Discursive differences and policy outcomes: EU-Russia relations and security in Europe

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Abstract

The redefinition of political communities in Europe has been a process in flux, especially since the end of the Cold War. The central role of the EU as an "identity builder" (Risse, 2009) among its member states, and to a certain extent in its relations with its neighbours, has been increasingly contested, not least in its relations with Russia. Europe has been a permanent feature of Russia's identity redefinition following the collapse of the Soviet Union and therefore a central element shaping relations between the two actors. This article puts forward the argument that differences in discourse and meanings have an impact in policy outcomes, as regards EU-Russia relations and security in Europe. It surveys fundamental events in European security and the parallel evolution in security discourses within the EU and Russia. It, therefore, maps the main elements shaping EU-Russia security relations, focusing on the construction of discursive maps and on how these have impacted bilateral and regional security relations.

Keywords: European Union, Russia, identity, discourse, security, neighbourhood

JEL Classification: F59, R58, P48

1. Introduction

The issue of political community formation in international affairs has been consistently shaped by what can be called the *nationalisation* of the modern political communities (Baker and Bartelson, 2009, p. 3), i.e. the establishment of the modern nation-state as the measure against which all other forms of political community are assessed. This has reinforced the socio-cultural homogeneity and territorial boundedness of the modern political communities,

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as opposed to a focus on the values and norms guiding political communities. The notion that political communities exist beyond the nation state, to incorporate human collectives, sharing a common set of ideas and notions, has remained rather underdeveloped in International Relations.

The European Union (EU) has stood as an important challenge to theorists of political communities due to the hybrid nature of its sovereignty, overlapping national boundaries and an emerging European polity with a strong normative nature (Linklater, 2009). Although the nation-state is still a central element of the contemporary European political experience, and supra-nationalist and federalist conceptions of the European political project have lost momentum (Habermas, 2002, p. 59), the seeds to establish a supra-national European identity exist in Europe. The EU is an "active identity builder" in Europe through its polity and its interaction with the states and the people of Europe (Risse, 2009, p. 154). It defines standards for its members, for new ones to access it, but also in its relations with the outside world, between those within and beyond its borders.

The neighbourhood policy is an example of this active construction of Europe's social identities, defining the features of the members of the community, but also its boundaries. In the Maghreb and the Middle East, a boundary has been established setting the political and cultural borders of Europe, arguably reinforcing an exclusionary view of the European identity. In the Eastern neighbourhood, the construction of boundaries (or walls to use Iver Neumann's expression (1997, p. 148)) has also been a constitutive element in Europe's identity definition. For the Central and Eastern European countries, membership to the European Communities and NATO was a matter of "returning to Europe". Under the neighbourhood policy, the EU sought to reactivate this idea and provide an incentive to Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and the South Caucasus countries to reform, under limited possibilities of integration into the EU. The definition of common values and shared principles as the foundations of this relationship was a fundamental aspect of this initiative. Its limitations became visible when the construction of the neighbours' identity as European became actively linked to accession demands. It can be argued that the redefinition of identities in Europe and the setting of the boundaries of the European political community were being managed from the EU side of the partnership, in a display of realist political behaviour, based on power asymmetries, and empowering the EU as normative empire in the Wider Europe (Laïdi, 2008b). This situation partly explains the limited reform achievements of the neighbourhood policy.

Identity construction in Russia has also been significantly shaped by the idea of Europe (Neumann, 1996; Allison, Light and White, 2006; Morozov, 2007). Russians regard themselves as Europeans, *but also*, Eurasian, and *also* unique. Among Russian elites, the nature of post-Soviet Russia has been hard to

define. For the liberals supporting closer ties to Europe, Russia is a part of European history and identity and it should strive for closer relations with the EU and the European states. For those advocating the unique nature of Russian identity, Eurasianism has been an appealing notion portraying Russia as the bridge between Europe and Asia (Thorun, 2009, p. 35). This unsettled identity is the result of historical, geographic and political contexts, which have placed great pressure on Russia to rediscover its identity and purpose in the post-Cold War context, both in global and regional terms.

The close interaction between identity perceptions and the consolidation of a new regional order in Europe, after the Cold War, is the main argument of this article. Building on the relations between the EU and Russia on their shared neighbourhood, the article sheds light on the relevance of identity building processes for regional security in Europe. How is security in Europe taken as a central part of the new identities developing in the EU and in post-Soviet Russia? What sort of international actors are the EU and Russia becoming and how has that affected their foreign policy options in Europe? Overall, both Russia and the EU have developed into two very different actors and their relations have reflected this disparate nature. Taking this reflection on how political communities come to define their identities and how that process is mutually shaped and shapes other communities' identities, the question then arises as to the role of this interaction in European and Russian identities.

The article takes three recent crucial events in EU-Russia relations, with implications for the conceptualisation and the rendering operational of security in Europe. The first is EU and NATO enlargements of 2004. This was a turning point in Europe's conceptualisation as a regional power of continental dimensions, with increased security responsibilities. For Russia this was a turning point in its perception of EU enlargements. If in previous moments the EU was seen as a rather benign neighbour, in 2004 the scope of its enlargement and the inclusion of former-Soviet states considerably changed Russia's perception of the EU.

A second event analysed here is the Ukrainian elections of 2004 and the developments of the orange revolution. EU support for the reformist pro-western movement led by President Yuchshenko and the campaign pushing for Ukrainian accession to NATO radically changed Russia's perceptions of the EU. Moreover, the debacle of this process was also an important lesson for the EU, as regards the limits of its power and Russia's influence in the shared neighbourhood. A third and final event is the war in Georgia, in the summer of 2008. The war was a turning point in Russia's assertiveness in the former-Soviet space and a clear challenge to the EU's (and NATO's) growing engagement in the South Caucasus. For the EU, it also represented a challenge to its normative standing and a reminder of the increasing difficulties, but urgent need to engage with Russia on security issues. The conclusions put forward a tentative mapping

of perceptions and discourses developing in the EU and in Russia and flashing out the links to policy outcomes.

2. EU 2004 Enlargement

EU enlargements have been portrayed as the Union's most effective foreign policy tool. Through enlargement, the EU consolidates a regional order based on a set of principles defined by its members and its institutions, and reflecting the shared values of its political community. The deepening and widening processes of European integration have historically advanced based on security concerns in Europe, which functionalists regarded as best addressed by technical and function-oriented cooperation among nations in Europe. Liberalists regarded increasing interdependence levels, namely on trade and cultural relations, as an effective tool to anchor European interests in a common goal of shared peace and prosperity. The former External Relations and Neighbourhood Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner referred to the EU's export of its governance model as "soft and smart power" to project security and create prosperity" (Ferrero-Waldner, 2008). Besides this dimension of regional integration, seeking to develop a common economic space, upon which political and security coordination could develop, one should not neglect the deep meaning that European integration processes had on the (re)definition of national identities in Europe, and the consolidation of what Waever has called a security community (Waever, 1998).

All these changes have increasingly placed the EU as a post-modern actor in international relations, if not devoid of state-based power concerns, at least heavily influenced by a multi-level governance model and normative goals, relying on structural power. As cited in Averre (2009, p. 1690), Lukyanov (2008, p. 1114) makes the argument that

> *Due to differences in political culture, Russians find it very difficult to understand the complex post-modernist logic which Europe declares... for Russia, this is the traditional understanding of force, based on economic and military–political levers; whereas for the European Union, it is soft power used to expand the European legal space and make the European model more attractive to neighbouring countries.*

Opinions in Russia regarding the advantages of closer cooperation with Europe have evolved throughout time. Some regarded it as an area where mutually advantageous relations should be pursued, assuring that Europe would not transform Russia into a "raw materials appendage", but could make a contribution to Russia's democratisation and development (Allison, Light and White, 2006, p. 152-5), as well as to advance its goals of establishing a multi-polar world order. At times, Russian leaders portrayed EU countries as weak

and divided, and the Kremlin has favoured a bilateral approach to its relations with the EU. Russia has also failed to clearly make the argument of how much it regards the EU as a priority in its foreign policy, at times pushing for a closer partnership with Europe (as in the case of the new European security treaty advocated by President Medvedev), and at other times, displaying a clear prioritisation of the United States (US), seeking to be recognised as a great power. As argued by Markarychev (2009, p. 5) "under closer scrutiny, despite surprisingly normative language, Russia's opposition to the US-driven unipolarity appears rather inconsistent. For Moscow, Washington is certainly not a Schmittian enemy threatening it militarily, but rather an opponent who refuses to admit Russia as an equal partner in security building".

The development of relations with the EU is therefore inconsistent and dependent on the interpretations advanced at a particular time. Either privileging a pragmatic approach, based on coinciding strategic interests, or promoting an alternative international order, Moscow and Brussels have failed to root their partnership on a clear understanding of what their discourses mean. The EU has also contributed to this confusion, seeking to be recognised as a different kind of actor in the international system. Its governance is complex and hard to understand by its closest partners, including Russia; and its ambitions to set itself as the yard-stick against which political relations should be assessed in Europe has also been contested. The EU's regional normative hegemony, although increasingly consolidated through enlargement and the neighbourhood policy, has also faced increasing challenges by those standing aside these processes, or those prevented from having an active voice within them. The EU, although refusing to establish new division lines in Europe through enlargement, is doing just that by not creating flexible ways of engaging non-members in its governance system. This has poised Russia on a conservative note, regarding the expansion of the EU.

According to one commentator, "the enlargement of the EU, initially perceived as an objective process in the development of post-bipolar Europe, is today more and more often seen by many in Russia as a source of new challenges [linked with] rivalry in the post-Soviet space" (Arbatova, 2006, p.15–16, cited in Averre, 2009, p. 1691). The disputes over influence in the so-called "shared neighbourhood" have added tension in EU-Russia relations. As a result of the EU 2004 enlargement, the establishment of the neighbourhood policy and the EU's closest attention to political developments in Georgia and Ukraine provided perhaps the moment of the greatest tension in EU-Russia relations since NATO's intervention in Kosovo. As Fernandes and Simão have argued (2010, p. 113-114)

> *Russia views the overall ENP as interference in its 'near abroad'.*
> *This is less problematic than the engagement of NATO or the U.S.*
> *(e.g., the missile defence project) in Central and Eastern Europe,*

but it nevertheless provokes a will to reassert Russian power and sovereignty. Globally, EU post-enlargement ambitions in the common neighbourhood are those of a post-modern actor,[1] in contrast with traditional Russian sovereign prerogatives. Instead of becoming an idealised European partner, Russia is becoming, in the EU perspective, a challenging foreign policy actor.

Whereas the EU was presenting the 2004 enlargement as an opportunity to reunite the continent and bring Central and Eastern European countries to take part in European integration, the creation of the neighbourhood policy denotes recognition by the EU that integration processes do create new borders in Europe, between those in and those outside of the EU. Russia's demand to be treated by the EU as a strategic partner, outside of the framework of the ENP, was a clear statement that Moscow would challenge this revisionist EU notion of a wider Europe, and would fight for its influence in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). As the next sections on Ukraine's political path since the orange revolution up to the 2009 elections and on the Georgian war in 2008 illustrate, Moscow has challenged the EU's pretensions to be the uncontested pole of attraction in Europe and the main source of norms and rules for relations in the European space.

Averre (2008; 2009) and Popescu (2006) have argued that Moscow has engaged in its own soft power expansion, challenging the EU. Popescu talks about a "smart authoritarianism", based on the creation of an infrastructure of ideas, institutions and civil society organisations linked to the presidential administration. These infrastructures are aimed at positioning Russia as an alternative pole of attraction in Europe, proposing an alternative regional order, equally aimed at providing for security in Europe. As Averre (2009, p. 1696) refers, Moscow is keen to illustrate the dangers of the EU's "forceful" democratisation in the wider European space and, instead, proposes a normative framework based on sovereignty, regime stability, non-interference and evolutionary models of governance change. Laïdi (2008a, p. 136) has hinted that such trends are visible at the global level, with a "race between global governance via norms and 'realist' governance by states" taking place.

These competing visions of the European integration and enlargement processes and of what the regional European order should look like have quite often set the EU and Russia in opposite logics, making the development of their bilateral relations harder and with a negative impact on their shared neighbourhood. Competition for influence is now established as the underlying logic in Eurasia, with an impact in terms of political (in)stability, missed economic opportunities, challenged cultural conceptions and even hard-security

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[1] We use here some elements of Krastev's definition of European post-modernity: a system of mutual interference in domestic affairs, security based on openness and transparency and the rejection of the use of force to solve conflicts (Krastev, 2007).

breaches, as was the case in Georgia. The next section looks at the case of Ukraine and illustrates the competition for political influence.

3. Colour Revolutions: Ukraine

> *Moreover, and this must be said straight out, the possibility of NATO's expansion to Ukraine, which Russia's elite views as a vital threat to its security, has created and maintains – for as long as this possibility exists – a threat of a large-scale war in Europe, which may escalate unpredictably. (Valdai Club, 2010)*

This statement included in the Valdai Club's report on Euro-Atlantic security is rather illustrative of the importance Russian elites attach to Ukraine and of Moscow's need for strong rhetoric regarding the possibility that Ukraine's accession to NATO might become the ultimate destabilising factor in the Euro-Atlantic security. These views are the culmination of a period of contested influence over the political fate of Ukraine and other countries in Eurasia. In order to retell this story, so as to illustrate the different conceptualisations of European security by the EU and Russia, it is necessary to start with the presentation of the events of the orange revolution in 2004, followed by Kiev's path to Euro-Atlantic integration, which paradoxically culminated with the election of Viktor Yanukovich in 2010 as President, arguably reversing the orange and pro-western tide.

The contestation of the election results, in Kiev, in late 2004, has been perceived through different lenses. For some, it was the wilful action of the Ukrainian people to denounce corruption and fraud as unacceptable for the country's political future, and a committed choice of its leadership to follow a Western model of development (Kuzio, 2007). The political action plan presented by the pro-Western candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, detailed the steps Ukraine would seek to take in order to fully anchor its presence in Europe: "first to achieve recognition of market economy status, second to accede to the WTO, third to become an associate member of the EU, and fourth, in the long run, to become a full member state" (Emerson, 2004, p. 3). The reaction by the EU leaders, namely in the Council, to the events in Ukraine was positive and supportive, but also careful as not to make commitments to the orange revolution leadership's claims of future accession to the EU. Emerson (2004, p. 3) underlines the subtle change in the EU rhetoric: whilst initially making "explicitly negative remarks about the new neighbours having no membership perspectives, now the discourse seems to be cutting out the negatives, saying that while accession is not on the agenda, no doors are closed for the future".

Although this understanding of the orange revolution was the one favoured by the EU, its nuanced approach led to increasing disappointment by the new leaders in Ukraine, who sought to upgrade Ukrainian pledges to European integration from rhetoric to action. The ENP was regarded as

insufficient in this regard. Russia's reaction to the ENP further reinforced the view that it was inadequate to structure EU-Russia relations and, in that sense, it was just another topic on the extensive EU-Russia agenda (Delcour, 2007, p. 135). Russia was keener on building new foundations for its strategic partnership with the EU, based on an equal partnership. Moscow's major goal was to develop a partnership which would provide Russia with opportunities to cooperate with the EU, despite the lack of membership, and which would simultaneously reinforce EU-Russia cooperation as an alternative pillar of a multi-polar world. The events of the colour revolutions in Georgia and in Ukraine, together with EU and NATO continuous expansions into the former-Soviet area of influence, created a new understanding in Moscow of these events as important elements in geopolitical competition for influence.

The events in Ukraine set Russia in a new course of action in the CIS. The lessons learned were extremely important for Moscow's more assertive and pro-active approach to Eurasia. First and foremost, an important speech, partly reproducing the views of the official elite, began to develop among Russian media, suggesting that the orange revolution was the result of a deliberate strategy by the west to "rob" Russia of Ukraine (Grätz, 2010, p. 15). This was closely linked to the fears in Moscow that by pursuing the path of integration into the EU, Ukraine would abandon Russia-led formats of cooperation, namely the CIS, strategically curtailing Russia's power (March, 2006, p. 98). This discourse poised the West's approach as a zero-sum game, which neglected Russia's concerns in its neighbourhood, and ultimately posed a grave danger to the Russian domestic model of centralised governance. Therefore, we can say that Russia's reaction to the colour revolutions was aimed at two reinforcing goals: to prevent the establishment of anti-Russian leaderships in Ukraine and Georgia and the spread of the colour revolutions to Russia proper (Makarychev, 2008, p. 14).

The EU's visible support to the leaders of the orange revolution in Ukraine and its support to the new Georgian President's pro-western rhetoric sparked a fierce debate in Moscow on how Russia could counter these events and reinforce its position as the centre of attraction to the CIS countries. Some of these views recycled the concept of Eurasianism to underline Russia's innovative offers (Allison, Light and White, 2006, p. 162), others sustained that a more purposeful policy towards the near abroad would be necessary to foster pro-Russian forces among civil society and opposition forces (Makarychev, 2008, p. 14). Ultimately, Russia began a policy of contention with its neighbours. It enforced trade embargos on Moldova and Georgia; it raised energy prices to market levels, initiating a series of "gas wars" with Ukraine which had significant impact in European and Ukrainian territories. The political use of energy has been documented as one of the most significant changes in

Russia's policies towards the near abroad (Nygren, 2008), as was the decision to resort to war in Georgia.

Under President Putin, Russia was very actively seeking to anchor Ukraine in the multilateral institutions of the post-Soviet space, as well as to become a central economic player in Ukraine's strategic sectors, namely its pipeline infrastructures (Samokhvalov, 2007, p. 11). As the Russian-backed candidate, Viktor Yanukovich, was elected President in 2009, Russia also sought to assure another fundamental aspect of its relations with Ukraine, which was the presence of the Black Sea fleet in Crimea. Overall, Russia's presence in Ukraine is considerable, although the orange revolution did present Ukrainian leaders with alternatives to Russian dominance. This heritage was visible in the efforts by the new Ukrainian President to get the EU and Russia to jointly manage the Ukrainian pipeline systems, in an effort to boost energy security in Europe (RFE/RL, 2010). The debacle of the orange revolution in the presidential elections of 2009 and the election of the Moscow-backed candidate has been regarded in Moscow as a positive step and an important victory in terms of maintaining its influence in the post-Soviet space. As far as the EU is concerned, there has been an attempt to underline the process instead of the outcome, as a proof of the positive development for Ukraine's democracy. The lawful conduct of elections is seen by some as the most important outcome for the country's political stability and ultimately the most important fruit of the orange revolution (Fischer, 2010).

In the long run, Ukrainian anchorage to Euro-Atlantic integration has been halted. The promise made at the NATO Bucharest summit that both Georgia and Ukraine "would enter NATO", seems rather disconnected from the realities on the ground. Relations between Brussels and Kiev will advance based on a pragmatic and functionalist-oriented cooperation, rooted in the neighbourhood policy. Considering the political options of the new political forces in power, Brussels will have to find new ways to acknowledge Moscow's views on the role of Ukraine in European security.

4. The War in Georgia

1. Besides the dispute for influence in Ukraine, Georgia has become another point of contention between the EU and Russia. Since the rose revolution in 2003 brought to power the pro-western President Mikhail Saakashvili, relations with Russia gradually worsened. Although Moscow did help Tbilisi mediate the departure of Aslan Abashidze from Ajaria (Samokhvalov, 2009, p.33), in a display of good faith towards the new authorities in Tbilisi, it soon became apparent that Georgia's positions were irreconcilable with Russian interests in the Caucasus region. Russia was particularly concerned with the increasing cross-border activities of insurgents from the North Caucasus, using Georgian territory in their operations. US military support to the

Georgian armed forces was crucial at the time to improve Georgian oversight of its borders and thus remove a source of tension in the Georgia-Russia bilateral relations.

2. Gradually, however, Tbilisi's closer relations with the US and NATO and the deterioration of its relations with the Kremlin raised enormous pressure on regional stability. President Saakashvili's main goals for Georgia included on the one hand the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgian territory, including from the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and, on the other, a steady path towards full Euro-Atlantic integration. These were two irreconcilable goals with Moscow's own ambitions to remain a relevant and hegemonic power in the CIS. The EU cautiously welcomed the events of the rose revolution, despite the enthusiastic appreciation of the Baltic and Polish leaders – EU candidates. Brussels was not keen on hampering its relations with Moscow due to a distant and unstable country like Georgia. The number of advocates for Georgia inside the EU was also reduced, and the complex situation on the ground, along with the increasing rhetoric by the new Georgian President for the EU to assume greater security functions in the region, only worked to keep EU leaders on a conservative note (Lynch, 2006, p. 53).

3. Eventually, the EU's Security Strategy called on the EU to take a more active role in the South Caucasus and the region was included in the ENP, in 2004. The EU therefore reinforced its position in Eurasia and took on increasing security functions in Georgia, understood here in a broad sense, to include the political and economic stabilisation of the country and through the work of the EU Special Representative, to assist Georgia in solving its conflicts. From 2004 until the war in August 2008, there were numerous crises and tensions in the Georgia-Russia relations which the EU had to mediate to a certain extent (Vieira and Simão, 2008). During the first years in power, Saakashvili sought to change the negotiation formats for the South Ossetian conflict, reducing Moscow's role, and ultimately sought the departure of all Russian military from Georgian territory, as agreed under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. As events in Ukraine unfolded and western leaders began to speak of a fourth wave of liberation in Europe, which should be rewarded with Euro-Atlantic integration (Civil Georgia, 2005), Russia's muscle started to flex. Russia imposed what is widely seen as politically-motivated economic sanctions on Georgia, closed its borders and imposed stricter visa-regimes. It also developed an aggressive policy of passport distribution among Abkhaz and South Ossetians, further infringing on Georgia's claimed sovereignty over these territories.

4. 2008 was the year of all opportunities for Ukrainian and Georgian integration into NATO. In the Bucharest summit both countries hoped to be given membership action plans (MAPs), despite the European partners'

reluctance to support this step, due to the tensions this would create in relations with Russia. Ultimately, the MAPs were not agreed upon, and NATO leaders backtracked on their position. The European uncertainties were further reinforced with the deflagration of the war in South Ossetia, in August 2008. The hostilities were brief, from August 7 to August 12, when a cease-fire agreement was negotiated by the French President, holding the EU rotating presidency. Early EU reactions to the crisis included a repudiation of violence and a careful denouncing of Russia's actions by "older" EU member states, as opposed to loud statements by some of the "younger" member states, concerned with what this meant to the security in Europe. Although the EU presented a united front in the Council statements, the challenge to follow through on the leadership role it took upon itself has proved difficult. Moreover, President Saakashvili was being increasingly regarded as unpredictable and taking an authoritarian turn, which was negatively perceived in Brussels. It was therefore no surprise that the official EU position was rather limited to acting as an honest broker between Russia and Georgia. Some European media outlets denoted understanding for Russia's actions, as retaliation for NATO's expansive policies (New York Times, 2008), and some EU politicians were quick to point their fingers at President Saakashvili for starting the war (YHIAN).

5. To Russia, the case was presented as a duty to intervene and stop Georgian aggression on South Ossetians and Russian citizens. The point was even made that Russia was acting to stop a genocidal campaign ongoing in South Ossetia (Schröder, 2008, p. 8). Although only part of these allegations were confirmed in an independent report on the outbreak of hostilities (IIFFMCG – CEIIG, 2009), Russia sought to take the higher moral ground. It became nevertheless harder to keep it as its military campaign extended well into Georgian territory. Strategic attacks on energy and transport infrastructure were undertaken, providing evidence of Russia's wider strategic goal of hampering Georgia's role as a transit country for Caspian energy reserves to Europe. Some analysts also predicted that Russia was aiming to undoubtedly prove its hegemonic position in its sphere of influence. The outcome might have been more limited than initially thought by Moscow, as Russia began to lose the battle for international support, including within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Instead of warm support, Russia received a cold-shoulder reaction from its CIS partners, concerned that this might symbolize the beginning of a militant and interventionist Russian policy in the CIS.

6. The intervention in Georgia is "[i]llustrative of Russia's resistance to the applicability of EU principles 'as the cornerstones of a wider international order'" (Haukkala, 2009, p. 1757). President Medvedev's proposal to establish a new comprehensive security treaty in Europe further reinforces

this revisionist policy of the Russian Federation. A fundamental aspect of this proposal, as articulated by Foreign Minister Lavrov in New York, is the rending operational of the concept of indivisibility of security in Europe, seen as "the inadmissibility of strengthening one's own security by infringing upon the security of others". According to Emerson (2008) "This can be read as diplomatic language for what writers about geo-politics call 'sphere of influence'; which is not worthy of a 'Helsinki-2', but more reminiscent of some infamous 20th century pacts".

7. In fact, the war has been regarded by one prominent Russian analyst as being "caused by the inability of the existing European security institutions to prevent both internal and intra-state conflicts which escalated after the bipolar confrontation was over" (Valdai Club, 2010). The same report clearly states that it was the Western countries' "geopolitical expansion plans" which caused the war in Georgia (Valdai Club, 2010) and that Russia initiated a "radical modernization and revision of the political, legal and institutional frameworks of the system of international and collective security in Europe" right before the war.

5. Conclusions

As these case studies sought to illustrate, the establishment of different and competing perceptions of the regional security environment in Europe has hampered the development of the EU-Russia relations and has undermined the existing security regime. Despite high expectations that the EU enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe would finally reunite the European continent and consolidate a norm-based security regime shared by all, the reality today is strikingly different. Not only has the superiority of the European norms been disputed by Russia, but its exclusivist approach to the neighbourhood has been translated into new division lines, which the under-conceptualised neighbourhood policy has been unable to address. The ENP potentially escalated competition in the neighbourhood shared with Russia, by building on ambiguity. The EU was comfortable by letting its Eastern neighbours expect membership perspectives, as long as it controlled the pace of integration and could do "damage control". This escalated the rhetoric between the neighbours and Russia and ultimately changed the benign image of the EU in Russia.

Moreover, the EU official speech portrayed EU governance expansions as apolitical and inclusive, providing benefits for all. This understanding was contested in Moscow, which regarded the EU rules as favouring the EU and not-necessarily Russia, or even the countries in the shared neighbourhood. As argued by Haukkala (2009, p. 1762) "[i]n fact, the EU can be envisaged as a regional normative hegemon that is using its economic and normative clout to build a set of highly asymmetrical bilateral relationships that help to facilitate an active transference of its norms and values". Russia saw regime stability as preferable

to the so-called democratic revolutions, which created deep political instability in Ukraine, for instance. Moscow also saw the EU commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration in the CIS space as a fundamental challenge to the EU's stated desire to build a strategic partnership with Moscow, and to its commitment to shared security in Europe. The proposals of the Russian President to establish a new security treaty for Europe, albeit rhetorically welcomed as a valid contribution to the debate, have not been taken up by the European partners as an opportunity to debate the need for strengthening the security regime in Europe.

After the war in Georgia and with the financial and economic impact of the global financial crisis, both the EU and Russia are looking at each other's potential. The partnership for modernisation has been advanced as the new motto for bilateral relations, although what will be fundamentally different in this approach is still to be seen. Fundamental differences subside. As Makarychev (2009, p. 7) argues, "Russia is more a norm-exploiter than a norm-producer. It stays far-removed from multiple norm-producing initiatives on a trans-national scale, including – but not limited to – norms that regulate transparency, accountability, sustainable development, good governance, and so on. If Russia remains aloof in these debates, communicative problems with its major Western partners are inevitable".

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