

**EU FOREIGN POLICY AND THE NATIONAL
PRIORITIES OF THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN
EUROPEAN MEMBER STATES: SELECTED
SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS**

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ABSTRACT: The author of the paper submits that EU foreign policy disputes can be attributed to the fact that Central and Eastern Europe was admitted into the European Union as a less developed part of Europe. As a result, particularly the Franco-German axis intended to run EU foreign policy in accordance with the rule “the West knows best”. This approach is based on the assumption that the new EU member states should be socialized into Western, superior values. EU foreign-policy problems were created mostly by the Franco-German axis when these two countries decided to support a multi-polar world trying to counter American dominance and forging close ties with the Russian Federation. This approach to EU foreign policy was not acceptable to the new member states for political, economic, military and historical reasons. In the context of the current economic and financial crisis, the new member states’ foreign-policy choices have been vindicated as it turned out that the European Union cannot distance itself from the United States due to its economic weakness and the organization was not able to change Russia by way of the policy of “Wandel durch Annäherung”.

KEYWORDS: EU foreign policy, Central and Eastern European EU member states, EU-Russia relations, the Transatlantic Alliance, EU energy security.

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INTRODUCTION

The European Union has been able to act in unison with reference to numerous conflicts in different corners of the world (e.g. the Darfur conflict) (Smith 2009: 241–250). However, many key foreign-policy issues the organization faces remain unresolved. These issues include relations with Russia and the United States, EU eastern enlargement, or Turkey's EU membership (MacShane 2010: 3). Diverging national interests were especially visible in the case of war in the former Yugoslavia (Ginsberg 2000: 83–85). The problem connected with the lack of unity had been aggravated since the Central and Eastern European states had been admitted into the organization, e.g. the Iraq war and the Russian aggression against Georgia. The disagreements over the directions of EU foreign policy were frequently so strong that some analysts talk about a state of disunion in this field. Others claim that the European Union is “frustrated by its own relative impotence” (Dinan 2005: 610). C. Gegout (2010: 3) writes that “No decisions, or Lowest Common Denominator (LCD) decisions, are the most likely outcomes of policy discussions, and this limits the impact of CFSP on the world”¹. As a result, the European Union is supposedly increasingly ignored by other world powers². The question arises, then, as to the real culprits and reasons for the lack of unity within the European Union with respect to foreign policy/Common Foreign and Security Policy³. The aim of the paper is to analyze the key EU foreign-policy issues from the point of view of the Central and Eastern European member states. The analysis includes cultural determinants of EU foreign policy.

¹ In fact, experts disagree over the efficiency of EU foreign policy (Smith 2009: 1–2). European academics tend to praise the policy as it is based on ‘soft power’ and the promotion of human rights and democracy. In consequence, the European Union is posed to lead the 21st century. Numerous American experts, in turn, are vocal critics of EU foreign policy which is presumably inefficient or even appeasing and short lived (Kagan 2003: 24–27).

² The opinion of J. Fischer, former German foreign minister, as cited by (Smith 2009: 2).

³ EU foreign policy is carried out mainly within the legal framework created by Common Foreign and Security Policy which was enacted by the Treaty of Maastricht. However, EU foreign policy also includes European Security and Defense Policy. According to Keukeleire and MacNaughtan (2008: 1–3) the term EU foreign policy should encompass such issues as trade, human rights, democracy or development policy.

DETERMINANTS OF EU FOREIGN POLICY DISPUTES

EU foreign policy disputes are determined by several factors. From the point of view of the new EU member states a state of disunion with regard to EU foreign policy can be ascribed to the three following factors, in particular:

1. Remnants of Western Eurocentrism.
2. Different historical perspectives of the old and new EU member states.
3. Structure of world capitalism.

As far as the problem of Western Eurocentrism is concerned, the Western European EU member states were convinced in the 1990s that the achievements of Western civilization should serve as a model for the candidate states from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Therefore, the richest EU member states regarded themselves as entitled to set standards for the candidate states in accordance with the rule that “the West knows best”. In consequence, CEE was to be Europeanized, or socialized into Western superior values. This attitude persists even today also at the elite level and can be explained as the remnants of Western Eurocentrism (Böröcz 2001: 4–50). Such construction of relations between the old and new Europe is explained by E. Balibar (2009: 169) when he writes that “What has thus been created is a system of concentric circles: the first posed as the “true” Europe in opposition to the “outer Europe” that is still asking to be Europeanized”. Images of countries are powerful in modern international relations as they influence power and hierarchy by ascribing identity to nations. Images of nations can be actively constructed or imposed on weaker nations. In this manner hierarchies of prestige are created (Taras 2013: 1–2). Even today the new member states are regarded as junior partners who should follow the advice of the biggest EU member states (it refers to the Franco-German axis in particular)⁴. As a result, whenever the junior partners intend to express their own opinion and follow their own path against the will of the biggest EU member states, they are labeled as countries hampering EU integration for they presumably do not understand EU values (it was particularly visible during the conflict over the Iraq war). The candidate states supported the invasion of Iraq and the Franco-German axis opposed it. As a result, French president J. Chirac was furious and said that the candidate states “missed a good opportunity to shut up” (as cited by McNicoll 2008: 52–53) and that “these countries have been badly brought up”. Particularly

⁴ The Franco-German tandem is the driving force of European integration (Hendriks and Morgan 2001: 4–14).

Poland was bashed for what happened and was even labeled as American Trojan horse in the European Union⁵.

Different historical perspectives create additional problems. Namely, as far as the Second World War is concerned, the West is particularly preoccupied with Nazism and it tends to gloss over Soviet transgressions. For instance, Poles regard themselves as victims of two totalitarian systems during the Second World War (Nazism and Soviet communism). The Baltic States were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 and as a result, they cooperated with Nazi Germany during the war (it applies to Estonians in particular). The restoration of Soviet rule after the war is regarded by these countries as alien rule. In such circumstances, it comes as no surprise that particularly the Baltic states and Poland view today's Russia with suspicion. One can even say that these countries still wage a war against Russia with regard to historical remembrance running their own historical policies. They question the Russian narrative according to which defeating Nazi Germany the Soviet Union liberated European nations (liberation from German occupation was followed by Soviet domination)⁶. Historical remembrance is an important part of the national culture and identity determining to some extent foreign policy choices. Western European elites hold a favored view of Russia and a rather negative view of America as Western Europe had different historical experiences. Anti-American sentiment provide Western European elites with a common identity. The sentiment was used to construct a unified European Union which would be able to counter American dominance during the presidency of G. W. Bush and become one of the major poles of global influence (Markovits 2007: 8–10).

As regards to world capitalism, in the 1990s the underlying opinion was that *laissez-faire* capitalism was the best form of capitalism. The Central and Eastern European states were admitted into the European Union within this economic framework. The problem was that these countries were not prepared in the 1990s to suddenly introduce free market capitalism as they were not competitive.

⁵ Another problem was the fact that Poland bought American fighters instead of European ones which was regarded as anti-European behavior. Poland supposedly acted against European unity (Kerski 2003: 11).

⁶ From legal point of view there was no Soviet rule in Poland following the Second World War. The Baltic states, however, resumed diplomatic relations with Western powers in order to demonstrate that from the point of view of international law they existed as states between 1940 and 1991. Therefore, there was no secession from the Soviet Union and Soviet rule should be regarded as a case of illegal occupation (Czubochka 2012: 31–32).

Neoliberal capitalism was imposed on them which led to a severe economic downturn (they lost on average 25 per cent of their GDP and only some of them regained their economic output from the 1980s in 2000 (Heyns 2005: 163–180). Currently, their economies are vibrant but they are still underdeveloped in comparison with the most advanced EU economies. As a result, the new member states are dependent on EU structural funds to a substantial degree. On the other hand, nearly 25 years after the fall of the Soviet Union the new member states are still dependent on Russian oil and gas supplies. The lack of economic independence limits the possibilities of running an independent foreign policy by the new member states. Western European Eurocentrism is also based on economic power as powerful nations are able to impose their values on weaker nations e.g. by way of the media. Therefore, the economic determinants of EU foreign policy are connected with culture as economic power makes it possible to label weaker nations.

DISAGREEMENTS OVER THE DIRECTIONS OF EU FOREIGN POLICY AND THE FUTURE OF THE EURO-ATLANTIC ALLIANCE

According to official EU documents the political power of the organization should commensurate with its economic power meaning that the European Union should become one of the most important poles of global influence. The problem is that EU member states have diverging political and economic interests.

Particularly during the presidency of George W. Bush France and Germany decided to distance themselves from the United States and cooperate with Russia. The policy was to lead to the creation of a multi-polar world. The transatlantic alliance was to be weakened. In consequence, the European Union would do nothing that might look provocative to Russia. The policy was devised mainly by France and Germany failing to reflect the views of all EU member states (Żurawski 2008: 327–328).

This sort of policy is anathema to the Central and Eastern European member states. The alliance with the United States is regarded by these countries as a bulwark of their independence and they pursue their own Atlanticist objectives (Leonard 2008: 19) treating Russia as the most important threat to their national security both in economic and political terms. Poland supports the Ukrainian accession to the European Union to weaken Russia and create a buffer

zone between Russia and the Polish eastern border. The accession of Ukraine is important as without Ukraine Russia cannot become one of the great powers (Tiersky 2010: 4–5). According to a popular opinion in Poland, there can be no free Poland without an independent Ukraine. France and Germany oppose the Ukrainian accession as they respect Russia's security concerns (Giusti and Penkova 2010: 134–140). The European Union implicitly accepts Russia's special role within the Community of Independent States and thus, rejected the idea that Ukraine could be granted EU membership (Govan 2000: 406–409). There is a fundamental rift between the Central and Eastern European member states and the Franco-German axis with reference to EU relations with Russia and more broadly the eastern dimension of EU foreign policy. In this context the new member states are accused of Russophobia which presumably jeopardized EU-Russia relations. Countering the policy of the Franco-German axis with reference to Russia resulted in sidelining and isolation of recalcitrant politicians from the new member states at the EU level.

Anti-American sentiment characteristic of some sections of Western European elites is shared by Russia which resents the United States as the only superpower. The partnership with the European Union was to weaken the influence of the United States in Europe. The most important goals of Russia's foreign policy are as follows: weakening of the transatlantic alliance, marginalizing NATO and acquiring the right of veto with reference to European security. The above mentioned goals were part of a new Russian plan concerning collective security in Europe. The plan was presented in 2008 by president Medvedev. Tellingly the plan was directed at France and Germany which hold a rather favorable opinion of Russia (Krzymowski 2009: 23–32). On numerous occasions during the presidency of V. Putin Russia tried to sideline the new member states during official state visits and summits talking to the Western powers only and in general favoring interstate diplomacy (Piccardo 2010: 124).

Hence, in spite of integration with the European Union, the Central and Eastern European member states still feel insecure. As a consequence, the new EU member states supported the United States during the Iraq War as opposed to France and Germany. The new EU member states would like the European Union to adopt a firm policy toward Russia (Piccardo 2010: 125). With this respect, however, there is a disagreement over EU capabilities to influence Russia. According to the new EU member states in terms of military force the organization outspends Russia and the EU economy is around eight times larger than the Russian one (World Bank Gross Domestic Product 2012). Russia is economically

weak and it needs Western cooperation in order to overcome the effects of the global economic crisis and modernize its economy. There is no reason to be afraid that Russia can turn off the tap (Czubocho 2009: 96–98). The problem is that according to Western European political elites there is nothing the European Union can do to change Russia's policy as the organization imports about 25 per cent of its gas and oil from Russia (the new member states from Central and Eastern Europe import about 60 per cent of their gas and oil from Russia) (Zięba 2007: 164–165). Neither economic nor military sanctions would be effective in this situation. In other words, the European Union has no leverage over Russia. As a result, the more the new member states opposed the policy of a strategic partnership with Russia the more isolated they became within the organization. In such circumstances, EU unity with respect to the relations of the organization with Russia and the United States cannot be achieved. Europe's national leaders often put their own domestic agenda before the interests of the European Union. They often treat EU foreign policy as an extension of their own national foreign policies (Pietraś 2006: 562–563).

In the case of Georgia, the European Union wanted to demonstrate unity at any cost. The organization supposedly spoke with one voice which was regarded as a great success by EU elites. There are opinions that the Georgia war united the organization after years of divisions created by George W. Bush⁷. Such opinions are erroneous, for the Georgia war even increased the anxiety of the Central and Eastern European member states (Piccardo 2010: 127). In Western Europe the war is referred to as an incursion whereas in Eastern Europe it is called an aggression. Poland and the Baltic states view the Georgia affair as a failure of the European Union for Russia was not punished for its behavior. Russian troops still remain on Georgian territory and Russia did not agree to replace its "peacekeeping" troops with international ones. President N. Sarkozy told in Moscow that Russia had the right to protect Russian speaking populations (Kranz 2008: 45–62). He did not know or did not want to know that the inhabitants of Georgian breakaway regions were being issued with Russian passports to create an impression that they were Russian populations. Before the beginning of the secessionist wars in 1990^s the inhabitants of both breakaway regions were not regarded as Russians. Moreover, nearly all Georgians were expelled from the regions in the 1990s. The success of both separatist movements was possible as

⁷ Some analysts claim that skillful French diplomacy prevented even stronger military sanctions against Georgia.

a result of Russian assistance. The expulsion of Georgians amounts to ethnic cleansing and its purpose was to perpetuate Russian aggression. The expelled Georgians are forbidden to come back to their homes⁸. By not raising the issue during talks with Russia, the European Union gave consent to ethnic cleansing. The Baltic states fear that the next step would be the dismemberment of Ukraine. The Baltic states feel they are especially in danger as they have large Russian populations (Piccardo 2010: 124)⁹ and the official reason for Russia's aggression against Georgia was the protection of Russian speaking populations.

Moreover, former German chancellor, G. Schröder, represented Russian interests trying to limit the damage done to Russia as a result of the Russian invasion of Georgia (Czubochka 2009: 97). O. Matthews and S. Theil (2009: 46) claim that Schröder "turned Kremlin lobbyist" promoting the Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis. Nevertheless, after several confrontations with its neighbours (gas wars and the Georgia war in particular) Russia's image was dented and the proponents of close ties with Russia lost their power to some degree. It turned out that it is difficult to put into practice the policy of "Wandel durch Annäherung" (Ananicz 2009: 13–14).

In such circumstances arming the Central and Eastern European member states is of great importance to them. Russia strongly opposes any attempts at strengthening the military capabilities of these countries. Unfortunately, the European Union shares the opinion. French and German political elites do everything to avoid angering Russia showing understanding for Russia's security concerns. The new EU member states envisaged upgrading their military capabilities, but they were discouraged from doing that. The new EU member states are militarily defenseless in the event of Russia's aggression and defense guarantees for these countries are untenable. American plans to deploy the anti-missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic are not supported by Germany and France as Russia threatened to station missiles in its enclave of Kaliningrad as a countermeasure.

⁸ Before the war Georgians made up 47 percent of the population of Abkhazia. Under contemporary international law there is no right to secession and from theoretical point of view a right to secession may apply only to a region inhabited by an ethnic group which constitutes the majority of its population (Raic 2002: 262–264). Therefore, Abkhazia does not have the right to secede from Georgia. Intervening in South Ossetia, Russia wrongly invoked the rule of the responsibility to protect.

⁹ In 2006 Russians made up 25,6 per cent of the Estonian population. The figure for Latvia was 27,8 per cent and for Lithuania 6,3 per cent. Russian-speaking populations have problems with gaining citizenship in the Baltic states which is denounced by Russia as discrimination.

EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE NEW MEMBER STATES

One could ask why the biggest EU member states preferred to side with Russia rather than the United States on numerous occasions in spite of the fact that Russia does not adhere to international democratic standards. The European Union is attached to human rights and freedom. It admonishes non-democratic countries to improve their human rights record. The rules do not, however, apply to Russia. EU-Russia relations has not suffered until recently as a result of Russia's poor human rights record, the lack of freedom of the press or bullying Russia's neighbours. Western European political elites tend to overlook the lack of democracy in Russia. This attitude is conditioned by the fact that these elites are at least to some extent anti-American and pro-Russian. The Franco-German axis aimed to create a strategic partnership with Russia with the aim of stripping the United States of its influence in Europe in order to turn the European Union into one of the leading world powers (Wągrowaska 2009: 51–53). The foreign minister of Luxembourg said in 1991 “this is the hour of Europe, not the hour of the Americans” (as cited by Dinan 2005: 592).

Russia precipitated its own economic collapse by intervening in Georgia. The move scared foreign investors who started withdrawing their capital from Russia. The flight of foreign capital started a cascade of severe problems for the Russian economy (Ananicz 2009: 13–14). Russia needed to reassure investors in order to stop capital flight. In consequence, it turned to the European Union to renew the negotiations concerning the economic partnership with the organization. It was a good opportunity for the European Union to win some concessions, e.g. with reference to Georgia. The resumption of the negotiations should have been contingent upon some concessions from Russia. The opportunity was not exhausted and the European Union commenced talks without preconditions. For the new EU member states it looked like a retreat in the face of Russian aggression. What is more, political pressure was applied by the largest EU member states to suppress any voices of discontent. Often criticized Poland did not veto the resumption of talks in order not to show that it was a dividing force. One more time it turned out that the interests of the biggest EU member states take precedence over the concerns of the Central and Eastern European member states.

These concerns are legitimate as there are indications that Russia intends to recreate its sphere of influence. According to Lara Piccardo (2010: 119) “[...]”

the “new” Russia shares with the “old” Soviet Union some aspects of its foreign policy.” Russia has pursued the same imperial policy for centuries. The policy consists in territorial expansion to the west and dividing European powers and it was successful in spite of Russia’s relative weakness and backwardness. Russia decided to pursue the same goals under V. Putin (Czapiewski 2009: 287–294). In the majority of cases, Russian elites consist of former communists who have never relinquished the dream of Russia as a great power. In fact, “this consensus ranges across the political spectrum – from pro-Western liberals to leftists and nationalists” (Aron 2013). “Putin added to this agenda an overarching goal: the recovery of economic, political, and geostrategic assets lost by the Soviet state in 1991” (Aron 2013).

Russian politicians talk about a zone of privileged interests based on historical and cultural ties (the Baltic states suspect that they belong to the zone and view Russia as an adversary). Russia suggests that this sort of zone should be recognized by other powers. V. Putin intends to restore Russia’s greatness. Russia is to command respect (Matthews and Nemtsowa 2010: 24–27). In this context, the policy of the Franco-German axis aimed at creating the Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis was especially worrying for the new EU member states. The policy was particularly promoted by French president J. Chirac and German chancellor G. Schröder.

Occasionally, there have been some tensions between the European Union and Russia and one can perceive even limited mistrust between both partners. The tensions were brought about by such developments as: the European Union’s eastern enlargement, the orange revolution in Ukraine of 2004, plans to deploy an anti-missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic, wars in Georgia and Chechnya, or Russia’s policy against free competition in the field of gas and oil pipelines and the development of Russian gas and oil fields. Nevertheless, these problems were sidelined by both partners in order to ensure uninterrupted and smooth cooperation with reference to strategic matters.

THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC ISSUES ON EU FOREIGN POLICY

The relations between the United States and the European Union should be vital for both parties as emerging economies develop at a very fast pace in comparison with sluggish advanced economies. Advanced economies’ share of world GDP has been shrinking (Czubocha 2010: 24–35). Therefore, if the European Union

intends to be a global player, able to influence the course of global events, particularly advance human rights, democracy and stability in the world, it needs sufficient resources. Running an active foreign policy and influencing the outside world requires ample financial means. The author of the paper submits that the European Union will not be able to meet its international commitments as its share of world GDP decreases and the debt crisis worsens the situation. The influence of every great power depends mostly on its economic might. EU economies are not faring well in the aftermath of the great financial downturn. With the exception of Germany the leading EU economies are stagnating and the level of public deficit is dangerously high in several of them. On the basis of the current economic tendencies one can predict that EU economies will not recover in the near future. In consequence, leading the world with reference to human rights, democracy and stability requires pooling resources. In other words, the revival of the concept of the Euro-Atlantic alliance is necessary if the West is to retain its position in the world. There have been many disagreements over foreign policy issues between the European Union and the United States in recent years (Dinan 2005: 609–638). Nevertheless, both partners are too weak to ‘manage’ the world on their own. The statement holds true particularly after the great financial downturn of 2008/2009. In this context the desire of the Central and Eastern European member states to maintain close relations with the United States proved to be right.

The global economic crisis has demonstrated Russia’s economic weakness. EU countries are the biggest source of foreign investment in Russia. Russia is not able to modernize its economy without Western investment, technology and financing (McCormick 2008: 353–354). The Russian authorities have realized that they are dependent on the European Union which resulted in softening the tone in relations with the organization. In reality, Russia’s economy is dependent on the European one. R. Tiersky (2010: 5) claims that “In the long run, Russia’s position is weaker than the EU’s”. Therefore, the European Union has leverage over Russia but it is not willing to use it. EU ineptitude with this respect can be ascribed to the fact that Germany and Russia share common economic interests being interconnected to a large degree. The German export-oriented economy needs markets for its products and Russia is one of the fastest growing markets for many German companies with reference to several strategic industries. The German economy needs energy as well. The energy sector is especially important for both countries. Business deals in this sector have multiplied in recent years. The most important ones include the North Stream pipeline, a 25 per cent share

of the Yuzhno-Russkoye gas field won by German On (British companies were sidelined) a deal between Siemens and Rosatom to build about 20 per cent of the world's nuclear plants (Matthews and Thiel 2009: 46–47).

EU ENERGY SECURITY AND ITS FOREIGN POLICY

During the mid-2000s, when oil and gas prices increased reaching their peak in 2008, the European Union became increasingly concerned with its energy security. According to experts the EU's dependence on imported oil and gas is set to nearly double between 2003 and 2030. The problem is aggravated by the fact that the majority of exporting countries are unstable and, therefore, are not reliable suppliers. These countries more and more often aim to exploit the existing market conditions to their advantage or even influence the outside world. For instance, Russia intended to restore its international status as a great power on the basis of high energy prices. It was a sobering experience for European policy-makers when Russia entered into conflicts with several of its neighbours over energy prices and supplies. After 2006 Russia doubled the price of oil for Georgia and cut supplies to Ukraine and Belarus. The conflict with Ukraine resulted in a temporary 30 per cent decrease in gas flows to EU member states (Youngs 2009: 2–4).

In March 2006 the European Commission came to a conclusion that high dependence on energy imports from unstable countries seeking to use energy as a political lever presented a serious risk for the European Union. The Commission asserted that energy issues should be incorporated into EU foreign policy and that European coordination with this respect was negligible (Commission of the European Communities, Green Paper 2006). In spite of growing concerns the real impact of energy issues on EU policy has been negligible until recently. The organization has not created a common energy policy so far and national governments pursue their own objectives with respect to energy issues (Żurawski 2008: 569–575). Surprisingly, proposals for deepening cooperation made by the new member states were rejected by the majority of member states. What is more, the European Union proclaimed that it would consider signing energy deals on the basis of good governance. Nevertheless, in the case of Russia energy interests override support for democracy. Another problem was a market-based approach to external energy security (Youngs 2009: 4–5). As a result, European energy companies were not strong enough to compete with Russian energy giants which were supported by the Russian government.

The Central and Eastern European member states are dependent on Russia with regard to gas and oil supplies to a much larger degree than their Western counterparts. In consequence, they demand that the European Union create a common energy policy to protect them against Russia (Zięba 2007: 164). Their demands have been met with a limited response so far. Russia aims to influence these countries by way of economic policy. The policy is to consist in taking over the new member states' oil and gas supplies and distribution networks, e.g. buying refineries, gas stations and pipelines. The North and South Stream pipelines are perceived by the Eastern European states as especially threatening. The North Stream pipeline would allow Russia to turn off the tap for Poland without disrupting supplies to Western Europe. These developments are particularly worrying for the Central and Eastern European member states. The problem is that the European Union has not done enough so far to assuage these countries. One of the reasons might be that about 25 per cent of European Union's oil and gas imports come from Russia. As a result, the organization is supposedly dependent on Russia. In fact, Russia would not be able to survive without the revenue generated by exporting raw materials to the European Union (Gowan 2000: 409–410). The organization accounts for over 50 per cent of Russia's exports and 54 per cent of its state budget (Każmierczak-Pec 2009: 300).

Russia holds a dominant position in the market of hydrocarbons thanks to pipelines which go through its territory. The United States envisaged breaking Russian monopoly by building new pipelines. The proposed hydrocarbon corridor through the Caucasus from Central Asia would bypass Russia. As a result, the Central Asian states could export their gas and oil to Western Europe without Russian control. In this manner, Russia's stranglehold on Central Asia would be weakened. Another proposed pipeline would allow to pump hydrocarbons from Azerbaijan to Poland through Ukraine. As a result of the projects, Russia would be weakened both in political and economic terms. Unfortunately, the Western European member states were not interested in the projects. Instead Germans created a consortium with Russians to build the North Stream pipeline (Żurawski 2008: 575–577). This sort of policy increased divisions within the European Union and cannot be regarded as a confidence-building measure. The aim of Germany was to gain financial support from the European Union for the project. Poland opposed such a move proposing financial support for the Nabucco pipeline. The project is not feasible as there are no reliable gas supplies in the Caspian region. The solution could be Iranian gas reserves, but such a move is opposed by the United States (Matthews 2010: 13). Germany, in turn,

would like to extend the North Stream pipeline to Poland and it blocked EU financing for a Polish liquid gas terminal.

A new development in the field of gas supplies is possible due to the fact that large deposits of shale gas and shale oil have recently been found globally. If they are proven and developed, the prices will fall which would undermine the current position of Russia on the market (large shale gas deposits have also been found in Poland). Shale gas extraction in the United States resulted in falling prices at the global level. This development puts in danger the clout of Russia's energy giant Gazprom.

On the other hand, exploitation of shale gas is illegal in France and it is not in the interest of Germany which signed contracts with Russia. In consequence, Russia tries to influence Western ecological movements to prove that the exploitation of shale gas is dangerous to the environment. There are also attempts at banning shale gas extraction by way of hydraulic fracturing at the EU level by changing legislation. Anyway, EU legislation driven by environmental concerns is going to substantially increase the cost of shale gas extraction.

The European Union could break the dominant position of Russian energy companies in the new member states if the policy of Gazprom was treated as abuse of its dominant position which restricts free competition. The Third Energy Package would allow it as it both aims to liberalize EU energy markets and introduces some elements of common energy policy.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the cultural dominance of the "old Europe" over the new member states was exploited by the Franco-German tandem in order to impose its foreign policy choices on the Central and Eastern European member states. As a result, the foreign policy priorities of the new member states were discredited for they presumably undermined both European unity and values. From the perspective of the new member states, the European Union was divided with respect to its foreign policy by the unrealistic assumption that the organization can be an important pole of global influence without America. To put this assumption into practice the Franco-German axis decided to counter American unilateralism also by way of forging a strategic partnership with Russia. However, the European Union has no economic foundations to act independently of America as a great power and moreover, the organization was not able to change Russia into

a cooperative state. In the context of the current economic and financial crisis, the new member states have been vindicated both with reference to political and economic aspects of EU foreign policy. As a result, the organization has been changing its foreign policy in line with their national priorities at least to a certain degree. The following trends are discernible:

1. The European Union has renewed its partnership with the United States.
2. The policy of “Wandel durch Annäherung” toward the Russian Federation has failed (Russia is becoming less democratic and its relations with Germany have recently deteriorated).
3. The European Union is steering toward a common energy policy which was proposed by the new member states several years ago.
4. Finally, the organization has taken more decisive steps to limit the power of Russian energy companies which may lead to a drop in energy prices.

So far, with reference to relations with the United States and Russia, member states were trying to secure their own national interests. If the organization intends to retain its status of a global player in the field of foreign policy, it should create a real common foreign policy and revive the concept of the Euro-Atlantic alliance taking into account the national interests of the new member states to a greater degree. The issue is very pressing as emerging powers are gaining strength and they increasingly question the supremacy of Western values.

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