



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MA (Carleton University, 2009)
Graduate Diploma (Carleton University, 2009)
Specialist Diploma (Petrozavodsk State University, 2005)

**“Exposing the Limits of EU-Russia “Autonomous Cooperation”:
The Potential of Bakhtin’s Dialogic Imagination”**

Department of Political Science

Wednesday, July 29, 2015
10:00AM
David Turpin Building
Room A144

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Amy Verdun, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Oliver Schmitdke, Department of Political Science, UVic (Member)
Dr. William Doll, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Tom Casier, International Relations, University of Kent/Brussels School of International Studies

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Budd Hall, School of Public Administration, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

The promising agenda of the EU-Russia strategic partnership has resulted in mutual frustration manifested in continuous crises between the partners. This study explores possibilities for political transformation in the EU-Russia relationship. In search of the key to understanding this complex relationship, I develop a three-fold argument. First, an ongoing crisis in EU-Russia cooperation cannot be understood without revealing the underlying problem of tension between the subjects' autonomy and their ability to cooperate. Second, this problem produces a paradoxical form of "autonomous cooperation," imposing limits on the prospects for political transformation in the EURussia relationship. Third, Bakhtin's dialogism holds a significant potential to re-imagine the contradictions of autonomous cooperation in an alternative *relational* way. Despite the existence of a considerable body of literature on EU-Russia cooperation, little work has been done to investigate the connection between the intricacies of political discourse and problems in EU-Russia cooperation. By drawing on Bakhtin's account of a "dialogic imagination," I develop a model, which exposes the processes of mutual constitution of the Self and the Other. This dialogic model reveals that in their political statements, both the EU and Russia privilege the pattern of autonomy or cooperation. The partners produce prevalent discursive practices that reinforce these contradictory patterns of autonomy and cooperation, systematically inflicting crises in the EU-Russia relationship. By establishing dialogic connections between the chosen political statements, the model demonstrates that Russia and the EU co-create perceived differences between each other, isolate each other or try to form an autonomous, self-sufficient Self through imposition, self-exclusion, resistance or dominance. This model, I argue, permits an alternative vision of contemporary trends and possible futures for the EU-Russia relationship as an exemplar of an international relationship viewed through a dialogic lens. My study is also relevant under the conditions of ongoing conflicts in EU-Russia cooperation, which expose the inability of the partners to cooperate effectively. I conclude with practical implications for the partners to overcome the current stalemate. In Bakhtin's words: "When dialogue ends, everything ends. Thus dialogue, by its very essence, cannot and must not come to an end."