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The Making of the European Union's Common Strategy on Russia

Hiski Haukkala
Researcher
Finnish Institute of
International Affairs
hiski.haukkala@upi-fiia.fi



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INTRODUCTION

“The European Council shall decide on common strategies to be implemented by the Union in areas where the Member States have important interests in common. Common strategies shall set out their objectives, duration and the means to be made available by the Union and the Member States.”¹

With these four, at first sight rather unimpressive lines the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 brought a brand new Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) instrument of common strategies (CS) into the European Union (EU).

In the literature so far, the impact of common strategies has somewhat surprisingly been sidelined. Usually the analysis follows the three main lines of concentrating on other institutional novelties adopted in Amsterdam: constructive abstention, the Secretary-General of the Council (or the High Representative, ‘Mr. CFSP’) and the Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit (PPEWU).² This is understandable as the wording on the common strategies is rather vague and the instrument itself is more operational in nature thus making the mere analysis of the Treaty provisions a rather fruitless exercise.

However, the few analysis, which have so far dealt with common strategies have taken a rather skeptical tone questioning the operational value of the concept.³ This paper seeks to build on that foundation, but instead of just scrutinizing the institutional side of common strategies the aim here is to provide the reader with a more comprehensive account of the political evolution of the common strategy concept into the Amsterdam Treaty and especially of the first common strategy on Russia (CSR), which was adopted at the end of the German Presidency in the Cologne European Council in June 1999.

The paper is divided into four parts. The first part, *the evolution of ‘strategic thinking’ on Russia in the European Union*, is a brief excursion into the different documents, policy-

¹ Treaty on European Union (TEU) Article 13.2.

² Cf. Duke 2000; Peterson 1998.

³ Cf. Ersbøll 1997; Nuttall 1997.

papers and action plans that the European Union and its different institutions have adopted on Russia during the 1990s. The main argument here is, that philosophically the first common strategy on Russia offers very little new added-value as the EU already has for the most part of the last decade been engaged in drafting a document after a document on Russia.

The second part, *the political evolution of the common strategy on Russia*, traces the endgame of the Intergovernmental Conference of 1996 (IGC 1996) and the emergence of the common strategy concept into the CFSP provisions of the Treaty. Moreover, the process of adopting the first common strategy on Russia is dealt herewith as well.

The third part, *the strategic experience on Russia*, deals with the implementation of the CSR. We have to keep in mind, however, that the actual experiences are still rather slim as the implementation started rather late during the Finnish Presidency, was disrupted because of Chechnya during the Portuguese one and is only now picking up speed under the French command.

The fourth and final part will conclude the paper gathering the different threads of argument together and assessing the impact of the CSR on both the EU-Russia relations and the CFSP. In addition, the reader is provided with four different angles at assessing and interpreting the impact of the common strategy on Russia on both CFSP and EU-Russia relations in general.

I THE EVOLUTION OF 'STRATEGIC THINKING' ON RUSSIA IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The end of the Cold War brought about a new political situation in Europe. As the rigid bipolar overlay was removed, the straits of strategic thinking – in the original and strictly military sense – that had prevailed for the last half a century became obsolete. However, the turbulent opening of the post-Soviet political space put all the mainly Western political actors before a vast challenge in finding innovative and adequate responses and feasible *policies* towards the Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) and the countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU).

The challenge was perhaps nowhere more acute than in the case of the (then) European Community's (EC) ability in responding in a coherent and effective manner, which was put into a severe test. When the three leaders of the Soviet Republics of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine were gathered in Minsk on December 8 1991 to decide on the final dissolution of the Soviet Union, the EC was caught off guard. The earlier fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989 had already forced the Community into *ad hoc* solutions and improvisation towards the emerging Central and Eastern European countries. It can be argued that what had previously been a blank space on the mental map of the Twelve was turned overnight into a source of great hopes and concerns.⁴

And none of the new states emerging from the ashes of the Soviet Union was more important, and challenging, to the European Community than Russia. The hopes stemmed mainly from the vast human and natural resources that the country possessed. Russia was seen as a large market just waiting to be exploited by the Western companies. However, quite soon the other side of the Russian realities began to dawn to the EC and its member states as the degenerated state of the Russian society, economy and environment became increasingly obvious.⁵ Thus it can be argued, that Russia had a special mix of acute short-

⁴ For an account of the history of EU-USSR relations during the Cold War, cf. Pinder 1991, 8-36.

⁵ For an analysis of the Russia's importance to European Union, cf. Patomäki 1996, 17-21.

term problems and glorious long-term prospects, which made devising a policy on Russia an extremely challenging task for the European Community.

The rapidity of events forced the European Community and its European Political Cooperation (EPC) system into a series of reactive moves that in time were to be molded into a policy towards the Eastern Europe.⁶ However, even before the dramatic events of November 1989, the need for clear policy, or strategy, was urgently felt in the member states. For example, in April 1989 the Spanish Council president Francisco Fernandes Ordoñez declared that “the Twelve would adopt a ‘common strategy’ in their relations with Eastern Europe”.⁷ The following Madrid European Council received a policy paper towards the Eastern Europe and it noted the importance of “integrating political, economic and cooperation aspects, which the European Community and its Member States follow in their relations with the USSR and with Central and Eastern European Countries.”⁸

In terms of treaties the EC only had the recent, yet already outdated Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) with Russia. The Treaty had been signed with the already crumbling Soviet Union as late as on December 21 1989. In addition, the only actual instrument in dealing with the tumultuous events in Russia was the TACIS programme⁹, which had been initiated in 1991.

In terms of Russia and the rest of the Soviet Union, the European Community’s stance seemed to be the controlled disintegration of the Soviet Union through at least some measure of economic and political integration within the emerging Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).¹⁰ These hopes have, however, never materialized as the CIS has suffered from serious internal tensions and lack of concrete co-operation.¹¹

⁶ For an account of the formation of EC/EU policy towards the Eastern Europe (excluding Russia), see Smith 1999.

⁷ Quoted in Smith 1999, 47.

⁸ European Council in Madrid, Presidency Conclusions.

⁹ TACIS = Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States.

¹⁰ This thought is implicitly present in the Report presented to the Lisbon European Council in June 1992. European Council in Lisbon, Presidency Conclusions, Annex I.

¹¹ Cf. Kortunov 1995; Pikayev 1996.

The first attempt at giving strategic direction into the evolving EC-Russia relationship was the decision to negotiate a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) in March 1992. Simultaneously this marked a qualitative departure in EC's Russia relations compared to the CEEC as the membership and even association of Russia into EC was decisively ruled out.¹²

However, despite of this initial disappointment for Russia, the PCA, which was signed after 18 months of prolonged and very difficult negotiations at the Corfu European Council in June 1994, represents a qualitative leap in the EU¹³-Russia relations and to date the PCA still remains the legal basis for the relations between the EU and Russia. Instead of offering Russia membership, the European Union approached Moscow with the notion of 'strategic partnership'.¹⁴ The respect for democracy and human rights is elevated into the leading principle in the future development of this partnership.¹⁵ In the Treaty the continuation of co-operation is made conditional on fulfilling "obligations under the Agreement"¹⁶, which is usually interpreted as a direct reference to the primacy of the observance of democracy and human rights in Russia.¹⁷

The PCA establishes a permanent and continuous multi-level political dialogue between the EU and Russia. The main forums for this dialogue are the biannual summits between the EU troika¹⁸ and the President of Russia, the annual Cooperation Council, which meets at ministerial level, the many different Working Groups that meet at least twice a year

¹² Smith 1999, 109.

¹³ The Maastricht Treaty entered into force in November 1993 turning the European Community into a European Union (EU).

¹⁴ Timmermann 1996, 206. Especially the French president Jacques Chirac has been a strong proponent of a partnership oriented approach towards Russia. For a closer scrutiny of the argument, see Tsakaloyannis 1996, 175-185.

¹⁵ Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation (hereafter PCA), Article 2.

¹⁶ PCA, Article 107.

¹⁷ Timmermann 1996, 204.

¹⁸ The Troika consists of the Council President, High Representative of the CFSP and the President of the Commission.

and Parliamentary Cooperation Committee between the European Parliament and the Russian Duma.¹⁹

Despite of this political outer layer, the main bulk of the PCA deals mainly with economic and technical issues between the European and Russia, such as granting the most-favoured-nation (MFN) status to most of the Russian goods.²⁰ In fact, the two most concrete strategic aims that can be found in the document reside in the realm of economics: the future membership of Russia in the WTO and the possibility of creating a free trade area between the EU and Russia – a prospect, which was originally to be reviewed in 1998.²¹

All in all, it can be argued that what had previously been a rather technical relationship between the European Union and Russia was through the adoption of the PCA turned into a continuous political process. However, for the most part, the PCA does not differ much from the TCA of 1989 as the bulk of the trade related clauses remained intact.²² Moreover, when viewed in the light of strategic guidance that the document is supposed to give in EU-Russia relations most of the aims reside in the realm of vague declarations on the importance of democracy, human rights and market economy. The only real novelty is the aforementioned prospect for a free trade area, which has yet failed to materialize.

Regardless of this new beginning in the EU-Russia relations the tides were already turning in Moscow. The enthusiastically ‘romantic’ leaning towards the West was coming to an end in Russia as a more assertive policy of “Russia First” was gaining ground in Moscow.²³ The change was visible in the Moscow’s vocabulary on

¹⁹ PCA, Articles 7, 8 and 90-98.

²⁰ PCA, Article 5.

²¹ PCA, Articles 3 and 4. For more detailed analysis of the content and the impact of the PCA, cf. Timmermann 1996; Hillion 1998.

²² Surovell 1997, 25.

²³ For accounts of this sea change in Russia’s foreign policy see Kortunov 1999; Truscott 1997.

international relations as notions of abstract ‘universal values’ were replaced with concepts such as state sovereignty and inviolability of borders.²⁴

The new emphasis on “Russia First” was visible in a more heavy-handed approach towards the Russia’s “near abroad” in the CIS. The new Russian assertiveness became visible also internally in the form of the first war of Chechnya.²⁵ The Russian war against the rebellious Chechen Republic began in December 1994 and managed immediately to rupture the ratification process of the recently signed PCA, which was to enter into force as late as on December 1 1997 after Russia had, to a large extent, folded under the growing EU pressure for a political solution to the crisis.

However, the ratification of the actual PCA was preceded by the adoption of an interim Treaty in 1996, which allowed for the trade clauses of the PCA to enter into force prior to the whole Treaty. It has been argued, that the European Union’s decision to go forward with the ratification reflected a pragmatic and even cynical *Realpolitik* stance towards the issue of Chechnya and thus jeopardized the credibility of the political dimension and the emphasis of the importance of human rights in the PCA even before it had entered into force.²⁶ However, in all fairness it has to be clearly stated that in handling the first war of Chechnya, the European Union showed a great deal of consistency in condemning the war and in applying political pressure on Russia in order to solve the crisis.

The ruthlessness of Russian action in Chechnya showed the EU member states that the PCA alone was not sufficient in guaranteeing the strategic guidance and flexibility of EU action *vis-à-vis* Russia. Thus, the European Union came up with the idea of drafting the first Russia strategy, which was based on the European Commission’s communication, presented at the *Gymnich* meeting of the EU foreign ministers in Carcassonne in March 1995.

²⁴ Kortunov 1999, 34.

²⁵ For an authoritative account on the first war of Chechnya, see Lieven 1999.

²⁶ Hillion 1998, 418.

The communication²⁷ implicitly aims at creating a EU strategy towards Russia. The main aim of the strategy is to develop the mutually beneficial partnership with Russia, which is based on mutual responsiveness and respect for human rights. Moreover, the emphasis in the future relations with Russia is laid on the following aims: strengthening political, societal and economical stability in Russia, sustainable development, which will improve the living standards of the Russian population and increased co-operation in resolving the most important regional and international questions.²⁸

The communication also enumerates the following priorities, which follow from the aforementioned aims: (i) the further involvement of the Russian Federation in the development of the European security architecture, the overriding aim being to avoid new divisions in Europe; (ii) the further development of democratic norms, institutions and practices, and the respect for human rights, individual liberties and the; (iii) further progress towards economic reform and encouragement of European Community/Russia economic interaction in order to ensure Russia's economic liberalisation and establishment of the market economy; and its growing participation in a wider European economic zone of prosperity, and the world economic system; (iv) the intensification of bilateral and multilateral co-operation in other fields, inter alia justice, home affairs and crime prevention, and crisis prevention and management; (v) the extension of open and constructive dialogue at different levels and in various fora, covering all matters of common interest.²⁹

In addition, the communication also includes two annexes: the first one is an overview of the economic situation and the state of the reforms in Russia. The other is an inventory of the on-going co-operation and projects between the European Union and Russia.³⁰

²⁷ Commission of the European Communities, "The European Union and Russia: the future relationship", COM (95) 223 final, 31 May 1995.

²⁸ Commission of the European Communities, "The European Union and Russia: the future relationship", COM (95) 223 final, 31 May 1995, 1.4.-1.5.

²⁹ Commission of the European Communities, "The European Union and Russia: the future relationship", COM (95) 223 final, 31 May 1995, 5.2.

³⁰ Commission of the European Communities, "The European Union and Russia: the future relationship", COM (95) 223 final, 31 May 1995, annexes A and B.

The main dilemma facing the European Union, however, was perceived as finding the right balance between condemning the Russian actions in Chechnya and supporting the economic and political reforms in Russia.³¹ However, the Commission's communication represented a new departure in the strategic thinking towards Russia as it sought to establish certain criteria, which should be used in the relations with Russia. Moreover, the strategy also emphasised the need for coordinating all the on-going EU efforts *vis-à-vis* Russia. Nevertheless it has to be said that despite of its ambitions the document fell short off the mark as it failed to produce new impetus to the EU-Russia relations, which were muddling through the Chechnya crisis.

However, the communication did result in the adoption of an action plan in May 1996. The adoption of the action plan was preceded by a strategy paper on EU-Russia relations, which was formulated by the General Affairs Council (GAC) on 20 November 1995.³² With a voiced intention of adopting "the following elements in its common approach to relations with Russia", the document is actually the first official EU strategy on Russia. The strategy voices the European Union's wish to develop a "substantial partnership" with Russia in order to promote democracy, economic reforms and human rights in Russia together with wider peace, stability and security in Russia while ensuring Russia's full integration into "the community of free and democratic nations."³³

Regardless of the ambitious aims, the document is, however, very thin on concrete proposals and actual measures to be taken. An illustrating point is the passage on "contribution to Russia's democratic reforms", where the aim is a "continued support of the further development of democracy, the rule of law and pluralism in Russia" and the measures to be taken include "regular consultation and technical assistance" and "active promotion of people-to-people contacts".³⁴ To be fair, the same passage also includes the

³¹ Commission of the European Communities, "The European Union and Russia: the future relationship", COM (95) 223 final, 31 May 1995, 4.2.2.

³² European Union's Strategy for Future EU/Russia Relations, European Council in Madrid, December 1995, Presidency Conclusions, Annex 8.

³³ European Union's Strategy for Future EU/Russia Relations, European Council in Madrid, December 1995, Presidency Conclusions, Annex 8, 1.

³⁴ European Union's Strategy for Future EU/Russia Relations, European Council in Madrid, December 1995, Presidency Conclusions, Annex 8, 3-4.

support for Russian accession to the Council of Europe – an aim, which was realized in February 1996. However, it can be argued, that the Russian membership in Council of Europe represented more the cynical *Realpolitik* of the Western European countries, rather than genuine progress in the human rights situation in Russia.

Yet another document of strategic nature on Russia was drafted in May 1996, when the General Affairs Council adopted an action plan for Russia, which was drafted on the basis of the aforementioned strategy. The action plan is constructed on the aims and principles of the strategy. However, the action plan failed to bring much new substance into EU-Russia relations. Perhaps the only major novelty compared to the earlier documents is the increased emphasis on the importance of nuclear safety in Russia.³⁵

In reality, the combined actual impact of the first strategy on Russia and the action plan that ensued has been rather limited. They are both encompassing too broad scopes of challenges in Russia without elaborating enough concrete measures on how to achieve them.³⁶

In fact, it can be said, that despite of bold declarations, the documents lacked certain basic characteristics, which should be present in a strategy. First, a strategy, in order to be successful, has to express clear aims and objectives for future action. Second, a strategy has to provide clear ways and means how these objectives shall be reached in the first place and what to do in case things do not go as they have been planned. When pondering the true nature of any strategy the following definition of a strategy can be taken as a starting point: “strategy is a value-based doctrine of those measures and resources, which are to be applied when an actor is consciously striving for a certain preferred end-state.”³⁷ In addition, a strategy should provide the actor with a certain measure of consistency and flexibility in realizing the objectives.³⁸

³⁵ European Union action plan for Russia, II. EU Bulletin no. 5, 1996, 2.3.1.

³⁶ This point has been expressed, for example, by the then Finnish Ambassador in Moscow Markus Lyra (1999).

³⁷ Haukkala and Toivonen 2000.

³⁸ Pearson 1990, 24-25.

However, this definition has to be accompanied with a caveat. The main emphasis on any strategy in the post-Cold War world has to be put on the flexibility. The rapidity of events in the globalizing world does not call for rigid doctrines and structures but rather require a more flexible approach, which allows the actor to respond in an effective but yet coherent manner. However, this fact does not remove the need for certain clear guidelines or baselines, which any international actor should have for its actions.

As the account above has shown us, during the 1990s the European Union has developed a vast array of reports, strategic documents and action plans on Russia. Yet none of them can be seen as fulfilling the above criteria for a strategy. Yet, during the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference, the idea of common strategies was introduced with a clear intention of drafting the first one of them yet again on Russia. In the following we move on to pondering why the concept of common strategies was adopted in the Treaty of Amsterdam and why, despite of all the earlier efforts, there was a special need for one especially on Russia.

II THE POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF THE COMMON STRATEGY ON RUSSIA

The Treaty of Maastricht stipulated that in 1996 there should convey an Intergovernmental Conference, which would ponder the working of the Treaty on European Union and make amendments where necessary. However, due to numerous ratification difficulties it was only in November 1993 that the TEU entered into force. Thus, the member states had relatively little time to gather experiences of the possible problems for the forthcoming IGC.

One of the sectors where the shortcomings of the Maastricht Treaty had become most painfully clear was the CFSP.³⁹ The new provisions had been put to a test in the tumultuous events of the dissolving Yugoslavia where the CFSP and the member states had failed spectacularly. One of the biggest stumbling-blocs on the way towards coherent EU foreign policy has been the rigid decision-making procedure in the Council, which has been based on strict unanimity. There exists a wide-spread consensus among the CFSP scholars, that the unanimity principle has led to constant delays in the decision-making process while the decisions that have finally taken are usually watered down to the lowest common denominator⁴⁰.

Thus it was obvious from the beginning of the IGC that the development of a more coherent and effective CFSP would be high on the agenda. In the following, an account is given on the emergence of common strategies onto the CFSP agenda. The analysis concentrates, however, solely on the process of the common strategy formation as there is hardly any lack of description and analysis on the whole IGC 1996 process⁴¹.

³⁹ Regelsberger and Wessels (1996, 29) captured this mood of “gloom and doom” when they wrote that the “mood in expert circles is depressed” and that the first experiences of CFSP are “on the whole negative”.

⁴⁰ Cf. Monar 1997, 418.

⁴¹ Cf. Lodge 1998; McDonagh 1998; Moravcsik and Nicolaïdis 1999.

The introduction of common strategies as a CFSP instrument

The CFSP provisions that were to be reviewed in the IGC 1996 revolved around the problems of how best to analyze the events that required EU action, how to plan that action, how to take decisions on the action and how to implement those decisions effectively. These contentious issues were transformed on the IGC agenda into concrete questions of whether or not the member states should (i) establish a Policy Unit, (ii) appoint a High Representative for the CFSP, (iii) merge the Western European Union (WEU) into EU structures, and (iv) whether or not the decision-making procedures should be streamlined by injecting CFSP with increased possibility for flexibility. The debate over increased flexibility revolved mainly around constructive abstention and increase in the use of qualified majority voting (QMV).⁴²

Of these questions only the establishment of a PPEWU was rather problem free whereas the other issues proved to be very difficult in the negotiations. Especially the institutional battles, which had been raging in the CFSP since the beginning of the Maastricht Treaty negotiations in 1990, were once again among the most difficult questions in the 1996 IGC.⁴³ Despite of the vast problems, the member states were willing to make an attempt at introducing increased majority voting in the CFSP.

In the beginning of the IGC there were roughly two opposing camps to be found concerning the extension of qualified majority voting: Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Italy and Austria were in favour of increasing majority voting, where as others remained skeptical⁴⁴. Of those member states that were opposed to the injection of QMV France, Greece, Portugal and especially the United Kingdom⁴⁵ were most adamantly against the reforms.⁴⁶

⁴² For an account of the role of flexibility in the 1996 IGC, see Missiroli 2000.

⁴³ Cf. Forster and Wallace 1996, 421.

⁴⁴ Monar 1997, 418.

⁴⁵ For an account of the British position, see Grabbe 1997.

⁴⁶ According to Anderson (1998, 141) the Great Britain and Greece were most strongly opposed to the increase in QMV in the 1996 IGC.

However, there seems to be some ambivalence in the research literature on the initial positions of the member states. Andrew Moravcsik and Kalypso Nicolaïdis have argued, that the basic division between the member states in terms of decision-making procedures was actually three-fold: countries with distinctive policy preferences (such as Great Britain and Greece) which opted for the preservation of unilateral veto; Germany, which favoured more binding cooperation in the CFSP; and the Benelux together with the Nordics, which supported the increase in the QMV for second-level decisions as long as they were able to retain the right for unilateral non-participation⁴⁷.

Nevertheless, the original positions remained virtually intact throughout the IGC with very little headway made in the matter. However, by the spring of 1997 the IGC was running out of time. A solution had to be found, which would allow for the QMV to be ‘sneaked’ into CFSP in such a manner that even the British Government could accept it. It is against this background that the French proposal of March 1997 of “common strategies” has to be examined.

The French proposal, which was strongly backed by Germany, included a stronger role for the European Council in the CFSP through the formulating of new common strategies, which would be decided on geographical basis on areas of importance to the European Union. In addition, the common strategies would set out “objectives, duration and means to be used by the member states and the European Community.”⁴⁸

The question of decision-making procedures was at the heart of the common strategy concept from the very beginning. The French proposed that the common positions on the basis of common strategies would be taken by qualified majority voting. Initially, however, the adoptability of QMV in the realm of joint actions was somewhat unclear in

⁴⁷ Moravcsik and Nicolaïdis 1999, 64. This interpretation has at least partially been backed up by Heather Grabbe (1997, 29) who has suggested that Finland and Sweden were willing to go along with QMV as long as it would be possible to withdraw support when vital national interests were at stake. Denmark, however, would have opposed the QMV in every possible case.

⁴⁸ European Report 2207, 15 March 1997.

the minds of the French. This ambiguity was enforced by several other member states, which were rather reluctant in accepting QMV in adopting joint actions.⁴⁹

The French proposal did not, however, materialize out of thin air. In the CDU/CSU Group Manifesto in the German Bundestag in September 1994 the earliest reference to common strategies can be found. The document calls for a strategic concept of the CFSP, which “clearly defines common objectives and interests, conditions and procedures and the necessary political, economic and financial means.”⁵⁰ Moreover, the manifesto proposes the following geographical priority areas for CFSP: CEEC, Russia, the Mediterranean, Turkey and the transatlantic relationship between the European Union and the United States.⁵¹

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome in Campidoglio on 25 March, the Dutch Presidency tabled a report on the IGC where it formally proposed a distinction between general policy guidelines decided by the European Council through unanimity, and decisions for implementing these guidelines that the Council may take through QMV. QMV would thus be enabled only under the common strategies and decisions affecting defence or with military implications would be decided unanimously.⁵²

The French proposal for “general and strategic guidelines” for the CFSP on the basis of which common positions and joint actions would be adopted “if not systemically by qualified majority, at least in most cases”⁵³ was welcomed by the majority of the member

⁴⁹ European Report 2207, 15 March 1997.

⁵⁰ CDU/CSU Manifesto. The text of the manifesto can be found in Agence Europe 1895, 7 September 1994.

⁵¹ CDU/CSU Manifesto. During the initial stages of the IGC, the CDU/CSU manifesto’s proposals were, however, set aside. For example, the Reflection Group’s Report, the Commission’s opinion and the European Parliament’s Resolution on IGC all fail to mention the concept of common strategies. However, all the ingredients of common strategies, such as decision-making procedures, better quality of preparation of decisions together with the importance of proper implementation of policies can all be found in the aforementioned documents. See Reflection Group’s Report; Commission Opinion: ‘Reinforcing Political Union and Preparing for Enlargement’; European Parliament’s Resolution of the convening of the Intergovernmental Conference.

⁵² Agence Europe 6940, 22 March 1997.

⁵³ Agence Europe 6932, 12 March 1997.

states. However, the Conservative Government of the United Kingdom presented the toughest opposition for the concept, mainly criticizing the adoption of QMV in the CFSP in the first place.⁵⁴

In May there was a compromise on the usage of QMV in which the concept is amended with the so-called ‘escape clause’ or ‘emergency break’ where a member state “for reasons of national policy” can prevent the voting from taking place.⁵⁵ However, the ‘escape clause’ is not entirely unproblematic either as especially France and Germany wanted to erect at least some obstacles for it. One proposal put forward for doing this was a clear definition of what ‘vital interests’ would entail.⁵⁶ Another proposal put forward by Germany was, that when invoking its vital interests it has to be done by “the Head of Government, in writing and for specific reasons.”⁵⁷ In the end of the day conceptualizing of this kind never took place and these openings failed to show up in the final text of the Treaty.

The final attempt at limiting the ‘escape clause’ was done in the last days of May at the extraordinary summit at Noordwijk where the French and German governments proposed that a member state could invoke its ‘vital interests’ only if it obtained 27 supporting votes in the Council.⁵⁸ This would ensure that the ‘escape clause’ would not be triggered for trivial reasons: the French and Germans argued that other member states would of course take the legitimate national interests into consideration whereas destructive stalemates caused by a single member state would be prevented. Also this proposition failed to end up in the final text of the Amsterdam Treaty.

On May 30 the Dutch Presidency circulated a preliminary draft Treaty where all the final ingredients of common strategies were already decided on: the European Council was to decide on common strategies unanimously on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers. The common positions and joint actions adopted on the basis of common

⁵⁴ European Report 2211, 28 March 1997.

⁵⁵ Agence Europe 6966, 1 May 1997.

⁵⁶ Agence Europe 6966, 1 May 1997.

⁵⁷ Agence Europe 6978, 22 May 1997.

⁵⁸ Agence Europe 6982, 28 May 1997.

strategies shall be taken by QMV. However, for “reasons of national policy” a member state could veto the adoption of decisions for the implementation of common strategies. All in all, the common strategy concept proved to be the only way, which allowed the British government to accept qualified majority to be used in the implementation of CFSP.⁵⁹

The final negotiations on the Amsterdam Treaty proved to be very difficult. This was so especially in CFSP where the problems concerning the possible EU-WEU merger lead to widespread fears that the IGC might end in failure.⁶⁰ The common strategy concept was, however, free of all these complications. Despite of many difficulties an agreement on the Treaty of Amsterdam was finally reached at 4 a.m. on June 18 1997.

Assessment of common strategies in the Amsterdam Treaty

The provision describing the common strategies says:

“The European Council shall decide on common strategies to be implemented by the Union in areas where the Member States have important interests in common. Common strategies shall set out their objectives, duration and means to be made available by the Union and the Member States. The Council shall recommend common strategies to the European Council and shall implement them, in particular by adopting joint actions and common positions.”⁶¹

First of all, the passage above makes clear that drafting of the common strategies is *intergovernmental* by its very nature. Common strategies are to be based on important and common interests that the member states can agree on. This creates a difficulty, as the European Union’s perspective is omitted from the Treaty. Thus, the common strategies are to be based on the common-denominator deducted from the member states’

⁵⁹ European Report 2229, 4 June 1997.

⁶⁰ Agence Europe 6997, 18 June 1997.

⁶¹ TEU Article 13.2-3.

individual interests, which might not – at least in all possible cases – correspond to the common interests of the European Union.⁶² Thus, for example, the steel industry of Germany might benefit greatly from the exclusion of certain Russian industrial products from the European Union markets whereas the EU as a whole could suffer from the growing Russian political animosity towards the restrictions in industrial goods.

However, what is most striking in the provisions is that the role of the main decision-making body, the Council, is reduced to that of recommending and implementing common strategies. Instead, the European Council is, for the first time, given a formal role in taking decisions in the European Union. When the European Council decides (unanimously) on common strategies this translates into *de facto* increased intergovernmentalism in the CFSP.

This feature of the Amsterdam Treaty was received with skepticism especially in the European Parliament where, for example, Elmar Brok repeatedly argued that the adoption of common strategies must not result in strengthening of intergovernmental decision-making where effectively everything is decided unanimously in the European Council and the adoption of QMV in implementation would effectively lose any meaning.⁶³

Elmar Brok's worry has been backed up Simon Nuttall, who has argued that the adoption of common strategies will result in the tendency for the level of decision-making to move upwards as "those Member States which are committed to the principle of consensus will endeavour to make certain that the largest possible number of decisions are taken at the level of the European Council, where that principle applies, and will exploit the requirement that the common strategies must set out their objectives, duration and means to ensure that as few details as possible are left for decision by QMV at the lower level."⁶⁴ This, in turn, means that the pace of the decision-making is bound to be slowed

⁶² Of course keeping in mind that the question of 'objective interests of the European Union' is very problematic, cf. Haukkala and Toivonen 2000.

⁶³ Agence Europe 6982, 28 May 1997.

⁶⁴ Nuttall 1997, 2.

down as at best four times a year gathering of heads of states try to find the time to make an agreement on new common strategies or revise the existing ones.

The provisions quoted above also reveal the biggest weakness that the common strategies have. In the Treaty the content of the future common strategies is defined only that they are to include their “objectives, duration and means”. This is indeed an extremely vague wording. It can be argued that with only these formal guidelines in mind, the drafting of the common strategies is effectively without any formal treaty-based guidance.

The vagueness of these provisions stem from the nature of the negotiations on common strategies. As was shown above, the main object of arguments was the problem of qualified majority voting. Otherwise the common strategies seemed to be a rather problem-free area in the negotiations. This ease, which with the common strategy concept was adopted in the Treaty of Amsterdam, has, however, a serious down side: the provisions on the actual substance of the policy, besides those dealing with decision-making, were not particularly well thought out or discussed. The main idea was to find a suitable compromise, which would enable the injection of QMV into CFSP.

In terms of decision-making the Treaty stipulates:

*“the Council shall act by qualified majority when adopting joint actions, common positions or taking any other decision on the basis of a common strategy.”*⁶⁵

Thus, the adoption of common strategies introduces QMV for second level decisions in implementation (thus enabling – at least in principle – increased cohesion and effective action) while enabling the member states to retain control on overall decisions through unanimity in the initial crafting of the strategies in the European Council. The final success of the common strategies in enhancing the coherence of the CFSP remains, however, a rather contentious issue. Most commentators seem to agree that the introduction of the common strategies is somewhat artificial, a bad compromise, which is

⁶⁵ TEU Article 23.2.

bound to lead to conflicts in the Council of ministers⁶⁶. Niels Ersbøll has said, that if they are to be more than “a gimmick to introduce majority decision in the CFSP” common strategies would have to be “genuinely subscribed to by all Member States” while being “detailed in substance” and “based on high quality preparation.”⁶⁷

Moreover, as was discussed earlier, the main decision-making rule is amended with an ‘escape clause’:

“If a member of the Council declares that, for important and stated reasons of national policy, it intends to oppose the adoption of a decision to be taken by qualified majority, a vote shall not be taken. The Council may, acting by a qualified majority, request that the matter be referred to the European Council for decision by unanimity.”⁶⁸

All in all, the adoption of common strategies can rather be seen as reflecting the increasing desperation in member states favouring increased majority voting⁶⁹. However, the member states willing to have QMV almost at any cost ended up paying a heavy price indeed as the passage above is actually a codification of the infamous “Luxembourg Compromise” from 1966.

The question of what is the actual impact of the common strategies on CFSP has stirred some debate in the recent years. For example, Alan Dashwood has taken a rather skeptical stance towards the whole concept. Dashwood argues that the adoption of common strategies raise more questions and difficult issues than solve them: the roles of the European Council, Council and the Commission need clarification while the actual instruments made available to the implementation of the common strategies remain vague.⁷⁰ Especially the Article 13.3 leaves room for many interpretations as it states that “the Council shall recommend common strategies to the European Council and shall

⁶⁶ Duff 1997, 125.

⁶⁷ Ersbøll 1997, 9.

⁶⁸ TEU Article 23.2.

⁶⁹ Monar 1997, 421.

⁷⁰ Dashwood 1999, 212.

implement them, in particular by adopting joint actions and common positions.” Thus, even though the European Council decides on the common strategies they are to be recommended by the Council. Moreover, the passage above refers to the existence of other instruments perhaps available in the implementation of common strategies. During the drafting of the common strategy on Russia the question of what could these be surfaced and almost managed to cripple the process of adopting the first common strategy.

Drafting the first common strategy on Russia

The economic and political crisis of August 1998 in Russia acted as a wake-up call for the European Union. The optimism that was still widely shared in the beginning of summer about the state of the Russian reforms faded instantly with the massive devaluation of rouble together with Moscow’s default on its debts. The European Union was thus faced with a Russian economy and a currency in a free fall together with an unfolding political crisis. The rapid pace of events together with the fact that everything took place during the high holiday season in Europe left the European Union and its member states in a state of shock of not knowing how best to respond.

But there is more to the events than just bad timing. The EU was not prepared to handle such a crisis and when it occurred the EU was left to improvise – a task in which it is not very good at. Thus when in September the EU organs were returning from their holidays a sense of being sidelined in the dramatic events was clearly visible: President Clinton rushed to Moscow for a meeting with Boris Yeltsin and the biggest EU member states, France, Germany, Great Britain and Italy, chose to deal with the crisis in the context of the G-7.⁷¹ The Commission President Jacques Santer, however, issued a statement, which essentially stated that apart from humanitarian aid Russia would for the time-being be left to fend on its own and – most importantly – the EU economies and the forthcoming

⁷¹ European Report 2338, 2 September 1998.

launch of the euro would not be hurt by the crash.⁷² Moreover, the September saw a vast amount of both formal and informal contacts between the EU and Russia but with very little new EU-thinking emerging as a result. In the beginning of October EU was still insisting on the need for reform in Russia but with very little concrete proposals on how to do it.⁷³

All this procrastination and lack of decisive action seems to reflect the fact that the European Union did not have a coherent set of principles and instruments, which could have been utilized in steering the reaction to the tumultuous economic crisis. It must be pointed out, however, that not many other international actors had a recipe for solving the problems either. But it can be argued that the crisis and the resultant paralysis in Brussels justified the common strategy approach of the Amsterdam Treaty and made the decision of drafting one on Russia even more urgent.

The preparations for the drafting of the first common strategy on Russia were started in the aftermath of the crisis. During the autumn of 1998 the Council of Ministers instructed COREPER to prepare a progress report on the development of “comprehensive policy towards Russia.” The resultant report is a comprehensive survey of the challenges facing the European Union in Russia with the main emphasis put on the effects of the recent economic crisis. The main conclusion of the report can be summed up as a realization of the multi-faceted nature of problems in Russia and that an effective EU response requires a multidimensional policy, which takes into account all the aspects of the Russian reality as well.⁷⁴

The report was presented to the Vienna European Council, which decided on the preparation of common strategies on Russia, Ukraine, the Mediterranean region and Balkans, on the “understanding that the first common strategy will be on Russia.”⁷⁵ The

⁷² European Report 2339, 5 September 1998.

⁷³ European Report 2348, 7 October 1998.

⁷⁴ Venäjä: Yhtenäisen EU-politiikan kehityksessä saavutettu edistys.

⁷⁵ European Council in Vienna, December 1998, Presidency Conclusions, 74.

drafting of the common strategy on Russia was to be left to the German Presidency in the first part of the 1999.

In reality, the drafting had already begun during the Austrian Presidency. In addition to the already mentioned background reports, Germany together with the help of Finland, France and Great Britain had begun working on the topic in an informal manner. This, however, managed to upset the Austrians, as they felt somewhat sidelined in the process.

As a result of these preliminary consultations the German government approached the other member states with a letter in December. In the letter the German government described its preliminary guidelines for the drafting of the CSR and invited the member states to comment on how best to begin.

From the beginning of the actual German Presidency the initial drafting of the common strategy on Russia was to a large degree done in a small 'core' of most interested countries. In addition to Germany the group consisted of France, Great Britain and Finland.

However, from the very beginning the negotiations were shadowed by an uncertainty over the precise nature of the common strategy. As was discussed earlier, the wording to be found in the Amsterdam Treaty is very vague and does not offer a very good starting point for drafting actual strategies. Thus it did not come as a surprise that some voices emerged arguing that the common strategy on Russia faced the risk of becoming a shopping list of grand political ideas without anything specific to back them up. Especially France demanded that the member states should embark on a detailed debate about what the common strategy should really be about. The German Presidency, however, insisted that such detailed considerations would only slow down the process unnecessarily.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ European Report 2373, 13 January 1999.

In February the Council working group responsible for drafting the strategy was established. It was rather quick in fixing the main priorities of the strategy on the basis of the earlier work by the ‘core’: democracy, European stability, rule of law, investment climate, nuclear safety and organized crime. When compared to the earlier documents concerning Russia, the list of priorities, however, contained nothing new and the working group was faced with the task of coming up with the added value that the CSR should bring.⁷⁷ The possibility for adopting decisions on QMV was clearly not enough to be the main content for the strategy.

By March 1999 the draft had seen some more clarity in terms of the added value: it would come from the increased cross-pillar coordination within the European Union together with closer links between what is done at EU level and in the bilateral member state contacts with Russia.⁷⁸ However, there was a growing sense of urgency in the member states as the German Presidency was already halfway through its way without any significant progress in drafting the strategy. There was also a fear that the drafting of the first common strategy might end in failure, as the deadline of June Cologne European Council might not be met at all.

As a result, the March 22 session of the General Affairs Council reviewed the progress made on the common strategy on Russia. The GAC was, however, unable to offer any new insight into the strategy and thus sufficed to instruct the ambassadors to intensify their work with a clear aim of presenting a complete draft of the text to be finalised in the Council on May 17.⁷⁹

The drafting of the CSR was riddled with two major problems: financial resources to be allocated on implementing the strategy and the decision-making procedures. From the start there was a budding consensus between the member states and the Commission that the co-operation with Russia should not be given any new resources in the common strategy. Especially the southern member states were arguing that Russia together with

⁷⁷ European Report 2388, 6 March 1999.

⁷⁸ European Report 2392, 20 March 1999.

⁷⁹ European Report 2393, 24 March 1999.

the Eastern enlargement was already consuming too large a share of the scarce EU resources.

Moreover, some southern member states were afraid that the possibility of QMV could be extended in areas where it did not belong. The issue was raised because of the vague wording to be found in the Amsterdam Treaty, which stipulates that QMV is to be used when adopting joint actions, common positions or taking *any other decision* on the basis of a common strategy.⁸⁰

The issue where the problems of money and decision-making collided was that of the European Investment Bank's (EIB) role in the implementation of the common strategy on Russia. EIB does not have a mandate on granting loans to Russia. However, there has been a decision according to which the board of the EIB can on specific occasions grant loans to Russia. However, this is possible only through a unanimous vote in which a representative from every member state has one vote. The fear that especially the Spanish representative brought forward during the negotiations was that the CSR could be used as a cover for 'sneaking' the possibility of qualified majority voting in the EIB as well and thus *de facto* increasing the financial resources made available for co-operation with Russia.

This problem was finally resolved by adopting a declaration at the end of the document, which clearly states that in the implementation of the strategy *only* those common positions and joint actions which fall within the scope of Title V of TEU (i.e. CFSP) will be taken by QMV whereas other decisions will be taken according to "the appropriate decision-making procedures provided by the relevant provisions of the Treaties."⁸¹ Thus, the Spaniards were finally reassured that EIB would continue to grant loans to Russia only in unanimity.

⁸⁰ TEU Article 23.2.

⁸¹ Common Strategy on Russia.

The consensual result of the COREPER and Political Committee was presented to the General Affairs Council on May 17 1999, which endorsed the draft to be presented at the Cologne European Council. The heads of state and government then formally adopted the first Common Strategy on Russia almost without discussion.

The common strategy on Russia: what it says and what it means?

The document, adopted for the initial period of four years, opens with the European Union's vision of the future partnership with a "stable, democratic and prosperous Russia firmly anchored in a united Europe free of new dividing lines."⁸² The ensuing partnership is to be built on the "foundations of shared values enshrined in the common heritage of European civilization."⁸³

Moreover, the European Union has two strategic goals concerning Russia:

"a stable, open and pluralistic democracy in Russia, governed by the rule of law and underpinning a prosperous market economy benefiting alike all people of Russia and of the European Union"

and:

*"maintaining European stability, promoting global security and responding to the common challenges of the continent through intensified cooperation with Russia."*⁸⁴

At the heart of the CSR is the development of a political, or 'strategic' partnership with Russia. The main objective of the partnership is successful political and economic

⁸² Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia (CSR).

⁸³ CSR.

⁸⁴ CSR.

transformation of Russia – keeping in mind that the “main responsibility for Russia’s future lies with Russia itself.”⁸⁵

The CSR sets out four principal objectives concerning Russia: (i) consolidation of democracy, the rule of law and public institutions, (ii) integration of Russia into a common European economic and social space, (iii) co-operation to strengthen stability and security in Europe and beyond, and (iv) common challenges on the European continent. Based on these principles the documents spells out numerous “areas of action” where further measures are required, such as developing training programmes for Russian civil servants, promoting cultural and education exchanges, conducting high-level dialogue on economic issues, working with Russia to develop joint foreign policy initiatives and enhancing nuclear safety as well as overall environmental protection.

The list is exhaustive but unfortunately lacks any real proposals for concrete action. Thus it is not hard to come by sentences such as: “the situation in Russia calls for the use of appropriate mechanisms and means to strengthen such [public] institutions in terms of efficiency and responsibility.” In sum, the keywords to be found in the document are “examination”, “encouragement” and “support” with only a few references to active measures in order to get something specific done in/with Russia. Thus, instead of providing operational added value, the CSR acts as a broad policy framework for EU-Russia relations. In this respect the CSR has some similarities with the Northern Dimension initiative, which in the strategy is put to a subservient role as the instrument for regional cross-border co-operation with Russia.⁸⁶

What comes to the actual means and instruments that are put under the disposal of the CSR, the document treads the widest possible terrain stating that “all relevant instruments and means available to the Union, the Community and to the member states are to be used in the implementation.”⁸⁷ This all-encompassing approach has two serious shortcomings: how to actually determine what instruments are *actually* disposed (as the

⁸⁵ CSR.

⁸⁶ On the policy framework nature of the Northern Dimension, see Haukkala (1999).

⁸⁷ CSR.

thought of *all* the EU and national instruments being used in the implementation of the CSR sounds unrealistic) and how to coordinate/control the proper use of those means. These two aspects raise the further question of the level and seriousness of the political commitment to the agreed principles of the CSR in the member states as they are required to take the document into account at all times when dealing with Russia.

On the internal repercussions of the CSR, the European Union and its member states are obliged to develop the “coordination, coherence and complementarity of all aspects of their policy towards Russia.” In addition, the member states are obliged to “work together” within international organizations, such as the OSCE, Council of Europe, United Nations and IFIs (especially IMF). This is a tall order, especially when one keeps in mind that on the enforcement side the document is rather thin.

Moreover, the document urges the Council, the Commission and the member states to review “existing actions, programmes, instruments, and policies to ensure their consistency with this Strategy; and where there are inconsistencies, to make the necessary adjustments at the earliest review date.”⁸⁸ At a first glance this might seem as a rather strongly-worded obligation for the EU institutions and the member states but in reality the document lacks such clear-cut mechanisms, which would allow the consistent monitoring of especially the individual member states’ actions together with *credible* sanctions for those who fail to comply.

The CSR is to be implemented mainly by the individual Presidencies. Each Presidency is obliged to present the Council with a work plan for the implementation of the CSR. In the work plan, the Presidency sets out its own priorities for the development of the EU-Russia relations. In addition, the European Council is to be reported to with a review and evaluation of the CSR no less than annually. The main responsibility for this reviewing lies in the Council but the Commission “will contribute to the above within its competence.”⁸⁹

⁸⁸ CSR.

⁸⁹ CSR.

The short introduction of the common strategy on Russia above explicitly reveals the negotiation method used in drafting the document, which can be best described as a 'Christmas tree method'. Once the general principles, the bulk of the tree, were in place the member states were allowed to add their own decorations into the strategy. Thus, for example, Finland managed to enter a reference of the Northern Dimension and Sweden added the importance of free media.

The Christmas tree method has, however, proven unsatisfactory in reality. The document lacks agreement on the most important issue-areas and lacks a definition of clear priorities within those areas that are singled out as being important. Moreover, the document is a 'fair weather strategy', i.e. it does not take into account or anticipate that there could be serious problems in Russia and/or in EU-Russia relations, which would require a structured and strategic response from the European Union.

Another thing, which has to be kept in mind when assessing the nature of the common strategy on Russia, is that it is part of the European Union's *public diplomacy* towards Russia. The very fact that the member states were from the beginning engaged in a process resulting in a public document is something that has perhaps to a certain degree 'tainted' the whole process of actually generating a truly 'strategic' document. Thus, the EU and its member states were forced to take into account the reactions on the other side of the table – even though they were not actively consulted in the matter. This can at least partially explain the 'fair weather' nature of the document.

To sum up, the end-result, the common strategy on Russia, lacks such strategic elements, which would have been necessary if the original aim of the member states, a coherent and consistent EU policy towards Russia, was to be achieved.

III THE STRATEGIC EXPERIENCE ON RUSSIA AFTER THE ADOPTION OF THE COMMON STRATEGY ON RUSSIA

The impact of the second war of Chechnya on the Implementation of the CSR

In the early days of July the Finnish Presidency issued the first work plan for the implementation of the common strategy on Russia. The Finns took a very pragmatic and down-to-earth approach to the work plan. The document, which is only a little over three pages long goes through the main issue-areas of the CSR and suggests certain measures that Finland was going to take during its Presidency.⁹⁰

The main emphasis in the Finnish work plan is put on increasing dialogue with Russia on many different levels and sectors ranging from a high-level political, security and economic dialogue to a more informal exchange of words on organized crime and justice and home affairs.⁹¹

Most of the sectors of co-operation are backed up by more concrete measures, such as organizing seminars and working groups. The most important feature of the document, however, deals with the internal cohesion of the European Union as the Finns stress that diplomatic missions of the member states and the European Commission delegation in Russia will be asked to enhance their mutual consultations in order to increase exchange information and coordination.⁹²

It is of course purely anecdotal but it seems to be that every time there is an important qualitative change in the nature of EU-Russia relations, problems in Chechnya surface and manage to grind the positive momentum in the relations to a standstill. This was true in the aftermath of the signing of the PCA in 1994 and the same happened after the adoption of the common strategy on Russia. Barely had the Finnish Presidency had time

⁹⁰ Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia. Presidency's Work Plan, July 9 1999.

⁹¹ Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia. Presidency's Work Plan, July 9 1999.

⁹² Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia. Presidency's Work Plan, July 9 1999.

to prepare the first work plan for the implementation of the common strategy and the new Commission led by Romano Prodi begun to take offices when the Chechen bandits made their attack in Dagestan in August 2000, which proved to be the starting gun for the Second war of Chechnya.

The initial EU responses to Russia's situation were sympathetic. On August 13 the Finnish Presidency issued a declaration in which the European Union recognized the territorial integrity of Russia and condemned the establishment of the "so called independent Islamic State of Dagestan." However, the declaration calls upon Russia to use "proportionate force" in restoring order in the "Dagestan Republic of Russia."⁹³

The wording of the declaration is very clear about the legal status of Dagestan as a subject of the Russian Federation. In addition, Russia's right of restoring order in the republic was openly recognized. It is only the amount of force that is to be used in the operation that was raising some eyebrows in the European Union at this stage.

By the end of September it was becoming clear that the EU fears about the extent of the use of force were justified as Russia's Security Council expanded the "anti-terrorist campaign" into Chechnya. However, on September 20 - while the warring was about to start in Chechnya - the EU troika met with foreign minister Igor Ivanov in New York where they expressed their continued moral support for Russia. The main concern visible then was the fear that president Yeltsin might use the events as an excuse for declaring a state of emergency and thus postponing the December Duma elections, which were beginning to look more and more unfavourable to the Yeltsin regime.⁹⁴

On October 7 – after the beginning of heavy bombing and fighting in Chechnya – the EU foreign ministers' troika was in Moscow and the tones of voice had been changed. The Finnish foreign minister Tarja Halonen, leader of the delegation, reaffirmed EU's support for Russia's territorial integrity and condemned terrorism in all forms but also questioned

⁹³ EU Presidency Declaration, August 13 1999.

⁹⁴ European Report 2436, September 22 1999.

the methods Russia was applying in restoring order in Dagestan and Chechnya. Halonen also called for dialogue “with the responsible leaders of North Caucasus.”⁹⁵

The tone of EU condemnation grew harsher hand in hand with the escalation of violence and growing number of civilian casualties in Chechnya. The General Affairs Council on October 12 called for political solution to the crisis and endorsed the OSCE’s role in resolving the conflict.⁹⁶ The following EU-Russia summit in Helsinki on October 22 revealed the tensions in EU-Russia relations. Although Chechnya dominated the discussions the formal communiqué deals mainly with PCA related problems and ponders the enhancing of political dialogue between the parties. On Chechnya the document notes dryly “the European Union and the Russian Federation exchanged views on the situation in the Northern Caucasus.”⁹⁷

In the press statement that followed the summit, the Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen devoted a lot of attention on Chechnya. While “recognizing the territorial integrity of the Russia Federation, and condemning terrorism in all its forms” the statement is a strongly worded criticism of the Russian actions in Chechnya. The statement calls for a “rapid de-escalation” of hostilities and the beginning of negotiations to reach a political settlement.⁹⁸

The October summit also witnessed the handing of Russia’s EU strategy, which was presented by the newly appointed Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. In drafting their respective EU strategy the Russians also returned a favour made earlier by Brussels, as Moscow refused to consult EU organs when drafting its own EU strategy.⁹⁹ In fact, the drafting of Russia’s EU strategy can at least partly be interpreted as stemming from the frustration of not being able to influence the drafting of the CSR earlier in the year.

⁹⁵ European Report 2441, October 9 1999.

⁹⁶ European Report 2442, October 13 1999.

⁹⁷ EU-Russia Summit Joint Statement, October 22 1999.

⁹⁸ EU-Russia Summit Press Statement by PM Paavo Lipponen, October 22 1999.

⁹⁹ European Report 2437, September 25 1999.

The negative impact of the second war of Chechnya reached its height in December as the Helsinki European Council issued a declaration on the topic. Faced with what was believed to be a Russian ultimatum against the remaining citizens in the besieged and already heavily bombed Grozny the heads of state and government issued a very harshly worded declaration.

In the declaration the European Council condemns the intense bombardments of Chechen cities. Although Russia's territorial integrity and its right for battling terrorism are once again acknowledged, the declaration states that such a fight cannot "under any circumstances, warrant the destruction of cities" nor "that a whole population be considered as terrorist." Moreover, the European Council declares that Russia's behaviour is in contradiction with the basic principles of humanitarian law and the commitments of the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The European Council thus calls for Russia not to carry out the ultimatum against Grozny, end the bombing and the "disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force" against the Chechen population, allow safe delivery of humanitarian aid in Chechnya and start political dialogue with the elected Chechen authorities.¹⁰⁰

Moreover, the declaration decides to "draw the consequences from this situation": the implementation of the common strategy on Russia should be reviewed, some provisions of PCA should be suspended and the trade provisions applied strictly and TACIS 2000 should be limited to priority areas, including human rights, the rule of law, support for civil society and nuclear safety.¹⁰¹

The declaration ends with an almost emotional plead:

"Russia is a major partner for the European Union. The Union has constantly expressed its willingness to accompany Russia in its transition towards a modern and democratic state. But

¹⁰⁰ Helsinki European Council, Declaration on Chechnya, December 10 1999.

¹⁰¹ Helsinki European Council, Declaration on Chechnya, December 10 1999.

Russia must live up to its obligations if the strategic partnership is to be developed. The European Union does not want Russia to isolate herself from Europe.”¹⁰²

This statement reveals that the conflict in Chechnya had ‘helped’ the European Union and its member states to find out what the baseline in their relations with Moscow and in the common strategy on Russia was, after all: Russia is the most important partner in Europe and Russia’s future development has a vast impact on EU’s own future. Moreover, the main priorities in the European Union’s policy *vis-à-vis* Russia had been clarified: territorial integrity of the Russian state, at least minimal (and developing) level of democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law and freedom of media.

In the aftermath of the Helsinki European Council the External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten was pondering the possible sanctions against Russia. He flashed the possibility of suspending the MFN status granted to Russia in the PCA. However, in justifying the possible decisions Mr. Patten made a very odd remark: “Europe has to consider European public opinion, just as much as Russia has to consider Russian public opinion.”¹⁰³ At the time rather vague wording gets its real meaning only in the light of the Feira European Council still some six months away, which is to be discussed in more detail below. However, it suffices to say that what Mr. Patten does here is hinting at the rather superficial nature of EU reactions in the first place: EU *was* acting under the pressure of public opinion instead of sincerely trying to uphold the ‘universal European values’ of human rights, which undeniably were being brutalised by the Russian forces in Chechnya.

The deepest dark in the EU-Russia relations also saw a slim ray of light on December 17 as the Council adopted the first Joint Action under the CSR. “The Joint Action establishing a European Union Cooperation Programme for Non-proliferation and Disarmament in the Russian Federation” was adopted in a rather unlikely place of the Fisheries Council. The decision was, however, not an easy thing for the member states to agree on. The programme itself is financially rather modest but it included elements,

¹⁰² Helsinki European Council, Declaration on Chechnya, December 10 1999.

¹⁰³ European Report 2460, December 18 1999.

which were unacceptable especially for the Austrians but also to the Swedes. However, the possibility of adopting the decision on QMV did force the two opposing member states into concessions and the decision was finally reached without voting.

The Cooperation Programme is intended to help Russians in the dismantling of infrastructures and armaments industries as well as in the conversion of former military sites. The main part of the programme is the chemical weapons pilot destruction plant in Gorny in the Saratov *oblast* where the work will begin in April 2001. The EU has made available Euro 8.9 million for the years 1999 and 2000 for the programme. The programme will also evaluate in a very strict manner whether Russia has fully cooperated in the implementation of the programme. In cases of mismanagement the EU can suspend the programme.¹⁰⁴

The General Affairs Council gathered on January 24 2000 to decide on sanctions against Russia. The Commission and the General Secretariat of the Council had drawn a list of possible sanctions and their possible effects on future EU-Russia relations. The conclusion seemed to be that EU had very little effective means of sanctioning Russia.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the heat of the moment felt so urgently in December had surpassed to a large extent and there were signs that the member states were starting to regret the harsh wording of the Chechnya declaration. However, the crisis in Chechnya was still acute and the member states were forced to take some measures against Russia. Thus the GAC agreed on measures, which in the press were soon characterised as “pseudo sanctions”, which was interpreted that EU was putting the interest of long-term relations with Russia ahead of short-term “anxieties” over Russian behaviour in Chechnya.¹⁰⁶

In the Council conclusions the fighting in Chechnya is downgraded to one of several “issues of disagreement and concern.” The GAC also decided to suspend the signature of the Science and Technology Agreement with Russia. Other measures to be taken

¹⁰⁴ Council Joint Action establishing a European Union Cooperation Programme for Non-proliferation and Disarmament in the Russian Federation, December 15 1999. Agence Europe 7618, December 18 1999 and 7625, January 3 2000.

¹⁰⁵ European Report 2468, January 22 2000.

¹⁰⁶ European Report 2469, January 26 2000.

included the Commission's decision not to use Euro 30 million worth of unspent food aid from 1999 in 2000 – an inconsequential decision at the time as Russia was hardly in need of any food aid anymore. The Commission was invited to re-focus the TACIS 2000 programme to areas promoting democracy, humanitarian assistance and promoting networks in civil society. Translated into euros this decision meant that the TACIS funding for year 2000 dropped from euro 130 million to euro 40 million. In addition, the Commission was invited to suspend the extension of additional GSP preferences for Russia and take a hard stance on any Russian infringements of the PCA.¹⁰⁷

All in all the sanctions adopted in January were rather modest and did not hurt Russia in any significant way. Yet the December declaration and the following threat of sanctions were taken rather seriously in Moscow. The January decisions were taken in Brussels amidst heavy pressure from Moscow as the Russian diplomats branded the forthcoming EU measures as an “inappropriate mix of trade and politics” and threatened that any sanctions would “have very negative consequences for EU-Russia relations because this will oblige us to retaliate.”¹⁰⁸ It is evident that these Russian sentiments were taken into serious consideration by the member states as the sanctions were fashioned in such a way as not to endanger the long-term relationship with Russia over Chechnya.

Because of Chechnya the Portuguese Presidency presented the Council with its work plan for the implementation of the common strategy on Russia as late as on February 15. Because of the ongoing crisis the Portuguese settled for a very limited work plan, with only small references to actions and initiatives with immediate concern on Russia, such as strict implementation of the PCA, initiatives for the consolidation of democracy, the rule of law and public institutions, cooperation to reinforce stability and security in Europe and beyond, and common challenges on European continent (diseases, organized crime etc.).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ European Report 2469, January 26 2000.

¹⁰⁸ European Report 2466, January 15 2000.

¹⁰⁹ Agence Europe 7656, February 16 2000.

During the winter and spring the acute sense of not being able to influence Russia's behaviour in Chechnya gained ground in the European Union. Despite of the harsh EU rhetoric and some symbolic sanctions the Russian troops continued their offensive in Chechnya capturing the capital Grozny on February 1. The sensation of not being able to influence Russia's behaviour was accompanied by a growing realization that the member states had a lot to lose in terms of focusing too acutely on the Chechen problem alone as the member states risked politically alienating Moscow from the 'strategic partnership' with the European Union. Thus a more pragmatic interpretation of EU-Russia relations started to gain ground in the member states.

On national level the member states were most reluctant to apply negative measures against Russia. In fact, it can be argued that the member states used the European foreign policy and common strategy on Russia as avenues through which they expressed collective disapproval of the Russian actions while using them simultaneously as shields under which they were able to carry on business as usual in their bilateral ties with Moscow.

Especially the bigger member states were prone to do this. This was especially visible in the bilateral exchanges with Russia where the question of Chechnya was bluntly left to the sidelines. For example, in March the British Prime Minister Tony Blair visited the yet to be elected acting president Vladimir Putin in seeking to establish close relations with the future Russian president. The trip managed to show Moscow that there were serious cracks in the EU front on Russia and that in the United Kingdom – as well as in other member states - the bilateral ties were considered superior to the common strategy on Russia and the cohesiveness of European foreign policy.

The German chancellor Gerhard Schröder was not much slower than Blair when in mid-June he rushed to greet the newly elected President Putin in Berlin. Chancellor Schröder declared Germany and Russia as vital "strategic partners" while the campaign in

Chechnya was still in full force and the Feira European Council had yet to decide on the formal dismantling of the sanctions against Russia.¹¹⁰

Despite of these actions by individual member states the official EU line remained much harder. In its conclusions the March 20 General Affairs Council restated the official EU position on Russia: immediate cease-fire, political dialogue with representatives of Chechnya and secured access for aid agencies and other NGOs to give humanitarian assistance on the ground.¹¹¹

The election of Vladimir Putin as Russia's president on March 26 was greeted in the member states as a new beginning in the EU-Russia relations. The Portuguese Presidency's statement stressed the new impetus that the partnership would now gain new impetus while "trusting" that the new president would bring a lasting and peaceful settlement in Chechnya.¹¹² This change of EU mood was visible in the official EU-Russia exchanges as well. For example, the conclusions of the Co-operation Council on April 10 stress the importance of "long-term partnership" while the Chechnya received only passing attention.¹¹³

The EU-Russia summit in Moscow on May 29 radiated mutual good will and positive expectations of the future. President Putin stated that Russia regarded the European Union as a top priority in its foreign relations and that a political solution is being sought in Chechnya. Also Russia's new and extremely ambitious economic programme was given an enthusiastic reception by the troika. The joint statement was filled with positive references to "mutual interests", "partnership" and "reinforced political dialogue". Russia emphasised its "European vocation" and promised that it will remain "a constructive, reliable and responsible partner in working towards a new multi-polar system of international relations, based on strict implementation of the international law."¹¹⁴ In addition, all that the statement said about Chechnya was: "The EU expressed its well-

¹¹⁰ International Herald Tribune, June 17 2000.

¹¹¹ General Affairs Council, conclusions, March 20 2000.

¹¹² European Report 2487, March 29 2000.

¹¹³ European Report 2491, April 12 2000.

¹¹⁴ European Report 2505 June 1 2000.

known concerns about the situation in Chechnya and took note of the information provided by President Putin on the latest developments. It welcomed the intention of the Russian leadership to reach a political solution. The EU acknowledged the improvement in the access of humanitarian aid organisations and drew the attention of the Russian side to the continuing need for better working conditions.”¹¹⁵ This almost complete withdrawal of EU on Chechnya acted as the prelude to the forthcoming Feira European Council, which would end the sanctions and herald the new era of ‘strategic partnership’ with Russia.

The Feira European Council: towards a more pragmatic policy on Russia?

The Feira European Council conclusions acted as the graveyard for the growingly inconvenient Helsinki declaration. They also brought about a new phase of “constructive engagement” in the EU-Russia relations. In the Presidency Conclusions the passage on Russia begins: “a strong and healthy partnership *must be maintained* between the Union and Russia.”¹¹⁶ Thus, the pragmatic maintenance of the partnership with Russia is elevated to a highest principle of EU-Russia relations. However, this partnership is to be built on common values, especially respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The European Council offers its support for the continued reforms in Russia and invites the Council and the Commission to review the situation in July and re-start the implementation of the TACIS in full.

In reality, however, the initiative for the re-starting of TACIS and reconsideration of sanctions against Russia came from the European Commission. The Commission had monitored the actions of the member states during the spring 2000 and it had come to the conclusion that the sanctions were not working and that the member states were not acting consistently in line with their own earlier decisions. Thus, when the Commission

¹¹⁵ European Report 2505 June 1 2000.

¹¹⁶ European Council in Santa Maria da Feira, Presidency Conclusions.

saw an opening for releasing the European Union from a very inconvenient gridlock it sought action and managed to influence the member states' decisions in Feira.

On the basis of the Feira conclusions the General Affairs Council in its July 10 session agreed that the TACIS is to be reinstated and that in the future the EU energies should be put into building relations with Russia instead of limiting them. However, the GAC urged the EU institutions to keep a sharp eye on all future Russian activities and urged the coming Presidencies to gear their CSR work plans more towards supporting economic and democratic development and strengthening independent media and civil society in Russia. In addition, a decision was made that although European Union recalls its attachment to Russia's territorial integrity as well as its condemnation of terrorism and the indiscriminate use of force emphasizing the importance of political solution in Chechnya.¹¹⁷

On one hand the decisions can be seen as a beginning of a more pragmatic and down-to-earth phase in EU-Russia relations. On the other it can be argued that the decisions represent a cynical retreat to *Realpolitik* and a sacrifice of the principles of 'universal European values' as the cornerstones for the strategic partnership between the European Union and Russia. The complex realities of international relations and foreign policy decision-making are never black or white and this applies to the Feira conclusions as well.

The European Union and its member states had drawn the conclusions that as the Chechnya problem was not going to go away and there was precious little that the member states could do in solving the problem then it was perhaps wiser to let the events take their course and cherish the overall EU-Russia relations. The choice can be seen as reflecting the realization that EU risked to trade off its *future* relations and possibilities of influencing developments in Russia on an issue it could not in reality do anything about.

¹¹⁷ European Report 2516 July 12 2000 and Agence Europe 7755, July 10 2000.

Another thing, which might have influenced European Union's decision to give up on sanctioning Russia, is the strong positive value that the EU has received in Moscow during the first months of the Putin Presidency. On many occasions Russia has declared its willingness to be a European power, the importance of European Union in Russia's foreign relations and Russia's continued readiness for the development of a strategic partnership with the European Union. These are all positive trends in Moscow that risked to being sacrificed with the continued disapproval of the Russian actions in Brussels. However, it can be argued that Moscow was acutely aware of these sentiments in the European Union and was perhaps able to use these currents in the member states to its own advantage through the carefully crafted smile campaign that was directed towards the EU after the election of Vladimir Putin as President.

CONCLUSIONS

The common strategy on Russia can be seen as a product of a growing frustration in the European Union. Internally the frustration stems mainly from the lacklustre performance of the CFSP during its first years of existence. Another source of internal frustration came from the difficulties in agreeing over increased flexibility and especially QMV in the CFSP in the 1996 IGC, which resulted in the adoption of the somewhat artificial common strategy concept in the first place.

But this frustration has also an external element, namely the poor performance of the reforms in Russia together with the recurring political crises and relapses to old-fashioned soviet-type 'power politics', which at times have left the European Union in a state of shock of not knowing how to best respond.

However, when starting to analyze the importance of common strategies in general, two basic questions have to be kept in mind. At the heart of the matter lie two intertwining questions: on one hand there is the actual need to make the European Union more effective and cohesive actor in international relations through increased planning and deliberation and adopting increased use of qualified majority voting in the CFSP. On the other hand, the introduction of common strategies can also be seen as a mere gesture intended to give the impression that increased actor capability is actively sought by the Union and its member states. In this case the adoption of common strategies can be seen as detrimental for the CFSP as it is likely to widen the *capability-expectations gap* even further.¹¹⁸

As has been shown in this paper the real issue behind the adoption of common strategies was the question of decision-making procedures in CFSP. The provisions in the Amsterdam Treaty reflect the reconciliation between the United Kingdom's but also

¹¹⁸ Christopher Hill (1994) has argued that the excitement that followed the adoption of CFSP in the Maastricht Treaty made the expectations too high when compared to the actual capabilities it possessed. This has led to an emergence of a capability-expectations gap (CEG) both within and outside the European Union. Hill's argument was that the CEG is potentially very dangerous as it can leave the non-members counting too much on the EU or the Union trying to implement unrealistic policies (Hill 1994, 113).

France's insistence on consensus and Germany's (but also Benelux's) strive for increased majority voting. This basic dualism is reflected in the early commentary on the Amsterdam Treaty, where the German commentator chose to stress the importance of the increase in the use of QMV while his French counterpart left it entirely unmentioned¹¹⁹. Nevertheless, it has to be stressed that the existence of the principle of QMV in the CFSP is important in itself regardless of the fact that so far it has not been used and is not very likely going to be used in the future either.

All in all, the story behind the common strategy on Russia is that of good intentions. In the Intergovernmental Conference of 1996 the member states sought to give the battered CFSP with a new impetus and coherence but fell short off the mark. In the negotiations for the first common strategy on Russia the member states once again wanted to have a "strong document, which would show the world the new operational side of the CFSP"¹²⁰ but ended up repeating the main conclusions of the previous documents with very little operational value added.

Thus, when the CSR entered the implementation phase during the Finnish Presidency it was already dawning to the parties involved that the common strategy on Russia as such was almost 'unimplementable'. To make the matters worse, the beginning of implementation coincided with the final months of the Yeltsin regime when Russia was almost entirely paralyzed with the only signs of life being the murderous military campaign in Chechnya.

Yet there is more to the common strategy on Russia than meets the eye and it would be preliminary and wrong to rush into concluding that the common strategy on Russia has been a failure. Instead, we can approach the common strategy on Russia from different angles, which will give us a certain measure of knowledge about the impact and importance of the CSR so far. In the following, four different interpretations of the CSR are offered.

¹¹⁹ Hoyer and Moscovici 1997, 41. The German Hoyer stated that the increase in the use of QMV will lead to a situation where 'the recourse to vital national interests and the veto will be much more difficult'.

¹²⁰ As the early mood in the beginning of the drafting the CSR was described in my interviews.

The non-strategic nature of the CSR as the strategy vis-à-vis Russia: The ‘Christmas tree method’, which was applied in drafting the common strategy on Russia reveals that although there is a basic consensus on the overall importance of Russia to the European Union, the member states are nevertheless incapable of agreeing on what the real EU priorities on Russia should be. Instead the document represents a bad end-result of competing national interests and intergovernmental logrolling with numerous side-payments in order to satisfy the needs and concerns of all the different member states.

David Allen, who in 1997 noted, that the European Union does not seem to have “a clear and coherent policy” towards Russia, has also suggested this. He also asked: “is this because the member states have drawn the correct conclusion that they can have little impact on political developments, and so, the less said the better? Or, are they handicapped by the CFSP procedures of the EU, which reconfirm the parallel existence of diverging national foreign policies?”¹²¹ When assessing the impact of the PCA in 1997, David Allen declared that the “stick and carrot” policy of the European Union towards Russia has been only a limited success. According to Allen, the problem is the inability of the EU member states to be clear about specific, as opposed to general, political objectives.¹²² This would confirm the latter argument put forward by Allen.

But the recent history of the EU-Russia relations seems to confirm the first point as well: it is beginning to look like the member states have realized on one hand the rather limited leverage they have on Russia and on the other hand the complex and interdependent nature of problems and challenges that Russia poses on EU. In fact, a coherent strategy, or policy, on Russia would require tackling many delicate and difficult issues, which might force the European Union and its member states into making many difficult decisions on Russia. Thus it is possible to perceive the non-strategic nature of the common strategy on Russia as a way of avoiding certain difficult subjects and issue-areas, which would have to be confronted if a truly strategic CFSP would be aspired.

¹²¹ Allen 1997, 233.

¹²² Allen 1997, 230.

Thus, rather than having a full-fledged and coherent strategy, which would allow for a flexible response to the evolving events in Russia, the European Union has instead been forced to reaction, improvisation and relying on *ad hoc* arrangements. However, the conclusions to be drawn from this fact should not be too harsh, as the fact that EU lacks strategy does not translate into not having a *policy* on Russia. Although the EU has been frequently criticized of not having a pro-active long-term strategy towards events, its habitual reactive responses towards international events can still be called a policy¹²³: the EU has chosen a strategy of non-strategy on Russia.

The CSR as a part of a learning process within the European Union: This learning process has two dimensions, internal and external.

Internally the CSR as well as the whole common strategy concept can be seen as a way of approaching those “common values and fundamental interests”¹²⁴ that the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union is supposed to safeguard. Thus the European Union and its member states are engaged in a process that enables them to find out where do their most important interests lie and what they might be. Thus it is too early to judge the CSR as a failure on the grounds of its non-strategic nature and very vague all-encompassing approach as it is only a starting point in a wider process, which in time might lead into a more detailed and coherent understanding of European Union’s external priorities. For example, it is evident that the second war of Chechnya has helped the member states to grasp what their basic interests are in Russia as the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation was elevated almost to the highest principle in EU-Russia relations. And this realization has been built on the basis of the principles of the common strategy on Russia.

¹²³ Smith 1999, 4.

¹²⁴ TEU Article 11.1.

Moreover, there is a ‘psychological’ side to the internal impact of the CSR as the mere existence of the possibility of QMV in CFSP in building consensus among the member states should not be underestimated either.

The common strategy on Russia can also be seen as an external learning process. As was shown earlier, the European Union has for the best part of the last decade been busily engaged in drafting a document after a document on Russia. Although the usual pattern has been to build the latest one on the ‘copy and paste technique’ of the previous one, the whole business of drafting these documents shows a certain approach of seeking knowledge and trying to understand what is taking place in Russia. This is nowhere more so than in the European Parliament’s report from 1998 where Russia is approached through its thousand years of history.¹²⁵

Moreover, the obligation adopted in the common strategy on Russia that every Presidency must prepare a work plan for the implementation of the CSR is a novelty, which might yield long-term harvest. Now even the most disinterested member states are forced to think about their own as well as wider EU relations with Russia and write down a document consisting of the things that they think should be a priority in EU-Russia relations. In the future, an interesting comparative research task will be to find out how do these work plans differ and if there are certain countries that are more prone to make more detailed, innovative and operational documents where as some other member states might just pay lip service to the obligation and more or less copy the work plans of previous Presidencies.

The common strategies as a way of ‘sneaking’ the qualified majority voting into CFSP:
As was shown earlier the common strategy concept was the only possible solution to the problem of how to increase majority voting in the CFSP. The negotiation positions of the member states were rigid until the French came up with a ‘gimmick’ how to introduce QMV in order to find a suitable compromise with especially the German insistence on the

¹²⁵ European Parliament, ‘Report on the Commission Communication “The European Union and Russia: the future relationship” and the Action Plan “The European Union and Russia: Future Relations”’, A4-0060/98, 12 February 1998.

increase in QMV. In doing so the common strategy concept proved successful in the Amsterdam Treaty as both the proponents and the opposition were in the end of the day satisfied.¹²⁶

In addition, to injecting CFSP with qualified majority voting the member states have also managed to effectively control the use of it. In fact, there is a triple lock that can be used in preventing the Council from using QMV in implementing common strategies: the common strategy on Russia, adopted in unanimity and crafted in such a detailed, yet non-conclusive manner that voting on the grounds of the document is nearly impossible. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, the member states themselves are strongly committed to seeking consensus in CFSP matters. Moreover, there is the so-called escape clause, which allows even a single member state to veto any vote on grounds of “national policy”. And the final arbiter in possible conflict situations is the European Council, once again unanimously.

The CSR as an experiment in increasing coherence in the external relations of the European Union: This interpretation puts the main emphasis on the word “common” instead of the word “strategy”. Philosophically the whole common strategy concept is very ambitious, as it requires the usage of all the instruments that are available to the European Union, including the Commission and the member states. In order to be coherent such a horizontal approach requires effective coordination from all the players.

Although the cohesion of the European Union’s activities during the relatively short period of implementation has been far from perfect, the common strategy on Russia has been successful in injecting a certain measure of added cohesion into EU-Russia relations. Although the member states are still willing to foster their bilateral relations with Russia on the expense of the common approach the strategy has forced all the players into taking into consideration the existence of common strategy.

¹²⁶ Dinan 1999, 303.

The CSR is also yielding some concrete results in terms of cohesion as the Council Secretariat with the help of the Commission is preparing numerous inventories on European Union's and its member states' activities with Russia. The hoped end-result in increased coordination between the various bilateral and multilateral programmes and initiatives. The coordination approach can of course be criticized as the usual EU trick to foster added value without investing any money or new energies into co-operation but even these meagre results can be considered as an improvement as previously not even knowledge about all the existing activities within the EU existed.

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