ABSTRACT

Since the end of the Cold War, Europe has witnessed the intensification of new regional dynamics. Although the European Union (EU) has produced the most advanced model of integration, contributing to a major part of the definition of what is Europe today, other actors have also attempted to play a differentiated, or even leading, role in the continent. Under Putin’s leadership, Russia has been driving alternative dynamics to the dominant EU
model, forging recently the idea of a Eurasian Union with an unclear *modus operandi*. Thus, the foreign policies of both the EU and Russia have a strong regional dimension and offer a set of policies and norms contributing to legitimizing their own models. Additionally, the effects of their policies have contributed to an expansion of what constitutes European identity, especially visible in the neighbourhood policy of the EU and in the concept of Eurasia. Our paper aims at understanding the emergence of competing views concerning the creation of a new “regionness” in Europe, i.e., as Bjorn Hettne argues, the degrees of regionalization in terms of spatiality, cooperation, and identity; and questions how the Russian new stance contributes to create an alternative and expanded identity of Europe. But can the concept of regionness be applied to Europe taking into consideration EU’s and Russia’s leading roles? Can the concept of regionness explain security challenges that are not based on classical confrontation? It’s on the attempt to answer to those questions that this paper will focus on.

**Keywords**: European Union, identity, integration, neighbourhood, regionness.
Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, Europe has witnessed the intensification of new regional dynamics. Although the European Union (EU) has produced the most advanced model of integration, contributing to a major part of the definition of what is Europe today, other actors have also attempted to play a differentiated, or even leading, role in the continent. Under Putin’s leadership, Russia has been driving alternative dynamics to the dominant EU model, forging recently the idea of a Eurasian Union with an unclear modus operandi. Thus, the foreign policies of both the EU and Russia have a strong regional dimension and offer a set of policies and norms contributing to legitimizing their own models. Additionally, the effects of their policies have contributed to an expansion of what constitutes European identity, especially visible in the neighbourhood policy of the EU and in the concept of “Eurasia”.

Our paper aims at understanding the emergence of competing views concerning the creation of a new “regionness” in Europe, i.e., as Bjorn Hettne argues, the degrees of regionalization in terms of spatiality, cooperation, and identity; and questions how the Russian new stance contributes to create an alternative and expanded identity of Europe. Hettne’s argument is complementary to Barry Buzan’s 2003 “Regions and Power” argument of the importance of the “security complex”, connecting it with the “security community” that Karl Deutsch as well as Adler and Barnett foresee. The concepts suggest that we are no longer addressing regionalism if we want to address altogether questions like security, power and identity. Moreover, the systems of regional cooperation (e.g. EU, AU, SAARC, SAADC) are not only characterised by their frameworks, governing norms, governance systems and attempts to influence global policy-making. They are also shaped by
constraints (e.g. EU: integration process, political/economic instability) and challenges (e.g. funding, veto players, inability to act in crisis due to decision-making norms). The new concepts and theories related to the “regionalism” highlight the multidimensional result of the process of regionalisation of a particular geographic area, seen as an ongoing process with significant limitations as the recent Arab Spring uprisings and Ukraine events showed. In Europe, the European Union and its neighbourhood policy are particularly illustrative of this evolution.

**Conceptual Framework and state of art**

All States have a strategic culture and the European Union as a "security community" (Deutsch, 1961) also shares values and ideals based, for example, in the collective will of crisis management. However, it is a strategic culture in process, at an embryonic stage, and not a common strategic culture that gathers all member states. The foreign policy field illustrates how the EU as a global player is still evolving.

In fact, it has been recognized that the European Union is one of the best examples of what Karl Deutsch has called "security community",

a group of people that has been integrated, where integration is defined as the achievement of a sense of community, accompanied by formal or informal institutions or practices, sufficiently strong and widespread to assure peaceful change among members of a group with reasonable certainty over a long period of time (1961: 98).
In fact, the author suggests that a “security community” is a region in which a large-scale use of violence (such as war) has become very unlikely or even unthinkable as they have come to agreement that common social problems must and can be resolved by processes of ‘peaceful change’, through institutionalized procedures, without resort to large-scale physical force. People in a security community are also bound by the “sense of community”, the mutual sympathy, trust, and common interests.

After the end of the Cold War, the concept of security community was adapted by constructivist scholars, namely in the book Security Communities (1998) edited by Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, defining it as «transnational regions formed by sovereign states whose people maintain expectations of peaceful change» (Adler, Barnett, 1998: 30).

Indeed, the two authors succeeded in focusing the security community as shared identities, values, and meanings, many-sided direct interactions, and reciprocal long-term interest. Several regions of the world have been studied within the security community framework, as the European Union, the Mercosur or ASEAN.

However, while Deutsch divided the security communities into two types - the amalgamated (an ambitious process of amalgamation, e.g. United States) and pluralistic (based in integration and pluralism, in which States retain their sovereignty and therefore easier to establish and maintain than the amalgamated counterparts) ones - Adler and Barnett described the typical evolution of a security community from nascent to ascendant, to mature, and into “tightly” and “loosely coupled”, depending on the level of their integration. A nascent security community meets the basic expectations of peaceful change,
while a mature security community is also characterized by some collective security mechanisms and supranational or transnational elements.

Other authors like Raimo Väyrynen and Andrej Tusicisny differentiated between interstate security communities (e.g. South East Asia, where war between states is unlikely) and comprehensive security communities (e.g. Western Europe, where both interstate conflicts and civil wars are seen as unthinkable).

Moreover, Morel and Cameron (2009) define security communities as transnational security communities, which share a common identity and respect the concerns and perceptions of national processes of institutional cooperation between member states. It is in sum a community of practice united around a process of economic integration and common policy, historically coincident with the development of mutual expectations and shared similar views and values on how security can be achieved.

More focused in the idea of "community", Weiler highlights the idea of Europe as a political union, in any version of the federal United States of Europe (...) utopian model of "world government" and the idea of Europe as a community (...) that is considered the regulation of international law as a space to promote "neutrality" for states to pursue their goals of power and self personal interest (1991: 2478).

Weiler reinforces his argument adding that to the interest of the community must be added the state’s interest, without extinguishing any actors, their autonomy and balance (1991, 2479)
New and Old Regionalism(s) - regional identity and beyond

In 2003, Barry Buzan’s “Regions and Powers” suggest that the debates on regional integration and regionalism witnessed in the 70’s by the International Relations discipline might be overcome by a regional security focus in general and by a regional Security Complex Theory in particular.

The concept of “regional security complexes” analyses how security is clustered in geographically shaped regions. Security concerns do not travel well over distances and threats are therefore most likely to occur in the region. The security of each actor in a region interacts with the security of the other actors. There is often intense security interdependence within a region, but not between regions, which is what defines a region and what makes regional security an interesting area of study. Buffer states sometimes isolate regions, such as Afghanistan's location between the Middle East and South Asia. Regions should be regarded as mini systems where all other IR theories can be applied, such as Balance of Power, polarity, interdependence, alliance systems, etc.

More recently, Hettne and Soderbaum (2008) try to address the ambiguities associated with regionalism by taking an interdisciplinary approach - the New Regionalism Theory (NRT). The authors seem to downplay the role of geography in the phenomenon and highlight social processes as the main defining feature of the trend. Furthermore, although they acknowledge the importance of the regional space in the study of regionalism, they seem to point to the notion that this space transcends regional contiguity. They argue that new regionalism should be seen in the light of interactions characterised by geographic contiguity and limited by geographic boundaries within a continent and highlight the
importance of geography and geographic contiguity over social processes by making reference to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the enlargement of the European Union (EU) as well as the African Union (AU) or the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The concept of “regionness” is outlined and suggested as a comparative analytical tool for understanding the emergence and construction of regions and the formation of relevant actors in a historical and multidimensional perspective. To some extent the five levels express a certain evolutionary logic, but the rise of regionness is not necessarily based on each level. Furthermore, there are many regionalisms and the processes of regionalisation at different points in time provides various entry points into the globalised order for particular regions.

Thus, regionness represents a new field of IR research where more research is needed about sequences, levels, dimensions and actors. “Regionalism” refers to the general phenomenon as well as the ideology of regionalism, that is, the urge for a regionalist order, either in a particular geographical area or as a type of world order. There may thus be many regionalisms and the broad New Regionalism approach seeks to understand why and how pluralistic and multidimensional regionalization processes enfold (Hettne and Söderbaum, 1998; Hettne, 1999; Schulz et al, 2001).

In sum, the New Regionalism literature locates the new wave of regionalization processes within the ongoing transformation of the global political economy, within a globalized viewpoint, as accepts that such processes cannot be understood only from the perspective of a specific region, although they often emerge from the regions themselves (Schulz et al,
Russia and the Eurasian Union project

According to Lane (2014), “the Project of a Eurasian Union can be considered as a response to the consequences of neo-liberal globalisation, which led to economic and moral decline in the countries forming the Commonwealth of Independent States. It is part of a more general movement in world politics towards regionalisation. Possible developments are discussed in terms of three scenarios: isolation from the world economy, a “stepping stone” to further integration in the world economy; and a more autonomous “counter-point” within the world economy. The third variety would only be possible with current stronger linkages to the BRICS countries and the Shangai cooperative organisation.”

The lessons of Ukraine for European “regionness”

Last November, when former president of Ukraine suspended the process of closer relations with the EU, he initiated an internal crisis with serious strategic consequences in Europe. Ahead of the November 2013 Vilnius summit, president Yanukovich decided to suspend temporarily the preparations for signing two agreements that would have been a milestone for the country’s relationship with Brussels. The third summit of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) - an EU policy launched in 2009 to tighten Brussels’ offer towards its Eastern neighbours – marked a decisive failure in Ukrainian path towards the West. In fact, the summit ought to be an historical moment towards Ukrainian’s course of integration in the
EU - together with Moldova and Georgia - based on the Association Agreement (AA) and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA). Instead of opening a “new chapter” in EU-Eastern partners relations (Ashton 2013), the Vilnius summit has shown the need to rethink strategic relations with Russia and the neighbours in order to avoid the resumption of confrontational and zero-sum games relations in Europe. Additionally, Russian backing of Yanukovich’s positions through diplomatic and military escalation is putting at risk Ukrainian’s core sovereignty (territorial integrity).

The Ukrainian crisis evidences a strategic and a normative gap between the EU (and the US/NATO) and Russia, prone to change the European security architecture. The issue of non-convergence with Moscow in Europe has already been confirmed, *manu militari*, by the Georgian crisis of 2008. We argue here that the ongoing events in Ukraine further acknowledge that the cooperative “acquis” in EU-Russia relations, and Russian acceptance about Brussels’ soft power involvement in the shared neighbourhood are challenged by a renewed confrontational Russian posture.

President Yanukovich’s decision in November provoked popular opposition occupying the main squares of the capital city and spreading to other parts of the country. Since then, the crisis escalated into deadly political upheaval and international crisis confronting, on the one hand, the supporters of the interim government and presidential elections in May 25 (the EU and the US) and, on the other hand, Russian diplomatic and military support for a secessionist referendum in the autonomous republic of Crimea. The military support includes the presence of unidentified pro-Moscow gunmen in Crimea that are allegedly backed by the Kremlin and armed forces exercises at Ukrainian borders. The use of military moves has been a recurrent Russian reaction in crisis contexts in Europe. For instance, as above mentioned, the Kremlin stationed Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad
(at the border of the EU) in response of the US/NATO planned antimissile shield (Gutterman 2013). With similar political symbolism, Russia launched a military preparedness exercise at Ukrainian borders at the height of Ukrainian crisis in late February 2014 (Myers 2014).

The turning-point of the crisis was reached on February 20, the deadliest day of the crisis, when allegedly government snipers killed 70 protesters. This event led to Yanukovich’s removal as an out of law president who took refuge in Russia. Parallelly, a pro-Russian individual was appointed the new de facto mayor of Sevastopol and places in Crimea are being seized by armed men. Using the argument to protect its Black Sea Fleet stationed in Sevastopol, the Kremlin and the Russian Federation Council agree with military moves in Crimea, actually occupying military the peninsula on March 2. A few days later, Crimean parliament voted in favor of joining Russia (the pro-Kiev opposition has been physically impeached of entering into the house), followed by the city of Sevastopol.

The Russian military intervention in the country needs to be put in the perspective of the 2004 Ukrainian “orange revolution” (and Georgian “rose revolution”) because it caused a strong psychological impact in the Kremlin. Trenin underlines that Moscow did not see the “coloured revolutions” as spontaneous uprisings against unpopular regimes. Russia interprets them as “US-ordered coups, bankrolled by exiled 1990s-era oligarchs such as the London-based Boris Berezovsky. They were concerned less with creating democracy than projecting western influence” (Trenin 2007).

Yanukovich’s decision to halt closer ties with Brussels has been informed by pressure from Moscow in that sense. In this context, Kiev’s financial distress has been a key factor aggravated by a Russian “commercial war” initiated last summer to pressure
Kiev (Bogoslovska 2013), including the threat of economic sanctions such as higher gas prices. The fact that the EU refused to discuss the financial short-term needs by the Vilnius summit also highlights the issue of quality of the Union’s offer towards the East. The EU has based its relations with its Eastern partners on “conditionality”, a principle implying the convergence of third parties with a set of norms and values. Thus, the Union assesses, at least theoretically, the legitimacy of third actor’s actions under the scrutiny of norms and values observance (normativity). In this perspective, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have internal issues that put under criticism their path towards political reforms, and create strong demand on the countries’ leadership.

Before Yanukovich’s destitution, next presidential elections in Ukraine were due in 2015 and many observers understood that former president’s decision to halt negotiations with Brussels was related to his pledge for reelection by avoiding high EU demands for internal reforms. The current Ukrainian crisis raises the argument that Brussels can’t continue offering Eastern neighboring countries loose alternatives because of the geopolitical situation in Europe (strong and oppositional Russia). Brussels needs to build on its capacity to become a more constructive change promoter in the Eastern neighbourhood, while at the same time preserving a workable relationship with Moscow.

During the 90’s and until recently, Moscow has faced the uncomfortable situation of the loss of former allies and has sought to maintain a relevant position in a Europe that was dominantly defined by the EU initiatives. Russia seemed to be faced with the reluctant need to find a constructive role and place despite the unavoidable facts of the EU Eastern enlargement process and the European Neighborhood Policy, both materialized in 2004. The results of the Vilnius summit may well represent a shift in this post-Cold War pattern on the European continent. The Kremlin’s attempts to maintain an enhanced role in an
“EU’s Europe” are now producing tangible results that shed the light on the problems of compatibility that have arisen in the relation with Brussels, namely because of different interpretations of sovereignty and integration.

Geopolitics informs the view of European countries’ choices and policies. As Youngs and Pishchikova (2013) underline, the EU needs to promote “successful geopolitics” in order to compete with Russia on a different ground. Brussels has a *sui generis* perception of geopolitics and of its role that is based on values and on a positive-sum perspective of external relations. Instead of becoming an idealised European partner sharing views on common norms, Russia is becoming, in the EU perspective, a challenging foreign policy actor, as the Council Conclusions of March 3, 2014 on Ukraine illustrate:

> “[t]he European Union strongly condemns the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces as well as the authorisation given by the Federation Council of Russia on 1 March for the use of the armed forces on the territory of Ukraine. [...] The Council recalls the EU’s ambitions and openness to a relationship with Russia based on mutual interest and respect and regrets that these common objectives have now been put in doubt” (Council of the European Union 2014).

According to Emerson and Kostanyan (2013), Russia has a “grand design” to damage the EaP in favour of its own neighbourhood policy. The Ukrainian crisis illustrates, thus, Russian own view about stability and sovereignty in Europe, condemned by the EU and the US because of the Russian military escalation as a response to the crisis.

After the deceiving deliveries of the orange revolution in 2004 and the political comeback of the Party of the Regions in 2006 and of the former president Yanukovich in 2010, the country found a balance that revealed to be unfeasible. The current path towards integration in the EU is ultimately not compatible with good relations with Moscow. As above-mentioned, the Ukrainian desperate need for a financial rescue package made the
country more sensitive to Russian pressures. Until Brussels finally came up with a financial package to rescue Ukraine from bankruptcy in early March 2014, Russia and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were actually the two main potential sources for financial aid. By early December 2013, Moscow offered a similar amount of help but withdrew it in the meantime (Buckley and Olearchyk 2013). Additionally, the Union will try to lower Ukrainian vulnerability concerning Russian deliveries of gas by providing the country with “reverse flows” of gas from the EU (Baker 2014).

This shift in EU’s answer towards Ukraine questions further the adequacy of its policies considering the geopolitical stakes of helping Ukraine finding a stable balance between the Union and Moscow. Ahead of the Vilnius summit, Yanukovich had repeated his request for assistance and for the EU’s involvement in the IMF in order to soften the terms of the loan that was being negotiated for month (Herszenhorn 2013). Austerity demands and the unpopular need to raise household gas prices were a key issue for Kiev. Today, the EU conditions its financial assistance with a parallel deal with the IMF.

For the first time in institutionalized EU-Russia relations, a biannual summit has been postponed because of an ongoing crisis. The usual December summit of 2013 was delayed until January 28 in an ultra-minimalist format of three hours only at the top level, with a peculiar agenda devoted to “a joint reflection between leaders on the nature and direction of the EU-Russia strategic partnership” (European Commission 2014). In fact, the summit involved a diplomatic language from the EU for a summit that was saved in extremis from not happening. Brussels official communication about the summit emphasized the lack of a common vision and the seriousness of the Ukrainian situation. The notion of “shared continent” and “strategic trust” has been introduced in EU’s appeal towards Russia. The unique sizeable result, besides a joint declaration on combating
terrorism, is an agreement to pursue bilateral consultations on the EaP Association Agreements and their economic consequences for both sides (Barroso, 2014). On its side, Putin did not confront the EU on meddling in its neighbourhood, arguably to secure a smoothing in view of the Sochi Olympics that were launched a few days later (Euractiv 2014).

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