

# **From cooperation to confrontation: the impact of bilateral perceptions and interactions on the EU-Russia relations in the context of shared neighbourhood**

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## **Abstract**

*Relying on the regional security complex theory and statements made by top Russian and EU officials and key decision-makers from the new EU Member States bordering Russia to the East, the article advances three main conclusions. First, that Russia's negative perceptions of the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative explains to a large extent the change of its EU's perception from a strategic ally to a competitor for influence in the shared neighbourhood and the speeding up of the Russian-led Eurasian integration project. Second, that faced with Russia's increasing bullying behaviour in its Eastern neighbourhood in general and Ukraine in particular, the EU has been pushed into a confrontational mode with Russia. Third, that being at the forefront of condemning Russia's aggressive behaviour in Ukraine, the new EU Member States along the Baltic-Black Sea limes have created a new regional security subcomplex within the EU-Europe regional security complex.*

**Keywords:** European Union, Eastern Partnership, Russia, Ukraine, regional security complex theory

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