

Коммуникационный менеджмент и стратегическая коммуникация в государственном управлении

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Реконцептуализация культуры во времена беспорядков: культурное сотрудничество и диалог между ЕС и Россией за пределами кризиса на Украине*

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Аннотация

С начала украинского кризиса российско-европейские военные, стратегические и дипломатические отношения ухудшались, достигнув в последнее время рекордно низкого уровня. Помимо известных политических и экономических последствий, это также влияет на уровень культурных контактов. Хотя официально роль культурного фактора в отношениях ЕС и России не является приоритетной, культура играет жизненно важную, порой двойственную, роль во внешней политике обоих акторов. Под эгидой культурной дипломатии односторонняя передача «культурных ценностей» преобладает над подлинным диалогом, ограничивая развитие межкультурного сотрудничества. Тем не менее, нынешний кризис предоставляет и новые возможности в этой сфере. Пересматривая роль культуры в уникальных отношениях ЕС и России, а также оценивая нынешние культурные стратегии обоих акторов, автор исследует альтернативные пути кросс-культурного диалога. Переоценка концепции культурных отношений представляется эффективным средством оживления этого диалога и отношений ЕС и России в целом.

Ключевые слова

Культурные отношения, культурная дипломатия, мягкая сила, кризис на Украине, отношения ЕС и России, общественная дипломатия.

Culture humanizes what politics demonizes

Wole Soyinka¹

Introduction

Following a popular saying, the EU's High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Frederica Mogherini declared at the presentation of the EU's strategy for International Cultural Relations in 2017: "Culture brings people closer, prevents conflicts and helps wounds to heal"². Indeed, cultural expression in all its forms can be said to be a mobilizing factor going out from people. Through art, language and performance, culture has the potential to inspire, heal and touch people across cultures and civilizations. By the same

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¹ Quoted in: *Schneider C.P.* The Unrealized Potential of Cultural Diplomacy: "Best Practices" and What Could Be, If Only... // *The Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*. 2009. Vol. 39. No 4: Repositioning Culture in US International Relations. P. 262.

² Culture Brings People Closer, Prevents Conflicts and Helps Wounds to Heal // Council of the European Union [Facebook Page]. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/eucouncil/videos/1351857068197278/> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

token however, culture has been mobilized, contributing to conflict and collapse, for instance, when used in relation to totalitarian regimes or destructive ideologies, or as instrument of war as expressed during the Cold War³.

The ambiguous nature of culture is reflected in the different roles it plays in society, for instance in foreign relations. Since the 19th century, national cultures have been functioning as an instrument in foreign policies. Although, such instrumentalization of culture is not negative per se, certainly because of the non-coercive strategies behind it, such policies and practices, often denoted under the umbrella of cultural diplomacy, tend to coincide with various hazards and challenges, for instance with respect to conflicting interests, the place and role of the cultural practitioner in this process, or, not least importantly, within the context of the significant global transformations of the 21st century.

In addition to the difficulties in measuring the outcomes of cultural diplomacy practices, it seems that the over-instrumentalization of culture risks to turn into a destabilizing factor in nation's cultural life, but similarly between states, ultimately affecting people to people relations. This is particularly likely to come to expression in so-called "times of trouble", periods of heightened tension when political relations are likely to be cut or undermined by for instance the implementation of sanctions. This raises questions about the role of culture. Should cultural cooperation, as an extension of a nation's policy also be cut, or should it after all play a positive role as the saying proclaims?

The current relations between the EU and Russia provide an example of troubled times since their young but tumultuous relationship deteriorated over the Ukrainian crisis which broke out in the winter of 2013. Following the rupture of their relations, scholars and policy makers have analysed Russia-EU relations while focusing on traditional vectors such as geopolitics, economy and security, though largely neglecting the role of culture in their unique and historical relationship. This paper which was developed following a conference talk⁴ at the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (April 2017), aims at filling this gap by critically assessing the role of culture in EU-Russia relations and contributing to the knowledge of EU-Russia relations. It argues that the instrumentalization of culture through cultural diplomacy practices plays an ambiguous and potentially destabilizing role in Russia-EU

³ See: *Saunders F.S.* The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters. New York: The New Press, 2001; *Saunders F.S.* Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War. London: Granta Books, 2000; *Nielsen A.E., Walker W.H.* Warfare in Cultural Context: Practice, Agency, and the Archaeology of Violence // *Historical Archaeology*. 2010. Vol. 44. No 4. P. 166–167; U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), "SOF Support to Political Warfare" White Paper. Fort Bragg, NC: U.S. Army Special Operations Command, 2015.

⁴ «Трансформация международных отношений в XXI веке: вызовы и перспективы»: Международная конференция при поддержке Фонда Горчакова в Дипакадемии // Фонд Горчакова [Сайт]. URL: <http://www.gorchakovfund.ru/news/20699/> (дата обращения: 25.07.2017).

relations, and that a reconceptualization of the role of culture in these relations is immanent in the inevitable process of restarting political dialogue beyond the Ukraine crisis. To do so, this article highlights the role civic initiatives play in the bilateral cultural field, while redefining the popularized term of cultural relations.

This paper starts from a constructivist approach to culture, acknowledging the potential for building sustainable cross-cultural relations between Russia and the EU on the one hand, and the role of culture as an indispensable form of communication within and between societies on the other⁵. Following Kirsten Bound, et al., culture is considered to be a medium between people on a mass scale, with profound effects laterally and upwardly on interstate relations⁶. A medium that has moreover unlimited potential to penetrate political barriers and build connections, even under adverse circumstances⁷, while it can hold up a mirror to politics and systems on the one hand, and yield indispensable insight into other countries on the other⁸. Based on extensive desk research, the analysis critically compares the cultural strategy of the EU and Russia in order to reveal its assets, but also its hazards and potential challenges in their future relationship. In addition, some recommendations toward the successful implementation of culture within the framework of a prospective, collaborative cultural policy are proposed.

The article is structured as follows. The first part sketches the role of culture in international relations, highlighting the phenomenon of cultural diplomacy in today's rapidly transforming world. The second part analyses EU-Russia relations, particularly assessing the role of culture, while identifying hazards and risks in relation to cultural policies in their respective foreign policy agendas. The third part concentrates on the role culture plays in the relationship focusing on initiatives coming from within civic society, and proposes a theoretical framework based on the notion of cultural relations aiming at reconceptualizing the role of culture in future EU-Russia relations.

I. Culture & Politics: Idealism or Marriage of Convenience?

The phenomenon of culture is notoriously difficult to define. Coming from the Latin word *colere*, to till, culture refers to the process of becoming educated, polished, refined, that is, the state of being civilized. In this sense, culture suggests a process for the deliberate and systematic acquisition of an intellectual sensibility⁹. Overall, definitions of culture tend to

⁵ Mitchell J.M. *International Cultural Relations*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 1986. P. 8.

⁶ Bound K., Briggs R., Holden J., Jones S. *Cultural Diplomacy*. London: Demos, 2007. P. 16–17.

⁷ Schneider C.P. Op. cit. P. 262.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Mulcahy K.V. *Public Culture, Cultural Identity, Cultural Policy: Comparative Perspectives*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017.

highlight two specific understandings of culture, namely an anthropological, that is, culture as set of beliefs and behaviour patterns, and as an umbrella term encompassing the fine arts on the other¹⁰. The *Oxford English Dictionary* for instance, first defines culture with reference to tillage: “the cultivation or development of the mind, faculties, manners, etc.; improvement by education and training”; and second as involving “the distinctive ideas, customs, social behavior, products, or way of life of a particular nation, society, people, or period”¹¹.

Both knowledges of the phenomenon of culture are of importance in relation to politics, particularly its role in foreign relations, where it is often denoted as cultural diplomacy, a practice that goes back to the 19th century, when it was common for European states to establish cultural institutes, libraries and language teaching facility across the globe in order to maintain or extend their cultural influence in countries where foreign cultural products were difficult to access¹². During the twentieth century and under the influence of the World Wars, the influence of cultural diplomacy expanded, gradually becoming associated with mere propaganda and later with the concept of soft power (See *infra*). Nowadays cultural diplomacy is not only a quintessential aspect of (great) nations’ (and supranational institutions’) foreign policy, it has also become separated from traditional diplomacy, gaining specificity in its way of working. Subsequently, cultural diplomacy is often executed by specialised organizations and institutes which manage cultural bodies of ministries or departments of foreign affairs and councils and ministries of culture.

The increasing importance of cultural diplomacy in international relations is reflected in a growing body of scholarship about the topic resulting in many definitions and making the phenomenon relatively difficult to grasp, not to say vague. Louis Bélanger for instance, understands it as the activities of foreign policy that deal with culture, education, science, and, to a degree, technical cooperation, in other words, those activities that relate to activities of the spirit¹³. According to Mariano Martin Zamorano, cultural diplomacy involves the systematic intervention of governments in the arts, sciences, and other cultural expression as the basis of an official categorisation of national identity¹⁴. Other definitions tend to focus more on the communication aspects of cultural diplomacy. Bound et al. for instance, conceptualize cultural

¹⁰ *Mulcahy K.V.* Op. cit.

¹¹ Culture, n. // *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000 (online version).

¹² *Paschalidis G.* Exporting National Culture: Histories of Cultural Institutes Abroad // *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. 2009. Vol. 15. No 3. P. 275–289.

¹³ *Bélanger L.* La diplomatie culturelle des provinces canadiennes // *Etudes internationales*. 1994. Vol. 25. No 3. P. 422.

¹⁴ *Zamorano M.M.* Reframing Cultural Diplomacy: The Instrumentalization of Culture Under the Soft Power Theory // *Culture Unbound*. 2016. Vol. 8. No 2. P. 169.

diplomacy through referring to the multiple uses of culture as a communication channel between governments and diplomats¹⁵. Similarly does Milton Cummings who defined the practice as “the exchange of ideas, information art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding”¹⁶.

The ambiguity of the term is also reflected in the variety of roles that are ascribed to cultural diplomacy. Whereas some see the central role of cultural diplomacy in fertilising the ground for possible actions with a real outcome¹⁷, others have pointed to the ability of softening and clarifying different premises and expanding opportunities for connections and mutual understanding¹⁸. Not surprisingly, there are some voices critical of the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy. According to Patricia Goff for instance, it can be helpful in bridging differences but cannot change outcomes where policies are entrenched¹⁹. Similarly, Manuela Aguilar writes that it is irrelevant per se, but important as a means for granting different ends — both of political and non-political nature²⁰.

A helpful qualification is the understanding of cultural diplomacy as a main sub-area of public diplomacy²¹; a connection which quite rightly links cultural diplomacy to the concept of soft power in the international arena. The term “soft power” coined by Joseph Nye who categorically distinguished it from hard power and defined it as the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction, rather than coercion or payment²². Soft power generated from culture, known as cultural soft power, comes from many different sources including popular culture, music, literature, arts, the movie industry, television, news, and the internet²³. It is made available to foreign audiences through public, private, and commercial channels and cultural diplomacy’s role in this case is to make certain aspects of the culture available where they are otherwise unavailable²⁴.

¹⁵ Bound K., Briggs R., Holden J., Jones S. Op. cit. P. 21.

¹⁶ Cummings M.C. Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey. Washington, D.C.: Centre for Arts and Culture, 2003. P. 1.

¹⁷ Udovič B., Podgornik A. Cultural Diplomacy of Slavic European Union Member States: A Cross-country Analysis // Baltic Journal of European Studies. 2016. Vol. 6. No 2. P. 121.

¹⁸ Goff P. Cultural Diplomacy // The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy / Eds.: A.F. Cooper, J. Heine, R. Thakur. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Aguilar M. Cultural Diplomacy and Foreign Policy: German-American Relations 1955–1968. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996..

²¹ Udovič B., Podgornik A. Op. cit. P. 127.

²² Nye J. Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics. New York: Public Affairs, 2004. P. 94.

²³ Rugh W.A. The Case of Soft Power // Toward a New Public Diplomacy: Redirecting U.S. Foreign Policy. Ed.: P. Seib. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. P. 3–21.

²⁴ Klueva A., Tsetura K. Strategic Aspects of Russia’s Cultural Diplomacy in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities of the 21st Century / Eds. A. Catellani, R. Trench, A. Zerfass. Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2015.

Within the context of soft power, based on the neo-liberal view which assumes that shared values are both possible and ultimately beneficial and that actors who share them are unlikely to enter into conflict with each other²⁵, cultural diplomacy is positioned as a tool to exert power, while it contributes to mask its manipulative role in “smart” power strategies²⁶. The latter conceptualization, linking cultural diplomacy directly to instrumentalization of culture, spurred Rhonda Zaharna to distinguish between two types of cultural diplomacy: a culturalist and a neo-propagandist type. Whereas the culturalist (or reflexive) type is characterized by policies focusing on the artistic, intellectual, and cultural pedagogic areas using diversified organization schemes such as cultural centres abroad, exchange programs, and diaspora politics, the second type, that is, the propagandist type, is reinforced by the soft power theory. In the latter case, culture tends to be subjected to political and economic instrumentalization by various processes of government management of external cultural representation aimed at creating short-term external social representation, reducing cultural diplomacy to a tool for the country image construction²⁷.

Regardless of the latter distinction, cultural diplomacy has one aim, namely, the promotion of a positive and contemporary image of the nation, and this will typically be for economic or political ends, rather than the cultural ones²⁸. This echoes Mary Maack who argues that the transmission of national culture brings about an understanding for national ideals and institutions as part of a larger attempt to build support and economic goals²⁹. David Carter writes from a similar perspective, that “cultural diplomacy is not undertaken by governments altruistically, but overtly in the national interest, and learning to live with this commitment to the nation might, at least theoretically, be one of the major challenges for those trained in the hermeneutics of suspicion or more simply those used to teaching the nation critically”³⁰.

In addition to its ambiguous nature, critics and scholars have raised more substantial questions about the practice of cultural diplomacy in the 21st century, for instance regarding the absence of clear criteria for understanding how and why such measures can be successful³¹. “The study of cultural diplomacy lacks a theoretical toolkit for understanding what consumers do with

²⁵ Clarke D. Theorising the Role of Cultural Products in Cultural Diplomacy from a Cultural Studies Perspective // International Journal of Cultural Policy. 2016. Vol. 22. No 2. P. 158.

²⁶ Zamorano M.M. Op. cit. P. 174–178.

²⁷ Zaharna S. Rhonda. Mapping out a Spectrum of Public Diplomacy Initiatives // Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy / Eds.: N. Snow, Ph. Taylor. New York: Routledge, 2009. P. 86–100.

²⁸ Carter D. Living with Instrumentalism: The Academic Commitment to Cultural Diplomacy // International Journal of Cultural Policy. 2015. Vol. 21. No 4. P. 482.

²⁹ Maack M.N. Books and Libraries as Instruments of Cultural Diplomacy in Francophone Africa During the Cold War // Libraries and Culture. 2001. Vol. 36. No 1. P. 59.

³⁰ Carter D. Op. cit. P. 482.

³¹ Ibid. P. 147.

cultural products from abroad which might be applied in order to assess what could be achieved”³². Moreover, questions have risen about how cultural diplomacy practices should adapt to a fast transforming world. Scholarship has been pointing to the fact that social and economic changes as well as geopolitical transformations have led to a new relevance for international cultural policies³³. This has already led to new dynamics in cultural diplomacy³⁴, exemplary of this is the fact that the state cultural mission to the international scene no longer is simply about promoting already existing culture abroad, but that it involves a more visibly active role in protecting and developing national culture, goals as seeking cultural exemption provision in trade agreements or gaining access to a foreign partner’s telecommunication network³⁵. Not surprisingly, such developments spurred others to state that the theoretical definition of cultural diplomacy established during the Cold War is rendered obsolete³⁶.

Three factors are noteworthy regarding the transformation of cultural diplomacy practice in the 21st century. Firstly, in today’s world of globalised, digitised and network media, policy makers are faced with “multidirectional flows”³⁷ of information, this is challenging the unidirectional model of the cultural diplomacy provider addressing its audience directly and without interference from cultural background noise³⁸. Secondly, the appearance of non-state actors and the replacement of the state-centric approach in the field. This is a consequence of the reconfiguration of power and has decentralised cultural diplomacy from traditional political and cultural centres to what Zamorano has called a “complex dialogue scheme”³⁹. This similarly echoes Damien Pwono who argues, that processes in the modern international community limit the power of government actors and empower actors from the public sphere, business world and civil society⁴⁰. This was already observed by James Rosenau who stated that in earlier times the global stage was occupied mainly by states and their intergovernmental organizations, but that the cast of characters has multiplied and that although states still occupy important roles in the routines of world affairs, their ranks have become thin relative to all the organizations that now

³² Carter D. Op. cit. P. 148.

³³ Zamorano M.M. Op. cit. P. 166.

³⁴ Paschalidis G. Op. cit. P. 283.

³⁵ Bélanger L. Op. cit. P. 678.

³⁶ Zamorano M.M. Op. cit. P. 166.

³⁷ Castells M. *Comunicaion y poder*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2009. P. 130.

³⁸ Clarke D. Op. cit. P. 148.

³⁹ Zamorano M.M. Op. cit. P. 174.

⁴⁰ Pwono D. *Fostering a Cultural Diplomacy Policy Dialogue: The Quest for the Stewardship and Cooperative Engagement // The Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*. 2009. Vol. 39. No 4. P. 297.

reach across boundaries to conduct their affairs⁴¹. Third, the participation of new developing countries when it comes to the deployment of cultural diplomacy, which makes it no longer the strategy of the most privileged (primarily the United States⁴²); resulting in what Zamorano has called the growing “glocal” character of cultural policy⁴³.

We may conclude that cultural diplomacy is an intrinsically complex and even ambiguous phenomenon of which the practices tend to oscillate between instrumentalism and constructivism. The future of cultural diplomacy should be understood within the context of the global transformation of the 21st century. The question arises however, whether this will lead to an increasing conceptualisation of culture in foreign relations as instrument of power or as means to foster intercultural dialogue. In the next sections, we explore this question by examining the role of culture (and cultural diplomacy) in contemporary EU-Russia relations.

II. EU-Russia Relations: A Brief Introduction

Romano Prodi compared the relations between Russia and the EU in 2003 to “vodka and caviar”⁴⁴, an idealist and slightly odd way to compare their young, though already tumultuous relations. Characterized by high but also low points, Russia-EU relations have gradually been deteriorating, culminating in the Ukraine Crisis following the outburst of the Maidan Protests in late 2013. Today, given mutually imposed sanctions, various conflicting interests and opposing political and ideological narratives, it can be said that EU-Russia relations are in utter times of crisis, a situation which has not only generated international discussion about the future of global politics, but even about the possible emergence of a “new Cold War”⁴⁵.

The current legal basis for EU-Russia relations is the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) which came into force in 1997 and established a political framework for regular consultation between the EU and Russia, based on the principles of respect for democracy and human rights, political and economic freedom, and commitment to international

⁴¹ Quoted in: *Ang I., Isar Y.R., Mar P.* Cultural Diplomacy: Beyond the National Interest? // *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. 2015. Vol. 21. No 4. P. 371.

⁴² *Brzezinski Z.* The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives. New York: Basic Books, 1997.

⁴³ *Zamorano M.M.* Op. cit. P. 174; *Цветкова Н.* Публичная дипломатия США: от «мягкой силы» к «диалоговой пропаганде» // *Международные процессы*. 2015. Т. 13. № 3. С. 121–133.

⁴⁴ Romano Prodi: Europe and Russia Are Like Vodka and Caviar // *Pravda.ru* [Website]. 03.06.2003. URL: <http://www.pravdareport.com/news/world/03-06-2003/50400-0/> (accessed: 25.06.2017).

⁴⁵ *Gromyko A.* Russia-EU Relations at a Crossroads: Preventing a New Cold War in a Polycentric World // *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*. 2015. Vol. 15. No 2. P. 141; *Haukkala H.* From Cooperative to Contested Europe? The Conflict in Ukraine as a Culmination of a Long-Term Crisis in EU-Russia Relations // *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*. 2015. Vol. 23. No 1. P. 25–40.

peace and security⁴⁶. Since 2007 the partnership has been renewed annually and is complemented by a range of sectorial agreements. As a measure against what the EU has considered to be Russian involvement in the Ukraine crisis, some of the mechanisms have been frozen and sanctions have been imposed which in turn provoked Russia to impose countersanctions. Regardless of few positive sounds on the improvement of the relations⁴⁷, both the EU and Russia have prolonged the sanctions in June 2017, signifying that the political crisis is far from being resolved⁴⁸.

The problematic aspects of the current EU-Russia relationship have been pointed out by different specialists in the field. Hiski Haukkala's qualification of the development of EU-Russia relations after the Cold War for instance, showcases that the roots of the crisis date back to far before the outburst of the Ukrainian Crisis. Distinguishing three phases in their relations, Haukkala considered: a formative phase (1992–1994) characterized by relative optimism and the setting up of cooperative structures; a more strained era (1994–2000) which can be referred to as a (first) “time of troubles”; and a third-era (2000 — present) referred to as a hybrid era that began with an optimistic note, but turned into a growing mutual disappointment, eventually culminated in and over the conflict in Ukraine⁴⁹. Similarly, Cristian Nitoiu argued that the current crisis is the culmination of an already tense relationship: “More than anything the Ukraine crisis highlighted the fragility of the partnership between the EU and Russia. The little trust that both sides worked rather reluctantly to build for the past quarter of century was shattered in a few months. [...] While the Ukraine seems to have damaged EU-Russia relations beyond repair, there is still cause for hope that future meaningful cooperation is possible. [...]

⁴⁶ EU Projects with Russia // Delegation of the European Union to Russia [Website]. URL: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/721/eu-projects-russia_en (accessed: 25.07.2017). During the St. Petersburg Summit of May 2003, 4 common spaces of cooperation were established: a common economic space, a common space of freedom, security and justice, a space of cooperation in the field of external security and a common space for research and education, including cultural aspects.

⁴⁷ Moscow Expects Substantive Dialogue Between Lavrov and Mogherini on Russia-EU Cooperation // TASS: Russian News Agency [Website]. URL: <http://tass.com/politics/942602> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

⁴⁸ Illegal Annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol: EU Extends Sanctions by One Year // Council of the European Union [Website]. URL: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/06/19-crimea-sevastopol-eu-extends-sanctions/> (accessed: 25.07.2017); EU Sanctions Against Russia Over Ukraine Crisis // European Union Newsroom [Website]. URL: https://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/eu-sanctions-against-russia-over-ukraine-crisis_en (accessed: 25.07.2017); Herszenhorn D.M. Putin Extends Counter-sanctions Against EU // Politico [Website]. URL: <http://www.politico.eu/article/putin-extends-counter-sanctions-against-eu/> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

⁴⁹ Haukkala H. Op. cit. P. 26.

Cooperation will only be possible if Europe and Russia choose, in times of uncertainty, to increase their dialogue rather than curtail it”⁵⁰.

A number of recurring issues have characterized the troublesome relations between the EU and Russia. First, at the EU-side, the lack of solidarity among member states in relations with Russia has had salient implications for decision-making in foreign policy at the EU level and at the level of national policy-making, impeding the establishment of a coherent EU policy⁵¹. Second, there has been a persistent demand of Moscow to be treated as an equal partner by the EU which has been articulated by Russian officials on multiple occasions, for instance by current Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov⁵², but also by Vladimir Chizhov, deputy minister of foreign affairs in 2004, who stated that “Russia has a full right and expects to participate in European affairs as an equal partner. Not isolated from the rest of the continent by new dividing lines and not constituting an object of «civilizational influence» on the part of other states or associations, but precisely as equal among equals”⁵³. Third, the EU’s enlargement toward Central and Eastern Europe and the creation of a common neighbourhood policy. Launched by Sweden and Poland in 2004, it engages former Soviet republics Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, with the official aim to promote socio-economic reforms and further political dialogue.

In practice however, the promotion and harmonization of these countries’ legal system with the EU’s *acquis communautaire* and the creation of favourable conditions for political integration through ‘shared values’ tend to occupy an equally central position⁵⁴. Further touching upon the matter of shared values it is useful to refer to Rikard Bengtsson and Ole Elgström who argue that since 2004, the EU has sought to position itself as a normative leader in the region by building on the external expectations that associate EU action with fairness and the promotion of noble goals, rather than by delegating a large amount of resources in

⁵⁰ Avoiding a New “Cold War”: The Future of EU-Russia Relations in the Context of the Ukraine Crisis / LSE Special Report SR020. March 2016. P. 94. URL: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/pdf/LSE-IDEAS-Avoiding-a-New-Cold-War.pdf> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

⁵¹ Timmins G. EU-Russian Relations — A Member State Perspective: Germany and Russia — A Special Partnership in the New Europe // Perspectives on EU-Russian Relations / Eds.: D. Johnson, P. Robinson. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2005. P. 51–64.

⁵² Lavrov S. State of the Union Russia-EU: Prospects for Partnership in the Changing World // JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies. 2013. No 51 (S1). P. 6–12.

⁵³ Lain S. Russia and EU Relations in Light of Ukraine // The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs. 2016. Vol. 25. No 3. P. 64. URL: <https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1P3-4305455481/russia-and-eu-relations-in-light-of-ukraine> (accessed: 14.12.2017).

⁵⁴ Tumanov S., Gasparishvili A., Romanova E. Russia-EU Relations, or How the Russians Really View the EU // Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics. 2011. Vol. 27. No 1. P. 130.

order to influence policy outcomes in the post-Soviet states⁵⁵. Cultural diplomacy has been and still continues to be an essential aspect of the Eastern Neighbourhood project, as an instrument to easily connect with foreign audiences and spread these so-called shared values through cultural products (see *Infra*).

By interfering in what Russia considers to be their natural sphere of influence, growing tensions with Moscow have culminated in a continuous struggle for more (cultural) influence in the Eastern Neighbourhood⁵⁶. Regardless of historical or cultural claims often appearing in interstate conflicts, a critical understanding of these tensions however, requires an economic and more market-driven perspective. Moscow's creation of the Eurasian Customs Union between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan in 2010 and the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) for instance, has been interpreted as a move designed to counter the EU's growing presence in the post-Soviet space⁵⁷.

Finally, the tensions over the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood project are well reflected in a statement on the website of the permanent representation of the Russian Federation to the European Union: "The Ukraine crisis has highlighted the urgent need to jointly elaborate a model of Russia-EU relations in the region of our «common neighbourhood» which would ensure due consideration of the interests of all parties concerned and all countries of the region, thus instead of being a source of tension, becoming an instrument of enhancing and strengthening our cooperation. We should learn from self-evident mistakes made during the implementation by the EU of its Eastern Partnership initiative, the unilateral nature of which largely provoked the current crisis. In this context much will depend on whether the EU proves ready for real substantive dialogue on harmonising the processes of European and Eurasian integration"⁵⁸.

The tensions between EU and Russia have roots before the Ukraine crisis. Over the last decades several recurring issues have impeded the establishment of a strong and mutual reinforcing relationship between two actors. Regardless of the obvious role conflicting political and economic interests play in this process, we ask in the next section an arguably less obvious question: what role does culture play in EU-Russia relations?

⁵⁵ Bengtsson R., Elgström O. Conflicting Role Conceptions? The European Union in Global Politics // Foreign Policy Analysis. 2012. Vol. 8. No 1. P. 97.

⁵⁶ Nitoiu C. EU-Russian Relations: Between Conflict and Cooperation // International Politics. 2014. Vol. 51. No 2. P. 239.

⁵⁷ Haukkala H. Op. cit. P. 32.

⁵⁸ Brief Overview of Relations // Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the European Union [Website]. URL: <https://russiaeu.ru/en/brief-overview-relations> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

III. Cultural Dimensions of EU-Russia Relations

Russia and the West have unique historical ties, well-documented in many historical and literary accounts of travellers throughout the ages. In addition, in Russia an ongoing discussion exists on whether it belongs to the Asian East or the European West. Regardless of the many cultural contacts that existed, stereotypes have always characterized their relations and continue to persist until today. This is echoed by Edina Meszaros who writes that, “their [the EU and Russia] current relationship is also greatly shaped by a common history of cultural clichés and stereotypes, and we must no longer forget that perceptions often morph as a consequence of domestic and international factors”⁵⁹. One of the major assets ascribed to cultural diplomacy is its ability to soften such common places and facilitate mutual dialogue and cooperation⁶⁰, the so-called culturalist interpretation. This raises the question of which type of cultural diplomacy characterizes EU-Russia cultural relations.

As other aspects of their bilateral relations, cultural cooperation and dialogue have been primarily regulated by the PCA, while it has been supplemented by various other agreements and programs over the years. Within the framework of the PCA and during the St. Petersburg Summit in May 2003, four key-areas of common space of cooperation were created. The Common Space for Research and Education was concerned with the cultural aspects of EU-Russia relationship. In 2005, a further step was taken with the creation of so-called “road maps”, a tool to implement the cultural cooperation on the short and medium-long term by organising joint work groups and a permanent partnership council. Not surprisingly, given the short term mutual advantages, particular emphasis was put on the enhancement of the science and technology component and the development of a common education space. The latter was well-expressed in the creation of a co-funded Moscow institute of European studies and exchange programmes such as Erasmus Mundus⁶¹ and the organisation of the Year of Science (2014) aimed at promoting and encouraging technological cooperation between Russia and the EU⁶².

⁵⁹ *Meszaros E.L.* The EU-Russia “Uncommon” Spaces, Stereotypes and Growing Russophobia: Does Cultural Diplomacy Stand a Chance in Shaping the Future EU-Russia Relations // *Culture and Paradiplomatic Identity: Instruments in Sustaining EU Policies* / Eds.: A. Stoica, I. Horga, M.M.T. Ribeiro. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016. P. 480–499.

⁶⁰ *Reiterer M.* The Role of Culture in EU-China Relations // *European Foreign Affairs Review*. 2014. Vol. 19. No 3/1. P. 137.

⁶¹ *Entin M.L.* Positive Example of Russia-EU Cooperation in the Field of Education // *Вся Европа*. 2009. № 3 (31). URL: <http://alleuropalux.org/?p=6162> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

⁶² The Year of Science coincided with the start of the new EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, “Horizon 2020”, and a new Russian Federal Targeted Programme, “Research & Development in Priority Areas of Development of the Russian Scientific & Technological Complex, 2014–2020”. Both programmes share the goal of increasing economic competitiveness by supporting forward-looking exploratory science and innovative market-

Even in recent times of trouble, these aspects are prioritized. According to information from the *Erasmus+* office in Russia, sanctions have not affected educational programmes⁶³ and cooperation between Russia and the EU continues on and the volume of credit mobility has even grown⁶⁴. According to the head of the EU delegation to Russia, Vygaudas Usackas, “the European Union plans to strengthen cooperation with Russia in the spheres of science, culture, education and the arts”⁶⁵.

The same cannot be said about the development of the soft cultural component, meaning in this context: the arts and artistic cooperation. This was also observed by Irina Busighina who writes that, “the classical forms of cultural cooperation between Russia and the EU such as tours and concerts, exhibitions and publishing activities also have a long-standing history. Nevertheless, they should be expanded in the post-industrial era”⁶⁶. This, however, does not mean that no attention has been paid to the “soft aspects” of culture. In addition to the organisation of so-called “cross cultural years”, international seminars such as the “Russia-EU signs on a road map of cultural cooperation”⁶⁷ (Moscow, 2009), and international festivals and exhibitions in the field of music (e.g. “Europe through the Eyes of Russians, Russia through the Eyes of Europeans”⁶⁸), cinema (e.g. “27+One” festival), theatre (e.g. “Caravan of the World” festival), and architecture (e.g. “Mosconstruct” project⁶⁹) were organized. The first Russia-EU permanent partnership council on culture was organised in Lisbon in 2007⁷⁰.

oriented research. The EU–Russia Agreement on Science and Technology Cooperation was renewed in February 2014 for another five-year term and serves as a solid basis for cooperation.

⁶³ *Evtikhevich N.* The Impact of Tension between the EU and Russia at the People-to-People Level // Russian International Affairs Council [Website]. 19.06.2017. URL: <http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/the-impact-of-tensions-between-the-eu-and-russia-at-the-people-to-people-level/> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ EU Plans to Expand Cooperation with Russia in Science, Culture — EU Envoy // Sputnik International [Media Agency]. 20.04.2016. URL: <https://sputniknews.com/europe/201604201038346324-envoy-cooperation-eu/> (accessed: 07.09.2017). In this interview from 2016, the EU envoy pointed out that the bloc spends almost 28 million euros to allow 3 500 Russian students to attend EU universities for periods ranging from three to nine months. According to Usackas, these efforts are the best example that the European Union “has always advocated respectful relations in these areas”.

⁶⁶ *Busighina I.* Analysis of the EU-Russia Relations // Bridge [Website]. 2012. URL: <http://www.project-bridge.eu/datoteke/Actions2012/BRIDGE-ANALYSIS%20OF%20THE%20EU-RUSSIA%20RELATIONS.pdf> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

⁶⁷ Cultural Programme // International seminar «Russia — EU: Signs on the Road Map of Cultural Cooperation». 8 December 2009, Moscow [Website] URL: http://cultureworkshop2009.iis.ru/cultural_programme (accessed: 25.07.2017); Non-governmental Non-profit Agency “Tranzit” [Website]. URL: <http://www.tranzit-kaliningrad.ru/en/> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

⁶⁸ Европа глазами россиян. Россия глазами европейцев // Цикл концертов камерно-оркестровой музыки в Рахманиновском зале Московской государственной консерватории [Сайт]. URL: <http://www.eu.cmm.ru/ru/> (дата обращения: 25.07.2017).

⁶⁹ The Shukhov Tower Foundation [Website]. URL: <http://www.shukhov.org/news.html?n=56&id=7> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

⁷⁰ An overview of the activities can be found here: *Busighina I.* Op. cit.; *Smits Y.* Russia Country Report. Preparatory Action “Culture in the EU’s External Relations” / European Commission. 26 February 2014. URL: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/culture/policy/international-cooperation/documents/country-reports/russia_en.pdf (accessed: 25.07.2017).

The organisation of many events in the first years following the official agreement, showcases the initial intention from both sides to start genuine cultural dialogue and cooperation which suggests that a non-instrumentalist model of cultural diplomacy dominates their cultural relations. This was observed by Tatiana Zonova who argued that cultural cooperation was an important soft power tool in their relationship⁷¹. This similarly reflected the opinion of specialists who regarded cultural cooperation as the most promising area of Russian-European strategic partnership given the clear mutual advantage⁷². Nevertheless, a decline in events and official dialogue can be observed since 2009, way prior to the Ukrainian crisis, leaving observers and specialists disillusioned⁷³ and suggesting that cultural cooperation is merely a secondary matter on the EU-Russia agenda after trade, security and energy.

The question arises, why cultural development and cooperation did not develop in a more fruitful dialogue between the EU and Russia. According to Elena Sidorova, the document which defined cultural cooperation should not be overestimated, but neither should it be undervalued. Analysing cultural cooperation between the two actors, she rightly points to the fact that one of the weak points is the absence of a specific organ to coordinate cooperation in the cultural sphere, regardless of the proposal from Russia in 2006 to create such organ. In addition, she mentioned the persistence of stereotypes, the nature of public diplomacy practices and the lack of knowledge of each other's culture⁷⁴. An aspect which has been given less attention however, is the increasing instrumentalization of culture in both actors' cultural strategies within their foreign policies.

During the last decades, both actors have increasingly paid attention to the role of culture in their foreign relations. With respect to the EU, Michael Reiterer writes, "as part of its comprehensive approach to foreign policy as well as an expression of its soft power, the EU has an interest in adding cultural context to its toolbox to achieve policy goals through cultural

⁷¹ Zonova T. Cultural Diplomacy As a "Soft Power" Tool in the EU-Russia Relations // *Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionale*. 2013. Vol. 80. No 3. P. 365.

⁷² Бусыгина И.М. Отношения России и Европейского союза: современное состояние и перспективы развития. Аналитический доклад // Россия — Европейский союз: возможности партнерства / Российский совет по международным делам. М.: Спецкнига, 2013. С. 47–92.

URL: <http://russiancouncil.ru/common/upload/Russia-EU-11.pdf> (дата обращения: 12.08.2017).

⁷³ See e.g.: Busighina I. Op. cit.; Vodopianova E. Russia — EU: Labyrinths of Humanitarian Cooperation // Russian International Affairs Council [Website]. 22.06.2013. URL: <http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/russia-eu-labyrinths-of-humanitarian-cooperation/> (accessed: 25.07.2017); Smits Y. Op. cit.

⁷⁴ Sidorova E. EU-Russia Cultural Relations' Rethinking EU-Russia Cooperation // Вестник международных организаций: образование, наука, новая экономика. 2014. № 3. P. 68–82.

URL: https://iorj.hse.ru/data/2014/12/12/1104743105/%D0%A1%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%86%D1%8B%20%D0%B8%D0%B7%20IORJ_2014_3-6.pdf (accessed: 25.07.2017).

context which is not stable propaganda but also more than just communication”⁷⁵. In first instance this resulted in the creation of the EU Preparatory Action on ‘Culture in EU External Relations’ in 2012; and eventually in the Joint communication “Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations” which was published in 2016 by the European Commission and adopted in 2017⁷⁶. The latter document is shaped around three pillars, namely, guiding principles, themes for EU international culture action and cooperation on cultural heritage, and a strategic EU approach to cultural diplomacy. Culture is defined as the arts and “a wide range of policies and activities from intercultural dialogue to tourism, from education and research to the creative industries, from protecting heritage to promoting creative industries and new technologies, and from artisanship to development cooperation”⁷⁷.

It seems however, that the conceptualisation of culture goes beyond the latter definition. The importance of foreign policy behind the cultural strategy is articulated in a press release of the EU Parliament on the approval of the resolution, stating: “MEPs stress that culture should become an essential part of EU political dialogue with non-EU countries, as it is a powerful bridge between people, helps to strengthen civil society, to prevent radicalisation and conflicts, and disseminate EU values”⁷⁸. To facilitate the materialization of the latter project, a *Cultural Diplomacy Platform*⁷⁹ has been created in 2016 aiming at expanding the EU’s cultural reach in and beyond the EU through the organisation of workshops, training seminars and research.

Similarly, Russia increased efforts to develop a cultural strategy fit to meet foreign policy objectives. The first steps toward a cultural policy were taken in 1990–2000 resulting in 2001 in the approval of the first strategy for the promotion of cultural links abroad conceptualising culture as an instrument for advising foreign policy by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs “Principal Directions of Ministry of Foreign Affairs policy with respect to the development of cultural relations with foreign countries” («основные направления работы МИД России по развитию культурных связей России с зарубежными странами»). The importance of cultural diplomacy became more apparent over the years following various references in foreign policy concepts

⁷⁵ Reiterer M. Op. cit. P. 137.

⁷⁶ See: Culture — Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations // European Union External Action Service [Website]. 05.01.2017. URL: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/18306/Culture%20-%20Towards%20an%20EU%20strategy%20for%20international%20cultural%20relations (accessed: 25.07.2017).

⁷⁷ Helly D. Europe’s Enabling Power: An EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations // College of Europe [Website]. URL: <https://www.coleurope.eu/research-paper/europes-enabling-power-eu-strategy-international-cultural-relations> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

⁷⁸ Culture Deserves a Bigger Role in EU Diplomacy // European Parliament News [Website]. URL: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20170629IPR78685/culture-deserves-a-bigger-role-in-eu-diplomacy> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

⁷⁹ Cultural Diplomacy Platform [Website]. URL: <http://www.cultureinexternalrelations.eu/> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

(2008) and the establishment of specialised institutions, such as Rossotrudnichestvo (2008), an organization officially called into existence in order to intensify Russian cultural and humanitarian foreign policies in the post-Soviet space and abroad, but rather functions to strengthen communities of Russian speakers abroad, signified the full integration of cultural diplomacy into the Russian foreign policy, has been quintessential in process.

The first official document however, appeared not before 2010, namely, “Principal Directions of the Russian Federation policy in the field of international cultural and humanitarian co-operation” («основные направления политики Российской Федерации в сфере международного культурного гуманитарного сотрудничества»), supplemented to the foreign policy concept⁸⁰. Today, two other public organisations are considered the main implementations of Russia’s cultural diplomacy efforts: The Russian Association for International Cooperation (RAMS, 1992) and the Russkiy Mir Foundation (2007). Similarly, in 2012, the Russian Presidential Decree from May 2012 mentioned “to widen Russia’s cultural presence abroad, reinforce the position of the Russian language in the world and develop a network of Russian centres of science and culture”. As appears from the latter example, Russia’s cultural strategy, in contrast to the EU’s conceptualisation of its culture as an all-encompassing instrument to strengthen civil society, is rather invested in promoting the uniqueness of its cultural heritage, for instance by highlighting its contribution to literature, music and other forms of arts.

Relevant to the discussion is the context wherein actors’ cultural strategies emerged. With respect to Russia, it is useful to look at the so-called colour revolutions which Russia identified as foreign interference in their natural sphere of interest, triggering the creation of a new public diplomacy strategy wherein culture would play a constituent role. Looking from this perspective to Russia’s leading cultural diplomacy, we can suggest that its cultural strategy aims at preservation and spreading of national values. This has also been observed by Yudhishtir Isar who considers Russia’s cultural strategy, a tool to convey its image and outreach to Russian diaspora communities, a process wherein the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Media play a central role, while the main geographical focus seems to lie on the CIS and Georgia⁸¹. The Russkiy Mir Foundation for instance, aims at preserving the Russian language and culture, and is dedicated to the spreading of awareness of Russian values and tradition to non-Russians living outside of Russia, and to create a sense of community through the establishment of cultural centres. It has been described as an organization, which contributes to strategic cultural

⁸⁰ Sidorova E. Op. cit.

⁸¹ Quoted in: Smits Y. Op. cit.

diplomacy efforts of Russia around Europe, specifically, in many Eastern European countries, to build a strong community around the Russian language and the Russian Orthodox Church⁸².

With regards to the EU's cultural strategy, a close look at the latest policy document ("Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations") shows that it is not only about culture but that security and economic issues play an equally important role suggesting that we can understand its policy as a response to the multiple crises the EU is simultaneously facing. This is echoed by Damien Helly who states that, "in a context of multifaceted crisis in Europe, the strategy had to respond clearly to current challenges: instability in the Eastern and the Southern neighbourhood of the EU, low growth rates and unemployment, migration shocks, decreasing market shares in international trade. At the same, as culture is a supplementary competence at EU level, EU institution also had to respect member states' sovereignty with regard to national external cultural action, thus focusing on EU added value"⁸³. This suggests that the shift towards instrumentalization of culture in EU-Russia relations has been fuelled by external triggers.

These external triggers which stand at the basis of the recent development of the EU's and Russia's respective cultural strategies are also reflected in the tendency to highlight each other's paradigm, rather than the search for a common ground to enable dialogue and cooperation. Following Haukkala, these world views are irreconcilable and constructed in a path-dependent and deterministic manner, undermining possibilities for cooperation in the short term⁸⁴. Andrey Loginov similarly noted that Russian-EU dialogue encounters cultural and civilizational difficulties in both the EU and in Russia⁸⁵. Although, this is not the space to engage in the socio-philosophical discussion regarding the validity of such questions, it stands beyond doubt that both actors' cultural strategy are the reflection of separated cultural projects⁸⁶.

In addition, Zonova points out that cultural diplomacy means different things in Russia compared to Europe. Whereas in many EU working languages, humanitarian cooperation often refers to cooperation in the spheres of human rights, organized crime or human and drug trafficking, it refers in Russian to collaboration in the area of culture and science, inter-civilization relations, cooperation between civil societies to build dialogue, and supporting compatriots abroad. The difference in meaning might also indicate basic strategic differences in

⁸² Klueva A., Tsetura K. Op. cit.

⁸³ Helly D. Op. cit.

⁸⁴ Quoted in: Nitoiu C. Op. cit. P. 239.

⁸⁵ Россия в современном диалоге цивилизации / Ред.: А.В. Логинов. М.: Культурная Революция, 2008.

⁸⁶ Zonova T. Op. cit. P. 365.

the cultural diplomacy efforts of Russia compared with other countries⁸⁷. Regardless of questions regarding the existence of civilizational and / or strategic differences between the EU's and Russia's conceptualization of culture, the latter's instrumentalization takes place in a debate which has taken the shape of a clash of civilizations.

Whereas the EU praises itself as the original exporter of values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law, Russia tends to present itself as a viable alternative to a world dominated by the West. Besides the concept of the *Russian World* (Russkiy Mir)⁸⁸, the creation of the Eurasian integration project is instrumental in the latter process as it is meant to become a source of cultural ideology. Sidorova writes on the matter that, "contemporary Russia strives to use the classical Eurasian idea for the spiritual-ideological integration of countries in the context of the Eurasian union and for the foundation of the cultural point of view of the incorporation of post-Soviet in the Eurasian integration project"⁸⁹. Of crucial importance is the fact that this concept philosophically rejects the notion of an EU-centric unilateral order in which the transference of norms and values is entirely one-sided⁹⁰. This has resulted in a simulated clash of civilisations which deliberately dismisses the many cultural and historic similarities and ties between many EU member states and Russia, while it arguably rejects the notion of shared (European) roots.

The fast instrumentalization of cultural strategies on both sides has already materialized in the so-called common neighbourhood, a space which has become the field of fierce cultural competition and where both actors are actively seeking to expand (in the case of the EU) or maintain (in the case of Russia) influence. In this respect, Sarah Lain writes that the disagreement over spheres of influence, perceived respect and the superiority of one system over another was even epitomised in the EU's Eastern Partnership Project⁹¹. The EU has several cultural programs aiming at expanding its influence in the region, for instance the EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme⁹². The EU's overall approach towards its eastern vicinity relies heavily on positive conditionality and socialization; a crucial factor in the

⁸⁷ Zonova T. Op. cit. P. 365.

⁸⁸ See: Zevelev I. The Russian World in Moscow's Strategy // Center for Strategic and International Studies [Website]. 22.08.2016. URL: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russian-world-moscows-strategy> (accessed: 25.07.2017); Laruelle M. The "Russian World": Russia's Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination / Center on Global Interests. May 2015. URL: <http://globalinterests.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/FINAL-CGI-Russian-World-Marlene-Laruelle.pdf> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

⁸⁹ Sidorova E. Op. cit. P. 78.

⁹⁰ Haukkala H. Op. cit. P. 32.

⁹¹ Lain S. Op. cit. P. 69.

⁹² Culture & Creativity: EU-Eastern Partnership Programme [Website]. URL: <https://www.culturepartnership.eu/en> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

promotion of its norms and values beyond its borders⁹³. Similarly, Russia's cultural institutions are engaged in the region.

Of particular interest is the Russkiy Mir Foundation which has particularly targeted the Russian diaspora in Eastern European countries in order to forge new and stronger links between Russia and the newest member states of the EU. Moreover, other cultural programs and activities for the Russian near abroad exist, for instance, the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund, which includes countries of the former Soviet Union, such as Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, among others. These efforts include providing opportunities for cultural and social programs as well as assistance in the relocation of Russian-speaking citizens; such efforts has been particularly vibrant in the eastern parts of Ukraine⁹⁴.

Derek Averre rightly points to the importance of the "broader picture" behind the dynamics of cultural strategies, as he writes, that to the EU, Moscow's strategy towards the shared neighbourhood represents an extension of its internal project aiming to shape its external environment by establishing friendly states on its periphery as a *sine qua non* condition for domestic and regional security⁹⁵. In other words, similarly to the EU, Russia has successfully developed a neat cultural strategy to fit its foreign policy concept. Nevertheless, the question arises whether such tendency towards the instrumentalization of culture has proven successful in EU-Russia relations. This will be assessed in the next section.

IV. Instead of a Conclusion: Refurbishing the Concept of Cultural Relations

In the previous sections, we have explored the role of culture in EU-Russia relations, at least with respect to the respective cultural diplomacy strategies of both actors. Initially playing a constructive role, it seems that official efforts regarding the establishment of cultural cooperation and dialogue have been reduced throughout the years and replaced by soft-power impeded attempts to instrumentalize culture for political objectives.

With the exception of (short-term) mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of education and science, cultural dialogue and cooperation is a secondary matter in their relations and signifies not only the problematic nature of traditional cultural diplomacy practice, but above all the turbulent political character of their very relation. This is well-expressed by the fact that while cultural dialogue based on advocacy purposes has failed with the EU, it seemed, until

⁹³ Headley J. Is Russia Out of Step with European Norms? Assessing Russia's Relationship to European Identity, Values and Norms Through the Issue of Self-determination // Europe-Asia Studies. 2012. Vol. 64. No 3. P. 428.

⁹⁴ Klueva A., Tsetura K. Op. cit.

⁹⁵ Averre D. Competing Rationalities: Russia, the EU and the Shared Neighborhood // Europe-Asia Studies. 2009. Vol. 61. No 10. P. 1696–1697.

recently, to flourish in bilateral contacts with individual EU member states⁹⁶. This was already observed in 2013 by Zonova who wrote on the matter, that bilateral relations with some EU members were running better than those between Russia and the EU as a whole⁹⁷.

However, since the start of the ongoing Ukrainian Crisis, the state of cultural dialogue seems to have deteriorated following reports from the 2014 bilateral Russia-UK and UK-Russia Year of Culture, as any high level visits lacked⁹⁸. Building on the latter, the author suggests that cultural diplomacy (and not culture) plays a highly ambiguous role in EU-Russia relations and is even a potential destabilizing factor in their relations. Rather than that it fulfils the role of bridging cultures and peoples, it risks to become a source of soft power diminution: “so as much as culture, values, and ideals can contribute to the strength of soft power, their overuse can lead to the opposite effects”⁹⁹. The simulated clash of civilizations (cultures) which has become particularly apparent in the Eastern Neighbourhood where former Soviet republics have arguably become the field of cultural warfare between the EU and Russia points that scenarios of soft power diminution already have been materialized.

As a result, the question arises, whether the choice to opt for the current strategy of cultural cooperation serves its expected goals. In *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy* Jessica Gienow-Hecht and Mark Donfried observe two factors for the success rate of a cultural diplomacy strategy, namely, the more distance exists between a cultural diplomacy program and a political / economic agent, the more likely it is to succeed, taking into account that dynamicity is also a prerequisite for success¹⁰⁰. Following the latter reasoning, we can conclude that the current cultural diplomacy practices characterizing contemporary EU-Russia relations are unsuccessful, primarily because of the apparent political motives behind both actor’s foreign cultural strategy. In addition, other weak points have been observed in the actor’s respective strategies.

With regard to the EU at least two conditions have been identified that undermine the way in which they seek to promote a certain set of values in the Eastern neighbourhood, namely, the absence of promise of future membership and Russia’s attractiveness based on short term

⁹⁶ A Cross-cultural Year 2016 for Russia and Greece // Greek News Agenda [Website]. 01.02.2016. URL: <http://www.greeknewsagenda.gr/index.php/topics/politics-polity/5808-a-cross-cultural-year-2016-for-russia-and-greece> (accessed: 25.07.2017); Years of Cross Cultural Exchange to Be Organized Between RF and European Countries // Russkiy Mir Foundation [Website]. URL: <http://russkiymir.ru/en/news/213384/> (accessed: 25.07.2017); German-Russian Culture in the Face of Political Crises // Deutsche Welle [Website]. 05.06.2015. URL: <http://www.dw.com/en/german-russian-culture-in-the-face-of-political-crises/a-18497843> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

⁹⁷ Zonova T. Op. cit. P. 365.

⁹⁸ Evtikhevich N. Op. cit.

⁹⁹ Klueva A., Tsetura K. Op. cit.

¹⁰⁰ *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy* / Eds.: J. Gienow-Hecht, M.C. Donfried. New York: Berghahn Books, 2013. P. 5.

incentives, such as preferential energy deals or political support for corrupt elites¹⁰¹. Similarly, Russia's soft power abilities have been criticized in the past¹⁰². However, contrary to the assumption that the Russian strategy in the region is solely based on hard power using its resources to increase vulnerabilities and political, security and economic dependencies of the countries in the region¹⁰³, Russia has been increasingly deploying soft power to enhance its economic attractiveness to promote stability and security in the region¹⁰⁴ ranging from presenting pro-Russian youth groups and NGOs both in Russia and abroad, while presenting its own concept of democracy and freedom as an alternative to the liberal model enforced by the EU¹⁰⁵.

Although, this suggest that a unique communication channel, namely, culture is not being fully deployed, which doesn't mean that these genuine cultural exchanges do not exist; on the contrary, there are dozens of examples of successful cultural cooperation and dialogue between Russia and the EU. Some initiatives originate from academia, such as the organisation of international conferences¹⁰⁶. Other initiatives come from artistic communities and citizens (so-called people's or citizen diplomacy) in Russia or the EU and engage in different fields with various aspects of the relation¹⁰⁷. As these initiatives come from civil society, they often receive limited funding and primarily focus on artistic expression rather than on soft power practices and most often stay off the public radar. Similarly, academia seems to have little interest in such events. One reason for this can be the obvious difficulty of measuring their societal impact as

¹⁰¹ Nitoiu C. Op. cit. P. 243.

¹⁰² Rutland P., Kazantsev A. The Limits of Russia's "Soft Power" // *The Journal of Political Power*. 2016. Vol. 9. No 3. P. 395–413; Hudson V. "Forced to Friendship"? Russian (Mis-)understanding of Soft Power and the Implications for Audience Attraction in Ukraine // *Politics*. 2015. Vol. 35. No 3–4. P. 330–346; Nielsen K., Paabo H. How Russian Soft Power Fails in Estonia: Why the Russophone Minorities Remain Quiescent // *Journal on Baltic Security*. 2015. Vol. 1. No 2. P. 125–157.

¹⁰³ Baev P.K. Russia Aspires to the Status of "Energy Superpower" // *Strategic Analysis*. 2007. Vol. 31. No 3. P. 454.

¹⁰⁴ Dias V.A. The EU and Russia: Competing Discourses, Practices and Interests in the Shared Neighbourhood // *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*. 2013. Vol. 14. No 2. P. 262.

¹⁰⁵ Popescu N., Wilson A. The Limits of Enlargement-lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood. London: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2009.

¹⁰⁶ XVIII Международная научно-практическая конференция «Россия и Европа: связь культуры и экономики» // Конференции.ru — Открытый каталог научных конференций, выставок и семинаров [Сайт]. URL: <http://konferencii.ru/info/121032> (дата обращения: 25.07.2017); East-West Cultural Relations: Interplay of Arts and Cultural Diplomacy. 1945–2017. Conference in Jyväskylä, Finland, 24–25 February 2017 [Website]. URL: <https://ewcr2017.wordpress.com/tag/eu-russia/> (accessed: 07.09.2017); Cultural Exchange // MitOst [Website]. URL: <http://www.mitost.org/en/cultural-exchange.html> (accessed: 8.08.2017).

¹⁰⁷ Few examples of EU-Russian cultural relations: Letters to Max // Eric Baudelaire [Personal website]. URL: <http://baudelaire.net/secession/letters-to-max/> (accessed: 25.07.2017); About // Slavs and Tatars [Website]. URL: <https://www.slavsandtatars.com/about> (accessed: 25.07.2017); Irony Curtain: A Russian Interventionist // Partizaning. Participatory Urban Planning [Website]. URL: <http://eng.partizaning.org/?p=6295> (accessed: 25.07.2017); Keimena #12: Krisis. By Dimitri Venkov // Keimena: Documenta 14 [Website]. URL: <http://www.documenta14.de/en/public-tv/12599/12-krisis> (accessed: 25.07.2017); Scotland-Russia Forum [Website]. URL: <http://www.scotlandrussiaforum.org/> (accessed: 25.07.2017).

well as the subsequent difficulties of pointing to the relevance of such research, but also the lack of a coherent framework to contextualise these contacts, comes to mind.

John Mitchell, in his work *International Cultural Relations* (1986) referred to cultural relations as a broad range of culture-related actions going beyond the governments and their agencies that are conducted on the initiative of private as well as public institutions¹⁰⁸. Among the crucial assets of cultural relations, he mentions its potential support to conventional diplomacy, its use in international understanding (reducing stereotypes); in addition he calls it a lubricant for trade and an instrument of peace¹⁰⁹. Building upon the above-mentioned concept of cultural relations, the author suggests in co-authorship with Stuart MacDonald a new definition¹¹⁰ highlighting the communication aspects of cultural relations, as reciprocal, non-coercive transnational interactions between two or more cultures, encompassing activities that are conducted both by state and non-state actors within the space of cultural and civil society.

Initially coming out of civic initiatives, these non-territorially bound, cross-cultural interactions focus on artistic expression, but are a largely ignored communication channel between the EU and Russia. Following Mitchell, we acknowledge the difficulties in measuring results of such cooperation, but note that long-term thinking and an element of faith are crucial when working with culture. Moreover, we follow his idea that cultural dialogue can be particularly fruitful in societies with traditional belief in the importance of culture and devoting public resources¹¹¹; this is the case for both Russia and the EU. Salon, a French cultural representative, wrote on the matter:

In fact, one of the principal difficulties of evaluation in general comes from the almost complete absence of quantifiable data and their unreliability when they exist. Cultural work bears fruit only in the medium and long term, very rarely in the short term, and it operates essentially by people and through people, with all the fortuities and imponderables that this brings with it. Evaluation runs the risk of being reduced to a qualitative appreciation, vague and almost inevitably subjective¹¹².

Going beyond, traditional methods of foreign cultural diplomacy, these forms of relations do not necessarily single out any form of governmental involvement. Rather, they suggest that only

¹⁰⁸ Mitchell includes arts, libraries, information services, literature, language teaching, science and technologic social structure, the exchange of persons, links between communities and institutions, and educational aid and training in the developing world.

¹⁰⁹ Mitchell J.M. Op. cit. P. 14.

¹¹⁰ The authors have created the Wikipedia entry for cultural relations on the subject: Cultural Relations // Wikipedia [Website]. URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_relations (accessed: 25.07.2017).

¹¹¹ Mitchell J.M. Op. cit. P. 107.

¹¹² Quoted in: Ibid. P. 112.

in close interactions between both civic societies, genuine cultural exchange can take place as this enables all actors to avoid the well-known obstacles, and to lay the foundation for interstate cultural cooperation characterised by mutual understanding and dialogue, rather than by repulsion. The overall outcomes of cultural relations are greater connectivity, better mutual understanding, more and deeper relationships, mutually beneficial transactions and enhanced sustainable dialogue between states, peoples, non-state actors and culture. Given the unique historical ties between the EU and Russia and keeping in mind that cultural dialogue and cooperation requires long-term thinking, the model of cultural relations can be used as one framework for rethinking the EU-Russia cultural dialogue beyond Maidan. Moreover, re-embracing the concept can be an impetus to reconsider public and cultural diplomacy as an instrument of international dialogue¹¹³, rather than an instrument to engage in cultural warfare.

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¹¹³ Великая А. Публичная дипломатия как инструмент международного диалога // Журнал «Международная жизнь» [Сайт]. URL: <https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/1440> (дата обращения: 12.08.2017).

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Vlaeminck E.

Reconceptualising Culture in Times of Trouble: EU-Russia Cultural Cooperation and Dialogue beyond the Ukraine Crisis**

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Annotation

Since the outbreak of the Ukrainian Crisis, Russian-EU military, strategic and diplomatic relations have been deteriorating, recently reaching a previously unseen low point. Besides the well-known political and economic consequences, this has also implications on a cultural level. Although officially assigned a secondary role in EU-Russian relations, culture plays a vital and often pernicious role in both actors' foreign policy. Under the umbrella of cultural diplomacy, one-way transfer of “cultural values” is prioritised over genuine cultural dialogue, leaving open enormous potential for growth and intercultural collaboration. Yet, the current crisis offers opportunities. By reconsidering the role of culture in the unique relationship between the EU and Russia, and by critically examining both actors' current cultural strategies, alternative cultural paths are explored. A revalorisation of the concept of cultural relations appears to be a viable means to revitalise EU-Russia relations and sustain cultural dialogue.

Keywords

Cultural relations, cultural diplomacy, soft power, Ukraine crisis, EU-Russia relations, public diplomacy.

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