

European Security through EU-Russian Relations: Towards a New Multilateral Order?

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Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War, the EU and Russia have managed to create an original framework for institutionalised cooperation despite asymmetric characteristics. Yet, the way these two main security actors interact has an impact on the (non)-resolution of security issues in Europe, ranging from “frozen conflicts” to the discussion of the security architecture. Since the second mandate of President Putin, the relation has been characterised by two paradoxical features. On the one hand, the methodology and the domains of cooperation have reached a high degree of achievement. On the other hand, the political quality of the relationship has deteriorated and it is not able to achieve the desired “strategic partnership” that should be based on a common set of values and principles. This article aims to define multilateralism as a paradigm applicable to EU-Russian relations. It examines their relationship in the security and defence realm and the Union’s reactions to a new security approach by Russia since the 2008 Medvedev proposal. The article questions how the EU-Russian political dialogue impacts on multilateralism in the security field. The conclusion considers EU-Russian relations as a peculiar multilateral playground addressing common security challenges, which still needs to be developed further in order to be instrumental in the search for collective and legitimate solutions.

Keywords

European Union; Russia; European security architecture; multilateralism

By and large, it is necessary to analyse the “family affairs” in Europe, and reassess a lot of things, though not in terms of the euphoria and triumphalism of the early 90s, but on the basis of sober analysis of the real consequences of what has occurred in the past twenty years (Lavrov 2010).

THESE WORDS OF RUSSIA’S FOREIGN MINISTER ARE A REMINDER OF THE RENEWED Russian desire to reshape security relations and institutions in Europe. This idea was launched by President Dmitry Medvedev in June 2008 and is recurrent in the serious and polarising security-related disputes over the US project to extend missile shields in Europe, Kosovo’s independence and the EU/NATO-accession aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia.

Since the end of the Cold War, the European Union (EU) and the Russian Federation have developed a unique institutional framework of cooperation, based on the 1997 cooperation agreement and the creation of “four common spaces” of cooperation in

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2003.¹ Nonetheless, despite the approximation experienced between the two biggest European neighbours, growing dissatisfaction has emerged from both sides. The contribution of Russian experts to the report of the “Group of Valdai” is illustrative of this state-of-play. The report criticises both parties for the stagnation of the relationship and calls urgently for a ‘Union of Europe’ (Karaganov *et al.* 2010).

Additionally, the 2008 Russian–Georgian war has created a more difficult environment for relations with the Kremlin. As far as relations between the EU and Russia are concerned, significant changes have occurred. After a ‘reflection period’ from September to October 2008, the agenda for cooperation has refocused on core interests, such as trade and energy. Parallel to this, a new agenda on security is taking shape. Globally, despite a comprehensive cooperative dialogue, producing concrete results mainly on economic matters and trade, the political outcomes have not been satisfying for either partner. This is particularly noticeable in the ‘common space of external security’², or more broadly in the political difficulty of achieving a renewed partnership.

This article aims to understand the current state-of-play of security relations in Europe and how multilateralism impacts on them, taking into account two main elements. On the one side, there are new Russian pressures on security arrangements in Europe, namely the Medvedev proposal for a new security pact in the context, created by the August 2008 war. On the other hand, the EU is an important counterpart for Russia and is a security player as well. Cooperation has, in fact, emerged between the EU and Russia but there is still a controversy in interpreting the added value of this cooperation in the systemic context of global politics and as a problem-solving tool for specific issues.

The fact that there are opposite views about EU-Russian relations are also a motivation for their study. Some consider that the relationship has produced little in dealing with European and global issues and, in contrast, others value the outcomes of EU-Russian relations. For instance, Emerson (2005) tends to produce a critical assessment of the capacity of EU-Russia relation to deliver tangible solutions, as opposed to Grant and Barysh (2003). There is, therefore, a need to evaluate the current stalemates in the European security dialogue and the possibilities for developing dialogues into a problem-solving tool.

The present work assesses the impact of multilateralism (a form of cooperation and institution) in framing the European order in the light of EU-Russian relations. In the first section, the phenomenon of ‘multilateral cooperation’ is analysed and applied to the case of EU-Russian relations. This form of interaction remains complex and poorly defined in the literature and the relationship between the Union and Russia are presented here as a case-study for multilateralism. The article endorses Petiteville’s broad definition of multilateralism for the study of its current forms:

The production by States, international organisations and NGOs of norms and rules that aim at establishing a cooperative international order governing international interdependencies (2009: 13).³

Secondly, the author addresses the specific area of security cooperation between the two actors in order to analyse a specific practice of the theoretical framework presented in the

¹ The 1997 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement is the legal basis for EU–Russian relations. A new framework of cooperation was established at the St. Petersburg summit in 2003. Since then, Brussels and Moscow have cooperated in four areas (the so-called ‘common spaces’): a common economic space; a common space of freedom, security and justice; a common space of cooperation in the field of external security; and a common space on research, education and culture.

² See footnote 1.

³ Author’s translation.

first section. The state-of-play of EU-Russian relations in this domain is taken as an element to assess the capacity of the relationship to address security concerns and solutions. The Medvedev proposal for a new security treaty for Europe is also considered in the sense that this initiative relates to the need to reshape the security order. Finally, the conclusion draws on the limited EU reactions to the Medvedev proposal and on the poor prospects for EU-Russian relations to advance collective and legitimate solutions for European security, despite the originality of their multilateral interactions.

Multilateralism as a paradigm

In this section the author aims to explore the multilateral feature of EU-Russian relations, as opposed to mere bilateral relations. The European Union and Russia have developed a unique and institutionalised framework of cooperation, based on the implementation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) since 1997.⁴ Despite the fact that EU Member States retain core sovereign prerogatives in external affairs and defence issues, as opposed to EU supranational prerogatives in other domains such as trade (Kurpas *et al.* 2007), this article argues that the relations between Brussels and Moscow are embedded in a core multilateral scheme. This characteristic does not dismiss the fact that bilateral interactions do happen and influence the relationship. The argument developed below is that bilateral relations are not disconnected from the overall multilateral playground. Two elements are analysed in order to understand multilateralism and EU-Russian relations. On the one hand, an overview of the concept of 'multilateralism' highlights the theoretical and empirical limitations of the study of this phenomenon. On the other hand, this particular form of interaction is applied to the case of EU-Russian relations, namely taking into consideration the analysis of the EU as a global actor.

The concept of 'multilateralism'

At the beginning of the 1990s, Ruggie stressed that the lacunas in the research about multilateralism laid in the lack of studies about the form that international institutions can assume and about the effects on their world role (1992: 597). The phenomenon has an important place in post-Cold War studies but the complex nature of its forms and efficacy has not yet created a unified theoretical proposal. In 1992, Ruggie already noticed that multilateralism was a spread and studied institutional phenomenon but that its features were often blurred by institutionalism (1992: 567). In EU-Russian relations, it can even be approached as the less usual of one of its three historical forms: the one which aims at solving cooperative problems when conflicting interests are at stake (1992: 582). The other two are the management of coordination problems (in that case, states want the same result for all and result is less important as such) and Property Rights of the states (1992: 597).

Multilateralism is broader than international organisations. Thus, one may underline Ruggie's advice about the fact that there is no explanation in theoretic literature about contemporary multilateralism because of its adaptability (1992: 594 and 597). Petiteville (2009) also addresses the multiplicity and evolution of 'multilateralism' as an unavoidable fact of contemporary International Relations (IR) in specific organisations and areas. The theoretical and empirical importance of the study of multilateralism in the selected context (EU-Russia relation) is, furthermore, supported. Ruggie is also puzzled by a global

⁴ There is a broad literature on EU-Russian relations. See for instance Antonenko and Pinnick 2005; Delcour 2005; Emerson 2006; Kefferpütz 2008; Makarychev 2008; Nikolov 2009; Nygren 2009; Trenin 2002.

movement through the twentieth century: the fact that multilateralism materialised in formal organisations.⁵

Taking into account the existing analysis of institutions and cooperation⁶, it is considered here that multilateralism is a specific shape of institution and also a form of reciprocity⁷. As an organising form of IR, it has gained new impetus with the end of the Cold War and with the integration of the world economy. Multilateralism is a specific way of gathering international actors to support cooperation, non-discrimination principals, diffuse reciprocity (positive sum games) and generalised institutional structures (Caporaso 1992; Ruggie 1993). Indivisibility is also another principle. For instance, in collective security agreements, peace is indivisible and states must assume compromises towards all members (*e.g.* Article 5 of North Atlantic Treaty).

Institutionalist approaches also state that institutions form preferences and that they influence choices. In contrast, individualist approaches consider that states and their interests are the independent centres of cooperation. This would reduce multilateralism to a simple strategic interaction. Institutionalism presents itself as a moderation of neorealism and not as its refutation: states and interests matter but they are located in a context in which there are norms, rules and believes (institutions).

The 'problem of cooperation' is not representable primarily as a game of strategic interaction, although this dimension of interstate behaviour surely exists. The emphasis shifts from strategic interaction with given (and fixed) utilities to a model of debate, communication, persuasion, argument, and discursive legitimation (Caporaso 1992: 626).

⁵ Morgan raises a similar question about developments in post-Cold War: 'it is hard to see why great powers have now responded to the long peace in one way, enhanced cooperation, rather than the other – stable nuclear deterrence amid serious political cooperation. [...] Leading governments reacted to the astonishing developments of 1989-1991 by declaring their readiness to undertake unprecedented adventures in multilateralism to enhance regional (European) and global security' (1993: 328 and 333).

⁶ The concept of 'cooperation' is an element of both realist and liberal theories of International Relations but it has a different importance and explaining value. The liberal conception of IR lays mainly on 'institutional liberalism', which develops the following assumption: institutions are a key to promote peace. The main disagreement between realism and institutionalism is about the significant effect of institutions on perspectives of international stability, in an anarchical environment. Other general theories offer different perspectives. These approaches proposed, since the 80's, contesting views based on a critic of modernity and positivism. Critical theory, post-modernism, gender theory or constructivism put the emphasis on the fact that all knowledge arises from a specific historical and political base. They are considered radical theories because they aim at changing the world rather than interpreting it (Battistella 2003: 235-298). Taking into consideration the debate between these two different IR approaches, institutions are defined here broadly as the rules which stipulate the way each state should cooperate or compete with others (Mearsheimer 1998: 333). The theory of international regimes provides a more detailed classification (Krasner 1983).

⁷ In IR, due to the great number of actors (players) involved, the cooperative games are, by essence, positive sum games. Nonetheless, there is another factor which interferes in this: the way each actor sees the game. As Dougherty and Platzgraff underline, there is often a player who sees the game as zero sum (2003: 724). The issue of how each actor perceives the results of interactions raises another difficulty for cooperation because one may consider absolute or relative gains. If the player considers absolute gains, cooperation is easier because he is not worried with the other's gains (distribution of the benefits among all the participants) but only with his own share with no comparison. Realist thinkers have also underlined this constraint on cooperation by identifying that anarchy makes the states worry with relative gains (Waltz 2002: 148). One of the main contributions of Axelrod consists in having evidenced the effect of iterated games in establishing reciprocity, namely among states (Axelrod 1984; Wu and Axelrod 1995). The perspective of future encounters with the same player is an incentive to both cooperate and reciprocate strategies since it may be repeated in forthcoming situations. Globally, reciprocity in iterated games diminishes the fear of cheating of the actors, which is the biggest obstacle to cooperation (solution to the 'prisoner's dilemma'). Consequently, reciprocity is able to promote stability in a direct (between states) or indirect (multilateral agreements) way.

Institutionalism is then interesting in the analysis of multilateralism because it is a component of it. Additionally, this approach implies a critical cross-fertilisation of the theories of IR and an historic perspective. In fact, the contingency of the institutional models and their results (Caporaso 1992: 628) is a pertinent characteristic for the post-Cold War period (systemic changes and nature of the actors). Nonetheless, this article argues that a more specific approach to multilateralism is still necessary because it is a particular form of institutionalised cooperation often drowned in a theory of international institutions or, more generally, of cooperation. Thus, the study of EU-Russian relations through multilateral cooperation is an analytical challenge that needs to be explored.

The phenomenon of 'multilateral cooperation' remains complex and insufficiently defined in the literature. The current dynamics that shape the global order highlight the core tension between several forms of external action, mainly between unilateralism and multilateralism. Devin synthesises the definition of these terms and how they relate to each other, as follow.

In the usual sense, multilateralism is a method for coordinating behaviour among three or more actors. It differs from both bilateralism that concerns actions defined between two parties only and unilateralism by which one party alone defines the elements of its conduct. But this nominal approach is not sufficient. The noun (multilateralism) adds another dimension to a simple particular mode of cooperation (multilateral). Multilateralism (as bilateralism or unilateralism) is also a policy and, as such, is a series of actions led by some general principles and pursuing the achievement of certain goals. Technique and politics are not always equal: if the multilateral nature of international negotiations is ancient, multilateralism is more recent (2006: 21 and 26).

In this context, EU-Russian relations can be viewed as an answer to the complex nature of the international scene. They would represent a kind of reciprocal strategy to cope with globalisation and complexity. Kessler underlines that new centres of power have been created or reinforced in the globalised world and in the complex multilateral system. She gives examples ranging from the EU to the G8. The aim of the participating states is to coordinate policies and eventually common norms (1999: 482-483).

Taking into account the above mentioned tension between multilateral and bilateral options for global actors, and the aim of understanding EU-Russian relations, the question of how multilateralism is a feature of this relationship is raised. The issue of how bilateralism interplays within is not developed in this article although the author acknowledges the pertinence of this element. In fact, the EU outputs are informed by the Member States that retain sovereignty in certain domains, in addition to the EU level that creates a balance based on the power of EU institutions.⁸ The Russian Federation is a more traditional state actor that does not share decisional power as it is the case in the complex and unique EU political system. In the case of EU-Russian relations, available theoretical debates do not answer sufficiently critical questions such as the following. Why does the advanced framework of cooperation produce such limited outputs, namely at the political level and in the security agenda? How does Russia deal with the Union as compared to its relations with Member States separately? On which issues and in which conditions do these actors interact multilaterally? Is there a synergy between the different levels of interaction? These questions are wider research questions that fall outside the scope of this paper. The author aims here at identifying multilateral characteristics and the impact of this form of cooperation, and institution, in framing the European security order.

⁸ The literature about EU functioning and external policies is abundant. See for instance Jorgensen *et al.* 2007; Kurpas 2007; Magnette 2008; Petiteville 2006; Rosamond 2000.

Additionally, the Union is a *sui generis* actor that needs to be conceptualised as an international actor. As it will be demonstrated below, the Union conveys practices of multilateralism. Nonetheless, as above mentioned, bilateral relations between the EU Member States and third actors occur in parallel with EU relations with these third parties, namely EU-Russian relations. On some issues and in specific contexts, actors favour the national level to pursue foreign policy goals. In differentiated cases, EU Member States and Russia are cooperating and competing depending on how national and bilateral positions and actions influence EU-Russian relations as such. This influence might reinforce or weaken the multilateral agenda and EU policies towards Russia. On the one hand, it depends on whether national preferences are convergent with the EU agenda. On the other hand, it depends on the EU possibility to act at the Union level as opposed to individual Member States actions.⁹ Russian preferences to deal with Brussels or with the Member States capitals to advance its interests are also influential in shaping relations with the Union. Energy relations are illustrative of this interplay between the bilateral and multilateral level. The fact that the EU has no integrated policy on energy yet puts a break on its management of the issue at the multilateral level, as opposed to bilateral relations of Member States with Moscow (Delcour 2009). In the second part of this article, the author shall evidence how security relations are poorly dealt at the multilateral level.¹⁰

Weiss (2006) underlines that 'effective multilateralism' is 'the core thought of the European approach to international relations'. It constitutes a principle that considers the Charter of the United Nations the guiding reference for international relations.¹¹ In external policies, the Union has used the principle of conditionality to deal with its neighbourhood (and with the enlargement process) (Raik 2011). This principle implies the convergence of third parties with the EU set of norms and values. One of the most visible strains in EU-Russian relations is related to this characteristic of the EU as a foreign policy actor: the sharing of common values and principles, which are supposed to be the basis of the partnership. In 2003, the *Wider Europe* concept and the *European Security Strategy* clarified the external goals of the EU (European Commission 2003; Council of the European Union 2003). Brussels wants to create prosperity and security on its borders, which highlighted the importance of the relation with Russia. The objectives stated by the EU, in its *sui generis* foreign policy (Common and Foreign Security Policy (CFSP)), are also based on norms observance because they advocate an international order based on multilateralism ('effective multilateralism') and International Law, as embodied by the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The normative goals of the external action of the EU have, then, been further clarified in these two documents. The 2003 *Strategy* has been under revision and the French presidency of the EU issued a first preparatory outcome in 2008. Concerning the enhancement of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the Union shall act 'in the service of effective multilateralism and peace' and CSDP is '[c]ompliant with the principles of the United Nations Charter and the decisions of the United Nations Security Council (...)' (Council of the European Union 2008b: 11 and 15). These external policy aims are also convergent with the goals of the institutionalised dialogue with Russia, stated in all the documents produced in the relation.¹²

⁹ The cases of bilateral trade disputes between Member States and Moscow evidence this interplay between the bilateral and multilateral levels (Roth 2009).

¹⁰ The analysis of bilateral relations and how they interfere with the EU-Russian agenda are not part of this research. The aim of the paper is to highlight multilateral interactions as such.

¹¹ We underline in particular the Chapters 1, 5 and 7 of the Charter (United Nations 1945).

¹² The official documents produced in the context of EU-Russian relations are available at the website of the European External Action Service (EEAS), available at http://www.eeas.europa.eu/russia/index_en.htm. The issue of norms convergence between the two actors has produced abundant literature such as Nygren 2009; Makarychev 2008; Tocci 2008.

An influential effort to conceptualise the EU as an international actor has been shaped by Manners (2002). He developed the idea that the Union might be a 'normative power'. He aimed at 'thinking beyond traditional conceptions of the EU's international role and towards the idea of the EU's international role being primarily normative, not civilian or military' (Manners 2001). He considers that:

The EU as a normative power has an ontological quality to it – that the EU can be conceptualized as a changer of norms in the international system; a positivist quantity to it – that the EU acts to change norms in the international system; and a normative quality to it – that the EU should act to extend its norms into the international system (2002: 252).

Laïdi (2008; 2010) has also been studying the issue of norm, 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). The feasibility of such a normative commitment for the EU as a global actor and the various understandings of the concept will not be discussed here.¹³ Rather it addresses the effects of this assumption on its relationship with Russia, namely how the Union has been able to apply, or not, the core systemic principles that it has endorsed in this context. It is argued here that the principled relationship that the Union wants with Russia has proven to be difficult to achieve in the interaction with Russia, namely in the security domain (see section two of this paper).¹⁴

In an attempt to analyse change in IR, Grevi characterises the contemporary world as being 'interpolar'. His analysis underlines the fact that balances of power are highly evolutionary and dynamic, with a loss of dominant position by Washington on a global scale. He relates two basic trends: the multipolarisation of the balance of power and the deepening of interdependence. The management of this dual long-term 'great transition' requires, essentially, cooperation in the form of multilateral arrangements (Grevi 2009: 7 and 31-38). In his analysis, power is measured as the capacity to strengthening multilateral structures, able to bringing about an 'interpolar world'. In his view, the EU has the profile to do so. The EU is a unique global actor and its complexity conditions its relation with Moscow. Particularly, if one attends Caporaso's question: '[w]hat is the relationship between the number of actors involved in a potential multilateral scheme and the costs of transacting?' and its answer: transaction costs increase with the number of actors [these costs include: '[t]he costs of identifying the relevant others, of discovering their preferences and strategies, and of devising policies that are capable of discriminating among defectors and cooperators' (1992: 609)], then, the EU simultaneously facilitates multilateral cooperation, but it also complexifies it because of its complex and unique structures, functioning and policies.

How multilateralism applies to EU-Russian relations

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 (United Nations 1945). In this context, the Union seeks the promotion of 'effective multilateralism'. The goal of the

¹³ For an analysis of the EU commitment to the concept, see Wouters *et al.* 2010.

¹⁴ Globally, the use of conditionality and the insistence on normative convergence has been producing increasingly a 'boomerang effect' on the Union because Russia has been reacting negatively (Fernandes 2008a).

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 2003b). The Union recognises the importance of multilateralism for its policies that have external dimensions in other documents, such as the *European Security Strategy* (Council of the European Union 2003). Secondly, one might argue that the EU is itself a unique international organisation whose relations with Russia cannot be considered simply as bilateral relations as it is the case for relations between two states, for instance. 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. This is a complex framework which involves several EU institutions (the Commission, the Council, the Presidency, the High Representative), Member States and other international organisations.

The EU foreign policy is composed by, on the one hand, economic and commercial policies and, on the other hand, a security and defence content.¹⁵ Globally, the EU has developed and implemented a CFSP since 1992 and a CSDP since 1999 (former ESDP). Although the general definition of multilateralism considers that, '[m]ultilateralism is three or more actors engaging in voluntary and (more or less) institutionalised cooperation, with rules that apply (more or less) equally to all' (Aspinwall 2010), this analysis underlines that multilateralism is still defined in multiple manners. The first findings of the Mercury consortium, that studies *Multilateralism and the EU in the Contemporary Global Order*,¹⁶ also point 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 study also considers that 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). Thus, the EU uniqueness, understood as a process of integration¹⁷, creates, on the one hand, its own internal experience of multilateralism and, on the other hand, multilateral interactions with third actors. It may be argued, then, that EU-Russian relations have a multilateral feature.

The way third actors view and interact with the peculiarities of the Union is also important to shape the nature and the quality of the multilateral cooperation that is produced. Baranovsky (2002) evidences that there is a Russian tendency to consider the EU under the political angle and that Moscow views the Union through multiple perspectives. He explains four paradigms in Russian views: the EU as a model, as a partner, as a possible accession, as a mean to achieve results. According to the author, the second view is the most developed and it mixes political and economic motivations, whereas the third paradigm is the most demanding for Russia because it would imply exigent conditions to be an EU candidate country. Nikonov (2004) clarifies some core reasons that explain the Russian lack of interest for an eventual accession to the Union. He explains that Russia 'is too big and too Russian', even in a long term perspective. This affirmation refers to the geopolitical and cultural features of the Federation. Additionally, the EU is very rigid in terms of regulation and it is not a homogeneous entity. As a consequence, bilateral relations with Member States are often preferred. Finally, he underlines that there are other possible models to create a free trade area with the Union. Nonetheless, this article highlights that both the Union and Russia advocate multilateralism, at the discourse level,

¹⁵ Petiteville (2006) analyses the foreign policy of the EU in its multiple aspects, namely how the common trade policy of the Union contributes to the shape of EU's external dimension.

¹⁶ The information about the research conducted by the Mercury consortium is available at the Mercury website: http://www.mercury-fp7.net/index.php?id=10072&no_cache=1 (accessed April 2010).

¹⁷ Abbott and Snidal consider also the Union as a different case in the context of their study of international organisations. The state that '[a]lthough we discuss certain of its operations, we deliberately de-emphasize the EU because some would regard it as an exceptional case of institutionalization' (1992: 4).

as a desirable tool to address global politics and, particularly, global security (Council General Secretariat 2003; Putin 2007).

Additionally, the EU specifically binds its relationship with Moscow to the provisions that both parties endorsed in other multilateral organisations or conventions. EU-Russian relations are then informed by multilateralism coming from the systemic or global scale. Among the most important reference points, the United Nations, the OSCE and the Council of Europe are core depositories of principles and values. The role of the OSCE in the European security architecture has been discussed recurrently, despite the prominence that NATO has gained in the reshaping of the post-Cold War order. Although the Helsinki statement recognises official principles such as peace, consultation and the respect for human rights (Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, 1975), they will not be interpreted in the same way. The divergences about the commitments assumed in Helsinki, and later, have in fact been enduring. Klimov (2008) considers that it is time to organise a major international conference on the issue of security and take into account the new facts of the 21st century. He underlines that Helsinki occurred a long time ago and that it is not valid any more. Contrarily, the view of the Union is that the principles of Helsinki are valid. An official of the European Parliament Secretariat¹⁸ underlines that 'the Helsinki Act is not obsolete because the values are more important than the signatories of the time'. Additionally, the participation of Russia in several multilateral forums, such as the Council of Europe, has been based on its interest to achieve international legitimisation (Massias 2007:103-119). Moscow wants recognition of its specificities and not a convergence on perceived imposed standards.

Multilateralism in practice: EU-Russian security and defence dialogue

This section explores the significance of the Medvedev proposal for a new security treaty for EU-Russian relations and for the emergence of a multilateral form of dealing with security issues in Europe. Firstly, the article analyses the security and defence dialogue between Brussels and Moscow, under the 'Third Common Space of Cooperation', in order to assess the modest role that this domain of cooperation has played in the European order. In fact, one might argue that the achievements of this dialogue are a key to understand how both actors may contribute to a multilateral approach to European security. Secondly, the impact of the Medvedev proposal is analysed as such.

The Third Common Space of Cooperation

Since 1999, both the Union and Russia have acknowledged major internal and external changes. Moscow has recovered from the 1990s political and economic chaos, whereas Brussels has concretised its CFSP/CSDP and launched a renewed policy framework towards its neighbourhood, namely in the post-Soviet/ post-Warsaw Pact space (the Russian 'near abroad'¹⁹). Nonetheless, the two actors have not experienced the expected approximation, namely at the normative level and in cooperative solutions to solve 'frozen conflicts'. The Kremlin seems to have been looking for the maintenance of an enhanced role, in a Europe which is more and more defined by the EU (enlargements and neighbourhood policy) (Oldberg 2010). Problems of compatibility have arisen, namely because of different interpretations of sovereignty and integration. The Russian approach of sovereignty through territorial control has unique features in Russian foreign policy,

¹⁸ Interview conducted at the European Parliament, on 24 September 2008.

¹⁹ The near abroad corresponds to the fourteen Newly Independent States which integrated the USSR. This zone of vital interest, or at least sphere of influence, is fundamental to the Russian perception of threats. The Russian *near abroad* (*blizhneye zarubezhye*) is attributed to Kozyrev, minister of foreign affairs under Yeltsin (Tinguy 2008, 57-59; Safire, 1994).

which Chaudet *et al.* highlight by explaining the 'eurasianist' imperial characteristics of Russia (2009: 39-66, 99-120).

After the presidency of Yeltsin (1991-1999), the Putin leadership marked a new era for Russia that also introduced changes in the relationship with Brussels, leading it to a crossroads.²⁰ In fact, the state of play concerning the acceptance of the consequences of the end of the Cold War, during the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, has been challenged. Until then, the Russian Federation accepted a *status quo*, determined by its weaker position in the regional and global balance of power. This explained partly its approximation to Europe, mainly in economic and commercial areas but also, later, in the security and defence sector.²¹ The EU, Russia and their relations have changed during this timeframe. This has been particularly visible from the Russian side. Since the second mandate of president Putin (2004-2008), the relation has been characterised by two paradoxical features. 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 is not able to achieve a real strategic partnership. The above mentioned image of a crossroad is pertinent to define the relationship since then. It is so because the ten years period of the PCA has come to an end in 2007, the consequences of the 2004 Eastern enlargement of the EU are impacting on its approaches, the EU is deepening its role as a global and a regional actor and the Russian foreign policy has become more assertive.

A feature of EU-Russian relations is the fact that the 'low politics' agenda (economics and trade) has been more developed than the 'high politics' agenda (security and conflicts) (Fernandes 2008b). The first common declaration in the security field was issued in 2000. It included concrete measures and common objectives for peace and security. At the operational level, cooperation in crisis management was established as a field for further development, as well as regular consultations at the expert level. Both Brussels and Moscow considered the evolution of these practical aspects related to the evolution of the European integration process in this domain (EU-Russia Summit, 2000). This enhancement of the political dialogue towards a security dimension has brought two modest results: a Russian participation in a CSDP mission and improved channels of communication. The first CSDP mission in which Moscow contributed is actually the EUFOR Chad/RCA, after the signing of an agreement in late 2008 (Council of the European Union 2008), below mentioned. Russia was also the first non-EU country to have regular meetings with the Political and Security Committee (PSC), created in 2001 after the Nice Treaty signature. This represents an additional institutional channel in the framework of cooperation and in the security dimension of the political dialogue.

Under the St. Petersburg third common space of external security and the 2005 Road Map to concretise this area of cooperation, five priorities are identified. The five priority areas are: 'Strengthened dialogue and co-operation on the international scene; fight against terrorism; non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, strengthening of export control regimes and disarmament; co-operation in crisis management; co-operation in the field of civil protection' (European Commission 2005). One of them, cooperation in crisis management, is directly connected to CSDP. The other four are mainly dealt with through CFSP. The political and security dialogue with Moscow, through the CFSP, has intensified even if the 'common neighbourhood' is clearly a difficult area of cooperation, as the current crisis in Georgia further highlights. The concrete

²⁰ Some analysts, such as Nadia Arbatova (2008), have a sharper view on the situation. She affirms that the turning-point has been surpassed in 2007 and that the EU and Russia took a different way. She wonders if they will meet again.

²¹ The relation with NATO has also led to an institutional framework of cooperation, based on the *Founding Act* (1997).

achievements in CSDP-Russia cooperation have materialised, so far, in four main aspects: missions, orientation courses, expert talks and virtual exercises.

The EUFOR Chad/RCA military mission is unique in the context of EU-Russian relations because, for the first time, Russia has contributed to the operational deployment of a CSDP mission. This operation in the Republic of Chad and in the Central African Republic was designed as a 'bridge operation', for a one year period, to be substituted by the *UN mission in the Central African Republic and Chad* (MINURCAT). In March 2009, MINURCAT has taken over the authority of the EU operation. The UN deployed their mission since 2007. On November 5, 2008, Solana and the Russian ambassador to the EU signed an agreement on the Russian participation in the operation (Council of the European Union 2008). Previously, in May, the EU Military Committee analysed positively the offer of a contribution from Russia and, in October, the Council endorsed the agreement that had been negotiated with Moscow (Council of the European Union 2008f; 2008g). The negotiations started in March and were concluded in early November, followed by the Russian deployment on November 24-26. Besides Russia, only two other third states (Croatia and Albania) contributed to the mission.

In the Chad/CAR case, Russia demonstrated a change of attitude. The country did not overcome questions of principle²² but it did contribute fundamentally to the mission. Considering the huge distances to be covered in the region of eastern Chad and the north-east of CAR and the EU lack of airlift, the Russian four helicopters and 120 supporting personnel were needed. The balance of the Russian participation is considered positive. The full Russian operation was achieved by January 2009. The mission seems to have triggered the Russian will to follow what the Union does in its missions. Additionally, the long process in the Russian *Duma* to ratify the EU-Russian agreement for the Chad/CAR mission has also provoked a will to simplify the procedures. In fact, the agreement was ratified after the mission ended, in the autumn of 2009. The parties agreed about the fact that an exchange of letters would be sufficient in the future.²³

The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon since December 2009 could be an opportunity to improve the EU-Russia security dialogue. Namely, the *troika* PSC meetings with Russia (discuss CFSP issues only) have neither delivered enough concrete results, nor cooperation in the scope of CSDP. Russia is not satisfied with the arrangements proposed by the EU to all third states in general. There has been also a need for a package of technical agreements to clarify how classified information can be protected, namely in Russia, that was finally signed in June 2010. It comprises all the areas of cooperation and is especially significant for crisis management and projects requiring access to classified material (Council of the European Union 2010). More positively, non-proliferation is an area of cooperation offering prospects for closer interaction between the EU and Russia. This area is an important element of the security dialogue that can contribute to an improved political convergence between the two parties and impact on the willingness to cooperate further. One of the priorities of the third common space is 'non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, strengthening of export control regimes and disarmament' (Council of the European Union 2005). This goal is pursued using the *G8*

²² There are EU red lines on CSDP that are twofold: preserve EU decision-making autonomy and the conditions for Russian participation in EU crisis management operations (defined by the arrangements of the Seville European Council). On the one hand, the Kremlin wants to be involved in the decision making process on an equal footing with Brussels. On the other hand, the EU considers Russian participation at the same level as the participation of other third states, based on the framework of the Seville Council conclusions (Council of the European Union 2002). Globally, Moscow wants more influence and integration compared to what the Europeans are willing to concede.

²³ The data concerning the deployment and the Russian participation in the EUFOR Chad/CAR mission have been retrieved, namely, from the author interviews at Directorate-General 8 and 9 of the Council Secretariat, on November 11, 2008, November 26, 2008, December 12, 2008, and March 3, 2010.

Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, created in 2002.

The deepening of CFSP/CSDP is regularly pointed out as a precondition for the EU to be an empowered global actor and a stability provider. This perspective is part of a debate about the nature and the impact of EU power (McCormick 2007). Nonetheless, besides any considerations about the Union capacities in these domains, understanding the growing difficulties in creating political convergence is crucial to interpret the poor EU-Russian military cooperation. Furthermore, there is today a complex 'basket' of security issues which relate to each other and undermine cooperation on 'frozen' conflicts and weaken the legal bases for solutions. For instance, there has been a growing need to further discuss, in a collective manner, the consequences of a defence missile system and its implications for the future of the CSDP and relations with Russia. Although Member States retain sovereignty on the issue and they are allowed to engage in bilateral moves with Washington, the Bush administration policies provoked unease in Brussels. The specificities of the integration process require at least consultation, not to mention the growing appeal of European internal solidarity, especially with respect to Russia. Although the CSDP does not cover missile defence, Javier Solana stated that 'the treaties in force allocated sovereignty over this issue to the Member States, but this must be compatible with [the] EU's general interest in security' (Euractiv 2007). CSDP is influential in defining the EU's role as a global actor in the medium and long term. In the common space of EU-Russian cooperation on external security, the two main aspects are crisis management and non-proliferation. Ryabkov identified a divergence of views only on a few issues, concerning separatist entities (Ryabkov 2008).²⁴

The fact that Brussels has experienced serious difficulties in producing a unified stance towards Russia has had a serious impact in advancing the security multilateral agenda. The difficult search for unity has reached a severe moment in 2008, in the context of the Russian-Georgian war. In the aftermath of this war, the EU went through an internal crisis concerning the attitude to adopt towards Moscow that involved Member States, the Council, the Commission and the Parliament. The Union sensed that '[I]a crise en Géorgie place la relation entre l'UE et la Russie à la croisée des chemins' (Conseil de l'Union européenne, 2008, p. 4). There are different national perspectives in the EU on Russia and there is no consensual method to deal with Moscow. Some Member States wish to reconsider cooperation with Russia on the basis of Russia's non-normative behaviour, while others favour a more pragmatic approach (Leonard and Popescu, 2007).

Immediately after the Georgian war, the EU stance has been concretised in three main events: the Extraordinary Council of 1 September, the Review of EU-Russia relations (Conseil de l'Union européenne, 2008; European Commission, 2008), and the EU-Russia Nice summit of November (Présidence de la République, 2008). The review is the first exercise of this type conducted by the EU where a frank and open wording highlights the problems putting a brake on the relationship. It is a direct reaction to the need to redefine attitudes towards Russia in the aftermath of the Georgian crisis. It was meant to address two important issues: to send a public message to Moscow stating the principle of Georgian territorial integrity, and to support the resumption of negotiations with Moscow for a new cooperation agreement to substitute the obsolete PCA. In fact, the EU core interests regarding Russia are stated and the aim was to consider 'the complex web of overlapping and shared interests in the EU-Russia relationship, and to make a sober assessment of where the EU's own interests now lie' (European Commission, 2008, p. 2). The political impact of this document was influential in prioritising EU-Russia cooperation because of EU interests, even if principles were still defended by Brussels in the letter.

²⁴ Ryabkov was director of the Department of European Cooperation of the Russian Federation's ministry of foreign affairs. At the time of writing, he is the deputy foreign minister.

The balance of EU institutional positions, on how to deal with Russia after the August war, has been summed up by the chair of the *European Parliament Delegation to the European Union-Russia PCC*. In an internal meeting of October 2008, she acknowledged that 'no business as usual' could be undertaken with Moscow because the situation was exceptional, while dialogue was to be maintained (Oomen-Ruijten, 2008). Nonetheless, it was visible that a fuzzy situation existed in the Union at the time about how to cooperate with Russia. The officials and the institutions were looking for the determination of a position in the making. For instance, the Chair directly asked the Commission and the Council if their working groups were meeting and if the work was blocked until November 15 (the day of the Nice EU-Russian summit).

The author considers that the importance attributed to the 2008 EU review of its relations with Russia is linked to the 'emotional' moment of EU-Russian relations provoked by the August 2008 Russian-Georgian war. This moment is particularly illustrated by the conclusions of the extraordinary Council on 1 September 2008 (Conseil de l'Union européenne, 2008). The 2008 recommendations reveal the high degree of tension in EU-Russian relations through a screening of all the conflicting issues among the parties. The text is interesting namely because it refers the main legal instruments that are not being implemented by Russia and because it reveals the internal EU tensions. The EU ability to accommodate Russia as a bloc during the French presidency seems to have been only episodic. It also irritated some Member States as for instance during the Nice summit, in November 2008, when President Sarkozy announced an OSCE meeting to discuss the Medvedev proposal and criticised the US missile defence project (see below).

According to Trenin (2008), the Caucasus reveals a multiple failure for which three actors are responsible: Russia, the United States and the EU. Moscow has maintained the conflicts 'frozen' during too much time. Washington has failed to prevent an attempt by the Georgian president to take the separatists regions by force. Brussels is considered to have failed in a minor proportion and that it should act 'more boldly' in this part of Europe and become a united player. His reading of the rationales of Russian actions is linked to the United States and not the issue of values observance in EU-Russian relations. He does not consider that the Russians engaged in conflict against EU principles and values because there are internal forces in the country that desire peaceful relations with the neighbours. His reading is geopolitical instead. He considers that the conflict evidenced a conflict between United States hegemony and Russian great power ambitions and that the 'redlines' of the Kremlin have been surpassed. The Russian limits are the United States political and military presence in the post-soviet space, namely NATO enlargement towards Ukraine and Georgia.

The return to the *status quo* situation prior to the conflict has not been an option since the conflict. The loss of Abkhazia and South Ossetia for Georgia seems improbable in the foreseeable future, despite the presence of the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) since October 2008. One of the main tasks for the EU Member States is to face the need to find the right balance between condemning/sanctioning Russia *versus* cooperating in the light of major interdependencies and the weight of Moscow in global issues (energy, Iran, missile defence and other security issues). The political framework of cooperation, namely the Third Common Space of Cooperation, is the multilateral tool available in the context of EU-Russian relations.

The Medvedev security proposal: Towards new multilateral arrangements?

One of the most important issues that the Union had to face in the aftermath of the Georgian crisis was the fact that the Russian foreign policy became much more self-assertive, in continuity with Putin's aim of 'recreating the greatness of Russia' (Kanet 2009:

5; Oldberg 2010). The Medvedev proposal for a new security pact in Europe has emerged in this renewed context. In fact, a new debate appears to be entering into EU-Russia relations. It existed before but it has not been tackled directly so far. The discussion of the European security architecture and the need to redefine is prone to impact on the relation. This is due to several factors, namely the recent EU developments in CFSP/CSDP, Russian transformation during Putin's mandates, Russian views on the EU as a security actor and the August 2008 war. It is a complex issue since it implies a discussion of the role of NATO, the US, the Council of Europe and, the OSCE. To analyse the ongoing debate provoked by recent Russian security discourses, two elements have to be balanced: Russian discourses and the Kremlin capacity to deliver in accordance to them.

The Medvedev proposal is vague and sometimes inconsistent. For instance, Article 10 foresees that all the international organisations and states of the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area shall become parties of the new security treaty. Globally, the proposal to include all these actors raises serious issues on the functioning of such an alliance and it ignores the political differences among them. For instance, as far as NATO is concerned, the signature of this treaty would be incompatible with its own article 5 (mutual defence) because article 7 and 8 of the Medvedev proposal state the principle of mutual defence as well. Thus, NATO member states would assume this principle for the whole area. From the EU side, nobody sees a consistent Russian plan. Nonetheless, discourses need to be interpreted under the scrutiny of the Russian ability to deliver the desired outcomes. This section assesses this capacity in the security field and how the Union has been dealing with this new agenda.

The issue of how to read Russia and, as a consequence, how to deal with it, is a recurrent in Western concerns. This question has gained a renewed importance since 2006, because of the Russian reassertion of power, which can be seen in the energy disputes but also in the ability of the Kremlin to oppose undesired developments, such as NATO enlargement, and more vigorously in the August 2008 war. There is a disagreement on how to interpret Russian power. In this context, EU Member States (and NATO allies) have demonstrated a 'wait and see' attitude towards the Medvedev proposal to reshape the existing security architecture into a new *European Security Pact*. This idea was launched by the Russian President in 2008 during a visit to Germany (President of Russia 2008b). It has been promoted later by Foreign Minister Lavrov in the sense of reshaping security relations and institutions in Europe (Lavrov 2009).

Concomitantly, new Russian doctrines have been made official. In fact the *Russian national security strategy to 2020* was approved in May 2009 (Zysk 2009), replacing the 2000 text. Additionally, in December 2009, the draft Russian military doctrine indicated a more assertive use of military means to defend Russia's interests and strategy (*Russia Today* 2009). In mid-2008, a Presidential decree clarified the signs of change which have been visible previously concerning the new Russian foreign policy. The new concept of foreign policy states the objectives of the Federation, such as the capacity to impact on the global agenda (President of Russia 2008). Finally, a draft 'European Security Strategy' was sent by Medvedev in November 2009 to European foreign leaders (President of Russia 2009). The May 2008 Medvedev's speech in Berlin called for the creation of a new European security pact, but without any specification of *modus operandi*. The consequences of these doctrinal moves are still difficult to assess but they are a key to interpret what is at stake for Moscow and, consequently, for Europe.

In real terms, three interrelated security issues have been addressed and opposed by Russia, with some success: missile defence in Europe, NATO enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia, and the CFE (Conventional Forces in Europe) Treaty. They are dealt with in different forums, at bilateral and multilateral levels. The existing security architecture makes it difficult to discuss missile defence outside the bilateral US-Russian dialogue.

Actually, there are several security dialogues which do not necessarily overlap. For instance, the EU lacks competences, under Title V of the Treaty on the European Union, to discuss hard security matters. Member States are, then, able to pursue national aims in bilateral talks with third states. NATO enlargement is a more divisive topic among Member States as compared to the US plan to extend missile defence in Europe,²⁵ which has led to a delay in offering *Membership Action Plans* to the candidates.

Concerning conventional armaments, there is a shared concern about the Russian suspension from the CFE, since December 2007. As a result, the EU Member States have been supporting missile defence in the NATO context, have been cautious with enlargement, and have been worried by the CFE issue. One can translate these positions as mixed messages towards Moscow, in a balance of negative and positive decisions on the Kremlin stances on the three disputes. The European responses, so far, highlight that, contrary to what happened in the 1990's, these long lasting and recurring disagreements are now to be dealt taking into account a real Russian capacity of influence. The presence of Medvedev in the last NATO summit had a high symbolic impact, qualified as a 'fresh start' or a 'reset' (Blitz and Spiegel 2010). The Russian President agreed on the idea of a missile system to which it could contribute. Nonetheless, operational matters and the issue of sharing sensitive information cast a serious shadow on the political euphoria that the Lisbon summit created.

The bottom line of the disagreement on security issues lies in a deep incompatibility of views, besides the flaws within the proposed Russian concept of security architecture. On the one hand, the Kremlin does not recognise the legitimacy of the existence of NATO in the post-Cold War world. On the other hand, the Allies do not even question NATO *raison d'être*. The former Secretary-General embodied this fact when he acknowledged that he is willing to engage in a dialogue on Medvedev proposal but that he considers the existing security architecture as being 'satisfactory' and 'balanced' (Scheffer 2009). The EU has not been answering the 1990s Russian will for core thinking about transatlantic relations and European security. On the contrary, Brussels has invested much more in economic cooperation with Russia, while the US-Russian relationship has focused on security. In fact, since the 1990s, Russian foreign policy was largely pro-European, based on the existence of a 'European ideal'. This trend lasted until the beginning of the first mandate of President Vladimir Putin. Moscow considered that there was a trade-off between the EU and NATO, at least in a long term perspective. NATO still represents a challenge to Russian interests, despite the *modus vivendi* experienced (the NATO-Russia Council, for instance). It is then possible to interpret the Russian reluctant acceptance of the first two NATO enlargements (1999 and 2004) as the provisional agreement on a *status quo* explained by its weaker position in the balance of power. The Bucharest Summit, in April 2008, demonstrated that the *status quo* had evolved, resulting in the delay of further enlargements towards Ukraine and Georgia. The Moscow opposition was one of the causes which informed, for instance, German and French caution in this move.

It might be too early to foresee how the discussion of the European security architecture, and the need to redefine it, will impact on the Moscow – Brussels relation, and *vice-versa*. It is a complex issue since it implies a discussion of the role of several international organisations. The Union has not responded to it yet, at least in a consistent manner, which may be explained by internal disagreements: a passive 'wait-and-see' posture (namely the period that consisted in waiting for Obama's turn) *versus* active (present an EU offer). The EU still needs to be taken more seriously by Russia on security affairs, and how the US shadow impacts on it. Today, there is a window of opportunity for the EU to have a

²⁵ The issue of missile defence has been surpassed politically during the last NATO summit in Lisbon last November. The allies agreed to cooperate on the system. Russia has also lifted its recurrent opposition during this summit (Blitz and Spiegel 2010).

greater and defining role in this forthcoming debate on security, which Russia would most likely welcome. Although the Medvedev proposal is considered one of the 'big things' in the current EU-Russian agenda, EU officials²⁶ acknowledge that there is no novelty in the substance and that the issue that is of matter is the process in which the debate will be conducted. The issue was expected to be handled at the OSCE. In fact, the *Corfu process* was launched on 28 June 2009 (OSCE 2009). A Council official²⁷ considers that it places the debate in another phase that is less general, such as merely brainstorming. Eight different areas are specified and Member States are pushing forward proposals. Despite the fact that it may be considered a minor change, it is an evolution. The official also underlines that the main issue is about the coordination of the EU 27 Member States that are a majority in the OSCE.

Some EU Member States have tried to engage more consistently, at the EU level, with the Kremlin on the security agenda in the context of improved relations with Russia since 2009. The most visible proposal might be the German-Russian initiative of June 2010 in order to launch an 'EU-Russian Political and Security Committee' that would permit to achieve joint decisions. The idea was resumed in the trilateral Deauville meeting that gathered France, Germany and Russia in October 2010 (the fifth meeting of the kind). Security issues were high in the agenda of this encounter, namely because of the need to prepare for the Russian rapprochement with NATO during its summit in the following month (Zuvela 2010). After the German-Russian move, the French president advocated a fuzzy 'economic security union' between the Union and Moscow. Nonetheless, as much as Sarkozy's idea has been seen as a mere statement to trigger re-approximation with Moscow, the German initiative is difficult to materialise if one considers the sensitive issue of EU decision-making autonomy in CSDP (above mentioned). As far as the Medvedev proposal is concerned, the lack of interest for the Russian 'European Security Treaty' seems to be further confirmed by the French and German positions in Deauville. Whereas a German official considered that it was 'more important to have closer EU-Russian co-operation', a French official declared that 'the Russian idea for a new security framework was 'no longer really the subject'' (Hall and Peel 2010). On the Russian side, despite official discourses pointing to the continued interest in advancing the Medvedev proposal, the author considers that the Russian goal is not to get the proposed treaty ratified as such, but rather push for new pan-European security arrangements that would give Russia an improved role. A high rank official of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID) declared that the substance of the European Security Treaty was to ask the question whether Russia is 'inside or outside the Atlantic community' and that it served the purpose to launch the discussion. Practicalities need now to be discussed.²⁸ On the EU side, the most cautious voices see the Russian move as an attempt to veto security-related decisions in the EU (and NATO). Nonetheless, even these sceptical voices acknowledge that 'Russia should nonetheless be consulted on all major security issues' (Onyszkiewicz 2010).

Conclusion: The need to reshape the European security order multilaterally

This article has aimed at contributing to a better understanding of multilateralism, namely by analysing the case of EU-Russian relations in the security and defence field. As a domain of social sciences, international relations theories do not offer a unique explanation of the multilateral phenomena despite the need to grasp the complexity of the empirical world. The growing significance of institutionalised and multilateral cooperation since the 1990's has not yet provided a unified theoretical approach to the phenomenon. Taking into

²⁶ Interviews conducted at the Council of the European Union, on 27 April 2009 and 1 March 2010.

²⁷ Interview conducted at the Council of the European Union, on 1 March 2010.

²⁸ This declaration has been collected by the author during an informal meeting on 9 September 2010.

consideration the features of 'multilateralism', the present analysis has characterised EU-Russian relations as being a specific and unique form of multilateralism.

This argument lays mainly on the characteristics of the paradigm and on the nature of the Union as an international actor. In fact, the EU creates its own experience of multilateralism, internally and externally. Externally, the EU might be viewed as a normative actor that conveys multilateralism as a desirable tool to achieve its goals. In their relations, the Union and Russia assume several values and principles that should guide their cooperation. These values and principles have not been defined for this specific relation but are inspired from other multilateral *fora* instead. The United Nations, the Council of Europe and the OSCE are the core depositaries of these guiding provisions that are assumed as such, in the letter, in the overall cooperation between Brussels and Moscow.

The literature of the beginning of the 1990s enhanced 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). Our objective was to characterise the kind of multilateralism created by EU-Russian relations and how it affects the approaches of the two players, in particular to security challenges in Europe. Cooperation under the Third Common Space of Cooperation has proven to be modest but evolving towards a greater common engagement of both players. Nonetheless, the security dialogue does not comprise 'hard' security issues. Additionally, both political divergences and the limited agenda of EU-Russian security dialogue have impeded Brussels and Moscow to engage in the areas of their 'common' neighbourhood and in the definition of new security architecture.

This article has also analysed the relation that the Union developed with the Russian Federation in the defence realm. The cooperation with Moscow has been characterised by a decade of unfulfilled promises in the security and defence fields. The security dialogue was launched more systematically into the EU-Russian agenda in 2000 and, in 2003, it has been organised under a 'common space for external security'. Nonetheless, this is one of the less advanced areas of cooperation between the two actors as compared to the overall framework of cooperation.

The major consequence of the Medvedev proposal has been the fact that the security agenda has gained more visibility. The impact of this development on improving political convergence between Brussels and Moscow has still to be foreseen. Nonetheless, a resurgent Russia introduces the need for the EU to devise a new and consistent model of multilateral cooperation with Moscow that comprises security, while pursuing the management of real interdependencies. The Medvedev 'proposal' for a new security pact in Europe needs to be interpreted in the context of Russian re-assertiveness that has materialised in a better position to impose its most-favourable terms (Georgia, missile defence, NATO enlargement).

The Union has not demonstrated willingness to address these Russian evolutions, as the poor reactions to the Medvedev proposal have shown. The proposal voices recurrent Russian dissatisfaction with the European security architecture that need to be accommodated in light of the Russian renewed capacity to deliver beyond mere rhetoric. This need arises besides any interpretation of the legitimacy of foreign policy actions. The Union has developed a political and security dialogue with Moscow that has a potential to shape multilaterally this accommodation, provided that sufficient political will and unity emerges from the Union as a whole.

The 'reflection period' that the Union undertook towards Moscow after the Georgian war in 2008 has shown that the EU unity promoted by the French presidency has been

sporadic and that the cleavage between Member States on how to deal with Russia is enduring. Despite the Union presence in Georgia through the EUMM and the increased visibility of security in EU-Russian relations, the growing dissatisfaction of Brussels with Russian developments is expressed directly, namely in the 2008 review of EU-Russian relations conducted by the Commission. Nonetheless, although the banner of 'no business as usual' has been endorsed as an EU stance in the aftermath of the Georgia crisis, the focus rapidly returned to trade goals. This fact has also been visible in the EU avoidance of the issue raised by Medvedev for a new security treaty in Europe and more globally, security arrangements in Europe. Nonetheless, multilateralism implies reciprocity that ought to be achieved in all the dimensions of EU-Russian dialogue if better deliverables are to be achieved, namely to overcome growing competition at the expense of cooperation.

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