

Europe as Seen from Russia

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Abstract: The article argues that Russia is concerned by the marginal position often ascribed to the country in the European politics. The frustration is fed by the fact that Russia perceives itself as a European country. As the article shows, the liberal part of the Russian political spectrum offers a range of ideas for an EU-Russia alliance that could make each of the allies more competitive in the globalized world. Meanwhile, the conservatives believe that Russia has enough resources to be a self-sufficient centre of power.

The economic potential of the EU, which is Russia's major trading partner, puts cooperation with the EU on the forefront of the Russian external economic policy. But the only time when the EU becomes practically important for ordinary Russians is when they have to deal with (obtaining) Schengen visas. The state of the visa-related arrangements between Russia and the EU then becomes a major criterion that drives the public assessment of the EU-Russia relations. Visa-free travel and the following increase in people-to-people contacts would eventually provide the necessary level of trust between Russia and the EU.

The authors also argue that the idea of an EU-Russia Political and Security Committee, which was proposed by Angela Merkel and Dmitry Medvedev, deserves serious consideration. The article concludes that it is still possible to construct Europe as a global actor which is not limited to the present day EU but also comprises other European countries, with Russia among them.

Keywords: Russia, Europe, EU, Schengen