

The EU's attitude towards Russia: condemned to be divided? An analysis of the Member States and Members of the European Parliament's preferences¹

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Abstract

This paper intends to offer an analysis of Member States (MS) positions towards Russia, as influenced by the strength of economic flows, energy dependence, preferences for projects of regional security, existence of disputes and projects of energy supply. On this basis, an index of likelihood of “friendliness towards Russia”, is here presented. This index allows us to analyze MS' position and to order them into a continuum, in taking into account a number of important elements that influence their position towards Russia. It is here argued that the strength of economic relations or the reliance on Russian natural gas sources do not produce the same sets of preferences and attitudes among the EU's MS. Thus, the index was built in taking into account the intrinsic “bi-directionality” of these measures. Indeed, many new MS still perceive as a form of “blackmail” the *absolute* dependence of exchanges with Russia, while old MS entertaining solid economic relations with Russia, still perceived it as an important *relative* economic asset. Another group of MS – mostly coming from the “old Europe” – is not deeply chained to Russia, both in terms of relevance of commercial flow or in terms of energy supplies. Considering the leverage of the “Eastern colossus”, this group of states might feel as more comfortable either to rise their voice against Russia or to assume moderate positions, for not to irritate the irascible neighbor. This might also concur to explain why the EU final decisions tend to reflect an intrinsic median position, regardless from the stake of the issue involved. Rather than reconstructing MS' positions in the Council, this paper attempts to develop a wider perspective on MS' long term attitudes, regardless of the changing political color of their governments. The effect of MS' preferences towards Russia will be then compared to those expressed at the level of the European Parliament (EP). The paper therefore wants to use the Russian case for proving the validity of the assumption for which the EP is now evolving along “national evolutive lines”, by reflecting “ideological”, rather than national positions. As the Russian dossier proves to be highly delicate in many issues, we assume that MEPs coming from MS holding out-liners positions towards Russia (that is, very acquiescent or very critical) will tend to have higher defection rates than those that feel more comfortable with the final (and generally “mild”) outcome of the EU legislative process.

1. Introduction: Russia and the EU, condemned to be divided?

«Russia is an integral part of Europe, of European geographic, historical, cultural, political and economic space. It is self-evident that our continent can be fully united only if Russia as the largest European state becomes an inalienable part of the European process. That is why we attach such importance to the idea of a Europe free of dividing lines, a Europe based on an equal cooperation, a Europe which is civilizationally tolerant, a Europe characterized by social solidarity, a Europe caring for its common future».³

¹ At this stage, the paper is very much in a draft version! Please, do not quote without authorization.

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³ Statement by H.E. Mr. Alexander Yakovenko Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the 62nd Session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on Agenda item 6 “Building on ECE’s sixty-years contribution to pan-European integration: cooperation for stability and prosperity in the ECE region” http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/9677cd4414db77cfc32572c9004d585d?OpenDocu

«We will extend the intimidation, harassment and expropriation of British, American, Polish and Czech companies active in our domestic market and as energy customers, while at the same time offering further preferential treatment to those from countries that are politically friendly, especially France, Italy and Germany. Are big European companies willing to sacrifice billions of euros in lost exports or higher energy costs by indulging their politicians' desire to grandstand and moralize? We think not».⁴

Whether one may tend to believe to the veracity of either the first or the second sentence, this preliminary selection of quotes well represents the current status of the relationship between the European Union (and the West in general) and the Russian Federation. Mistrust and ambivalence dominate reciprocal perceptions, driving their relationship into an oscillating path.

Beside the issue of energy dependence, Russia imposes to the European Union (EU) challenges of different kinds. Relations with Russia have been marked by high levels of disagreement over several issues. To quote but a few: divergence over the management of international global dossiers, such as disarmaments and ecological threats, the issue of the exclave region of Kaliningrad, the elections in Ukraine in 2004, the brutal management of counter-terrorism in Chechnya, its staunch opposition to the NATO enlargement and the management of the so-called frozen conflicts, at the borders of the recently enlarged Europe. New and particularly critical Member States (MS) also lament the enduring interference of Russia in their internal affairs, pursued by means of an offensive commercial and diplomatic politics. Facing these challenges, the EU's philosophy itself – spreading wealth and stability through progressive economic and institutional integration – seems to be put into discussion and leaves the doors open to a decisive question mark: integrating Russia, in spite of its scanty democratic records or assuming a more severe posture?

According to the Russian side, the EU is not able to adopt a coherent policy. Indeed, Russia considers the EU as oscillating between a “containment or cooperation” strategy,⁵ between a “friend-or-foe” principle.⁶ Russia laments that the EU is not offering cooperation on an equal footing, and that it is biased by a kind of *Pax Romana* syndrome, according to which the EU acts as a metropolis which imposes its dictates on the provinces.⁷

Russia has often been considered as representing an emblematic case in which the EU's coherence and its normative distinctiveness in foreign policy are put into question. It is also told to play a *divide et impera* strategy with the EU. Indeed, if, on the one hand, it considers the EU as its “chief partner in Europe, with whom the main array of Russia's European interests are associated”,⁸ on the

[ment](#), Geneva, 26 April 2007, accessed on 10 September 2008.

⁴ *What Russia will do next- A secret e-mail to Mr. Putin reaches our columnist*, published on August 28, 2008, retrieved from www.Economist.com, accessed on 31 August 2008.

⁵ Transcript of Remarks and Replies to Media Questions by Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at the Seminar on the Occasion of the 200th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Russia and the US at the Carnegie Moscow Center, 21 June 2007.

⁶ Article by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov “The Present and the Future of Global Politics”, “Russia in Global Affairs”, №2, 2007, published on 21 May 2007, retrieved from http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/b55da00639381794c32572e6001f4268?OpenDocument, accessed on 10 September 2008.

⁷ Speech by deputy foreign minister V.A. Chizhov at conference ‘Enlarging Europe: The New Agenda’, Bratislava, published on 19 March 2004, retrieved from http://www.ln.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/sps/67D6F86FA4BAF9AEC3256E5D004D0963, accessed on 11 May 2004, quoted in Averre, 2005:178.

⁸ This brief introduction of the Russian position towards the EU member states is summarized by *A Survey of Russian Federation's Foreign Policy*, retrieved from http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/89a30b3a6b65b4f2c32572d700292f74?OpenDocument, accessed on 10 September 2008.

other, it pursues very diversified strategies with MS, in undermining the EU's unity.⁹

Many factors concur to MS' divisive temptation, as the relationship with Russia involves many challenges to the regional stability, the appeasement of the continent, the management of overlapping peripheries, and the access to natural resources and to a huge and expanding market. The EU's MS, thus, oscillate between liberal institutionalist and neo-realist temptations in dealing with Russia, in setting above at time the ambition of integrating Russia into a larger pan-European process of integration based on rules and norms, at time their concerns for their interests and security.

The last two waves of enlargement imposed further problems of coherence to the EU. If the “old Europe” – to varying degrees of intensity – saw in the long Russian transition the opportunity to spread stability through economic integration, the “new Europe” maintained regional security as a priority, in generally pressing the EU to assume a more severe stance. These goals, which apparently do not contradict one others, pose problems of “fungibility” of the European action, that is, the ability to transfer resources and capabilities from one dimension of international relations (for instance, trade policy) to another dimension (for instance regional security), in order to gain more influence in the latter.¹⁰ This climate, further poisoned by the ongoing conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia, has strengthened the impression that Member States' divisions are far more problematic and complex than those responding to the mere East/West EU member states' divide.

This paper intends to offer an analysis of MS' positions towards Russia, as influenced by the strength of economic flows, energy dependence, preferences for projects of regional security, existence of disputes and projects of energy supply. On this basis, an index of likelihood of “friendliness towards Russia was built. This index allows to analyze MS' position and to order them into a continuum, in taking into account a number of important elements that characterize their position towards Russia. Rather than reconstructing MS' positions in the Council, this paper attempts to develop a wider perspective on MS' long term attitudes, regardless of the changing political color of their governments.

It is here argued that the strength of economic relations or the reliance on Russian natural gas sources do not produce the same sets of preferences and attitudes among the EU's MS. Thus, the index was built in taking into account the intrinsic “bi-directionality” of these measures. Indeed, while many new MS still perceive as a form of “dominance” the *absolute* dependence on the exchanges with Russia (even worsened by Moscow's unilateral coercive politics), old MS entertaining solid economic relations with Russia still perceived it as an important *relative*

⁹ Russia considers “of key significance” the relations with Germany, France, Spain and Italy. The United Kingdom is considered as an important, though “complicated” partner, due to the “avowedly messianic disposition of a considerable part of the British political elite”. Relations with Northern European countries – as witnessed by a well institutionalized system of regional cooperation – are overall considered as stable, even if due to a “varying degree intensity”. Among these countries, Finland is considered the one “with which an in-depth political dialogue proceeds and economic and commercial interaction is actively developed”. The States of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) are in general considered as a “substantial reserve”, which needs a case-by-case approach due to their interest in developing a pragmatic cooperation with Russia. In reality, relations with the former Soviet satellites are overall considered as negative, due to the “attempts by a number of countries having joined the EU in 2004 to “avail themselves” of the advantages of their membership for the realization of their political tasks vis-a-vis Russia, turning the Russia-EU relationship into a “hostage” of their own narrow national interests.” Russia declares to be interested in good-neighborly relations with the Baltic States, even if considers them as affected from “outbursts of occupation rhetoric” and “manifestations of neonazism”. Moreover, the issue of Russian minorities and the disputes over borders make “good-neighborly” relations very much improbable.

¹⁰ Definition given by Bueno de Mosquita, 2003:150, adapted to the EU by the authors.

economic asset. Another group of MS – mostly coming from the “old Europe” –holds a less extreme position. Considering the lesser relevance of commercial flow or energy dependence, this group of states might tend either to rise their voice against Russia or, considering the leverage of the “Eastern colossus”, to assume moderate positions, not to irritate the irascible neighbor. This might also concur to explain why the EU's final decisions on the issue tend to reflect an intrinsic median position, regardless of the gravity of the Russian challenge.

The effect of MS' preferences towards Russia will be then compared to those expressed at the level of the European Parliament (EP). Thus, the paper wants to propose a further step, in adopting the Russian case for testing the validity of the assumption for which the EP is now evolving along “national evolutive lines”, by reflecting “ideological”, rather than national positions (Kreppel and Hix, 2003). As the Russian dossier proves to be highly delicate in many issues, it is possible to hypothesize that Member of the European Parliament (MEPs) coming from hard-liners MS may be tempted to adhere to their national positions, by defecting from their official group-line. We, thus, assume that MEPs coming from MS holding out-liners positions towards Russia (that is, very acquiescent or very critical) will tend to have higher defection rates than those that feel more comfortable with the final (and generally “mild”) outcome of the EU legislative process.

Accordingly, the next section will introduce the main variables adopted in the construction of the index and explain the methodology implied for the analysis of both MS and MEPs' attitudes. Section 3 and 4 will present the main results of the analysis. In the final part of this work we will develop some general conclusions.

2. Data and methodology

2.1 An index to measure MS' attitudes towards Russia

Russia is often told to play a divisive game in order to prevent the European Union to adopt unfavorable measures. Beside this consideration, Member States' relationship with Russia is *per se* profoundly diversified, an element that signals that Russia has a lot of material in order to threaten the EU's cohesion! In order to depict the MS' positions, in taking into account divisive elements that structure MS' attitudes towards Russia, an index of likelihood of “Russian friendliness” was built, on the basis of seven variables. This index took into account the following elements:

2.1.1 – The East-West MS divide

The last two waves of enlargement of the EU opened to many satellites of the former Soviet Union the doors to “back to Europe”. Overall, this heritage marks profoundly the attitudes of new member states towards Russia. Indeed, it is possible to argue that there is a difference between the attitude of the older and newer MS towards Russia, due to the heritage of the past. In this sense, the old-new MS' divide refers, although not completely, to the East-West divide. Hence, in our analysis this distinction fits completely, as Malta and Cyprus have been excluded by the analysis due to the lack of data.

It is here argued that new MS will tend to have a more negative approach towards Russia, compared to older MS. A dummy variable was created in order to take into account this factor, in which new member states score 0 (minimum of Russian friendliness) and old member states score 1 (maximum of Russian friendliness).

2.1.2 – The economic strength of the relationship with Russia

Economic ties are also supposed to influence heavily MS' attitudes towards Russia. The strength of

existing economic ties with Russia has been measured as the share of trade with Russia weighted by the share of overall extra-EU commercial trade. By analyzing the figures of the Russian share in the EU's MS' trade balance, some interesting data can be observed.

In general, new member states tend to be much more reliant on Russian trade (see *Appendix 1 – Russian share in the extra EU overall trade balance*). This seems to be the case for many EU's MS that confine with Russia, whether from the northern or the eastern borders. Baltic MS (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) score the highest rate of commercial exchanges with Russia. Eastern (such as Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia) and Northern MS (Finland and Sweden, with the exception of Denmark) comparatively score a high rate of commercial exchanges.

In this framework, old Member States tend not to score a comparatively high rate of commercial exchanges in relative terms. This is also the case of those MS (notably, France, Germany, Italy and Spain) that Russia considers as “strategic partners”. Among the old Member States, Greece is the one that scores the highest level of commercial exchanges, while, Ireland is the one that scores the lowest rate.

As it was mentioned in the introduction, this variable was built in taking into account the East-West divide. Indeed, it is here argued that the strength of economic relations affect differently EU's member states: whereas it is positively related to a more friendly attitude in the case of old member states, it is negatively related to a positive attitude in the case of new member states. We assume that both the heritage of the past and the tendency of Russia to recur to unilateral commercial blockages aliment negative feelings and sense of dependence on behalf of new member states. In this sense, the new member states may suffer from a “colonization syndrome”, due to their ongoing dependence on “mother Russia”.

Accordingly, we ordered on a continuum old member states with strong economic ties with Russia, old member states with less stronger economic ties, new member states with weaker economic ties with Russia and new member states with stronger economic ties with Russia. In order to operationalize economic ties a four scale variable was built, ranging from 0 (maximum of exchanges with Russia on behalf of a new member state) to 1 (maximum of exchanges with Russia on behalf of an old member state).

2.1.3 – Dependence over Russian natural gas

An element that is commonly raised in order to explain the European proneness towards Russia is dependence over Russian natural gas. Reliance on Russian natural gas supplies appear to be very diversified among member states (see *Appendix 2 – Dependence on Russian natural gas supplies*). The rate of dependence over Russian natural gas was measured as the share of gas imported from Russia on the overall country consumption.

Among MS, there are those that rely completely or nearly completely on Russian sources (such as Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia) and those that do not draw at all on them (such as, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Ireland, Portugal, and Luxembourg and the UK). Belgium and the Netherlands score a comparatively low level of reliance on Russian sources (respectively 0.28% and 0.61%, while the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Austria and Slovenia draw more significantly on Russian sources (respectively, 72.24%, 72,2%, 66.5%, 62.9% and 50.9%). Germany, Poland and Italy score relatively high level of dependence, which, nonetheless, account for less than 50% of the total gas imported (respectively, 42.9%, 45.2% and 30.5%). France and Romania also have comparatively low rate of dependence (respectively, the 18.21% and the 15.2%). These data dimension considerably the commonsensical parlance according to which some big

member states are those that are submitted the most to the blackmail of a possible Russian cut in supply. Rather, once again, the most heavily dependent states are the Central and Eastern Europeans (CEE).

Analogously to what affirmed for the strength of economic ties, the divide West/East is taken into consideration, by hypothesizing that those Eastern MS that are more heavily dependent on Russian gas resources will be the most unfriendly. On the contrary, old MS that rely the most on Russian gas resources are here considered as the more friendly. Accordingly, this variable is measured on a four scales basis, ranging from 0 (maximum of exchanges with Russia on behalf of a new MS) to 1 (maximum of exchanges with Russia on behalf of an old MS).

2.1.4 – Support for energy independence from Russian supplies

Member states' preferences on natural gas supply options are a powerful explicative factor. In order to see whether EU's MS promote independence from Russian supplies, support for three alternative projects has been included: support for the Nabucco Pipelines Project, for the South Stream Project and for the North Stream Project.

It is here argued that the former would bring about a major independence from Russian supplies, while the latter two would not rely on different sources. Thus, this variable is divided into three modalities: those that support the Nabucco, in favoring alternative gas supplies from Russia, those that favor Russian sources and those that do show no particular preferences, as they do rely on alternative natural gas supplies.

The Southern Stream represents a particularly meaningful example in this regard. It could be regarded as a reaction to the European project to establish the Nabucco pipeline, which would have allowed the EU to substantially differentiate natural gas supplies. Indeed, the Nabucco natural gas pipeline, which should have been accomplished in 2012, would have transported natural gas from the Caspian region and from the Middle East through Turkey, Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary to Austria and then further to the West European markets. Russia immediately opposed to the Nabucco an antagonist project, by launching, with the Italian company Eni, the South Stream project in 2007. This proved to have a tremendous divisive effect over the European support to the Nabucco project.¹¹ In a short arch of time, Gazprom, on behalf of Putin, proved to be able to reach agreements over seals pipeline for the Souther Stream gas pipeline with Greece, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Austria.

In order to take into account of support for differentiation from Russian natural gas sources, a three scale basis variable has been built. This variable ranges from 0 (support for Nabucco pipelines or opposition to the Northern Stream) to 1 (support for either the Southern Stream or the Northern Stream). A modality, ranging 0.5, was further added, in order to take into account those MS that do not rely on Russian sources, thus, do not adopt any clear positions on this regard.

2.1.5 – Attitude towards NATO's enlargement

A fifth variable took into consideration the security preferences on a particular sensitive issue: the accession of Georgia and Ukraine in the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO). This indicator was also chosen in the light of the opposition of Russia towards this proposal.

Indeed, many MS, notably some of the “big” ones, such as Italy, France and Germany, Spain, but

¹¹ The project, which has been seen as strongly rivaling Nabucco, planned to pump Russian gas to Europe, under the Black Sea, via Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia and Italy, which branches crossing Hungary and Austria.

also, the Netherlands and Belgium, proved to be particularly keen not to hurt Russia's sensitiveness on the issue. During the NATO Summit in Bucharest, held in April 2008, for instance, the accession had been delayed, in contrast to the US' will, in order to take in due respect "Russia's legitimate security concerns".¹²

MS' positions in this matter were represented into a three scale variable, dividing those that favored the accession of the two candidates from those preferred to counter or postpone the accession for not to hurt Russian sensitiveness. To this, a further modality was added, considered that not all EU members are also NATO members (namely, Austria, Ireland, Finland, Sweden) and, accordingly, did not express any particular position on the issue.

2.1.6 – Existence of direct disputes with Russia

To this picture, an important difference is presented: the existence of direct disputes with Russia. Relations with Russia are likely to be worsened by the presence of significant disputes, whether territorial, diplomatic, commercial or of other kind.

Particularly CEE have been dramatically affected by "systematic policy of coercive bilateralism" (Leonard and Popescu, 2007:11) pursued by Russia. Commercial disputes, for instance, emerged in case of the Poland's meat and vegetable embargo, imposition of trade sanctions on Latvia and Estonia, oil cuts to Lithuania and Czech Republic and disputes over export taxes on timber experienced by Finland and Sweden. Severe diplomatic disputes have been experienced also by some old member states, notably, in the case of UK, not to mention widespread diplomatic harassment on CEE. In this respect, the Baltic states represent an epicenter of turmoil. The ongoing crisis between Estonia, Latvia and Russia over the issue of Russian minorities or the territorial disputes affecting Lithuanian-Russian relationship over the Kaliningrad Russian enclave represent all serious causes of concern.

In order to operationalize the presence of relevant disputes, we adopted a dummy categorization, signaling the presence or absence of significant disputes. Even in this case, the presence of direct conflicts will be considered as a proof of a more negative behavior towards Russia (then scoring 0), and the absence of direct disputes will be considered as an element reinforcing positive attitude (then, scoring 1).

2.1.7 – The religious background

Russia is the biggest Orthodox country in the world. We assume that common religious roots might concur to favor better relations, above all for old MS. Indeed, we can assume that past Russian domination can diminish considerably, the effect of common religious roots.

For this reason, we created a four scale variable, which aims at taking into consideration both the religious and the geopolitical consideration. This variable was, hence, developed as follows: Western orthodox (displaying the highest level of Russian friendliness), Western non orthodox, Eastern orthodox and Eastern non orthodox (displaying the lowest level of Russian friendliness).

¹² German source quoted by Elitsa Vucheva, Uncertainty hanging over NATO hopefuls ahead of Summit, published on 01 April 2008, retrieved from: www.eubserver.com/?aid=25895, accessed on 11 September 2008. Analogously, France assumed even a more negative stance. For instance, Mr. Fillon, the French Prime Minister, declared: "France is not green-lighting Ukraine and Georgia's accession. Paris has different opinion to that of the US on this matter". Quoted in Old and New Europe divided at NATO summit, published on 2 April 08, retrieved from www.euractive.com/en/enlargement/old-new-europe-divided-NATO-summit/article-171288, accessed on 11 September 2008.

2.2. Measuring MEPs' voting rationale towards Russia

The EU has been described as a classic two chamber legislature, in which the Council represents the States and the European Parliament the citizens. The interests that those institutions respectively represent may be considered as belonging respectively to territorial and functional categories (Longo, 2005). Thus, while the Council may be regarded as representing territorial powers and interests, the Parliament may be seen as embodying interests which derive from the increasing politicisation of the agenda. On this basis, it is possible to raise a question: do national delegations in the European Parliament tend to mirror national positions over sensitive issues or to vote according to their party lines?

In general, many scholars tend to consider that the EP is evolving towards greater normalization, thereby abandoning the temptation of following national positions (Hix, 2001; Kreppel and Hix, 2003). Even if, on the whole, we can assume this consideration as true, given the degree of national saliency of the Russian issue, it would be of great interest to test this claim in this particular regard.

In order to test our hypothetical propositions, an assessment of 18 RCVs dealing with Russia is presented in the following section.¹³ The votes included in the analysis were held between December 2004 and July 2008¹⁴. In this study we considered only those cases characterized by opposite majorities of MEPs at delegation and group level, that is, those votes marked by conflicting positions between the two. In other words, this analysis specifically refers to those cases when the modal vote of the majority of the European group differs from the modal vote of the majority of its affiliated national party delegation. This filter seems to guarantee both the 'national saliency' of the votes included (the parties *care* when the vote matters) and a clearer identification of the voting preferences of the European parliamentary group (EPG) and the affiliated national party delegation.

The measure used to calculate and compare the levels of nationally-conformist defection at national delegation¹⁵ level is the absolute defection rate (ADR). It represents the average proportion of nationally-oriented votes for each delegation of MEPs. The ADR has been built through a multiple-step data refinement process. *First*, the modal voting option of each EPG and of each affiliated NPD has been identified for every single RCV included in the analysis. *Second*, the share of nationally-oriented votes has been identified for each NPD. *Third*, the measure for the 25 national ND have been calculated by combining together the results of the NPDs belonging to the same member state.

In order to compare the share of nationally-conformist votes among the 25 national delegations we will make use of the relative defection rate (RDR). This index can be obtained by dividing the

¹³ A study of the RCV records seems to be particularly suitable for our analysis as they allow us to detect each MEP's position over an issue. Indeed, when a RCV is called, each MEP is required to indicate his/her voting choice (Yes, No, Abstention). MEPs' votes are then recorded in the minutes, thereby providing the exact position of each legislator on a specific vote. The RCVs are usually called by the political groups. According to Hix (2002) and Carrubba (2002), the RCV procedure is typically requested by the parliamentary leadership for achieving two specific goals. On the one hand, group's leadership might be keen to exert extra pressures on its MEPs to act cohesively, by providing the more concrete risk of parliamentary sanction. On the other hand, it gives the possibility to show other groups' internal divisions.

¹⁴ The minutes of the votes are available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/plenary/pv.do?language=EN>.

¹⁵ In this paper, the term *National party delegation* (NPD) refers to a group of MEPs elected under the label of the same national party, whereas the term *National delegation* (ND) includes all the MEPs of a Member state, regardless of their partisan affiliation at national and EP level. The NPD operates with the framework of an intra-group dimension, while the latter cross cuts the ideological divisions.

absolute defection rate of each national delegation by the EP average ratio of nationally-oriented defections. Accordingly, the RDR value will be higher than 1 if one delegation defects more than the EP average share of nationally-oriented defections and will be lower than 1 if it does not. The main advantage of using the relative rather than the absolute defection rate is to relativize the differences in the levels of defection among the delegations, thereby making them statistically comparable.

3. The state of the art of the relations with Russia: friendly or conflictual?

In order to systematically depict MS' attitudes towards Russia, an index of friendliness towards Russia has been built based on the variables described above. The index proves to be reliable, scoring a Cronbach's Alpha of .752. The index orders MS' attitudes from 0 to 1, whereas 0 indicates the lowest rate of friendliness towards Russia and 1 the highest (see Table 1). On this basis, we built a four-type categorization. In order to give a snapshot of MS' attitudes toward Russia, our categories have been labelled as those of “the Eastern divorced”, “vigilant critics”, “acquiescent partners” and “loyal wives”.

Our results seem to validate our hypothesis: the East-West divide concur to explain consistently differences in MS' behaviors. The hypothesis of a bi-directional relation of figures of commercial exchanges and energy dependence seems also to be validated: whereas for old MS they represent a *relative* economic asset, for new MS they are still perceived as a form of *absolute* dependence to get rid out of.

Hence, MS' collocation along the index seems to consistently depict the current status of the EU's MS-Russian relations. Furthermore, our results partially coincide to those found by Leonard and Popescu on their analysis of MS' attitudes towards Russia (Leonard and Popescu, 2007), who mapped the EU MS' approaches towards Russia through qualitative analysis of their preferences and behaviors in a number of salient issues, such as energy policy, economic ties, energy dependence, and their general attitude towards the Eastern colossus. Differences can be found in relation to the definition of those MS that have a less legible position towards Russia, due to the lowest stake of the issue and their less structured foreign policy agenda.

The index seems to correctly collocate the MS which invest more energy in order to oppose or to defend the Russian counterpart. As we will see, for the two median categories a more nuanced result can be highlighted.

Table 1 – An Index of Friendliness towards Russia

Estonia	0	<i>Eastern Divorced</i>
Lithuania	0	
Poland	0.09	
Latvia	0.14	
Czech Republic	0.17	
Slovakia	0.21	<i>Vigilant Critics</i>
Romania	0.38	
Slovenia	0.38	
Sweden	0.40	
Bulgaria	0.43	
Hungary	0.45	<i>Acquiescent Partners</i>
United Kingdom	0.47	
Portugal	0.55	
Denmark	0.62	
France	0.62	

Ireland	0.62	<i>Loyal Wives</i>
The Netherlands	0.62	
Belgium	0.69	
Germany	0.69	
Spain	0.69	
Luxembourg	0.69	
Finland	0.74	
Italy	0.76	
Austria	0.78	
Greece	0.90	

3.1. The Eastern divorced

According to our results, the least friendly MS towards Russia come from CEE. This group of countries – composed of Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, Czech Republic, and Slovakia – has been labeled as “Eastern divorced”. The heritage of the past seems to play a relevant part in defining their colder attitude towards Russia. Indeed, in spite of the fact that the East/West divide cannot be considered as a sufficient explicative factor in order to depict MS' attitudes towards Russia, it still prove to be a powerful analytical prism.

According to our hypothesis, their comparatively highest level of dependence over Russian economy and energetic sources negatively affects their attitudes towards Russia. With the possible exception of Slovenia and Slovakia, all the countries in the group have been affected by Moscow's unilateral coercive politics. Overall, security concerns seem to worry this group of countries, which tends to assume atlanticist positions when coming to deal with their security strategy. All those countries supported the project of NATO' enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia, regardless of Russian opposition.

As was possible to foresee, the Baltic States, namely **Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia** score the maximum level of coldness towards Russia. The question of Russian minorities in the Baltic States, particularly in Estonia and Latvia, can be regarded as a main source of conflict between these States and Russia, poisoned in the cases of Estonia and Lithuania by other disputes which ended up in serious diplomatic and commercial disputes.¹⁶ Compared to the other Baltic neighbors, Latvia recently attempted to improve its bilateral ties with Moscow.¹⁷

Poland and Czech Republic can be regarded as having very similar attitudes towards Russia. Like Lithuania, Poland has actively promoted a harder line towards Moscow at the EU level, “using means like critical non-papers, diplomatic footwork and even vetoing negotiations about a new EU

¹⁶ Russia laments the continuous violations of human rights perpetuated against its fellow citizens, while the Baltic MS oppose the argument that those Russian born citizens have been forcefully implanted in their territories during the Soviet era. This led to several turmoil and accidents, testifying the extremely unfriendly attitudes towards Russia on behalf of the Baltic States. In 2007, Estonia openly confronted Russia, by changing location of a war memorial to Soviet soldiers. This caused a diplomatic crisis and the adoption of “punitive” economic measures on behalf of Russia. Relations between Russia and Estonia are characterized by such “accidents”, as, for instance the cyber attacks presumably perpetuated by Russia in April 2007. Lithuania still confronts Russia with the open issue of Kaliningrad, the Russian exclave completely surrounded by the EU's territory. The issue of granting visas, in order to guaranteeing the transit to Russian citizens arose fears of invasion on the one side and feeling of being outraged on the other. The Baltic countries have massive Russian speaking minorities living in their territories: 16% in Lithuania, 32% in Estonia, and 42% in Latvia (Mihails Hazans, Olga Rastrigina and Ija Trapeznikova, 2005:1).

¹⁷ Latvia indeed, progressively started to see its relations with Russia as “taking the form of a constructive dialogue in the context of both bilateral and multilateral co-operation”. Quoted in Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bilateral relations with Russia, published on 17 October 2007, retrieved from <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/policy/bilateral-relations/4542/Russia/>, accessed on 10 September 2008.

agreement with Russia” (Leonard and Popescu, 2007). The two countries experienced serious unilateral commercial blockages on behalf of Moscow. The antimissile shield stands at the core of the diplomatic stalemate between Moscow, Warsaw and Prague.¹⁸

Slovakia seems to have a softer approach towards Russia, as reflected by its borderline position in the category. Slovakia did not register any particular conflict with Russia and tend to have a more acquiescent attitude in dealing with the Russian dossier (Leonard and Popescu, 2007:38).

3.2. The vigilant critics

The group of the vigilant critics contains an interesting group of countries. On the one side, we have four CEE countries, which progressively undertook an operation of “defrost” in their relationship with Russia. On the other, we have four Western European Countries, characterized by low level of economic exchanges and total energy independence from Russia.

The **UK** is the more hostile among the biggest MS. Moscow diplomatically defined it as a strategic, though “problematic” partner. Its commercial exchanges rate with Moscow is one of the lowest if compared to other EU MS. Moreover, its position of energy supplier puts it in a position of total independence from Russian natural gas resources. In this regard, London marks its “insularity” vis-à-vis the other big MS, in confirming the special character and autonomy of its foreign policy. Several diplomatic accidents and vocal criticisms marked the British position towards Moscow, such as the Zakaev extradition case in 2003 and the assassination of Litvinenko in 2006. As a fervent atlanticist EU's MS, the UK tended to following the US in all those issues which hurts Russian sensitiveness, such as the accession of Ukraine and Georgia to NATO. Moreover, the UK did not spare severe criticisms, in denouncing Russian violations of human rights, whether in Chechnya or elsewhere.

Sweden scores relatively high rate of commercial exchanges, as is the case of Bulgaria and Hungary, but total independence over Russian natural gas resources, as is the case for the UK and Portugal. Stockholm's reaction to Northern Streamline Project has been definitely lukewarm and marked by concerns over the ecological feasibility of the project. Although Sweden is not a member of NATO – and, as such, did not express any particular position towards the accession of Ukraine and Georgia – the recent turmoil in Abkhazia and South Ossetia urged several cabinet members in Sweden, but also in Finland, to speed up discussions on their membership in the Alliance.¹⁹ This is coupled with Swedish tendency to raise its criticisms about the evolutions of Russian politics.

¹⁸ Moscow rejected the idea since it was proposed in 2006, in conceiving it as a threat at its closer borders. In July 2008, the US and Czech Republic signed a bilateral agreement, which implants a US radar in the Czech territory. Analogously, in the aftermath of the Georgian-Russian conflicts, the U.S. and Poland signed an agreement to deploy parts of the U.S. global missile shield in the Polish territory, in spite of the Russian staunch opposition to this project. On the same time, a change in attitudes on behalf of the Polish establishment came to verify. In 2007, the Polish Premier Tusk, who entered in office after Jaroslaw Kaczynski, declared to want to “crucially” warm up the Polish-Russian relations, in highlighting that “it is crucial in the sense that it will be very difficult.” (Quoted in Kubosova, Lucia, 'New Polish leader vows to repair EU and Russia ties', published on 24 October 2007, retrieved from <http://euobserver.com/?aid=25030>, accessed on 12 September 2008). In spite of this, relations seem not yet to have entered a more positive stage. Backing the US, the Polish foreign minister reassured Moscow by declaring that the antimissile shield was conceived as a means to protect Europe from the Iranian, not from the Russian danger. However, these declarations did not convince the Russian counterpart, which considered the settlement of the antimissile shield, “a move in the wrong direction”, with tremendous implications for regional security, to quote the Russian foreign Minister (Quoted in: U.S. missile shield plans in Europe target Russia – expert, published on 2 March 2007, retrieved from <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20070205/60242190.html>, accessed on the 2 June 2008).

¹⁹ See, Sweden Finland debate NATO as Russian relations worsen, published on 01 September 2008, retrieved from <http://www.barentsobserver.com/sweden-finland-debate-nato-as-russia-relations-worsen.4504795-58932.html>, on the accessed on 12 September 2008.

Within the group, **Portugal** seems to be the MS which has a lesser interest in keeping good relations with Russia: it doesn't have significant commercial exchanges and does entirely draw upon different natural gas sources, namely, Algeria and Nigeria. This position is coupled with its indifference over the Nabucco/Southern Streamline quarrel. Thus, its “lukewarm” position towards Russia may depend on the absence of relevant stake.

As their Eastern neighbors, **Bulgaria** and **Hungary, Romania** and **Slovenia** are tied to Russia by nearly total natural gas dependence and by strong commercial rates. But, compared to their Eastern neighbors, they have undertaken a more positive path in their relationship with Russia. In particular, in the case of Bulgaria, this seems related to the strategic weight of the South Streamline Project.²⁰

3.3. Acquiescent partners.

This group represents the most heterogeneous group in our index. This may be due to different reasons. In the first place, it represents the modal category of our index. Thus, this specific measure of central tendency might be more subject to internal inconsistency.

The most outstanding outlier in the group is represented by Denmark. **Denmark** does not have particularly strong commercial ties with Russia and score a total independence from Russian natural gas supplies. However, as Leonard and Popescu report (2007:46), Denmark can be regarded as the first MS that had experienced severe bilateral disputes since the Putin's Presidency, as it hosted the 2002 Chechen congress and refused to extradite the Chechen leader Akhmed Zakaev.

States such as **Ireland, The Netherlands, Belgium** and **Luxembourg** can be considered as small member states, with a weaker foreign policy agenda and with a lower stake in relation to Russia. Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands score very low level of commercial rates with Russia and low reliance on Russian natural gas sources. With the exception of the Netherlands, they have generally not been involved in disputes with Russia, even if often raised their criticisms towards it. As the other big MS in this group, these MS favored the postponement of the accession of Georgia and Ukraine to the NATO. Traditionally, these states tend to assume a rigid stance in human rights matters, nonetheless, the leverage of the Eastern giant may bring them about assuming an acquiescent behavior, if not a properly friendly one.²¹

Within the group, France, Spain and Germany can be regarded as important foreign policy players with precise strategy vis-à-vis Moscow.

Spain stands in a slightly different position from France and Germany. It is completely independent from Russian natural gas supplies and does not regard Russia as a relevant asset for its international trade balance. Even if Spain did not take part to the Nabucco/Southern Streamline quarrel, it often voiced the claim for a major EU's energetic independence (Leonard and Popescu, 2007:36). Probably, the need to maintain good relations with the Eastern colossus brings it about being more acquiescent.²² As Germany, Spain advocated the postponement of the accession of Georgia and

²⁰ In particular, Bulgaria proved its will to strengthen relations with Moscow. Bulgaria, which was initially included in the Nabucco project, did not hesitate to change its position, by assuming actively a more acquiescent position towards Russia, by signing agreements for the realization of the Southern Streamline. Notwithstanding, the increasingly good state of the relationship did not prevent Russia to use its “policy of coercive bilateralism”, when in 2006, Gazprom impose Bulgaria to renegotiate its gas supplies (Leonard and Popescu, 2007).

²¹ According to Leonard and Popescu, the Benelux and Ireland do not assume the same stance towards Russia. The Netherlands and Ireland are told to assume a colder posture, while Luxembourg and Belgium a more friendly one, due to criticisms and occasional disputes in the case of the former, and of higher economic stake in the case of the latter (Leonard and Popescu, 2007: 36-43).

²² Leonard and Popescu account for several episodes during which Spain acted by defending Russian interests and

Ukraine to NATO, in order not to irritate Moscow.

The recent activism of the EU French Presidency in the Russian-Georgian crisis proves the importance that France has historically attached to its relations with Moscow. **France** does not enjoy comparatively relevant commercial exchanges with Russia and its rate of dependence on Russian natural gas sources (18.2%) is generically lower than the European average. In spite of this, France took a pro-South Streamline position in the European pipelines “disputes” and often boasted its preferential channels of communication with Moscow. The reciprocal relevance of the relation is more political, rather than economic, grounded on the partners' will to increase their leverage in the international system. Recently, in many international conflicts, Russia and France assumed similar positions, such as in the case of Iraq. France voiced clearly and firmly not to favor Georgia and Ukraine's accession to NATO, in overtly highlighting its differences with the US' approach.

Among the big member states, **Germany** is the one that scores the highest rates of commercial exchanges and natural gas dependence. Indeed, Germany is the Western MS with the strongest economic ties with Russia. Its *Ostpolitik* tradition has brought it about having a balanced and often acquiescent position towards Russia. Angela Merkel adopted a colder posture than her predecessor towards Putin, in, nonetheless, recognizing the importance of the dialogue with Russia in all issues. Germany proved to be sensible in many occasions not to hurt Russia. As was noted above, Germany suggested to postpone the NATO accession of Georgia and Ukraine, in acknowledging Russian concerns. Angela Merkel, for instance, defined the partnership with Russia as one of a special kind, in stating the importance “to talk to rather than against” each other, also in delicate questions, such as the antimissile shield and the enlargement of NATO.²³

The last MS in our group, **Finland**, proves to be remarkably careful to keep good relations with Moscow. It enjoys a comparatively high rate of commercial exchanges and a total dependence on Russian energy supplies. The leverage of Finn-Russian relations improved to the extent of approximating the replacement of Germany as Russia' biggest trading partner, also on the basis of the fact that “a quarter of all Russian imports transit through Finland” (Leonard and Popescu, 2007:37). Historically, Finland has tried to have good-neighborly relations with Russia, and to be able to pursue its own soft security agenda, in order to maintain a peaceful path in its relations with Russia.²⁴

3.4. The loyal wives

The last group – here epitomized as the group of the loyal wives – depicts those states that prove to be more friendly towards Russia. Their score range from the 0.76 of Italy to the 0.9 of Greece. This group shows interesting internal differences and includes one big Mediterranean MS and two small MS, respectively from the South Mediterranean, and from the central Europe. As in the previous cases, it is possible to argue that support for Russia will express a different leverage vis-à-vis other MS and, accordingly, their ability to threaten the EU's cohesion on a number of issues.

Among its loyal wives, **Italy** is the only one that Russia considers as a strategic partner. Italy scores a relatively high rate of economic exchanges, and relies consistently on Russian natural gas supplies

entreaties.

²³ Speech of Angela Merkel at the 43th Munich Conference on Security Policy, published on 2 October 2007, retrieved from <http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?id=178&sprache=en&> , accessed on the 10 September 2008.

²⁴ Finland launched the Northern Dimension Initiative (NDI) in 1997, which later has been included on the agenda of the Luxembourg Summit and became an official EU policy. In this regard, in spite of its small dimension, Finland proved its ability to pursuing actively its goals, in order to influence the EU's agenda, even if the ability to influence further implementation of its goals is far beyond its scope of action (Arter, 2000:695).

if compared to the other Western countries. Indeed, even if with different emphasis, all Italian premiers tended to stress the importance of economic ties with Russia. Italy proved to be particularly active in contrasting the Nabucco Pipelines Project, in so witnessing the precise will of keeping a special relation with Moscow. In several occasions, Berlusconi emphasized the friendly character of his relationship with Putin and defended his positions vis-à-vis European partners. Italy proved in several occasions to be a “loyal wife” for Russia, even if its loyalty, in certain cases, resulted obscured by its solid atlanticist commitment. This was, for instance the case for the antimissile shield issue, when, even if in an evidently embarrassed and unclear way, Italy support the US' position. In this regard, its loyalty towards Russia maybe suffers from a structural bias, due to the medium foreign policy leverage, which characterizes Italian foreign policy (Santoro:1991).

Austria scores comparatively low rate of economic exchanges with Russia, but a consistent energy dependence on the Eastern giant. As mentioned above, Austria signed agreements in order to be included in the Southern Streamline Pipelines. It is not involved in any direct dispute with Russia and tends to maintain overall good relations with Moscow. Even if with a low leverage, Austria proved in several occasions its keenness to defend Russian interests within the EU (Leonard and Popescu, 2007:37).

In particular, the case of **Greece** coincides with Leonard and Popescu's categorization of MS, which depicted Greece as a Russian “Troian horse” within the EU (Leonard and Popescu, 2007). As mentioned, Greece boasts solid cultural, historical and even religious ties with Russia. Its rate of energy dependence proves to be high, even if rates of commercial exchanges are not among the highest if compared to other MS. Greece concluded agreements on energy supply with Russia and proved to be a staunch opponent of the Nabucco Pipeline Project and an active supporter of the Southern Streamline. Thanks to its loyalty, Greece has never faced diplomatic or commercial harassments by Russia, and has been rewarded by being included in the Southern Streamline trajectory. The low leverage of Greece vis-à-vis other EU MS presumably dimensions its ability to threaten the EU's cohesion. Notwithstanding, Greece proved to be a solid ally for Russia, which tried to push forward its cause at any occasion.²⁵

From this insight in the index, we might draw the first preliminary conclusions. The more new MS are dependent on Russia, the more they adopt a critical attitude. The new MS that boast a major independence or are undertaking agreements with Russia in order to gain advantages out of future pipelines, tend to have a slightly milder position, even if keeping a quite critical stance. Those old MS that hold a comparatively low dependence over Russian energetic supplies and commercial exchanges tend to assume a colder posture. Whether this posture is translated into open criticisms presumably depends also on the leverage of their foreign policy and on the stake of their relation with Russia. Proceeding along our continuum, we progressively find those old MS that have a comparatively high dependence over Russian supplies and strong economic ties, which, thus, assume the most friendly attitude towards Russia.

4. An analysis of the RCV concerning Russia: national or ideological orientations ?

We can assume that the MS (say, the NPDs or the domestic governments) urge their MEPs to defect if they feel uncomfortable with the position sponsored by the EPG to whom their parliamentarians are affiliated. More in particular, if the position is perceived as too Russian friendly or too hostile towards Russia, or, more in general, not in line with national sectorial concerns, NPDs may urge their MEPs to defect. Keeping aside ideological reasons, their opposition can also stem from more practical reasons. We can assume, for instance, that national governments exert pressures on their

²⁵ On the specificity of Greece's foreign policy in this regard, see Pace, 2004:227-38.

parliamentarians in order to avoid a parliamentary rejection of a position agreed at intergovernmental level within the Council.

In our analysis, we did not look at the (anti-/pro-Russia) polarization of the specific votes under scrutiny, we just hypothesized that the most fervent supporters or opponents of Russia are more likely to feel uncomfortable with the final outcome of the vote, given the alleged *median* nature of the parliamentary compromise. As a consequence, we can expect stronger nationally-oriented pressures on the MEPs coming from less mainstream national environments, characterized by above-the-average levels of opposition or support towards Russia. In this section we will test this hypothesis by comparing national delegations' defection rates with Member states' stance towards Russia (Member states' index score).

In the first part of this section I will therefore look at the ADR values displayed by the 25 national delegations analyzed, while in the second I will comparatively assess the existence of a relationship between Member states' warmth towards Russia and the voting behavior of the respective MEPs.

Chart 1 - National Delegations' Absolute Defection Rate

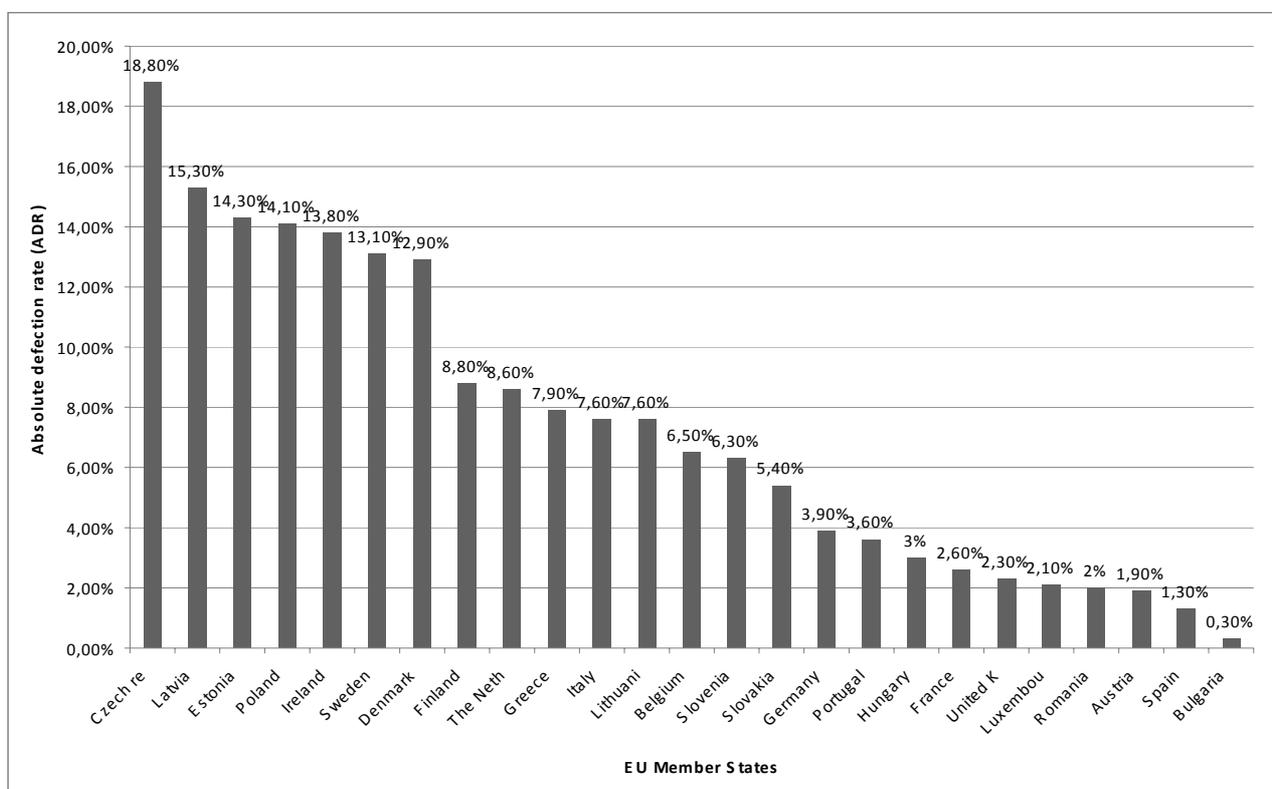


Chart 1 summarizes the results of our first analytical step. If we look at national delegations' ADR values we can assess a high level of variance among the 25. The average level of defections at EP level equals 6.04%. The Czech MEPs represent by far those who tend to defect more often from their respective Parliamentary group (18.80%), followed by the Latvians (15.30%), by the Estonians (14.30%), and by the Polish MEPs (14.10%). On the other hand, the Bulgarian MEPs emerge as the most conformist as they defect only 0.3% of the times. Similarly, two other delegations present an ADR value below 2%, namely the Austrian and the Spanish ones. Therefore, four delegations from CEE tower as the least conformist.

If one looks at the defection rates of national delegations by issue area, one can see that national party delegations have certain issue domains where their defection rates are much higher²⁶.

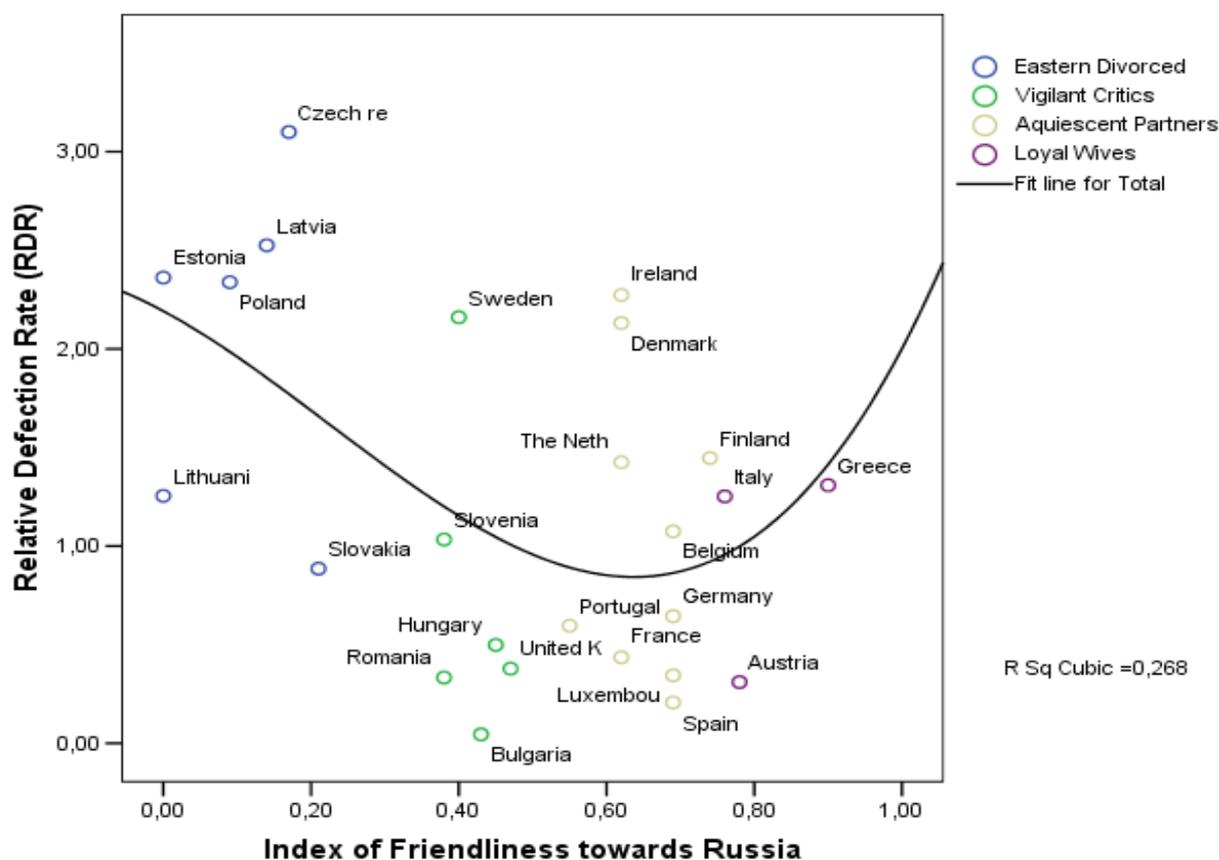
²⁶ According to many scholars, the party cohesion at EP level does not seem to have suffered considerably from

Interestingly enough, these issue domains vary considerably by country and party. We can therefore conclude that national delegations tend to defect more in the policy-areas considered as matters of primary national concern. Moreover, it has been widely demonstrated that the MEPs from several of the new MS are more cohesive along national lines than those from Western Europe, that is, they appear – on average - keener to defect.

Another group of national delegations which clearly emerge as keener to defect is represented by the Scandinavian countries: Sweden, Finland, and, Denmark’s ADR values score relatively higher than that of other Western member states. We can assume, that, given their geopolitical position, relations with Russia are perceived by these MS as a matter of great interest. Notwithstanding these relevant exceptions, the defection rate of most of the national delegations (18 out of 25) tends to score lower than 10%. It is noteworthy to notice that all the EU heavyweights fall in this low-defecting group. Whether this is due to their ability to affect the pre-legislative policy-shaping processes at EPG level or to less evident and straightforward reasons is still an open matter.

In the most conformist national delegations the MEPs do not seem to disagree frequently from their respective group. In those cases we cannot automatically rule out that simply the national (political or governmental) leaderships do not care, but given the relevance of the issue at stake we can confidently assume that they do. Consistently, Faas (2003: 847) maintains that “if national parties become involved in the process of voting in the EP and have the appropriate means to influence the proceedings, MEPs from national delegations are likely to defect in cases of conflict. In these cases, the party group leadership cannot do anything but accept it”.

Chart 2 – Relationship between MEPs’ Relative Defection Rate and MS’ Index Score



the Eastern enlargements. However, given the significance of Russian dossier for the new member states from CEE, we can expect significant exceptions in the cases of votes directly related to the issue.

Chart 2 summarizes the results of our second analytical step. National delegations' defection rates are measured by means of the RDR which, unlike ADR, allows statistically consistent inter-delegation comparisons. If we look at the horizontal dimension of the chart we can locate member states' position along the anti-/pro-Russia *continuum*, as defined by our index. The vertical dimension refers to national delegations' voting behavior (RDR score). The point of convergence of the two measures defines Member states' position on the bi-dimensional plane.

Several national clusters clearly emerge from the observation of the plot, which seem consistent with the categorization presented in the previous section and patterned after the index of Russian friendliness. On the left upper side of the bi-dimensional space we can identify a group of four CEE countries (Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland, and Estonia) characterized by both the lowest levels of warmth towards Russia and by the highest level of defections. The high RDR scores yielded by these countries indicate national leaderships' uneasiness with respective EPGs' positions, allegedly perceived as too moderate towards the "Russian threat". Consistently, they have been identified by our index as "Eastern divorced".

In this respect Lithuania and Slovakia do not fit completely the general pattern of the group. Indeed, even if they are integral part of the anti-Russian front, their low score in the index (0) is rather matched with a low level of defections at EP level (respectively, 7.6%, 2%, 6.3%, and 5.4%).

In the specific case of Lithuania this seems to be primarily determined by specific inter-parliamentary factors and by the political distribution of the Lithuanian MEPs: the majority of the Lithuanian parliamentarians (7 out of 13) belong to the Labour party (Lithuanian: *Darbo Partija*) affiliated to the ALDE group, whose leader is the Russian-born millionaire Viktor Uspaskich. In the mid-1990s, Mr. Uspaskich quickly gained tremendous success in his business empire that now includes – among others - the importation of natural gas from Gazprom, in addition to flourishing enterprises in the food production and animal fodder industries²⁷. These factors seem to explain Mr. Uspaskich's more moderate stance towards Russia and is consistent with the exceptional voting behavior of the Lithuanian cohorts.

On the other hand, Slovakia's more conformist behavior in comparison to Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland, and Estonia might well be explained by their peripheral position within the anti-Russian group; indeed Slovakia presents the highest scores in the index among the hardliners (0.21). Moreover, it is relevant to mention Slovakia (unlike all the other members of the group) did not experience any relevant diplomatic or commercial conflict with Russia.

In the central-lower section of the chart we can identify a cluster of countries characterized by the lowest degree of defection and a more balanced and central position in the anti-/pro-Russia continuum. This cluster embraces the countries belonging to the two median groups identified by our index: the "vigilant critics" and the "acquiescent partners". In this cluster the RDR is generally low. Ireland and two Scandinavian countries (namely, Sweden and Denmark) represent relevant exceptions as they score sensibly higher RDR values than the average of the group. Significantly, we discovered that both Sweden (as "vigilant critic") and Denmark are marked by a more critical approach towards Moscow, especially when it comes to human rights.

It is noteworthy to mention that 4 of the EU's heavyweights fall in this cluster, that is, they appear closer enough to the pro-Russia front. Three of them Spain, France, and Germany perfectly fit the general pattern of the cluster (milder stance towards Russia and low RDR), whereas the United Kingdom represents a relevant exception as its relations with Russia are generally marked by a

²⁷ See Founder of Lithuanian Labor Party Viktor Uspaskich released from custody, published on 28 September 2007, retrieved from <http://www.regnum.ru/english/623519.html>, accessed on 15 September 2008.

more conflictual stance (UK scores 0.48 in the index of friendliness towards Russia) even if the RDR of the British MEPs (0.38) seems to be in line with the average of the group.

In general the presence of all the major EU Member States in the least defecting group seems to confirm the possibility of significant policy-shaping power in the pre-legislative phase of the intra-group bargaining. Among the most conformist cases we can also mention, Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria, which significantly undertook a more moderate policy towards Russia, and the small Benelux states, characterized by weaker foreign policy agenda and lower stake in relation to Russia.

A final cluster of states that includes mostly the so-called “loyal wives” can be identified in the left side of the chart embracing Greece, Finland, and Italy (the only Russia’s strategic partner in the group). According to our index, these countries emerge as Russia’s best friends and appear therefore characterized by an evident pro-Russia stance at EU level. The levels of nationally-oriented defection appear higher than that displayed by the median group, but lower than that of the anti-Russia hawks. The RDR score of the three delegations equals respectively 1.31, 1.45, and 1.25, moderately above the average level of defection. This is possibly due to the fact that the parliamentary compromise is for them less exacting than to the anti-Russia hawks. This however does not rule out the possibility of frequent defections. The case of Austria, similarly labeled as “loyal wife”, appears less clear, as its MEPs tend to defect relatively less than the Greek, the Finnish, and the Italian ones.

The cubic fit line in the plot tells exactly the story briefly described above. If we move from opposition to friendliness towards Russia in the horizontal dimension of our bi-dimensional chart, we assess a gradual decrease in the national delegations’ defection rate whose lowest level is touched by the states sponsoring a median position towards Russia. We can confidently assume that those states feel sufficiently comfortable with the stance of their respective EPG; therefore they don’t need to defect frequently. When we approach the pro-Russia pole of the horizontal continuum we register a new (even if more moderate) increase in national delegations’ defection rate, signaling growing concern with the EP final compromise. The trajectory of the change is plotted as a cubic fit line with 95% individual confidence intervals.

5. Conclusions: condemned to be divided?

This paper intended to provide a conceptual and methodological contribution to the analysis of MS' attitudes towards the sensitive Russian dossier.

Dependence from Russian natural gas resources and intensity of commercial exchanges prove to be highly significant factors in determining the MS' attitudes towards Russia. In building our index, we tried to depict the complexity of these measures, in hypothesizing a bi-directionality of their causal effects: whereas old MS consider the strength of economic ties with Russia as a *relative* asset, new MS still consider it as an *absolute* form of dependence, which threatens their overall stability. Our results seem to shed a new light on the analysis of MS' attitudes towards Russia and prove to be consistent with the results found by other analysts elsewhere, who did not adopt similar conceptual starting points (for instance, Leonard and Popescu).

Indeed, the intensification of commercial exchange seems to mean different things for the old and new MS and to affect their behaviors in a different way. Same can be said for dependence over Russian natural gas supplies. Old MS try to “keep the tap opened” by assuming more flexible and diplomatic postures towards Russia, while deeply dependent new MS do not hesitate to react more vigorously towards Russia, despite their relative higher dependence over Russian supplies. This is probably linked not only to the burden of the heritage of the past, but also to the direct exposure to

the effects of a “systematic policy of coercive bilateralism” on behalf of Russia. In sum, intense exchanges with Russia means *in practice* different things for the old and new MS.

This is consistently confirmed by the MS' different attitudes towards others important variables, such as preferences over projects of regional stability. In general, whereas new MS tend to adopt a more rigid stance when dealing with regional security, as in the case for the NATO enlargement, old MS tend to be more cautious. This does not prevent also old MS to assume a more intransigent posture towards these issues. But, not surprisingly (and independently from foreign policy traditions), these positions seem to be assumed by those MS that have lesser prominent commercial exchanges and levels of energy dependence (such as the UK).

By saying this, we do not by any means cede the temptation of treating the old and new MS as homogeneous blocks. On the contrary, our results show a more nuanced picture.

For instance, the level of energy dependence over natural resources – which still sees the new MS as relatively more dependent over Russian supplies – does not straightforwardly bring them about having the same preferences about projects of energy supplies. Analogously, having lower economic stake with Russia does not bring old MS to straightforwardly assume a rigid stance, above all if the leverage of their foreign policy imposes them caution.

By combining indicators of strength of economic flows, energy dependence, preferences for projects of regional security, existence of disputes and projects of energy supply, we found four ideal-typical reactions to the Russian neighbor: the “Eastern divorced”, the “vigilant critics”, the “acquiescent partners”, and the “loyal wives”.

The two extreme ideal-types are those characterized by either major opposition or major proneness towards Russia. These MS will generally tend to be the most discontent of the final outcome of the EU decisional process and to propose more hard-core positions. The two median ideal-types comprise a more diversified group of MS that still seem to be correctly collocated by the index here implied. These groups seem more heterogeneous and driven by consistently different kinds of rationale.

Among the critics, two major approaches can be depicted. To the one side, there are MS, mostly coming from Western Europe, which are less tied (economically or energetically) to Russia. These MS may be more incline to assume a rigid stance. On the other, there are MS, mostly coming from the “new Europe” – that undertake a softer approach compared to the neighbors, due, for instance, to the strategic importance of projects of energy supply. Analogously, among the acquiescent partners (a group consisting only of old MS), there are those MS that have a major interest in keeping good relations with Russia. They will be incline to pursue friendly policies at the EU levels, even if this does not necessary prevent them to raise their voice, above all if considered the leverage of these countries. On the other, we have MS that do not have a major commercial or energetic stakes in relation to Russia. These, mostly small, MS may tend to follow the median outcome of the EU's policy making towards Russia, probably because irritating the Eastern giant is a high stake for their foreign policy leverage.

Yet, there are many margins of improvement for our preliminary work. An indicator to depict MS' attitudes towards human rights violations on behalf of Russia (for instance, given by the reaction of MS to the Russian intervention in Chechnya), to our advice, might help us to refine these results even further, by expanding the scope of the overall analysis.

The parliamentary face of our analysis, conducted by means of MEPs' RCV records, seems to

confirm two relevant elements. On the one hand, the states care of their MEPs' voting behavior, thereby trying to affect their decisions when a relevant vote is at stake. On the other hand, when the MEPs find themselves in such a situation they tend to vote following the instructions issued by their national leadership.

Consistently with what we said above, several national delegations proved to be keener to defect than other, due to their stance towards Russia and relative distance from the position sponsored by MEPs' respective EPG at parliamentary level. National delegations' RDR seems to vary according to each Member states' position in our index of friendliness towards Russia: in the case of the national delegations belonging to the two polar categories ("Eastern divorced" and "Loyal wives"), MEPs are more likely to vote "nationally", that is, to defect from their respective EPG.

These differences have been clearly highlighted by crossing national delegations' respective RDR and MS' index score by means of a scatter plot. The analysis of the results showed the existence of three clusters which are marked by distinctive behavioral styles. The first cluster, mainly consisting of the so-called "Eastern divorced", is marked by low levels of warmth towards Russia and by high levels of defections at EP level. The delegations belonging to second cluster (comprising the two median categories of the index, "Vigilant critics" and "Acquiescent partners") seem rather characterized by a milder and more moderate stance when it comes to the Russian dossier and by the lowest levels of parliamentary defections. Interestingly, the third cluster, consisting of Russia's best friends, is marked by a relevant increase in the RDR score. However, it is significantly lower than that displayed by the first group.

This brings us to an interesting conclusion. Assuming that national delegations' RDR increase if they feel uncomfortable with their respective EPGs' position, it seems that EP median position leans towards the pro-Russia pole, given the higher level of discontent among the anti-Russian cohorts.

In conclusion, is the EU condemned to be divided over the Russian dossier? Despite the ambition of this question mark, many factors might concur to give an answer to this initial question, which go far beyond the scope of this paper. The ability of the MS to fix them together in a coherent policy framework still seems the recipe to get rid of this condemn. At time being, our results seem to confirm that the level of the divisions that dealing with Russia imposes to the Union, touches upon profound cleavages, which are reflected both at the level of MS' politics and at the level of their polities' perceptions.

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Appendix 1 – Russian Share in the Extra-EU Overall Trade Balance

Country	Total extra-EU export	Total extra-EU import	Export towards Russia	Import from Russia	Total Impo.Expo	Russian Share	Ratio
Belgium	74651	87744	3268	4872	162395	8140	0,05
Bulgaria	5308	9081	328	2707	14389	3035	0,21
Czech republic	13185	16919	2081	3835	30104	5916	0,20
Denmark	22545	19370	1361	863	41915	2224	0,05
Germany	340307	267707	28089	27587	608014	55676	0,09
Estonia	2391	2439	710	1147	4830	1857	0,38
Greece	6204	23441	438	3130	29645	3568	0,12
Spain	52865	105329	2050	7698	158194	9748	0,06
France	141115	137995	5602	10437	279110	16039	0,06
Ireland	32350	18299	310	74	50649	384	0
Italy	143230	158423	9579	14354	301653	23933	0,08
Latvia	1668	2522	782	973	4190	1755	0,42
Lithuania	4409	5634	1875	3206	10043	5081	0,51
Luxembourg	1872	5317	148	175	7189	323	0,04
Hungary	14705	21276	2231	4786	35981	7017	0,20
The Netherlands	88260	178618	6898	17989	266878	24887	0,09
Austria	32742	24608	2904	1660	57350	4564	0,08
Poland	21610	32292	4727	10449	53902	15176	0,28
Portugal	8725	13999	143	559	22724	702	0,03
Romania	8260	14722	427	3235	22982	3662	0,16
Slovenia	6740	6050	965	491	12790	1456	0,11
Slovakia	5630	11329	959	4016	16959	4975	0,29
Finland	28356	21430	6724	8308	49786	15032	0,30
Sweden	47754	32214	7451	3386	79968	10837	0,14
UK	133934	205964	4077	7584	339898	11661	0,03

SOURCE: Eurostat, *External and Intra-European Union trade*, Monthly Statistics, Issue N. 8/2008.

Appendix 2 – Dependence on Russian natural gas supplies

Country	Natural gas consumption	Gas trade movements with Russia by pipeline	Total gas trade movements by pipeline	Ratio
Belgium* ²⁸	17,33	0,50	19,34	0,03
Bulgaria	3,10	3,10	3,10	1
Czech republic* ²⁹	8,90	6,43	8,63	0,72
Denmark	4,60	0	0	0
Germany ³⁰	82,70	35,55	83,72	0,43
Estonia* ³¹	1,50	1,50	1,50	1
Greece	4,00	2,89	2,89	0,72
Spain	35,10	0	10,95	0
France	41,90	7,63	33,76	0,18
Ireland	4,80	0	4,15	0
Italy	77,80	23,80	70,45	0,31
Latvia* ³²	1,89	1,60	1,60	0,85
Lithuania	3,80	3,40	3,40	0,89
Luxembourg* ³³	1,41	0	1,50	0
Hungary	11,80	7,85	10,48	0,67
The Netherlands	37,20	2,30	18,86	0,06
Austria	8,90	5,60	7,48	0,63
Poland	13,70	6,20	9,30	0,45
Portugal	4,30	0	1,39	0
Romania	16,40	2,50	4,80	0,15
Slovenia* ³⁴	1,10	0,56	1,10	0,51
Slovakia	5,90	5,80	5,80	0,98
Finland	4,10	4,30	4,30	1,05
Sweden	1	0	1,11	0
United Kindgom	45,60	0	28	0

NOTE: The figures are expressed in billion cubic meters; if not explicitly stated otherwise data refer to 2008; asterisk (*) denotes countries whose data refer to 2005. SOURCE: British Petroleum Company, *BP Statistical Review of World Energy*, London, June 2008.

²⁸ Source: http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=BE, accessed on 18 August 2008.

²⁹ Source: <http://www.iea.org/journalists/docs/GasData2005.pdf>, accessed on 18 August 2008.

³⁰ Source: <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/BALTIC/full.html>, accessed on 18 August 2008.

³¹ Source: http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=EN, accessed on 18 August 2008.

³² Source: http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=LG, accessed on 18 August 2008.

³³ Source: http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=LU, accessed on 18 August 2008.

³⁴ Source: http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=SI, accessed on 18 August 2008.