

# Germany and Russia – strategic partners?

Roland Götz

in: Geopolitical Affairs, 4/2007.

Europe's two largest peoples have never been able to ignore each other, thanks to their dominating role on the Eurasian continent. German-Russian relations have always been characterised by contradictory feelings, in which admiration and dislike, fear and Romantic attachment have intertwined rather than alternated.<sup>1</sup>

Germans and Russians fought together against Napoleon, they both divided Poland between them, they found one another after the tricks of diplomacy had placed them on different sides in the First World War and made common cause against the Western victorious powers with the Pact of Rapallo. Blinded by Hitler's ideology of blood and soil the Germans then launched a war of destruction against the Soviet Union and had to be liberated from their own regime by the Red Army, with atrocities on both sides. The pride of victory replaced hatred of the Germans. For many members of the Soviet armed forces, the German Democratic Republic became the very model of a new, friendly Germany. However, the Russian population considered the division of Germany to be unnatural and therefore, for the Russians, reunification drew a conciliatory line under what both Germans and Russians considered an incomprehensible mistaken development in relations between the two countries.

Since 1990, these relations have developed in a pleasingly pragmatic direction. Today, German-Russian relations are characterised by great breadth. There is a long tradition behind this: think of German emigration to Russia and the numerous German businessmen and industrialists who worked in Russia before the First World War.<sup>2</sup> Measured in terms of volume of trade, Germany is Russia's main business partner and will remain so for several years, until China takes its place (see Table 1). Like the Netherlands and Italy, Germany imports oil and gas from Russia but Germany's imports from Russia are much higher than those of any other country in the world. Germany is also Russia's main supplier of investment goods. For Germany, which is above all economically tied in with the EU, Russia was in 10<sup>th</sup> place in terms of imports and in 14<sup>th</sup> place in terms of exports (see Table 2).<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See Gerd Koenen, *Der Russland-Komplex*, Munich, 2005, p. 15ff.

<sup>2</sup> See Dittmar Dahmann and Carmen Scheide, eds., "... 'das einzige Land in Europa, das eine grosse Zukunft hat'". *Deutsche Unternehmen und Unternehmer im Russischen Reich im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert*, Essen 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Statistisches Bundesamt, *Rangfolge der Handelspartner im Aussenhandel 2004*, (Ranking of Commercial Partners in Foreign Trade) [www.bundesstatistik.de](http://www.bundesstatistik.de) (1.2. 2006).

Table 1

**Russia's largest trading partners (without CIS countries) and their share of total imports and exports (including transit supplies of oil), in percent 2006**

Russian imports from		Russian exports to	
<b>Germany</b>	<b>16.0</b>	Netherlands	13.8
China	11.2	Italy	9.7
Korea	5.9	<b>Germany</b>	<b>9.4</b>
USA	5.6	China	6.1

Source: Statistical office of the Russian Federation, [www.gks.ru](http://www.gks.ru)

Table 2

**Largest trading partners of the Federal Republic of Germany in the first half of 2005 and their share of imports and exports (percent)**

German imports from		German exports to	
France	9.0	France	10.6
Netherlands	8.6	USA	8.7
USA	6.8	UK	8.1
Italy	6.0	Italy	7.1
UK	6.3	Netherlands	6.1
China	5.9	Belgium	5.8
Belgium	5.2	Spain	5.3
Austria	4.1	Austria	5.3
Switzerland	3.8	Switzerland	3.8
<b>Russia</b>	<b>3.5</b>	Poland	2.6
Japan	3.4	China	2.5
Spain	3.2	Czech Republic	2.4
Czech Republic	2.9	Sweden	2.2
Poland	2.5	<b>Russia</b>	<b>2.0</b>

Source: Federal German Ministry for the Economy and Technology, from Statistical Office, Wiesbaden, 2005.

Apart from energy imports, Germany's economic relations with Russia are above all born by small and medium-sized enterprises. Important help is provided by organisations like the Alliance of the German Economy in the Russian Federation, the Delegation of the German Economy in the Russian Federation and the Eastern Committee of the German Economy. The Federal Republic of Germany is present in dozens of Russian towns as a result of cultural and economic organisations. Personal contacts have arisen through the hundreds of thousands of Russians of German origin who have settled in Germany as well as through tourism and scientific and student exchanges.<sup>4</sup> More than three million Russians are learning German, more than in the whole of the rest of the world put together. The Petersburg Dialogue and the German-Russian Forum have created the bases for continuous dialogue between representatives of both societies. Since 2005, the German Historical Institute in Moscow had enabled German and Russian researchers to work together on their common history.<sup>5</sup>

Since 1990, at the state level, a number of bilateral agreements have been signed including the Agreement on Good Neighbourliness, Partnership and Cooperation (1990), on Cooperation in Labour and Social Policy (1990), on the environment (1992), on mutual help in times of national emergency (1992), on cooperation in international road and air transport (1993), on the creation of the common commission to work on recent history (1997), on facilitating travel (2003) and on cooperation in youth policy (2004).<sup>6</sup> Since 1998, yearly inter-governmental consultations which take place alternately in Russia and Germany provide an occasion for an exchange of views at ministerial level. In addition, leading politicians meet each other frequently. Even the activities of Germany's federated states, the *Länder*, deserve mention since eight of them have representatives or offices in Russia.

That German-Russian relations are so dynamic has to do with the fact that many factors which tend to disturb relations between states do not obtain between Germany and Russia. There are no unresolved border issues, no ethnic or religious conflicts, and no rivalry for world domination on the international stage. The only questions still outstanding from the Second World War concern war booty, mainly art, which is a delicate matter but certainly not a major source of conflict. Even Kaliningrad/Königsberg is not a bone of contention between Germany and Russia but rather an object of common concern.

In spite of the numerous forms of cooperation and the meetings which bring Germans and Russians together, however, Russia's image in Germany is mixed. At economic events and high-level meetings, the good relations are given prominence but in the media Russia is often criticised. The cause of this does not lie in direct relations between the two countries but instead in the way the Russian state deals with

---

<sup>4</sup> For cultural and scientific contacts, see [www.ifa.de/russland/index.htm/publikation](http://www.ifa.de/russland/index.htm/publikation) (1.2. 2006) and [www.bmf.de/2513.php](http://www.bmf.de/2513.php) (1.2. 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Deutsches Historisches Institut (DHI), Moscow, [www.dhi-moskau.de](http://www.dhi-moskau.de) (1.2. 2006).

<sup>6</sup> See [www.weltpolitik.net/Regionen/Russland% 20und%20Zentralasien/Russische %20F6deration](http://www.weltpolitik.net/Regionen/Russland%20und%20Zentralasien/Russische%20Federation) (1.2. 2006).

its own citizens and with the states on its borders: the dismantling of democracy, the weakening of parliamentarianism, restrictions on press freedom, excessive use of force in Chechnya, pressure on the CIS states Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova which want to distance themselves from Moscow, support for the totalitarian Lukashenko regime in Belarus and for separatist forces in Transnistria, South Ossetia and Abkhazia.<sup>7</sup> People in Russia react very sensitively to these reproaches, they accuse critics of not knowing about the conditions in their country, and they feel misunderstood and treated like children. This can be seen, for instance, on the Chechen issue, where the Russians see themselves as fighting international terrorism and as an ally of the West, for which they ask in vain for recognition, without wanting to take cognisance of the negative consequences of the presence of Russian troops in the Caucasus and Chechnya, or of the Moscow-installed regime there.<sup>8</sup> In spite of the broad basis for dialogue between Germany and Russia, it cannot be foreseen that perceptions on these issues are going to grow any closer.

### Close energy relations

Both sides regard their economic relations in a generally positive light although the close energy relations are also seen as problematic by the German side. Germany, which needs to import 97% of its oil and 80% of its gas, has found in Russia a reliable major supplier. In 2005, 34% of Germany's oil imports came from Russia and 42% of her gas imports. (Tables 3 and 4).

**Table 3**

#### German oil imports in 2005

	Million tonnes	Percent
Russia	38	34
Norway	17	15
Africa	21	19
UK	15	13
Other countries	13	12
Middle East	8	7
Total	112	100

Source: *Federal German Ministry for the Economy and Technology, [www.bmwi.de/BMWi/Navigation/Energie/energiestatistiken.html](http://www.bmwi.de/BMWi/Navigation/Energie/energiestatistiken.html) (01.07.2007).*

<sup>7</sup> For a critique of the "Putin system", see Heinrich Vogel, *Russland ohne Demokratie*, SWP-Studie 38/2004, [www.swp-berlin.org](http://www.swp-berlin.org) (1.2. 2006); Eberhard Schneider, *Putins zweite Amtszeit*, SWP-Studie 1/2006, [www.swp-berlin.org](http://www.swp-berlin.org) (1.2. 2006).

<sup>8</sup> See Uwe Halbach, *Gewalt in Tschetschenien. Ein gemiedenes Problem internationaler Politik*, SWP-Studie 4/2004, [www.swp-berlin.org](http://www.swp-berlin.org) (1.2. 2006).

**Table 4****German gas imports 2005**

	<b>Billion cubic metres</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Russia	38	41
Norway	29	32
Netherlands	21	22
Denmark/UK	4	5
Total	92	100

*Source: Federal German Ministry for the Economy and Technology, [www.bmwi.bund.de](http://www.bmwi.bund.de).*

What does this close interconnection in energy mean? Does it provide energy security or does it cause a dangerously high level of energy dependency? No firm judgement can be made on the basis of the numeric relations. Germany, which is surrounded by energy exporting countries, has a high level of diversification in her energy imports. But will that remain the case in the future, if Germany imports yet more oil and gas from Russia? Russia currently has 10% of the world's conventional oil supplies and 34% of its conventional gas.<sup>9</sup> The oil and gas fields are distributed across the whole of the territory of the Russian Federation although the main extraction is currently in Western Siberia. (See Map 1). It is obvious that Russia can never replace the Middle East as an oil supplier for Western countries since Russia does not have many untapped reserves. For Europe, whose oil consumption will rise by another third between now and 2025, Russia should remain a reliable supplier at the present level while extra imports will come mainly from the Middle East, Africa and the Caspian Sea.<sup>10</sup> Since Germany's need for oil will fall in the future, Russia's share of her oil imports will rise to around 40% even on the basis of the same nominal levels of supply.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> See Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe (BGR), *Energiestudie 2005*, [www.bgr.bund.de](http://www.bgr.bund.de) (1.2. 2007), Table 9 and 13. "Supplies" means reserves and resources. "Conventional oil" means oil which can be supplied by pumping. Oil can also be extracted in "unconventional" ways from heavy oil and oil sands.

<sup>10</sup> According to the optimistic prediction of the Energy Information Administration (EIA), Russia's export of oil and oil products will rise, depending on the oil price, from 340 million tonnes in 2005 to between 390 and 450 million tonnes by 2020. Exports from the Caspian will rise from 30 million tonnes in 2005 to 170 to 195 million tonnes by 2020. See Roland Götz, *Russlands Erdöl und der Welt-Erdölmarkt*, SWP-Studie 40/2005, p. 24ff

<sup>11</sup> Germany's need for oil imports will fall from over 100 million tonnes at present to about 90 million tonnes by 2025 because of the increasing disconnect between economic growth and energy consumption. See *Energiewirtschaftliches Institut an der Universität zu Köln (ed.), Energiereport IV. Die Entwicklung der Energiemärkte bis zum Jahr 2030*, Munich 2005, p. 380 ff.; see also the summary: [www.ewi.uni-koeln.de/content/e266/e563/e3009/EnergiereportIV\\_Kurzfassung\\_de\\_ger.pdf](http://www.ewi.uni-koeln.de/content/e266/e563/e3009/EnergiereportIV_Kurzfassung_de_ger.pdf) (1.2. 2006).

Russian gas still has a dominant position in the European market, since it can be delivered cheaply from Western Siberian gas fields via the pipeline network which dates from Soviet times. In future, the rising costs of extracting gas in the Barents Sea and the Jamal Peninsula will mean that the share of imports from Africa and the Middle East will rise and Russia's relative share in European gas imports will fall. Quite apart from this, Russia's gas supplies will increasingly be directed towards China and Japan (see Map 2). This will in fact not affect European supplies since Russia will overwhelmingly use East Siberian and Far Eastern resources for this, which are out of the question for the European market because the transport costs are so high.<sup>12</sup> Also oil, which will be transported through new pipelines to China and the Pacific Coast, will come mainly from East Siberian oil fields and Sakhalin but not from the West Siberian fields which are important for Europe. There is therefore little danger of a geopolitical competition between Germany/Europe on the one hand, and Asia and the USA on the other, for Russian oil and gas.<sup>13</sup>

German gas imports will rise between now and 2025 to 105 billion cubic metres.<sup>14</sup> Since it can be predicted that by then imports from the Netherlands, Denmark and Britain will decline, while imports from Norway will remain about the same, Germany's imports from Russia will have to rise to about 60 billion cubic metres. From 2020 they will represent between 55% and 60% of all Germany's gas imports. With this numerical dependency, Germany would be in the same situation as Eastern EU states.<sup>15</sup> Whether this is considered too high depends on whether Russia is seen as a politically reliable partner. Since gas exports to Germany represent one quarter of Russian gas exports to Europe, it is obvious that the dependence is mutual. There is no one-sided dependence and therefore no potential threat to German energy security.<sup>16</sup>

An increase in energy imports to Germany from Russia raises the question of the availability and security of transport routes. The transport routes for oil and gas from Russia to Europe pass through territories which are not threatened by earthquakes and which are less prone than other parts of the world to terrorist attacks. Any interruptions to supply through long-distance pipelines (for instance via Belarus and Ukraine as a result of disagreements over gas prices for domestic consumption) have so far been extremely short-lived and they have not affected gas supplies to Germany and Europe. In any case, it is argued that the planned North European Gas Pipeline (otherwise known as "Baltic pipeline") will contribute to Germany's energy

---

<sup>12</sup> See Roland Götz, *Russlands Erdöl und Erdgas drängen auf den Weltmarkt*, SWP-Studie 34/2004, [www.swp-berlin.org](http://www.swp-berlin.org) (1.2. 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Rahr has a different view. See *Die neue OPEC. Wie Russland zur globalen Energie- Supermacht werden will*, in: *Internationale Politik*, 31(2006) 2, p.15-23, [www.internationalepolitik.de](http://www.internationalepolitik.de) (13.2. 2006).

<sup>14</sup> See *Energiewirtschaftliches Institut* (Note 11).

<sup>15</sup> See Roland Götz, *Nach dem Gaskonflikt. Wirtschaftliche Konsequenzen für Russland, die Ukraine und die EU*, SWP-Aktuell 3/2006, [www.swp-berlin.org](http://www.swp-berlin.org) (1.2. 2006).

<sup>16</sup> For a different view, see Frank Umbach, *Europas nächster Kalter Krieg. Die EU braucht endlich ein Konzept zur Versorgungssicherheit*, in: *Internationale Politik*, 61 (2006) 2, p.6-14, [www.internationalepolitik.de](http://www.internationalepolitik.de) (1.2. 2006).

security because it does not pass through potentially unsafe transit countries (by which is meant Poland, Ukraine and Belarus). (See Maps 3 and 4)

The Baltic pipeline caused strong protests in the Baltic States and Poland which are due to the fact that the impression has been created there that the pipeline deliberately bypasses these states and that Germany and Russia have come to an agreement behind their backs.<sup>17</sup> This made it clear how important it is to consult and inform all states which are affected by Germany's policy towards Russia. The rational core of the ill-will in the Baltic states and Poland consists in the fact that the construction of the Baltic pipeline with its final capacity of 55 billion cubic metres a year disregards alternative possibilities for increasing Russia's gas export capacity to the West, namely the planned doubling of the Jamal pipeline through Belarus and Poland from 30 billion cubic metres to 60 bcm per year, and the extension of the Ukrainian pipeline network (currently 120 bcm, increasable to 190 bcm per year). The states concerned will lose potential investments and transit fees although it cannot be ruled out that the capacities for extension of the Belarusian-Polish and Ukrainian networks will be carried out later.

### **Russia's own path**

Thanks for Russia's support for reunification, Germany was one of the main countries to support Russia financially in its transformation to a democracy and a market economy.<sup>18</sup> To what extent this transformation has been a success remains in dispute.<sup>19</sup> But in any case, Russia has turned away from Communism, not least because many former Party and state bureaucrats became successful private property owners. However, unlike elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the abandonment of the Communist regime was not the basis for a new state identity. Unlike the other states which emerged from the Soviet Union, Russia could not gain a sense of identity by means of a "national renaissance" in opposition to Russian dominance. Russia, which has never existed as a nation-state within its current borders, has since been seeking its own path. The Russian political class is however divided on whether this is just a diversion which will eventually lead the country into the Western camp or whether, as the "Eurasianists" think – it will lead to a special model for state and society and for relationships with other countries.<sup>20</sup> Pointing to Russia's potential for

---

<sup>17</sup> The other points of conflict are maritime legal questions. The dangers and environmental concerns associated with sunken explosives from the Second World War will be dealt with not only by the Germans and the Russians but with the involvement of all the states with Baltic coasts.

<sup>18</sup> Between 1990 and 1994, Germany participated in multilateral programmes with 4.4 billion Deutsche Marks for technical and humanitarian help. Far greater sums were given in connection with the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the rescheduling of the Soviet state debt.

<sup>19</sup> See Lilia Shevtsova, *Bürokratischer Autoritarismus - Fallen und Herausforderungen*, in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 11/2006.

<sup>20</sup> On the views of the Eurasianists, see Katrin Bastian/Roland Götz, *Unter Freunden? Die deutsch-russische Interessenallianz*, in: *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, 50 (2005) 5, p. 583 - 592, here p. 591ff.

power (its size, its resources, its missiles) many in Russia dream of a return of the empire, or at least of a close alliance of the CIS states under Russian leadership.<sup>21</sup>

The relatively liberal domestic policies of Boris Yeltsin and the “early” Putin had led to expectations of a fundamental foreign policy line of rapprochement with Europe and at least partial integration in its structures. Thus, in Putin’s speech to the German parliament on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2001 (still under the influence of 11<sup>th</sup> September) one finds the expression of a wish for “true partnership” and even Russia’s accession to a “Greater Europe” and the unification of the potentials of Germany and Russia.<sup>22</sup> One hears very little any more now in Moscow of such wild dreams, which recall Gorbachev’s wish for a “common European home”. Conversely, from the Western side, the Chechen problem, the Khodorkovsky affair including the transfer of Yukos property to the state oil company, Rosneft, the disaster of Beslan for which Russian behaviour is partly to blame, or the interference of the Kremlin in the Ukrainian presidential elections have all awoken doubts about Russia’s suitability as a European partner.

Russia’s place in the world is now situated by the Moscow political elite somewhere between a regional power and a world power.<sup>23</sup> Russian analysts like the pro-Kremlin chairman of the political foundation of United Russia, Vyacheslav Nikonov, call for a multipolar foreign policy, which would give Russia freedom of action in all directions, and rejects any dissolution of Russia in European structures.<sup>24</sup> Russia should have an independent role in world politics, working within global treaty structures like the UN, the G8 and later the WTO and the OECD, but should preserve her sovereignty by not being integrated into supranational regimes like NATO or the EU. Russia should deal with other world powers on the basis of equality and it should base its policies on its own self-interest and on the principle of the balance of power. The alternative of a European orientation for Russia, by contrast, is supported by only a small number of Russian analysts.<sup>25</sup>

Since the supporters of the “great power option” see the EU as a union of countries which compete with one another, they push for bilateral relationship, above all with Germany. The idea of a Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis which is supposed

---

<sup>21</sup> See Gernot Erler, *Russland kommt*, Freiburg-Basel-Vienna 2005, p. 156 ff.; Jutta Scherrer, *Ideologie, Identität und Erinnerung*, in: *Osteuropa*, 54 (2004) 8, p. 27 - 41, here p. 34ff.

<sup>22</sup> Speech of the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, to the German Bundestag, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2001, [www.documentarchiv.de/brd/2001/rede\\_putin\\_bundestag.html](http://www.documentarchiv.de/brd/2001/rede_putin_bundestag.html) (1.2. 2006).

<sup>23</sup> See Lilia Schevtsova, *Rossija - god 2006: Logika političeskogo stracha* (Russia 2006 – the Logic of Political Fear), in: *Nezavisimaja gazeta* 13<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> December 2005; for extracts see *Russia in 2006: The logic of political fear*, [www.russiaprofile.org/cdi/2005/12.19.2904.wbp](http://www.russiaprofile.org/cdi/2005/12.19.2904.wbp) (1.2. 2006).

<sup>24</sup> See Vyacheslav Nikonov, *Strategija Putina* (Putin’s Strategy), in: *Rossijskaja gazeta*, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2004, English translation in *Global Affairs*, 3 (2005) 1, <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/10/813.html> (1.2. 2006), see also Falk Bomsdorf, *Ein Hauch von Ukraine*, *SWP-Zeitschriftenschau* 4/2005, [www.swp-berlin.org](http://www.swp-berlin.org) (1.2. 2006).

<sup>25</sup> On Russian foreign policy conceptions, see Hannes Adomeit/Rainer Lindner, *Die "Gemeinsamen Räume" Russlands und der EU*, *SWP-Studie* 34/2005, [www.swp-berlin.org](http://www.swp-berlin.org) (1.2. 2006), here p. 10 f.; Marek Menkiszak, *Russia vs. the European Union - A Strategic Partnership Crisis*, *CES-Studies* 22/2006, [www.osw.waw.pl](http://www.osw.waw.pl) (1.2. 2006).

to defy American hegemony and also drive a wedge into the EU phalanx corresponds to the same thinking. Conversely, Germany's role is often seen as a door-opener for Russia's integration into Europe, without it being noticed that Russia does not need any such help because the obstacles to any integration are not to be found in any reluctance by the EU but instead in Russia's own lack of will to subject herself to the European rules of the game.

### **Value and interests**

A consequence of the complex German-Russian relationship is that it cannot be expressed by any simple formula. The hackneyed term "friendship of peoples" has been completely debased by the GDR experience, which is presumably why Chancellor Angela Merkel did not use the term when she met President Putin in Moscow in January 2006. Instead she confirmed the "strategic partnership" with Russia, on which the then Federal Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, and Putin had already reached agreement at the German-Russian summit in June 2000.<sup>26</sup>

However, the Russians do not understand why they have to take second place to the "American friend" and why only "partnership" not "friendship" is on offer. It leads to German-Russian misunderstandings that by "strategic partnership" Russia understands an alliance of interests. For Russian politics, strategic partners are those with whom one undertakes important projects for mutual benefit and with whom one shares aims. As a result, Russia's list of strategic partners is a long one, and nearly every country in the world could appear on it. By contrast, in the foreign policy language of the EU, ever since the concept of strategic partnership was introduced into the Common Strategy towards Russia in 1999, the term means not only an alliance of interests but also a partnership on the basis of common values.<sup>27</sup> Significantly, Russia's corresponding medium-term strategy towards the EU is limited to the expression of common interests without any reference to common values.

Under Chancellor Schröder, Germany's Russia policy gave the impression – in spite of the demonstrative friendship between the two leaders – of wanting to be limited to a partnership based only on common interests, since the German side avoided taking a public position on Russian domestic policy.<sup>28</sup> The CDU/CSU and FDP opposition, by contrast, insisted that a partnership with Russia cannot last without a common basis of values.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> See Christian Meier/Heinz Timmermann, Nach dem 11. September: Ein neues deutsch-russisches Verhältnis?, SWP-Aktuell 22/2001, p. 5, [www.swp-berlin.org](http://www.swp-berlin.org) (1.2. 2006).

<sup>27</sup> See Rolf Schuette, Interest and values: A European Perspective, Carnegie Paper 54/2004, [www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=16269&prog=zru](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=16269&prog=zru) (1.2. 2006). For the text of the EU's Common Strategy to Russia, see [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/ceeca/com\\_strat/russia\\_99.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ceeca/com_strat/russia_99.pdf) (1.2. 2006). But the EU also occasionally uses the concept of strategic partnership in a limited sense, when speaking of strategic partnerships with the Mediterranean Region, China or the whole of Africa.

<sup>28</sup> See Hannes Adomeit/Katrin Bastian/Roland Götz, Deutsche Russlandpolitik unter Druck, SWP-Aktuell 56/2004, [www.swp-berlin.org](http://www.swp-berlin.org) (1.2. 2006).

<sup>29</sup> See Hans-Joachim Spanger, Paradoxe Kontinuitäten. Die deutsche Russlandpolitik und die koalitionsären Farbenlehren, in: HSKF-Report 12/2005, p.13 ff., [www.hsfk.de](http://www.hsfk.de) (13.2. 2006).

Common values are an important element of a foreign and security policy based on cooperation. The former US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, confirmed this is an article in *Izvestiya* when he drew attention to the fact that beyond the interests and the trust of political leaders the ability of nations to cooperate is based on a convergence of fundamental principles which are shared by the respective societies as well.<sup>30</sup> This linkage of values and interests is also based on the idea that only the recognition and practice of democratic values and the creation of a corresponding legal system will guarantee Russia's market orientation in the long term. This in turn is the basis for balanced economic development not based on the export of gas and oil alone. It is an important pre-condition for the successful involvement of small and medium businesses that they can rely on a functioning legal system Germany has a strong interest in this. Thus there are good arguments to insist on a dual approach to Russia and in addition to pragmatic agreements in the foreign and security policy field (for instance on the involvement of Russia in finding a solution to the Iranian question) there should also be encouragement for progress on domestic developments.

### **New style or new content?**

What has changed since in Germany's Russia policy since 2005? The friendly private style which characterised the relationship between Schröder and Putin has been replaced by a matter-of-fact diplomatic style. Chancellor Merkel has not been content, as Schröder was, with private admonitions but instead had openly criticised the situation in Russia, much to the displeasure of the Russian president.

But the basic conception of the strategic partnership between Germany and Russia has remained unchanged in spite of the change in government. As Foreign Minister Steinmeier adroitly put it, its purpose is that Russia find the way to a stable democracy "on the basis of the values of Europe but also with regard to her own traditions".<sup>31</sup> Germany's Russia policy is therefore now as before in harmony with the EU's Russia policy, as laid out in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement of 1<sup>st</sup> December 1997, namely it is aimed at the market-economic and democratic transformation of Russia and thus a "harmonisation" of the internal situation in Russia with the EU rules of the game.<sup>32</sup> The overarching concept for this has been expressed by the German Foreign Office with the expression "rapprochement through integration", a phrase which recalls the Leitmotiv of Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik, "change through rapprochement". The German Foreign Minister remains firmly committed to this although doubts are growing in Germany about the likely success of this "functionalist logic".

---

<sup>30</sup> Guest commentary by Colin Powell in *Izvestia*, 26th January 2004, quoted here from Hans-Joachim Spanger, *Modernisierung contra Demokratisierung: Putins russischer Weg*, in: HSFK-Report 12/2004, p. 34ff., [www.hsfk.de](http://www.hsfk.de) (1.2. 2006).

<sup>31</sup> Interview mit Bundesaussenminister Steinmeier im rbb-Inforadio, 14.10.2006.

<sup>32</sup> Hans-Joachim Spanger, *Partnerschaft: strategisch, pragmatisch oder selektiv? Die EU und Russland suchen nach einem neuen Vertrag*, in: HSFK Standpunkte, 6/2006, S.2, <[www.hsfk.de/](http://www.hsfk.de/)>.

In parallel to the deepening of the partnership with Russia, German foreign policy would like to place its Ostpolitik on a broader basis by lending greater weight to relations with the westerly states of the CIS who have previously been somewhat in Russia's shadow. In addition, there is new talk of a "Central Asia policy" by which German Ostpolitik will extend beyond the area of EU neighbourhood policy. In this extended Ostpolitik economic interests are mixed with a striving towards "harmonisation" of the domestic conditions of the Eastern partner states with those of the EU.

The problem of asymmetric expectations, which has already become clear in the project of creating a strategic partnership with Russia, also characterises the desired partnership with Central Asian CIS states. While those states believe it is sufficient for commercial relations to have a political accompaniment and to be framed with cultural contacts, German policy has to be measured according to how far it shows commitment to democracy and human rights in these states. But the more clearly German Ostpolitik emphasises the normative aspect of the "harmonisation" of domestic policies in the whole of Europe, the more it is discredited in the eyes of Russian and Central Asian elites whose goal is to cling on to power. It is also inevitable that, with its Ostpolitik and Central Asian policy, Germany will also enter into implicit competition with Russia which has not given up its claim to a leading role in the CIS. German foreign policy must artfully look after its extended responsibility in Eastern Europe without jeopardising Russia's confidence.

"Energy foreign policy" is an example of such a conflict situation. This is loudly invoked by the EU as a response to the actual or perceived dependence on Russia and the Middle East and as one of the main instruments which is to ensure the spatial diversification of energy supplies. Germany, which can rely on continuing to be reliably supplied with Russian oil and gas, has no reason to take part in the race for the in any case overestimated "energy resources of the Caspian Sea". It will gain nothing and only awaken Russian suspicion.

The goal of Germany's "rapprochement through integration" with Russia is regarded with reservations by some Eastern EU states, since these countries are seeking to distance themselves from Russia rather than have any rapprochement with it. They do not consider Russia to be capable of democracy, and they believe it to be unpredictable and a continuing security problem as before. Germany is expected to show solidarity with the Eastern EU states and certainly not to "go it alone" with Russia. German Ostpolitik therefore has to be complemented by a policy towards Central Europe which would work towards understanding with the Eastern EU member states.

For Germany's positioning, simple and grand sounding concepts like "the Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis" or "Germany as the leading power in Europe" are useless because they do not match the complexity of Germany's tasks. But also the more modest-sounding slogan of "rapprochement through integration" must be analysed

because it cannot mean the integration with partners regardless of their constitution. A “harmonisation” of the domestic policies in Europe and of the countries to the East remains the ultimate goal which must always be an element of the strategic partnership.

**Roland Götz** is Senior research fellow of the Research Unit ‘Russian Federation/CIS’ of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin.