Perception of Russia in Contemporary World: Memory, Identity, Conflicts

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Russia and the East-West Dimension of Building the International Role of the EU

The appraisal of the success of EU policies of external relations has to a high degree centered on its relations to Russia both at the time of the greatest triumph and the hardest setback. The justification of granting the Nobel Peace Prize to the EU in 2012 accentuated the stabilizing part the EU had played in transforming "most of Europe from a continent of war to a continent of peace" by stating: "The division between East and West has to a large extent been brought to an end." After the Ukraine crises, East-West vocabulary has strikingly returned to European political discussion, and many commentators have interpreted the Russian annexation of Crimea and the involvement in Eastern Ukraine as the ultimate failure of EU Neighbourhood Policies.

My paper studies how Russia has been included in the design of EU policies and, more broadly, in the building of EU actorness in international relations. The paper analyses the key-concepts of EU policies in the context of the discussion on the role of the EU as "a new kind of international actor" that represents novel conceptions of sovereignty, borders and territoriality. The aim is to bring a critical contribution to this discussion by investigating when and in what sense the EU has introduced new sovereignty conceptions and territorial imaginaries as part of its policies – and how Russia has been included as part of these policies. The focus of the analysis is mainly on the level of EU institutions and supranational European decision-making. In terms of territorial imaginaries, special attention is paid is paid to East-West perspectives in the constitution of EU actorness. This includes, importantly, identifying and assessing conflicting and competing conceptualisations of EU policies in regard to Russia.