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A JIGSAW VS A GAME OF CHESS: THEORETICAL ECLECTICISM IN EXPLAINING EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS

ABSTRACT

In this article, we reflect on analytical eclecticism as a research approach and apply it to EU-Russia relations. First, we sketch the conceptual contours of theoretical eclecticism in international relations. Next, we consider its explanatory potential, discuss some of the present criticism and conduct a brief exemplary analysis of its use. In the process, we focus on EU-Russia relations using the theoretical perspectives of both liberalism and realism. In this view, the EU's and Russia's decision makers are conceptualized as looking at their mutual relations (and international relations in general) through the lenses of both perspectives. The empirical case is "diversity management" between the EU and Russia including issues of states/territories with limited recognition (Crimea, Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic of Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia).

Key words

EU-Russia relations, theoretical pragmatism, eclecticism, liberalism, realism

Introduction

EU-Russia relations, especially currently, have been overshadowed by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and seem to be marked by almost permanent conflict or, at best, rivalry. Explanations for this vary greatly and include many elements such as geopolitics, history (tradition), culture and economics. What is common in explaining the complications of EU-Russia relations is that the contradictions are structurally in-built. This article to some extent follows this line of reasoning. The aim, nevertheless, is to add another perspective without focusing on any of these concrete elements.

The research approach used to explain why it seems there is always conflict between the EU and the Russian Federation, is analytical eclecticism. The main assumption behind it is the simultaneous use of multiple theoretical and methodological approaches. In the article the analysis is limited to the theoretical level, as the authors try to show the analytical potential of eclecticism. The theories that we use in this limited analysis are the International Relations (IR)[1] theories of liberalism and realism. The core of the analysis assumes that the EU, as an international actor, perceives both itself and international relations as ruled by the premises of liberalism. The Russian perspective, in turn, is defined by the main premises of the theory of realism.

The article consists of three parts. The first explains how the authors understand pragmatism and analytical eclecticism and how these two correspond to each other. The second explains how liberalism and realism in IR define and conceptualize "diversity management". It also describes, in general terms, how the liberal perspective of the EU and the realist perspective of the Russian Federation play out in international relations. The third presents a brief analysis of EU-Russia relations through the proposed use of an analytical matrix. The authors put a special focus on the issue of how both actors use "diversity" as a tool of foreign policy in international relations.

[1] In the text, "International Relations" (IR) written with capital letters refers to the field of social science, while "international relations" spelt with lower case refers to the process of interaction on the international scale.

1. Pragmatism and analytical eclecticism

The aim of scientific research is to understand and explain reality. In the case of the social sciences examining international relations, it is an especially difficult task due to its complexity and dynamism. Looking at IR as a field of study and its development, there is an impression that its practical aspect (to understand and explain) has somehow become lost in the process of theoretical discussion and inter-paradigm debates. This kind of discourse, and the growing intellectual and explanatory rivalry between different theories, has not produced constructive results in terms of IR development. Quite the contrary, it has led to stagnation and a kind of homeostasis. One can argue that this state is actually an effect of the inter-paradigm debates and even that IR develops not as a consequence of these debates, but in spite of them (Bennett, 2013). IR has found itself at a point where an explanatory deficit of available paradigms and theories is visible. A belief that there is no "theory of everything" to deliver tools to understand all phenomena in the field of IR seems to increasingly gain traction. A manifestation of this belief is a tendency to integrate existing theoretical frameworks in order to create an effect of synergy. Integrative pluralism is one example (Dunne, Hansen & Wight, 2013). The challenge, however, is not to create any more paradigms explaining yet another bit of international relations, but to re-define the mode of how we use existing theoretical frameworks. As Patrick Thaddeus Jackson states rightly, there is no single methodology or universal way of understanding and interpreting knowledge that would serve the whole field of IR (Jackson, 2011).

Skepticism towards the explanatory potential of IR has led to a search for new perspectives aimed at understanding and explaining, instead of supporting a given "theory club". Since the aim is to explain a phenomenon fully and comprehensively, the route to it should lead through the use of tools that are up to the task. A possible route responding to such a requirement already exists and it is called "research pragmatism". The focus of pragmatism is a practical perspective as the aim is to produce an analytical tool that will help answer questions on how things work in reality. This approach may colloquially be called "anything that does the job"; it underlines that it is not of the utmost importance which paradigm, theory, methodology or research technique we are using, as long as we get the practical knowledge we are striving for. The main advantage of this approach lies in the fact that we are avoiding paradigmatic deadlock (Friedrichs & Kratochwil, 2009).

The premise behind a pragmatic approach to research assumes that an optimal practice, from the perspective of the research aim, is to concurrently use many

theories and perspectives, in concordance with cognitive rationality (Monteiro & Ruby, 2009). Pragmatism stresses the importance of research utility and does not pay much attention to theoretical or methodological debates. The key to success is the selection of appropriate theories, research tools and techniques, without dwelling on ontology or the failures of different epistemological approaches. Knowledge is valuable and useful only when grounded in research practices and focused on the issues which are important from the perspective of social practice. Theoretical speculations are not relevant in this perspective (Kratochwil, 2011; Sil & Katzenstein, 2010). At the same time, pragmatists are aware that the complexity and changeability of social phenomena, especially within international relations, is so large that finding regularities is very difficult. Knowledge fluctuates along with social life and this is the only way to stay in touch with the reality to be explained (see Bauer & Brighi, 2011).

The answer to the challenge described above could be analytical eclecticism. The essence of the eclectic approach is the rejection of nomothetic explanation and the transformation of "isms" into analytically useful tools. It means the rejection of theories as a source of division between paradigms (compare with Lake 2011) while collecting them into a research practice used for the solution of concrete problems (Jackson & Nexon, 2009). Analytical eclecticism is a necessary answer to the complexity of international relations. A single paradigm, theory or epistemology is simply not enough even to describe international relations, let alone explain them. The methodological pluralism embraced by eclecticism combines many theoretical approaches because a single theory is not able to cover the whole of reality. Only a cluster of theories, of "isms", is able to more holistically deal with social phenomena (Amhedi & Sil, 2012).

As Peter Katzenstein (2011) convincingly suggests, analytical eclecticism answers the demand for research pragmatism as it enables a connection between the world of theory and reality. Therefore, there is a need for multi-perspective research capturing reality in a broader spectrum, instead of carving it into frameworks of "isms". A multi-perspective approach allows the discovery of genesis, causal relations and mechanisms. Looking at a given issue from different perspectives but separately, one at a time, would exclude the effects of synergy and interdependency. Confinement in a single paradigm raises the risk of subjective confidence about the exceptionality of such a paradigm and its explanatory power. Such a stance may be intellectually comfortable, but it definitely does not serve the development of social science. This narrow perspective leads not only to incomplete results, but also incorrect conclusions (see Hirschman, 1970, pp. 341, 343). Relying on a single paradigm forces many compromises, as explanations

not fitting the paradigm create inconsistencies. Each paradigm is based on a certain model simplifying reality: for instance realism assumes that the state is the most important unitary actor in international relations. It does not reflect on the details of the internal organization of that state, the genesis of its interests and its motivations in international relations; the complex structure of a state is simply reduced. In such a situation a problem appears: how to analyze non-state and transnational actors who are visibly increasingly important in international relations. Unconditional attachment to an "ism" limits the field of analysis and squeezes it into a rigid framework of a single paradigm. The elements of international reality not fitting into this are omitted or at best belittled. For example, neo-realists admit that the internal dynamic of states affects foreign policy, but are mostly ignored as they still focus almost exclusively on external determinants (Fearon, 1998, p. 290). This is a direct effect of using a single paradigm/theory, as a single approach can explain only a section of social reality. As argued before, the solution to such a limitation is the use of multiple perspectives, including those that are not necessarily labelled as "scientific" (Jackson, 2011, p. 91).

The synergetic effect of analytical eclecticism comes from the use of multiple theoretical approaches and research methods allowing the re-conceptualization and integration of already existing knowledge. It helps to alleviate the shortcomings of a single theory (Sil & Katzenstein, 2010). Eclectic analysis does not limit itself to a simple mechanism of triangulation. It does not focus solely on comparing results on the same research topic through the use of different research procedures used separately from each other. The synergetic value added comes from the ability to detect a plethora of connections between the processes under scrutiny. This is possible because different approaches are used simultaneously in an integrative manner. This way, different approaches gain a quality of complementarity instead of rivalry. The elastic adaptability of eclecticism breaks the atomization of "isms", and provides researchers with new conceptual constructs which are useful in the full description and explanation of given phenomena. Analytical eclecticism aims at holistic explanation of the reality of international relations with considerable complexity, therefore the focus is put onto more general phenomena. It creates a toolbox for the identification of causal relations at the level of middle-range theories (Merton, 1968) and adheres to the premise of research pragmatism (Sil & Katzenstein, 2010).

Analytical eclecticism may also create some risks. One of the possible shortcomings is the incompatibility of research approaches. Using tools and methods stemming from different theories carries the risk of results being inconsistent. Theoretical differences have often already appeared by the stages of

conceptualization and operationalization. Additionally, analytical eclecticism lacks holistic and cognitive consistency as there are no procedures on how to transcend the borders between paradigms (Cornut, 2015). Another weakness is of a practical nature and regards the arbitrary choice of theories selected for eclectic analysis. Researchers mostly focus on realism, liberalism and constructivism and their choice serves to maintain the dominance of these theories. There is a lack of a procedural path in the selection of methodology as analytical eclecticism is a fairly new approach, and not much research utilizing it has been undertaken (Sil & Katzenstein, 2010).

These weaknesses are the basis for the criticism of eclecticism. The main one is that eclecticism does not contribute to the advance of research because it does not involve in inter-theoretical and inter-paradigmatic discussions, by some perceived as the essence of scientific advance (Sil & Katzenstein, 2010, p. 412). In this study, however, it is treated as a strength rather than a weakness. The lack of a standardized episteme and research procedures allows intellectual shortcuts to be avoided for the sake of being coherent with a given "ism". Moreover, an elastic selection of paradigms and tools allows research of the whole spectrum of a phenomenon and enables utilitarian pragmatism.

Analytical eclecticism is still *in statu nascendi*, and therefore it requires more discussion in order to establish its position in the epistemic community of IR scholars. The authors are convinced that criticisms of eclecticism stem mostly from the fact that it is always difficult to go beyond well-established schemes, and fresh approaches generate some resistance in the community of scholars (Lake, 2013). This corresponds with the issue mentioned at the beginning of the article that IR, to some extent, is fond of extensive inter-paradigm debates. Analytical eclecticism in turn, with its focus on pragmatism and utility for academic research, may be a remedy for over-theorizing.

2. Diversity management in EU-Russia relations from the perspective of analytical eclecticism

Taking all of the above into account, the article's aim is to offer an eclectic theoretical approach towards an analysis of EU-Russian Federation relations. The eclectic perspective will be used on two levels. First, the authors are going to use the two most popular theories of IR, namely realism and liberalism[2]. Second,

[2] The authors are aware that that by doing so, they can be criticised for choosing to analyse international relations from the perspective of dominant theories. Nevertheless,

both theories are used concurrently, offering a new perspective on EU-Russia relations. The text discusses what each party perceives as international relations, globalization and mutual relations through the lenses of both liberalism and realism.

The diversity management is a case that the authors undertake in an effort to exemplify the potential of analytical eclecticism. The main assumption here is that the EU (treated as an actor in international relations) has adopted a liberal theory as the lens through which it treats foreign policy. The Russian Federation in turn sees international relations in a realist perspective. It is important to underline at this point that the authors do not maintain that liberalism can fully explain EU foreign policy, or realism for Russia. The aim, as stated above, is to give an example of eclectic analysis, and to demonstrate that it can be used in actual pragmatic analysis of existing issues in international relations. The authors are convinced that the perspective presented in the article is sufficient to demonstrate their stance, but it is definitely not an exhaustive analysis of EU-Russia relations. It offers another perspective that can trigger other modes of analysis, previously closed because of the limiting division into "isms"[3].

This freedom also respects the freedom of other approaches, so there is a consensual and cooperative basis underlying the liberal conception of reality in international relations. A special position is reserved for international institutions. Theories of European integration descended from liberalism and they laid ground for the current EU's perception of international relations. It perceives the institutions of cooperation, in every possible field, as a basic rule of interactions (Keohane & Martin, 1995; Ruggie, 1992). Multilateralism is the center of this approach and constitutes the basis for the EU's foreign policy (Bersick et al., 2006). Multilateral interactions are win-win-win-win etc. situations, meaning that they are beneficial for everyone. Implicitly, this attitude not only envisages diversity but also embraces it as a normal situation. The diversity, variety and complexity of the system is not its weakness but rather a strength: the stability of the system is guaranteed as all of the actors accept the same ground rules for interaction (see the theory of entropy, Schweller, 2014). Neoliberalism also points

EU-Russia relations lie within their research interest, while liberalism and realism offer one of the best tools to explain these relations.

[3] Thus the authors do not state that liberalism and realism are the best possible theories for the analysis of EU-Russia relations. They can easily imagine adding constructivism and feminism to the analysis to make it more complete, and it is their plan for future research.

out that states are cooperative within the framework of international institutions because those institutions may serve as leverage and provide states with benefits otherwise unattainable (Harmes, 2011). The concept of absolute gains applies here, and diversity is a vital instrument for the receiving of these benefits (Powell, 1993)[4]. In the perspective of international relations, the embrace of diversity and its management is evidently best seen in the concept of global governance. Because there is a plethora of actors, there is no world government, and global governance is conducted using a variety of international actors (Telo, 2009).

In a realist approach to international relations, the diversity of the world is seen quite differently, especially if we take into account the central concept of balance of power. Realists do not ignore or negate the existence of diversity, on the contrary they see it as an immanent characteristic of an anarchical system. The difference between realism and liberalism lies in the assessment of the diversity, as realists see it as rather a liability for a state, the most important player on the international scene (Guzzini, 1998, p. 97). Thus diversity is a liability, but it does not mean that it cannot be used for the benefit of a state, if properly managed. In this perspective the role of diversity management is to optimize the plethora of actors, interests and regimes so it would become subservient to the interests of states (Schweller, 1997). One example of such optimization would be *soft balancing* (Paul, 2005). States, even those with the status of aspiring global powers, like Russia or India, were not able after the Cold War to counterbalance the hard power of the United States. Hard (military) balance was, and still is, not within the range of other states. The balancing is nevertheless possible with the use of diversity management, understood on the global macroscale. Examples of how it can be done include forming limited diplomatic alliances (mostly through bilateral or limited multilateral relations, like the BRIC initiative), functional alliances (Russia and China in the Syrian civil war) and façade institutions (Commonwealth of Independent States). These endeavors are not institutionalized on purpose, as stable institutionalization would limit the freedom of states to act.

The analytical framework the authors propose in the following part of the article is grounded on the previously expressed assumption that the EU mainly follows liberalism in foreign policy and Russia mainly adopts realism. The aspects of the analysis include:

[4] It is important to remember that even though in its processes of regulation the EU embraces the rules of pluralism both extensively and intensively, this in turn may paradoxically lead to a limitation of diversity (Phelan, 2012).

- The nature and character of international relations
- The perception of cooperation and international institutions
- The identification and defining of interests

These three analytical aspects will be used further to scrutinize how the EU and the Russian Federation manage diversity in mutual relations. The aim of this limited analytical model is obviously not a fully-fledged analysis of realist and liberal perspectives on international relations. Its goal is to use both theories pragmatically and to use them to analyze sections of EU-Russia relations. The analytical matrix is to deliver a practical explanation of the specific choices and actions undertaken by both actors in international relations. The authors are convinced that even in such a limited case, analytical eclecticism demonstrates its significant potential.

3. Jigsaw vs Game of Chess

The nature and character of international relations: the EU perspective

The theory of liberalism in IR consists of many streams, as mentioned before, but at this point the authors are not going to describe all of them as it is not the aim of the article. The purpose is to present those elements of theory that constitute the EU perspective on international relations. Therefore, the concepts chosen for analysis are the theory of interdependence, the theory of international regimes and neoliberal institutionalism.

International relations seen from the liberal perspective are defined mostly by a network of interdependencies (Morse, 1976) which, if properly managed, can become the cornerstone of a state's power (Keohane & Nye, 1977). The "natural" state of co-dependence is asymmetrical, meaning that some actors in international relations are more powerful, some are weaker. Nevertheless, states accept this situation, trying to adapt to it in the best possible way by optimization of their interests. Interdependence in this perspective, even though much easier to accept and manage by powerful states, is also accepted by weaker ones. The premise is grounded in the concept of absolute gains, understood as a win-win situation. Both for stronger and weaker counterparts, cooperation still remains more beneficial than conflict.

The second element of the EU's liberal perception of international relations is the importance of institutions and international regimes (Keohane, 1989). In the neoliberal stream, institutions and regimes are the guarantors of the stability of the whole international system. They are used as trust- and predictability-building mechanisms, assuring respect for the interests of the strong and

the weak (Keohane, 1984). International institutions are the manifestation of the ideas and values that are fundamental for the liberal vision of the world (de Wet, 2006). Institutions are therefore viable because the states creating them share these fundamental values. They create a platform for states to realize their interests. To do it more effectively, even less powerful states can create coalitions of actors sharing the same interests, and influence the way an institution is managed (see coalitions of states within the EU). Still, the underlying assumption from this perspective is that all members share the conviction that peaceful cooperation is the best way to conduct foreign policy.

Last but not least, and crucial for this analysis, is the way interests are defined and identified. The bearer of interest in international relations is not the state *per se*, but society or rather the groups of interests of which society consists. In this approach, the interest of a social group/state/organization is an outcome of a decentralized process of deliberation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts (Moravcsik, 2012). It is a bottom-up process, well known in liberal democracies, of which the EU nominally consists (Moravcsik, 1997, p. 517). Interest groups influence governments, prompting them to voice certain interests in the international arena. The rational actor model in this case describes a state representing and defending the interests of its society (Quackenbush, 2010). Conflict is irrational and does not serve the interest of societies, and it is they who pay the highest price for conflicts (democratic peace theory (Doyle, 1986)). Therefore, the primary source of values, ideas and in effect preferences are societies in the EU as they, by the use of democratic mechanisms, incline governments and EU institutions to act on their behalf.

The nature and character of international relations: the Russian perspective

The construction of Russia's perception of IR through the use of realism theory is made in a similar way to the EU's liberalism. The authors chose the streams of classical realism, offensive realism and neorealism. And, as in the case of the EU, the analysis focuses on the following elements: perception of immanent features of international relations, perception of cooperation and multilateral relations, and ways of identifying and defining interests.

International relations, according to realism, are an arena of constant conflict of states whose final aim is the maximization of power in order to gain dominance and thus provide security for the state (offensive realism (Snyder, 1991)). Power here is based on relative gain and it is always in reference to rivals as the aim is dominance over them. Offensive realism seems to be especially useful in the description of the foreign policy of powerful states (Zajączkowski,

2015). In their own eyes, powers like Russia are predestined to balance the influence of other great powers like the US or the EU. In the anarchical environment of international relations, power is the only effective way to guarantee security (Mearsheimer, 2001).

The reason why power is the only way lies in the belief that international relations are indeed anarchical. Because there is no world government, no effective institutions (or regimes) to guarantee the security of states, only relative dominance over rivals is a guarantor. In this perspective, international politics are anarchical, but not chaotic. Sovereign states are still by far the most influential actors and they create a highly flexible, adaptive and self-regulatory system of international relations (Mearsheimer, 1994/1995, p. 10). This system is described by the concept of self-help (Waltz, 2008) where states all follow the same imperative of self-interest in pursuit of their own security (Mearsheimer, 1994/1995, p. 11).

From a realist perspective, to paraphrase John Mearsheimer, the promise of cooperation within international institutions is false (1994/1995 p. 15). It means that the states which are gathered in such institutions falsely claim they want cooperation, while in reality they keep pursuing victories over other states and try to maximize gains. The conclusion is that states behave in exactly the same way both within institutions and outside them. An effect of this is the weakness of international institutions because its members do not trust in their ability to guarantee security. It does not mean that this approach rejects the possibility of institutional cooperation *in extenso*. Realism proposes to put adequate emphasis on certain modes of cooperation, but this is just another channel to pursue interests where the strong dominate the weak. That is how Russia perceives the EU; therefore it wants to negotiate with the powerful members, Germany and France, and not the weak (Baltic states or Poland) or the supranational EU institutions. To conclude, realists value both absolute and relative gains, but if they have to choose, relative gains are much more important (Powell, 1991). The optimal structure of international relations for a state, perceived through the lens of offensive realism, is multipolar order with a few superpowers sharing *de facto* control over the world (Morgenthau, 1978). For realists this order is the most stable one, primarily due to the concept of spheres of influence where great powers police their respective regions.

Interests in such a system are defined almost exclusively exogenously. The most important element defining an interest is its position in the international structure, and these interests are constant as long as the state's position remains unchanged. Besides this determinant, all states follow the same mechanism: maximizing power *vis-à-vis* other states. Neoclassical realists started to

pay closer attention to endogenous factors constituting state interests, foremost the personality of a leader and his/her subjective perception of the power of other states (Byman & Pollack, 2001; Rose, 1998).

The world in realist terms is a world of pervasive rivalry between states. If leaders pursue foreign policy with such an assumption, they are logically more inclined to undertake risky behavior, even provoking open conflict. They assume that rivals have exactly the same way of seeing things. If so, the main aim is to gain relatively, even at the cost of temporarily undermining international equilibrium. This attitude may produce a revisionist disposition where the acceptable "toolkit" of foreign policy does not even exclude physical intervention, as long as it serves the purpose of gaining an upper hand or sustaining equilibrium (balance of power). The Russian invasion of Ukraine is an obvious example of this old Clausewitzian rule ("war is the continuation of politics by other means").

Managing diversity in EU-Russia relations

European integration of previously sovereign states is to a great extent successful due to the process of globalization (globalization and regionalization to be more exact (Cooper, Hughes & Lombaerde, 2007). The liberal order of the West, established after World War II, and especially neoliberal economic order and trade liberalization, is a part of what the EU is (with the single market being "the jewel in the crown"). Therefore, the EU as an organization holds a liberal perspective on the world from the internal organization of actors, through social issues, political systems and ending with a perception of international relations as a system. Democratic peace theory and its assumptions are clearly a part of the EU's vision of IR. One of the most important premises in this vision seems to be that what leads to peace is free trade and boosting of trade between nations, as trading nations build up interdependencies and mutual trust. In effect, they do not wage war against each other (see Cain & Jobson, 1978).

The end of the Cold War, and the integration of many post-communist and post-Soviet states into the architecture of the West (NATO, EU), seemed to be proof for the EU's decision makers that liberalism in international relations actually works. The "end of history" (Fukuyama, 1992) seemed to be near and Russia was to become, if not an ally, then at least a good partner. During the time of Boris Yeltsin this view appeared to find confirmation in the practice of mutual relations, but the situation changed with the advent of Vladimir Putin. The climate of EU-Russia relations was again marked by change in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation (Steil, 2018). Yet EU leaders did not seem to notice and continued on their path based on the liberal perspective: there may

be variation, even confrontation sometimes, but in fact, everyone still accepts that peaceful and cooperative solutions are the only solutions. That is why events such as the Russian intervention in Moldova in 1991, the weaponization of energy sources against Central-East European members of the EU and Ukraine (Newnham, 2011), and the invasion of Georgia in 2008 did not change the EU's policy in the longer term. This is also the reason why the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014 – with the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of Donbas, its brutal intervention in Syria and the hybrid/informational war waged against the West – came as a surprise. It simply did not fit the liberal perspective of international relations and the vision of its actors as cooperative partners.

Meanwhile, the Russian Federation, with its realist perspective, never really trusted globalization and its alleged positive effects. International institutions and regimes seemed to be at best obstacles in the way of its national interest. Predominantly though, the process is rather seen as Westernization, not globalization. The West uses international organizations solely to impose its rules and dominate weaker states, and Russia was to be a victim of such a policy. In this perspective the EU seems to be just a controversial experiment or rather a "nice wrapping", a cover story of what is essentially the way in which the biggest EU members (Germany, France, formerly the UK) dominate the whole continent. Thus the best way to conduct international policy is through bilateral relations with the most powerful because only they matter. According to the concept of spheres of influence, they will project their power onto smaller EU member states to make them follow suit (Herbut & Chwedczuk-Szulc, 2017, p. 189). This is the reason why, in the case of EU-Russia negotiations, Russia is deliberately trying to ignore smaller states, especially those formerly under its control, as they are not suitable partners for such a great power (Lamoreaux, 2013).

It can clearly be seen that the diverging liberal and realist perspectives of the EU and Russia affect how they perceive "diversity" in their relations and how they try to manage it. For the EU it seems like a natural state, reflecting its internal organization where constant negotiation and renegotiation of interests takes place. The EU is embedded in this perspective and tries to promote it abroad (see European Neighbourhood Policy, ENP), working to create a zone of stability around itself, an interplay of many different actors working out their differences in a system of liberal democracy. It fulfils the idea of respecting partners in the international arena. Additionally, spreading liberal democracy binds partners together because they start accepting the same rules of engagement. This is exactly the point where the Russian perspective clashes with the EU's. The promotion of diversity, *ergo* raising the number of veto-players (Tsebelis,

2002), complicates the pursuit of national policy and undermines its strength. Therefore, in a situation like Euromaidan, which started Ukraine's political transformation, EU and Russian evaluations are diametrically opposed. For the EU, it was the logical effect of peaceful coexistence and cooperation between neighboring partners. Ukrainians, as the main agent defining national interests, decided to follow a path of closer cooperation with the EU. From the Russian perspective, it was a straightforward intervention of the West (including the US with its use of the CIA (Higgins & Baker, 2014)), aimed at weakening Russia by slipping Ukraine away from its sphere of influence. The Russian invasion could not possibly be just a random reaction but a well pre-prepared operation given the swift and effective Russian conduct of their military, political and informational intervention (Simpson, 2014). It supports the premise that Russia had prepared its contingency plans because of how they perceived relations with the EU and the West, and are always ready for confrontation.

It has already been indicated how both sides approach the process of interest identification and definition. In the EU's liberal perspective this process is bottom-up; in Russia's realist perspective, it is top-down. In the former, societies and their internal, dynamic political processes are responsible for establishing what is in a state's interest, and the government is only the executor of the people's will. In the latter, the state as a unitary actor (in this case, mostly the Russian president) sets national goals in foreign policy and the citizens follow. In these broadly sketched models, the perception of diversity is also different. In the EU, it may be a very complicated process, but it is also a guarantor of stability as it prevents the domination of one group over another. The management of diversity is just a political process streamlining communication between social groups and helping them voice their positions. In Russia, diversity, diverging voices and most of all, open contestation of the government and president is a liability, and is often treated as a threat to national security. In EU democracies, the majority wields a decisive vote while respecting the rights of minorities. In Russia, there is majoritarian rule and it dominates over the rights of minority groups; the main mode of operation is dominance, not coexistence – with the issue of human rights, as widely understood, being one of the most visible examples of this difference[5].

[5] The persecution of LGTB community members in Russia is just one example, though a very poignant one. See: Human Rights Watch (2018) "No support: Russia's 'Gay Propaganda' Law imperils LGBT youth".

Conclusion

The authors have presented a general analysis of EU-Russia relations using the eclectic approach with a special focus on diversity management. Again, confined to the format of an article, they have not tried to present a comprehensive analysis of EU-Russia relations, instead using only two theories and limiting themselves to a short description of general differences.

The concept of diversity management is used in a broader sense, as a perception of variety, differences, and the participation of many different actors in the political negotiating process, both internally and externally, within the framework of international relations. Looking at these relations from two different theoretical perspectives, the EU's liberal and Russia's realist, the conclusion could be that both sides are using diversity as a tool, to avoid using the term "weapon of influence". The point is that they perceive this tool in entirely different ways and they evaluate diversity from completely different standpoints. For the EU, diversity is something natural and rather positive, a state of affairs that has to be embraced and used for one's own good – hence the promotion of liberal democracy with its pressure on safeguarding the rights of all actors in political bargaining, including minorities, as the way to provide stability for all, with the utopian goal being the Fukuyamian "end of history". It is a part of the EU's famous soft power where it advances its interest by convincing partners that its model is the most effective. The whole process of integration of post-authoritarian states serves as evidence of this. In turn, the Russian perspective sees diversity in internal politics as a liability, so the management of diversity in internal Russian politics is in fact its suppression. But what is a liability internally, can be used as an asset externally. If diversity is a problem, then spreading it to rivals' territory may be useful. Thus, using conflicts between minorities (Baltic states, Ukraine), language differences (Baltic states, Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia) and separatist movements, while also creating them (Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine) or supporting political differences (mainly right-wing extremists in the EU (in Poland, Hungary, Germany, Austria, France, the Netherlands, the UK etc.)), is a form of diversity management. It is used as a weapon to weaken its competitors. The concept of selective partnership, by which Russia is trying to force a wedge between EU member states, has the same function. Again, the question of energy resources is a case in point. Russia sells natural gas more cheaply to wealthier Western

European countries than to less wealthy CEE member states[6]. The EU uses its soft power to crawl into Russia's sphere of influence (Ukraine) and Russia uses its "harder" (energy) power to retaliate.

At the end, as a part of the conclusion, the authors would like to explain in detail why they use the metaphors of jigsaws and games of chess to describe EU-Russia relations. A cartoon published by The Economist can serve as an excellent graphic description of the complications in those relations[7]. In the image below we can see an EU bureaucrat sitting at a table face-to-face with a Russian bear. However, the bureaucrat is piecing together a jigsaw, while the bear is playing chess, even though they share the same board.

The metaphor, as it is multidimensional, is a great portrayal of the assumptions behind EU-Russia relations. First of all, it tells us something about the actors involved. The EU bureaucrat represents the structure of the EU, based on procedures and institutions, he may seem weak as a character but his strength comes from the institutions he represents, shown by his briefcase. The bear is a powerful creature and symbolizes strength understood in a pretty straightforward manner: he is alone, without any accessories because he does not need them, and as he is strong, he relies purely on his strength. The second level represents the discrepancy between the games both characters are playing and this is exactly the essence of the perspective proposed in this article. Many misunderstandings, disagreements and conflicts in EU-Russia relations come from the fact that both actors look at the same things through different lenses, and therefore they see something different. In addition, the whole cognitive-normative systems each of them uses to evaluate these things are different; it seems a very easy recipe for a lack of mutual understanding. It is exactly this conclusion that is behind the authors' main assumption that the EU perceives international relations and relations with the Russian Federation (and others) mainly through the theory of liberalism. The Russian Federation in turn uses the theory of realism. As they do not seem to go beyond these perspectives, their relations are marked by constant tension.

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[6] Ongoing discussions on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, just like the controversies with the first Nord Stream, are perfect example of this. The pipeline is to bypass CEE countries, including Ukraine, so Russian gas could be directly sold to Germany and further to the west. In this way Russia could limit deliveries to CEE countries, without hindering deliveries to the Western EU. It was done in the past, mostly to blackmail Ukraine and CEE (see the European Commission antitrust case against Gazprom).

[7] We are very grateful to Prof. Eiki Berg from the University of Tartu for suggesting this cartoon to us.

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