

# Competing for Peace?: Explaining the Normative Contestation and Negotiation between the EU and the Eurasian Union in the Post-Soviet Space

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## **ABSTRACT**

Four decades ago, the prominent integration scholar Ernest Haas warned that deepened regional integrations may lead to a world comprised of fewer and fewer "blocs" competing for prominence, thereby fueling conflicts and obstructing peace. The Ukrainian crisis in 2014, which essentially emerged as a result of the membership competition between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), indicated that Haas's nightmare may have already come true. As the European integration initiatives have moved ever closer to the domain of the Eurasian integration project pushed by Moscow, we have come to observe tensions, collisions, and even conflicts between these unions. Yet contemporary studies on regional integration have largely focused on how integration promotes peace and paid little attention to the "inter-union" dynamics of competition. This study addresses this shortcoming by asking: How do regional integration projects engage and competes with each other? To what extent and under which conditions is the "integration of integration projects" a desirable and achievable objective? Guided by these questions, the study employs small-N, comparative case study research design and qualitative content analysis method to compare and contrast values, ideas, and principles advocated by Moscow and Brussels. The analysis reveals that, while there is a discrepancy between the visions pursued by the two unions, the collisions rather stems from the tactical level. The study concludes that institutionalizing a framework of competition offers a promising avenue for harmonizing EU-EEU relations without compromising values that each union promotes.

## **KEYWORDS**

Conflict Management/Resolution (Mediation, Negotiation); European Union; Integration; Law and Norms; Legitimacy; Russia; Security; Eurasia; Regional Powers

# 1. Introduction

Four decades ago, the prominent integration scholar Ernest Haas (1970) warned that deepened regional integrations may lead to a world comprised of fewer and fewer “blocs” competing for prominence, thereby fueling conflicts and obstructing peace. The Ukrainian crisis in 2014, which emerged essentially as a result of the membership competition between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), indicated that Haas’s nightmare may have already come true. As the European integration initiatives have moved ever closer to the domain of the Eurasian integration project pushed by Moscow, the post-Soviet “common neighborhood” has emerged as a field of intense competition between the two unions, involving rivaling ideas to order regional politics (Mezhevich 2013; Bolgova 2013; Barysch 2004).<sup>1</sup> Several authors have termed this “great game” as a “norm competition (Popescu and Willson 2009: 48),” “competition of integration (Der Spiegel 2014),” “clash of integration processes (Casier 2007),” “battle of ideas (Averre 2009: 1695),” and “normative conflict (ibid: 1702).” However, contemporary International Relations (IR) scholarship remains in short of effective analytical frameworks to address this important phenomenon.

For one, there is a “cooperation bias” in the IR literature concerning regional integration and international organizations, which almost exclusively focuses on the benign side of institutional mechanisms. While a plurality of integration scholars maintain that regional integration is more likely to lead to peace *within* integrated blocs (e.g. Mattli 1999; Haftel 2007), the opposite may be true for relationships *between* different unions. If each “integration bloc” has its own visions to be advanced at the expense of values championed by others in a shared region, there emerges a zero-sum competition for norm promotion (Florini 1996).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, this is a point often missed by rational institutionalists, who have tended to see institutions predominantly as devices for international cooperation (e.g. Keohane and Nye 1977; Keohane 1989; Keohane and Martin 1995). By the logic of cooperation, the more institutional initiatives a region is equipped with, the more stable it becomes. The case of the post-Soviet neighborhood offers a strikingly puzzling outlook in this regard: with deeper and wider involvement of European and Eurasian institutional initiatives, the region has become ever more conflict-prone, with the Ukrainian crisis being just a tip of iceberg. In short, when fundamental values embodied in each integrating bloc are not closely aligned, regional integration may lead to international disintegration characterized by “bloc politics.”

Another issue is the prevalence of normative universalism, where the EU (and the Greater West in general) is often recognized as the world’s sole reservoir of “appropriate” international values (Sjursen 2006; Kratochvíl 2008). Within this paradigm, the post-Soviet space becomes an ideological “frontier” waiting to be filled with “universal” European norms, while post-communist Russia is seen as a predominantly non-ideological regional hegemon purely driven by its power aspiration and the logic of *realpolitik*. Indeed, while research program on norms and values gained a solid ground in European studies

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this study, the qualifier “normative” indicates *matters related to norms*. Norms are understood as “shared understandings and values that shape the preferences and identities of state and nonstate actors that legitimize behavior, either explicitly or implicitly. (Badescu and Weiss 2010: 358).”

<sup>2</sup> This is, of course, not to say that all regional institutions are created for the purpose of competition from the beginning.

in the last two decades (e.g. Diez 2005; Smith 2007; Hyde-Price 2008; Zielonka 2008), “virtually no thorough research focusing on Russian norms in its policy towards the EU has been carried out (Kratohvil 2008: 399).” But the thesis that Russia has no vision to offer is increasingly at odd with the emerging reality on the ground: a recent cross-regional Gallup survey (2015) revealed that, even though the international image of Russia was devastated by the Ukrainian crisis, the regional support for Russia’s leadership remains surprisingly high for citizens in many of the former Soviet republics: the public support ratings for Russian leadership is 93 percent for Tajikistan, 79 percent for Kyrgyzstan, 72 percent for Kazakhstan, 72 percent for Armenia, 66 percent for Uzbekistan, and 62 percent for Belarus.<sup>3</sup> As Omelicheva (2015) suggests, the non-liberal, statist normative vision of regional governance offered by Moscow is increasingly gaining popularity in its neighborhood. However, the existent frameworks hinging on the dichotomous narrative of “democracy against autocracy” largely failed to capture the complex regional dynamics evolving out of the normative competition between Moscow and Brussels.

This study aims to address these shortcomings by proposing a holistic approach to decipher and comparatively analyze the normative visions offered by the EU and Russia (as the leader of the EEU). How do regional integration projects engage and compete with each other? Guided by this question, the study combines small-N, comparative case study research design and qualitative content analysis method to compare and contrast values, ideas, and principles advocated by the two key actors. My central argument is that the emerging competition between the two unions is manifested in the discursive realm involving rivaling visions to organize post-Soviet regional politics. The analysis demonstrates that this normative competition has been intensified in recent years, not because the values pursued by the two unions are fundamentally irreconcilable, but because each side strategically adapts their visions to gain support from regional states while there is no institutionalized framework regulating how the competition of norms ought to be played out.

Following this introduction, the paper consists of three sections. The second section briefly reviews contemporary IR literature on norm promotion and identifies conceptual and methodological deficits. To remedy these shortcomings, the section develops a holistic approach to analyze the organic constellation of norms. Equipped with this analytical tool, the third section presents case studies on Russian and European normative visions for the post-Soviet space during 1999-2016, divided into four case periods (1999-2003, 2004-08, 2009-13, 2014-). The final section concludes.

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<sup>3</sup> The approval ratings are based on face-to-face and telephone interviews with approximately 1,000 adults who aged fifteen and older at the time of the survey, and they were selected from each country or area.

## 2. The Matrix Approach to Normative Orders

### Capturing the Hierarchal Constellation of Norms

On the linkage between norms and institutions, IR theorists have studied, *inter alia*, how institutions affect interstate interactions (e.g. Keohane and Nye 1977; Oye 1986; Keohane and Martin 1995); how institutions transform state preferences (e.g. Kelley 2004; Checkel 2005; Gheciu 2005; Simmons et al. 2006; Bondanella 2007); and how institutions promote particular values and norms (e.g. Ruggie 1993; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 1999; Manners 2002; Vanhanen 2004; Pevehouse 2005; Epstein 2005; Flockhart 2005; Pevehouse 2005; Coppedge 2012; Malone 2015; Bohlken 2015).<sup>4</sup> However, a plurality of these studies tended to rely on binary approaches, either tracing the presence/absence of norms of our interest (e.g. Percy 2007; Betts and Orchard 2014; Axyonova 2014; Panke and Petersohn 2015), or simplifying the reality by pitting particular (ideal) type of normative visions against others, such as democratization vs “autocratization” (Ambrosio 2008, 2009; Doli and Korenica 2009; Vanderhill and Aleprete 2013; Escribà-Folch and Wright 2015; Shevtsova 2015; Obydenkova and Libman 2015).<sup>5</sup> While these have brought useful insights, this study contends that the binary approaches have been more constraining than enabling when it comes to sensitizing our understanding on how different set of norms compete with each other.

To begin with, it is often misleading, if not obsolete, to conceptualize the normative competition by pitting the bottom-up, liberal European normative order against the top-down, “autocratic” Eurasian alternative.<sup>6</sup> As Stephen Holmes emphasizes, “the ideological polarity between democracy and authoritarianism, inherited from the Cold War, obscures more than it reveals (Holmes 2010, quoted by Krastev 2011).” Indeed, the European normative order is still based on top-down mechanisms when it comes to national security, defense, and intelligence, but nevertheless it is different from the Eurasian variant in the sense that the top-down norm is *subordinated to* bottom-up mechanisms such as transparency measures, civic participation, and democratic contestations. Hence, I argue that *relative strength* or *ranking* of norms embedded in a particular normative order plays a critical role in determining its overall constellation.

Second, our methodological approach needs to be sensitized to the conceptual ambiguity. In essence, many norms discussed in IR literature are often contested ideas with no clear-cut definition. This point is further elaborated by Clark:

However, even within a specifically ‘international’ setting, this value system is far from definitive, and embraces tensions and possible contradictions. The amalgam of sovereignty, non-intervention, self-determination and human rights –let alone the shifting bases of rightful membership, such as dynastic, popular and national– that looms large in the

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<sup>4</sup> For comprehensive reviews on IR studies on norms, see e.g. Cortell and Davis (2000) and Acharya (2004).

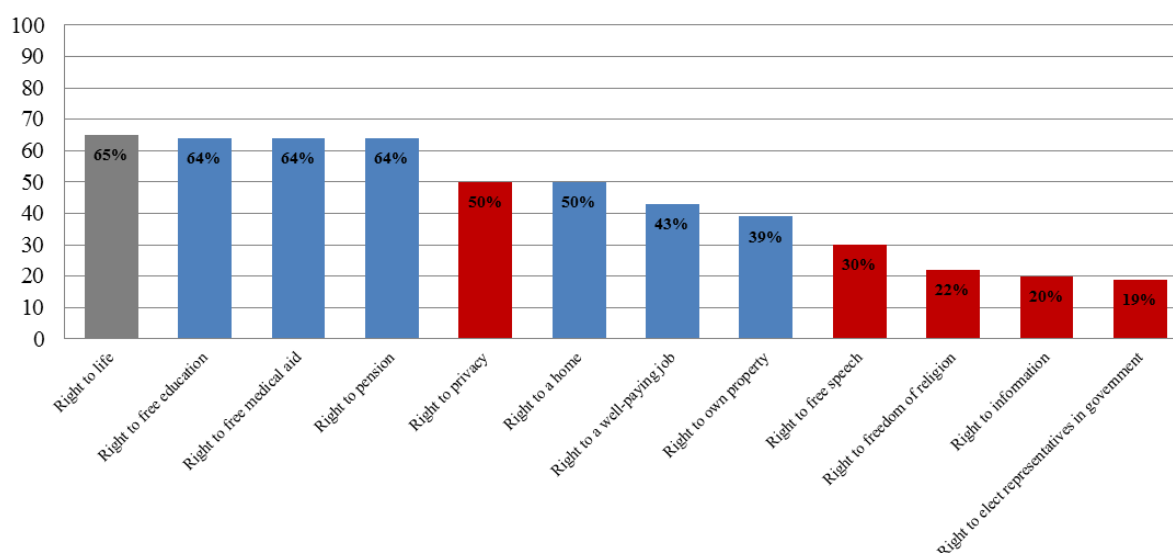
<sup>5</sup> On this debate, see the special issue of Contemporary Politics (Volume 16, Issue 1, 2010), entitled: “Promoting democracy – promoting autocracy? International politics and national political regimes”.

<sup>6</sup> See also the special issue of Europe-Asia Studies (Volume 61, Issue 10, 2009) entitled: “The European Union, Russia and the Shared Neighbourhood.”

evolving international society raises questions about the coherence of the value system that underpins even that society. It comprehends a number of distinct ‘legitimacies’... then even within the parameters of international order there is no clear and unambiguous set of basic values to be found, but only shifting compromises and tentative adjustments. (Clark 2003: 93)

His contention is particularly relevant when it comes to deciphering normative visions proposed by non-Western powers, which may operate outside of the taken-for-granted, euro-centric “truth regimes (Foucault 1977)”. For example, it is often argued that the Russian citizens largely prefer authoritarian political order in which human rights norms have limited resonance (Ross 2011). Such argument is misleading since one’s definition of “human rights” may be insensitive to alternative conceptions. A recent poll presented by the Levada Center, for instance, demonstrates that while the Russian public tends to dismiss the centrality of *political* rights, their insistence to *economic* rights is remarkably high (Moscow Times 2014, see Figure 2.1.).

**Figure 2.1. Russian Perceptions on Human Rights**



Note: N=1600. The survey asked what rights were important to the respondents and multiple responses were permitted. Numbers shown in the left axis is the percentage of respondents who answered affirmatively to the importance of each right. The survey was conducted by the Levada Center and was reported by the Moscow Times. The poll was conducted among 1,600 adults in 46 regions and 134 cities, with its margin of error not exceeding 3.4 percent. The blue bars represent economic rights and red bars political rights, while the “right to life” is colored grey since it is considered one of fundamental freedoms.

As such, a key feature of the Eurasian normative order may not be the total absence of human rights norms, but instead the (assumed) *superiority* of economic rights over political rights. In contrast, the liberal democratic order tends to place a premium on political rights and the social democratic order defends both rights equally (although at the expense of high social welfare costs). This example illustrates that the variety of human rights norms embraced by different normative orders may be better differentiated by the *simultaneous* presence/absence of each variant (e.g. political rights only, economic rights only, both absent, both present, and so on) and the interrelationships of subordination among them.

Building on these insights, this study understands normative order as *a system of norms* involving: (a) the range of appropriate state behaviors specified by each norm (*content*); (b) rankings among these norms (*subordination*); and (c) the overarching logic specifying interrelationships among them (*constellation*). Together, the system constitutes what Forst termed as “the space of reasons, or the normative space of freedom and action,” which is “based on a certain understanding of its purpose, aims, and rules (Forst 2015: 119).” In this sense, my working definition of normative order mirrors his definition of “normative order as an order of justification”, where an organic constellation of norms as *a holistic system* defines the realm of appropriate state behaviors backed by a particular set of justifications.

Guided by this understanding, and based on the insights offered by various European and Eurasian area studies,<sup>7</sup> the present study identifies sixteen key normative elements in eight dimensions which organically make up different types of normative orders.<sup>8</sup> These elements can be divided into system norms, or norms on the regional system (i.e. how the system should be organized and managed), and polity norms, or norms on the polity (i.e. how each policy in the region should be organized and managed). While a brief exploration of each of the sixteen norms will follow, Table 2.1. offers a concise overview.

**Table 2.1. Elements of Normative Orders**

<b>System Norms</b>	<b>Peace and Order</b>	Balance ●Pluralism	Community ●Universalism
	<b>Management</b>	Great Power Concert Great Power Leadership	Legalization Multilateralism
	<b>Sovereignty</b>	Classical (Westphalian) ●Unconditional Equality ●Unconditional Territorial Integrity ●Non-Interference	Conditional (Post-Westphalian) ●Conditional Equality ●Conditional Territorial Integrity ●Responsibility to Protect/Brezhnev Doctrine
	<b>Institutionalization</b>	Intergovernmentalism	Supranationalism
<b>Polity Norms</b>	<b>Human Rights</b>	Economic, Social, Cultural Rights	Political Rights
	<b>Governance</b>	Top-Down ●Statism ●State Capitalism	Bottom-Up ●Political Liberalism ●Economic Liberalism
	<b>Development</b>	Stabilization Modernization	Liberalization Transformation
	<b>Domestic Legitimacy</b>	Regime Stability ●Operability	Regime Accountability ●Representation

As I have emphasized, the methodological framework offered by this study allows for simultaneous presence of norms in each normative dimension. For example, in the dimension of institutionalization, norms on intergovernmentalism and supranationalism can be present at the same time. Indeed, this captures our political reality better than the binary approaches, since even the most supranational entity such as the EU still entails a fair degree of intergovernmentalism. In other words, the EU normative order is marked by the prominence of supranationalism with the marginal presence, and not

<sup>7</sup> These include: Brzezinski (1997); Tsygankov (2004); Barysch (2004); Kratochvíl (2006); Sperling (1999); Featherstone and Radaelli (2003); Sjursen (2006a); Prozorov (2006); Yeşilada et al. (2006); March (2007); Haukkala (2008); Avere (2009); Jackson (2010); Treisman and Shliefer (2011); Dragneva and Wolczuk (2012); Bolgova (2013); Delcour (2009); Gänzle (2009); Delcour (2011); Whitman (2012); Omelicheva (2014); Lane and Samokhvalov (2015); Cadier and Light (2015); Axyonova (2014); Hett and Szkola (2015).

<sup>8</sup> These are selected following a method of abduction based on pre-conceptions and an overview of the relevant literature. The selection is by no means a final one and is amenable to adaptation.

the total absence, of intergovernmentalism. In line with this, the study assumes four degrees to differentiate the absence/presence of norms:

- **Absent:** The reference to and the practice of a norm is not observed, or the norm is rejected.
- **Marginal:** The reference to and the practice of a norm is weakly observed but the adherence is regarded not imperative, if not desirable.
- **Present:** The reference to and the practice of a norm is observed and the adherence to the norm is regarded necessary.
- **Prominent:** The reference to and the practice of a norm is noticeably observed and the adherence to the norm is regarded categorical imperative. When multiple prominent norms coexist simultaneously (which is often the case), one of them becomes designated as a **supreme** norm, which trumps over the rest when there is a conflict among prominent.

The framework presented above leads to the construction of the *normative matrix* –an analytical tool to identify the content, subordination, and constellation of different normative orders (Table 2.2.). Below I briefly describe the content of the selected normative elements.

**Table 2.2. Normative Matrix**

Norms for Organizing Regional Politics			Absent	Marginal	Present	Superior
System Norms	Peace and Order	Balance				
		Community				
	Management	Great Power Concert/Leadership				
		Legalization/Multilateralism				
	Institutionalization	Intergovernmentalism				
		Supranationalism				
	Sovereignty	Classical (Westphalian)				
		Conditional (Post-Westphalian)				
Polity Norms	Human Rights	Economic, Social, Cultural Rights				
		Political Rights				
	Governance	Top-Down				
		Bottom-up				
	Development	Stabilization/Modernization				
		Liberalization/Transformation				
	Domestic Legitimacy	Regime Stability				
		Regime Accountability				

## Normative Elements

### SYSTEM NORMS

• **Peace and Order:** International peace and order may be accomplished by the maintenance of *balance* (i.e. the absence of overwhelming concentration of power) and/or the making of a *community* of shared values (“zone of peace” in the Kantian sense and “world socialist republic” in the Marxian sense). The logic of peace by balance comes from the fundamental distrust in power;<sup>9</sup> the renowned international lawyer Oppenheim once noted that the international balance of power (i.e. the situation where no major state has preponderance of power to impose its worldview over others) is prerequisite for the healthy working of international law (Oppenheim 1905). This point was concurred by Clark (2003: 86): “What all

<sup>9</sup> The logic is also present in the American constitution with its government managed by the check and balance system.

this seems to suggest is that a physical balance of power is necessary, but not sufficient, for a secure and stable order. What it needs, in addition, is a 'moral balance' which, given what is said elsewhere, presumably can express itself only through agreement and consensus.” In contrast, the community-building logic stems from the faith and confidence in particular type of international normative order, be it liberalism or socialism. The peace is ultimately achieved through the expansion of the “common house”, and the enforcement of community values as well as “disciplining” and socializing of those who stand “outside” of the community. Hence, the former embraces a perspective of *pluralism* while the latter embodies that of *universalism*.<sup>10</sup>

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●**Management:** The international system may be managed by *great power concert/ great power leadership* of major states (the “rule of power” in the words of Burley 1993: 144), and/or by the making of a rule-based, constitutional type of order based on the principles of multilateralism and legalization (the multilateral rule of law). Multilateralism refers to a particular format of diplomatic engagement which coordinates and manages relations among three or more states (Ruggie, 1993:11), where it essentially calls for “the nondiscriminatory application of the agreed principles of conduct” under which “all the relevant actors are expected to play by the same set of rules (Sjursen 2006: 245–246) .” A few conceptual notes need to be made here. First, “the multilateral rule of law” by itself is not devoid of power. For instance, the International Criminal Court (ICC) represents a highest degree of legalization efforts in world affairs. However, the African Union (AU) in recent years advanced a vocal criticism for the court and proclaimed that it is no longer “a court for all”,<sup>11</sup> as the majority of the tried cases come from Africa. Nor the multilateral framework is always morally superior to the rule of power. For instance, the OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) satisfies the criteria for multilateralism but the forum often prioritize in the interests of “cartel members” over the common interest of the international community. It must be also emphasized that the rule of power and law can be mixed in practice. For instance, the UN Charter embodies the norm of great power concert in the sense that the five (unelected) permanent members of the UNSC are conferred special rights and responsibility for the maintenance of international order, while the charter also exhibits the collective will to manage international relations by the multilateral rule of law.<sup>12</sup>

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●**Institutionalization:** The *intergovernmental* norm prioritizes in respecting the sovereign autonomy of each state participating in the process of institutionalization, while the *supranational* approach (also

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<sup>10</sup> The liberal order-builders often invoke the value of pluralism, but this is essentially a “managed pluralism” within the framework of liberalism. In other words, the variation *within* the liberal framework is allowed and encouraged, but the deviation from it is not permitted. On this point, Clark contends: “It has recently been suggested that international society's concept of order is itself based on a fundamental ambivalence, since it espouses the values of both 'toleration' and of 'civilisation'. By this is meant that it has been pluralistic towards its core members, and tolerant of difference between them, while at the same time seeking to impart civilisation to those outside (Clark 2003: 93).”

<sup>11</sup> The term was borrowed from the speech of Ethiopian Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus speaking on behalf of the African Union (AU) at the 14th session of the Assembly of States Parties. In line with this warning, South Africa's ruling party expressed its intention to withdraw from the court (Deutsche Welle 2015).

<sup>12</sup> Another example is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is based on the principle of nuclear power concert but also presents an attempt to ensure a more constitutional form of global nuclear management.



termed as “post-sovereign governance” by Scholte 1997; Holton 1998; Lucarelli 2006; Krastev 2011) endeavors to create supranational authorities with extensively delegated competence to manage the regional institutionalization process. In reality, a majority of regional institutionalization processes evolves in the combination of the two norms, and even in the most “supranationalized” institution such as the EU, a fair degree of intergovernmentalism remains. Hence the norm on institutionalization simply sets which of the two directions is more appropriate for the development of regional institutions.

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●**Sovereignty:** While there are different conceptualizations of state sovereignty, this study follows Hurrell (2006)’s approach and differentiates the *classical* Westphalian notion from the emerging post-Westphalian variant.<sup>13</sup> The notion of sovereignty embodied in the UN Charter, the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties<sup>14</sup> and the Helsinki Final Accord can be referred as classical sovereignty, where non-interference in internal affairs and unconditional sovereign equality are noted as fundamental principles. Sovereign equality is unconditional: all states shall be treated equally, regardless of their power positions and the nature of internal regimes, as long as they are internationally recognized to be a sovereign. The post-Westphalian vision on *conditional* sovereignty advocates that sovereignty may be compromised in exceptional cases for a higher purpose, be it the protection of human lives (the Responsibility to Protect doctrine) or the defense of socialism (the Brezhnev doctrine). Under this notion, sovereign equality exists only among those states which adhere to the set standard of norms, and those who fail to comply with the standard are not to be recognized as fully sovereign.

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## POLITY NORMS

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●**Human Rights:** The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) broadly categorized human rights into two groups: *economic, social, and cultural (ERC) rights* and *political rights*. The former covers rights to housing, education, work, health, culture, and social security, while the latter places an emphasis on freedom of speech and association, the participation in domestic politics, and so forth. In an ideal world, these rights are complementary and indivisible; however, in reality, the official discourse of states may prioritize in guaranteeing ERC rights (e.g. USSR, Russia, China, and Cuba),<sup>15</sup> in political rights (e.g. the United States), or in both (e.g. European social democracies and Japan). The norms on human rights are generally absent in absolute monarchies and colonized spaces, where citizens are predominantly seen as “servants” thus not entitled to extensive rights.

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●**Governance:** Norms on governance specify the appropriate model for providing basic public goods (security, welfare, and so on) in each polity. The *top-down* approach focuses on the centralization of state

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<sup>13</sup> Thus this study concurs that sovereignty is essentially a social construct. On this point, see the seminal work of Biersteker, Webber (1996). See also Biebricher (2014). On the notion of sovereignty in the post-Soviet states, see Deyermund (2008).

<sup>14</sup> The Article 2 VII specifies the prohibition of any external interference in the domestic affairs of a state, regardless of the means.

<sup>15</sup> For instance, Panebianco (2006: 133) also notes that “China tends to prioritise human rights by affirming the supremacy of economic and collective rights over individual rights.”

power and also often termed as *statism*. The *bottom-up* approach prioritizes in the participation of citizens in the process of governance and emphasizes the importance of *political liberalism*, understood generally as the democratic control of the state power. In the former approach, the national economy is managed by *state capitalism* (or the planned economy in the extreme case; see Wade 1990; Bremmer 2010), while the latter places a greater emphasis on the free market mechanisms (*economic liberalism*).

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●**Development:** Development may be understood as a process of *stabilization and modernization* or of *liberalization and transformation*. The former emphasizes the incremental reforms and envisions the progress as the continuation of the current state of affairs with gradual adaptation. By contrast, the discourse of change plays a key role in the latter, which understands development as transformation of system, practices, and attitudes.

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●**Domestic Legitimacy:** As Clark emphasizes, “Actors within the global order are searching for, and competing about, the principles of legitimacy that deserve respect (Clark 2003: 94).” As such, while there is no universally agreed-upon notion of legitimacy, two distinctive approaches exist. The norm on *regime stability* sees the performance and operationality of the regime in power as a key factor in evaluating its legitimacy. The legitimacy is thus outcome-based. The regime is perceived legitimate when it fulfils the fundamental functions of the state (the provision of basic public goods) in a sustainable manner. Stability is regarded as a prerogative to ensure the continuing livelihood of citizens and to maximize predictability and to minimize political uncertainty. By contrast, the norm on *regime accountability* (or democratic accountability) judges the legitimacy based on the representation of voices involved in policymaking processes, where liberal democratic credentials form a substantive part of the legitimization criteria. In contrast to the former approach, regime accountability is a process-based legitimacy.

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## Methodology and Research Design

As Florini (1996) skillfully compared the evolution of international norms to the process of genetic mutation, this study assumes that the variety of normative orders originates from the *combination* of different normative elements. Each set of normative dimensions presented above entails

$${}_8C_2 = \frac{8*7}{2*1} = 28 \text{ (patterns)}$$

with which the matrix is able to describe

$$28^8 \approx 3.8*10^{11} \text{ or around 380 billion (types)}$$

of normative orders, which offers more than sufficient variations.

The matrix approach is advantageous because it empowers us to capture *composite norms* – norms made up by several elements. Democracy is a good example here. What is generally understood as liberal democracy is actually a composite norm encompassing several normative elements such as political rights,

bottom-up governance, liberalization, and regime accountability.<sup>16</sup> Added by a stronger presence of the top-down governance norm and the ESC rights norm, liberal democracy is transformed into social democracy. The French and Japanese domestic normative orders with a greater role envisioned by the state may fall somewhere between these ideal-types.<sup>17</sup> As I have emphasized, most normative orders embrace multiple, overlapping, and sometimes even contradictory normative elements within their systems<sup>18</sup>; however, the lack of precision and/or coherence also leaves a room for flexibility and adaptation, which facilitates the transformation of these orders in the long run (Betts and Orchard 2014; Percy 2007; Panke and Petersohn 2015).

Building on this holistic approach, the purpose of this study is to investigate to what extent and why Russia's and EU's normative visions for the post-Soviet neighborhood compete with each other. The study intends to achieve this objective by employing the research design of structured, focused comparison (e.g. Eisenhardt 1989; George and Bennett 2005; Bennett and Elman 2007; Baxter and Jack 2008) over time –which merges features of small-N qualitative studies (Bennett 1997; Mahoney 2000; George and Bennett 2005; Brady and Collier 2010) with Bartolini's method of chronological comparative case study (Bartolini 1993). The research design thus seeks to combine examination of synchronic variation in normative visions proposed by Moscow and Brussels, with chronological variation over time (see Tannenwald 1999 for a similar research design). Based on the insights provided by previous studies (e.g. Thorun 2008; Clunan 2009; Molchanov 2015), the study distinguishes four analytical “case periods” summarized by the table below.

**Table 2.3. Hypothesized Case Periods, 1999-2016**

Periods	Years	Characteristics
<b>I</b>	1999-2003	The Kosovo conflict and NATO's eastward enlargement took place against Russian opposition. The EurAsEC economic integration was launched.
<b>II</b>	2004-2008	The NATO-EU double enlargement took place in 2004 and the EU launched the ENP as an attempt to institutionalize its relationship with former Soviet states. The EurAsEC showed further developments but without any breakthrough.
<b>III</b>	2009-2013	The EaP was launched with more forthcoming institutional initiatives such as the DCAAs. With the birth of the ECU, regional institutionalization became a top-priority for Russian foreign policy and more decision-making power was delegated to the new and old institutional frameworks with a greater voice allowed for regional states.
<b>IV</b>	2014-(2016)	EU's DCAAs emerged as a final cement to institutionalize European engagement in the former Soviet states. Russia redoubled its efforts to strengthen regional institutions and the EEU was created.

<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Youngs (2015) maintains that democracy entails seven principles – electoral, liberal, majoritarian, consensual, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian. The norm on political rights in this study captures liberal and egalitarian principles in his study Electoral, majoritarian, and consensual principles are incorporated as regime accountability, and the rest can be seen in light of bottom-up governance.

<sup>17</sup> For instance, Manners identified nine European norms: sustainable peace; social liberty; consensual democracy; associative human rights; supranational rule of law; inclusive equality; social solidarity; sustainable development; and good governance (Manners 2006: 35-37). While I do not go into details of these norms, the matrix framework can express each of them by the combination of normative elements articulated above. For instance, Manners' definition of good governance “the provision of open, participatory and democratic governance without creating hierarchical, exclusionary and centralised government” essentially entails norms on legalization and multilateralism, political rights, bottom-up governance, and regime accountability.

<sup>18</sup> As Sjørnsen maintains: “Different universal norms may collide in a concrete situation or a particular context...in a given context we often face several universalizable norms that have conflicting content and that would point us in different directions. (Sjørnsen 2006: 243).”

With the tool of normative matrix, this research employs a method of qualitative content analysis (see e.g. Kracauer 1952; Kohlbacher 2006) to investigate key texts and practices embodying normative visions of each international actor. In this regard, to code or not to code, that is the question. In recent years, Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) have dramatically improved the “trustworthiness (Elo et al. 2014)” of qualitative content analysis by providing a coding framework which enhances procedural transparency, analytical replicability, and intersubjective validity of the text interpretation process (ibid; see also Schreier 2012).

However, the applicability of this (rather nomothetic) approach is limited in my methodological framework for several reasons. First, the logic of coding heavily relies on “dependability (Elo et al. 2014)” of analytical categories specified by a code book. In other words, each category of norms, worldviews, interpretations, and discourses (and so on) requires these concepts be stable over time and across domains. This is the case, for instance, when we look at the norms of anti-slavery in contemporary world politics, whose meaning has been generally stable and clear-cut. In contrast, the normative elements described above entail a low degree of dependability, because the overall meaning of each element is determined *in reference to* the organic constellation of a normative order as a whole. This point is most eloquently elaborated by two prominent norm scholars:

...values do not count much in isolation from the normative framework in which they are embedded. Rather, they assume meaning, give sense to the political identity of the members of the community, and finally influence policy on the basis of how they stand in relation to other values and principles of the normative framework in which they are embedded. Most frequently, what differentiates political communities is not a list of values, but the relationship that a political community constructs among these values, their hierarchical order, and their peculiar translation into guiding principles. (Lucarelli and Manners 2006: 215)

In line with this argument, the normative elements introduced above do not constitute a pre-defined “category,” since my unit of analysis is the overall constellation of norms, within which each normative elements *acquire* their meanings.

Faced with these methodological challenges, this study adopts a more open-ended, interpretative approach to textual analysis exemplified by Pouliot (2010)’s work on NATO-Russia relations. In line with his call for a “subjective” methodology which seeks the “disciplined subjectivity” rather than the rejection of subjectivity, this study aims at minimizing the possibility of esoteric speculation ungrounded in empirical observations. For this purpose, the analyses will be guided by the tool of normative matrix in order to increase procedural transparency and analytical replicability, while my interpretations of original texts will also be cross-referenced to contemporary European and Eurasian area studies. The pool of texts to be analyzed (see Annex.1) is not selected by a randomized process, but the perspectives offered by present a fair degree of saturation.

### 3. Case Studies, 1999-2016

#### Case Period I: 1999-2003

##### *Modalities of European Normative Engagement in the Post-Soviet Space (1999-2003)*

The EU's engagement with the former Soviet states in the early 1990s was primarily guided by the universalist worldview of Fukuyama (1992). However, it must be noted that the "end of history" thesis was more about the universality of liberal democratic ideas and had much less to do with the *active promotion* of these values. In this sense, liberalism was believed to prevail sooner or later *with or without* active promotion.<sup>19</sup> Although the importance of political rights, bottom-up governance, and regime accountability was often invoked, the European normative vision for the post-Soviet space in the 1990s placed these norms under the framework of great power concert and other intergovernmental coordination mechanisms. The European policymakers actively supported the preservation of Russian leadership in the format of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which was largely portrayed as a chief mechanism to stabilize the regional "disintegration" process. This "concession" was granted partly because Brussels was more concerned with its immediate neighborhood (i.e. Central Europe and the Balkans), but also because efforts to forcefully project liberal norms often met with the opposition from the post-Soviet states that now Brussels was attempting to replace the Soviet-time Moscow and to "teach" them what to do (Sperling 2003: 18). As a result, liberalization –which was seen as a key pathway for constructing regional peace based on the idea of a "common European house"– was envisioned to be achieved solely based on the voluntary compliance and thus the logic of conditionality was only weakly present (Börzel and Lebanidze 2007).

The Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs), came into effect in the late 1990s, mirrored these trends and emphasized the superiority of "political dialogue" as an avenue for change (EC 2010). For instance, the original texts of PCAs signed with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan had no mentioning of democracy and human rights,<sup>20</sup> instead, they proclaimed that the purpose was "to strengthen the links ...on trade and commercial and economic cooperation (EC 1999)."<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the EU's Technical Assistance to the CIS (TACIS), which formed the backbone of the PCAs, was "technical" because the program almost exclusively focused on the assistance to facilitate the transition to free market economy (out of which political liberalization was assumed to grow subsequently). As a consequence, the normative vision pursued by Brussels at this time was largely focused on the stabilization of the increasingly troubled region, the protection of minimum standard of living, and the promotion of

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<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Fukuyama (2006) harshly criticized the zealous democracy and human rights promotion as counterproductive measures in achieving global liberalization.

<sup>20</sup> As Fischer (2012: 34) points out, "PCAs are mixed agreements focused on the regulation of economic cooperation, trade and EU technical assistance to economic and, to a lesser extent, political reform."

<sup>21</sup> Note that the analysis of the PCA texts is kept minimal for this subsection since they are short documents (less than 1,000 words in English). But this modality of agreement itself also manifests the weak presence of highly legalized cooperation frameworks.

economic liberalism. As such, in the early 1990s, the emancipatory discourse of liberalization was rather treated with caution to prevent the rise of endless secessionism and nationalistic/ethno-centric visions.

At the turn of the century, a series of game-changing events took place, including the first NATO enlargement to the former Warsaw pact countries on March 1999, followed by the NATO-Yugoslav war in the same year. On the other side of the Atlantic, the 9.11 terrorist attacks led to America's punitive war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The emergent Bush doctrine on pre-emptive attacks was then used to justify the invasion of Iraq in 2003 – a conflict which widened the gulf between Washington and its European allies (Kagan 2004). While these events significantly affected Russian-Western relations, the EU's normative vision for the post-Soviet space exhibited a remarkable continuity during 1999-2003.

The Kosovo case indeed contributed to the subsequent emergence of the R2P doctrine, however, it initially had much less to do with democratization and human rights promotion, but more to do with ensuring the right to survival under exceptional circumstances.<sup>22</sup> As the top NATO official rightly noted, the chief purpose of the operation was to “halt a humanitarian catastrophe and *restore stability*” (quoted by Thomasen 2008, emphasis is mine). In this sense, the idea to forcefully promote liberal values across the region was marginally present in the discourse of European policymakers (Chida 1999). Indeed, the Balkan conflict was managed largely in the manner of great power concert between Russia and the West, at least until the beginning of 1999.<sup>23</sup> NATO's unilateral bombing of Yugoslavia symbolized the West's departure from the concert framework; however, the European discourse still placed a premium on stabilization. This was especially so with regard to the post-Soviet states, where establishing a solid statehood and stable regime was seen as a prerogative to prevent further fall-out of the region (Papacosma 2003). In this sense, the centralization of power (the idea of “strong state”) was seen as a prerequisite to ensure basic human rights.

This ambiguity characterized the modalities of European normative engagement in the post-Soviet space during the period. On the one hand, Brussels assured the post-Soviet leaders that Kosovo was a truly extraordinary case and European respect for classical sovereignty remained unchanged (Gow 1997; Pouliot 2010). On the other hand, the apparent “success” in Kosovo brought a new wind into the thinking of European officials, with which the discourse on the *acceleration* of liberal trends was emerging (Mankoff 2012; Tsygankov 2013). Overall, the analysis does not confirm the presence of a “forceful liberalization” discourse and practice often claimed by Russian elites and scholars. Nevertheless, the West's “graduation” from the great-power mindset had a lasting effect on the subsequent development of Russian-European relations. Table 3-1. below shows the corresponding normative matrix for the European normative vision for this period.

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<sup>22</sup> Similar trends were observed in other instances. Human rights concerns or regime accountability were not the chief justifications for the initiation of the American-Afghan War and the Iraq War, and the discourse on democratization (and democratic, participatory governance with greater regime accountability) became more present only after the military victories in those countries were achieved.

<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the West's deep respect for Russia's insistence to the great power concert format until the late 1990s was quite possibly one of the major factors which stalled the diplomatic negotiations process (Gow 1997).

**Table 3-1. Matrix for European Normative Vision, 1999-2003**

Norms for Organizing Regional Politics			Absent	Marginal	Present	Prominent
System Norms	Peace and Order	Balance	X			
		Community				X X
	Management	Great Power Concert/Leadership		X		
		Legalization/Multilateralism		X		
	Institutionalization	Intergovernmentalism				X
		Supranationalism	X			
	Sovereignty	Classical (Westphalian)			X	
		Conditional (Post-Westphalian)	X			
Polity Norms	Human Rights	Economic, Social, Cultural Rights			X	
		Political Rights			X	
	Governance	Top-Down				X
		Bottom-up			X	
	Development	Stabilization/Modernization				X
		Liberalization/Transformation			X	
	Domestic Legitimacy	Regime Stability				X
		Regime Accountability			X	

*Modalities of Russian Normative Engagement in the Post-Soviet Space (1999-2003)*

In the early 1990s, the Russian elites placed a great emphasis on “remaking” Russia as a full-fledged member of the European society of states (Tsygankov 2004). However, Moscow’s commitment to the community-building project was entirely founded on an assumption that each member had a final say in the community’s decision-making. This did not mean that Russia’s opinion would always prevail over others, but it was at least assumed that when Moscow’s vital interest was at stake, its voice would be counted. This belief swiftly evaporated when the NATO-Yugoslav war broke out and the liberal logic of “peace by community” was quickly replaced by the idea of “peace by balance” in Russia.<sup>24</sup>

At its core, the Eurasian integration project emerged in the early 2000s was primarily driven by the balancing logic that a Eurasian alternative would restrain, or at least check, the ambition of Brussels in the post-Soviet space. The Treaty on the Establishment of the Eurasian Economic Community made no reference to the EU, but it stressed “the need to coordinate approaches to integration into the world economy and the international trading system (EurAsEC 2001)”. Indeed, WTO was most frequently mentioned in the text, where the EurAsEC was portrayed as a strategic instrument to align the voice of member states in order to maximize their collective bargaining power. As Ultanbaev explains:

The EurAsEC members realize that reorientation toward the West, where there is virtually no demand for their products (with the exception of some primary commodities), could lead to economic degradation and a destruction of the high-technology sectors of their national industries...At the present level of economic and technological development, autonomous efforts to enter the world market by individual EurAsEC countries could turn them into a raw material outskirts of the world economy. (Ultanbaev 2003: 109)

In this sense, the EurAsEC was envisioned to be a stepping-stone to integrate post-Soviet states into the global economy with a greater voice and autonomy vis-à-vis the West.

<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, many Russian elites felt that the West took advantage of the Russian financial crisis in 1998, contributing to the rise of new worldview that, notwithstanding the European rhetoric for peaceful community, the world was still a place where the weak had no place (Godzimirski 2000: 78).

The analysis of early EurAsEC texts reveals that the project embodied several important normative components: strong preference for intergovernmentalism, Russia's great power leadership, and the absence of (political) human rights discourse. To begin with, the principle of intergovernmentalism was a key driving force behind the integration process (Calleo 2003; Ultanbaev 2003), which reinforced the salience of other related norms, namely, classical sovereignty and statist domestic governance. These norms were codified by the EurAsEC treaty which created five major organs:

- 1) **Interstate Council:** The supreme decision-making body gathering heads of states and heads of governments (decisions adopted by consensus);
- 2) **Integration Committee** (Moscow, Russia and Almaty, Kazakhstan): The main regulative body comprised of deputy heads of government (decisions adopted by 2/3 majority), equipped with the Secretariat (Secretary-General and two Deputy Secretary-Generals);
- 3) **Community Court** (Minsk, Belarus): The judicial body comprised of no more than two representatives from each member state (yet the court did not come into effect until 2012);
- 4) **Inter-Parliamentary Assembly** (Saint Petersburg, Russia): The coordination body to align national legislations;
- 5) **Commission of Permanent Representatives:** The advisory body comprised of Permanent Representatives appointed by heads of states.

While the Integration Committee was tasked to manage daily activities of the integration project, Article 13 (2) specified that any disputed decision shall be referred to the Interstate Council. At the end of the day, sensitive matters were envisioned to be resolved by diplomacy. Galina Islamova (2001), Deputy Head of the Central Economic Cooperation Board of the Integration Committee (appointed by Kazakhstan), criticized the design that there was no specification for the "powers voluntarily transferred to the EurAsEC" –which was stated in the preamble of the treaty– while the implementation of EurAsEC decisions were entirely dependent on national legislations of each member state.

Since the initial design of EurAsEC entailed little support for supranationalism and legalization, Russia's great power leadership emerged as a central mechanism for administering the project. The Article 15 (2) codified that 40 per cent of the community budget was to be contributed by Russia, while other five members covered the rest (Belarus 15 percent; Kazakhstan 15 per cent; Kyrgyzstan 7.5 per cent; Tajikistan 7.5 per cent; and Uzbekistan 15 per cent). In turn, the decision-making procedure (Article 13) specified that Russia retained 40 votes (Belarus 15 votes; Kazakhstan 15 votes; Kyrgyzstan 7.5 votes; Tajikistan 7.5 votes; and Uzbekistan 15 votes). While the decisions at the Interstate Council were to be adopted by consensus, Russia was the only country which could veto in the Integration Committee and the Commission of Permanent Representatives. Hence, the EurAsEC was unique in the sense that it explicitly institutionalized Russia's great power leadership.

The EurAsEC was also distinctive in the sense that it embodied no norms on political liberalism. This did not mean that Russia and other participating states rejected these norms outright; instead, they were subordinated to the statist ideas for organizing the region and national polities. For instance, the Joint Statement released by the participating heads of state emphasized that "the number of concrete joint steps



in the humanitarian field” would be taken to “better meet the needs of the citizens of our countries in the area of education, culture, health and welfare, and social rights”, while the initiative was heavily based on a vision of “integration from above” that no reference was made for bottom-up participatory mechanisms. Regional development to be accelerated by Eurasian regional integration was thus primarily understood as a process of stabilizing and modernizing the national economy of member states and raising standard of living, implying that domestic legitimacy largely rested on the managerial capability of regime rather than its democratic credentials.

In essence, the EurAsEC project attempted to communicate a thesis that economic liberalism was achievable without far-fletching liberal reforms, advancing a regional normative order based on statism. Table 3-2. below shows the corresponding normative matrix for the Russian normative vision for this period.

**Table 3-2. Matrix for Russian Normative Vision, 1999-2003**

Norms for Organizing Regional Politics			Absent	Marginal	Present	Prominent
System Norms	Peace and Order	Balance			X	
		Community		X		
	Management	Great Power Concert/Leadership				X X
		Legalization/Multilateralism		X		
	Institutionalization	Intergovernmentalism			X	
		Supranationalism	X			
	Sovereignty	Classical (Westphalian)			X	
		Conditional (Post-Westphalian)	X			
Polity Norms	Human Rights	Economic, Social, Cultural Rights				X
		Political Rights		X		
	Governance	Top-Down				X
		Bottom-up		X		
	Development	Stabilization/Modernization				X
		Liberalization/Transformation		X		
	Domestic Legitimacy	Regime Stability				X
		Regime Accountability		X		

## Case Period II: 2004-2008

### *Modalities of European Normative Engagement in the Post-Soviet Space (2004-2008)*

The year 2004 ushered a new era of European normative engagement in the former Soviet space, marked by the “double enlargement” of the EU and NATO and the launch of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). These developments largely symbolized a shift in European approach to what Fukuyama (2006) termed as an “activist foreign policy.” In this regard, EC (2003: 5) apprised that “enlargement has unarguably been the Union’s most successful foreign policy instrument:” the successful internalization of European norms willingly pursued by the new EU members taught Brussels that conditionality and other institutional initiatives could be used as an instrument to induce deeper political change in the neighborhood.

As the analysis above showed, the Russian and European normative visions for the post-Soviet space during 1999-2003 were largely aligned in the sense that stabilization efforts served as a common denominator. Against this background, the ENP brought a sea-change for it explicitly framed the legalization as a means for projecting and institutionalizing European values in the region while extending the logic of conditionality to those states lacking an immediate membership prospect. The new initiative

stepped up the language of liberalization and stressed that “Democracy, pluralism, respect for human rights, civil liberties, the rule of law and core labour standards are all essential prerequisites for political stability, as well as for peaceful and sustained social and economic development (EC 2003: 7).” In this sense, “stability” in the European worldview began to diverge substantially from the ideas of regime stability and “development as stabilization” put forth by the Russian side. This collision of ideas became evident in the European and Russian responses to the color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, where the former applauded these revolutionary changes as a step towards regional transformation, while the latter denounced them as a symptom of regional destabilization (Ambrosio 2007; Horvath 2011).

While the Central Asian states were absent from the ENP framework, the EU developed a “Strategy for a New Partnership” for the region mirroring the language of the ENP, where the promotion of European values, as Melvin analyzes, has become an important cornerstone: “In this respect, the Strategy should distinguish the EU from those international actors who are focused exclusively on stability and the status quo in the region....The EU must, therefore, set itself clearly apart from those that place stability above progressive change in the region (Melvin 2007: 2).” Here, “those that place stability above progressive change in the region” presumably refer to the statist-minded Russia, as the author acknowledged that “The Union also faces significant competition for influence from countries ready to commit greater resources to the region with little in the way of conditionality for their assistance in terms of political and human rights policies (Melvin 2007: 3).”

While the EU’s vision for the post-Soviet space showed an important shift towards a more activist stance, Brussels was cautious not to antagonize against Moscow and repeatedly emphasized the “Union’s determination to avoid drawing new dividing lines in Europe and to promote stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the Union (EC 2003: 3-4).” Furthermore, attempting to avoid the criticism of the imposition of European values, the EU policymakers stressed the “joint ownership” of the ENP: “Development and reform in our partner countries is primarily in their own interest, and it is their *sovereign responsibility* (EC 2006: 4, emphasis is mine).” In this sense, the European normative vision at the time still operated within the framework of classical sovereignty and recognized intergovernmentalism as a central mechanism for greater regional institutionalization. Hence, “greater efforts to promote human rights, further cultural cooperation and enhance mutual understanding (EC 2003: 12-13)” was envisioned to be largely undertaken within the framework of cultural and educational exchange and bilateral visits. The importance of participatory governance and the role of civil society was highlighted (EC 2006: 6-7), but the traditional diplomatic dialogue was still seen as a chief means to advance political liberalization.

Brussels’s increasing reliance on conditionality, however, resulted in the “bilateralization” of EU’s engagement in the region (see also Gänzle 2009). For instance, the ENP remained completely silent on the *intra-regional* collaboration with the existing regional institutions such as the EuAsEC and the GUAM.<sup>25</sup> In this sense, GUAM offered a test case, since most of its members were ENP partners (except for Uzbekistan), and more importantly, the organization demonstrated a strong commitment for

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<sup>25</sup> GUAM is a regional organization created by Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan Azerbaijan, and Moldova in the early 2000s to counterbalance Russian influence in the post-Soviet neighborhood.

Europeanization (hence renaming itself later as the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development). The complete absence of GUUAM in the EU initiatives at the time indicates that the European policymakers deliberately avoided a multilateral format (such as a EU-GUUAM pact) so that the post-Soviet partners would not “pool” their voices to present a unified front to extract more concessions from Brussels (see also Delcour 2011). Likewise, the ignorance of the EurAsEC as a regional partner also implied that the European vision largely rejected the idea of “great union concert” proposed by the Kremlin, in which the EU and the EurAsEC were envisioned to govern the common neighborhood in tandem (Krastev 2011; Popescu and Willson 2009).

In sum, an increasingly activist EU’s engagement in the region at this time assumed that the EU was the only game in town. As the remainder of this case study illustrates, this was no longer the case and Moscow increasingly began to project an alternative, statist normative vision for organizing post-Soviet politics (Haukkala 2008), which often obstructed the EU initiatives in the region. Faced with this emerging competition between the two unions, the post-Soviet leaders quickly learned to instrumentalize the Eurasian alternative. As Cadier illustrates, “several states have sought to avoid making a definite, either-or choice with regard to these two structures... either because they were hoping to reap some benefits from balancing one regional power against the other, or because the issue was too polarising domestically (Cadier 2014: 63)”. Table 3-3. below shows the corresponding normative matrix for the European vision for regional normative order for this period.

**Table 3-3. Matrix for European Vision, 2004-2008**

Norms for Organizing Regional Politics			Absent	Marginal	Present	Prominent
System Norms	Peace and Order	Balance	X			
		Community				X X
	Management	Great Power Concert/Leadership	X			
		Legalization/Multilateralism			X	
	Institutionalization	Intergovernmentalism				X
		Supranationalism	X			
Polity Norms	Sovereignty	Classical (Westphalian)			X	
		Conditional (Post-Westphalian)	X			
	Human Rights	Economic, Social, Cultural Rights			X	
		Political Rights				X
	Governance	Top-Down			X	
		Bottom-up				X
	Development	Stabilization/Modernization		X		
		Liberalization/Transformation				X
	Domestic Legitimacy	Regime Stability		X		
		Regime Accountability				X

#### *Modalities of Russian Normative Engagement in the Post-Soviet Space (2004-2008)*

Russia’s approach to the region during 2004-2008 was primarily marked by the continuation of the trends observed in the previous period. While the EurAsEC was largely ignored by Brussels, Moscow stepped up its efforts to present the framework as an institutional focal point in the region. The EurAsEC’s “Concept on the International Activities of the Eurasian Economic Community”, for instance, proclaimed that its major aim was “to develop and effectively promote a coordinated position [among its member states] on the major issues of world development” and also “improving the efficiency of the interaction of the

Community's institutions with relevant international and regional organizations (EurAsEC 2007).” Unlike the European counterpart, the document also made extensive reference to the EU:

The EurAsEC regards the European Union as one of its main partners, whose activities largely coincide with the objectives of the Community. Based on the understanding that the nature of their relationship will have a drastic impact on the situation in the Eurasian space, the Community will seek to develop structures of intensive, sustained and long-term cooperation with the European Union on *equal footing*, both at the level of institutions as well as of its individual members (ibid, emphasis is mine).

Despite the cooperative language embodied in the document, these references need to be placed within a wider context of “great union concert” where the EurAsEC was hoped to become a counterweight to the EU. This primacy of balance became even more pronounced in a strategy paper “Priority Directions of Development for the EurAsEC during 2003-2006 and Subsequent Years,” which argued that EurAsEC should “provide the common defense against *possible economic damage from third countries*” and “strengthen the resilience against *the overall economic threats*, in particular in regard to the exacerbation of international competition... (EurAsEC 2004, emphasis is mine).” Since the paper was published before the advent of the global financial crisis, the “possible economic damage” largely referred to the EU’s attempt to bring post-Soviet states closer to the European economic arena while ignoring the role of the EurAsEC.<sup>26</sup>

As Russia was “increasingly willing to put forth a competing political and normative agenda that has the potential to blunt the Union’s value-laden approach in its periphery (2008: 37),” the Kremlin consolidated the “Moscow-centered system (Trenin 2006: 87)” underpinned by the norms of great power leadership, intergovernmentalism, classical sovereignty, and above all, the logic of peace by balance. However, as the EU capitalized on its asymmetry of power vis-à-vis its regional partners, a multitude of regional specialists observed that the Russian foreign policy at the time also showed a notable preference for bilateralism.<sup>27</sup> By and large, deep regional institutionalization at the time was limited since Moscow disliked supranational arrangements while the post-Soviet elites also feared that any supranational framework would grow into a new Moscow-based super-authority of a Soviet kind. In this sense, the interests of EurAsEC members were aligned to champion the centrality of intergovernmentalism. This also meant that Russia lacked effective means to influence those regional states stood outside of the EurAsEC (e.g. Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia). For these states, Russia repeatedly returned to non-institutional measures including food embargos, “energy weapons,” and ultimately, the use of force in the case of Georgia.

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<sup>26</sup> For instance, Prime Minister Yanukovych of Ukraine at the time signed the EurAsEC’s agreement creating a Single Economic Space (SES) and justified this initiative as a stepping stone to increase Kiev’s leverage over EU policymakers and to integrate Ukraine into Europe on its own terms (i.e. more financial aid and less conditionality) (Krushelnycky 2004).

<sup>27</sup> For instance, Kay (2003: 132) maintained that “Since becoming president, Vladimir Putin has increasingly prioritised Russia’s bilateral relations with CIS members over multilateral action. In the words of Willerton and Cockerham, “Russia and other FSU states have relied primarily on bilateral arrangements with one another to advance their agendas (Willerton and Cockerham: 187).

Nevertheless, Russian behaviors during the period suggest that the Kremlin was not exclusively driven by “a hunger for power,” as many Western observers proclaimed, but also constrained by the very normative vision it advocated. As two notable analysts contended:

A regime truly committed to expansion would have behaved quite differently... In Georgia, a revisionist Russia would have annexed Abkhazia and South Ossetia long ago, before Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili embarked on his military buildup after taking power in 2004. To many in the West, Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia seemed to prove the Kremlin's land hunger. But Kremlin leaders bent on expansion would surely have ordered troops all the way to Tbilisi to depose Saakashvili and install a more congenial government. At the least, Russian forces would have taken control of the oil and gas pipelines that cross Georgia. In fact, they left those pipelines alone and quickly withdrew to the mountains. (Treisman and Shliefer 2011: 129)

While a multitude of reasons could be offered to explain Moscow's choice, the Russian leadership showed a fair degree of commitment to classical sovereignty by not taking over Tbilisi, and more importantly, by not disposing the Saakashvili regime and by allowing him to continue his “anti-Russian” foreign policy, even though the EU report at the time had already confirmed that Saakashvili was the one who ordered pre-emptive strikes (Mankoff 2012). Indeed, this stood in a stark contrast to the Western operations (NATO bombing in Yugoslavia and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq) which primarily aimed at disposing the national leadership altogether.

In this regard, Moscow was “tested” for its commitment to its own normative vision where the Russian elites faced a foreign policy imperative not to damage the credibility of its great-power-centered, statist normative order. An occupation of Georgia would have put Russia's commitment to non-interference into a serious doubt, while such a policy would also enhance the relative attractiveness of the rule-based European normative order. In this sense, the emerging normative competition between Moscow and Brussels might well have constrained foreign policy options for Moscow. Table 3-4. below shows the corresponding normative matrix for the Russian vision for regional normative order for this period.

**Table 3-4. Matrix for Russian Normative Vision, 2004-2008**

Norms for Organizing Regional Politics			Absent	Marginal	Present	Prominent
System Norms	Peace and Order	Balance				X X
		Community		X		
	Management	Great Power Concert/Leadership				X
		Legalization/Multilateralism		X		
	Institutionalization	Intergovernmentalism			X	
		Supranationalism	X			
	Sovereignty	Classical (Westphalian)			X	
		Conditional (Post-Westphalian)	X			
Polity Norms	Human Rights	Economic, Social, Cultural Rights				X
		Political Rights		X		
	Governance	Top-Down				X
		Bottom-up		X		
	Development	Stabilization/Modernization				X
		Liberalization/Transformation		X		
	Domestic Legitimacy	Regime Stability				X
		Regime Accountability		X		

## Case Period III: 2009-2013

### *Modalities of European Normative Engagement in the Post-Soviet Space (2009-2013)*

Despite the high hopes given to the ENP, liberalism in the post-Soviet space was marked by an overall stagnation since the mid-2000s (Averre 2009; Delcour 2009). Ukraine after the Orange Revolution quickly fell into a political crisis where internal fractions within the pro-European camp fought with each other; as a result, the 2010 presidential election (which was declared reasonably free and fair both by EU and NATO) brought back Viktor Yanukovich –the very figure who was discredited for the electoral fraud in the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election. Likewise, Mikheil Saakashvili, the son of the Rose Revolution, increasingly reverted to “the rule of terror” by imprisoning opposition leaders, clashing street protestors by force, and personalizing national wealth (Sumbadze 2009; Gordadze 2014). In Central Asia, Kyrgyz president Kurmanbek Bakiyev (having come to power by the Tulip Revolution in 2005) proclaimed as early as in 2006 that Western individualism and the emancipatory discourse finds no resonance in his country (Omelicheva 2015). Over these regional trends, the 2009 EC communique expressed a grave concern that “the pace of reforms has slowed particularly in democratic reforms and human rights standards (EC 2009a: 2).”

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) was born out of this frustration over the decline of liberalism in the region since the initiation of the ENP (Bolgova 2013; Axyonova 2014; Cadier 2014). While the EaP was advanced as a complementary framework to strengthen the existing instruments of ENP (EC 2008: 2), the initiative was also distinctive in many aspects. First, the EaP’s ultimate objective was to induce the *structural approximation* of the EU legislation and standards. In this sense, the supranational norm became more salient in the EU’s approach to post-Soviet regional institutionalization during this period. For this purpose, the Deep and Comprehensive Association Agreements (DCAAs) was invented as a key instrument to institutionalize “the principles of conditionality and differentiation (EC 2009b: 5)” based on “mutual commitments to the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, and the principles of the market economy and sustainable development (EC 2008: 3).” Moreover, the document also elevated the importance of accountable and bottom-up governance by creating a new EaP Civil Society Forum to promote interactions and dialogues among civil society actors and state authorities.

Although the document emphasized the “joint ownership” of the initiative, it was essentially “an imbalanced partnership, where the partner countries are supposed to carry out reforms, while the EU unilaterally decides whether and what kind of reward to grant them (March 2011: 11).” The initiative also strengthened its political component by demonstrating a “wish to deepen where appropriate political association and increase political and security policy convergence and effectiveness in the field of foreign policy (EC 2013: 9).” In this regard, the EaP was a pioneering arrangement which advanced the EU’s normative aims by economic means (Cadier and Light 2015; Lane and Samokhvalov 2015).

The new initiative also outlined the creation of a Neighbourhood Economic Community (EC 2008: 10); however, it still remained completely silent on the role of existing regional institutions

including the EurAsEC. In this sense, “The EU has proved so far unable to design a coherent vision of its eastern neighbourhood as far as it fails to take into account the role played by Russia in the region (Delcour 2009: 515).” Instead, Brussels advanced a Euro-centric vision that the EaP would bring together “other EU institutions, international organisations (such as the OSCE and CoE), International Financial Institutions, parliaments, business representatives, local authorities, and a wide range of stakeholders in the fields covered by the thematic platforms (EC 2008: 12).” The Prague Declaration also called for a closer involvement of the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EC 2009b: 10). By strategically ignoring the viability of the Eurasian alternative, European policymakers implicitly rejected Moscow’s proposal of managing the post-Soviet space by the tandem of the two unions (Popescu and Willson 2009).

Nevertheless, the EaP was pragmatic and more “flexible” in the sense that it abandoned the ENP’s value-laden, “EU-does-not-talk-to-dictators” approach and fully integrated Belarus (which was excluded from the ENP over human rights concerns) into its institutional framework. This was a sea-change, particularly considering that fact that Belarus in 2009 was much more illiberal than the time of the ENP’s launch. Indeed, the Belarussian participation was suspended in the 2013 Warsaw EaP Summit for its further deterioration of human rights record. But Belarus was oddly readmitted in the 2013 Vilnius Summit, although marginal improvements were observed in terms of human rights and good governance. In a stark contrast to the Warsaw Declaration, the Vilnius Declaration refrained from criticizing the Belarussian government and stated that “The Summit participants note that the EU remains engaged in a European Dialogue on Modernisation with Belarussian society and that exchanges are ongoing between the EU and the Belarussian government with a view to determining the best future form of cooperation on modernisation issues. (EC 2013:15)”

It is plausible to argue that this change was partly driven by the dynamics of normative competition: the initial ENP designers expected that Belarus, once excluded from the European integration process, would ultimately embrace European norms in search for wider economic opportunities. What happened was completely opposite: furious of Europe’s “exclusive” integration policy, Minsk stepped up its support for Russia-led Eurasian institutionalization and drifted further away from the European ideals. In this sense, the presence of the Eurasian alternative may have structurally “forced” Brussels to accept Minsk as a partner on equal footing. All in all, the case of Belarus implied that the mechanism of conditionality is effective only when there is no alternative.

In sum, the European approach at the time was marked by a normative ambiguity: Brussels learned to compromise some of its core values to retain and advance its own vision in the region, while its commitment to democracy, (political) human rights, and other liberal ideals was noticeably elevated. Table 3-5. below shows the corresponding normative matrix for the European vision for regional normative order for this period.

**Table 3-5. Matrix for European Normative Vision, 2009-2013**

Norms for Organizing Regional Politics			Absent	Marginal	Present	Prominent
System Norms	Peace and Order	Balance	X			
		Community				X X
	Management	Great Power Concert/Leadership	X			
		Legalization/Multilateralism				X
	Institutionalization	Intergovernmentalism			X	
		Supranationalism				X
	Sovereignty	Classical (Westphalian)		X		
		Conditional (Post-Westphalian)			X	
Polity Norms	Human Rights	Economic, Social, Cultural Rights			X	
		Political Rights				X
	Governance	Top-Down		X		
		Bottom-up				X
	Development	Stabilization/Modernization		X		
		Liberalization/Transformation				X
	Domestic Legitimacy	Regime Stability		X		
		Regime Accountability				X

*Modalities of Russian Normative Engagement in the Post-Soviet Space (2009-2013)*

In the late 2000s, “a pivotal change in integration patterns (Dragneva and Wolczuk 2012: 5)” emerged in Russia’s approach to the post-Soviet institutionalization. Established in 2010, the Eurasian Custom Union (ECU) became the first post-Soviet regional institution giving equal voice to all participating members.<sup>28</sup> In this sense, the principle of great power leadership codified in the EurAsEC’s institutional DNA was rapidly replaced by that of legalization and multilateralism. Previously, Russia was the only EurAsEC member with the privileged right to veto at the institution’s daily decision-making body, the Integration Committee. By contrast, the new voting procedure of the ECU’s Eurasian Economic Commission adhered to the one-country-one-vote principle, permitting a possibility of Russia being outvoted. Several authors contended that this change was rather declarative (Jarábik and Marin 2014; Dragneva and Wolczuk 2014), but in the eyes of Moscow, the EurAsEC was valuable precisely because it explicitly institutionalized Russia’s great power leadership: similar to America’s permanent NATO commandership, the special status conferred to Moscow entailed both symbolic as well as normative values which served to reaffirm Russia’s leading position in the region.

While the objectives of European initiatives have increasingly shifted to the supranational “approximation” of EU norms and legal standards in the post-Soviet space, Russia’s attachment to great power prerogative waned considerably and supranationalism emerged as a new principle in the making of the ECU and its subsequent transformation into the EEU. As discussed earlier, post-Soviet leaders have been adamantly against any form of supranational integration, since this may easily lead to the revival of Soviet-style centralized regional governance commanded by Moscow. At the same time, Russia was equally concerned that a supranational structure may lead to the creation of a “transfer union” where Moscow is expected to commit disproportionate amount of national resources. This alignment of interests made intergovernmentalism the prominent organizing principle of the EurAsEC.

Breaking this tradition, the *Declaration on Eurasian Economic Integration* expressed that the ECU’s key objective is “the improvement and development of supranational institutions (Eurasian

<sup>28</sup> On 27 November 2009, Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan approved a customs code and a single customs tariff for creating the ECU. The code came into effect on 1 July 2010 and the tariff on 1 January of the same year.



Economic Commission 2011).” Indeed, this was the first time the word “supranational” appeared in the Eurasian official documents. Although the intergovernmental ways of managing integration process was still in place, the document asserted a collective aspiration to go further on the supranational path, even envisioning “the development of cooperation in the sphere of foreign policy issues of mutual interest.”<sup>29</sup>

Despite these sea-changes, the Declaration continued to value the statist vision on domestic governance where regional integration was primarily portrayed as a means to enhance economic, social, and cultural rights of post-Soviet citizens. In line with this, the Declaration clarified a major objective was to improve “welfare and quality of life, sustainable socio-economic development, comprehensive modernization, and strengthening of national competitiveness in the global economy (ibid)”. Nevertheless, the once-marginalized norm on bottom-up governance is now marginally recognized in the text, stressing the need to involve “business communities” and “people-to-people contacts (ibid).” In this sense, what used to be seen as a top-down process propelled by the sovereign governments now has been gradually opened up for a more inclusive form of regional governance.

With the newly emerging integration framework, Vladimir Putin’s op-ed published by *Izvestiya* stressed the compatibility between the European and Eurasian integration projects, and even went so far as to argue that “new dynamic markets governed by unified standards and regulations for goods and services” are “in most cases consistent with European standards (Putin 2011).” This view was echoed by the Belarussian Foreign Ministry, which further articulated that the ECU “was launched as a first step towards forming a broader single market inspired by the European Union, with the objective of forming an alliance between former Soviet states (Belarussian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015).” In this regard, Putin emphasized that “none of this [projects] entails any kind of revival of the Soviet Union” while proclaiming that “It would be naïve to try to revive or emulate something that has been consigned to history.”

This cooperative language, however, did not mean that the gulf between the two unions was closing (Bordachev and Skriba 2014). Overall, Putin’s vision was still based on the logic of peace by balance – the “accession to the Eurasian Union will also help countries integrate into Europe sooner and from a *stronger position* (Putin 2011, emphasis is mine).” In this sense, it becomes clearer that the mission of the ECU/EEU project was to form a united Eurasian front, “a powerful supranational association capable of becoming one of the poles in the modern world (Putin 2011)” In this regard, Krastev (2011: 86) insightfully analyzed that “Putin’s hypothesis” was after all not the gradual convergence of the two unions, but that “Europe will accept a more powerful Russia as a guarantor of stability, even at the cost of a European retreat from its values and ambitions.”

As many observers noted, the rise of the ECU was primarily driven by Russia’s aspiration to counter the growing European influence in the region represented by the EaP (March 2011; Mezhevich 2013; Cadier 2014). As such, the notable shift in the integration approach from intergovernmentalism to supranationalism may be partly attributed to the fact that, in order to compete with the EU’s supranational initiatives, Moscow was compelled to offer an alternative deal that embraces some part of the EU values.

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<sup>29</sup> The treaty of 1995 as well as of 1999 guaranteed the creation of a custom union yet mechanisms for realizing the plan was largely absent. Indeed, Kazakh president Nazarbayev criticized this series of perpetual inaction and stressed the need to “move from ‘a decade of talk’ to the ‘Decade of Action’ (Nazarbayev 2012).”

Table 3-6. below shows the corresponding normative matrix for the Russian vision for regional normative order for this period.

**Table 3-6. Matrix for Russian Normative Vision, 2009-2013**

Norms for Organizing Regional Politics			Absent	Marginal	Present	Prominent
System Norms	Peace and Order	Balance				X X
		Community		X		
	Management	Great Power Concert/Leadership		X		
		Legalization/Multilateralism				X
	Institutionalization	Intergovernmentalism			X	
		Supranationalism				X
	Sovereignty	Classical (Westphalian)		X		
		Conditional (Post-Westphalian)	X			
Polity Norms	Human Rights	Economic, Social, Cultural Rights				X
		Political Rights		X		
	Governance	Top-Down				X
		Bottom-up			X	
	Development	Stabilization/Modernization				X
		Liberalization/Transformation	X			
	Domestic Legitimacy	Regime Stability				X
		Regime Accountability		X		

## Case Period IV: 2014-

### *Modalities of European Normative Engagement in the Post-Soviet Space (2014-)*

At the end of 2013, a sense of political crisis was plaguing in Brussels well before the onset of the Ukrainian crisis. After a series of prolonged negotiations, preliminary DCAAs were concluded with Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, prepared to be signed at the Vilnius EaP Summit on November 2013. In that month, however, the EU was caught unprepared by Ukraine's rejection of the final agreement and Armenia's abrupt "U-turn" from the EU to seek official membership in the forthcoming EEU (Rettman 2013; Popadiuk 2013).<sup>30</sup>

At the moment, the EU faced a fundamental choice whether or not to accept Russia's "balancing unions" vision advocating for co-management of the region. Eying to leap concessions from both sides, then Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov proposed a tripartite Russia-Ukraine-EU association where Ukraine (and by implication other regional states) would be able to avoid choosing sides (Popadiuk 2013). While Moscow was overwhelmingly supportive of this proposal, the EU "unambiguously refused to support this idea" by declaring that "We see no role for third countries in this process (Rekeda 2015)."

Once EU's fundamental confidence in its own normative vision had prevailed, Ukraine emerged as a field of intense normative competition. At the time, Ukrainian domestic opinion was highly polarized: 36 percent of the population longed for a closer integration with Russia while 41 percent advocated for a "European choice" in February 2014 (IRI 2015). This lack of national consensus meant that the EU had to make a strong push in support of pro-Europeanism, in which the EaP instruments played a crucial role. For instance, the EaP's European Endowment for Democracy (EED) provided the Euromaidan movement with 150,000 EUR of direct finance between November 2013 and March 2014 (Mainichi Shinbun 2014). In an

<sup>30</sup> Armenia's National Assembly voted 103-7 on 4 December 2014 to join the EEU (Standish 2015).

exclusive interview with the major Japanese newspaper, EED's Executive Director Jerzy Pomianowski admitted that "It is difficult to act as the EU, but as an NGO [the EED] it is easier to support the opposition forces standing up against the semi-dictatorship of Yanukovych (Mainichi Shinbun 2014)." In this sense, the Euromaidan revolt actualized the very fear of Moscow that the EaP would be eventually used as an instrument to forcefully push for liberalization in the region at the expense of Moscow's key interests.

For the purpose of space, this study does not engage in a detailed analysis of causes and consequences of the Ukrainian crisis; however, the worldviews expressed by the EU documents published in 2015 –the EaP Riga Summit's *Joint Declaration* and the *Council Conclusions on the EU Strategy for Central Asia*– reveal that the conflict has affected the EU's plan for the region in several important ways.

Both of these texts exhibit the continuity of the vision and stress the primacy of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedoms and socio-economic development (EC 2015: 1; European Council 2015: 2). They also reaffirm the principle of "shared ownership, responsibility, differentiation and mutual accountability (EC 2015: 1)," which is "aimed at fostering the stable, secure and sustainable development of the region (European Council 2015: 2)." Nevertheless, despite the acceleration of supranational arrangements like DCAAs, the EU has noticeably elevated the norm of classical sovereignty, where, for instance, the EaP participating states are now named as "*sovereign, independent* partners (EC 2015: 3, emphasis is mine)." The Riga Declaration went so far as affirming "the sovereign right of each partner freely to choose the level of ambition and the goals to which it aspires in its relations with the European Union (EC 2015: 2) where "sovereign partners" are allowed to "decide on how they want to proceed in their relations (ibid)."

This revert to classical sovereignty was presumably a consequence of Russia's policy in Ukraine,<sup>31</sup> as well as the rise of the EEU as an alternative choice for regional states. As a result, the accusation for the Lukashenka regime's dubious human rights records was completely dropped, and instead, Belarus was applauded for its role as an effective mediator in the Ukrainian conflict. An even more interesting case was the EU's ratification of the PCA with Turkmenistan, which had been blocked since the late 1990s over human rights concerns. Despite no visible improvement has occurred on the side of Ashgabat, the document further called for an immediate upgrading of the EU's Liaison Office into a full-fledged EU Delegation in Turkmenistan (EC 2015: 3). These moves imply that the EU's insistence to the norm of conditional sovereignty, political rights, and regime accountability has somehow lessened.

While the Eurasian integration project has increasingly moved away from the reliance on Russia's leadership and embraced a more multilateral approach, the EU's strategic ignorance of the Eurasian alternative became even more noticeable. The Riga Declaration stressed "the importance of ensuring coherence between various relevant regional initiatives and networks (EC 2015: 6)" yet with no reference was made to the EEU. Perhaps the clearest manifestation of this trend can be seen in the EU's renewed policy for Central Asia, which acknowledges the need to "promote dialogue with the relevant regional and international organisations (European Council 2015: 8)" by which they meant the OSCE, the Council of

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<sup>31</sup> This is mentioned in the Riga Declaration as a threat to the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, while the document, unlike the previous declarations, spared a fair space to discuss the state of other "frozen-conflicts," namely, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia.

Europe, the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, and other UN agencies. The document even expressed an interest in capitalizing on the “possibilities arising from ‘silk road’ initiatives (ibid: 8)” proposed by China, but remained strikingly silent on the prospect for the collaboration with the EEU, which was already joined by two of five Central Asian republics (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) with the likely admission of Tajikistan. We can grasp the oddness of this policy by imagining a hypothetical case where Brussels develops a “Western partnership” with Canada and Mexico but chooses to be completely silent on the role of NAFTA. Indeed, the EU’s recent conclusion of an Enhanced PCA with Kazakhstan, and not with EEU, adds yet another evidence in this regard.

The strategic adaptation of the European normative vision in this period suggests that, partly driven by the competitive normative dynamics, Brussels is ready to be flexible in regard to some of its core values. At the same time, “continuity in change” is still observed when it comes to the EU’s blunt ignorance of the EEU as a constructive regional partner, even though the Eurasian integration project has increasingly embraced multilateral, legalized format of managing regional relations. Table 3-7. below shows the corresponding normative matrix of the European normative vision for this period.

**Table 3-7. Matrix for European Normative Vision, 2014-**

Norms for Organizing Regional Politics			Absent	Marginal	Present	Prominent
System Norms	Peace and Order	Balance	X			
		Community				X X
	Management	Great Power Concert/Leadership	X			
		Legalization/Multilateralism				X
	Institutionalization	Intergovernmentalism			X	
		Supranationalism				X
	Sovereignty	Classical (Westphalian)			X	
		Conditional (Post-Westphalian)		X		
Polity Norms	Human Rights	Economic, Social, Cultural Rights			X	
		Political Rights				X
	Governance	Top-Down		X		
		Bottom-up				X
	Development	Stabilization/Modernization		X		
		Liberalization/Transformation				X
	Domestic Legitimacy	Regime Stability		X		
		Regime Accountability				X

#### *Modalities of Russian Normative Engagement in the Post-Soviet Space (2014-)*

Since 2014, much ink has been spilled on Russia’s policy in Ukraine. A plurality of European observers (e.g. McNabb 2015) was quick to proclaim the return of “Russian imperialism.” Yet, if this was the case, the question would be why Russia did *not* take over the *whole* Ukraine, not why it took back Crimea. Indeed, while Yanukovich was still recognized as a legitimate president (who had sat on the negotiation table with the EU), Moscow could have persuaded him to issue an “invitation for intervention” for Russia. This action could have been justified by referring to 2004 French intervention in Ivory Coast, where the French forces (with the invitation from the pro-Paris regime) clashed anti-regime protestors and killed dozens of civilians (AFP 2008). In essence, if Moscow were guided by a truly imperial vision, it would not

have missed the golden opportunity to embark on a wider scale intervention, especially since the feasibility of such option was high.<sup>32</sup>

By the same token, Hett et al. (2015) argues that Russia's reaction was guided by its great power prerogatives. Indeed, several analysts noted that Russia's prime objective has been retaining its sphere of influence over Ukraine (e.g. Stratfor 2015; Shevtsova 2015). While the attachment to great power status has been a hallmark of contemporary Russian foreign policy (Clunan 2009), however, the developments of multilateral ECU/EEU project suggest that Moscow is ready to move beyond the conservatives framework (Dragneva and Wolczuk 2012: 7). Indeed, Moscow's enthusiastic support for the EU-Ukraine-Russia trilateral association proposal indicates that its prime objective was to avoid being *excluded* from the post-Soviet region. Hence, what the Crimea crisis symbolized was perhaps not Russia's radical departure from its previously communicated normative vision, but instead its continued commitment to the supremacy of the balancing prerogatives.

Immediately after the Crimean crisis, many in the West predicted that Russia's decision to "annex" the peninsula has put a final bullet into the already-crumbling Eurasian project (Michel 2014; Barbashin 2015). Quite contrary, my analysis of the EEU treaty below suggests that the crisis, and particularly the Western attempts to isolate Russia, might have accelerated the further institutionalization of the EEU by lowering the once-dominant voice of Moscow. In essence, "the Crimea-Ukraine crisis strengthened Belarus's and Kazakhstan's position in the EEU negotiations (Sivickiy 2015: 7)." Occasionally, Russia has tried to inject political aspirations into the EEU such as border protection, common citizenship, and the coordination of foreign and security policies. Minsk and Astana together blocked all of these attempts and removed related clauses from the treaty (ibid: 15), and more surprisingly, Moscow largely gave in to these requests. An even more interesting case was the accession of Kyrgyzstan, where Bishkek even managed to make a list of unilateral "demands."<sup>33</sup> As Popescu (2014: 22) rightly points out, it is significant that "a state as small as Kyrgyzstan is advancing such conditions for joining a club." As such, since Moscow is desperately in need of support from its neighbors, Russia has become increasingly willing to downplay the centrality of great power leadership; as a result, the principles of multilateralism and sovereign equality have become a salient driver of the EEU project.

Reflecting these dynamics, the 680-page EEU Treaty represents the most legalized framework ever negotiated in the post-Soviet neighborhood, establishing three supranational institutions:

- 1) **Supreme Eurasian Economic Council:** The supreme decision-making body comprised by the heads of states and governments (decisions adopted by consensus);
- 2) **Eurasian Economic Commission** (Moscow, Russia): The supranational regulative body comprised of the *Intergovernmental Council* (represented by one deputy head of government from each member, decisions adopted by consensus) and the *Board* (headed by the Chairman and

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<sup>32</sup> Stratfor (2015) estimated that Russia needed around 91,000-135,000 troops and 11-14 days to completely occupy the whole Eastern half of Ukraine and to march into Kiev. If the operation was simply to take over Kiev, this could be done with only a few thousand troops and within a few days.

<sup>33</sup> These included "financial support for the creation of labour-intensive industries (to compensate people who might lose their incomes if there is a drastic reduction of re-export opportunities from China); facilitations in the field of migration; and exemptions from the application of the EEU tariff levels for the import of equipment and machinery from countries such as Turkey or China (Popescu 2014: 22).

represented by three delegates from each member, decisions adopted by consensus), equipped with the Secretariat encompassing 23 departments and over 1'000 staffs;

- 3) **EEU Court** (Minsk, Belarus): The judicial body whose rulings are final, immediately effective, and supranationally binding.

While the creation of these institutions was already envisioned by the ECU framework, the EEU Treaty clearly promoted further ascendance of multilateralism and supranationalism (see also Zagorski 2015 2015). With the strong insistence of Kazakhstan and Belarus (Nicu Popescu 2014: 11), the principle of unanimity and “equal representation of the Parties (Article 9)” prevailed in all decision-making bodies even though Russia contributes most of the union’s budget.<sup>34</sup> The Treaty also represents a commitment to the international rule of law, where the compliance with the WTO regime became imperative, even for non-WTO EEU members.

Yet perhaps the most innovative aspect of the Treaty is the salience placed on supranationalism, where it is declared that “In case of conflict between international treaties within the Union and this Treaty, this Treaty shall prevail (Article 6.3).” While the executive function retained by the Supreme Council indicates the survival of intergovernmentalism, the Union is now conferred a wider and deeper competence to oversee foreign economic relations of its member states (Article 12.14 and 12.15), as well as to coordinate macroeconomic and monetary policies (Sections XIII and XIV, respectively). Unlike the EurAsEC’s Integration Committee (whose competence was vaguely defined), the Commission is tasked to pursue a single foreign trade policy with a clearer mandate specified by Annex.1 (Weisberg 2014). These arrangements demonstrate that, although intergovernmental ways of managing integration process is still present, the overall vision is learning towards a greater supranationalism.

In terms of values, the Treaty’s preamble stresses “the principle of the sovereign equality of states, the need for unconditional respect for the rule of constitutional rights and freedoms of man and national” as well as the “respect for specific features of the political structures of the Member States (EEU 2015: 5).” With this continuity of the statist vision, the document also highlights the need to champion “balanced development (ibid: 1)” and even the “resistance to external influences (ibid: 60).” However, unlike the previous agreements, the Treaty spares an entire section (XII) on consumer protection and also incorporates a new clause on transparency measures (Article 69), which allows the union’s stakeholders, including civil society actors, to review and comment on the forthcoming regulations. While the effective implementation of this process is yet to be seen, the Treaty presents an important shift towards the gradual embracement of bottom-up governance mechanisms. Table 3-8. below shows the corresponding normative matrix of the Russian normative vision for this period.

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<sup>34</sup> In 2014, Russia contributed of 87.97 percent of the total budget, Kazakhstan 7.33 percent, and Belarus 4.7 percent. The total budget and contribution of each member is decided by the Supreme Council (Article 12.7).

**Table 3-8. Matrix for Russian Normative Vision, 2014-**

Norms for Organizing Regional Politics			Absent	Marginal	Present	Prominent
System Norms	Peace and Order	Balance				X X
		Community		X		
	Management	Great Power Concert/Leadership		X		
		Legalization/Multilateralism				X
	Institutionalization	Intergovernmentalism			X	
		Supranationalism				X
	Sovereignty	Classical (Westphalian)			X	
		Conditional (Post-Westphalian)	X			
Polity Norms	Human Rights	Economic, Social, Cultural Rights				X
		Political Rights		X		
	Governance	Top-Down				X
		Bottom-up			X	
	Development	Stabilization/Modernization				X
		Liberalization/Transformation		X		
	Domestic Legitimacy	Regime Stability				X
		Regime Accountability		X		

## 4. Conclusion

While my research design does not allow me to make probabilistic causal claims, the case study offers several important insights. The values and normative orders promoted by the EEU and the EU in the post-Soviet neighborhood remain incompatible to a certain extent, especially when it comes to how regional peace ought to be organized. However, the strategic adaptation of both sides appears to be a key driving force behind the intensifying competition. In order to reach out to a wider set of regional partners, the EU has watered down its “human-rights-first” approach in recent years, while Russia has also increasingly embraced a more legalized, multilateral, and supranational ways of promoting regional integration. In this sense, perhaps the biggest winners of the deepening competition in the neighborhood are the competing unions’ regional partners who seemed to have learned how to effectively advance their voices by playing both sides and preventing the emergence of a monopolistic integration framework.

Despite Brussel’s aspiration to advance its normative hegemony in the region, the “unions-in-concert” deal envisioned by Moscow is already in place and has constrained EU’s policy options. As a consequence, the EU’s strategic ignorance of the EEU has become increasingly obsolete, particularly considering the fact that European policymakers seem to be willing to open dialogues with Turkmenistan and China, whose political values are arguably much less liberal than those of EEU members. While political rights and regime accountability remain points of collision between the two unions, a more promising “entry point” for the EU to initiate a constructive dialogue with the EEU on “the integration of integration” could be the aspect of participatory governance mechanisms, whose importance has been increasingly recognized by and practiced within the EEU. If Brussels continues to categorically refuge the viability of such harmonizing framework, however, the normative competition might face a further escalation. In this regard, it must be noted that the EEU is increasingly eyeing on the Balkan states (i.e. Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia) while several Russian policymakers (such as Sergey Glaziev) have even mentioned an option to “take away” some of the EU members (i.e. Greece and Cyprus) to the side of the EEU.

At the same time, Russia may have been overly sensitive towards regional democratic trends and might have missed opportunities arising from its commitment to the statist values, which find a wide resonance in the regional societies. As the landslide victory of pro-Russia/EEU parties in 2015 Kyrgyz election (as well as the regional opinions poll cited in the introduction) suggests, the region's "democratic will" often falls on the side of Moscow, particularly since post-Soviet citizens have witnessed that Brussels is not willing or capable of giving unconditional support for its troubled partners (e.g. Greece and Ukraine). In this sense, a final challenge remains whether the EEU members –above all Russia– are ready to practice and communicate the values embodied in the EEU framework, although the contemporary developments suggest that this has been largely the case in recent years.



# Annex.1 Selected Texts on European and Eurasian Integration Initiatives

## European Texts

Case Periods	Release date and year	Title	Size (words in English)
I	31 May 1999	EC. (1999). Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Armenia. <i>Decision 99/602/EC</i> .	911
	11 March 2003	EC. (2003). Wider Europe —Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours. Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. <i>COM (2003) 104</i> .	8,946
II	4 December 2006	EC. (2006). Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy. Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. <i>COM (2006) 726</i> .	6,043
	3 December 2008	EC. (2008). Eastern Partnership. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. <i>SEC (2008) 2974</i> .	5,893
III	29 April 2009	EC. (2009a). Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2008. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. <i>COM (2009) 188/3</i> .	5,742
	7 May 2009	EC. (2009b). Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit. <i>EC Press 78 8435/09</i> .	2,715
	30 September 2011	EC. (2011). Joint Declaration of the Warsaw Eastern Partnership Summit. <i>EC Press 341 14983/11</i> .	4,153
	29 November 2013	EC. (2013). Joint Declaration of the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit. <i>EC Press 516 17130/13</i> .	8,937
IV	22 May 2015	EC. (2015). Joint Declaration of the Riga Eastern Partnership Summit. (Document number not assigned).	4,856
	22 June 2015	European Council. (2015). Council conclusions on the EU Strategy for Central Asia. <i>9972/15 COEST 185</i> .	2,050

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Case Periods	Release date and year	Title	Size (words in Russian)
I	10 October 2001 (date unspecified)	EurAsEC. (2001). Dogovor ob uchrezhdenii Yevraziyskogo ekonomicheskogo soobshchestva [The Treaty on the Establishment of the Eurasian Economic Community]. Accessible at <a href="http://evrazes.com/docs/view/3">http://evrazes.com/docs/view/3</a> .	4,779
II	9 February 2004	EurAsEC. (2004). Prioritetnyye napravleniya razvitiya YevrAzES na 2003–2006 i posleduyushchiye gody [Priority directions of development of the EurAsEC for 2003–2006 and subsequent years]. Accessible at <a href="http://evrazes.com/docs/view/30">http://evrazes.com/docs/view/30</a> .	1,794
III	3 October 2011	Putin, V. (2011). Novyy integratsionnyy proyekt dlya Yevrazii — budushcheye, kotoroye rozhdayetsya segodnya [A new integration project for Eurasia: The future in the making]. Accessible at <a href="http://izvestia.ru/news/502761">http://izvestia.ru/news/502761</a> . *English translation by the European Parliament available at <a href="http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/d-ru/dv/dru_2013_0320_06_/dru_2013_0320_06_en.pdf">http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/d-ru/dv/dru_2013_0320_06_/dru_2013_0320_06_en.pdf</a> .	2,063
	18 November 2011	Eurasian Economic Commission. (2011). Deklaratsiya o ekonomicheskoy integratsii [The Declaration on the Eurasian Economic Integration]. Accessible at <a href="http://kremlin.ru/supplement/1091">http://kremlin.ru/supplement/1091</a> .	521
IV	5 June 2014	Eurasian Economic Commission. (2014). Dogovor o Yevraziyskom ekonomicheskoy soyuze [Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union]. Accessible at <a href="http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/01-01-2015-1.aspx">http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/01-01-2015-1.aspx</a> .	152,300 (22,237 words for the treaty and 130,063 words for annexed protocols)

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