

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND RUSSIA: A WORLD OF ENERGY

by Martí Anglada*

Until the expansion of the European Union to 27 countries, European foreign policy was essentially one of expansion. In fact, it was the only policy. The external efforts of the EU were concentrated on its growth and, therefore, focused on its European neighbours (in East Europe and the Baltic, previously under Soviet influence). Following its latest growth, this form of European foreign policy has proven to be very limited. It includes the Balkan states, Turkey and just six other countries: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the three Caucasus- Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. To make matters worse, the latter six countries formed part of the Soviet Union. Therefore, any action in this sphere comes up against Russia's interests and influence. Consequently, the lesson to be learnt from a European foreign policy solely based on influencing those countries that are candidates for EU membership, is that it has reached its limit. It is obvious, now more than ever, that the EU needs an effective foreign policy.

It is well known that the foreign policy of a great power, such as the EU is at present, needs to give priority to its allies (the United States and other members of NATO), the other great powers (China, India, Russia and Japan) and the presence of international organisations (the WTO and the IMF). Another priority for attention must be for one's neighbours, which is to say towards all the countries on the shores of the Mediterranean, the countries mentioned above and, once again, towards Russia. Russia is unique, therefore, in that it fulfils the double condition of being both a neighbour and a great power.

Currently, an impetus has been given to a collective presence in the continent that is part of the European colonial heritage, which is to say Africa. The EU's military missions in Chad and Somalia

are an example of such a presence. This is a result of the impact made by the French presidency, now that the EU is beginning to experience the need for an *effective* foreign policy. However, according to the spokesperson for the presidency of the European Commission, the three major advances in common foreign policy in recent times are: A) that the EU has been key to Kosovo's impendence, B) that the EU has been the sole mediator in the war in Georgia and C) the 'Eastern Partnership' (the six countries mentioned above, headed by Ukraine, all former members of the Soviet Union). Therefore, the elements that Brussels highlights as significant are to be found by looking towards the East, where we always find Russia. In reality, it is the European Union's recognition of the fact that aiming for an authentic foreign policy always begins with Russia. The journey that the EU is



undertaking towards global participation always has its first stop in Moscow, where it must pass its first test of planetary credibility.

THE JOURNEY THAT THE EU IS UNDERTAKING TOWARDS GLOBAL PARTICIPATION ALWAYS HAS ITS FIRST STOP IN MOSCOW, WHERE IT MUST PASS ITS FIRST TEST OF PLANETARY CREDIBILITY

Following the conflict in Georgia in the summer of 2008, the EU announced on the 5th of November that it would resume talks with Russia over the renewal of the treaty that deals with issues such as energy, the structure of the Russian market (a key element if Russia continues with its

goal of entering the World Trade Organisation), organised crime and migration. The picture these issues paint is basically an economic one. Are there other areas of collaboration between the EU and Russia that spill over into areas beyond the economic realm? What is happening in the military arena, for example? In terms of military issues of a more peaceful nature, such as the peace missions, there are positive signs of collaboration between the EU and Russia. They are limited, however, to the administration of the crises, such as in Somalia. This decisively contributes to the fact that all the EU's missions are conducted under the UN's umbrella and that the EU is not a defensive bloc in its own right. Indeed, if the EU often carries out missions that could be done by NATO, it is because the UN prefers the EU for this very reason.

European security is another issue entirely. It is one in which the EU and Russia fail to maintain an effective dialogue. They are, obviously, valid negotiators that have taken on a relative degree of cooperation in the construction of a new architecture of European security, but the negotiations are between NATO and Russia. NATO, of which various members of the EU are not members (Ireland, Sweden, Finland and Austria), and Russia are the true effective interlocutors in terms of security (from the balance of conventional forces on the continent to the anti-missile shield that the Pentagon wants to install in the Czech Republic and Poland). The question, therefore, is: does NATO complicate the EU's relationship with Russia? The answer is, at present, 'no'. However, it could cause a problem if NATO does not proceed with a flexibilisation of its ability to operate that gives more autonomy to its European members. Nevertheless, NATO is committed to moving in this direction, one that leads to a strengthening of the so-called 'European pillar' of the Alliance. At present, in view of the fact that the EU's foreign policy is still of an embryonic nature, Brussels does not have the capacity to pressure on Moscow and make demands on it, both of which are needed in order to negotiate with Russia on matters of security.

In order to highlight the EU's pressing need to fortify a common foreign policy towards Russia, it is worthwhile examining the different ways in which Russia and the EU deal with their immediate neighbours. Russia tends to consider a neighbour's defeat as a victory for itself, as such a situation increases Moscow's influence, making the neighbour more dependent. The procedure established by the EU, from the treaties of association with countries of the Maghreb to the accords with Turkey, is on the other hand, one of considering that if the neighbour is in a better position, then it will benefit the EU. What the EU is looking for is known as the *interactive sphere*, in contrast to the *sphere of influence* sought by Russia. When faced with the sphere of influence that Russia wishes to consolidate from the Ukraine to the Caucasus, it is evident that the 27 member

states of the EU (especially the smallest) are unable to develop separate foreign policies. The only way to deal with the problem is from a common EU foreign policy.

**AT THIS STAGE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
A COMMON EUROPEAN ENERGY MARKET
CANNOT BE PUT OFF ANY LONGER**

Let us examine the most important sector in economic relations between the EU and Russia, namely energy. Its major strategic importance at this historic time means that it is the central issue in relations between Brussels and Moscow. Newspaper headlines all round Europe tell us that Europe depends on Russian gas. While this is true, is it a sufficient reason to justify and strengthen a common energy policy? It appears still not to be so. In fact, while the EU imports 29% of its oil and up to 40% of its uranium from Russia, it only imports 24% of its gas. Gas consumption is increasing, however and since it is transported via gas pipelines (fixed installations) it also creates dependency. Within the EU there are stark variations in the dependency on Russian gas: while Estonia is 100% dependent and Germany 40% dependent, Spain has a dependency of 0%. Moscow's policy is likewise full of contradictions: the gas it sells to Estonia, while representing the totality of that country's consumption, represents just 1% of Russian gas exports; Germany, on the other hand, carries more weight, since its imports represent some 29% of total Russian gas exports. Obviously, Spain does not feature on the list of customers. With such diversity in energy relations one thing remains clear: there cannot be a common EU energy policy involving Russia, if first there is not a united energy market in the European Union.

At present, the EU is making unified progress in another aspect related to energy: the fight against climate change. This allows one to confirm that the EU is undergoing profound changes in state policies directed towards a common energy policy. The growth of the EU to 27 countries



means that many small states do not feel themselves able to advance independently towards goals such as saving energy, or more significantly, ensuring energy supplies. They do not have the means to do so alone and seek the refuge of the EU in many policies. Energy problems have, therefore, increased *the need for the European Union*. They have amplified the necessity of a common energy policy that not only moves forward, but that is led by the larger nations.

The urgent need for a common energy market within the framework of the EU is obvious, therefore. There is at present an *energy solidarity agreement* between the 27 member states of the

Union. However, in order for it to become effective the energy networks of all EU nations would need to be interconnected, thus diversifying energy sources. This is the only true guarantee of energy security for all Europeans. At this stage the establishment of a common European energy market cannot be put off any longer.

For those who fear Russia's reactions, one need only recall one fact: while Russian trade and investment in the European Union only affects 8% of the EU's economic activity, the EU's economic activity affects 50% of the Russian economy as a whole.

*MARTÍ ANGLADA

FOREIGN NEWS EDITOR AT TV₃ (CATALUNYA TELEVISION). HE HAS BEEN FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST, ITALY AND GREAT BRITAIN (1977-1984) FOR THE BARCELONA NEWSPAPER *La Vanguardia* AND UNITED STATES CORRESPONDENT FOR TV₃ (1987-1990). HE HAS ALSO BEEN AN INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL COMMENTATOR. HE RECENTLY PUBLISHED *Afers no tan estrangers* (NOT SO FOREIGN AFFAIRS) FOR *Editorial Mina* (PART OF *Grup 62*).

