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Introduction

Frédéric Mérand and Stefan Gänzle

It is our great pleasure to introduce this special issue of the Review of European and Russian Affairs devoted to the external relations of the European Union. The three articles selected for this issue deal with some of the most central topics of this particular policy area: the development of a strategic culture in the EU and its member states (as compared to the United States), the EU involvement in stabilizing the South-Eastern Balkan, and, last but not least, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and Ukraine in matters of migration management. All of them provide in-depth insights into the growing importance of the EU's actorness in international relations. The contributions were written by promising young scholars, who first presented their work at the Young Researcher Network (YRN) conference in Victoria on May 18, 2006, and then agreed to undergo the painful peer-review process that is the hallmark of rigorous scientific publishing.

The first article deals with transatlantic relations. Based on a careful and thorough reading of the European Union's Security Strategy and the United States' National Security Strategy, Benjamin Zyla, Royal Military College of Canada, makes the provocative argument that, beyond the rhetorical fights, EU and US security strategies are in fact quite similar. Couched in terms that former President Woodrow Wilson would have recognized as his own, these official documents "are alike in their messianic approach to create a better world and to enhance global order". It follows from Zyla's interpretation that it is incorrect to characterize Europe as a civilian power and the US as a military one or, to use the now famous *bon mot*, Europe as Venus and the US as Mars. By and large, the two "share very similar strategic objectives". Although the author admits that there are minor gaps (for instance in terms of long-term visions), Zyla states that the differences have been overplayed in academia and the media and may just reflect spin. If Zyla is right, the demise of the transatlantic relationship may be further in sight that many believe or would like to believe.

One may dispute Zyla's conclusions and point out that while Europe and the US may agree on the ends – that of a liberal, democratic order – they strongly differ on the means. Pierre Hassner, for example, argues that the Bush administration is promoting a special kind of liberalism, which he calls “Wilsonianism in boots”. That is quite different from Brussels' approach of “effective multilateralism”. Nevertheless, Zyla has written a sophisticated essay, and his argument is well worth reflecting upon. While the fact that the two security documents are similar does not mean that the actual policies are the same, he is right to insist that we should not overplay their differences. Zyla's paper is a sobering reminder that we often read a text in the way we want to read and understand it.

With the second article, we move from transatlantic to West-East relations, specifically the EU's relations with Serbia and Montenegro. Marko Papić sets out to analyze the role played by the EU in drafting the Serbia and Montenegro State Union Constitution. The EU's role, Papić argues, often bordered on direct intervention in domestic affairs. Brussels went “beyond conditionality” in assuming a pro-active – in fact determining – role of “constitutional engineering”. To test this hypothesis, Papić unfolds a thickly descriptive account of the Brussels' involvement in the constitutional process. His account highlights the crucial role of Javier Solana, the EU's High Representative for the Common Security and Foreign Policy.

The theoretical contribution of Papić's article is superb: his case suggests that the importance of “supportive strategies” in harnessing Eastern European countries to the West may have been underestimated in the growing literature on EU-spurred conditionality, which emphasizes reinforcement by reward and (soft) coercion. In addition, Papić gives an interesting twist to the constructivist argument of socialization. He shows that, in the process of democratic socialization, Brussels may actually have learned more than Belgrade did.

Socialization and lesson-drawing, two concepts that have been given special importance by the constructivist school, are not necessarily a one-way street.

Last but not least, Lyubov Zhyznomirska's article takes us firmly onto the constructivist terrain. Zhyznomirska uses the example of Ukraine to demonstrate how the EU is exporting the burden of international migration management to neighbouring countries. This has the probably unintended effect of destabilizing societal security in these countries which, like in the case of Ukraine, lack the administrative or institutional capacity to deal with problems posed by illegal migration. Zhyznomirska's argument relies on the critical constructivist notion of "securitization", whereby migration issues are increasingly constructed as security threats that require repressive measures. The case of the Ukraine suggests that this securitization strategy has a cost, which is borne by the states least capable of supporting it.

Critical constructivism has often been accused of being high on theory but low on empirics. Zhyznomirska avoids this pitfall as she weaves an elegant argument that follows the "securitization" thread to illuminate a rigorous description of the EU's external policy with regards to migration, Ukraine's adaptation to it, and the complex relations between the two.

The three articles included in this special issue demonstrate the richness of Canadian scholarship on European affairs. While pluralistic in their theoretical approaches, they share a commitment to rigorous, empirically-based research, with clear policy implications.