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EU-Russia Strategic Energy Culture: Progressive Convergence or Regressive Dilemma?

Amelia Hadfield Canterbury Christ Church, Politics/IR

Introduction

At first blush, the topic of EU-Russia energy relations is a strikingly unfelicitous combination by which to explore diplomatic innovations. But oppositions can also make for strange bedfellows, particularly if they share a common foundation. As much recent research illustrates, energy security has a tendency to be analysed in starkly polarising terms, cast along the lines of importer vs. exporter states, worsened when those identities are politicised, and then subsequently securitised. With two energy leviathans like Russia and the EU, the clash is even more diametrically opposed. However, when viewed solely as brute outputs, strategic policies like energy security lose both their nuances, and their origins. A range of policies have emerged to lift energy security analysis beyond power-based frameworks, usually from within the core of International Relations theory.

This article suggests that strategic culture, long consigned to the margins of broader, more substantial IR theories, offers a novel mode by which to explore recent developments in EU-Russia energy relations. Approaching security precepts and strategic policies like energy from the perspective of institutionalised norms, cultural value-sets, strategic culture explores 'the cognitive power of the past... as it has been interpreted and processed' by governments and societies.² Bringing more than half a century of deeply interdisciplinary analysis to bear, through three successive waves of thought, strategic culture-based analysis deconstructs the mindsets by which energy security is first rendered strategic, and subsequently identifying whether such policies are progressive or regressive in terms of their inherent degree of cooperation or conflict. As illustrated in the case studies below, strategic culture-oreinted analyses help shed light on both the polarising tendencies that reify policy stances, and the harmonizing potential that remains to connect the two sides. The broader conclusion is that EU-Russia energy security relations are overdue a rethink. It is therefore too simple to assign the EU and Russia a priori identities of norm setter and revanchist regional

hegemon. This merely *consigns* either side to a series of pre-defined roles in which the areas of their connection are entirely missed against the accepted backdrop of historic opposition, while the reasons for opposition themselves reamin unexplored. Instead of demonstrating the 'change and continuity' theme, strategic culture instead uncovers the 'like and unlike' dyanmics held between the EU-Russia, and which colour their respective attitudes to e energy security; the result is a more nuanced appraisal of actorness, governance and interests.

At the level of energy security decision-making, strategic culture is additionally helpful in revealing a key paradox. Both sides are essentially motivated toward the same goals of energy security (whether that entails security of supply for the EU or security of demand for Russia), market prosperity and actor-based prestige, but undertake their plans on the basis of vastyly different visions, using widely diverse modes of implementation, and with dissimilar standards of evaluation. On the basis of acknowleged commonalities, both sides thus have real impetus to both cooperate to the point of complete agreement, and yet remain in conflict to the point of aggression.

In energy security terms, the material needs for cooperation are as potent as the economic benefits, and security dividend on offer by securing long-term EU-Russia energy deals. Energy security is an area of real sensitivity between the two sides: generally the first policy area to witness accusations of interference, with either side threatening to prevent supply or curtail demand. Elsewhere, energy relations remains surprisingly robust in both the public and private sector, surviving the seemingly lethal wounds inflicted elsewhere, from diplomatic sparring to the punitive weight of sanctions. Yet the two sides remain wholly at odds in virtually every aspect of their vision of the role that energy security plays. EU energy security is premised on open (if incomplete) competitive energy markets, which increasing amounts of policies integrated between EU Member States, with the ultimate vision of constructing a European Energy Union to bolster the regional integrity of the EU as a whole. Russian energy policy remains a power-based, closed market based economy that is inescapably filtered through realpolitik-oriented foreign policy. Energy security is still one of many means to an integrated European end; for Russia: a mode to increase bargaining power over key actors, including the EU, and an end that ultimately permits it to remain a "strategically independent actor".3

Strategic culture examines this paradoxical relationship, in which the two sides 'are inextricably linked in terms of the energy sector', and reveals how overarching value sets came to be held, shared, and ultimately disputed by both the EU, and Russia beyond the prevailing geopolitical or geoeconomic rubrics.⁴ The result are areas of schism due to the persistence of key strategic norms, and cooperation, even harmonisation based on modes of convergence. The case studies thus reveal areas where both sides have worked to establish common, or at least shared attitudes across their respective strategic needs, with progressive results. Progressive EU-Russia strategic energy cultures like the Northern Dimension, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), the EU-Russia Energy Dialogue, and various post-PCA initiatives are those which positively identify a commonality, endow it with legitimacy, and concretise it within a given policy. Regressive EU-Russia strategic energy cultures however see strategic demands trump value-based requirements. They are governed instead by the predominance of national cultures or regional requirements, in which cardinal beliefs are perceived to be at odds with other viewpoints, prevent cooperation and prompting belligerence, even aggression. Foreign policy fallouts over the Energy Charter Treaty, the Third Energy Package, and the role of transit states like Ukraine see the collapse of both basic governing norms, and modes of communication.

Strategic culture thus brings an additional variable to the table, filling in the gaps between geopolitics, decision-making, and foreign policy with the 'beliefs, assimptions, attitudes, norms, world views and patterns of habitual behaviour' that comprise EU and Russian strategic energy cultures.⁵ However, this analysis must be drawn against 'the gradual development of a shared set of rules that results from [and in] international cooperation', in which the gradual convergence of policies, as well as the approximation of the key terms and legal concepts move through minimal, mutual, and even maximum areas of convergence in energy policy.⁶ In its lesser-known progressive form, both sides illustrate a 'culture of contact', and even commonality, on the most strategic of policies.⁷ More familiar regressive episodes however, reveal ongoing ontological bifurcations in cateogrising EU approaches to governing energy as fundamentally distinct from Russian. The current limits to a viable sector-specific strategic culture are laid bare, with contemporary convergence instrumental at the best, driven by the pragmatism of saticficing needs rather than the values of establishing eastwest energy governance.

The EU and Russia remain interdependent rivals with varied and irrepresible continental claims; each regarding the other grudgingly as a counterpart, struggling vainly with the concept of a limited partnership, even a strategic one. If then a 'strategic culture' of contact and commonality has arisen, it needs careful consideration; its origins have likely been brutal; its contact instrumental; its political interaction touchy at best: wrung, rather than won, between an aspiring EU, and a Russia 'which does not aspire to become its member' and yet remains defiantly, disconcertingly close to the EU.8 This article suggests that enough evidence may yet be found of a strategic EU-Russia energy culture even if the nature of the content remains pragmatic at best and parsimonious at worst. Clearly, analysts and policy-makers alike require a workable model that is capable of simultaneously capturing the constitutive consequences of eastwest energy connections, and the discursive implications of 'the most intensive and productive' and yet divisive area of contemporary EU-Russia relations.9

Part I. Avenues of Strategic Culture: A New Lens for EU-Russia Energy Relations

The concept of strategic culture is a fascinating one, and yet oddly neglected within the pantheon of mainstream IR theory. Perhaps the term is too wide, or its application too far-flung. Yet strategic culture has an intrinsic interpretive richness, offering a 'context for understanding the intellectual, instituitonal and strategic-cultural determinants' 10, able to account for both *continuity and change* in key security policies. Strategic culture emerged from the Cold War context, when scholars such as Snyder examined Soviet deterrence policy and concluded that US analysts failed to predict Soviet reactions, having neglected key cultural differences between Soviet and American decision-making. 11 Behavioural prediction focused solely upon rational-actor paradigms and game modelling proved to be wholly unsuited to uncovering the 'set of beliefs, assumptions, norms, world views and patterns of habitual behaviour held by strategic decision-makers regarding the political objectives of war, and the best way to achieve it'. 12

Within the three waves of scholarship comprising contemporary strategic culture, two key areas emerge: the Johnson-Gray debate, and the emergence of European strategic culture studies. The use of proressive and regressive scenarios to determine innovative areas of cooperation and conflict, as applied to EU-Russia energy security policies, may

gradually consitute an additional approach. Foundational strategic culture scholarship was established in works by Snyder, identified as 'the sum of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behaviour that members of a national strategic community share with regard to nuclear strategy' 13. This was greatly refined by the subsequent conceptual clash between Johnston and Gray who differed in regarding the concept as innately *causal* or more broadly *constitutive* of strategic decision-making, respectively. Both perspectives shed interesting light on EU-Russia relations.

Johnston's perspective of strategic culture is a forceful, causal imperative explaining decision-making. It is determinative, not merely influential explanation of how different national collectives perceive, and act, pursuant to the use of force. In essence, strategic culture 'provides decision-makers with a uniquely ordered set of strategic choices from which we can derive predictions about behavior'. ¹⁴ The source of this behaviour is the whole gamut of cultural dispositions, ideational precepts, and normative touchstones at work in a given national community. For Johnston, strategic culture reveals the 'shared assumption and decision rules that impose a degree of order on individual and group conceptions of their relationship to their social, organisational or political environment'. ¹⁵

As such, strategic culture is the mode that best deconstructs the combined 'system of symbols' first identified by Geertz, including 'argumentation, structures, languages, analogies, metaphors', as well as the policies that flow from such systems, and which together 'establish pervasive and long lasting strategic preferences'. ¹⁶ Johnston's use of culture as a distinct causal variable is helpful in illustrating pervasive national interests - be they Russian or European - that continue to directly inform energy preferences and which may predict future preferences in key policies like energy security. From this perspective, EU-Russia relations appear destined to remain strongly opposed. Despite the uneven conglomeration of Member State interests that constitute the EU's own energy security policy, Johnson-based critiques suggest there remains a stark east-west divide, with policies flowing causally from national attitudes, themselves the product of their strategic environment, and threat perceptions regarding adversaries. Here, strategic culture is both determinant, and detrimental to constructing cross-strategic links with other groups.

Gray however defined strategic culture as 'modes of thought and action with respect to force, which derives from perception of the national historical experience, from aspirations for responsible behaviour in national terms' 17. Explanatory, rather than determinative, strategic culture is 'a useful' but chiefly 'constitutive context for understanding decision', but which 'does not dictate strategic behaviour', at least not independent of a range of other internal and external variables, from domestic geography to the international balance of power. 18 From this perspective, strategic culture is less a decoding mechanism to unpick the causal connections between national attitudes and ensuing strategic decisions regarding EU and Russian energy security, but a context-based tool that utilises domestic factors 'to understand the reasons and moitvations of actors'. 19 Here, policy choice arises not strictly via tradition but through 'preferred methods of operations that are more or less specific to a particular geographically based security community'. 20 This additional flexibility not only sets the stage for the emergence of specific cross-national security communities (e.g. NATO, the UN and the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy), but indiviudal cross-cultural communities arising relationally, rather than oppositionally to each other, and within a given policy area. The EU-Russia Energy Dialogue, various conventions and treaties, or even the Eurasian Economic Union are instructive in this regard.

The process of EU integration fostered contructivist concepts of **European strategic culture**. Scholars were immediately confronted with the issue of reconciling widely different national attitudes to security and defence. As Meyer argues, '[w]e cannot expect national and European strategic cultures to be identical or even similar', with the EU's own 'relatively short history and foundational myths revolving around the benefits of peaceful multilateral co-operation' ultimately thinning out the critical mass of likemindedness.²¹ Cornish and Edwards suggest that EU strategic culture devolves from 'the institutional confidence and processes to manage and deploy military force as part of the accepted range of legitimate and effective policy instruments.'²² Others identify the challenges inherent in getting the 'compass points' of the Member States to line up consistently enough to speak confidently of such a culture existing (Meyer, 2006), and suggest that vital aspects of security will remain permanently under sovereign purview (Lindley-French, 2002).

What remains unclear within this school of thought is what precisely is meant by 'strategic' in a strictly European sense, and therefore capable of 'collective culturing'. Cornish and Edwards limit this to 'a positive approach among the military... [and] the inclusion of the military dimension' within the EU²³. Equally however, EU strategic culture may spring from economic and energy security, and the integrity of international law, as found in the 2003 European Security Strategy. The 2011 Special Issue of Contemporary Security Policy for example looked at European strategic culture applied to a range of issues, such as EU Civilian Crisis Management in the Baklans and multilateral cooperation with NATO and the UN²⁴. More recently, the EU's 2016 Global Strategy illustrates that any emergent European strategic culture must now extend beyond political-military activity to encompass the hardware and software of EU strategic concerns (e.g. post-conflict reconstruction, peace-building and development aid), and centrally, the 'influence of 'soft power instruments' in security policy' ²⁵.

European strategic culture is breaking new ground. Situated within a broadened school of security studies, bouyed by increasingly polyvalent definitions of 'strategic', and ever-shifting categories of 'Europe', European strategic culture must not only comprise a common normative foundation, but be flexible enough to incorporate multifaceted policies like energy security as key to a shared European identity narrative. Two points can be made here. First, broadening the field of enquiry will ensure strategic culture remains a progressive research programme. As Biava, Drent and Herd have argued, strategic culture is currently 'under-explored in terms of theory and methodology', and requires 'embedd[ing] in a contemporary, rather than cold war, strategic context'.²⁶ Second, energy security itself is a helpful example of a polyvalent strategy emerging from national narratives, combining political, security, economic, legal and even social components. Indeed, energy security represents Johnston's original demand that, as Haglund argues, "grand strategic preferences" at whose service strategic culture must be placed entail more than purely military considerations, and include all those economic and political, as well as military, aspects of national power that must be brought to bear upon the task of accomplishing 'national goals'.²⁷

What now remains is the application of broadened understandings of strategic culture to the concept of *policy-specific strategic cultures*, i.e. an identity narrative shared

between *two* neighbouring entities. Before turning to such possibilities, the specifics of Russian strategic culture need to be investigated.

Russian Approaches

The determinative interpretation of strategic culture described by Johnson is a good fit for superficial readings of Russia, suggesting an entity 'where historical choices, analogies, metaphors, and precedents are all invoked to guide choice'28 with few opportunities for change. The 2009 *Energy Strategy of Russia* is a good example of this national attitude, describing energy security as synonymous with the 'protection of the country, its citizens, society, state and economy against the threats to a reliable fuel and energy supply'.²⁹ Here, concepts of the non-Russian other, representing the EU counterpart whether broadly 'geopolitical, macroeconomic' or regionally 'conjunctural' can thus be viewed simply as 'threats' to be contained or negotiated.³⁰ Recent work on Russian strategic culture illustrates the same focus on continuity and change that preoccupies its European counterpart, as well as the same struggle to get to grips with unwieldy series of nested identities. As Ermarth argues:

For all its high degree of militarization, Russian strategic culture is not simply coterminous with its military culture, i.e., deep attitudes about how military power should be shaped, maintained, and used. Strategic culture in the Russian case is very much influenced by political culture, how political power is defined, acquired, legitimized, and used; by foreign policy culture, how the outside world is regarded and addressed; and by economic culture—although the latter is, in the Russian case, more a product of the other influences than itself a source of influence. But that may be changing. In other words, strategic culture arises from the intersection of political, foreign policy, military, and economic culture— and influences can flow in both directions.³¹

Other scholars including Trenin agree that the seismic changes between Soviet era conceptions of the state as a major military and economic power and its more blurred 21st century status have impacted strongly on national perceptions³². Materially, the situation is one of deterioration: demographic crises, a fall in industrial efficiency and

production, lack of expertise, crumbling monetary stability and the rise of rival states and regions in its neighbourhood.

It is clear that Russia has undergone a degree of strategic soul-searching since the post-Soviet era which could explain both the decoupling between the culture of its core norms and beliefs, and instability and unpredictability of that comprised its strategic positioning.³³ The backlash against such declinist images has been considerable, however. One aspect illustrates a pervasive need to reclaim a narrative of former greatness in a wholly autonomous way. Others suggest foreign policies that acknowledge the status, and strength of key global neighbours and the need to cooperate with them. Taken togther, Russian strategic culture operates beyond simple internal self-definition in its inputs, and defensive and tactical outputs, striving merely to be a 'partner more humored than honored'. 34 More likely, a shift in regional hierarchy between Russia, its former provinces, NATO and the EU has produced an attitude of self-determination in both Russia and the EU in which both sides operate with flexible attitudes permitting policy cooperation, alongside unyielding attitudes preventing it. As Haukkala argues, both the composition and external activites of the EU provide the surface area for Russian re-definition, allowing Russia to define itself in opposition to (and possibly explot) the complexity of the EU's integrated institutions, shared policies, and slow implementation. This in turn has had an impact on the way agreements and deals are conducted between the two sides; producing that same uneveness of cordiality and intransigence on areas deemed inherently strategic.³⁵.

Updating the Field: Cause, Context and Collective Cognition

As illustrated above, both Johnson and Gray-oriented interpretations can apply to either side of the EU-Russia dyanmic. The next step is identifying how the EU and Russia together comprise a shared policy-specific strategic culture, in this case, on the basis of energy security. Classic strategic culture scholarship offers a few insights. Johnston-derived interpretations of strategic culture for example helpfully discerning the motives by which each side is initially constructed in terms of self-definition. However, interrogating the heritage of EU-Russia energy security is enhanced by Gray's view of strategic culture as a 'constitutive and discursive context for understanding decisions' that does not 'dictate strategic behaviour'. ³⁶ Contextual approches explain how

episodes of cooperation *and* conflict emerge, and how they simultaneously comprise, and mediate their shared environment in a way that goes beyond the rudiments of 'deep' self-image on both sides. Further, EU-Russian strategic energy culture is by its nature *constitutive* of the basic agreements emergent from former motivations; comprising an effect, rather than a cause *strictu sensu*). Finally, the motivations on either side are by their very nature *discursive*, in the sense of projecting a variety of power-based self-images within the context of defining their Strategic Partnership. While both sides arrive with pre-set self-definitions, the concomitant contours of the EU-Russian strategic energy culture, are too wide and variable an area to be seen to be determinative in an absolute sense of the strategic behaviour of either side. It is less of a microcosm, and more of an active shaper in filtering *a priori* strategic assumptions, and then translating them back; for this reason EU-Russian strategic energy culture has been seen to both broker compromise, and spectacularly increase tensions.

In instrumental terms, EU-Russia energy security has operated along a hard-fought spectrum of slim approximation vs concentrated convergence encompassing legal, political and economic standards (as means), and strategic goals (as ends). Shared value sets move between agreement, disagreement and impasse. This is best exemplified, qua Johnson, as *process rationality*, in which the forum of engagement itself helps each side to define, rank and defend their various preferences. This occurs not merely on the basis of their pre-deteremined strategic cultures, but in practical terms, upon the rules, standards and general assumptions that are hammered out between the two sides. These shared rulres emerge independent of *a priori* cultured identity bases as the foundation of a separate, secondary *policy-specific strategic culture*. Policy-specific strategic culture is itself *constitutive* of the dual preferences of both actors, *substantive* in representing key points of agreement and disagreement, and *discursive* in conditioning the expectations of power and policy that underwrite the dynamics of the entire process.

There is however a need to push beyond these perspectives to examine key examples of EU-Russia interaction that can viably illustrate 'an extensive degree of convergence of norms and standards in some areas, principally economic relations'. Accordingly, the use of causal and contextual factors needs to be augmented; and the best contender at present, as argued by Schmidt that of strategic culture 'as a 'system of preferences' and not as a concept for the explanation or understanding of specific decisions'; this

approach allows analyses that pull together specific particularist (i.e. 'national') interests 'alongside the way in which the decision-making 'game' is played across the various levels' between two key players. From its application to EU military involvement, Schmidt argues this variant produces enriched analyses that explain the individuated interests of discrete actors, the 'constituent 'preferences' that produce both agreement and disagreement between the two sides, and the agreed 'general preferences, particular interests' that produce specific policies and illustrate 'the way the 'game' is played' as a whole. (568.

This article concludes with three observations. First, there is an extant EU-Russia strategic energy culture based on mutual understanding of the need for a settled, interdependent framework of supply and demand in ways that minimize risk in all its forms. Alongside the material interdependence that accompanies the present setup, the sharing of risk and cost entailed in balacing security of supply and demand also binds the two sides together; simply put, 'the burden of risks, be they technical, political, etc. as well as the burden of costs, should be shared' (Kaveshnikov, 2010, 589). Accordingly, there is a unity of purpose here, and a consequent 'common responsibility at the political and business level' (ibid), but it tends to be undermined by duality of vision, between the liberalizing paradign of the EU, and Russian efforts to 'create conditions for the financial and economic stability of the energy structures and institutions', prefering the 'innovative development of the sector through its dramatic modernization (Russian Federation 2003) to liberalisation. Second, despite such duality, this culture has demonstrated progressive attributes, in both initial successes such as 2005 Roadmap for a Common Economic Space in which 'the development of harmonised and compatible standards, regulations and conformity assessment procedures...including enhanced regulatory dialgoue and cooperation between responsible institutions and a reinforcement of the institutional capacities' was agreed to, as well as current low-level sector-specific harmonies (Russian Federation and the European Union, 2005). Third, this culture has also exhibited since the early 2000s persistent regressive qualities, in which political discord has promoted division of the negotiating culture as a whole, largely on the basis of an increasingly incommensurate interpretation of energy security that best reduces risk, and increases various degrees of power, be it market, political, regional, etc.

PART III. CASE STUDIES

Progressive EU-Russia strategic energy culture

1. The Northern Dimension (1999 and 2006)

One of the oft-forgotten areas of early EU-Russia engagement, the Finnish-led project to act as interlocutor between the emergent EU and a newly-post Cold War Russia yielded quiet but impressive results in establishing an operational milieu of trust, reciprocity and like-mindedness in key areas. The project not only kickstarted the dynamic of regional cooperation but constructed a visible 'policy platform between the EU, Norway, Iceland and Russia', one which Aalto argues is a 'crucial case study [as] a promising setting for energy policy coopeartion.... in northern Europe', an early microcosm of the later successes of the EU-Russia Energy Dialogue (Ashgate, 18).

This joint policy aimed to promote the dialogue between the partners and improve the levels of cooperation for a better economic prosperity of the sides involved. It did not only prove to be a success in terms of allignment of policies in that regard, but also got renewed again in 2006, which shows the continuous effect it had on the EU-Russia relations (eeas.europa.eu).

The merits of the Northern Dimension include the basic regional system that was tentatively constructed between the two sides; the low-level socio-political convergence operating horizontally, the precursor in those first post-Cold War years, of subsequent institutional links, economic cooperation and legislative approximation, all of which saw greater refinement in the following PCA. The basic interaction afforded by regular dialogue and necessary compromise emerged relatively neutrally on either side, and over time developed into model norms, affording both instrumental harmonisation and a degree of likemindedness over the need for a culture of contact ensuring compatible approaches. This only proves the beneficial effect that strategic culture in terms of economy and energy cooperation between the actors involved, hence the member states as well as Russia itself, in making the cooperation in certain fields of policy something of a building bloc for mutual understanding.

The Northern Dimension itself is therefore seen as a progressive EU-Russia strategic energy culture, due to its nature of leading to a positive notion into the cooperation and

the common understanding of the benefits in deepening into the likeminded policy coordination as well as the widening of the areas where strategic gains can be achieved through the mutual compromise of the actors involved. Given the fact that the Northern Dimension set the ground for opened dialogues and possibility for future futher deepening and widening in terms of foreign policy making between the EU and Russia, it is clear that those inherity different actors could work together on the basis of progress and prosperity. What is more, the very fact that the Northern Dimension was then ratified again after its innitial creation shows the willingness of those partners to aim for that strategic progress, thus this case study perfectly fits the progressive nature of the strategic eergy culture. Furthermore, through looking at the Northern Dimenstion in Johnson's sub-categories, we can conclude that the case eemplifies the process rationality which has developed through the interaction of those partners and determins their future stand on issues involving the continuous cooperation in any given area between the EU and Russia.

2. Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (1994)

Whilst the ECT initially provided a framework for energy relations between the EU and Russia, a significant political strategy between the new Union and its foremost strategic partner was needed on which to base the majority of political dialogue, as well as helping 'develop their economies through cooperation in a wide range of areas and through political dialogue' (European Commission, 1997). Like the ECT, negotiations to finalise the 1994 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA, concluded at last in 1997) were fraught with tension, and yet contained a measure of equivalence and acceptance. While agreement over market stimulants were generally easily arrived at, the interpretation of key norms, including the 'respect for democracy, the principles of international law and human rights' (European Commission, 1997) produced serious acrimony. Key to this agreement was the basic forms of legal approximation needed upon which both a normative and strategic foundation could then be built. As Romanova argues, the convergence requirements inherent in the document, and the expectations on the EU side that 'an important condition for strengthening economic links between Russia and the Community is the approximation of legislation', from the Russian perspective clearly 'put the burden of implementation on Russia' (Romanova, 2012, p. 27). During the 1994-1997 negotiations, the idea of a partnership of equals was

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strained to breaking point; Russian cherry-picking of provisions most favourable to its current economic needs sat uneasily alongside the EU's apparent universal interpretation of norms necessary to a Europe that would prosper, with its partners, for the *long duree*.

Here, the EU itself required adjustment, from a locked-in set of demands that, following Romanova's suggestion, 'hinges on the total approximation [of legislation] as opposed to agreeing on the goals and leaving it to the partners to decide on the instruments to achieve them' (ibid). Much of the flexibility underwriting strategic culture of any sort, between any two actors, emerges from the political capacity, and indeed the legal capabilities inherent in what might be termed 'directive-based' modes of negotiation and integration. Regulation-based requirements may appear absolutist in demanding wholesale legal convergence, pertinent only for key aspects of the EU's own aquis. The pragmatism necessary to produce a working culture capable of producing a decent bilateral agreement generally flows from directive-based methods allowing either side to 'approximate only essential norms and standards while gauranteeing mutual recognition of national standards and regulations in other fields' (ibid 25). The PCA's latter cycles of negotiating exemplified much of this directive-based flexibility.

The ability of either side to strike common ground, and to move from common to compatible, and from then to convergence, is the quintessence of any subsequent strategic culture. When this occurs in the area of policies, particularly those as strategic as energy security, the input is as crucial as the output; as Egan argues, the 'harmonization of policies was a means of reconciling differences in national regulatory practices and creating common rules (Egan 2006, 32, in Romanova 2012, 26). Further, the badging by the EU of a clearly defined set of inviolable norms had a profound effect upon the emergent Russian political structure, its governing elite, and its civil society. The PCA thus imparted both the *normative milieu*, and the *consensus-driven dynamics* that Russia necessarily needed, both domestically and internationally, to gain a sense of legitimacy. It also lodged the strategic aspect of 'partnership' as the cardinal method of matched, equal recognition, on the basis of far more equivalent, even equivocal agreements in terms of gradual legal and approximation and policy alignment. In addition, the body of agreements itself also contained key provisions on energy security which may have appeared more favourable, emanating as they did from a vehicle that

was not the ECT. Perhaps the strongest argument for a low-level strategic culture operating between EU-Russia on key provisions (including energy) is, ironically, the continued development of recognisably PCA-derived provisions, in the absence of any formal replacement or successor to the PCA itself. Designed ostensibly to operate for a decade, its 2007 due-date has confounded attempts to reboot, reset or replace it; no significant legal construct consequently exists. Yet key frameworks continue to flow from it, including the 2003 Permanent Partnership Council (replacing the PCA's original Cooperation Council), and 'an increase in contacts at the transgovernmental level'; chief among which were key in the preparation of the 2005 Common Spaces, which were 'preserved and further developed in the framework of sector dialogues'. Further evidence of a progressive energy security culture are found in post-PCA projects including the promotion of energy saving, energy efficiency, in which Russia ratified the Kyoto Protocol, phased out single hull tankers, reduced gas flaring, constructed the EU-Russian Energy Efficiency Initiative (2006), which mirrored the Energy Dialogue by operating as 'a platform for discussions on both legal and policyrelated issues' (Romanova, 2012, 31)'. The late 2000s was in this way witness to 'a gradual thickening of transgovernmental and transnational' links between EU-Russia relations (Romanova, 2011, 5). The deepening of the strategic energy colture following the fact that cooperation continues to occur even when the PCA has not been re-drawn, also speaks for the progressive notion of the strategic culture between both partners, and the process rationality is even more evident that it was in the Northern Dimension, showing a wide range of policy areas which have been aligned, however, issues around the cooperation of Russia and the EU still exist in areas where political involvement blurrs the benefits of economic convergence.

3. EU Russia Energy Dialogue

Similar to the Northern Dialogue, another low-level forum that operates as a 'useful constitute and discursive context for understanding decisions' (Baiva, Drent and Herd, 2011, 1228) is the **EU-Russia Energy Dialogue**, which emerged as a netural forum in which the main players were able to meet independently of the the worsening climate of Transit Protocol/ECT ratification negotiations. Established in 2000 at the EU-Russia Summit in Paris, with a legal basis that can be traced to the PCA, the goal of producing eventual commonalities and cooperation in low-level issue areas was helpfully unburdensome, allowing the dialogue to be regarded positively from the ouset as a

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forum 'which will enable progress to be made in the definition of an EU-Russian energy partnership' (European Commission, 2010). Emergent commonality on the complex area of energy security (founded via the Northern Dimension) arguably emerged in a way that established a series of working assumptions and beliefs about the need for, approach to, and efficacy of, key aspects of the Pan-European energy supply chain. One cannot argue that an emergent strategic culture of a decidedly thick quality resulted; for the most part, the summit-based asepct of EU-Russia context for decision-making shaped strategic decision making between the two, but did not determine it. It operates (as neoclassical realists might argue) more as an intervening variable between more robust a priori strategic cultures held independently by the EU and Russia, and the structural requirements of balancing security of supply demands with those of security of demand (Lobell and Taliaferro). Regardless, the merit of the dialogue, apart from its reliability and as a seemingly permanent low-level, neutral forum to debate a policy that is ironically anything but, were the small successes that flowed from it, including the EU-Russia Technology Centre (2002-6), the Energy Permanent Partnership Council (2005-present), the EU Energy Efficiency Initiative (2006), and a variety of sub-sector agreements brokered on crisis management, and an enhanced Early Warning Mechanism

In addition, a number of post-PCA initiatives, including the Four Common Spaces (2003-present), the EU-Russian Common Economic Space (2005-present) and the Partnership For Modernization (P4M) all effectively support the general cooperative ethos of the EU-Russia Energy Dialogue, and the wider corpus of an EU-Russia strategic energy community. Despite 'differing priorities of Brussels and Moscow' the concept of common spaces – possibly because of their innate ambiguity – has 'generated tangible progerss in terms of highlighting shared strategic interests in the sphere of 'soft' security and establishing common principles which – given greater mutual trust and confidence – may in time develop into a deeper partnership based on common norms and values' (Averre, 2010, 532 and Potemkina 2010).

While criticism has been levelled at the Dialogue as an inconsequential talking shop, it has for more than a decade remained the neutral arena in which to negotiate small sectoral successes and debate larger issues of space, terrain and actorness. As Aalto argues, the dialogue 'has remained safe from widespread politicization by the larger

bulk of actors involved in and affected by European energy policy' (Ashgate 14). Given the high stakes involved, the ongoing neutrality of the dialogue sees it continue as a subtle but necessary fulcrum for EU-Russia strategic energy security, capable of reversing, or at least defusing disputes, which 'initially look technical, but eventually turn into fundamentally political questions of what the EU and Russia represent as political projects, and of whose models are being adopted in the institutionalization of their mutual relations' (Aalto, ibid, 15).

Furthermore, the dialogue itself offers a way of cooperation between the two partners which does not aim to introduce incredible policy convergence or break-through in their relations, rather it focuses on the small-step winnings along the way of delegating and compromising in small areas, which is then meant to build up on the progress of positive interaction netween the EU and Russia. Thus, the EU-Russia Energy Dialogue is considered as a starting point for future likemindedness in attitudes and deepening into the policy convergence of the partners for better productivity in terms of future policy allignment.

Each of the above examples reinforces the thicker quality not only of the EU-Russia strategic partnership, but to suggest that this partnership goes beyond diplomatic bilateralism; that pragmatic cooperation, when untrammeled by other expediences, is perfectly capable of generating 'shared norms [that] can lead to a pluralist community of political, economic and social actorsn, and to common approaches to governance in the shared neighbourhood' (Averre, 2010, 532).

Regressive EU-Russia strategic energy culture

4. The Energy Charter Treaty

During the 1990's, opening and integration of post-Communist energy markets constitued the first, and best area for mutually beneficial cooperation (Konoplyanik 2006, p.524). Aligning the richness of Russian natural resources with growing usage in Europe, alongside increasing desire to reduce their Middle East dependence, in a way that provided macro-economic stability for the region appeared the best way forward. Not yet capable of managing cross-Member State negotiations, the structure that emerged to promote east-west energy cooperation was distinctly national in ilk, and managed outside the EU legal framework. 1991 saw the European Energy Charter

declaration signed in the Hague, followed by the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT), signed in Lisbon in 1994, taking legal effect in 1998. Designed with the objective that 'within the framework of State sovereignty and sovereign rights over energy resources and in a spirit of political and economic cooperation' (European Commission, 1991), the ECT afforded its signatories, including the EU (as a REIO) and EU Member States the opportunity to 'promote the development of an efficient energy market throughout Europe'.

The spectacular series of fallouts that dogged the ECT throughout the 2000 are wellknown. Internally, they can be read as the EU's inability to permit an energy agreement that quickly appeared to rival major chunks of the EU's own aguis; resulting in the Commission opposing virtually every aspect of negotiations on the subsequent (and scuppered) Transit Protocol. Externally, Russia soured in its interpretation of major provisions; refusing to ratify it domestically, but ultimately liable internationally for applying it provisionally, as evidenced by the ruling on the Yukos case. Equally however, the ECT set the framework for the major terms of east-west energy security in terms of trade, transit, third party access, investor protection, and dispute settlement resolution. While Russia withdrew from the Treaty in 2009 (energycharter.org), ECT investment protection provisions will continue to 2030; and much in terms of the framework - while hotly disputed - has permanently set the definitions, and requirements for establishing a secure energy community between the EU and Russia. The push towards more open energy markets (energycharter.org), could be said to be of importance when it comes to Russia's withdrawal from the Charter, since as mentioned above in the article, their basis of operation and what they strive to achieve has always been centered around the idea of nationally owned markets with little room for discussion on the matter.

Such an evident case of not being able to allign policies in order to achieve a common ground is therefore a clear examination of how regressive strategic energy culture appears in the EU – Russia relations, even on the verge of having agreements as the PCA as well as other minor agreements and declarations which promote closer cooperation. The highly selective way of conducting policies especially in the case of Russia complements to that regression, even though in the contrary in can be said that the EU have been expressing a policy pursuit which is closely in line with its own

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desires and aspirations, rather than a compromise making for the purpose of mutual understanding.

This in its own right has been more then a clear evidence on how even in the face of having to cooperate in terms of such a vital matter as energy, the different perceptions of two actors such as the EU and Russia can clash and lead to distancing in the way policies are being made. The fact that Russia decided to withdraw from the ECT evidently has lead to lack of efficient dialogue and further deepening of energy security, making the ECT an example for the regressive nature of strategic energy power. The adaptive rationality of Russia and the limited rationality of the EU and its 28 members have both contributed to the lack of continuous cooperation and have both played a part in the "fall-out" between the actors. Whether or not such a downfall in policy alignment will be a consistent factor in the future interaction in the EU-Russia aquis depends on many variables, however, especially with the growing political distancing between the parties, a positive outcome seems unlikely to be reached.

5. EU Aquis

The uptake in attempting to complete the EU internal energy market has produced greater legistlative surface area upon which an increased number of spats have arisen. From the 2004 Directive on the security of the supply of natural gas designed to establish 'measures to safeguard an adequate level for the security of gas supply' (2004, 127/93), to proposals of unbundling vertically integrated companies inherent in the Third Package, the Commission has attempted to construct and finalise a legal framework to which all Member States must adhere. Market norms however appear to outflank the market; competition laws (particularly those underwriting unbundling requirements) impact third parties and seem poised to demand significant changes, in which even rudimentary approximation appears a pipeline too far.

Regulations and Directives on Electricity and Gas were intended to establish "common rules for the transmission, distribution, supply and storage of" gas and electricity (European Commission, 1998), geared to boost the EU's policy of enhanced market integration, consequentially boosting competition and consumer choice. While the technical aspects were laid out in some detail, neither Regulations or Directives were able to fully account for the knock-on effect that such measures would have politically,

as well as economically, with its largest third party supplier, specifically regarding the failsafes of gauranteeing security of supply. In a pre-gas spat world where long-term contracts were largely driven by private sector dyanmics and overseen by Member States in terms of majority shareholdings, or in terms of dictating national energy supplies, the need for failsafes was not apparent. However, after the 2006 and 2009 spats (Stern 2006, and 2009), with the intervening Russian defence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia prompting a low-level war in Georgia, and the Commission committed to a policy of decoupling energy champions from their state sponsors, managing energy security as a progressive strategic culture looked decidedly challenging. Gazprom contracts were still popular with Member States, but the legal obligations via 'take-orpay' requirements, their sheer longveity, and the intermediary vulnerability of relations with transit states like Ukraine, cast a still more sobering light on the situation. After the Russian withdrawal of the ECT and subsequent attempt to reconstruct their own framework for east-west energy cooperation (Sierra 2010, Lussac 2010), EU responses inevitably became more politicized, with starker contrasts between the 'EU method' of marketing opening and a Russian ethos based on a determined commitment to increasing the series of long-term bilateral gas contracts with Member States while seeking to diminish key EU projects like Nabucco and South Stream.

Oppositional outlooks, pugnacious diplomatic forays, and the 'divide et imperium' approach to the Ukraine have certainly contributed to an impasse atop the various formats of EU-Russia energy relations. Once a benign, necessary tool to achieving a balanced energy portfolio, the policy of diversification has been incorporated by both sides into an increasingly zero-sum arsenal of energy tools. The irony is that both sides are resorting to the same foreign policy tool to alleviate what is essentially the same problem: attempting to decouple, and even transcend the emphatically interdependent and consumately regional nature of their relationship by striking out-of-area deals that entail similar, if not enhanced degrees of risk in the energy supply chain than each accuses the other of representing within the current setup.

This case study presents a strong view of a further regressive behaviour when it comes to strategic energy power. What is more, the regressive notion is seen to be expressed by both partners, which suggests that positive outcomes are unlikely to occur once such a divide is being achieved and one artner becomes suspicious of the actions which the

other one is about to make. The politicising of the energy security question further denotes the power of positive and beneficial cooperation, which is seen by the way the Commission has reacted to the growing EU dependency on the natural resources of Russia. This in its own right was inevitably going to affect Russian percentions of its Western partner, pushing the Federation to go back to a zero-sum game of achieving sustainability for its future exports, which is so vital to their domestic economy.

On the other hand, the fact that a large number of the EU's member states are highly dependant on Russian gas has further destabilised the EU internally, creating a division and leading to slowing down on the policy-making process, which, as discussed above in the article is often seen as a weakness of the Union. The inability of both actors to come together and work closely in times of uncertainy has lead to misperceptions and further regressive behaviour when it comes to the EU-Russia energy security.

6. European Neighbourhood Policy and Russia

Furthermore, The EU created its European Neighbourhood Policy as a way of providing its neighbours a closer cooperation and economic benefits, therefore, the EU's conditionality works on the basis that the EU perceives itsef a valuable partner that shares similar values and norms with its immediate neighbourhood (Haukkala, 2008, p.41). The EU detemins its own norms to have a strategic power over third partners, therefore, it expects complience and further integration to be an easily followed process. However, when it comes to how Russia sees the ENP, a different perceived culture is being exeplified. The country sees the ENP as a way for the EU to acquire a "sphere of own influende" and pool resources towards Brusses. The very fact that the EU offered Russia to become its neighbour, not only provoked Russian pride, seeing itself as an equal player, but was seen as an intrusion into their sovereign dealings (Haukkala, 2008, p.43). Such a division in the perceptions towards the ENP not only does not help the progress of mutual strategic culture, it creates tensions between those partners in the struggle to receive what they need and not present themselves as a weaker actor. Struggles over the neighbourhood can also be seen with the Russian reactions towards Ukraine's ellegit signing of the trade agreement with the EU, which was to take place in 2014, however, Yanukovych's government refusing to go ahead with the decision at the time resulted in a backlash of violence and instability in one of the key strategic neighbours both of Russia, due to the gas pipelines going through the country and their common history, and the EU, being a slogan for employment and economic prosperity for Ukraine. However, the division in the responses to the annexation of Crimea by the ethnic russian population has pushed Europe into further distancing from Russia, having to impose economic sanctions upon businesses and nationals of the Federation, in order to avoid being seen as the actor which, whilst promotic human rights and the rule of law through democracy, has failed to act in a situation where it needs to hold its position as a global player (Cunningham, 2016). In terms of energy such sanctions have played an even more distancing role, due to the restrictions put on Rosneft, Transneft and Gazprom, all of which being owned by the Russian state (Bbc.co.uk, 2014). According to Cunningham, even though the results form the contra-sanctions coming from Russia to EU and US officials placed pressure upon the European economy in an unimaginable way due to the energy dependency between EU and Russia, such foreign policy decisions are best described through the lense of strategic culture, since rationality does not often play a role in the way decisions are being make, making the area of strategic culture of high importance in examining the complex ties between actors in the international system.

This is one of the most valuable examples when it comes to the regressive energy security, since it exeplifies traits oof both actors, which are inevitably going to lead to beliefs and perceptions that are going to distabilise any further deepening or widening when it comes to policy convergence. The PCA was supposed to place Russia on the global scene as an equal partner, however, the fact tat the EU has even considered Russia as a possible ENP country brought back the politically enduced decision-making in Russia, causing it to defend itself from being seen as a week state.

The events following the ENP led not only to show the differences between Russia and the EU, what is more, it caused both actors for one reason or another to enact their beliefs upon the countries in between the entities, especially Georgia and Ukraine, which as seen led only to energy distabilization and political suspicion form both sides, The power game which occurred between the military enhanced Russia and the normative based EU thus contributed to the regression, which following the sanctions placed upon one another gives little hope for future improvement when it comes to energy security. This is therefore a topic of high importance, since as discussed above, both the EU and Russia need each other and are extremely dependant on each other when it comes to energy security, and a contnuous regression in the strategic energy

relations is going to lead to a long period of economic downfalls and political distancing.

IV. Concluding Observations

The case has been put, from a conceptual and practical perspective, for a somewhat unorthodox approach by which to examine EU-Russia energy relations, in the context of post-Cold War integration, emergent actorness, and varied concepts of regulating their energy interdependence. Drawing on the political, sociological and cultural heritage of strategic culture, the merits of the present approach entail 'methodological pluralism, disciplinary tolerance, and... dialogism' in support of 'multiperspectival enquiry' (Aalto, Ashgate, 21). The same could be said about the myriad working dyanmics of strategic culture itself: promoting in its more pragamtic interpretation, the ability to identify and codify, however broadly, convering political viewpoints, approximated measures, and even harmonised standards, against a broader backdrop of commensurate perspectives in terms of both economic growth and political stability.

As illustrated, the suggested multi-level fora which exemplify positive and negative examples of attempts to reach this commonality, can be badged as an emergent EU-Russia strategic energy culture, embodying as it does, the energy security decision-making realm in which a 'system of symbols' is drawn upon by both actors. It is tempting to regard the systemic outputs as manifestly dyadic in nature, comprising a rather limited family of exporter/importer, antagonist/protagonist, threat/receptor, etc. The multiperspectival nature of strategic culture however should act as a healthy deterrent to such limitations; counteracting such oppositional identities with a series of relational ones in which far more commonality, convergene and cooperation exists than is generally observed or credited, and in which the sector-specific strategic culture is located against the broader backdrop of post-Cold War east-west cooperation. As Aalto suggests, this narrative method allows key facets of the strategic culture, such as the EU-Russia energy dialogue to emerge 'as part of a larger story in the writing, and where two parties are trying to address mutual concerns by means of a dialogue, whilst other interested actors and affected groups are joining in' (Ashgate, 29-30).

Opposition understandings are not difficult to reach; particularly at times of great

political tension. Equally when such tensions seem over time to characterise the majority of given relationship, it is tempting either to suggest an absence of any cooperation on the basis of primordial geopolitical rivalry, or attributes of ambiguity and complexity, arising from institutional dissimilarities; this spectrum could range from observing a total absence of any EU-Russia cooperation to incidental spats arising from the substantial 'misfit in their administrative structures and cultures' (Romanova, 2011, 1). There are a number of problems with such conclusions. First, there is a distinction to be made between bilateral relations in the public sphere that appear sporadic while cooperation in the private sphere continues in a manner that permits the continuance of contractual relations, including those for the purchase and delivery of oil and gas. Second, one needs to distinguish between statements suggesting that a period characterised by an absence of EU-Russia cooperation and, following Romanova, 'an absence of the concept of EU-Russia cooperation' simply because 'none of the pre-existent patterns of the EU's or Russia's external relations is suitable (ibid). Here, the conceptual must labour in to capture the practical; the suggestion is that a broad, relatively historical concept capable of isolating the wide-ranging areas of interest that have generated agreement, compromise, and even convergence is found in as a form of strategic culture. This concept can be thick or thin; policy-specific or ideational; a priori or constructed via the conjunctive processes between two key parties via identification and interaction; most crucially, progressive or regressive.

The paradox of the EU-Russia strategic energy culture is that the recent high-profile fallouts between Brussels and Moscow are vitriolic in nature precisely because of the frustration and anger felt by each side, having assumed that the other had understood and agreed to operate according to the negotiated rules of the strategic culture itself. Representing the heritage of all past agreements and convergences obtained, the EU-Russia strategic energy culture is never more evident than when both sides are locked in vicious disagreement about how to interpret, and manage it.

¹ I. Kustova, 'EU-Russia Energy Relations, EU Energy Integration, and Energy Security: the State of the Art and a Roadmap for Future Research', <u>Journal of Contemporary European Research</u> 11/3

^{(2015),} p.2.

² C. Meyer, The Quest for A European Strategic Culture: Changing Norms on Security and Defence in the European Union (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2006), p. 1.

Trenin, 2012, p.10.

⁴ An impressive counterexample of such foreclosed approaches are the multiple methodologies of energy secuirity deconstruction set out by various authors in Aalto (ed.) The EU-Russian Energy Dialogue, in which geopolitics, trade and diplomacy sit alongside the political sociology, bureaucratic, regional and environmental politics of energy.

⁵ Baiva, Drent and Herd 2011, 1228.

⁶ Romanova, 2012, 24 and 25

⁷ Baiva, Drent and Herd, 2011, 1228.

⁸ Romanova, 2012, 24

⁹ (Romanova, 2012, 25

¹⁰ Baiva, Drent and Herd: 2011, p. 1227.

¹¹ Snyder, 1977.

¹² Baiva, Drent and Herd, 2011, 1228.

¹³ Snyder 1977:8 in Longhurst: a 2000:302

¹⁴ A. I. Johnston, 'Thinking About Strategic Culture', <u>International Security</u>, 19/4 (Spring 1995), p. 45 15 Ibid

 $^{{}^{16}\;}Geertz\;(cited\;in\;Johnston,\;p.46),\;\underline{Interpretation},\;p.\;90\;Clifford\;Geertz,\;\textit{The Interpretation}\;of\;\textit{Cultures}\;(New\;Properties)$ York: Basic Books, 1973),

¹⁷ (Colin S. Gray, Nuclear Strategy and National Style, (1986), Hamilton Press)

¹⁸ Baiva, Drent and Herd 2011, 1228.

¹⁹ Meyer, p. 16.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid, p. 27.

²² Cornish & Edwards International Affairs 77/3, 2001, p. 587.

²³ Ibid

²⁴ See Contemporary Security Policy, 'Special Edition: European Security Policy: Strategic Culture in Operation?' 32/3, 2011, pp. 481-687.

²⁵ P. Schmidt, 'The EU's Military Involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Security Culture, Interests and Games' Contemporary Security Policy 32:3 (Dec 2011), p. 567.

²⁶ Baiva Drent and Herd 2011, 1229

²⁷ D. Haglund, 'Let's Call the Whole Thing Off'? Security Culture as Strategic Culture' Contemporary

Security Policy 32:3 (Dec 2011), p. 500.

²⁸ Alastair Iain Johnston, (1995) 'Thinking about Strategic Culture, International Security, 19:4, pp. 33-64

²⁹ Kaveshnikov, 587.

³⁰ Kaveshnikov, 587.

³¹ F. Ermarth, 'Russia's Strategic Culture: Past, Present and... in Transition?' Defense Threat Reduction Agency (SAIC, 18-06-02) available online: https://fas.org/irp/agency/dod/dtra/russia.pdf.

³² Trenin, 2009, p.72-78.

³³ Ibid, 5.

³⁴ Trenin, 2009, p.8

³⁵ Haukkala, 2009, p. 1758

³⁶ Baiva, 2011, 42

³⁷ Averre, 2010, 532.

³⁸ Schmidt, p. 567.