
THE BIG, THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL: AMERICA, RUSSIA AND EUROPE'S MELLOW POWER

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As political scientists, we are lucky to live in an extremely exciting period. French President is confessing love to the US, Russians are flying strategic bombers along the American coast, Americans are preparing for another episode of Star Wars and another military adventure in the Middle East. The North Pole is suddenly an object of geopolitical competition. In such a vibrant, dynamic environment, even a new treaty of the EU does not stir much excitement. The jungle of European institutions, committees and directorates may sometimes seem depressing, at least from International Relations perspective. Despite this, I will try to showcase and upraise the beauty of Europe's mellow power.

Lithuanian worldview has always been rather simple, painted in black and white. It is framed by three strong images. First, it is an image of big and powerful US dominating the world politics. It is a good friend of ours, so everything that US does must be good for Lithuania. Secondly, there is the image of a big bad bear – Russia, who, we think, is doing everything to make life miserable for Lithuania and everything that Russia does must be bad for Lithuania. Last but not least is the EU – a generous source of social and economic welfare, whose power of attraction, seduced us to become a member of the family. When the EU agrees with the US, it is good for Lithuania, when the EU agrees with Russia, it is bad for Lithuania.

Life is not that simple anymore, but these three images is a useful starting point when discussing the global role of the EU itself. EU's international behaviour is shaped by the same actors and factors: cumbersome transatlantic relations with the US, cumbersome relations with Russia, and tricky relationship with itself.

There are three groups of problems and dilemmas related to the EU's global role: metaphysical, strategic and institutional. Let's start with metaphysics.

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What is Europe? Where is Europe and which Europe are we talking about? Some call it Venus, some call it Eurabia, Americans say it is somewhere between Vancouver and Vladivostok, Eurocrats say it is between Lisbon and Liubliana. Postmodernists like R.B.J. Walker, say that Europe is not where it is supposed to be. So what is so European about the EU?

Those who still believe in neorealism know for sure where Europe is and what it stands for. They consider Europe an economic giant and a military dwarf, which has to boost its military power and align with the US in order to survive. For constructivists, Europe is what we make it. We are constructing Europe by speaking Europe. On one hand, we have a modern image of Europe made up of territory and power, balancing against other great powers. On the other hand, we have a postmodern image of Europe, in which international politics have transformed into post national and post sovereign politics.

The distinction that Robert Cooper makes between modern and postmodern actors seems to be more useful than Robert Kagan's comparison of Venus and Mars. The neorealist logic of IR does not lead us very far: Kagan wants us to believe, that transatlantic relations during the Cold War were good because of the misbalance of power – US was a strong Mars, and Europe was a weak Venus. Now, he says, the transatlantic relations are bad because of the misbalance of power – the US is the strong Mars and Europe is the weak Venus. As it is usually the case with neorealists, the same cause seems to explain any outcome.

From a constructivist point of view, international politics are a matter of social interaction. Anarchy and power politics are not eternal laws – for one, European nations have chosen to move beyond national politics, share sovereignty and live in a security community, within which war is impossible. The newest twist in the US-French relationship provides another good example that relations between states is a matter of choice, not a matter of metaphysical geopolitical destiny.

The EU is an increasingly postmodern, postnational space, in which the notions of power, territory and boundaries are increasingly losing significance. In Europe, politics are no longer about the security of the state borders, but about individual happiness and welfare.

In the meantime, much of the modern world, including Russia and the US still believe in national sovereignty and importance of territory. The ultimate

objective of the state is to defend the state. This seems to be the source of asymmetries and misperceptions in the EU-US and EU-Russia relations.

The second important metaphysical tension is the one between deepening and widening of Europe, between the logic of internal post-territoriality of the EU, and the strive to draw the final borders. One school of thought argues in favour of the widening imperative – enlargement has always been the most successful foreign and security policy of the EU. Enlargement is what ensures thriving of the common market. Stop the enlargement, and you stop the EU itself. It would be a disaster for sluggish economy and aging society of Europe to build new walls. Another school of thought contends that the deepening imperative is much more urgent: to be able to function properly, the EU needs to pursue further internal institutional, social, economic consolidation and probably draw final external borders. If the EU chooses deepening over widening, it will not be able to use its beauty to solve the problems of its neighborhood. At the same time widening the EU would almost definitely create new obstacles to deepening.

This dilemma is related to the second of problems - the strategic issues. Let's start with Europe's immediate environment. To paraphrase the George W. Bush famous speech in Warsaw, Europe is not whole, Europe is not free, Europe is not secure and Europe is not at peace.

First, Europe is not complete. The EU is still struggling in the Balkans, Turkey's membership prospects are getting bleaker by the day, and Ukraine is probably decades away from membership, to say nothing about Georgia or Moldova. The most successful tool in the EU's toolbox – enlargement – may still help complete the vision of Europe from Lisbon to Liubliana, but it is of little help in other cases.

Europe is not free. The last European dictatorship is just 200 kilometers away from us. The Freedom House ranks both Belarus and Russia as not free countries. Here, the EU has very limited options. If anything, both Belarus and Russia has moved further away from democracy in the last decade. So much for Europe's power of attraction.

Europe is in danger. Solana's security strategy lists a number of threats: terrorism, WMD, regional conflicts, state failure and organized crime. For Europe, terrorism and organized crime are pretty much an enemy within. To cope with external challenges, the EU would have to underpin its mellow power with

credible military capabilities. The latter may never happen and on this I agree with Kagan – Europeans have no appetite for war. They will spend more money on police to fight terrorism at home, but they will not spend more money to fight terrorism abroad or get into American-style regime change business.

Finally, a number of frozen or not so frozen conflicts persist in European neighborhood: South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria. Some of these conflicts can explode into new war. The EU is pretty much absent from resolution of any of them. So far, Europe's neighbourhood policy has been too misbalanced and to make a difference in Eastern Europe. Mr. Europe Javier Solana often acts as Mr. Balkans or Mr. Africa.

On the global issues, that dominate current headlines, the EU is more a factor than an actor. Ironically, most of these issues are directly related to Europe's security. While US and Russia continue negotiating on missile defence in Europe, on Treaty of Conventional forces in Europe, on the future of Kosovo in Europe, the European voice is absent - it would be difficult to pinpoint any clear common European position on these issues.

Of course, the EU continues to be a major global economic actor, it is the largest donor of humanitarian aid and sometimes does make a difference in such places as Democratic Republic of Congo or Lebanon. However, it is obvious that a strategy of being beautiful and attractive is not always sufficient – sometimes a focused effort of persuasion or punishment is necessary. To become a global actor comparable to the US, China or Russia, the EU would have to underpin its mellow power with more assertive foreign policy and military power. The latter seems unlikely, which leaves the EU one option - to get its foreign and security policy right.

This leads to the institutional dilemmas of the EU. The CFSP may have a new architecture, but the furniture is the same. Moving the furniture around does not solve the chronic problems of this policy. I am not convinced that Lisbon treaty alone can do this. Now the EU dragon will have three heads: the High Representative, President of the commission, and President of the EU Council. The question remains the same, who do you call when you want to make war or love with the EU?

Although Lisbon Treaty is supposed to help solving the problem of democratic deficit, ironically, probably only one nation will hold a referendum on it. As a

historian Timothy Garton Ash once remarked, if the EU applied to join the EU, it would not be admitted because it would not meet the democracy criterion. Supranationalism by definition is difficult to appreciate in terms of democracy.

Most obvious problem is the 27 national diplomatic services and 27 national foreign policies trying to preserve the autonomy of decision and action. The ongoing EU integration increasingly blurs distinction between foreign and national, domestic and external, subnational and supranational policies and politics. Both the nationhood and the statehood of nation states many indeed be at stake. As David Campbell has argued, states strive to articulate identity by means of foreign and security policy. In other words, states quite simply cannot and does not exist without a foreign policy.

Therefore, every member state wants to have some kind of special relationship with the key actors outside the EU, especially the US and Russia. Not surprisingly, most European countries can be easily identified as either being pro-American and anti-Russian, or anti-American and pro-Russian, but it would be difficult to list a sincerely pro-European camp.

There are at least three distinct approaches towards Russia within the EU:

- *An idealist romantic view* - Russia is European, Democratic partner of EU;
- *A pragmatic cynical view*, there are problems, but interests come first;
- *And a suspicious view*, expansionist and authoritarian regime, a bad guy threatening neighbors.

The beauty of the EU is that the combination of these contradictory views provides a mish-mash common policy on Russia, with which none of the members are fully happy. For bigger states, this is an additional incentive to go the bilateral way, for smaller states the bilateral way is even worse than the consensual EU way.

Transatlantic relations are no less problematic. During the Cold War transatlantic link was synonymous with NATO. It's no longer so: today transatlantic dialogue takes place between Europe and US inside NATO, between NATO and the EU and between the US and the EU. In the first case, NATO is not always the first choice for the US - take invasion of Afghanistan as an example. As

for NATO-EU relations, NATO's secretary general described them as a „frozen conflict“. Finally, US-EU dialogue bypasses NATO altogether. Although the rift over Iraq has more or less healed, some of the strategic tensions will remain for the foreseeable future: most notably, because of proximity to the Middle East and the growing addiction to Russian gas and oil, the EU will inevitably have different interests and concerns on these issues from those of US.

Life for Europe was easy during the Cold War: it defined its identity against the Soviet Union and Europe's own bloody past, while the US was the positive reference of a common civilisation. Today, Europe has an identity problem. Europe is divided and undecided whether Russia is a partner or a threat; Eastern Europeans view Americans as guardians of their freedom, while citizens of biggest EU members regard the US as the biggest threat to global peace, meanwhile Muslim minorities in some European countries is emerging as the enemy within.

The new member states are facing a plethora of their own dilemmas.

First, they have not yet mastered the rules of postmodern politics such as shared sovereignty, consensus building, and multi-level governance. For example, Lithuania pursues a rather contradictory strategy: our support for the deepening is rather reluctant probably out of fear that we will lose decision making autonomy and the Germans will sell us to the Russians. But we full-heartedly support the EU enlargement to all the willing countries from Turkey to Ukraine to Georgia. This would undoubtedly weaken the EU internally and redistribute EU funds towards the new new members.

Secondly, although the EU is beautifully mellow, it is no doubt a global actor. Many of the new Europeans are able to think and act regionally and often only locally. They objectively are too small to see the big picture. What we consider existential problems often are only marginal irritants to the great powers.

Thirdly, some of the new members, including Lithuania, like to use history as a tool of foreign policy. The problem is that the very success of the EU project was always dependent on the ability to forget the past for the sake of the future.

Fourthly, the new members usually believe that their best chance to outmaneuver Russia is American support, this is why they support Americans. There are two paradoxes in this belief: first, the full-hearted support for Iraq war has brought new wealth and power to Russia, while weakening the US

and dividing the EU. Secondly, the solutions to the problems that the Eastern Europeans are facing vis a vis Russia lie in Brussels and the ability of the EU articulate common foreign policy. There is not much Washington D.C. is able or willing to do in this regard.

Finally, most new member states have not yet decided which model of European integration would benefit them most: the British widening but not deepening EU, German deepening but not widening, or the French agricultural Europe of nations led by France. Which Europe do we want: Constitutional Europe, The United States of Europe, Free-Trade Europe or Multi-speed Europe?

There are no easy solutions to the problems I have outlined. The EU is aging and losing competitive edge – to reverse this trend, it needs to continue widening, embracing globalization, embracing immigration and getting rid of protectionism. It also has to put its act together internally, which means further deepening. Combining enlargement with integration will be increasingly difficult. To address this dilemma, the EU will need some kind of magic, or at least extraordinary imagination. Imagination, however, seems to be in deficit in the EU.

Probably the greatest paradox is that despite all its flaws and problems, all the EU's neighbours want to be friends with the EU and very often to become part of the EU. The EU is a beautiful transcendental, postmodern entity, which does not fit into the traditional models of international relations, and cannot be easily explained using the concepts of sovereignty and power.

Even if EU behaviour may seem boring and we cannot google up jokes about Jose Manuel Barroso or Javier Solana, we do have to take the EU seriously. The EU institutions may lack imagination, but we, political scientists, do need imagination to fully understand and appreciate the complex beauty of Europe.