trading partner, friendly neighbor, and a supporter of an effective rules-based international system.<sup>33</sup> For parts of the European political and intellectual elite, a non-democratic Russia will always represent an existential threat: an archetypal enemy bent on exploiting the weaknesses of open societies to expand its sphere of influence. Russia, on the other hand, arguably needs Europe as an adversary to support its nationalist and ultra-conservative

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<sup>32</sup> Liselotte Odgaard, "Europe's Place in Sino-US Competition," *Chapter 3 in Strategic Asia 2020, US-China Competition for Global Influence*, January 2020, 58.

<sup>33</sup> Fraser Cameron, "Prospects."



ideology. It also needs Europe as a partner, to keep its primitively structured economy afloat and as the most effective vehicle toward the progressive modernization of Russia itself. Russia's official strategy, therefore, clearly defines future relations with Europe as "a strategic partnership not aimed at Russia's incorporation into European institutions."<sup>34</sup> Michal Šimečka (Vice-Chairman of the political party Progressive Slovakia, and elected Member of the European Parliament in the 2019 election) explains: "Moscow is well aware of the magnitude of the EU's power. While publicly identifying NATO as Russia's main security threat, Russia suspects it is the Union, with its democracy, prosperity, and rule of law, that poses a much greater challenge to the oligarchy than all the NATO nuclear warheads and tanks combined. And so, does the common market: The Kremlin has never forgotten that it took but a few EU directives and regulations (the third energy package) to upend Gazprom's entire business model."<sup>35</sup> Even though current EU-Russian relations are far from optimal due to the 2014 Ukrainian crisis, the opportunity for normalizing relations does exist within both great power strategies. The 1922 treaty of Rapallo between the German Republic and Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, just four years after the end of WWI, is a testimony to how quickly nations can normalize their diplomatic relations and cooperate in a spirit of mutual goodwill to meet their economic needs.<sup>36</sup> Just like today, as already hinted at by German and French politicians, the key to EU-Russian cooperation lies within economic benefits for both. Patience towards frozen conflict resolution through diplomacy (like the Balkans who will inevitably all join the EU), and

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<sup>34</sup> Scott N. Romaniuk, "Rethinking EU-Russian Relations: Modern Cooperation or PostModern Strategic Partnership?" *Central European Journal of International and Strategic Studies*, 2009, accessed September 15, 2020, [https://static.cejiss.org/data/uploaded/13835988726861/romaniuk-rethinking\\_eu\\_russian\\_relations.pdf](https://static.cejiss.org/data/uploaded/13835988726861/romaniuk-rethinking_eu_russian_relations.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> Michal Šimečka, "The Future of EU-Russia Relations," The Aspen Institute, *Aspen review Issue #1*, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.aspen.review/article/2017/the-future-of-eu-russia-relations/>.

<sup>36</sup> Gordon H. Mueller, "Rapallo Reexamined: a New Look at Germany's Secret Military Collaboration with Russia in 1922," *JSTOR, Military Affairs* 40#3, 1976.

the EU's ability to grant Russia enough geopolitical buffer to not feel too much threatened by the EU.

So, if economic motivations are the key to cooperation, how then could cooperation benefit the EU as well? To answer this question, this monograph will look at Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic tools to assert national power and influence, which is also known as the DIME model.<sup>37</sup> Consecutively, this monograph will discuss all four aspects from an EU point of view. Within that view, positive as well as negative implications will be addressed in order to be able to make a determination between the pros and cons of cooperation.

## Diplomatic Perspective

In their book *Exit from Hegemony*, Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon state the United States is no longer a global hegemon. They explain that “Even the apex of American hegemonic ordering was not a solo diplomatic effort. It depended on ongoing, negotiated bargains with second-tier great powers and the European Union. As of now, fundamental trends in geopolitics are producing a rebalancing of economic and diplomatic powers.”<sup>38</sup> In his book *After Victory*, John Ikenberry argued the United States' ability to create a lasting and legitimate international order would in no small measure be determined by how American officials use and operate within international institutions.<sup>39</sup> Hegemonic stability theorists argue hegemons create followers and through the followers, regimes and international institutions. They believe the whole order becomes unraveled when followership declines.

In the last four years, the United States has pulled out of the 2016 Paris Agreement, the Iran nuclear deal, the cultural agency UNESCO, the UN Human Rights Council, the Open Skies

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<sup>37</sup> Joint Staff, Joint Doctrine Note 1-18, *Strategy*, (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2018), 23.

<sup>38</sup> Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon, *Exit from Hegemony* (Oxford University Press, New York 2020), 184.

<sup>39</sup> John G. Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major War* (Princeton University Press, 15 December 2000), 20.

Treaty, and the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty with Russia. It has postponed ratifying membership of the International Criminal Court (ICC) indefinitely and has stopped sending US troops to aid in UN Peacekeeping missions altogether. Further, on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 the United States announced its intentions to leave the World Health Organization (WHO) after the Trump administration repeatedly accused the WHO of being too lenient with China's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Arguably, these are all indicators of a hegemonic leader who has lost the will or ability to lead. Larry Gostin, director of the O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at Georgetown University, explains these acts of "America First" policy are often described as a "political gift to China." He believes the United States, by leaving the WHO and other organizations, is creating a leadership vacuum that China will be more than happy to fill..<sup>40</sup> Arguably the same holds true for the other examples of US withdrawal from international agreements. Although this monograph supports the claim of an emerging leadership vacuum, it is not just China stepping up the plate. Concerning the WHO example, for instance, it is not China, but the EU, which would become by far the largest influencer of the WHO with just the German, French and Italian budgets alone..<sup>41</sup> The situation for UNESCO, UNHCR, and even the UN regular budget is no different. The logic of the EU's choice to strive towards this influence links back to the EU's "Global governance for the twenty-first century." This strategy dictates the EU will strive for a strong UN as the bedrock of the multilateral rules-based order and develop globally coordinated responses with international and regional organizations, states, and non-state actors. The EU aims not just to preserve the multilateral system, but to thoroughly reform it, to

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<sup>40</sup> Pien Huang, "Trump Sets Date to End WHO Membership Over Its Handling of Virus," accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/07/07/888186158/trump-sets-date-to-end-who-membership-over-its-handling-of-virus>.

<sup>41</sup> Niall McCarthy, "The Biggest Financial Contributors to the WHO," *Statista*, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.statista.com/chart/21372/assessed-contributions-to-the-world-health-organization/>.

prevent the risk that states that feel underrepresented start creating their own organizations, which would be detrimental to the universally applicable rules of various UN bodies.<sup>42</sup>

Unlike the EU, Russia does not have the diplomatic influence within the established international institutions, apart from their seat at the UN Security Council. Even though it has shown willingness to participate by signing the 2016 Paris Agreement, ratifying the ICC, and holding on to its memberships where the United States did not, the actual willingness of Moscow to adhere to the rules it committed itself to remains questionable. Suspicions of Russia breaking the rules of the former Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces and ongoing Russian stalling of the ICC's investigation into the downing of flight MH17 in 2014 over Ukraine are just two recent examples of how Moscow undermines its credibility within international institutions. As a regional diplomatic force, however, Russia has found a different power vacuum to fill. Poorly reasoned US foreign policy decisions, such as allowing Russia to play a role as peace negotiator in the 2013 US-Syrian conflict involving the illegal use of chemical weapons, and by abandoning Kurdish partners in Syria in 2019 with Russia subsequently stepping in to sign a cease-fire, as well as the assassination of Iranian general Qasem Soleimani in January 2020, all improved Russia's position in Syria and reinforced its security of the Northern Caucasus. Having solidified its strategic partnership with Iran and Syria while simultaneously driving a wedge between the US, EU, and Turkish approach to the Syrian conflict, Moscow also strengthened its position in the broader region. Meanwhile, nine years after the combined US and EU intervention in Libya, Russia and France are now both supporting General Haftar, who is openly defying the UN-recognized government in Tripoli, which in turn is backed by Turkey and the United States. Simultaneously, in Eastern Europe, Moscow proved it can check growing EU influence and expansion eastward by operating outside of established international institutions.

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<sup>42</sup> Sven Biscop, *European strategy*, 189.

So, while the EU is influencing international stability and striving to spread its values through equality and patience by engaging all sorts of governments and institutions, Russia, under Putin, has acted as a revisionist power since at least 2004 (after the so-called Orange Revolution in Ukraine) and particularly since December 2011, when mass protests erupted in Moscow after fraud marred the parliamentary elections. As long as actors are perceived as a threat to Putin's political, military and economic security, the Master of the Kremlin will continue to respond to those threats by turning the authoritarian ratchet even further.<sup>43</sup> With Russia and the EU striving towards creating a more multipolar world, both have thus started working towards carving out their own preferred niches of the global leadership vacuum. In doing so, those who had long been sounding alarm over Putin's revisionism, claim that history has proven them right. But so, do those who had warned that eastward EU expansion would precipitate strategic confrontation with Russia. The Ukrainian conflict all but vindicated and reinforced both groups' prior convictions. The upshot is a reproduction of the false dichotomy that casts Russia as either a mortal threat or as a would-be strategic partner. The EU must move beyond that. Together with Moscow, Brussels should envisage a future of EU-Russia relations where Moscow is neither a partner nor a threat, but where it could potentially be both at the same time. Further, it needs to develop a set of discursive and institutional tools to sustain this dialectical equilibrium.<sup>44</sup> Because for all apparent conflicts, both great powers, fortunately, also share several stability related interests, including the elimination of threats posed by terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and the prevention of regional armed conflict increasing the potential for escalation.

Those who disregard the possibility of cooperation with Russia ought to consider the cases of Iran, Syria, and Eastern Europe. The Iranian nuclear deal still is a significant

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<sup>43</sup> Robert Person, "Balance of Threat: The Domestic Insecurity of Vladimir Putin," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* Volume 8, Issue 1, January 2017.

<sup>44</sup> Michal Šimečka, "The Future."

achievement towards regional and international security, and it would not have been possible without support from the Russians. It was also Moscow who forced Syria to agree to US pressure to destroy its chemical weapons in September of 2013, which led to the actual destruction, performed by a team of US Army civilians and contractors, of over 600 metric tons of chemical agents in forty-two days.<sup>45</sup> Regarding the region's instability under the Islamic State in the years after that destruction operation, those chemical weapons could have posed a significant international security threat today. Ignoring the potential of cooperation with Russia on (frozen) conflicts in Eastern Europe will only serve to weaken the Europeans' own ability to tackle the most pressing challenges it faces towards their goal of spreading values and international institutions. Perhaps one year from today, Europe and Russia can look upon the current developing crisis in Belarus as an example of how cooperation is possible. The current Belarussian revolution is not Anti-Russian, but people are taking to the streets to demand more individual rights. This has led to a unique situation in which, for the moment, Russia seems to allow the democratic protest. Also, the EU appears to have learned from its mistakes in 2014 when EU officials openly encouraged Ukraine to take a more pro-European course. This time, the EU welcomes more rights for Belarussians and the possibility of a more open economy, while at the same time only imposing sanctions on specifically targeted Belarussian government individuals and maintaining a more neutral stance on the political orientation of a possible new regime.<sup>46</sup> This could prove to be a first step in Russian and EU acceptance, that cooperation can lead to not just preserving the current global multilateral system, but to reform it into a system in which EU values can spread while Russian security is guaranteed and in which both Russia and

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<sup>45</sup> Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association, "Cape Ray Completes Destruction of Syrian Chemical Agents," *M.E.B.A. Telex Times*, 21 August 2014.

<sup>46</sup> David Godfroid, "Uitspraken Russische minister lijken opmaat voor ingreep door Moskou in Wit-Rusland," NOS news, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2346647-uitspraken-russische-minister-lijken-opmaat-voor-ingreep-door-moskou-in-wit-rusland.html>.

the EU, as well as the United States and China, are more equal diplomatic powers in a multipolar world.

## Informational Perspective

Within military communities, informational power is often translated as information operations, which include electronic warfare, computer network operations, operations security, military deception, and psychological operations. Informational power is much broader than that, however. Therefore, at the height of the Cold War, with diplomatic agreements impossible, economic sanctions exhausted, and direct military action unthinkable, the US Information Agency was the government's leading instrument to promote and expand US ideology and institutions.<sup>47</sup> Whereas diplomatic power is generally based on mutual engagement between nation-states to secure some form of agreement that allows parties to coexist peacefully, informational power is about creating, exploiting, and disrupting knowledge. A state generally benefits when it enjoys an information advantage over another party. Creating and exploiting that information advantage is key for a state to form a crucial foundational and institutional dimension of power.<sup>48</sup> Informational power is mostly derived from higher education, media, entertainment and film, multinational advertising, influence, and content on the World Wide Web, non-governmental organizations, foundations, tourism, and common language. Unlike military and diplomatic power, however, informational power is not fully controlled, directed, or guided by administrations, national security agencies, or military commands.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Donald M. Bishop, "DIME, not DiME: Time to Align the Instruments of US Informational Power," 20 June 2018, <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2018/6/20/dime-not-dime-time-to-align-the-instruments-of-us-informational-power>.

<sup>48</sup> Joint Staff, Joint Doctrine Note 1-18, *Strategy*, (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2018), 23.

<sup>49</sup> Donald M. Bishop, "DIME".

Since chapter three already clearly described the EU's strategic advantage concerning "softer" areas of foreign policy, it will be no surprise the EU possesses a lot of global informational power. Today, Europeans are the world's leading supporters of international and regional institutions. Their commitment begins with the revolutionary creation of the EU itself and its ring of agreements with regional neighbors. Europe also employs subtler modes of exercising soft power. Europe is one of the two educational superpowers for example. Twenty-seven of the world's top 100 universities are in Europe, compared with fifty in the United States, one in Russia, and none in China. Europe exceeds the United States in educating foreign students, however, hosting almost twice as many students from outside the EU as non-Americans at US universities, and over ten times more foreign students than non-Chinese students studying in China. There are signs that opening up European institutions of higher learning to outsiders has been influential. For example, legal scholars have observed that the values and institutions found in most newly drafted national constitutions do not reflect American or Chinese practices, but distinctively European ones. These include social welfare rights, internationally recognized human rights, parliamentary government, and restrictions on money in politics.<sup>50</sup> Europe enjoys broad global admiration for its social, cultural, and lifestyle values. Europe accounts for 50% of the world's tourist arrivals and is the most visited region in the world, according to UNWTO.<sup>51</sup> Of the ten largest companies by revenue, three are European, compared to three Chinese and two American companies, and six of the ten largest internet hubs in the world are European.<sup>52</sup> In language too, Europeans enjoy enduring advantages, since the world's second languages are mostly European. However, even more profound is European dominance of almost all polls of

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<sup>50</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, "Europe is still a Superpower: And it's going to remain One for Decades to come," *Foreign Policy Magazine*, 13 April 2017, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/04/13/europe-is-still-a-superpower/>.

<sup>51</sup> Nina Siegal, "Europe Searches for Tourism Breathing Space," *US News*, 19 June 2018, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2018-06-19/europe-confronts-the-impact-tourists-leave-on-most-popular-destinations>.

<sup>52</sup> "Global 500," *Fortune*, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://fortune.com/global500/>.



global respect. In 2019, for example, Forbes magazine asked close to 60,000 people worldwide which countries were the most “reputable”: Of the top 20 countries, 15 are European. By contrast, the United States ranks 36<sup>th</sup>, China 45<sup>th</sup> and Russia 51st.<sup>53</sup> With regard to media, the EU cannot compete with the United States though. Every one of the top 20 worldwide grossing films ever made came from Hollywood. Yet sports are a similar form of mass entertainment with comparable global cachet, and Europe is the world’s dominant sports superpower. Five of the top seven most-watched professional sports in the world are played at the most prominent and intensive professional level in Europe rather than in the United States or China. The most prestigious European professional soccer generates more income and enjoys more worldwide visibility than any other sports franchises anywhere. One also sees the breadth of Europe’s dominance of sports at the Olympics. In the Summer Games, Europe takes home more medals than the United States, Russia, and China together; in the Winter Games, Europe has always won more medals than the entire rest of the world combined.<sup>54</sup>

Russia does not have the EU’s global soft power.<sup>55</sup> It does, however, have its former Soviet legacy. This legacy includes a robust space program which is currently the only option for the European Space Agency to send astronauts into space, a significant global export market of nuclear power technology, a (dwindling) socialist ideology which still ties them culturally to former allies and client states, and lastly, the Gerasimov doctrine.<sup>56</sup> In his article in 2013, Gerasimov noted that military engagements at the strategic and operational level are gradually

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<sup>53</sup> Vicky Valet, “The World’s Most Reputable Countries 2019,” *Forbes Magazine*, 15 October 2019, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/vickyvalet/2019/10/15/the-worlds-most-reputable-countries-2019/#2916df2f4cb8>.

<sup>54</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, “Europe Is Still a Superpower.”

<sup>55</sup> “The Soft Power 30,” accessed September 15, 2020, 2020-09-10, <https://softpower30.com/country/russian-federation/>.

<sup>56</sup> Valery Gerasimov, “Tsennost’ nauki i predvidenii, *Voенно-promyshlennyi kur’er*”, No. 8, 27 February 2013, accessed September 15, 2020, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/14632>.

becoming a thing of the past and that long-distance, contactless actions against the enemy were becoming the main means of achieving operational goals. He identified eight features of modern hybrid warfare that were applied to subvert states and to gain control of territory without resorting to conventional arms. Regime change could be achieved by the use of civil methods such as propaganda, funding and training of protest groups, and information campaigns aimed at discrediting the opponent. Gerasimov discounted the element of popular protest against corrupt and authoritarian systems in the Middle East, North Africa, and post-Soviet Eurasia and instead framed these events as part of the radicalized West's regime change strategies. In essence, Gerasimov responded to what was perceived to be new forms of Western "hybrid warfare" to overthrow regimes in Russia's periphery.<sup>57</sup> In the past two decades, however, Russia has become rather effective in aligning its primary source of soft power, social media, and cyber warfare, with its other forms of national power and by doing so, arguably surpassed the West in using "hybrid warfare" to its full effect. Particularly with regard to cyber warfare, Russian intelligence hackers are almost eight times as fast as their speediest competitor, North Korea, who themselves are nearly twice as fast as intrusion groups from China.<sup>58</sup>

The current legal basis for EU-Russia cooperation in many of the "soft power" themes is the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which came into force in 1997. It established a political framework for regular consultation between the EU and Russia, based on the principles of respect for democracy and human rights, political and economic freedom, and commitment to international peace and security.<sup>59</sup> The annexation of the Crimea has presented the EU with a

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<sup>57</sup> Robert Sakwa, "Greater Russia".

<sup>58</sup> Ken Dilanian, "Russian Hackers 8 Times Faster than Chinese, Iranians, North Koreans, Says Report," NBC News, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/russian-hackers-8-times-faster-chinese-iranians-north-koreans-says-n972926>.

<sup>59</sup> "The European Union and the Russian Federation," European External Action Service, accessed September 15, 2020, [https://www.google.com/search?q=eeas+eu&rlz=1C1GCEB\\_enUS857US857&oq=eeas+&aqs=chrome.2.69i57j0l4j69i60j69i65j69i60.3600j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=eeas+eu&rlz=1C1GCEB_enUS857US857&oq=eeas+&aqs=chrome.2.69i57j0l4j69i60j69i65j69i60.3600j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8).

dilemma regarding the PCA, however. The EU's 2016 Grand Strategy states: "We will not recognize Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea nor accept the destabilization of eastern Ukraine. We will strengthen the EU, enhance the resilience of our eastern neighbors, and uphold their right to determine their approach towards the EU freely. At the same time, the EU and Russia are interdependent. We will therefore engage Russia to discuss disagreements and cooperate if and when our interests overlap. Selective engagement could take place over matters of European interest too, including climate, the Arctic, maritime security, education, research, and cross-border cooperation. Engagement should also include deeper societal ties through facilitated travel for students, civil society, and businesses."<sup>60</sup>

Within this strategy and given the long common land and sea borders, and interconnected biosystems and shared risks, environmental problems can and should be addressed together. Besides presenting a huge bilateral success, joint EU-Russian action, as the only two major powers having signed the 2016 Paris Agreement, could also both help achieve the EU's global environmental ambitions by influencing other great powers, as well as help Russia get out of its diplomatic isolation. Likewise, the continuation of the European Higher Education Area, which allows individuals from the EU and Russia to move freely between higher education institutions, contribute to the reinforcement of people-to-people contact between Russia and the European Union. This, in turn, helps spread EU values but also reinforces EU-Russian technology exchange. In that exchange, Russia has traditionally been one of the most successful international cooperation partner countries. EU researchers, for their part, actively participate in Russia's research and development programs.<sup>61</sup> This is of particular importance for space exploration,

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<sup>60</sup> European Union, "A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy," June 2016, accessed September 15, 2020, [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eugs\\_review\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf).

<sup>61</sup> "The European Union and the Russian Federation," European External Action Service, accessed September 15, 2020, 2020-09-10, [https://www.google.com/search?q=eeas+eu&rlz=1C1GCEB\\_enUS857US857&oq=eeas+&aqs=chrome.2.69i57j0l4j69i60j69i65j69i60.3600j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=eeas+eu&rlz=1C1GCEB_enUS857US857&oq=eeas+&aqs=chrome.2.69i57j0l4j69i60j69i65j69i60.3600j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8).

arctic exploration, and nuclear technology. With regard to space, Moscow and Brussels are falling behind China and the United States in the new great power race to Mars. Within the arctic, EU and Russian borders combined account for over 75% of the Arctic Ocean coastline. And lastly, several EU Member States operate nuclear reactors of Russian design with construction of more reactors planned. Besides the importance of Russia as a nuclear supplier to the EU and nuclear power being necessary to achieve EU environmental goals, nuclear safety, non-proliferation and arctic cooperation are also important aspects of a bilateral relation and would help improve Russia's global image.<sup>62</sup> Lastly, with the current World Anti-Doping Agency (of which the EU pays 50% of its funding, compared to the US 30% and China's 20%) ban,<sup>63</sup> preventing Russian athletes to compete under their flag for the next four years, ongoing Russian participation in European sports events like the UEFA Champions League and the Euro 2020 are possibly Russia's only option to leverage its soft power through sports.

In a more military area of informational power, cooperation in the cyber domain poses an interesting question. With Russia and China undoubtedly undertaking massive cyber espionage activities, and not so long ago, the United States being accused of spying on its European allies on a broad scale, the world may gradually be drifting towards the Hobbesian condition of "war of everyone against everyone" in cyberspace.<sup>64</sup> Despite an official "non-aggression pact" between Russia and China, reporting from the Russian cybersecurity firm Kaspersky Lab saw Chinese hacking cases of Russian industries nearly triple from 2015 to 2016. The long-term issue for Moscow is the technological asymmetry with China, especially in commercial information and

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<sup>62</sup> Yves Desbazeille, "Why the EU Needs Nuclear," *Nuclear Engineering International*, 26 March 2020, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.neimagazine.com/features/featurewhy-the-eu-needs-nuclear-7839253/>.

<sup>63</sup> "Funding by Governments," accessed September 15, 2020, 2020-09-10, <https://www.wada-ama.org/en/funding-by-governments>.

<sup>64</sup> The 21st Century Concert Study Group, "A Twenty-First Century Concert of Powers: Promoting Great Power Multilateralism for the Post-Transatlantic Era," Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) 2014, 21.

communication technologies. There are no Russian companies with the global reach of the big Chinese firms, and these firms will help shape global technology developments and provide intelligence benefits to Beijing, not Moscow.<sup>65</sup> Contrarily, the EU does have the global corporate reach and is the second most central power in the internet with a 25% network ownership, compared to the United States' 39%, China's 10% and Russia's 2%.<sup>66</sup> The EU lacks the coherent government strategy concerning using that power, however. So arguably, in the same way the United States agreed with China to cooperate on cyber-crime in 2015, which at the time was seen as a victory for cyber diplomacy, a similar arrangement could be established between Brussels and Moscow. And there are some precedents. Russia has cooperated with the EU on issues related to the use of the internet by terrorist organizations and even with Europol within the field of cyber-crime.<sup>67</sup> Further cooperation in this field could benefit EU-Russian cybersecurity with regard to specifically Chinese and criminal cyber activities significantly.

## Economic Perspective

The EU is the main trading partner for Russia, representing €253.6 billion in 2018, which is 42.8% of Russia's trade, almost tripling the 2<sup>nd</sup> biggest Russian trade partner China representing €93.2. Due to sanctions after the Ukrainian crisis, Russia is currently only the 4th largest trading partner of the EU, representing 6.4% of overall EU trade. Russia is also the 4th export destination of EU goods (€85.3 billion in 2018) and the 3rd largest source of goods imports (€168.3 billion in 2018). Imports from Russia to the EU are driven by the growth of

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<sup>65</sup> Adam Segal, "Peering into the Future of Sino-Russian Cyber Security Cooperation," *War on the Rocks*, 10 August 2020, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/08/peering-into-the-future-of-sino-russian-cyber-security-cooperation/>.

<sup>66</sup> Jeanette B. Ruiz and George A. Barnett, "Who Owns the International Internet Networks?" *The Journal of International Communication* 21, no. 1 (2015): 38-57.

<sup>67</sup> André Barrinha, "Virtual Neighbors: Russia and the EU in Cyberspace," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2018, 29-42.

imports of energy products from Russia that account for c.a. 70% of the total imports. The EU is by far the largest investor in Russia. According to the Central Bank of Russia, the total stock of foreign direct investment in Russia originating from the EU approached €235.2 billion in 2018.<sup>68</sup> To summarize, Russia depends almost solely on the EU for maintaining its economy and modernizing it through EU investments, technology and know-how. In turn, Russia, with 35% of the market, is Brussels's main supplier of energy to keep the EU economy functioning.

It is the apparent EU dependency on Russian energy that frequently dominates public discussion. This is partly due to Eastern EU member states, who often appear scared Russia will turn off the tap, as it did briefly with Ukraine and Belarus. Another part can be attributed to US policy arguably trying to protect its economic interests by threatening European companies with sanctions when working together with Russia.<sup>69</sup> In reality, the situation for EU is not as dire as often suggested. Figure 2 shows EU member state dependence on Russian energy. In the top five EU member states, ranked per GDP, only Germany relies on Russian energy for more than 20%. So, with the EU being Moscow's largest investor and making up for almost half of Russia's trade (70% even for solely the Russian energy market), as well as with the heart of the EU economy not even 20% dependent on Russian energy, the EU has incredible leverage in a potential economic conflict.

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<sup>68</sup> "The European Union and the Russian Federation," European External Action Service, accessed September 15, 2020, [https://www.google.com/search?q=eeas+eu&rlz=1C1GCEB\\_enUS857US857&oq=eeas+&aqs=chrome.2.69i57j0l4j69i60j69i65j69i60.3600j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=eeas+eu&rlz=1C1GCEB_enUS857US857&oq=eeas+&aqs=chrome.2.69i57j0l4j69i60j69i65j69i60.3600j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8).

<sup>69</sup> Matthew Lee, "US Warns Firms about Sanctions for Work on Russian Pipelines." *The Washington Post*, 15 July 2020.

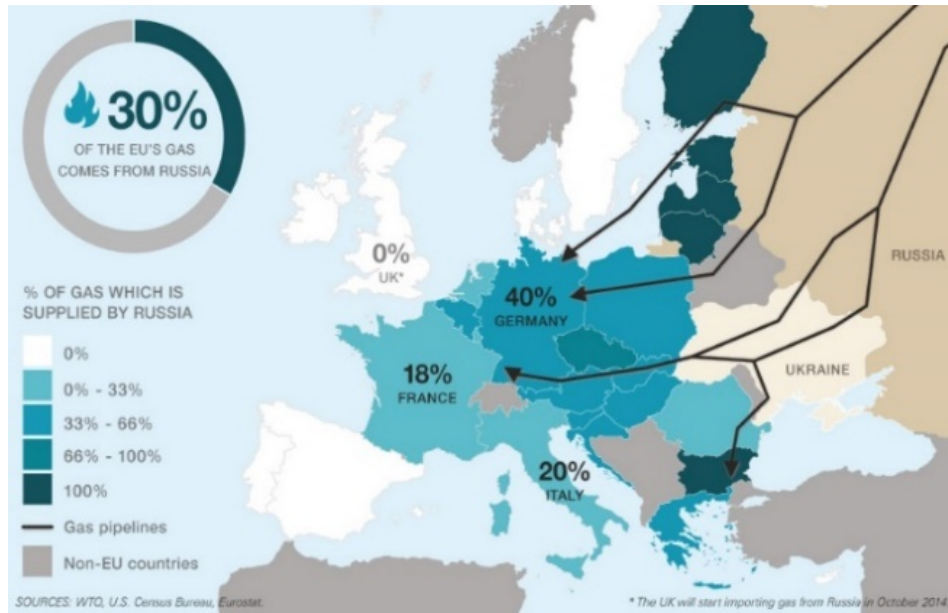


Figure 1. EU-Russian Energy Dependence. Kottasova, I., “Map: Europe's Thirst for Russian Gas,” CNN, July 22, 2014, accessed September 15, 2020, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/07/22/business/russian-gas-eu-sanctions/index.html>

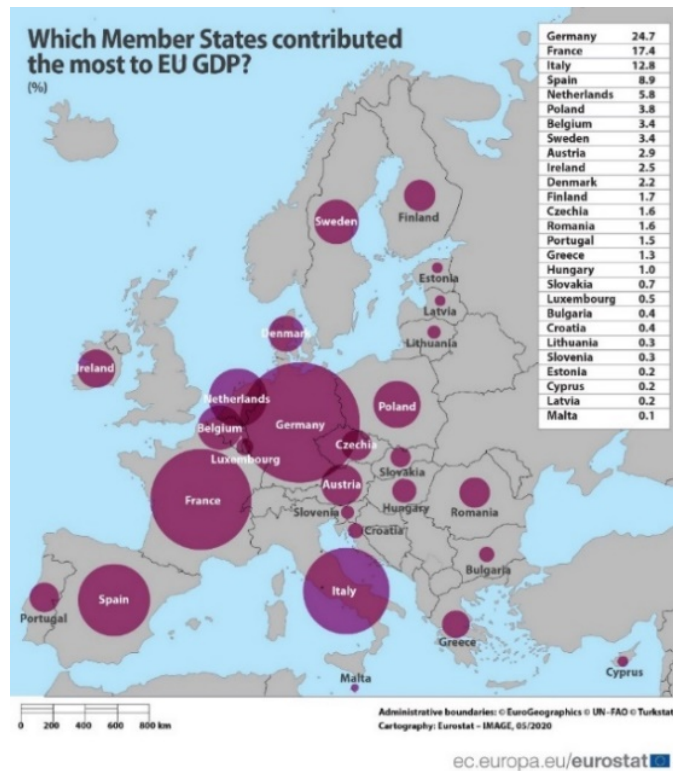


Figure 2. EU Member States per GDP. Eurostat, “Which EU Countries Had the Highest GDP in 2019?” May 8, 2019, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20200508-1>.

With the knowledge Moscow and Berlin are mutually dependent, this monograph will explain the possibilities for future cooperation to enhance both great power's economies. For Russia to profit from cooperation, it is dependent on EU investments to diversify its economy away from resource extraction and continued energy demand. The EU, in turn, needs Russian oil and gas, and regional stability to continue to expand its trade infrastructure to remain competitive with the other two major economies: China and the United States. Therefore, assuming Moscow and Brussels can overcome their differences regarding Ukraine, combined with the cooperation possibilities mentioned in the informational power paragraph, three major economic projects stand out: Facilitated travel, the Arctic region, and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Considering the EU has a total of 447 million inhabitants (650 million including non-EU members) with an annual growth of approximately 0.2%, and the Russian population totals 147 million while suffering from a roughly 0.5% annual decline, Russia will be heavily dependent on Eastern European migrant workers to support any kind of future economic growth.<sup>70</sup> Facilitated travel for businesses will be key to provide Russia with a future labor force, but it will also allow for less fraudulent options for EU companies to invest in the Russian energy industry, both increasing and diversifying Russia's economy. Simultaneously, facilitated travel will also allow for the exchange of nuclear technology to diversify the EU energy supply as well as making it more environmentally sustainable.

While the eyes of the world are on the US-China trade war, Asia and Europe have been working to deepen their relationship. Sustainable connectivity has become a focal point of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), a high-level intergovernmental cooperation forum between 30 European and 21 Asian countries. Asia and Europe have become the world's leading trade partners with \$1.5 trillion of annual merchandise trade, overtaking each continent's trade with the

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<sup>70</sup> International Labor Organization. "Russia needs Migrant Workers to Support Economic Growth," 20 July 2006, accessed September 15, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_071244/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_071244/lang--en/index.htm).



United States, and accounting for about half of all world merchandise trade.<sup>71</sup> The majority of that trade has to go through the Southern Sea Route (SSR), which passes through the contested South Chinese Sea and connects a number of geopolitically sensitive chokepoints – from the Strait of Gibraltar, the Suez Canal, to Bab-el-Mandab and the Malacca Strait – all of which have traditionally been closely aligned with US interests. Due to climate change, the Northern Sea Route (NSR), an Arctic shipping route along the Russia's exclusive economic zone connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, is expected to be fully operational as a shipping route by 2030 and is likely to be ice-free throughout the year by that year, according to the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis.<sup>72</sup> An operational NSR would reduce the total shipping EU-Asian distance by almost a third and could reduce the geopolitical importance of the SSR, giving a significant boost to the EU (and Asian) economy. Until large investments are made, however, such as a potential deep-water port at Arkhangelsk, including supporting railways, ice-hardened liquefied natural gas container ships, and state-of-the-art icebreakers, few ships can make the journey. Keen on profiting from the NSR, Russia has already built forty of such Arctic capable vessels (more than the rest of the world combined). Still, it will need EU investments to complete its necessary Arctic infrastructure before 2030.

Even though the NSR is technically part of the Belt and Road Initiative, the focal point of the BRI addresses an "infrastructure gap" to accelerate economic growth across the Asia Pacific area, and Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>73</sup> China, Russia, and the EU have a common interest in advancing connectivity along the transport corridor between China and Europe that passes

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<sup>71</sup> Ana Neves, William Becker, and Marcos Dominguez-Torreiro, "Explained, the Economic Ties between Europe and Asia," World Economic Forum, 14 May 2019.

<sup>72</sup> Ties Dams, Louise van Schaik, and Adaja Stoetman, "Presence before Power: Why China Became a Near-Arctic State," Clingendael Institute, 2020, 6–19.

<sup>73</sup> Svante Cornell and Nikolas Swanström, "Compatible Interests? The EU and China's Belt and Road Initiative", *Institute for Security and Development Policy*, February 2020, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://isdpeu/publication/compatible-interests-the-eu-and-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative/>.

through Russia, and which is part of the Silk Road Economic Belt of the BRI.<sup>74</sup> This land corridor is known as the New Eurasian Land Bridge and passes through Central Asia. The EU and Russia share an interest in finding synergies with the BRI as a way to balance China's fast-growing clout in Eurasia and maintaining a security situation supporting EU and Russian interests. This is now very tentatively pushing both actors towards each other when it comes to Central Asia and is opening up possibilities for cooperation on connectivity and security.

## Military Perspective

Throughout the diplomatic, informational, and economic perspective, this monograph has discussed some possibilities for military cooperation, such as within conflict areas around Russia's periphery, the cyber domain, and security of the Arctic and the New Eurasian Land Bridge. So, how does this translate into actual military cooperation? To support these strategic goals, military cooperation should focus on preferably resolving, but at least stabilizing (frozen) conflicts, expanding cyberspace security cooperation and protecting shared EU-Russian Lines of Communication (LOC) between the EU and Asia from regional instability and terrorism.

Cooperation in frozen conflicts might seem to have a slim chance of succeeding since most of them derive from opposing interests between Moscow and Brussels. However, as discussed in the diplomatic perspective it is possible as long as the EU is willing to have patience, and the Russian oligarchy can "sell" it as a victory over the West to the Russian people. For physical military cooperation, however, the cooperation between Russia and NATO in the Balkans might serve as an example. For close to ten years, Russian and NATO soldiers worked together in NATO-led peacekeeping operations in the Balkans, initially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and later in Kosovo as well. Relations and mutual understanding between Russian

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<sup>74</sup> Fabienne Bossuyt, "Connecting Eurasia: Is Cooperation between Russia, China, and the EU in Central Asia Possible?" *Russian International Affairs Council*, 30 May 2019, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/connecting-eurasia-is-cooperation-between-russia-china-and-the-eu-in-central-asia-possible/>.

and NATO troops on the ground continued to improve. Moreover, as a result of linguistic, cultural, and religious affinities, Russian peacekeepers brought an additional dimension to both SFOR and KFOR. It was not until the 1999 Kosovo Air Campaign, Moscow froze all NATO-Russia military and political cooperation, including the NATO-Russian Permanent Joint Council, and withdrew its peacekeepers in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the NATO command structure and expelled the NATO information office. For Russia, NATO violated the UN Charter and therefore acted illegally when it launched coercive military action against a sovereign state (Serbia) in the absence of a specific mandate from the UN Security Council. In hindsight, this was arguably an instance in which the West acted on democratic principles rather than rule-based values and failed to have patience toward the (inevitable) democratization process in the Balkans.

Regarding expanding cyberspace security cooperation and protecting shared EU-Russian Lines of Communication, the current EU Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) offers promising possibilities for future cooperation. With the America First doctrine evoked, the European Union found itself forced to become more flexible and independent of the United States in December 2017 and, at the same time, become more capable of acting in a security policy environment that is becoming ever more acute. Thus, PESCO was initiated in 2017 and became part of the EU security and defense policy in which twenty-five of the twenty-seven national armed forces pursue structural integration. Not being held back by the current poor relationship between NATO and Russia, PESCO is not only an EU military efficiency improvement but also seems an attractive alternative for EU-Russian military cooperation. In April of 2020, the Russian ambassador to the European Union, Vladimir Chizhov, showed his country was open to participating and playing its role in PESCO projects, by stating: “it would be conceivable to work with the European Union on cyber defense or in the logistics area. In addition, Russian troops and analysts could support European Union operations in third countries with their expertise.” Chizhov furthermore pointed out that Russia had already provided helicopters for an EU mission in Chad in 2008 and was also cooperating in the EU mission to combat pirates in the Horn of

Africa.<sup>75</sup> The possibility that the EU is inclined to include Russia in European intelligence operations is unlikely at the moment. However, Russian support in cyber defense, logistics and intelligence would be precisely what the EU needs to secure a future Arctic NSR, to provide stability in countries along the New Eurasian Land Bridge, and simultaneously have a positive impact on countering terrorism, while decreasing the inflow of refugees from the Middle East and Central Asia to the EU.

## 5. Conclusion

The world is returning to great power competition. Contrary to what many believe to be a power struggle between the United States and China, the EU regards the world as multipolar instead of bipolar, however, and it prefers to stay clear of power competition while playing to a balance of power. This is done out of the belief that bipolar great power competition will lead to fixed coalitions, which fueled by nationalism instead of cooperation, might eventually lead to armed conflict. In Europe, therefore, a remarkable trend was set in motion following World War II with the express intent of permanently banishing war from the European continent and of nurturing a culture of peace and solidarity. As a more self-reliant, values-based entity with an ethical foreign policy, Europe has become a safe partner for those countries beset by the more uncompromising US principles, Russian rhetoric, or Chinese lack of openness. Realizing this advantage, the EU is influencing international stability through engaging all sorts of governments and institutions, while spreading its values through equality and patience and by motivating other great powers to become more willing to compromise as well.

Simultaneously, acknowledging Russian dependence on European trade, investments and its power as an established great power at the UNSC, Moscow has avoided open confrontation

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<sup>75</sup> Thomas O. Falk, “Russia Offers European Union Defense Cooperation”, *InsideOver*, 23 April 2020, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.insideover.com/politics/russia-offers-european-union-defense-cooperation.html>.

with the West, and placed itself in the political and geographical position of a possible mediator of different civilizations as a bridge between the West and the rest of the world. This has given Russia the option of aiming for a global multipolar power strategy as an independent center of power, doing its best to establish equally distant or equally close relations with other centers of power. The combination of these two indicates the desire for geostrategic pluralism without jeopardizing the existing structures of the international system. For Russia today, this seems to be the way out of their current perceived geopolitical impasse.

With both great powers striving towards a multipolar world based on the current international system's structure, numerous Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic (DIME) cooperation opportunities to assert national power and influence become apparent. In the diplomatic perspective, the EU strives to not just preserve the current global multilateral system, but to reform it into a system in which EU values can spread and in which both Russia and the EU, as well as the United States and China, are more equal diplomatic powers in a multipolar world. The EU will, however, need to accept that in doing so, Russian needs to feel its security is guaranteed will have to become part of EU foreign policy.

Cooperation in the informational perspective has the potential to help achieve the EU's global value-based ambitions regarding the environment, human rights, and social development by influencing other great powers, as well as help Russia get out of its diplomatic isolation. Bilateral successes such as joint EU-Russian action, stemming from the 2016 Paris Agreement, Cooperation in Arctic and nuclear research, cybersecurity, and use of sports as a global influencer, all benefit EU and Russian goals. The question is how and when popular support in the EU and Russia will allow it.

The economy is arguably the most viable option to gain that support. Moscow and Brussels might overcome their differences through the need for economic growth to remain competitive with China and the United States, much like the 1922 treaty of Rapallo between the German Republic and Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, just four years after the end

of WWI. Three major cooperation projects to maintain competitiveness stand out: Facilitated EU-Russian travel for students, scientists, and businesses, and lifting current EU sanctions and Russian restrictions on combined investments in infrastructural improvements in the Arctic region to facilitate a future Northern Sea Route, as well as in Russian owned (and influenced) parts of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

From a military perspective, Moscow has expressed its willingness to aid the EU PESCO initiative in cyber defense and logistical support and intelligence support. This would greatly benefit a secure future Arctic NSR, and stability in countries along the New Eurasian Land Bridge, as well as positively impact countering terrorism and diminish the number of refugees migrating from the Middle East and Central Asia to the EU. However, including Russia in EU intelligence operations would require a substantial amount of trust from the EU and might damage EU relations with other security partners such as NATO, and the United States in particular.

Summarized, there is a lot of economy driven potential for EU-Russian cooperation, to foster EU ambitions to reform the current structure of the international system towards a multipolar world, while spreading its values through equality and patience, and by acting as the intermediate great power motivating other great powers to become more willing to compromise. The EU will have to make a tradeoff, however, between the benefits of this cooperation towards securing the EU's place in a return to great power competition and the possible political damage with regard to the legitimacy of that cooperation domestically, and towards its closest ally: The United States.

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