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RUSSIA AND TRANSFORMING SECURITY RELATIONS IN EUROPE: A MIX OF STRATEGIC AND NORMATIVE RATIONALES

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Abstract: Since the end of the Cold War, Russia has retained special attention as a Eurasian country with a defining role in the evolution of the former-soviet space. We argue here that the issue of Russian evolution under Putin's leadership has raised specific questions in the security realm, potentially affecting the entire post-soviet space and the European security architecture. This paper aims at, firstly, exploring geopolitics as a contributing perspective to this issue and, secondly, shedding some light on the role of normative (non-)convergence in explaining Russian external action. The paper will pay special attention to new modes of cooperation and competition that Moscow has developed with the US and the EU in the 2000's. Finally, the paper assesses how the strategic approach is complementary to the normative perspective in understanding current challenges.

Keywords: European security, Russia, geopolitics, multilateralism, normative convergence.

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War, after both the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the Soviet Union, the literature has attempted to organise the countries of this "space" in different categories that explain their internal and external orientations. In this context, the Russian Federation has retained special attention as a Eurasian country still occupying, and wanting to occupy, a defining role in the evolution of the former Soviet bloc.¹ Moscow, as the main successor state of the former Soviet Union, is a strategic player in a direct or indirect way.

Russian geopolitics have been a main contributing field to understand the renewed role of the former superpower in Europe, particularly as far as the analysis of its vast

¹ For an analysis of the role of Russia in the post-soviet space in the 21st century, see the comprehensive study (Kanet and Freire, 2010).

natural resources and its nuclear and conventional armament are concerned.² These two dimensions of power have been instrumental in Russian relations with the European Union (EU), the United States (US), European security institutions such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and neighbouring countries. Besides the fact that both dimensions are material dimensions of power, they also refer to power viewed from a spatial perspective and, thus, explain Russian foreign policy from a geopolitical gaze.

We do not aim here at reviewing critical geopolitics literature as a perspective for the analysis of international security³ but at evidencing how this view contributes to enlighten core dimensions of the Russian rationales in the security realm. As Dalby (2009) underlines, geopolitics implies a broad perspective on the relationship between space and power, i.e. “[...] a term that refers to numerous modes of linking space and power and is best left that way; it’s a discursive mode, a matter of overlapping discursive practices, not a thing to be reduced to a stable definition”. In that sense, the role of ideas and perceptions, besides traditional strategic interests, is also instrumental to understand Russian positioning towards security issues in Europe.⁴

The definition of what constitutes the European security architecture has evolved since the end of the cold war in accordance with the redefinition of strategic and normative relations, as it is argued in this paper. It is constituted by security institutions (with different roles, importance and scope), bilateral treaties between the US and Russia, and the main Euro-Atlantic security actors (the EU, Russia and the US). The peculiarity of the architecture is its ongoing adaptation to the post-cold war period and the recurring Russian contestation of the role of NATO in Europe. Despite an apparent status quo concerning its adaptation in the 1990s, such as NATO enlargement or the OSCE pan-European scope, the new millennium has brought increasing challenges to its foundations.

In order to understand the impact of Russia in the security realm, this paper will, thus, analyse two intertwined dimensions that inform Russian positions: (1) strategic interests and (2) issues of political convergence based on the normative assumptions underpinning the relations of Moscow with third parties. The latter is particularly

² On Russian geopolitics, see for instance Breault *et al.*, 2003; Isakova, 2005; Marchand, 2007; Nazet, 2007; Mongrenier, 2009; Facon, 2010.

³ On critical geopolitics, see Tuathail, 2006. Critical geopolitics is a term that refers to the resurgence of the geopolitical perspective of analysis after the Cold War. It “intends to understand world politics in terms of the ways in which elites and publics actively construct the spaces of political action that are then the medium for the policies of states and other actors” (Agnew, 2010: 569).

⁴ Bachrach e Baratz (1962) have contributed to enlarge the understanding and analysis of power by stating that power has two faces and that immeasurable aspects such as values and myths ought to be researched. Their work has been directed at analysing decision-making procedures.

sensitive as it relates to a growing gap between Moscow and its Euro-Atlantic counterparts concerning issues such as secessionism, among others central to the European security order. The paper will pay special attention to new modes of cooperation and competition that Moscow has developed with the US and the EU from 2000 to 2012, with some views on more recent developments. This period corresponds to Putin's leadership of the country and to significant shifts in its foreign and security policy in a course of reassertion.⁵ In the first part, we will analyse how arms control and energy management are pursued by Russia as core strategic interests to create an improved power position. In the second part, the paper explores how Russian multilateral relations demonstrate that the spreading of values and norms in cooperative relations impacts on Russian perceived positioning. The emphasis will, thus, be placed on immaterial aspects of power in contrast with material instruments (military and economic) and how the multilateral relationships of Russia form a loose commitment towards common norms. The conclusion synthesizes how the second category (ideational dimension) is complementary to the first to understand the fact that the security relations between Russia and the other security actors (the EU, the US and international organizations) have been deteriorating.

1. ARMS CONTROL AND ENERGY: TWO DRIVERS OF RUSSIAN STRATEGIC REASSERTION

1.1. ARMS CONTROL AND RUSSIAN DETERRENCE CAPACITIES

Putin's Russia has voiced divergent views from its Euro-Atlantic counterparts on an array of security issues, ranging from the so-called "common neighbourhood"⁶ with the EU, to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enlargement. The Ukrainian crisis, initialled in November 2013,⁷ illustrates Russia's own interpretation of stability and sovereignty in Europe, leading the EU and the US to condemn the Russian military

⁵ On the evolution of Russian foreign and security policy and Putin's Russia empowerment, see Haas, 2010 and Kanet and Piet, 2014.

⁶ Geographically, the "common neighbourhood" includes the countries of the "near abroad" or the "post-Soviet space". The first reflects the enlarged EU's view of its external role on the borders that comprise a shared neighbourhood with Russia on the Eastern flank of the EU. The expression refers, thus, to a geopolitical perspective of engagement of the EU in this space. The "near abroad" comprehends the fourteen Newly Independent States which integrated the former Soviet Union. This zone of vital interest, or at least sphere of influence, is fundamental to the Russian perception of threats. The Russian "*near abroad*" (*blizhneyezarubezhye*, in Russian) is attributed to Kozyrev, minister of foreign affairs under Yeltsin (de Tinguy, 2008: 57-59).

⁷ A few days before the November 2013 Vilnius summit, Ukraine decided to suspend temporarily the preparations for signing two agreements that would have been a milestone for the country's relationship with the EU. The summit was the third of the Eastern Partnership (EaP), an EU policy launched in 2009 to tighten Brussels' offers towards its Eastern neighbours. From then onwards, the country faces an internal crisis with international consequences. The EU has adopted several rounds of sanctions to protest against what it considers the Russian illegal annexation of Crimea of March 2014 and military backing of East Ukrainian separatists. Nonetheless, the extension of asset freezes and visa bans and the eventual trade restrictions on Crimea do not target Putin's inner circle, Russian access to financial markets or even sensitive sectors of the Russian economy. Currently, Ukrainian sovereignty is still threatened by separatism although it ratified an Association Agreement with the EU.

escalation as a response to the crisis in Ukraine. The use of military moves has been a recurrent Russian reaction in crisis contexts in Europe. For instance, in 2013, the Kremlin stationed Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad (at the border of the EU) in response to the US/NATO planned antimissile shield (Gutterman, 2013). With similar political symbolism, Russia launched a military preparedness exercise on the Ukrainian borders at the height of Ukrainian crisis in late February 2014 (Myers, 2014). Current stalemates in the European security dialogue stem from the inexistence of comprehensive partnerships in EU-Russian, US-Russian and NATO-Russian relations. Among the most divisive issues are the unilateral initiative, launched in 2007 by the US, to install a missile defence system in the Czech Republic and Poland, Kosovo's independence (2008) and the EU/NATO-accession aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia. This section addresses the new Russian pressures on European security in light of the anti-missile dispute and other issues concerning the military equilibrium in Europe.

The anti-missile defence system is mainly a bilateral issue and is poorly addressed multilaterally because of flaws in the existing security architecture. The Bucharest NATO summit in April 2008 voiced the support of the European member states for an anti-missile shield (Press Release, 2008). There is nonetheless discomfort among the allies about building such a system that may be perceived as directed against Russia, illustrating a process of spatialisation of Russia as a threat, and the corresponding identity formation processes that go with it. The discussion about the implementation of a missile shield in Europe has provoked intense transatlantic debate mainly since 2007, although it is an old issue in a new context. It has been developed as part of the arms control and arms reduction talks that began during the Cold War after the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. Washington expressed its intentions to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972; an intention that met Russian opposition. The main US argument in favour of developing the shield is a change in the perception of threats at the global level and a need to develop efficient defence systems (President of the United States, 2002). After 9/11, the Russian-American bilateral relationship improved due to the common perceived threat of global terrorism. Nonetheless, in order to pursue their war against terror, the US unilaterally withdrew from the ABM Treaty in December 2002. In the US missile defence project, the European sites would become the third location in the US system, complementing the other two in Alaska and California, meant to counter threats coming from Asian countries. As far as the EU is concerned, Brussels is not an appropriate forum to discuss the issue since the EU lacks competence in the matter. Furthermore, issues falling under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) are approved under the unanimity voting procedure, which allows each

member state to impose its national views and block decisions. Until now, bilateral discussions have been preferred to multilateral methods as a means to address this issue.

The idea that Russia should participate in the missile defence system and contribute to a pan-European device is often advanced by the defenders of the American proposal.⁸ It is also often accompanied by the idea that Russia should join NATO, which is presented as a panacea for all the security problems in Europe. In view of the history of relations between Russia and its NATO counterparts, it is hardly likely that the alliance along with its 1990s adaptations could be seen as more attractive to Russia now than before, considering Russia's global resurgence. On the contrary, Moscow is questioning this legacy of the 1990s and is seeking an appropriate role in the European security architecture. There are two opposing and contradictory stances being taken. On one side, Russia wishes to engage in a substantive discussion about the pertinence of NATO, in view of its belief that the alliance is erecting a new Berlin Wall (Putin, 2008). On the other side, the West sees NATO as an entirely new organisation, which has adapted to the new geopolitical situation and is no longer a threat to Russia. The debate about missile defence obscures another (avoided) discussion about the fact that NATO could represent a bloc against other countries. At the very least, the two stances are evidence that Moscow has not been offered a satisfying role in the organisation, which it permanently perceived as a threat or at least a leverage that could be used against its interests.

The main questions raised in the debate about the necessity of a missile defence system in Europe fall into two categories: political and technical arguments are used to defend or attack the project.⁹ From a technical point of view, the feasibility and effectiveness of such a device is questioned, as is the proven existence of a threat posed by an eventual Iranian nuclear bomb. From a political point of view, the risks of proliferation and arms race are discussed, as is the real purpose of the extension of the US Ground-Based Midcourse Defence (GMD) system in Europe as opposed to the stated goal of dissuading against Iran. Whether Europe needs such a system, against whom might it be directed and the consequences for arms proliferation are critical questions to be considered.

In the transition from President Vladimir Putin to successor Dmitry Medvedev (2008-2012), there has been continuity concerning the stance on missile defence in Europe, because the new President erected a diplomatic fence around this issue. In June 2008, in his first visit to a Western country (Germany), Medvedev underlined two

⁸ Interviews at NATO headquarters in Brussels, on March 12, 2008 and on February 24, 2009.

⁹ See for instance Slocombe *et al.* (2007), Webb (2008), Muller (2007) and Krause (2007).

leitmotifs for Russian foreign policy. First, NATO enlargement would seriously damage relations with Russia; second, the transatlantic approach is no longer suited to address security challenges in Europe. He proposed the creation of a “European security pact” that would link all the parties involved. He summarised the main idea of renewing the existing security architecture and mentioned the need for a “breathing space”, namely to discuss Kosovo and the missile defence system (Medvedev, 2008). Indirectly, President Medvedev urged a reshaping of the existing dialogue but without enlarging NATO and with Russia taking on a new role. This is the first time such a proposal has been advanced and defended, in an elaborated and more gentle tone although it remained so far a rhetorical exercise.¹⁰ The escalation of the Ukrainian crisis since the end of 2013 further narrows any prospects for this proposal to be taken more seriously.

Russia challenges, thus, the current alliance and its role in Europe. Missile defence is therefore not an isolated, controversial question and it should be understood in a broader geostrategic panorama, where the actors (particularly Russia) link different issues as a means to achieve goals. In the case of Russia, recovering from the humiliation of the Yeltsin years is an important factor. Yet, the issue of security at its borders is more consistent and goes beyond political post-imperial symbolism. The approach of sovereignty through territorial control has unique features in Russian foreign policy that are explained by the eurasianist imperial characteristics of Russia (Chaudet *et al.*, 2009: 39-66; 99-120). The August war in Georgia in 2008 and the ongoing Ukrainian split have proved that the Kremlin uses its strategic assets to reassert its role in the “near abroad”.¹¹

Two main issues have been advanced by Russia in connection with the anti-missile system: Russia’s decision to suspend the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and its opposition to further eastern NATO enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia. The latter is also connected to Kosovo’s proclamation of independence in February 2008, with the Kremlin arguing that it sets a precedent for other separatist entities in Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Chizov, 2008). After the Georgian-Russian war, Moscow recognised the independence of the two entities and has been providing support. A solution to these frozen conflicts, or at least their stabilisation, is fundamental for any Georgian transatlantic aspirations. During his term, President George W. Bush made several diplomatic efforts to support the Ukrainian and Georgian ambitions in this regard. Still, a number of European allies were against this proposal and consequently NATO endorsed the prospect of entry but delayed it with no precise schedule being set.

¹⁰ See Lomagin (2012) for the detailed analysis of the Medvedev proposal.

¹¹ See footnote 5.

For Moscow, this outcome was not satisfactory because NATO membership was merely postponed (while continuing to be encouraged) and because the allies decided, at the Lisbon summit in 2010, to complement the anti-missile project with a system developed by the Alliance to cover the geographical area of south-western Europe left aside by the US plans. It is interesting to note that the divisions among the allies reflect the divergences among the EU member states towards Russia. For instance, France and Germany are key partners for Russia in Europe and are inclined to take a prudent and conciliatory stance, mostly when perceived strategic interests are at stake. At the time, the 2008 Bucharest summit represented an achievement for the American leadership, determining Bush's legacy in foreign affairs. The confirmed reinforcement of the contribution of the alliance to the Afghan theatre positively balanced the summit. Yet, this does not hide the identity crisis of the organisation, which is still struggling for a broadly accepted *raison d'être* both internally and externally.

Despite its adaptations, NATO is still perceived as a threat by Moscow. Russian Ambassador to NATO Dmitry Rogozin (2008-2011) has perhaps expressed the most radical Russian view about the alliance and its policies towards Kosovo. His remarks even led to an argument with the Agence France-Press (AFP), which Rogozin accused of distorting his speech. He denied the quotation in which he allegedly advocated the use of force to impose respect for international law in Kosovo.¹² The fact that Putin appointed this outspoken nationalist politician to the post in January 2008 is representative of Moscow's determination to voice its opposition to the adaptations of the alliance and to a new missile defence system in Europe. For Rogozin (and hence Moscow), NATO expansion and missile defence "pose a clear and present danger to Russia" (Osipovich, 2008). While still president, Putin voiced the same idea when he threatened to target missiles in Ukraine, should it join the alliance (Belton, 2008). For the Kremlin, these two issues are closely linked to the equilibrium of forces in Europe. The French and German caution at the Bucharest summit, delaying the NATO Membership Action Plans for Georgia and Ukraine, arguably reflected the desire to preserve relations with Moscow.

These events also demonstrate that this third post-cold war enlargement differs from the previous ones of 1999 and 2004. Russia is now able to reject the status quo it had previously accepted because its position in the balance of power has changed. This objection constituted a strong signal that Russia could influence outcomes and that the "common neighbourhood"¹³ is also a Russian affair. After Bucharest, French

¹² Letter by Dmitry Rogozin to the chief editor of the AFP in Paris dated February 25, 2008. Details of Rogozin's speech are reported by the news agency RIA Novosti (retrieved from <http://www.rian.ru/pressclub/20080222/99667207.html>).

¹³ See footnote 5.

Prime Minister explained that France was against this accession because it was not “the right answer to the equilibrium, to the relations of power in Europe and to the relations between Europe and Russia” (Zecchini, 2008). He was actually expressing a view held by some EU and NATO member states, and he committed a media blunder because he was accepting implicitly that there are still spheres of influence in Europe.

Another important item in the US-Russian dialogue was the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty of 1993 (START II) of 1993, which has not been implemented because Russia withdrew from it immediately after Washington withdrew from the ABM Treaty, as above mentioned. This agreement is especially relevant because it prohibited intercontinental missiles with multiple re-entry vehicles (MIRVed ICBMs). This kind of missiles change the capacity to deter and to deliver a first strike, since the capability for destruction is increased by the multiple warheads carried by a single missile.¹⁴ The previous START I Treaty was due to expire in 2009, and it had a fundamental role in the destruction of strategic nuclear weapons in the US and Russia. After the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in 2002, the idea of a START III became unfeasible. Instead, the “Moscow Treaty” (more specifically, the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty or SORT) was signed between the two parties in 2002. It was meant to limit the number of operationally deployed nuclear warheads until 2012. The parties also signed a joint statement in parallel with the SORT Treaty, which created a Consultative Group for Strategic Security on confidence-building measures and transparency measures, as well as other strategic issues of mutual interest. The Russian side complained that Washington did not discuss in advance the European development of its missile defence, notably in this consultation framework (Slocombe *et al.*, 2007). These two nuclear treaties regulated relations between Washington and Russia until the signature of the New Start Treaty in April 2010, in force until 2021.

Another treaty that is connected to the missile shield, and is an irritant between Russia, the US and European countries, is the 1990 CFE Treaty. This agreement established a cooperative restraint in Europe in the field of conventional armaments from the Atlantic to the Ural Mountains. An adapted version was signed in 1999 at the Istanbul summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).¹⁵ A component of the CFE Treaty is also the limitation of national ceilings in the “flank” regions, such as the Russian North Caucasus. This legally binding framework is weakened by specific conditions from the Russian side and recent evolutions. The

¹⁴ The theory of nuclear deterrence is based on the Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) principle.

¹⁵ The 30 parties in the 1999 CFE Treaty are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, the UK and the US.

NATO allies have not ratified the Treaty. They are waiting for Russia to comply with the adapted CFE flank provisions and the commitments it assumed at the Istanbul summit regarding the withdrawal of Russian forces from Georgia and Moldova. Moreover, in December 2007 Moscow decided to suspend its implementation for several reasons (Socor, 2007). Russia is concerned by the fact that the Baltic States are now NATO members and have not yet ratified the 1999 adapted version of the CFE Treaty (they are not party to the 1990 version because at the time they were part of Soviet Union), as this situation could allow unrestricted NATO deployments there. Among the list of reasons presented, the most important is that Russia challenges the Treaty itself and seeks a total renegotiation to advance its own favourable terms. The Russian demands have therefore escalated in the context of Moscow's opposition to the US missile defence system. The deployment of Russian forces (regular troops) in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as a consequence of their recognition as independent states in August 2008, further complicates any observance of the CFE Treaty.

There is little doubt that missile defence in Europe would alter the existing equilibrium and the deterrence capacities. According to Webb (2008), it would undermine diplomacy and multilateral arms control in favour of a unilateral use of force, as in Iraq. The American agenda of missile defence "does not fit with the cooperative security model that Europeans support" (*ibidem*). Arms proliferation is also a risk pointed out by the opponents of the system. But for the US, it would improve its capacity to deter an eventual attack from Iran or North Korea. Once more, two conflicting views emerge. On the one hand, one can argue that the missile defence would represent a deterrent, avoiding the risk of an attack or the determination to develop nuclear weapons.¹⁶ On the other hand, one can argue that a vicious circle would emerge (similar to the arms race of the cold war) and alternative weaponry would be developed to counter the deterrence effect of the missile shield. The fact that Russia has "continued apace with its massive military rejuvenation efforts" during 2013 (IHS Jane's Defense Weekly, 2014) and has been engaging in a military build-up is already seen as a sign in that sense (Muller, 2007)

Russia ranks first among non-EU countries undertaking the greatest number of meetings with the EU, at all levels. It is also a special NATO partner. Nevertheless, there is a vacuum in the existing European security architecture, which fails to link the several multilateral and bilateral forums on missile defence and other related issues.

¹⁶ Thränert (Slocombe *et al.*, 2007) develops a refined argument about the deterrence effect of the missile defence, notably as a tool for crisis management. It is also interesting to note a Russian argument on the matter of deterrence, being that Moscow's assistance to Iran in the development of civil nuclear technology helps non-proliferation, as Russian control of the production process and recovery of the wasted fuel prevents its use for military purposes.

The fact that two EU member states are involved in the Russian dispute with Washington to install the missile defence system further complicates matters. This is a particularly sensitive issue, since Russia has been seeking closer cooperation with the EU in defence since 1999 (Fernandes, 2009). Moscow feels that the EU has not reciprocated and it would consider greater EU involvement in European security a way of provoking a reassessment of the role of the US in the European security architecture.

1.2. GAINING STRATEGIC RELEVANCE THROUGH AN ECONOMIC ASSET

“Energy represents a source of control for those capable of accessing and selling it, a security issue for both suppliers and buyers, and a foreign policy tool wielded by state actors” (Hadfield, 2008: 321). The energy agenda has been highlighted since 2006 because Russia seeks the recuperation of the energetic incomes and its distribution. Energy is one of the most prominent topics in the relationship with the EU, negotiated in their trade and investment agenda. Russia is the world largest exporter of gas and the second largest oil exporter, with considerable reserves of both hydrocarbons but also of coal. The country has the world’s largest natural gas reserves and is the third largest consumer of energy (EIA, 2008). The EU is the main trading partner of Russia, the latter being the third largest trading partner of the Union, largely due to the purchase of gas. In 2012, Brussels depended on 23% of Russian gas, with only 33% of consumption guaranteed internally 82% of the gas consumed was routed by pipeline, mainly sourced and controlled by Russian interests (Eurogas, 2014).

In 2000, the EU and Russia were already engaged in an energy dialogue. However, the lack of ratification of the 1994 Energy Charter by the Russian Federation has been a recurrent problem between the two parties. The Charter and related documents rule energy relations based, namely, on free access to energy markets; free transit of energy products; and free flow of investment capital in energy. Putin, as prime minister, closed definitely the issue of ratification when he notified foreign governments that Russia would not join the Charter (Ria Novosti, 2009). The main consequence of this fact is that there is no mutual access to energy markets and Gazprom¹⁷ retains its monopoly, namely of access to its pipelines for natural gas transit from Central Asia to the European Union. The parties disagree on the necessity to adopt a new treaty.

As a consequence of the deterioration of energy relations since the first gas crisis of 2006 that disrupted gas deliveries towards Europe, the parties agreed to create an early warning mechanism to prevent energy disruptions. A 2008 Russian law on strategic sectors also affects negatively the possibility of foreign investment in

¹⁷ Gazprom is the Russian gas monopolistic company.

production and infrastructure in Russia (President of the Russian Federation, 2008). Given the close ties between the EU and Russia in the energy sector, Brussels is strategically interested in improving trade conditions for energy. This includes guarantees of supplies from Gazprom (volumes), operational infrastructures, principles of transparency, reciprocal access to markets, diversification and energy efficiency (European Commission, 2005). In the case of oil supplies, disruptions have affected particularly Lithuania and Latvia since mid-2006 (“Druzhba” pipeline). Reciprocal need is one of the recurring motto in the Russian arguments, namely in the energy dialogue. It refers not only to equal access but also to exploitation deals. Energy has also been highlighted since 2006 because Russia seeks to recoup the income from energy production and distribution, which was partly managed by foreign companies (Putin, 2008).

Besides the Russian non-application of the ECT, the fact that the EU has no integrated policy on energy yet puts a break on its management of the issue, as opposed to bilateral relations of member states with Moscow. The pipeline routes intersect the political dependencies: the EU wants as much as Russia more autonomy in relation to the transit countries. Gazprom needs to rely on other sources of supply in order to fulfil the contracts with its final consumers mainly in terms of volume of gas. On its side, the EU is exploring ways of changing this situation by dealing directly with the Central Asian Republics. Both parties have preferred, then, to explore alternatives in friendly countries (diversification) and bilateral agreements of member states with Moscow have been undermining the prospects for a coherent and integrated energy policy at the EU level. France, Germany and Italy have signed agreements with Gazprom that involve for instance two new pipelines (“Nordstream” and “Southstream”) and opened distribution market for Gazprom in exchange of guaranteed supplies, with the support of new member states such as Bulgaria, Slovenia and Croatia (CASE, 2008: 198-199; Eke, 2009; Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2010). The aim is to create direct connections with the final consumers in Western Europe and, as a consequence, avoiding the transit countries in Central Europe (Mongrenier, 2009: 142-143).

As Delcour and Verluise (2009) emphasise, Brussels and Moscow have taken divergent approaches since 2006. The Union pursues the goal of a market-ruled and transparent energy sector, whereas Russia seeks to protect a strategic sector for the development of the Federation. Individually, some member states have preferred to secure their levels of consumption and downgrade relations between Russia and the European Commission to technical issues, thus, supporting Russia’s goals. To face this situation, the EU needs both to find alternative suppliers but also alternative

pipeline routes that bypass Russian territory, besides the need to agree on a common policy. The difficulty to concretise these combined needs is illustrated by a Polish Member of the European Parliament's (MEP) sharp critic towards Italy. He considers that the Italian deal with Gazprom for the Southstream pipeline, above-mentioned, is a "sabotage" of the EU Nabucco project because it jeopardizes the key issue of access to Central Asian and Caspian reserves (Saryusz-Wolski, 2007). Noël (2008: 3-7) does not foresee the scenario of a European gas market increasingly dominated by Russia provided that the creation of a single gas market would create solidarity among EU consumers and create a unified stance towards Russia.

2. BEYOND STRATEGIC INTERESTS: THE ROLE OF VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The analysis above has highlighted that the irritants concerning the European security architecture are informed by competing strategic interests. Russian perceptions of its geopolitical relevance are challenged, both in the nuclear and conventional fields, by anti-missile systems projects and by the revised CFE. Additionally, diverging views challenge the core legitimacy of the role of NATO in Europe. Concerning energetic assets, gas has also been an instrument to foster Russian power position. In this section, we explore further the evolution of the increasingly difficult security relations of European countries and regional organisations with Moscow, taking into account the principled foundations of these relations. We explore in particular the normative bases of cooperation that have emerged in multilateral fora (the EU, the Council of Europe and the OSCE) and the existing divergences despite declared common values and principles. Concerning the participation of Russia in multilateral institutions, Rowe and Torjesen (2009) present a useful analysis of several case-studies. This study highlights a clear dividing line in Russian stances towards the post-soviet space as compared to other issues, supporting thus our intent to analyse more specifically multilateral relations affecting the European security architecture.

Multilateralism is a specific way of gathering international actors to support cooperation, non-discrimination principals, diffuse reciprocity (positive sum games) and generalised institutional structures. "Multilateralism" refers both to an organising principle and/or a specific international institution, which distinguishes itself by three properties: indivisibility; generalised principles of conduct; and diffuse reciprocity (Caporaso, 1992; Ruggie, 1992). The literature of the beginning of the 1990s underlined the specificity of multilateralism but also the difficulty in defining it in a unique manner (meaning and concrete form). Multilateralism is an institution but it can refer to an organisation or an activity (Caporaso, 1992: 603). Considering that

multilateralism is a form of producing common norms, this section aims at analysing how multilateral relations affect political convergence between Russia and third parties.

2.1. THE EU AND RUSSIA

Our paper argues that the EU is a *sui generis* international organisation which conveys the practice of multilateral methods in its interactions with third parties. This characteristic is based on two core elements. Firstly, the external policy of the Union endorses values and principles that are deposited, namely, in the Charter of the United Nations. In this context, the Union seeks the promotion of “effective multilateralism”. The goal of the EU is to improve global governance and support, on the one hand, the UN system and, on the other hand, the EU values (European Commission, 2003a). The Union recognises the importance of multilateralism for its policies that have external dimensions in other documents, such as the *European Security Strategy* (European Council, 2003). Secondly, we argue that the EU is itself a unique international organisation whose relations with Russia cannot be considered simply as bilateral relations as it is for instance the case of relations between two states. The EU pursues a regional process of integration since 1951 that has no precedent in history. Today, the Union has no foreign policy as such, in the sense that it is a *sui generis* global actor (Cameron, 2007). In fact, there are areas of community competence and others depend on intergovernmental decision-making, whereas others remain national a prerogative, outside European decision-making. This is a complex framework which involves several EU institutions (the Commission, the Council, the Presidency, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy), member states and other international organisations.

The current literature also points to the fact that multilateralism is still defined in different ways, particularly in different regions of the world “but common to all are the importance of rules, institutionalised cooperation and inclusiveness.” The EU has still to develop a “coherent doctrine of multilateralism”, although it has been consistent in the promotion of principles to seek multilateral solutions (Mercury, 2010: 2). In fact, since 1997, EU-Russia relations developed a *sui generis* framework of institutionalised cooperation, producing “rules” and “inclusiveness” in a broad range of domains from trade relations to educational cooperation.¹⁸ From the EU perspective, the purpose of the relationship with Moscow is to avoid new dividing lines in Europe after having overcome previous ones (bipolarity). One of the most visible strains in this relationship is the sharing of common values and principles, which are supposed to be the basis of

¹⁸ The EU-Russia cooperation outputs are described on the EU website and available at http://www.eeas.europa.eu/russia/common_spaces/.

the partnership. They are the following (and they apply to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), initialled in 2004,¹⁹ as well): the rule of law; good governance; the respect for human rights, including minority rights; the promotion of good neighbourly relations; the principles of market economy and sustainable development (European Commission, 2003b).

Building on Manners' (2004) study of the EU as a "normative power", Laïdi (2010) has been studying the issue of norms and the rejection of the use of force to impose norms by the EU. He attempts to classify the Union as a "Risk Averse Power". This kind of power insists on the "indivisibility of systemic risks between actors" and is determined to diminish the "risky behaviours" of other actors by integrating "their actions within a normative framework that would constrain them and make them more predictable" (2010: 2). We will not discuss here the feasibility of such a normative commitment for the EU as a global actor and the various understandings of the concept.²⁰ We address here the effects of this assumption on its relationship with Russia, namely the convergence to the core systemic principles that it has endorsed in this context.

The principled relationship aimed by the Union has proven to be difficult to achieve in the interaction with Russia. Contrarily, the use of conditionality (to link the relation to values observance) and the insistence on normative convergence has been producing increasingly a negative impact on the Union because Russia has been reacting negatively (Makarychev, 2008). As a result, this relationship has reached a paradoxical stage. On the one hand, the methodology and the domains of cooperation have reached a high degree of achievements. On the other hand, the political quality of the relation has deteriorated and it has been unable to achieve a real strategic partnership, as the handling of Georgian and Ukrainian crisis has demonstrated.

Despite the fact that there are a lot of statements in that sense, the EU has not been willing to go beyond normative rhetoric on Russia. The most visible issue is the Chechen conflict that Russians always consider as an internal affair, refusing international interference (Carrère d'Encausse, 2010: 67-73). The EU has also never withdrawn from the vision that Russia is a partner, despite the existing normative gap. Even in the peaks of crisis in the relation, president Putin has been received by the EU as a special guest (for instance, during the Lahti informal Summit, in October 2006 under Finnish Presidency). The EU has created a specific dialogue on Human Rights with Russia, since March 2005, but the consultations never took place in Russia and it

¹⁹ There are twelve participating countries in the ENP at the Southern and Eastern margins of the EU. The latter overlaps with the Russian "near abroad".

²⁰ For an analysis of the EU commitment to the concept, see Wouters, 2010.

looks more as an additional, repetitive and somewhat empty institutional mechanism. Until the mid-2000s, there has been some wishful thinking on the European side that these talks could lately produce the desired effect on Russian transformation.²¹ Since Putin's third re-election in 2012, the Russian course of reassertion and political-normative divergences creates growing outstanding issues in the relationship in the four common spaces of cooperation.²² The Ukrainian crisis has contributed to deepen further this state-of-play by evidencing different normative understandings about sovereignty and territorial integrity on both sides. Additionally, the EU political system also contributes to the difficulty in creating political convergence between the EU and Russia because individual member states' views on Russia are able to create competitive aims that are not convergent with the EU's normative agenda.²³

The EU approach towards its Eastern neighbours has not brought results in terms of engaging Russia positively. On the contrary, Russia views the ENP as an interference in its near abroad. This used to be less problematic than the engagement of NATO, or the United States stance (missile defence project), in Central and Eastern Europe, but it provoked a will to reassert Russian power and sovereignty. The Russian military escalation towards Ukraine in early 2014, above mentioned, illustrates how the EU's normative engagement in the "common neighbourhood" has also become a security challenge for Moscow. In general, the EU post-enlargement ambitions in the common neighbourhood are those of a post-modern actor, in contrast with Russian traditional sovereign prerogatives. As Youngs and Pishchikova (2013) underline, the EU needs to promote "successful geopolitics" in order to compete with Russia on a different ground. According to the authors, Brussels has a *sui generis* perception of geopolitics and of its role that is based on values and on a positive-sum perspective of external relations. Instead of becoming an idealised European partner sharing views on common norms, Russia is becoming, in the EU perspective, a challenging foreign policy actor, as the Council Conclusions of March 3, 2014 on Ukraine illustrate (Council of the European Union, 2014). As in 2008 concerning Georgia, the Union condemns military reactions and threatens to halt specific dialogues with Russia. In contrast, Moscow has resorted to military means.

²¹ Interviews with EU officials in 2007-2009, Brussels.

²² Interviews at the European External Action Service and at the European Parliament, September 2012, Brussels.

²³ On the cleavage of positions between older and new member states, see Fernandes, 2013. The former defend an interest oriented relation with Moscow that prioritizes strategic interests and the later tend to base their positions on the observance by Russia of values and principles.

2.2. A SYSTEM OF NORMATIVE COMMITMENTS IN OTHER MULTILATERAL CONTEXTS

In this section, we analyse the role that international organisations and conventions have played, during Putin's mandates, in enhancing the normative gap between Moscow and European counterparts. Besides the EU-Russia institutionalized framework, the EU specifically binds its relationship with Moscow to the provisions that both parties endorsed in other multilateral organisations or conventions. Among the most important references, the United Nations Charter, the OSCE and the Council of Europe are core depositaries of principles and values. In the economic realm, the World Trade Organization (WTO) is the depositary of these principles. The Union, its member states, and Russia are connected to these multilateral *forums*, as members or observers. We observe that the Russian Federation has been using these multilateral arenas to discard difficult subjects or binding commitments from the EU-Russian agenda and depoliticise cooperation items. Nonetheless, the issues that Russia has to deal with in other *fora* than the EU show, as we shall see below, that Moscow tries not to be scrutinised in any multilateral relationship, neither in the relationship with the Union, nor with other international organisations.

The fact that Russia is a member state of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the OSCE has created a normative commitment towards these organisations and its members. Criticism against Russia has arisen in this context because the country is considered to have failed to respect original commitments. Thus, these different institutions have been "sounding boxes" of the problem of political convergence with the Kremlin and have not influenced Russia towards a common understanding about a system of values that is rooted in the Council of Europe and the OSCE. A Latvian representative at COEST²⁴ perceives the problem with Russia as being that "we don't know what to expect, i.e. which are the rules of the game".²⁵ Emerson underlines that the multilateral *fora* are irritating for Moscow because the country is constantly under criticism (2001: 1-2). Additionally, Russia also criticizes Western double standards, as it was the case concerning Kosovo independence as compared to Abkhazia and South-Ossetia recognitions in 2008. Concerning international organisations, their politicisation and application of double standards are the core critics, as mentioned below.

The review of EU-Russian relations conducted by the European Commission in the aftermath of the August 2008 Russian-Georgian war (European Commission, 2008) is particularly elucidative of the way the different multilateral *fora* have been a 'sounding

²⁴ COEST is the working party on Eastern Europe and Central Asia at the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union.

²⁵ Interview conducted in Brussels, on June 4, 2007.

box' of the normative gap in EU-Russian relations. The Commission refers regularly, along this document, to the organisations that are depositaries of the values that underpin its relationship with Russia. Globally, serious concern is voiced about Russian non-compliance with them. The review acknowledges that "[t]he EU should develop a common position on Russia's proposal for a new European security order. [...] Russia is a key geopolitical actor, whose constructive involvement in international affairs is a necessary precondition for an effective international community" (*ibidem*: 3). On energy, the Commission senses that "[a] great deal of work is still needed to build up a genuine energy partnership based on the principles of the *Energy Charter Treaty* and notably transparency, reciprocity and non-discrimination" (*ibidem*). The European Commission acknowledges that "the interpretation of reciprocity which should characterise interdependence differs widely". As a consequence, "the EU's dependence on Russia as a[n energy] supplier will remain strong and might be a source of concern" (*ibidem*: 7). On human rights, the review considers that "[t]here is a general sense that there is a growing gap with regard to common commitments in the Council of Europe and the OSCE" (*ibidem*: 3) and that "some gap exists between declarations and expressions of intent and reality on the ground" (*ibidem*: 8). Trofimov (2008), a Russian diplomat, resumed the Russian view, defending the relativity of the notion of "democracy" as opposed to a universal approach to it.

Concerning Russian membership in the Council of Europe, Massias underlines that Russia perceives internal developments as not being democratic backlashes but rather as the subordination of democratic values to national interests. In this logic, Russian authorities refuse external intromissions in domestic affairs. The result is a growing misunderstanding and irritation from the Russian side and a suspicion that the organisation is used by some countries to exert political pressure. The author compares these tensions to what happens in EU-Russian relations (Massias, 2007: 115-116). Massias concludes that the existence of two different conceptions of democracy and its principles hinders the credibility of the Council of Europe (*ibidem*: 118). This divergence produces a dilemma between, on the one hand, the need not to exclude Russia and, on the other hand, the consideration of its devious human rights and democratic records. As it is the case in EU-Russian relations, the relations of the Council of Europe with Moscow have proven to need a rethinking. The author interprets the Russian view on its membership as follows:

Russia's involvement must be understood as reflecting its overarching desire for multilateral diplomacy. [...] The [Council of Europe], therefore, is part of Moscow's search for recognition and international respectability [...] For Russia is

very self-conscious of its image abroad: while using multilateral fora to alter its partners' evaluation criteria, it is always asserting its specificity. (Massias, 2007: 115)

An EU official of the Council Secretariat²⁶ perceives that the Council of Europe is an exception in Russian views on multilateral *fora*. He considers that Russia is more “sentimental” about this organisation, as opposed to other *fora* where Russia does not believe in multilateralism and defends its own national positions. Nonetheless, Russian leaders are defensive and perceive these organisations as ways of influencing and tend to avoid decisions that could be prejudicial for their country. Membership is seen, mainly, as a gain in influence.

Similarly, commitments concerning the OSCE are perceived by Moscow as being relative and subject to change. In this organisation, the mutual criticisms have materialised mainly about the role of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR) and the CFE Treaty. Putin's Russia is criticised for its attempts to limit the scope of action of the organisation. The Russian argument is that the OSCE is too politicised and applies double standards (Jégo, 2007) and the country has become increasingly critical of the OSCE observation missions conducted by its ODHIR since the Orange revolution in Ukraine in 2004 (Belton, 2007). As a result, the Office could not observe the 2007 legislative and 2008 presidential elections in Russia for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russian authorities blamed the organisation for this fact by alleging technical obstacles in issuing visas for the staff of the mission (The Associated Press, 2007). Another outstanding issue is the Russian suspension of its participation in the CFE Treaty since December 2007 (see above). Contrarily, the view of the Union is that the Helsinki principles, which are the normative basis of the European security order, are valid. An official of the European Parliament Secretariat²⁷ underlines that “the Helsinki [Final] Act is not obsolete because the values are more important than the signatories of the time”.

CONCLUSION

The article has evidenced that Putin's leadership of Russia (2000-...) corresponds both to substantial bilateral and multilateral dialogues with main security actors and to increasing irritants affecting security relations in Europe. Power positions have been particularly advanced by Russia concerning military deterrence and gas interdependences. As a result, Russia has been facing an external confrontational

²⁶ Interview at the Council of the European Union, on June 29, 2007.

²⁷ Interview conducted at the European Parliament, on September 24, 2008.

environment because of its leverage on energy, combined with its positions on arms control and NATO's role in Europe.

Among a set of interrelated security disputes, ranging from the US plan to extend its missile shield in Europe to the eventual third NATO enlargement after the Cold War, foundational questions are challenged by Moscow. The Russian leaders have been voicing a growing dissatisfaction with the existing institutional frameworks for cooperation and have been able to oppose three core developments: arms control (including missile defence and the CFE treaty), NATO *raison d'être*, and the notion of a shared "common neighbourhood" with the EU. The 2008 August War between Georgia and Russia has contributed to evidence the emergence of a more fragmented geopolitical setting for relations with Russia, as the ongoing Ukrainian crisis is also demonstrating.

Energy has also been used as a geopolitical asset by Moscow. While Europeans try to create a common internal energy policy and to engage with Russia on regulating the energy market, the Kremlin takes advantage of this void in EU policies and has been sealing bilateral agreements to secure supplies and access to national consumers (namely with Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria), in order to create a strong Gazprom monopoly. The competition for the control of energy production and distribution further highlights bilateral strategies to advance interests and the limited capacity of the EU multilateral framework to manage cooperative solutions.

The normative foundations of relations have furthermore contributed to deepen a gap between the actors instead of approximation. The assessment of the legitimacy of Russian actions based on normative criteria has not fostered the expected convergence. The role of the OSCE in the European security architecture is under Russian scrutiny, along with the contested prominence that NATO has gained in the reshaping of the post-Cold War order. Although the 1975 Helsinki statement recognises official principles such as peace, consultation, and the respect for human rights, they have not been interpreted in the same way. A balance of Russia's membership to the Council of Europe shows that the organisation has not been able to foster Russian convergence with normative goals. Additionally, the EU application of conditionality in its relationship with Moscow has contributed to Russian grievance because the country does not accept what it considers as undue EU "lecturing" and influence in countries of the ENP.

Russia's positions demonstrate, thus, that European geopolitics is informed by competing views and a lack of political convergence about the foundations of the dialogues. These divergences go beyond core and classic issues of sovereignty

(military and energy) and the power of ideas and norms diffusion also plays a relevant role in the growing difficulty in shaping consensual European security architecture.

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