

THE POWER OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

What explains the EU's (lack of) influence on Russia?

Tuomas Forsberg

L'Harmattan | « [Politique européenne](#) »

2013/1 n° 39 | pages 22 à 42

ISSN 1623-6297

ISBN 9782343008356

Article disponible en ligne à l'adresse :

<http://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-europeenne-2013-1-page-22.htm>

!Pour citer cet article :

Tuomas Forsberg, « The power of the European Union. What explains the EU's (lack of) influence on Russia? », *Politique européenne* 2013/1 (n° 39), p. 22-42.

DOI 10.3917/poeu.039.0022

Distribution électronique Cairn.info pour L'Harmattan.

© L'Harmattan. Tous droits réservés pour tous pays.

La reproduction ou représentation de cet article, notamment par photocopie, n'est autorisée que dans les limites des conditions générales d'utilisation du site ou, le cas échéant, des conditions générales de la licence souscrite par votre établissement. Toute autre reproduction ou représentation, en tout ou partie, sous quelque forme et de quelque manière que ce soit, est interdite sauf accord préalable et écrit de l'éditeur, en dehors des cas prévus par la législation en vigueur en France. Il est précisé que son stockage dans une base de données est également interdit.

The power of the EU: what explains the EU's (lack of) influence on Russia?

There is much disagreement and confusion as to how much power the European Union actually has in international politics, whether it is increasing or on the wane, and how the EU can best use what power it has. Although no single analytical framework suffices for understanding power in international politics, it is important to be able to understand what difference alternative theories of power make. First, power can be seen in terms of its sources: military, economic and normative. Second, it can be conceived in terms of resources, perceptions, and intersubjective understandings. Third, in addition to resources, effective power also depends on strategy and will to use power. Fourth, the assumption that the more powerful party is always able to impose its will might be mistaken. Because power depends on context, there are many instances where it is unreasonable to expect that the EU could influence Russia, regardless of the former's resources or strategic skill. This article compares these four basic ways to understand power and applies them to EU - Russia relations. I argue that explaining the success or failure of the EU to advance its interests concerning Russia has little to do with the traditional understanding of power as military capability. On the contrary, much more attention should be paid to the other dimensions of power.

La puissance de l'UE : comment expliquer l'influence de l'UE (et sa perte) sur la Russie ?

Il existe de nombreux désaccords et confusions lorsque l'on cherche à interroger la puissance réelle de l'UE dans la politique internationale. Connaît-elle une augmentation ou un déclin ? Quelle est la meilleure manière pour l'Europe d'utiliser le pouvoir dont elle dispose ? Parce qu'aucun cadre analytique ne suffit à lui seul à appréhender la notion de puissance dans la politique internationale, il est essentiel de cerner les différentes approches alternatives qui considèrent et cherchent à analyser cette dimension. Selon une première approche, la puissance peut être considérée en fonction de ses sources constitutives : militaires, économique et normative. Pour une seconde lecture, elle mérite d'être conçue en termes de ressources, de perceptions et d'interactions subjectifs. Une troisième démarche ajoute aux ressources, la stratégie et les pratiques considérant qu'elles offrent une compréhension supplémentaire de la puissance. Enfin, la dernière vision estime que l'hypothèse selon laquelle la partie la plus puissante impose toujours sa volonté peut se révéler contredite en raison de l'importance du contexte. Cet article compare ces quatre lectures en les appliquant à l'UE et à ses relations avec la Russie. Nous chercherons à démontrer pourquoi l'explication du succès ou de l'échec de l'UE pour promouvoir ses intérêts vis-à-vis de la Russie a peu avoir avec la compréhension des marqueurs traditionnels de la puissance telle que la capacité militaire. Au contraire, une attention particulière sera apportée aux autres dimensions qui structurent ce registre européen.

The power of the European Union

What explains the EU's (lack of) influence on Russia?

Tuomas Forsberg

Université de Tampere, Finlande

There are many hopes and fears related to the European Union's position in world politics. The European Union has tried to boost its role as a global actor. Some member states and political actors have resisted what they see as overly ambitious plans for the EU's international role, and other global powers have shown mixed attitudes towards any accretion of the EU's international influence. As Antoine Mégie and Frédéric Mérand note in their introduction to this special issue, scholars and commentators have diverse and often disparate views on the present influence and the future development of the EU. The optimists maintain that the Union already contributes significantly to many international developments, and believe that it will become a new superpower. The pessimists on the other hand consider EU foreign policy ineffective, and believe the power of the EU in world politics to be declining as new power centres are emerging.

The key concept in these various discussions of the EU's international role is power. Analysts of the EU's role in world politics have talked of a “superpower”, “great power”, “weak power”, “trading power”, “market power”, “civilian power”, “normative power”, “ethical power”, “soft power”, “ambivalent power”, “transformative power”, “structural power”. This proliferation of cognate words is hardly surprising, power after all being a central theme in political science. Unfortunately however, power is such a complex and contested notion that there is little agreement on what it means, nor is it always clear that discussants are even talking of the same thing when they invoke it.

Because of the theoretical complexity and conceptual confusion, it may seem tempting to abandon the concept of power altogether in favour of terms such as “influence” or “leverage”. But it is scarcely possible to try to circumvent complex ontological, epistemological and methodological questions related to the concept of power through terminological changes. If merely swept

under the carpet, they will sooner or later return to haunt us. Admittedly, the mainstream conceptual discussion of power is burdened by many canonical approaches that are not always helpful in empirical analysis, but the relevant research questions still linger: in what circumstances does the EU have power in international affairs? If and when it does not have power, then why not? If there is a gap between expectations and capabilities, how can this be explained (Hill, 1993)?

Nowhere has the ineffectualness of EU foreign policy become more glaring than in the relations between the EU and Russia, despite the idea of a strategic partnership between the two (Averre, 2005, 175-202; Piccardo, 2010; Haukkala, 2010). According to former European Commissioner for External Affairs Chris Patten, “dealing with Russia has probably been the biggest failure in the attempt to make European foreign policy” (Patten, 2009). A Power Audit on EU-Russia Relations, conducted by the prestigious European Council on Foreign Affairs, found in 2007 that the EU has been largely unable to influence Russia, despite being the far larger of the two powers in conventional terms (Leonard and Popescu, 2007). In the view of Hiski Haukkala, “the Union has failed to reach practically any of the original objectives with Russia” (Haukkala, 2009). Others have been somewhat more optimistic: Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, for example, conclude that “the record of EU-Russia relations is thus mixed, with evidence of EU influence in relation to economic matters” (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006). Even more positively, Steve Marsh and Hans Mackenstein contend that the diverse programmes have enabled “the EU to be far more intrusive in Russian affairs than any other actor” (Marsh and Mackenstein, 2005). Yet concrete achievements in EU-Russia relations remain limited. The four common spaces agreed upon in 2003 have progressed little, and despite mutual rhetorical emphasis on a strategic partnership the EU and Russia have failed to conclude a new treaty to replace the outdated Partnership and Cooperation Agreement from 1994.

In short, the widely shared understanding is that Russia mainly represents a case where the EU has failed to have any appreciable foreign policy impact. If that is the case, what explains it? Still, when one examines EU-Russia relations more closely many instances may be discerned in which the EU has successfully brought some influence to bear on Russia. What do these experiences reveal about the power of the EU, and about the nature of power in today’s world politics more generally? To get to those questions, I’ll first discuss theories of power and how they can be applied.

Theories of Power

Though integration theories have been seen as essential part of IR theories, there is a common perception that research on EU foreign policy has been theoretically thin. It has been seen as a *sui generis* area where theories developed in other contexts are of limited applicability. Moreover, the pace of integration has led to descriptive and policy-oriented approaches that have remained largely aloof of theoretical issues (Ginsberg, 2001; Pollack, 2001; Carlsnaes, 2004). As a result, a rift of sorts has emerged between EU studies and IR theories: those in the former camp go their own way, without linking their conceptual and theoretical approaches to the general IR literature.

One area where this gap is evident is in the use of the concept of power. Discussion of “Normative Power Europe” has become immensely popular in the EU studies (Manners, 2002; Whitman, 2011), but it is only tenuously based on wider discussions of power and norms in IR. The concept of soft power, coined by Joseph Nye, has long been popular in relation to US foreign policy, but has mostly failed to gain much of a foothold in discussions of the EU’s global influence (Nye, 2004). Rather, it has been claimed that since the concept of soft power was developed in the US context, in Europe it is better to adopt other concepts, such as “normative power” (Diez and Manners, 2007). Another example is the conceptualization of the capabilities-expectations gap that is familiar to scholars of EU foreign policy. The gap is reminiscent of the “paradox of unrealized power” discussed by David Baldwin, but little effort has been made to bring these debates together (Baldwin, 1989). For Baldwin, the paradox of unrealized power can be explained either in terms of an inadequate conversion process, or in terms of mistaken judgments regarding the fungibility of power resources.

I adopt four rather general conceptual frameworks of power that are helpful in determining why the EU is not able to wield its power effectively. First, I ask what type of power the EU represents in world politics. Here the key assumption is that the failure of the EU to act as an effective power depends on its relative lack of military might. Second, I ask to what extent power is primarily based on objective resources, or if it might instead be the case that subjective perceptions and intersubjective understandings explain the failures and success of the EU’s foreign policy. Third, I ask whether inability or unwillingness to deploy its power may explain why the EU has been weaker than expected in the international arena. Finally, I consider the possibility that the expectations of what the EU can achieve in the wider world could be unrealistically high. In other words, is it reasonable to expect that any

other actor could have succeeded in world political situations where the EU has failed?

There are numerous other potential frameworks of power that could also be applied to the study of the EU foreign policy. The most obvious addition to be made here is the dichotomy between agential and structural power. Structural power is, however, not an easy concept because it can mean both the manner in which the EU affects international structures as well as transforms the domestic structures of the target (Holden, 2009). In the IR literature, Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall have outlined a two-dimensional typology of power: it can operate through interaction between specific actors or through social relations of construction and, secondly, it can be either direct or diffuse. Power can thus take four different forms: compulsory, institutional, structural, and productive. Compulsory power is direct and works through interaction of specific actors, institutional power is diffuse but works between specific actors, structural power is direct and works through social relations of construction, productive power is diffuse and works through social relations of construction (Barnett and Duvall, 2005). The taxonomy is helpful in distinguishing different types of power, but here the focus is – when talking about the EU and its impact on third powers, put on the first type of power – direct power between specific actors. In what follows I'll skip these frameworks of power, partly for lack of space and partly because a focus on structural power does not give any direct means of ascertaining why it is that the EU does not seem to live up to expectations.

Types of Power

International relations theories differ in their analyses of power. Realists associate power with military force – John Mearsheimer, for one, argues that “in international politics, a state's effective power is ultimately a function of its military forces” (Mearsheimer, 2001). The realist argument comes in more nuanced forms too. In Zaki Laidi's view, the EU cannot become a superpower because Europeans do not see themselves as the ultimate guarantors of their own security (Laidi, 2008). Realists nevertheless claim that the EU's relative weakness as well as its relative power can be traced back to its limited military resources.

Liberals, by contrast, argue that military power has lost in importance in contemporary international politics, with the emphasis instead being on economic power, the power to produce and Exchange (Rosecrance, 1986).

Economic statecraft can be used in different ways, both positive and negative, in the form of incentives and sanctions (Baldwin, 1985). Whereas realists locate the importance of economic power principally in its supporting role for military capability, liberals see economic power as the primary fundamental vehicle of power. For instance, the size of its internal market can be seen as a resource that the EU can leverage for external relations (Meunier and Nicolaidis, 2006; Damro, 2012). Lilia Shevtsova makes such an argument, contending that the West “has a plethora of levers that would move Russia” (Shevtsova, 2010).

Liberals and constructivists alike believe in a third form of power, one based on the ability to attract and persuade. Sometimes this is called cultural power, but scholars today more often speak of soft power, or in the EU context, of normative power. The concept of soft power was coined by Joseph Nye in the early 1990s who defined it as the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments that are the established vehicles of hard power (see Nye, 2004). In other words, soft power co-opts rather than coerces. Subsequently, the term has been stretched to cover anything but military force, but Nye’s original idea was that even economic inducements are better seen as lying on the side of hard power, albeit closer to the middle line separating hard and soft power (Nye, 2007). Normative power can also be seen as a form of cultural power. Manners argued that the EU is primarily a normative power, because its power rests on persuasion and the ability to shape discourses (Manners, 2001).

These three forms of power, famously distinguished in his conceptual division of power by E.H. Carr, offer different explanations of the limits of the EU’s ability to influence Russia (Carr, 2001). Whereas John McCormick argues that the changing nature of power has allowed the EU to become “a new kind of superpower”, one that operates through economic, political and diplomatic influence rather than military firepower (McCormick, 2007), the main argument against this view is that the EU does not have enough military power for Russia to take it seriously. The second counterclaim is that although the EU may have market power, its dependence on Russia’s energy resources cancels out the EU’s assumed superiority in other areas of trade. Although it is also possible to say that the EU in general does not have much soft power despite its image, the main claim against the effectiveness of normative power continues to be that it must be backed up with credible material threats or promises – the old “speak softly and carry a big stick” argument (Hyde-Price, 2006). As I’ll argue, another consideration to be taken into account is that normative power resources are based on the

compatibility of perceptions, values and identities. It is unlikely that there is any more objective basis for them. Though it is possible to argue that there are factual bases for some norms, but then the EU itself is not the source of normative power. Insofar as the EU is able gain acceptance by Russia as an authority, role model or teacher, it would have normative power. Without this acceptance, there is no credible basis for such a power claim.

Perceptions of Power

Another way of explaining why the EU fails to translate a power advantage into policy impact is to show that social power is in the eye of the beholder: it is not based not on resources but on perceptions and shared understandings (van Ham, 2010). In contrast to pure physical power, we can claim that social power depends always on B's perceptions of A's power. Nuclear weapons have an objective force that is entirely unaffected by whatever perceptions one may have of them, but if we regard them as political assets, perceptions and discursive signification play a crucial role. Therefore there is no objective way to define what relevant power resources in social interaction are, since B's view about A's power may be mistaken, but B will be primarily guided by these perceptions.

Closer attention should therefore be paid to perceptions and social constructions of power in EU-Russia relations as well. The EU sees itself as a global power, which is not necessarily how it is seen in target countries (Fischer, 2012; Lucarelli, 2007). The EU itself believes that it can approach Russia with confidence because "economically, Russia needs the EU" (European Commission, 2008). European powers have a historical tendency to underestimate the power of Russia (Wohlforth, 1987). One could thus argue that the EU cannot achieve what it intends and desires *vis-à-vis* Russia, despite the objective resource symmetries, because the Russian view of the EU's credibility is less impressive than the Union's own self-perception (Casier, 2011). The EU may be less dependent on Russia's energy than it actually is, but what matters in politics are the perceptions of this dependency. If we want to explain Russia's decisions in its relations with the EU, we need to take into account that Russia believes that it is a great power, or that the EU is more dependent on Russia's energy resources than Russia is on the EU as a buyer of its energy.

Conversion Process

It is an old maxim that power resources cannot be directly translated into power, and that weaker parties can win conflicts (See e.g. Arreguín-Toft, 2001). One can distinguish two different failures in the conversion process: lack of unity, and poor strategy. Both have often been seen as fundamental weaknesses in the EU's ability to exercise power effectively in international affairs. Moreover, since a poor strategy can be executed coherently, these two factors must be separated.

The widespread understanding is that the EU foreign policy is ineffective, because it is fragmented. This is why Kenneth Waltz thinks that the EU cannot become a great power: it “has all the tools – population, resources, technology, and military capabilities – but lacks the organizational ability and the collective will to use them” (Waltz, 2000). Similarly, Asle Toje argues that the main reason why the EU can't deliver on its foreign and security policies is “a lack of decision-making procedures capable of overcoming dissent” (Toje, 2008). Disunity and poor strategy are also often seen as being the main problem in EU-Russia relation. For example, the EU-Russia Power Audit recommends that EU leaders unite around a common strategy in order to have more leverage (Leonard and Popescu, 2007). Edward Lucas maintains that Russia's “divide and rule tactics” have crippled the theoretically far stronger party (Lucas, 2008). Although lack of unity is often seen as the greatest scapegoat for the ineffectiveness of EU foreign policy, this in itself is not a sufficient condition for such failure. Sometimes disunity may even be an advantage: the EU may have more impact when speaking with several voices, and sometimes it may not have much impact even when united, as is the case with the Human Rights Council (Smith, 2010).

Strategic failure is not simply a matter of having chosen the wrong type of power, since there are different strategies as to how hard or soft power can be effectively applied (See. e.g. Maynes, 2006). Typically, effective strategies are always contextual, and there is no consensus on any one overall political strategy being superior. A fairly common view is that the EU has been unable to persuade Russia to accept its normative framework because of the failure to offer Russia the prize carrot in the EU soft power arsenal, namely European Union membership. The ineffectiveness of EU strategies towards Russia has also been associated with the EU's reluctance to consistently impose any negative sanctions on Russia.

Misguided expectations

Finally, EU failure to exercise power effectively can be explained through mistaken expectations of power relations in the given context. In Baldwin's view, this is the most plausible explanation of the paradox of unrealised power in most cases (Baldwin, 2000). Power is not as fungible as some power theorists believe: power resources are always relative to the specific issue at stake. The assumption that the EU could influence Russia could only be conditionally and contextually true, rather than being true in all circumstances.

The point about mistaken expectations of EU power in relations with Russia is that the EU cannot reasonably be expected to hold sway over issues that are in Russia's sovereign control. If Russia does not want to change its internal policies, no resources or strategies are likely to have much effect. There is a vast difference between achieving defensive and offensive goals. This claim can also be turned around to emphasise Russia's relative weakness in comparison to the EU. Despite being normatively puny in the face of Russian resistance, the EU is still strong enough to resist influence in the other direction.

Power in EU-Russia Relations

It is very difficult to discern any objective statistical patterns of "success" in EU-Russia relations – and Ginsberg, for one, prefers to talk about impact rather than success (Ginsberg, 2000; Jørgensen, 1998). The overall picture is that the impact of EU policies on Russia has been quite limited. But there are also cases where some desirable outcomes have been achieved. In order to test explanations to the EU's weak performance in its relations with Russia, we should look not only at major instances of failure, but also at successes, as we are then better able to judge which of these potential explanations really matter. While recognizing that the concept of success is a tricky one, stipulating what counts as success is always relative to one's own perspective of objectives and costs. Unqualified successes and failures are rare in politics; on practically any complex issue, one is far likelier to find some combination of the two.

Bearing in mind that it is often hard to separate EU from US influence or from that of other international or domestic factors, I'll first look at failures – or failed influence attempts – before turning to successes in order to assess

whether it is possible to find a pattern that explains such differences in terms of power. The point here is not to establish a correlative relationship between types of power and achieved outcomes, but to survey some salient cases on the EU-Russia agenda in order to uncover some of the processes that explain the degree of success.

Failures

The EU's failures to influence Russia are more salient than the successes. In the field of hard security, the most prominent case is probably the 2008 Russo-Georgian war. The EU failed to prevent the war, and could not effectively defend Georgia's territorial integrity with regard to the breakaway regions after the war. Two explanations of this are commonly offered: the EU was weak due to lack of military power, and because it did not have the will and coherent strategy to prevent the Russian military intervention. These explanations are plausible, though it is difficult to assess how much military power or which strategy would have prevented the conflict. If military power matters, then it must be noted that the United States was not successful either in preventing the war or defending Georgia's territorial integrity. Nicu Popescu argues that the EU'S failure to prevent the conflict was "largely the result of internal EU divisions and lack of strategic vision" (Popescu, 2011).

The EU has tried to engage Russia in resolving other various international crises and protracted conflicts in the former Soviet Union. There are many cases where the Union has been split, and therefore no common effort to get Russia on board. But the EU has tried to work cohesively and influence Russia in a number of crises. Most recently, it has tried to get the country to accept tougher measures towards the Assad regime in Syria, but Russia has opposed any UN resolutions that threatened the regime with military force or mandated foreign military intervention. In the protracted conflicts of Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh, very little progress has been made, despite the EU having worked to get Russia to assist in conflict resolution, particularly in the former case (Popescu, 2011; Gordon, 2012).

The EU has also been unable to use its economic weight to change Russian policies in various trade issues. For example, the EU has not been able to persuade Russia to drop overflight fees (which are used to pay a subsidy to Aeroflot on flights to Asia) on European airline companies that fly over Siberia. This case suggests that many issues remain unresolved, even if the EU acted in a coherent manner and was very motivated. One could object,

justifiably, that the resolution strategy chosen by the EU was flawed, or at least overly limited. The EU referred to existing commitments as well as general rules and norms, but it did not consider or threaten with economic countersanctions – not to mention more political countermeasures. Yet in this case one should also remember that Russia initially agreed to abolish the fees but later reneged on its promise. This change of policy had much more to do with power relations within Russian politics than with EU relations (Forsberg and Seppo, 2009).

Another trade dispute with Russia that the EU couldn't resolve was the export tax on timber that Russia unilaterally raised in 2006. The export duties clashed with EU-Russia free trade regulations, and it seemed as if Russia wanted to stop all timber exports. Here the EU was not as united as in the Siberian overflight case, but paradoxically, there was greater success on the bilateral level. EU representatives reminded Putin that the export tariff issue is one of the few remaining obstacles to Russia's WTO membership, but this strategy did not seem to work at all. Indeed, Putin turned the tables by claiming that Russian WTO membership was more important to the EU than to Russia. When Putin rather unexpectedly announced in a meeting with the Finnish Prime Minister in 2008 that duties on timber were to be postponed for nine months, he explained that the decision was due to the dire situation on financial markets, and was necessary in order to safeguard jobs in both countries. This move can also be seen as a sign that Russia preferred to seek solutions bilaterally, in order to undermine the collective power of the EU and its institutions. The timber tax dispute was finally settled only when Russia joined the WTO in 2012. In this sense, the EU strategy of fostering Russian WTO membership appears as a belated success, but at the height of the dispute it did not offer much promise of any future reward (Forsberg and Seppo, 2009).

In energy issues, the EU has not succeeded in its key objectives. Most importantly, Russia has refused to ratify the Energy Charter Treaty that the EU regards as the basic framework for energy relations. In Fredrik Erixon's view, Europe's predominant political difficulty in its commercial dealings with Russia, particularly in energy issues, lies in its conflicting internal interests and a weak bilateral institutional structure (Erixon, 2008). Disagreements have also hampered EU-Russia negotiations on the Energy Charter Protocol on Transit. Russia has also opposed the EU's Third Energy Package for liberalisation of the gas and electricity markets (Sherr, 2012).

The EU has also tried to influence Russia in various human rights questions, without notable results. A well-known instance of this concerned human rights questions during the second Chechen war in 2000. Not only did the EU use strong diplomatic rhetoric, it also imposed sanctions on Russia, because the latter used excessive violence and abandoned its international legal commitments to the civilian population in Chechnya. Yet, Russia did not change its policies. The EU was initially not divided in its criticism of Russia's conduct in Chechnya. Despite internal disagreements, the largest member states, Germany and France, took the lead and mobilized the EU to demand transparency and respect for human rights agreements. The EU later changed its policy and dropped the sanctions. At this point there was an evident lack of will to push these policies any further, but this was due to lack of success and not the other way around (Forsberg and Herd, 2005). Similarly, the EU has had very little influence in trying to foster democracy and human rights in Russia with regard to fairness of elections, civil society organisations, freedom of the media and corruption.

Overall, these and other cases in which the EU has failed to influence Russia have created the impression that its foreign policy is generally ineffective. Different theories of power may account for these failures in different ways, and it would be too easy to point to one or two overarching reasons. In most cases, lack of military power, lack of unity or poor strategy are only partial explanations since Russia would hardly have changed its policies even if the EU had had more robust military resources, more unity or better strategies in any meaningfully conceivable manner. Before rushing to the conclusion that the EU can never influence Russia, we should examine some more encouraging precedents.

Successes

Although the negative picture dominates, the EU has nevertheless had several positive achievements in its relations with Russia. Despite failing to prevent the 2008 war, the EU was successful in mediating a ceasefire that ended the military conflict, and established a monitoring mission to stabilize the situation. Many observers saw it as a sign of the EU's growing role in issues of war and peace in world politics. Javier Solana, the High Representative of the EU's foreign policy, argued that the EU managed to rise to the occasion thanks to its internal unity and determination (Solana, 2008). But perhaps the success had more to do with Russia's wish to have the EU rather than NATO or the OSCE in its vicinity. Moreover, the mandate of the monitoring

mission was limited since it was denied access to the South Ossetian and Abkhazian territories. In some deeper sense, the fact that the EU had such resources and could send the mission was of course critical to this limited success; the success is not attributable to the amount of military or economic power as such (Forsberg and Seppo, 2011).

There are also other limited diplomatic successes in managing international crises and protracted conflicts both together with Russia as well as against it. The EU has worked together with Russia in a positive spirit in the Middle East Quartet and on the Iranian nuclear issue and counts Russia's cooperation in these cases as diplomatic achievements. Perhaps one of the most dramatic interventions in protracted conflicts against Russia's will took place in 2003, when Javier Solana declared that the EU did not support the Russian-sponsored "Kozak Memorandum" to solve the Transnistrian conflict. This intervention apparently compelled Moldova to reject the Memorandum at the last minute. In Nicu Popescu's view, the incident pointed to the importance of the EU in the region. Although it could not impose any solution to the conflict – its sanction policy, for example, remained rather vague – the episode showed that no solution to the Transnistrian problem is likely to be possible without EU support (Popescu, 2005).

In trade issues, the EU has been able to uphold a functioning trade regime, and strongly advocated Russian membership in the WTO. Russia's entry into the WTO in August 2012 has been lauded as a great overall success and helped the EU achieve some minor but still significant trade deals with Russia, although the latter has also implemented substitute measures to protect its markets. Moreover, the EU has also exercised power in creating standards for imports to the Union, and in imposing competition rules. A recent example of the power it can bring to bear on this front is the European Commission's decision to investigate whether Gazprom may have imposed unfair prices on its customers by linking the price of gas to oil prices. At the EU-Russia summit in December 2012, Barroso advised Putin to accept the measures against Gazprom by declaring that "your companies are most welcome in the EU market. But they have to respect fully our rules, and this is important to understand". Despite Putin's countering that Barroso was wrong, he could not change the outcome (EUobserver.com, 2012).

Another area of EU success concerns visas, which have constituted an issue of key importance to Russia. When the Baltic States and Poland joined the EU in 2004, the Commission was able to negotiate a deal with Russia that required all Russians who planned to travel between Kaliningrad and the

rest of Russia to acquire travel documents despite Russia's desire for free travel. Similarly in 2011 the EU and Russia agreed on the facilitation of the visa regime for EU and Russian citizens, but not on the abolition of visas, as Russia had wished. In these cases the EU, represented by the Commission, has shown a united front, although practices in implementing the existing visa policies have varied from country to country. This undermined some EU positions in the negotiations, but the EU still prevailed because these were matters where Russia and not the EU was the party making the demands.

The EU has also succeeded in getting Russia to follow European environmental standards in a number of cases, the best example being the Russian signing of the Kyoto protocol on climate change prevention. The EU, at least, saw this as a major diplomatic achievement and President Vladimir Putin indicated that the EU's willingness to back Russia's membership in the WTO got him to speed up the process (Walsh, 2004). Yet, it is not clear whether the EU was actually able to exercise any influence on Russia's decision, because it was simply in Russia's interests to sign the Protocol. Sometimes economic incentives, such as the allocation of EU funds for the renewal of the sewage treatment system in St. Petersburg, may explain the influence that the EU has on Russia's environmental policies. But sometimes it seems that the EU's "normative power" in setting standards and getting others to follow works when it comes to environmental issues, without any external pressure or incentive.

Finally, the EU can perhaps count as a success the fact that Russia has had limited opportunities to influence its decision-making or the issues related to the sovereignty of its member states or enlargement policies of the Union. For example, in an issue that was of utmost importance to it, Russia was unable to get the Chechen representative Akhmed Zakaev extradited from Denmark or the UK. And despite persistent criticism and dismissal, the EU's image in Russia is still rather good, and the values that the Union promotes are widely considered more attractive than others, such as the United States or China. Despite the many let-downs, the EU has managed to create the image of a partnership with Russia. And it has been the EU, rather than Russia, that has largely managed to set the terms of engagement: although it has so far failed to extend its normative agenda concerning Russian relations (Jonsson, 2012), its vision has not been derailed by Russia's own designs for the partnership (Emerson, 2005).

Conclusions

The EU's ability to influence developments in Russia and aspects of Russian foreign policy has been disappointing to many, in particularly with regard to the EU's ambition to play a significant role in world politics. This inability is puzzling insofar as the EU has been seen as possessing more traditional power resources than Russia. Examining a range of successes and failures in recent EU-Russia relations reveals some important details of the anatomy of power in current world politics.

There are at least four possible explanations for the EU's poor performance in the EU-Russia relations. The first concerns different types of power. Traditional realists argue that the EU is weak because it lacks military power resources. This assumption is somewhat problematic, since the member states of the EU collectively outstrip Russia in terms of military power. Moreover, a closer examination of many instances of EU-Russia relations reveals that it is seldom the lack of military resources that makes the EU weak. This is in line with the view that the absence of EU military capability was not considered problematic by any of the third party representatives interviewed by Bretherton and Vogler (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006). Neither has Russia used its energy resources as political instruments in its relations with the EU; rather, it acted as a responsible supplier. Since military power has become virtually irrelevant on the EU-Russia agenda, and energy dependency has seldom been instrumentalized in political disputes, we need other explanations for the EU's meagre influence on Russian policies (Haukkala, 2009). A second explanation is related to the ontology of power. It may be true that the EU possesses objective resources of power, but social power is more heavily based on perceptions and shared concepts of power. Indeed, despite objective power asymmetries particularly in the economic field, Russia does not perceive itself as being dependent on the EU. Russia thinks that it is a great power and yet the EU does not give it the role of an equal partner that it expects. For the EU, the relationship is conceived as one of interdependence, and yet the EU regards itself as the centre of European integration. Because there is no shared hierarchy of power, the two parties cannot exert any meaningful degree of influence on each other.

A third explanation concerns immaterial power components. The EU may possess power resources, but it is said to lack the coherence, strategic skill, and will to exercise them. These deficiencies are often evident in EU policies towards Russia, but risk being blown out of proportion if taken as a standard explanation for the EU's lack of influence. Indeed, the lack of success

often explains the lack of unity, rather than the other way round. In most cases, it can be claimed, even if it did enjoy greater internal unity, the EU would not have been able to make any significant impact on Russia. There are many instances when the EU was united and attempted to formulate a coherent strategy, but nonetheless failed to have any influence on Russia. By contrast, in some disputes Russia has refused to comply with EU demands, but was willing to seek bilateral solutions. It seems that a high level of EU cohesion does not always increase the likelihood of an agreement, since it is in Russian interests to stifle European unity. At the present it is unclear if a better strategy exists for the EU, for example through a more coercive approach or alternatively, by offering bigger incentives to Russia on trade and human rights issues instead of small-scale positive inducements and normative persuasion. Many doubt that this will be the case since whenever the EU has imposed economic and political sanctions, these were quickly abandoned as ineffective. By the same token, it is also rather unclear whether offering larger inducements or using a more persuasive rhetoric would have had an impact on Russia's policies in several key disputes.

Against this background, it is advisable to consider a fourth possibility, namely that it is unreasonable to expect the EU to be able to influence Russia on an expansive range of issues. The impression that the EU has little or no influence on Russia relies on instances where the EU has offensive and Russia defensive objectives. In other words, the EU has little leverage in matters that Russia can control by virtue of its sovereignty. In such cases it is difficult to imagine that any amount of power resources, unity, determination or strategies would have much effect. A fuller picture emerges when we turn this perspective around and see that in most cases of real importance to it, Russia has been unable to influence either the EU as a whole or individual EU states. If one takes a broad historical perspective, this in itself can be rightly seen as an achievement in its own right.

In sum, it is not easy to find a clear-cut pattern that explains successes and failures of the EU's influence attempts in its relations with Russia. Lack of unity, coherence, and political certainly play a role, but it is often implausible to think that more unity and more political determination could create radically different outcomes. There is no unified theory of power, and it may be futile to even look for one. Indeed, in many circumstances, factors on a more modest scale and political coincidences can play a decisive role.

References

- Arreguín-Toft Ivan** (2001), “How the Weak Wins Wars? A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict”, *International Security*, vol. 26, n° 1, p. 93-128.
- Averre Derek** (2005), “Russia and the European Union: Convergence or Divergence”, *European Security*, vol. 14, n° 2, p. 175-202.
- Baldwin David** (1985), *Economic Statecraft*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Baldwin David** (1989), *Paradoxes of Power*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Baldwin David** (2000), “Success and Failure in Foreign Policy”, *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 3, n° 1, p. 167-182.
- Barnett Michael and Duvall Raymond** (2005), “Power in International Politics”, *International Organization*, vol. 59, n° 1, p. 39-75.
- Bretherton Charlotte and Vogler John** (2006) [2nd ed.], *The European Union as a Global Actor*, Oxford, Routledge.
- Carlsnaes Walter** (2004), “Where is the Analysis of European Foreign Policy Going?”, *European Politics*, vol. 5, n° 4, p. 495-508.
- Carr E.H.** (2001) [1939], *The Twenty Years’ Crisis: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan.
- Casier Tom** (2011), “Russia’s Energy Leverage over the EU: Myth or Reality”, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, vol. 12, n° 4, p. 493-508.
- Damro Chad** (2012), “Market Power Europe”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 19, n° 5, p. 682-699.
- Diez Thomas, and Manners Ian** (2007), “Reflecting on Normative Power Europe”, in **Felix Berenskoetter and M. J. Williams** (eds.), *Power in World Politics*, London, Routledge, p. 173-188.
- Emerson Michael** (2005), “EU – Russia: Four Common Spaces and the Proliferation of the Fuzzy”, *CEPS Policy Briefs*, n° 112, Brussels, Centre for European Policy Studies.
- Erixon Fredrik** (2008), “Europe’s Energy dependency and Russia’s Commercial Assertiveness”, *ECIPE Policy Brief*, n° 7, available at <www.ecipe.org/media/publication_pdfs/europe2019s-energy-dependency-and-russia2019s-commercial-assertiveness-what-should-the-eu-do.pdf>, accessed 8 February 2013.

EUobserver.com (2012), “Energy Quarrel, Topless Protest Mark EU-Russia Summit”, 21 December, <<http://euobserver.com/foreign/118606>>, accessed 8 February 2013.

European Commission (2008), “Review of EU-Russia Relations”. Communication from the Commission to the Council. Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 5 November.

Fischer Sabine (2012), “The European Union and the Insiders/Outsiders of Europe: Russia and the Post-Soviet Space”, *Review of European Studies*, vol. 4, n° 3, p. 18-31.

Forsberg Tuomas and Herd Graeme (2005), “The EU, Human Rights, and the Russo-Chechen Conflict”, *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 120, n° 3, p. 55-78.

Forsberg Tuomas and Seppo Antti (2009), “Power without Influence? The EU and Trade Disputes with Russia”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 61, n° 10, p. 1805-1823.

Forsberg Tuomas and Seppo Antti (2011), “The Russo-Georgian War and EU Mediation”, in **Roger Kanet** (ed.), *Russian Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, p. 121-137.

Ginsberg Roy (2001), *The European Union in International Politics: Baptism by Fire*, Lanham, MA, Rowman & Littlefield.

Gordon Claire (2012), “The EU as a Reluctant Conflict Manager in Moldova”, in **Richard Whitman and Stefan Wolff** (eds.), *The European Union as a Global Conflict Manager*, Abingdon, Routledge, p. 120-137.

Haukkala Hiski (2009), “Lost in Translation? Why the EU has Failed to Influence Russia’s Development”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 61, n° 10, p. 1757-1775.

Haukkala Hiski (2010), *The EU-Russia Strategic Partnership: The Limits of Post-Sovereignty in International Relations*, Abingdon, Routledge.

Hill Christopher (1993), “The Capability-expectations Gap or Conceptualising Europe’s International Role”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 31, n° 3, p. 305-328.

Holden Patrick (2009), *In Search of Structural Power: EU Aid Policy as a Global Political Instrument*, Farnham, Ashgate.

Hyde-Price Adrian (2006), “‘Normative’ Power Europe: A Realist Critique”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 13, n° 2, p. 217-234.

Jonsson Anna (2012), “Russia and Europe”, in **Graeme Gill and James Young** (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Russian Politics and Society*, Abingdon, Routledge, p. 444-453.

Jørgensen Knud Erik (1998), “The European Union’s Performance in World Politics: How should We Measure Success?”, in **Jan Zielonka** (ed.), *Paradoxes of European Foreign Policy*, The Hague, Kluwer Law International, p. 87-101.

Laïdi Zaki (2008), *Norms over Force: The Enigma of European Power*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Leonard Mark and Popescu Nicu (2007), *A Power Audit of EU Russia Relations. Policy Paper*, London, European Council on Foreign Relations.

Lucarelli Sonia (2007), “The European Union in the Eyes of the Others: Towards Filling a Gap in the Literature”, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 12, n° 3, p. 249-270.

Lucas Edward (2008), *The New Cold War: How the Kremlin Menaces both Russia and the West*, London, Bloomsbury.

Manners Ian (2002), “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 40, n° 2, p. 235-258.

Marsh Steve and Mackenstein Hans (2005), *The International Relations of the European Union*, Harlow, Pearson Longman.

Maynes Charles William (2006), “A Soft Power Tool-Kit for Dealing with Russia”, *Europe’s World*, available at : <www.europesworld.org/NewEnglish/Home_old/Article/tabid/191/ArticleType/articleview/ArticleID/20599/language/en-US/Default.aspx>, accessed 8 February 2013.

McCormick John (2007), *The European Superpower*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan.

Mearsheimer John (2001), *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York, Norton.

Meunier Sophie and Nicolaidis Kalypso (2006), “The European Union as a Conflicted Trade Power”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 13, n° 6, p. 906-925.

Nye Joseph (2004), *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York, Public Affairs.

Nye Joseph (2007), “Notes for a Soft-Power Research Agenda”, in **Felix Berenskoetter and M.J. Williams** (eds.), *Power in World Politics*, London, Routledge, p. 162-172.

Patten Chris (2009), “Europe’s Vision-free Leadership”, *European Voice*, n° 26, November.

Piccardo Lara (2010), “The EU and Russia: Past, Present and Future of a Difficult Relationship”, in **Federiga Bindi** (ed.), *EU Foreign Policy: Assessing the EU’s Role in the World*, Washington DC, The Brookings Institution, p. 119-132

Pollack Mark (2001) “International Relations Theory and European Integration”, *Journal of Common Market Studies* vol. 39, n° 3, p. 221-244.

Popescu Nicu (2005), “The EU in Moldova – Settling Conflicts in the Neighbourhood”, *Occasional Paper*, n° 60, Paris, European Union Institute for Security Studies.

Popescu Nicu (2011), *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, Abingdon, Routledge.

Rosecrance Richard (1986), *The Rise of a Trading State*, New York, Basic Books.

Sherr James (2012), “Gas Politics”, *The World Today*, October-November, p. 18-21.

Shevtsova Lilia (2010), *Lonely Power: Why Russia Has Failed to Become the West and the West is Weary of Russia*, Washington D.C., Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Smith Karen (2010), “The European Union at the Human Rights Council”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 17, n° 2, p. 224-241.

Solana Javier (2008), “Discours du Haut Représentant de l’Union européenne pour la Politique étrangère et de sécurité commune”, The Annual Conference of the European Union Institute of Security Studies, Paris, 30 October.

Toje Asle (2008) “The Consensus-Expectations Gap: Explaining Europe’s Ineffective Foreign Policy”, *Security Dialogue*, vol. 39, n° 1, p. 121-114.

van Ham Peter (2010), *Social Power in International Politics*, Abingdon, Routledge.

Walsh Nick Paton (2004), “Putin Throws Lifeline to Kyoto as EU Backs Russia Joining WTO”, *The Guardian* , 24 May.

Waltz Kenneth (2000), “Structural Realism after the Cold War”, *International Security* , vol. 25, n° 1, p. 5-41.

Whitman Richard (ed.) (2011), *Normative Power Europe: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan.

Wohlforth William (1987), “The Perception of Power: Russia in the pre-1914 Balance”, *World Politics*, vol. 39, n° 3, p. 353-381.

Tuomas Forsberg

Professeur de relations internationales, Université de Tampere, Finlande

Tuomas.Forsberg@uta.fi