

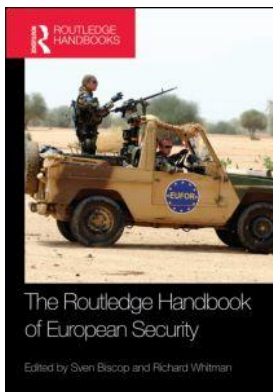
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Sven Biscop, Richard G. Whitman

The Three Paradigms of European Security in Eastern Europe

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Hiski Haukkala

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13

THE THREE PARADIGMS OF
EUROPEAN SECURITY IN
EASTERN EUROPE

Co-operation, competition and conflict

Hiski Haukkala

When it comes to Eastern Europe the term security should be understood in the broadest possible sense.¹ For the European Union the increasing exposure to Eastern Europe, or what is increasingly known simply as the ‘Eastern neighbourhood’, spells a myriad of security challenges, both soft and hard. The area is home to some of the most impoverished and unstable countries in the world. For example, of the 12 countries in the area, altogether 4 feature prominently in the top 60 on *Foreign Policy*’s failed state index: Kyrgyzstan (31), Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (tied at 39) and Georgia (47) (*Foreign Policy*, 2011). In addition, the relations between the countries in the region are often strained and the area is home to some of the most protracted and difficult inter- as well as intrastate conflicts in the world. What is more, the area also includes a less than fully stable regional hegemon, Russia, that jealously guards its perceived sphere of influence and has eyed the EU’s increasing role with some suspicion.

Yet it is in the EU’s own interests to engage with the region in a substantial and comprehensive manner (Bonvicini, 2006). It is also a region where the EU increasingly is expected to take the lead as well as shoulder the primary responsibility of peace, stability and security (Biscop, 2005: 37). This is something the EU itself has acknowledged as well. This was reflected in, for example, the EU’s own European Security Strategy (ESS) from 2003, which stated quite unambiguously how ‘building security in our neighbourhood’ was a key strategic objective for the Union (European Council, 2003). This view was reiterated in the Implementation Report of December 2008 (European Council, 2008a) as well.

That the EU itself thinks that Eastern Europe – and by extension Central Asia – is of considerable importance and interest is not to be doubted. Since the ‘Big Bang’ enlargement of 2004, the EU has gained direct access and at times unwelcome exposure to the volatile dynamics in the region. What is more, in recent years Brussels has been on its way to increasingly becoming a recognized and even welcomed actor in the region (for more about the role of recognition in the EU’s policies in the East, see Bengtsson, 2010). That said, this chapter nevertheless ventures on to analyse whether the EU’s voiced ambitions have been matched by the events on the ground. To a large degree, the result is a qualified no: despite the fact

that the EU clearly has vital interests and grand objectives, to date there have been not many actual deliverables, at least outright successes, for the Union to point to.

It is argued that the main reason for the relatively lacklustre performance by the Union stems from the conflicting logics at play in the region. The EU – which often is a one-size-fits-all actor internationally – is faced with three conflicting logics of interaction, or paradigms of security, in the East: co-operation, competition and conflict. This chapter will discuss all of them in turn and will end with some concluding thoughts pondering the relative weight the three paradigms can be expected to have in the future, as well as discussing the EU role in the region. Obviously a short chapter like this does not allow a full analysis of the issues both thematically and geographically. Instead, examples are selected from both categories with a view to arriving at as comprehensive a picture of the issues at hand as possible.

Co-operation

The dissolution of the Soviet Union catapulted the then EC into leadership in Europe (Pelkmans and Murphy, 1991). The challenge was perhaps the most acute in the East, where in January 1992 the Community was faced with the challenge of having 15 new countries altogether in the former Soviet Union (FSU). To be sure, in the first instance the challenge was mainly a negative one: to prevent the further disintegration of the former Soviet space and the significant rise in the EC's responsibilities in the region that would obviously ensue (Lippert, 1993: 130). Therefore the policy line chosen was based on the need to solidify a new and stable order in the post-Cold War Europe. Karen E. Smith has summed up the EC's line of reasoning by arguing that its approach was to be based on economic aid that was 'intended to facilitate economic reforms; reforms would help reintegrate each country into the world economy; and this would help create a new European regional security order' (K. E. Smith, 1999: 49; see also Webber, 2007: ch. 5). In addition to this, one more piece of the puzzle was also certain: full accession into the EC was not on the cards, especially for the countries of the FSU, with the notable exception of the three Baltic states that did indeed accede in 2004.

Regardless of the membership perspective, the EC's policy line towards the East was based on the uniform assumption that the eventual interaction and integration was to be based on common norms and values. This understanding followed logically from the developments at the end of the Cold War (the events have been discussed in detail in K. E. Smith, 1999). The spirit of the age was that of the triumphalism of Western liberal values. Therefore the destination ahead was certain – liberal democracy and market economy – and the road to be taken was that of transition (and not more open-ended transformation) to Western liberal norms and values (Ikenberry, 2001: 215–16).

It is against this background that the Union's enhanced attention to the role of political conditionality based on liberal principles in the Union's relations with third parties during the post-Cold War era should be understood. Despite the crucial differences in the nature of the Community's offer in the Partnership and Co-operation Agreements (PCAs) that were negotiated with the countries of the FSU and the Europe Agreements that resulted in eventual EU accession, the logic in the arrangements was largely the same, with the offer being made conditional upon meeting the key criteria put forth by the Community itself: in exchange for adherence to a set of 'European values' and the implementation of liberal economic reforms, the Community would allocate assistance and grant closer forms of association when necessary (Vahl, 2001: 9). In essence, in devising a dense network of bilateral relations with the countries in Eastern Europe, the Community not only responded

to external demands, but also showed strategic actorness by consciously seeking to project its views about good governance on its new partners (K. E. Smith, 1999: 173). All in all, the policy choices during the 1990s amounted to what can be called the Union's claim of regional normative hegemony, as exemplified best by the accession and European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) processes (Haukkala, 2008, 2010).

The 'Big Bang' Eastern enlargement of 2004 created a group of new issues for the EU. It now acquired a set of new neighbours that presented it with a host of new challenges. It is safe to say that for the first time the EU acquired a direct stake in the volatile dynamics of Eastern Europe, including the Southern Caucasus. The EU was also faced with the pressing question of how to deal with the fresh calls for accession that started to emerge from the forthcoming 'new neighbours'. To all intents and purposes, the enlargement process seemed to have become a perpetual motion engine, a fact not all the member states and wider public were equally comfortable with.

It is against this backdrop that the emergence of European Neighbourhood Policy in 2003 should be examined. The ENP can be seen as having a threefold function: First and foremost, it is a security and stability policy in its own right. Second, it is an attempt to devise an alternative to further enlargements of the Union. Instead of full integration and institutional immersion, the 'neighbours' are offered wide-ranging co-operation and association. Third, it is an attempt at (re)injecting the Union's normative agenda and the application of conditionality more strongly into relations with non-candidate countries (see Kelley, 2006; Dannreuther, 2006; Sasse, 2008). As such, it is a conscious attempt at squaring the circle of relinquishing enlargement while retaining the Union's normative power in Europe.

At the heart of the initiative is the EU's offer of enhanced relations and closer integration based on shared values between the Union and its neighbours. The mechanism is simple: in return for effective implementation of reforms (including aligning significant parts of national legislation with the EU *acquis*), the EU will grant closer economic integration and association with its partners (European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2011). The approach is twofold, as the EU wanted first to tap the full potential of the already existing PCAs, namely the gradual harmonization of legal norms with the EU *acquis* and the creation of free trade and only then move towards a set of new 'neighbourhood agreements' that would include a deep and comprehensive free trade area (DCFTA) as well as the prospect of closer political association with the Union.

The ENP also envisaged a process based on clear differentiation between countries and regular monitoring of progress. It is, however, here that the Union's attempt at normative hegemony in its neighbourhood becomes clearly visible, as the process is built on a set of bilateral relationships between the individual neighbours and the EU. Scholars seem to be in agreement that this is a deliberate choice on the part of the Union to maximize its leverage over the neighbours (K. E. Smith, 2005: 762–3; Vahl, 2005; Haukkala, 2008). Therefore, to all intents and purposes the Union does not give much meaningful say to the neighbours in setting the normative agenda: the objectives and the means are non-negotiable and the only time the partners have been consulted is when the individual action plans with clear benchmarks and timetables are being agreed upon. As such, the Union has been offering (or withholding) economic benefits depending on the neighbours' ability and willingness to implement the Union's normative agenda, and the EU is willing to give its neighbours influence basically only over *when* they want to implement the Union's demands and not *how* that is to be done (see also Bicchi, 2006).

The ENP also includes an aid component. The main instrument is the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) that was introduced in 2007 and has

replaced the TACIS funding in Eastern Europe. The budget for the Financial Framework 2007–13 is altogether €12 billion, an increase of 32 per cent compared with the previous budgetary cycle (European Commission, 2010).

Although the EU itself has been convinced of the credentials of its initiative, the neighbours themselves have been less impressed (Bengtsson, 2010; Bechev and Nicolaïdis, 2010). Ukraine is a case in point that has repeatedly voiced its frustration over the lack of credible accession prospects as well as the nimble level of market access and economic aid coming from the Union (Haukkala, 2008; Sasse, 2008). At the same time the lack of any serious progress in reforms in many of the neighbours has made it fairly easy for the Union to defer any further serious concessions.

Nevertheless, to allay some of the criticism the EU launched the Eastern Partnership in 2009. Compared to the ENP, the main new innovation in the EaP is the new multilateral component that encourages the convergence of the partner countries' legislation, norms and practices to those of the Union. The practical implementation of the multilateral track takes place through four thematic platforms: (i) democracy, good governance and stability; (ii) economic integration and convergence with EU policies; (iii) energy security; and (iv) people-to-people contacts. The multilateral track also provides for civil society participation through a separate Forum whose results will feed into the thematic platforms. Visibility and concrete substance are brought to the EaP through a number of regional flagship projects ranging from border management to energy efficiency and environmental concerns. Once again, political association and deeper economic integration are on offer for those partner countries which advance in agreed reforms. A related plan is to encourage free trade within the region itself. Of concrete and most immediate interest to the citizens of the partner countries is the facilitation of mobility. The EaP expands on the already set goal of country-by-country advancement to visa facilitation and readmission agreements with prospects for a visa dialogue with the possibility of eventual visa freedom. Integral to the success of this path is the the partner countries' ability to deal with the challenges posed by illegal immigration and other border-security-related issues.

Despite an impressive catalogue of new instruments and initiatives, the actual results from this flurry of activism have remained fairly meagre. To a degree this is due to Russia's suspicions, discussed in detail in the next section, but the nature of the EU's own policy template is also part of the problem. As Christou (2010) has argued, both the ENP and the EaP are based on binary logics of co-operation and containment where the essential securitization of the Eastern neighbourhood in effect limits and prevents the EU from effecting meaningful change through its policies: Instead of being able to offer its neighbours full benefits of freedom and interaction, the EU ends up shielding and protecting itself behind various policies that undercut the transformative potential of the EU in the East.

That said, the nature of the Eastern neighbours and indeed the very neighbourhood plays a role also. Countries in the region are usually weak states with limited administrative capacity. Corruption is entrenched and they are often divided states, either physically, as is the case with Georgia or Moldova, or mentally and politically when it comes to their place in Europe, as is the case with, for example, Ukraine. As a consequence, the countries have faced severe limitations in their ability and even basic willingness to engage in the kinds of reforms propagated by the Union (Lynch, 2005: 36).

A case in point is Ukraine. Despite repeatedly professing its European calling and credentials, Ukraine has failed to fully embrace the kind of societal change and reforms that would take it genuinely closer to the European Union. The brief 'romance' with the EU that followed the Orange Revolution of 2004 has increasingly been replaced with mounting

fatigue and disillusionment on both sides. To better understand the difficulties Ukraine has faced in effecting its European calling we should keep in mind that the country is essentially what North *et al.* (2009) have called a natural state. Natural states are essentially limited-access orders that are based on a close fusion of economics and politics, patron–client relationships and rent-seeking. By contrast, open-access orders separate economic and political interests to a large degree and are contractual and rule-governed while allowing mass access to rents (for a useful discussion in the IR context, see Buzan, 2010). In essence, the EU has been propagating open-access solutions to a still predominantly closed Ukrainian order (for a discussion that highlights these characteristics in the Ukrainian society, see Kuzio, 2011). Responsible Ukrainian elites, too, acknowledge this conundrum and would in fact prefer to move towards a more open order, as exemplified by the repeated Ukrainian calls for domestic reforms and integration with the EU.

But the transition from a closed to an open-access order is difficult, even dangerous, as developments that favour the move towards open access orders tend to destabilize natural states, threatening potential instability, even chaos. The fate of the Orange Revolution shows how even the best of liberal intentions can succumb to the pressure of the clannish and oligarchic political and economic structures of Ukraine. In the process EU-led initiatives for reform can be perverted to serve the needs of local elites in prolonging and even enhancing their grip on power (Börzel, 2010). As a consequence, the EU is in danger of ending up proping up regimes with authoritarian tendencies instead of reforming them.

It can be argued that these characteristics are not unique to Ukraine but that the same principles can be seen as being at work in other Eastern neighbours as well, including Russia. Therefore the crux of the issue is that to all intents and purposes the EU is asking too much and giving too little in return in the East. The EU is asking for a radical transformation of a set of countries without offering them the full European perspective. What is more, the EU is expecting them to part ways with domestic governance structures, such as rent-seeking and political patronage, even patrimonialism, in favour of an open-market economy, liberal democracy and rule of law, which, while they might in the long term be beneficial for the countries in question, could in the short term put their stability, or at least put the standing and prosperity of the current elites in jeopardy (cf. Holden, 2009: 93, 121). To be sure, here we are faced with a genuine chicken-and-egg dilemma, as by and large the Eastern neighbours simply are not ready for deeper forms of engagement with the EU until they have engaged in substantial domestic reforms, which, however, might prove unattainable without the golden carrot of full EU accession (Missiroli, 2004). Whether extending the Union's membership further to the East is a realistic proposition is an altogether different matter, however, and one that must remain outside the scope of this chapter (for a discussion, see Haukkala, 2008).

Competition

The EU's role in Eastern Europe is further complicated by the element of competition. In essence, the EU has become locked into integration competition with Russia. Although the EU has done its best to convince the Russians that it is not interested in exclusive spheres of influence but is seeking consensual win–win outcomes instead, Moscow has decided to treat the EU's presence in the region largely in a classical zero-sum manner. This is largely due to the fact that the Russian elites frame international relations in general in terms of fierce competition and consequent spheres of interests and influence (Zagorski, 2009; Trenin, 2009). This has been reflected in the fact that Russia decided to opt out of the value-laden

ENP and has insisted on and been granted a more interest-driven strategic partnership instead (Sergounin, 2006).

This is not to suggest that the relations between the EU and Russia are wholly competitive, as the two obviously do co-operate with each other (for a discussion, see Haukkala, 2010). But in the context of European security Russia has taken a series of steps to counter the EU's impact in Eastern Europe and has increasingly put forth its own policies that in effect have undermined the Union's influence in the region. As Leonard and Popescu (2007: 17) have noted, in certain respects Russia has in fact had a much more robust strategy and policy in place than has been appreciated either in the EU or the United States.

Russia's competitive approach to the region takes three main forms. First, oil-rich Russia can use a whole array of mechanisms, both positive and negative, that are not necessarily at the Union's disposal to foster bilateral relationships. Russia's biggest asset may be its ability to engage in business deals with countries that the EU finds hard to engage. In short, Russia can offer economic partnerships and benefits that the EU at times cannot match because Russia does not have any problems in supporting authoritarian regimes. A case in point is Central Asia, where Russia has for years been operating at full economic and political speed with the Union still contemplating the merits and possible limits of engaging countries with severe problems in their democratic and human rights credentials (Melvin, 2007). In Eastern Europe the same lesson also seems to apply: it has been largely thanks to political and economic support from Moscow that President Lukashenko has been able to hold on to power for so long in Belarus (Moshes, 2010). More recently, President Victor Yanukovich's Ukraine has to a degree been lured back to line with a set of preferential gas deals that have kept the country's crisis-ridden economy afloat while lessening the prospects of successful economic modernization and eventual integration with Europe.

As a consequence, Russia seems increasingly to position itself as a counter-force to the Union's approaches to their 'common neighbourhood' (Popescu and Wilson, 2009). This has been highlighted in the fact that increasingly Russia seems less interested in joining the EU in a pan-European free trade area (as envisaged by the current PCA) and is instead investing political energies into developing a competing Customs Union of its own with some countries of the CIS, notably Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Second, Russia plays a major role in the conflicts that also affect the Union's neighbourhood. Russia is a player (in one form or another) in all the still simmering conflicts in the region. For example, the independence-minded 'kleptocracy' of Igor Smirnov in Transdniestria relies on Moscow's political and economic support. Russia also holds considerable sway in the deadlocked settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In most cases it seems as if Russia is playing the role of spoiler, frustrating the Union's and other international actors' attempts to resolve the conflicts; essentially preferring the status quo and the perceived spheres of influence to the risk of the EU and its normative and economic reach achieving stronger sway in the region, perhaps even supplanting Russia's role in the process (Akçakoca *et al.*, 2009: 23–5; Meister, 2011: 17). To a degree, the brief Russo-Georgian war in August 2008 is a case apart and will be discussed in the next section.

Third, Russia has sought to develop an alternative model of economic modernization and societal development to that promoted by the EU. In this respect, however, it seems that Russia's effectiveness has at least so far been hindered by the fact that Moscow has failed to come up with an idea or theme to provide its policies with sound intellectual underpinnings that would have a wider international resonance. As a consequence, compared with the magnetic pull of the Union already mentioned, Russia's 'soft power' has been lacking (Tsygankov, 2006). Although the concept of 'sovereign democracy' has proven useful

internally in resisting (the perceived) external encroachments on Russia's domestic jurisdiction, it seems clear that, externally, the concept has not had much export potential. As a consequence, it has remained a home-grown Russian variant of a semi-authoritarian and state-capitalist thinking with rather weak intellectual underpinnings. That said, it should be noted that although the slogan and the ideology may not travel very well, the actual practice of resisting the Union's normative power and political conditionality seems to be a commodity that is in higher demand: engaging the European Union through its ENP requires sustained efforts at good governance on the part of the partner countries. Russia has shown how the EU can be successfully resisted, pointing out that being the Union's neighbour does not necessarily entail accepting its normative agenda as the basis for relations (see Karaganov, 2007).

The element of competition between the EU and Russia has not gone unnoticed by the countries residing in-between. In fact, the present constellation has invited and enabled a recurring political pattern where the states in the 'common neighbourhood' alternate their allegiances between the EU and Russia, always looking for a better political and economic deal. Therefore instead of fully Europeanizing or falling loyally into Russia's orbit the countries use the two protagonists as bargaining chips and sources of political leverage to buttress their own sovereignty and freedom of manoeuvre (Popescu and Wilson, 2009; Wilson, 2010). As a result there exists potential for an unhappy outcome where neither the EU nor Russia manages to achieve their aims but both end up being played by the countries in-between. What is more, this process feeds into the feeling of latent competition in the region, eroding trust and hindering the development of co-operation further while creating potential for conflicts in the future.

To be sure, the Union's immediate Eastern neighbourhood is not the only theatre where this game has been played. In Central Asia the same tendencies have been present, with the notable exception that there the EU is not the second important contender with Russia but comes perhaps distant fourth after the United States and China, which have both been vying for influence with more vigour and success than the EU. Despite the adoption of Strategy for Central Asia in 2007, the EU has remained hamstrung between its voiced objectives of promoting human rights, democracy and good governance and the harsh realities of authoritarianism and carbon-hydrate-based geopolitical competition in the region (Melvin, 2007; Emerson *et al.*, 2010). The EU's challenges in the region have been exacerbated further by the fact that it is Central Asia where Russia has been most concerned with the erosion of its standing and has therefore adopted an even harsher zero-sum mentality than has perhaps been the case in Eastern Europe (Torbakov, 2010; Deyermond, 2009).

Conflict

Since 2003 the EU has launched altogether 24 ESDP/CSDP operations, both civilian and military (Council of the European Union, 2011; Pirozzi and Sandawi, 2009). Of these only three have been conducted in the EU's Eastern neighbourhood. By contrast, ten operations have been conducted in Africa, suggesting a conclusion that the dispersion of missions tells more about the colonial past of many EU countries than the strategic importance of the Eastern neighbourhood to the European Union. Indeed, as Biscop and Coelmont (2010: 7) have noted, the missions often reflect political convenience or the parochial interests of only some of the member states rather than purely strategic considerations on the part of the EU.

To be sure, for a consensual win-win actor like the EU conflicts are always a challenge. In this respect Eastern Europe and Central Asia are a particularly challenging environment for

the EU, as they are home to some of the most protracted and difficult conflicts in the world. The EU's difficulties in dealing with them have been manifest in a certain basic reluctance to become fully engaged in conflict settlement and crisis management in the area. When the EU has acted, it has mainly reacted and has not portrayed strategic and proactive actorness in the region (Khasson *et al.*, 2008: 221).

The EU itself sees its very presence in the region as playing a useful role in conflict resolution (Tocci, 2008). For example, conflict settlement features prominently in the ENP Action Plans (Helly, 2008). That said, the limits of the EU's 'constructive engagement' have also become obvious. Often the EU's impact is lowered by the low objective value of the Union's offers in the region (Tocci, 2008). Therefore, at best the ENP can be seen as an indirect conflict-settlement and -prevention policy: by seeking to improve the economic conditions and fostering people-to-people contacts, the policy can play a role in creating conditions for settlements while perhaps mitigating the harmful effects of conflicts without actually directly helping to solve them (Khasson *et al.*, 2008: 222).

There are several reasons for the EU's performance in the region. The region has already been crowded by other actors, especially the OSCE, and the EU has been fairly content to give pride of place to the multilateral body (Lynch, 2009; Khasson *et al.*, 2008: 222). The main reason behind the reluctance to engage the region stems from the internal political divisions in the Union, with several key member states preferring to keep a low profile in the hope of avoiding antagonizing Russia. As a consequence, the EU has punched below its weight in promoting conflict resolution in the East (Tocci, 2008: 882).

Also the nature of the missions in the East testifies to the same effect. The first mission, EUJUST Themis, was the first ever civilian rule-of-law mission launched by the Union. Between July 2004 and July 2005 altogether ten legal experts were sent to Georgia with a view to helping to develop rule of law in the country (for more about the mission and its mandate, see Kurowska, 2008). As such, the mission and the decision to target Georgia reflected more the ambitions of the Council Secretariat to move the civilian ESDP 'out of the police box' and the interests of certain member states in engaging particularly Georgia rather than any serious strategic calculation concerning what were the most burning issues to be tackled in the area (Kurowska, 2008: 100).

As a consequence EUJUST Themis can hardly be called a resounding success for the Union. The mission was plagued by internal coordination problems within the Union as well as political problems on the ground in Georgia (Kurowska, 2008). More importantly, although based on good intentions, the mission did not try to address the biggest security issue in Georgia, namely the ostensibly 'frozen' conflicts with South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which were sparked into a intensive although brief armed conflict between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 (of which more below).

The second mission, the EU Border Assistance Mission to the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM Moldova-Ukraine), can be assessed in a more positive light. The decision to launch the mission in late 2005 was based on a joint request from Moldova and Ukraine for EU assistance to develop their joint border control/customs practices in order to rein in the widespread smuggling and other illegal activities in the breakaway Transdniestria (for more about the mission, see Dura, 2009). The underlying rationale for the mission, which at the time of writing is still ongoing, was that in addition to stopping criminal activities the EU could help to put economic pressure on Tiraspol and therefore contribute to conflict settlement between Transdniestria and Moldova proper. Although the mission has been success in the former task, the latter goal has proven elusive. This is largely due to the economic and political support of Russia, which has enabled Transdniestria to withstand the economic

losses incurred by the mission's activities. As a consequence the overall track record of the mission has been mixed: it has clearly proven useful in upgrading border management and fostering co-operation between Moldova and Ukraine, but it has failed to make a difference when it comes to the most profound underlying problem, the conflict concerning the future of Moldova (Dura, 2009; Parmentier, 2008).

Furthermore, the biggest success the EU has claimed, brokering the cease-fire between Russia and Georgia in August 2008, has not become an entirely unqualified success. At first sight, the EU's – or the Council Presidency France's and its President Nicolas Sarkozy's – performance was impressive: the EU managed, together with the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship to broker a six-point agreement that ended hostilities between the parties and managed to contain the conflict so that it did not entail the destruction of the whole of Georgia or loss of its sovereignty (the EU performance in the crisis has been discussed at length in Whitman and Wolff, 2010; Forsberg and Seppo, 2011). The EU was also able to field a substantial ESDP civilian Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) to supervise the implementation of the agreement. The EU has also secured, together with the UN and the OSCE, a leading role as a co-chair in the so-called Geneva Process that has been mandated to look for a more lasting settlement between all parties.

Yet all these successes can also be seen as failures of sorts. First, the EU's ability to act was largely made possible by the fact that Russia allowed it in the first place. For example, the cease-fire was agreed by Russia only after it had essentially achieved all of its primary military aims (Whitman and Wolff, 2010: 97). Russia's preponderance in the process is further underlined by the fact that Moscow has not lived up to its commitments in the six-point plan. For example, despite Russia assuming an obligation to withdraw its troops behind the pre-conflict lines it has not done so, and the EU has been forced to accept this as a *fait accompli*. Moreover, the ability of the EUMM to fully stabilize the situation on the ground has been substantially limited by the fact that Russia has not allowed the monitors any access to the breakaway regions themselves (Fischer, 2009: 385–6; Pirozzi and Sandawi, 2009: 6). Finally, in the Geneva talks the EU's role has remained weak, and the process has not produced any significant results but has to all intents and purposes degenerated into a mere refreezing exercise of the conflict.

None of this should be taken to mean that the EU has been useless on the ground. Although it has not been able to enforce the six-point plan, it was able to play a role in limiting the conflict. The monitoring mission has undoubtedly played a role in pacifying the area, too, and preventing small-scale skirmishes escalating into another shoot-out between the parties. In this respect the EUMM has become a useful trip wire that has at least thus far deterred all parties from any further aggression.

Conclusion

By its nature the EU's engagement and the policies it seeks to promote in its Eastern neighbourhood deal with security. Yet the analysis in this chapter highlights the certain and very real incompleteness of the EU as a security actor. It also highlights the certain discomfort the EU feels when operating in a region of vast importance where it nevertheless is for historical, cultural, economic and social reasons hampered and at times even undercut.

The chapter has argued that in the region the EU is faced with three different paradigms of European security – co-operation, competition and conflict – and that they create a rather mixed playground for the Union. In fact, for different reasons the EU has been hamstrung in playing all of them. In the sphere of co-operation the EU has been asking too much while

being able to give too little to the troubled countries in the East. As a consequence, the EU's partnership-oriented project of association and small-scale integration has progressed in fits and starts, if at all. The EU has also been unable, and perhaps even more importantly, basically unwilling, to compete for influence in the region. This has probably been a wise move on the part of the Union, as engaging Russia in a geopolitical competition over the 'common neighbourhood' would only have served to further aggravate tensions without solving any of the underlying problems in the region.

The sphere of conflict resolution has highlighted a certain incompleteness of the EU as an international actor. In addition, the EU has clearly been unwilling to assume a larger role, largely in hopes of avoiding antagonizing Russia in the process. The EU is also suffering from a certain strategic deficit as all the other players in the region – Russia, China and the United States – as well as the countries residing in-between portray characteristics of more robust strategic culture and actorness. For example, the EUJUST Themis shows how the decision to launch particular missions often reflects more the internal ambitions of the Union and not the actual needs on the ground. In addition, the mission showed how the inter-institutional competition in Brussels between the different bodies can hamper the attainment of goals. To be sure, inter-institutional rivalry was not invented by Brussels – every international actor worthy of the name surely suffers from the same syndrome – but it seems evident that the EU is suffering from it perhaps more than most other actors. It is possible that some of these problems will be alleviated under the Lisbon Treaty and in the new External Action Service. At the same time the very process of creating the EAS has also shown that these competing pressures are real and can even hamper the development of otherwise badly needed new initiatives in the EU.

Equally, the problems faced by the EUMM in Georgia show how the success of the EU is crucially dependent on the attitude of other players in the region, especially Russia. As already noted, the EU has been unable to sanction Russia to withdraw behind the pre-conflict lines as it was supposed to do in the six-point plan. The EU has also been denied access to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which has meant that its ability to reach all of its goals has been severely hampered. As a consequence, the EU has been forced to limit its actual impact to monitoring the new 'border' between Georgia proper and the break-away entities, in effect becoming a structural factor cementing the new status quo in the area.

None of this should be taken as a full rebuttal of the EU's role in the East, far from it. It should be borne in mind that the EU has come a long way as an international actor during the 2000s. The Georgian war has showed that the EU, when united and led by a leader with both authority and resolve, can make a difference. The fact that other international actors have been removed from the scene only serves to underline the importance of EU presence on the ground. Moreover, the EU is, finally, a fully engaged and recognized player in the region. Clearly the current state of affairs is not fully satisfactory for the EU and its member states, but it is a beginning on which the EU can and should seek to build more.

What is more, recently some weak signals of potential change in Russia have begun to emerge that offer some prospects of change also in the Russian view of the role of European Union in the East. These changes have largely been due to the wider 'reset' of US–Russian relations that have also spilled over to NATO–Russia relations as well (Antonenko and Yurgens, 2010). Some Russians have even begun to argue that a wide-ranging economic and political union between Russia and the EU is called for (Karaganov, 2010). Yet it is too early to conclude that a decisive shift has taken place in Russia. The long history of false starts in EU–Russian and US–Russian relations cautions against excessive optimism. Therefore it seems likely that the EU will continue to be hamstrung between the imperatives of its own

security, its voiced ambitions and the realities on the ground in the East. By and large these realities are based on the conflicting logics of interaction prevalent in the area, which in their turn are based on deep-seated structural factors that are unlikely to change very quickly. As a consequence, it seems safe to conclude that the EU's uneasy balancing act in the East is here to stay, well into the future.

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Note

- 1 In this chapter the term Eastern Europe, or 'Eastern neighbourhood', is used as a shorthand for the whole area of the former Soviet Union (with the exception of the three Baltic states). The focus will be largely, but not solely, on the EU's immediate Eastern periphery, the area covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).