

Normative Power Rivalry?

The European Union, Russia and the Question of Kosovo

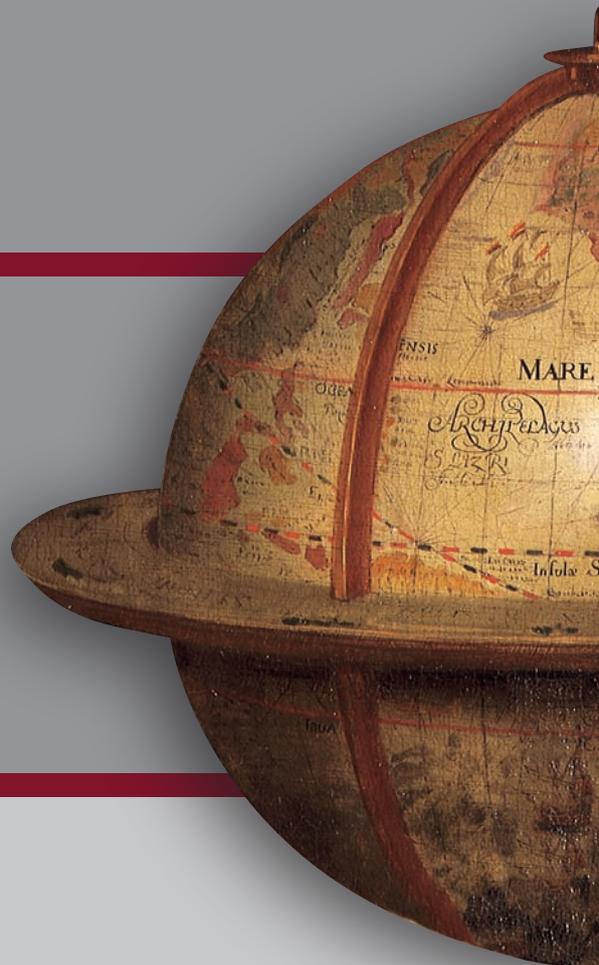
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Abstract

This paper analyses the concept of normative power rivalry. Assuming that normative power can lead to rivalry between international actors, the conditions under which the European Union's norms can cause rivalry and conflict are investigated. The hypothesis holds that the greater the clash in relevant norms, the more likely differences between them will lead to conflict. In order to test this supposition, a constructivist approach is developed and applied in a case study of the interaction between Russia and the European Union on the issue of Kosovo. It is argued that the EU's and Russia's interpretations of sovereignty, international law and multilateralism conflicted, thus leading to normative power rivalry over Kosovo.

1. Introduction: Normative Power from a Different Perspective

The concept of normative power enjoys great attention in the field of European studies. It is typically used to describe the European Union's unique influence on the international system. This normative power is generally regarded as something positive, contributing to the maintenance of peace, the defence of human rights and the spread of democracy. This paper looks at the concept from a different perspective, analysing normative power as a source of rivalry and conflict.

This paper constructs a theoretical framework to analyse normative power rivalry, then applies it to the interactions of the European Union and Russia on the question of Kosovo (1997-2008). This will shed new light onto the new concept of normative power rivalry and aid our understanding of the European Union's relationship with Russia as well as possibly its interactions with other great powers.

The question when the norms of the European Union lead to normative power rivalry and conflict with other normative powers guides this paper. In particular it will be asked what role norms played in the interaction between the European Union and Russia over the issue of Kosovo and the rivalry and conflict that unfolded between the two actors. This question builds on the assumption that international actors have certain norms they wish to establish in the international community. Norms in this context are principles or rules that guide the behaviour of international actors. They can lead to rivalry between different actors when those actors push for incompatible norms. Rivalry in this context implies that two or more international actors strive for discordant goals in a zero-sum fashion. It can turn into conflict when actors seek to undermine others' goal-seeking capabilities. Further, a definition of what qualifies as foreign policy action of the European Union is required. Here the foreign policy of the European Union is understood to include all coordinated actions of the European member states as well as actions conducted under the EU flag.

The hypothesis of this paper holds that the greater the clash of relevant norms between the European Union and any normative rival, the greater the likelihood of conflict. It is important to note that the clashing norms must be relevant to the issues in question. In this case the different interpretations of sovereignty, international law and multilateralism that the European Union and Russia tried to advance as well as the and different perceptions about the self clashed on nearly all points. This accumulation of clashes made rivalry and conflict between the two actors over Kosovo very likely.

In order to answer the question laid out above, this paper first presents a constructivist framework of analysis and the concept of normative power. It then identifies the norms the European Union and Russia strive to advance in international relations by creating two normative templates which form the principal tools for the subsequent analysis. The case study then analyses how these norms led to conflict between the two actors during the crises in Kosovo in the late 1990s and in 2007.

2. "Normative Power Is What States Make of It"

2.1 A Constructivist Approach

This paper relies on constructivism as developed by Alexander Wendt.¹ Wendt argues that social phenomena such as norms, threats, power and identities are constructed through processes of interaction that create collective meaning.² Identities only acquire meaning when they are seen relative to the identities and norms of others. The identity of the United States as the defender of democracy, for instance, is thus the result of its interaction with monarchies at the time of its independence, with authoritarian regimes in the twentieth century, with the Soviet Union during the Cold War and with Islamist terrorists today.

Unlike rationalist schools of thought, which focus on cost-benefit calculations as the logic underlying the behaviour of states, and unlike neorealism, which regards the actions of states as the result of the power distribution in the international system, constructivists assume that identities are "the basis of interests".³ During the Cold War, for instance, the United States and the Soviet Union constructed a relationship of hostility which defined the interests of both parties. Britain on the other hand was regarded as an ally by the Americans. Consequently, Soviet missiles stationed in Cuba affected American interests differently than the existence of British intercontinental missiles – regardless of their equally destructive power.⁴ As identities are "relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about the self",⁵ they can, to a large extent, be regarded as given. A case in point would be the

¹ See most importantly in Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It – the Social Construction of Power Politics", *International Organisation*, vol. 46, no. 2, 1992, pp. 391-425.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 398.

⁴ Ibid., p. 396.

⁵ Ibid., p. 397.

transatlantic identity of many European states which, although not a cast-iron institution, has become a highly significant social fact in the international system.⁶

Constructivism is particularly apt for the purpose of this paper as the European Union is an international organisation based on shared values and norms. More importantly, however, the concept of normative power is constructivist and requires a corresponding theoretical framework.

2.2 The Concept of Normative Power

In discussions about normative power Ian Manners' approach has become the point of reference.⁷ His definition contains two different interpretations of the word normative. The first of these is prescriptive, according to which normative powers strive to do what is good and "should be done in international politics".⁸ Relying upon our conception of 'good', this definition leads quickly to irresolvable debates between cultural relativists and universalists. In order to avoid this problem this paper relies on a second, more basic interpretation, according to which a normative power has the "ability to define what passes for 'normal' in world politics".⁹ This definition can more easily be applied to non-Western states and to empirical research. Tocci claims that this definition, if pushed to extremes, could be applied to all states.¹⁰ Not all international actors, however, are equally normative or have an equally strong sense of mission. Following Wendt, normative power is what states make of it, and it is worth analysing what normative power is.

3. Profiling Normative Power

This part creates two normative templates by identifying the normative nature of the European Union and Russia through their values, their norms and their underlying identities.

⁶ Ibid., p. 399.

⁷ Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2002, pp. 235-258.

⁸ Ian Manners, "The European Union as a Normative Power: A Response to Thomas Diez", *Millennium*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2006, p. 168.

⁹ Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe", op.cit., p. 236.

¹⁰ Nathalie Tocci, "Profiling Normative Foreign Policy: The European Union and its Global Partners", in Nathalie Tocci (ed.), *Who Is a Normative Foreign Policy Actor?*, Brussels, Centre for European Studies, 2008, p. 4.

3.1 The European Union as a Normative Power

3.1.1 Framework in which European Identity Is Formed

The Union's norms have their roots in the European Treaties and the common constitutional principles of the member states. Article 21(1) of the Treaty on European Union holds that the

"Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation [...] and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law".¹¹

These aims are also expressed in the European Security Strategy¹² and the 1993 Copenhagen accession criteria. Due to their domestic importance these norms have become defining elements of the Union's foreign policy identity and have been projected onto the international scene by the Union in the conduct of its external relations. These norms are firmly rooted and locked into the European foreign policy system and thus stable. The unanimity requirement for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) measures makes it nearly impossible to adopt positions that run counter to these norms. The 2003 Iraq War showed that the European Union would rather take no action at all than act against its principles.

There are several 'Others' in the process of European identity formation. One is Europe's war-torn past to which the European project is a powerful reaction; a second is the 'not-yet-civilised world'. Cooper's description of Europe as an advanced, post-modern international player is a case in point.¹³ The most important contemporary Other is the United States. Although generally perceived as a partner, the Union began to think of itself as a Western alternative to the US in view of the unilateral and hawkish foreign policy of the Bush administration.

¹¹ European Union, "Consolidated Version of the Treaty of European Union", *Official Journal of the European Union*, C83, 30 March 2008.

¹² European Union, "A Secure Europe in a Better World – The European Security Strategy", 12 December 2003, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.aspx?id=266&lang=EN>, accessed 12 January 2009.

¹³ Robert Cooper, "The New World Order", in Robert Cooper (ed.), *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century*, London, Atlantic Books, 2003, pp. 16-54.

3.1.2 The Norms of the European Union

The norms described below are part of the Union's ambition of 'domesticating' international relations. Although easy to identify, it is difficult to clearly distinguish the norms from each other. This section attempts to give a brief outline of the norms that are most prominent in the external relations of the Union.

Peace and Conflict Prevention

Peace is particularly important. Ensuring peace on the Continent was the main purpose of the European project at its inception and the preamble of the Lisbon Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union still lists "to preserve and strengthen peace and liberty" as a key objective of the Union.¹⁴ The Union is extremely reluctant to use military force and only does so when its use is deemed necessary for crisis management and averting humanitarian catastrophes. In other words, military power is only used in order to save lives. This aspect of European identity is reflected in the Union's position on the Iranian nuclear programme. Compared to the United States, the European Union consistently gave greater emphasis to peaceful and diplomatic means to prevent Iran from acquiring the nuclear bomb.

Rule of Law and Multilateralism

The rule of law is a core norm which the Union seeks to upload into the international system in its attempts to domesticate the international system. It aims to create an international society in which law, not might, makes right. The Union regards the United Nations as the primary organisation for achieving a rule-based international society and supports it as the principal source of international law. It is important to note, however, that the European Union is prepared to deviate from a strict letter-by-letter interpretation of international law if quick action is necessary to live up to the spirit of the law.¹⁵

In this context the European Union attributes great importance to multilateral action. It regards international action as more legitimate if it is supported by a significant number of states than if it is unilateral. Being aware of the danger of large multilateral fora, such as the United Nations, possibly descending into mere talking

¹⁴ European Union, "Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union", *Official Journal of the European Union*, C83, 30 March 2008.

¹⁵ House of Commons, "Foreign Affairs - Fourth Report", London, 23 May 2000, <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.com/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmffaff/28/2802.htm>, accessed 12 March 2009.

shops, the European Union emphasises that multilateralism must be effective. In this context the Union supports quick action, even if it deviates from a strict letter-by-letter interpretation of international law, as long as it is supported by a broad consensus in the international community.

Liberty and Democracy

From the European point of view liberty cannot be achieved without democracy. Unlike Russia's concept of 'sovereign Democracy' or Asian countries' particular 'models of democracy', the European Union's conception is based on its domestic pluralist systems. The promotion of liberty and democracy are *inter alia* advocated in the European Security Strategy. The insertion of good governance clauses in international agreements is part of the efforts to promote these values internationally.

Human Rights

All the aforementioned norms culminate in the Union's strong support for human rights. It tries to defend human rights even when this incurs political costs, a fact illustrated by Europe's delicate relationship with China and by the existence of the International Criminal Court which nearly all member states have joined in spite of strong American resistance.

Transatlantic Alliance

The transatlantic alliance must be added to this list of norms. Although the United States is often criticised by certain EU member states, most notably France, and although the relations between the Union and the United States have occasionally been tense over the past ten years, the transatlantic alliance remains a constant in the foreign policy of the European Union and in most cases Europeans seek to complement the United States in its international actions.¹⁶ This emphasis made its way into the European Security Strategy, which states that "[f]or Europe, the transatlantic partnership remains an irreplaceable foundation, based on shared history and responsibilities".¹⁷

¹⁶ Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "Hard Times for Soft Balancing", *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2005, pp. 91-92.

¹⁷ European Union, "Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy – Providing Security in a Changing World", December 2008, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/reports/104630.pdf, p. 12.

3.1.3 Foreign Policy Identity of the European Union

In Europe many decision-makers, academics and the wider public are convinced that the European Union is a force for good in global politics. Unsurprisingly therefore, Europe possesses a strong sense of mission. The enlargement process demonstrates that the Union is even ready to transform its internal make-up for the sake of exporting its norms effectively. "The aim of enlargement is simple: to extend the area of peace, stability, democracy and the rule of law, and prosperity and well being throughout Europe."¹⁸ This shows yet again that the Union is a value-driven actor, trying to spread its core norms of peace and conflict prevention, the rule of law and multilateralism, liberty, democracy and human rights. It seeks to reform the international system at large, ideally making the system more like itself. In sum, the European Union can be described as an increasingly proactive normative power.

3.2 Russia as a Normative Power

It is difficult to pinpoint norms in Russian foreign policy. In the Russian political system the President can exert strong influence on the country's foreign policy according to personal beliefs and norms. Additionally, the process of identity transformation that began with *perestroika* and *glasnost* is ongoing. As a result, Russian foreign policy is marked by inherent contradictions and tensions.¹⁹ The identification of Russian norms and values is rendered more complex by the fact that Russian foreign policy has lately been reactive rather than proactive.

3.2.1 Framework in which Russian Identity Is Formed

The Other in the Russian process of identity formation is usually the West. As a former superpower, Russia defines itself globally in relation to the United States; it defines itself regionally in relation to Europe.

The environment in which Russian foreign policy is conducted underwent significant changes around the turn of the century. During the Yeltsin years and the financial crisis of 1998, the "Russian government struggle[d] to provide the most elementary of public goods, such as a single currency, a common market, security,

¹⁸ European Commission, "Commissioner Olli Rehn", http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/rehn/index_en.htm, accessed 14 February 2009.

¹⁹ Bobo Lo, "Principles and Contradictions: The Foreign Policy of Vladimir Putin", in Tanguy de Wilde and Laetitia Spetschinsky (eds.), *La politique étrangère de la Russie et l'Europe: Enjeux d'une proximité*, Brussels, P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2004, p. 45.

welfare and education”²⁰ and was relegated to a mere observer status in international politics, only occasionally trying to catch the West’s attention. Under Putin “la Russie a retrouvé de véritables marges de manœuvre sur la scène internationale”²¹ due to his effective - if undemocratic - leadership and the rise in the price of oil. The oil price in particular has affected Russia’s capabilities as “every \$1 rise in the price of a barrel of oil represents a \$1 billion increase in Russian government receipts”.²² In spite of these changes certain core norms appear to have been resistant to change.

Sovereignty

Sovereignty is regarded as the basis of the international community and features prominently in Russian political discourse. When the West started diluting the concept of unconditional sovereignty in the 1990s, and later when “the neo-conservatives in Washington stressed the [...] global role that the promotion of democratic values should play, Moscow began to reassert an aggressive autonomy in international affairs, insisting on the sovereign right of each country”.²³ States are free to act as they please internationally and are only limited by the idea that they should adhere to international law. Given the strongly Westphalian conception of sovereignty in Russia its most important aspect is strict non-interference in other states’ domestic affairs. According to a former Russian foreign minister, his country believes that any “attempts to belittle the role of a sovereign state as the fundamental element of international relations generate a threat of arbitrary interference in internal affairs”.²⁴

Territorial integrity

Threatened by separatist movements in several parts of the country and having experienced the break-up of the Soviet Union, territorial integrity is a key norm of the Russian Federation. It is seen as one of the bases of international order and as a higher good than national self-determination. Opposing the latter except in cases of

²⁰ Michael A. McFaul, “What Are Russian Foreign Policy Objectives? Testimony before the House Committee on International Relations”, 12 May 1999, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=424>, accessed 16 January 2009.

²¹ Thomas Gomart, “Politique étrangère russe – l’étrange inconstance”, *Politique étrangère*, vol. 1, 2006, p. 25.

²² Richard Sakwa, “‘New Cold War’ or Twenty Years’ Crisis? Russia and International Politics”, *International Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 2, 2008, p. 246.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

²⁴ Russian Federation, “The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation”, June 2000, <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm>, accessed 02 February 2009.

mutual agreement,²⁵ self-determination must be reached within the borders of existing states. This is reflected in Russia's policies towards the Balkans, Cyprus, Chechnya and some regions of the former Soviet Union.

Multipolarity

Russia is a strong advocate of a multipolar world order. According to the Russian Foreign Policy Concept, unipolarity "leads to destabilization of international situation, provokes tensions and arms race, exacerbates interstate differences, stirs up ethnic and religious strife, endangers security of other States and fuels tensions in intercivilizational relations [sic]".²⁶ The United States are depicted as the source of unipolarity²⁷ undermining the functioning of the United Nations, an organisation to which Russia attaches great significance. Multipolarity, by contrast, "really reflects the diversity of the modern world with its great variety of interests".²⁸ It leads to the democratisation of the international system and a better representation of a greater diversity of interests, especially those of Russia.

It is important to note that this conception of multipolarity is different from European multilateralism. According to the Russian idea of multipolarity, several great powers shape the rules of international society in international fora or on bilateral bases. For Europe, however, it is not the number of poles that counts but the fact that the international system is governed by multilaterally agreed rules.²⁹

United Nations System

Given the decline of Russian power to shape the international system outside the United Nations, Russia believes that its interests are best served in the context of the UN and its Security Council. Consequently, the "Russian Federation shall resolutely oppose attempts to belittle the role of the United Nations and its Security Council in world affairs".³⁰ In this body the great powers are supposed to work together to manage international relations, similar to the Concert of Europe system of the

²⁵ James Headley, "Russia and 'European Norms', Paper presented at the British International Studies Association Annual Conference, Exeter, 15-17 December 2008", cited with permission of author, <http://www.bisa.ac.uk/2008/pps/Headley.pdf>, accessed on 3 February 2009, p. 7.

²⁶ Russian Federation, "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation", July 2008, <http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/07/204750.shtml>, accessed 2 February 2009.

²⁷ Foreign Policy Concept 2000, op.cit.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ European Commission, "Speech by Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner – The EU, China and the Quest for a Multilateral World", 4 July 2005, SP05-273EN, http://www.europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article_4854_en.htm, accessed 12 December 2009.

³⁰ Foreign Policy Concept 2000, op.cit.

nineteenth century. Additionally Russia regards the UN Charter as the only legitimate source of international law and follows an extremely legalistic interpretation of it and its related body of law. The wording, especially with regard to territorial integrity and sovereignty, is sacrosanct.

Great Powerness and NATO

Russia's self-image as a great power has outlasted the collapse of the Soviet Union. It regards itself as a global actor of particular international significance, emphasising in 2000 that "Russia exerts significant influence on the formation of a new world order".³¹ Maintaining this position is crucial to Russia, even when it comes at great cost. On a very thin economic base Russia supports an army of more than one million, commands the second-largest nuclear arsenal in the world, runs a truly global diplomacy and maintains a space programme,³² all of which to justify Russia's permanent membership of the Security Council.

Russia's fierce anti-NATO obsession dates back to Soviet times.³³ NATO is seen as a means for America to impose a unipolar system on Europe and the world and to keep Cold War structures alive.³⁴ As an alternative, Russia proposes an open transatlantic space "from Vancouver to Vladivostok, in such a way as not to allow its new fragmentation and reproduction of bloc-based approaches which still persist in the European architecture that took shape during the Cold War period".³⁵

Prestige

Russia is marked by a remarkable desire for prestige. "[E]nsuring itself a worthy place in the world"³⁶ is a declared objective. Some foreign policy actions, such as Russia's involvement in the Middle East Quartet, are taken only to enhance Russia's status in the world. Russia sees itself as "the largest EuroAsian power" with the "status as one of the leading States of the world and a permanent member of the UN Security Council"³⁷ that deserves to be treated accordingly. Its desire for prestige is fuelled by

³¹ Ibid.

³² Sakwa, " 'New Cold War' or Twenty Years' Crisis?", op.cit., p. 246.

³³ Vladimir Baranovsky, *Russia's Attitudes towards the EU: Political Aspects*, Helsinki, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2002, p. 41.

³⁴ Vladimir Baranovsky, "Russia: a Part of Europe or Apart from Europe?", *International Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 3, July 2008, p. 454.

³⁵ Foreign Policy Concept 2008, op.cit.

³⁶ Foreign Policy Concept 2000, op.cit.

³⁷ Ibid.

a fear that the West might regard it as a second-rank power,³⁸ as indeed many academics did during the later Yeltsin years. Thomas Graham observed that “[i]t should be clear by now that Russia is no longer a Great Power. Over the past decade, it has endured a socio-economic collapse unprecedented for a major power, let alone a superpower, not defeated in a major war”.³⁹ Such statements increased Russia’s pursuit of prestige and reinforced the Russian insistence that “[n]otwithstanding the strategic and economic decline of the past two decades, [...] Russia was, is and always will be ‘great’”.⁴⁰

Peace

Russian publications on foreign policy reiterate the importance of peace and that Russia is not a warmongering power. However, war is regarded as a legitimate means to achieve foreign policy goals.

3.2.2 Russian Foreign Policy Identity

Constructivism holds that a state’s foreign policy interests are shaped on the basis of its identity and norms. The Russian Foreign Policy Concepts show that the country sees its interest best safeguarded in a system based on an unreformed United Nation Organisation with a strongly Westphalian understanding of sovereignty, and keeping alive the pre-globalisation idea of spheres of influence. Consequently, Russia can be described as a defensive normative power that aims at maintaining the current international system and opposes the introduction of new norms.

4. Normative Power Rivalry over Kosovo (1997 to 2008)

The following case study analyses EU-Russia interactions using the normative templates created above. It is an empirical study that aims to discover whether the norms and values previously identified did clash and, if so, which of them did. At the same time I analyse how these clashes led to rivalry and conflict.

Kosovo provides a useful case for a constructivist study on the role of norms and values. Often the causes of conflict are reduced to ‘hard’ factors such as

³⁸ Alfred Evans, “Putin’s Legacy and Russia’s Identity”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 60, no. 6, 2008, p. 907.

³⁹ Thomas Graham, “Russia’s Foreign Policy”, Symposium at the Royal Defence College, 1 March 2000, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=529&prog=zru>, accessed 02 February 2009.

⁴⁰ Lo, “Principles and Contradictions”, op.cit., p. 64.

natural resources or influence in strategically important areas. Kosovo has no such things to offer. It is tiny in terms of size, population and economic influence, and possesses no major natural resources. European and Russian strategic interests in the region are negligible;⁴¹ any other Balkan country is strategically more relevant than Kosovo. Furthermore, no security issues were at stake for either side. Though refugee waves did pose a problem for the European Union, they did not necessitate a war. Geographically, however, Kosovo is in proximity to both Russia and the European Union, without sharing a common border, and is close enough for both parties to take an interest in developments in this area, an area which realists would describe as their 'spheres of influence'.

This implies that European and Russian involvement in Kosovo cannot be attributed to security or material interests; rather, norms can explain why Russia and the European Union engaged in a diplomatic struggle that was costly for both sides.

The case study focuses on the eleven years between 1997 and 2008. Of course, the history of conflict in Kosovo extends further, but it became most prominent in 1998 when news about ethnic cleansing and genocide made headlines in the West. After NATO's bombing campaign Kosovo in March 1999 shifted out of the limelight. Nine years later, Kosovo's declaration of independence on 18 February 2008 stirred emotions once more but soon afterwards Kosovo disappeared again from headlines.

4.1 Background to the Normative Clash

The end of the Cold War heralded the end of the existing world order; throughout the 1990s it was widely felt that a new order was in the making. In this context, Western powers advanced the principle of humanitarian intervention and began intervening in African countries to protect human lives. At the same time, Western powers debated whether NATO should function as the world's 'policeman'. During the Kosovo crisis, a humanitarian intervention was about to happen on European soil for the first time, placing the world at a crossroads. In Joschka Fischer's words, the "the Kosovo conflict also marks a change of direction in the development of international relations. How will the international community decide in future [...] when it comes to preventing massive human rights violations against an entire

⁴¹ David Mendeloff, "'Pernicious History' as a Cause of National Misperceptions: Russia and the 1999 Kosovo War", *Conflict and Cooperation*, vol. 43, no. 31, 2008, p. 32.

people?"⁴² For Russia and the European Union this was the crucial question, making Kosovo a matter of principle and precedent for the international system. Accordingly, all players felt stakes were high.

In this international debate the member states of the European Union sided with the United State and took a proactive stance. Driven by its sense of mission, the Union wanted to project its own, allegedly universal, principles into the international system. By building its own common defence policy the European Union was preparing for this.

Russia took a defensive position in this debate, as it did not want to see the rules of the international system changed. Some Russian norms proved to be less compatible with European ones than others, and the next part of this paper analyses which norms primarily conflicted. In practice, however, it is impossible to clearly separate one norm from another. It is also difficult to attribute specific actions to specific normative clashes. Rather, a reaction is most likely a response to an accumulation of different clashes. However, for the sake of clarity, this paper, wherever possible, treats these clashes as separate.

4.2 Sovereignty versus Human Rights

Russia wanted Yugoslav sovereignty to be protected by the international community. Insisting that whatever happens within the borders of Yugoslavia did not concern the international community, Russia "regarded Kosovo as an issue for Yugoslavia to resolve without pressure from outside, and certainly not with the threat or use of force."⁴³ When the NATO campaign against Serbia began in March 1999, Russia was outraged.⁴⁴ Its foreign minister Primakov was on a flight to the United States when Al Gore informed him that the campaign would begin. Primakov immediately ordered his plane to turn back. This was a powerful symbolic gesture. Russia also resorted to stronger diplomatic instruments. Supported by Belarus and India, it introduced a draft resolution to the UN Security Council calling for the

⁴² Joschka Fischer, Address by Joschka Fischer, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, at the Fifty-fourth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 22 September 1999, <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Infoservice/Presse/Reden/Archiv/2000/990922-UNSessionPDF.pdf>, accessed 20 March 2009.

⁴³ James Headley, *Russia and the Balkans: Foreign Policy from Yeltsin to Putin*, London, Hurst and Company, 2008, p. 419.

⁴⁴ Statement by Russian Ambassador to the U.N. Lavrov, March 24, 1999", in Philip Auerswald and David Auerswald, *The Kosovo Conflict*, Cambridge, Kluwer Law International, 2000, pp. 728-729.

immediate cessation of the use of force against Yugoslavia⁴⁵ and declared that it would not accept infringements of sovereignty. Russia did not, however, limit itself to symbols and diplomacy; it also turned to military means. When war was imminent on 23 March 1999, it reportedly tried to supply Serbia with military equipment for the defence of its sovereignty against NATO aggression. The weaponry did not reach Serbia only because the Romanian and Bulgarian authorities did not grant the cargo planes delivering these arms access to their airspace.⁴⁶

This conflict between Russia and the West had its roots in their different interpretation of the events in Kosovo. Reports about mass expulsions, which deeply concerned the European and American publics, were “dismissed by Russia out of hand”⁴⁷ as the Russian focus was not on human suffering but on the rights of the state. Inspired by the traditional Russian norm of sovereignty, President Yeltsin believed that “when you violate the rights of a state, you automatically and egregiously violate the rights of its citizens, including their right to security”.⁴⁸ With regard to the Milosevic regime Europeans found this logic hard to follow but to Russians it made sense. Kosovar Albanians were not regarded as victims of a ruthless dictator but as terrorists who tried to break up an internationally recognised state.⁴⁹ To Russia, supporting the terrorists in their challenge of sovereignty seemed perverse. Rather, Russia believed that the international community should have tried to strengthen and defend Yugoslavia’s sovereignty.

It is often argued that Russia’s insistence on sovereignty was a poorly disguised attempt to prevent interference with its own internal affairs; indeed some Russian newspapers fuelled the fear that Kosovo was only a prelude to Chechnya. There is no indication, however, that the West ever planned to turn against Russia militarily. On the contrary, in the late 1990s Western criticism of the Chechen War was toned down and the Union kept a low profile on the matter, which significantly weakens the explanatory power of this argument.

Europe’s set of values was incompatible with Russia’s. Through the use of force Europe wanted to “guarantee our fundamental European values, i.e. respect for

⁴⁵ Headley, *Russia and the Balkans*, op.cit., p. 372.

⁴⁶ “Russian Arms Shipment Signals Worsening Relations with West”, *Asia Times*, 24 March 1999, <http://www.atimes.com/c-asia/AC25Ag01.html>, accessed 22 March 2009.

⁴⁷ Mendeloff, “‘Pernicious History’”, op.cit., p. 32.

⁴⁸ Boris Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*, New York, Public Affairs, 2000, p. 265.

⁴⁹ See for instance “Statement by the Spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, April 2, 1998”, in P. and D Auerswald, *The Kosovo Conflict*, op.cit., p. 144.

human rights and the rights of minorities".⁵⁰ Most Europeans believed that "NATO [was] in the business of defending common values [...]. Our shared values – freedom, democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights – are themselves every bit as much worth defending as is our territory".⁵¹ Overriding sovereignty, Europe's top priority was to solve the humanitarian catastrophe that unfolded on the Continent. European heads of states and governments declared that

"[i]t cannot be permitted that [...] the predominant population of Kosovo is [...] subjected to grave human rights abuses. We, the countries of the European Union, are under a moral obligation to ensure that indiscriminate behaviour and violence, which became tangible in [...] January 1999, are not repeated. We have a duty to ensure the return to their homes of the hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons."⁵²

If necessary, the European Union was prepared to live up to its moral obligations without a Security Council mandate. It was believed that Serbia followed "actual or quasi-genocidal policies of 'ethnic cleansing' involving a wholesale driving out of the Kosovar Albanian population and in its course increasing evidence of kidnap, forced labour and mass murder in a manner not seen in Europe since the demise of the Third Reich".⁵³ In the eyes of most Europeans, Serbia had forfeited its right to sovereignty through its grave human rights violations.

In addition to stopping the genocide, the European Union tried to establish the principle of humanitarian intervention internationally. This is for example evident in the British House of Commons' statement that its Kosovo Committee "support[ed] the FCO in its aim of establishing in the United Nations new principles governing humanitarian intervention."⁵⁴ In this instance, human rights trumped sovereignty.

4.3 International Law versus Effective Multilateralism

Russia and the Union had different ideas about how to resolve the Kosovo crisis. Led by its preference for the United Nations System the former wanted to solve the crisis entirely within the framework of this body. Only through the Security Council could

⁵⁰ European Union, "Presidency Conclusions, Berlin European Council, 24-25 March 1999".

⁵¹ Alexander Vershbow quoted in Paul Latawski and Martin A. Smith, *The Kosovo Crisis and the Evolution of post-Cold War European Security*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 163.

⁵² European Union, "Presidency Conclusions", op.cit.

⁵³ Hilaire McCoubrey, "Kosovo, NATO and International Law", *International Relations*, vol. 14, 1999, p. 30.

⁵⁴ House of Commons, "Fourth Report", op.cit.

Russia ensure by peaceful means that its interpretation of international law was respected.

The European Union, however, knew that the United Nations' procedures would stop it from acting effectively because "it had been clear since June 1998 that China and Russia would veto any authorisation of Chapter VII intervention in Kosovo".⁵⁵ This posed a problem for the Union because a Security Council mandate was considered a prerequisite for the use of force in many European capitals. Despite their initial reservations, the member states of the European Union declared that they were willing to act outside the traditional legal framework should all efforts to obtain a Security Council mandate fail. The member states would go ahead in spite of Russian opposition in order to defend their allegedly universal values. They decided to act through more effective international institutions than the paralysed United Nations and turned to NATO. At an informal European Council meeting on 14 April 1999 it was concluded that the "Heads of State and Government [...] believe that the use of the severest measures, including military action, has been both necessary and warranted".⁵⁶ Later this approach whereby traditional authorities of international law would be circumvented if they prove to be an obstacle to the achievement of allegedly higher goals and are replaced by a broad consensus among the members of international society, would come to be called 'effective multilateralism'.

Russia, on the other hand, wanted to preserve the status quo. It insisted on discussing the political mechanisms for settling the crisis in Kosovo in the Security Council. When the bombing went ahead, Russia insisted NATO's actions were illegal and that Yugoslavia fell victim to "a flagrant act of aggression against a sovereign state".⁵⁷ Russia was appalled to see the norms laid out in the UN Charter so blatantly violated and regarded the bombings as an affront to itself and an attack on the entire United Nations system. According to Yeltsin, a "dangerous precedent ha[d] been created regarding the policy of diktat and force, and the whole of the international rule of law ha[d] been threatened".⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ United Nations, "Chairman's Summary of the Deliberations on Kosovo at the Informal Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the European Union held at Brussels on 14 April 1999".

⁵⁷ Headley, *Russia and the Balkans*, op.cit., p. 366.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Headley, *Russia and the Balkans*, op.cit., p. 367.

4.4 NATO versus Russian Great Powerness, Prestige and Multipolarity

European support for NATO was, and still is, a thorn in Russia's side. NATO's mere existence is enough to cause ill feelings in Russia. It is regarded as an anti-Russian organisation and a threat to its great power status. The airstrikes against Serbia were also perceived as an affront to Russia. General Ivashov complained that NATO "treated us as a fifth-rate power".⁵⁹ This humiliation was particularly painful because Russia's international status had suffered greatly following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Statements by Russian officials show how rivalry over this issue turned into conflict. Their rhetoric became increasingly aggressive. "The military, among others, urged Russian decision-makers to ignore the UN arms embargo on Yugoslavia and supply Serbia with military aid [...] and] even liberal politicians encouraged Russian volunteers to fight alongside Serbia".⁶⁰ Some "political and military officials spoke of re-targeting nuclear missiles"⁶¹ and Russia sent a warship to the Adriatic Sea that was supposed to supply Serbian troops with intelligence. Such displays of power again caused concern when Russia sent paratroopers to Pristina in order to secure a military zone for itself in Kosovo after the bombings. Ivashov claimed that "if we had retreated [from our insistence on a military zone], the world would have taken it as a serious defeat [...]. Our positions in Europe would have been undermined".⁶²

European support for NATO also collided with the value Russia attaches to multipolarity. Igor Ivanov stated that "the real reasons [for NATO's actions] are obvious – to establish such a unipolar world order [...], where the world's fate would have to be decided from Washington",⁶³ regarding them as "the latest form of neo-colonialism, the so-called NATO-colonialism".⁶⁴ He emphasised that in response to the airstrikes "we will strive even more energetically to shape a democratic multipolar world".⁶⁵ Interestingly, none of the mainstream politicians in the European Union perceived the US as a neo-colonial power on the Continent. On the contrary, there was a palpable sense of shared ownership in spite of NATO being an American-led organisation, as Europe could not have stopped the humanitarian

⁵⁹ Vladimir Brovkin, Discourse on NATO in Russia during the Kosovo War, op.cit., p. 26.

⁶⁰ Mendeloff, "Pernicious History", op.cit., p. 32.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Brovkin, "Discourse on NATO", op.cit., p. 26.

⁶³ Quoted in Headley, *Russia and the Balkans*, op.cit., p. 369.

⁶⁴ Ivanov quoted in Mendelhoff, "Pernicious History", op.cit., p. 47.

⁶⁵ "Ivanov in the Duma", in Heike Krieger, *The Kosovo Conflict and International Law*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 484.

catastrophe on its own. Although all European member states were extremely uncomfortable about having acted without a Security Council mandate, they believed that acting through NATO, a multilateral organisation, had increased the legitimacy in comparison to unilateral action at least slightly.⁶⁶

4.5 The Role of Peace

It has been shown that Western behaviour triggered intensely rivalrous behaviour on Russia's part which reached from symbolic gesturing to military action. For several reasons, however, the conflict did not lead to war.

The central norm of the European Union is the maintenance of peace; it is its *raison d'être*. Russia too emphasises the importance of peace although the events in Chechnya and in Georgia show that it deems the use of force a legitimate means to achieve political ends. War with the member states of the European Union, however, was clearly not in its interest. Yeltsin realised "that much progress had been made over the years [...] and that this should not be jeopardised, certainly not for the sake of Milosevic".⁶⁷ A war with the West would also run counter to Russia's attachment to the United Nations system. War with permanent members of the Security Council would entail the collapse of the existing world order.

Another reason why this conflict of interests between Russia and the West did not turn into war was because the European Union, in its attempts to resolve conflicts peacefully and multilaterally, tried to accommodate Russia's demands and integrated it in all diplomatic attempts to end the bombing campaign. Russia was given an active role in the Contact Group, in devising the Fischer Plan, in dispatching Ahtisaari to Belgrade and in the peacekeeping mission that followed the air campaign. Neither side wanted the conflict to escalate too far.

4.6 Conflict Prevention versus Territorial Integrity – Ten Years Later

Following a preliminary peace settlement in 1999, Kosovo became a *de facto* United Nations protectorate and soon faded out of the headlines. Increasingly, however, the Kosovar Albanians grew dissatisfied with the status quo. Mounting popular pressure for a unilateral declaration of independence in 2007 brought Russia and the

⁶⁶ This self-justification becomes evident in Javier Solana, "NATO's Success in Kosovo", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 78, no. 6, November/December, 1999, p. 118, where Solana writes: "It was the unique allied cohesion of 19 democracies, including NATO's three new members, that was crucial in establishing consensus on the legal basis and legitimacy of NATO's actions."

⁶⁷ Quoted in Headley, *Russia and the Balkans*, op.cit., p. 373.

European Union back on the scene. Norms had not changed on either side: Russia was still fundamentally opposed to an independent Kosovo as this ran counter to its norm of territorial integrity and was considered illegal under international law. Although the EU did not support secession, consensus emerged relatively quickly among its member states that an independent Kosovo would be acceptable for the sake of conflict prevention, thereby granting de facto recognition. Morally, it was felt that Serbia had lost its right to govern Kosovo after the grave atrocities committed against the Albanian population.

Russia, believing that territorial integrity and sovereignty cannot be revoked, did not follow this line of reasoning. In the run-up to independence it tried to prevent the breaking away of Kosovo at all levels. In the United Nations it vetoed UN envoy Martti Ahtisaari's plan which advocated internationally-supervised independence; President Putin and his foreign minister Lavrov warned at every possible occasion against the negative repercussions independence would have for the future of international relations. Russia tried to get the declaration of independence annulled at the UN only hours after it had been passed by Kosovo's Regional Assembly. Unlike ten years earlier, however, Russia abstained from major diplomatic gestures and military action.

In 2007 the rivalry between Russia and the European Union was decidedly less intense. This can be explained by the fact that fewer of their norms clashed. Russia had regained its confidence and unlike in the late 1990s its great power status was undisputed if only because of the high gas price. Furthermore, NATO was not involved and hence Russia's anti-NATO norm did not come into play and, since the West did not use force, the violation of the United Nations Charter was less obvious. It is in fact arguable whether the actions of the European Union can be considered at all contradictory to the Charter.

Additionally, the sense of urgency that prevailed in the 1990s had disappeared. In hindsight, Kosovo in 1999 did not prove to be the watershed moment it was thought to be at the time. NATO interventions without a UN mandate did not become the norm in the international system. This empirical fact led Russia to weigh its norms differently in 2007.

5. Conclusions: Normative Power Rivalry, Constructivism and the EU-Russia Relationship – What Can Be Learnt?

At the outset of this paper it was stipulated that the greater the clash between relevant norms, the more likely it is that differences between them will lead to rivalry and conflict. This hypothesis can be confirmed. This finding is not without irony, given the fact that generally the norms of the European Union are thought to make the world better, safer and more peaceful. The case study has also confirmed that the likelihood of conflict increases with the seriousness and the number of normative clashes. This becomes particularly apparent when comparing the situation of the late 1990s with the situation surrounding Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2007. As fewer norms clashed, rivalry and conflict were less intense.

The case study has also shown that the altered international situation played a role in alleviating the intensity of rivalry. Russia's improved international status as well as a change in the international discourse on the role of humanitarian intervention reduced the explosive force of the Kosovo issue. This finding is interesting because it demands an extension of the original hypothesis which ignores the influence that external circumstances have on the weighting of norms and thus on actors' behaviour. The framework presented here does not provide mechanisms that help determine the circumstances that lead to a different weighting. It is desirable to extend the scope of the framework in this direction to determine the conditions influencing actors' prioritisation of different norms because such a modification would increase its predictive power.

This paper also sheds light on constructivism in International Relations theory. It was shown that it can explain phenomena that rationalist theories cannot account for. Realism, and neorealism in particular, could not have explained Russian and European involvement in Kosovo, let alone normative power rivalry between the two. It also confirms the (moderate) constructivist assumption that it is impossible to separate values from interests. Values are indeed constructed on the basis of interests.

From a methodological point of view, the framework presented here has proven useful. One of its great advantages is its broad applicability. It can easily be applied to other instances in the relations between the European Union and Russia. It could also be applied to other countries or, with some modifications, to other issue

areas, such as negotiations on trade or climate change. In this case, the normative templates laid out above would need to be revised in order to reflect the norms most significant for such discussions. The European norm of sustainability, for instance, would certainly play a more prominent role than the norm of democracy in climate change negotiations.

Aside from theoretical implications, this paper also allows for political conclusions. The European Union can infer that it is well advised to continue its long-term project of a milieu foreign policy that aims at slowly convincing its partners to adopt European norms. Europe's normative milieu foreign policy is often perceived as inefficient because it does not produce immediate results but the findings of this paper suggest that norms are vital in determining the behaviour and interests of a state. Therefore it is worth continuing to invest in them.

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