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The 2007 Portuguese Presidency of the European Union and Russia

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Abstract

The relations between the European Union (EU) and Russia have attained today a pick of tensions since their inception in the 90's and dialogue on European affairs is broadly stagnated. As compared to other member states, especially after the 2004 enlargement, Portugal has maintained neutral or even good relations with Moscow. This paper aims at analyzing the impact of the 2007 Portuguese EU presidency on EU-Russia relations. Although Portugal assumed presidencies earlier, in 1992 and 2000, the 2007 leadership corresponds to a particular strained context that later materialized in a clear degradation of the dialogue with Moscow.

Keywords: Portuguese Presidency of the EU; EU-Russia relations; Foreign Policy Analysis

Introduction

This paper aims at analysing the role and the impact of Portugal, as a member of the European Union (EU) since 1986, in the relationship with the biggest EU neighbour that is Russia. Since its integration, Portugal assumed three presidencies of the Council of the EU, in 1992, 2000 and 2007. The three moments correspond to different stages of both the internal process of integration and EU-Russia relations. Alongside deeper and larger European integration, the relationship with Moscow has been highly

institutionalized and advanced. For instance, in 1999, Moscow has emerged as the first strategic partner of Brussels. Back in 1992, the two actors still organized their dialogue under the committee created by the agreement with the USSR in 1989. This situation was terminated in 1994 with the signature of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). Until then the relationship with the USSR aimed solely at economic stabilisation and recuperation, with the support of technical assistance.

The intensification of the political dialogue was noticeable in 2000 with an *ad hoc* “Joint Declaration on strengthening dialogue and cooperation on political and security matters in Europe”, adopted in Paris. Until the creation of the “four common spaces” in 2003, five declarations of this type were endorsed. The year 2003 is a turning point instaurating an *ad hoc* structure of cooperation. At the St. Petersburg summit, four common spaces were created: a Common Economic Space; a Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice; a Common Space of Cooperation in the Field of External Security; and a Common Space on Research, Education and Culture.¹ Their adoption came at a time when the relationship needed both new impetus and to adapt to systemic changes (enlargement and deepening of both the EU and the agenda of cooperation with Moscow). A major feature of the relationship has been the fact that economic objectives are enhanced, thus giving other areas a secondary priority.

Since 2007, the PCA has come to the end of its ten years validity. It has been extended each year since then, until a new agreement will be signed, as foreseen by article 106 of the PCA.² The parties agreed to engage in the negotiation of a new cooperation treaty but several obstacles delayed the beginning of the talks, which started in July 2008.³

Another component of the institutionalised framework of cooperation is the reference to common values and principles, replicated in all the documents produced in the context of the relation. For the EU, they are essential for a “genuine EU-RU

¹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION - *Press release. EU-Russia Summit*. St. Petersburg (May 31, 2003). Accessed 3 June 2016. Available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-12-401_en.htm?locale=en.

² Article 106 states the following: “[t]his Agreement is concluded for an initial period of 10 years. The Agreement shall be automatically renewed year by year provided that neither Party gives the other Party written notice of denunciation of the Agreement at least six months before it expires” (Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Russian Federation, of the other part, 1997).

³ The period concerning the need to launch negotiations for a new cooperation agreement lasted from late 2006 to May 2008, as we shall detail below.