

‘Bringing Geopolitics Back In’: Exploring the Security Dimension of the 2004 Eastern Enlargement of the European Union

Abstract *Notwithstanding the functional and technocratic basis of the European integration process, and the fact that the accession criteria hardly mention security issues, the 2004 eastern enlargement brought to the forefront of EU politics important geopolitical and security issues. Eastern enlargement came on to the agenda of the EU in the wake of 1989s peaceful revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. Security and geopolitics mattered to the decision taken by the EU to embark on expansion in the early 1990s, and thereafter security issues remained prominent in enlargement debates. This article seeks to analyse the most important geopolitical issues which eastern enlargement brought to the fore. In exploring the geopolitical dimension of the eastern enlargement process the article foregrounds some key issues including: the potential power realignments in Europe triggered by enlargement, the EU relationship with Russia and its importance to the unfolding of the enlargement process, and how eastern enlargement was conceived as a mechanism for stabilising the EU’s external environment. The article contrasts realist and constructivist images of post 1989 Europe and the eastern enlargement process and assess their contribution to enlargement scholarship. It argues that constructivist imagery best explains the way in which EU actors interpreted key geopolitical issues within the enlargement framework. In particular it presents enlargement as the expansion of the existing European security community where geopolitical issues were subject to a process of securitisation and desecuritisation.*

Introduction

On 1 May 2004 at an historic, if understated, signing ceremony in Dublin the European Union increased its membership from 15 to 25. The eastern enlargement of the Union was the largest and the most challenging which the EU had ever faced. And while the academic literature on enlargement developed in tandem with political events this was mostly to the neglect of the geopolitical dimension of the process. There were two reasons for this. First, the parallel process of NATO enlargement was the locus for the most important security issues in the post Cold War Europe. Scholarship therefore tended to focus on NATO enlargement to the exclusion of the EU expansion process as political events unfolded. Second, the EU’s accession framework was largely functional and technical in its fundamental constituent elements, centred more on the ‘low politics’ of macro economic reform and adjustment of public administration and legal systems in Central and Eastern Europe to EU norms than the ‘high politics’ of statecraft and diplomacy. Thus, from the beginning of the accession process in the early 1990s, geopolitical issues did not feature prominently in the corpus of enlargement literature that emerged. This relative neglect of the geopolitical dimension, however, was surprising in that eastern enlargement was clearly going to change the EU in important ways. At the very least it represented a major new foreign policy challenge for the Union. The

enlarged EU will figure prominently in the cognitive maps of decision-makers worldwide; existing and emerging powers such as the United States, Russia, China and India simply will not remain indifferent to the way in which enlargement changes the fundamentals of EU power (Hill, 2002, 97). This article seeks to redress the gap in the literature by analysing the geopolitical dimension of the process. In doing so it foregrounds some key issues including: the recalibration of geopolitical power within the EU triggered by the 1989 revolutions, the EU relationship with Russia as enlargement negotiations developed, and the fears of Yugoslav-style conflicts emerging in Central and Eastern Europe. The article contrasts realist and constructivist images of post 1989 Europe and the eastern enlargement process and assesses the extent to which they provide satisfactory explanations of outcomes. It argues that the EU approached geopolitical issues within the enlargement process from a 'soft' security template and sought to de-link territoriality from traditional security concerns, to 'normalise' a broad range of geopolitical issues as domestic EU politics within the enlargement negotiations. In other words the enlarging Europe was framed as an expanding security community, to be constructed through a process of what the Copenhagen School of International Relations terms 'desecuritisation'. Instability and existential threats to Europe's peace and security were to be managed through a process of controlled expansion and institutionalised cooperation. The article begins by outlining realist interpretations of post 1989 Europe.

Post 1989 Europe: the Return of Anarchy?

In the period following the collapse of communism and the bipolar system the academic community rushed to contribute to the debate on the future of international politics. Whilst Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the 'End of History', and Samuel Huntington the 'Clash of Civilisations', realist scholars, although divided on any number of issues, were generally very pessimistic about the prospects for progress. Although realists (and especially neorealists) had little to say about the European integration process,¹ John Mearsheimer (1990) for one predicted that Europe would remain mired in history and indeed go 'back to the future'. This was a world of historical *déjà vu*, as Jim George (2000, 33) put it, characterised by elementary and structurally induced threat. And that future would inevitably bring a fracturing of the European compact as a result of new modes of power balancing by individual states against perceived threats to state security. The realist argument was based on a view that, with the removal of the artificial straitjacket provided by the Cold War, the new European geopolitics would be one of competitive coexistence, a return to a more pure form of Hobbesian anarchy. The Cold War, in this view, had provided Western Europe with a secure and stable eastern frontier (W.Wallace 2002, 78). But where the Cold War had provided the critical leviathans for

¹ Within the discipline of IR European Integration was for long treated as an insignificant and provincial terrain unworthy of the interest of (mostly American) scholars. See Knud Erik Jørgensen (2000). The most recent comprehensive realist approach to European integration is provided by Anders Wivel (2004).

each geopolitical bloc in the US and USSR, this new world seemed to herald the return of self-help attitudes straight from the canon of classical realist thinking.

The empirical demonstration of this new amorphous European constellation was clearly evident in the appearance of new states and the attendant recalibration of international frontiers. Where in 1989 there existed 27 states in Europe, by 1992 this had risen to 42 with the break up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.² One estimate suggested that 8,000 miles of new borders were created out of the old demarcations (Mungiu-Pippidiu 2002, 52). And where there appeared new borders there also developed the manifest potential for conflict. New international frontiers were created such as those of the Baltic States, the Yugoslav successor states, and out of the break-up of Czechoslovakia. Some were re-configured as a result of war, others by democratic agreement (Bort 2002, 191). The more pessimistic predictions seemed apposite as Yugoslavia imploded and Europeans caught a glimpse of the disturbing new reality of fratricidal inter-state ethno-nationalist conflagrations. As the violence spiralled out of control in the Balkans, European political élites worried about similar conflicts breaking out in other parts of the continent. The disturbing legacy of European history meant the potential re-emergence of irredentism, and the presence of sizeable minorities in many of the new states left many fearful that the Yugoslav imbroglio rather than the relative harmony of the EU model was the template for the future.

Realist perspectives also suggested that enlargement presented an enormous challenge to the task of preserving the balance of power in Europe. In short, the new geopolitical environment brought into sharp focus a new set of security externalities that threatened the achievements of the successful post-1945 European compact. For one thing the 1989 revolutions had brought the German Question back to the centre of European politics. The question of how German power might reassert itself occupied the minds of many policy-makers, not least the Germans themselves. The mantra that what German élites sought was ‘not a German Europe but a European Germany’ was consistently deployed to assuage the concerns of those who feared a resurgence of German power. Similarly, German commitment to the deeper integration embedded in the Maastricht Treaty was presented as evidence of German bona fides. Despite such assurances, however, there were many who argued that, in the long run, the worst German tendencies would re-assert themselves and Central and Eastern Europe would become again, either directly through the projection of military and political power, or indirectly through the projection of Germany’s vast economic power, a zone of vassal states, which over time would help fracture the peaceable inter-state system built up through the integration process. The

² My estimate includes all of the new states of Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia (later the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro) and Slovenia, which emerged after the break-up of Yugoslavia. It also includes Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia as the states to emerge from the old Soviet Union. The Central Asian states to emerge from the Soviet Union are excluded. Finally, the Czech and Slovak republics are included as separate entities, as are Cyprus, Malta, and Turkey.

potential destabilisation of the Franco-German alliance, which had from the beginning powered the European integration process, also gave considerable cause for concern.

Realist perspectives on eastern enlargement also emphasised how expansion could be viewed as part of an ongoing project – to turn the EU into a superstate and a genuine great power that could compete with the United States and emerging powers such as China and India. The EU, in this view, instrumentally used eastern enlargement as the principal vehicle for this geopolitical advance which brought into the Union eight new states in Central and Eastern Europe, moved the EU border hundreds of miles east from Berlin to Tallinn (within miles of St. Petersburg), and added 80 million new citizens. Christopher Hill suggests that the EU already shows signs of behaving like a great power. In evidence he points to the EU's increasingly prioritising its own 'near abroad' through the Euro Mediterranean Partnership and a common strategy on Russia (Hill 2002, 96). Eastern enlargement was augmented with a *Wider Europe* initiative which then became the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), designed to encourage the further gravitation of Europe's peripheral states toward Brussels. Territorial expansion will only continue as the addition of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 (or 2008) will bring the Union's borders right up to the shore of the Black Sea. Whether in response to internal or external considerations, the EU, throughout the enlargement process, presented important security and geopolitical arguments as part of the underlying rationale for justifying expansion. Atsuko Higashino, for example, cites the declaration at the Helsinki European Council in 1999, which portrayed enlargement as a means to 'lend a positive contribution to security and stability on the European continent'. The rhetoric of EU leaders was as focused on security issues, she argues, as on economic or normative ones (Higashino 2004, 348). Her analysis of the speeches and statements of EU leaders throws up a rhetorical structure that consistently highlights the 'existential threats' to European security as a specific opportunity cost of failure to enlarge. Enlargement represented the only viable alternative to the various threat scenarios. CEE state representatives of course, also deployed this form of discourse strategically as a supplementary weapon used in conjunction with their more usual norm-based appeals for membership (Ibid., 351).

If EU actors highlighted such existential threats arising out of or in response to eastern enlargement their cognitive understanding of the geopolitical issues at stake was not informed by Realist notions of power balancing and material self-interest. Rather, as the article will go on to demonstrate, enlargement policy (and any threat perceptions associated with it) was conceived out of a specific understanding of the new Europe as a community of values, an extended zone of peaceable inter-state relations, where problem solving through institutionalised cooperation would become the norm. Where specific threats were framed by EU actors as security issues the understanding of security was a very different one to that informed by traditional conceptions of security. To understand how EU actors approached security and geopolitics within the framework of eastern enlargement it is necessary to explore constructivist ideas relating to inter-state interaction in institutionalised contexts and, specifically, the concept of security communities as arenas for collective action.

Constructing the enlarged EU security community

Constructivist approaches to international politics are distinguished by the effort to seek some sort of understanding between the natural world and the human or social world. Nicholas Onuf (1989, 59) points to a 'world of our making' and suggests that social relations make or construct people into the kind of beings that we are. Alexander Wendt in his seminal *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999, 69-71) tries to understand 'social kinds' and 'natural kinds'. The constructivist approach, although increasingly diverse, is made up of two important hypotheses. First, it is contended that the structures of international life are not exclusively material but also consist of a substantial ideational dimension; this means that the security dilemma traditionally associated with anarchy is, in fact, what Wendt suggests it is - *what we make of it* - in other words, an ideational construct rather than a material reality. Such a perspective does not deny the importance of material structures or a phenomenal world external to thought but rather seeks to understand that world in relation to human behaviour or social structure. Thus constructivists consistently argue that students of IR must take ideas and norms, constructed out of and reproduced through human contact, more seriously. Second, the contribution made by intersubjective shared meanings between purposive state actors decisively determines identities and interests in the international system. In other words, as Risse-Kappen (1995, 502) suggests, actors' interests and preferences cannot simply be treated as unproblematic and exogenous to structure. To a great extent those interests are made clearer as a result of interaction with other states and membership of international organisations. In the same way security is defined in collectivist rather than individualist and objective terms, the security environment as one which is dynamic rather than static. Wendt (1999, op.cit., 24) refers to this approach as 'structural idealism' (in opposition to existing structural realist theories such as those of Waltz).

The differences between and among the different streams of constructivist thought are significant.³ Nevertheless all constructivist approaches share the basic claim that the 'neo-neo' synthesis (and by implication most IR theory) is 'undersocialised' in the sense that it pays insufficient attention to the ways in which international life are socially constructed (Wendt, 1999, op.cit., 4). And for constructivists one of the most important features of contemporary international politics is the community-building and security-enhancing possibilities arising out of state engagement with multilateral international institutions. International institutions open up new opportunities for inter-state

³ On differences within the Constructivist school see Checkel (2003); Guzzini, (2000), Jacobsen, (2003), Ruggie, (1998), and Smith, (1999).

cooperation, change the patterns of state behaviour, and can create the conditions under which the structural quicksand that is international anarchy may be overcome.

Constructivists interested in exploring the links between state identities and interests have re-discovered the concept of security community in seeking to develop ideas about the norm-generating potential of international organisations. In the original formulation by Karl Deutsch, a security community was defined as a collection of states that had become integrated to such a point that there is a 'real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in a peaceful way' (Adler and Barnett, 1998, 6). The concept thus revolves around 'dependable expectations of peaceful change'. That is that states within the community possess a compatibility of core values derived from common institutions and mutual responsiveness - a matter of mutual identity and loyalty, a sense of 'we-ness', and are integrated so closely that the aforementioned 'dependable expectations of peaceful change' has become the norm (Russett, 1998, 373). Thus for 'democratic peace' theorists Immanuel Kant's postulate, developed in his *Perpetual Peace* (1795), has been empirically substantiated. Wendt's *Social Theory* (chapter six) argues that at its core the international system is being slowly transformed into a Kantian culture. In this sense we have moved from Hobbesian state rivalries (defined by enmity), to a Lockean culture (defined by rivalrous competition), to one where we see the emergence of a growing number of states that are predisposed toward external self-restraint and interdependence (Wendt, op.cit., 174).

For most analysts the European Union is the best example of a pluralistic security community in today's international system.⁴ The Member states of the EU certainly take 'dependable expectations of peaceful change' for granted in an institutional context which is underpinned by a set of core behavioural values. Since the foundation of the European Communities in the 1950s, European integration was meant to create and stabilise a security community that would replace the traditional rivalries and contestation for power and resources between and among the European states. In its course, the Community members not only established a stable democratic peace amongst themselves but also a unique set of institutions and legal order. This is indeed a type of regional organisation representing a community of values with the real achievement of the EU, being the lasting reconciliation between former enemies. Since 1989 European security has revolved almost exclusively (if not always directly) around the institutional settings of the EU (Wæver, 1998, 69-70). And the eastern enlargement of the European Union became the most direct and important instrument for extending the existing security community eastward.

⁴ Here I employ Deutsch's distinction between an 'amalgamated security community' where formal unity becomes the norm and a 'pluralistic security communities' where sovereignty is retained by individual states.

Eastern enlargement as such duplicated the earlier processes of inter-state cooperation and community building which shaped the early integration process in Western Europe. Its aim was that of transforming former adversaries into allies and transporting the CEE states directly into the heart of the European security community, which, although comprising of a range of different institutions,⁵ nevertheless has a distinct centre of gravity in the EU. Enlargement would facilitate the transmission of new norms from the EU to the candidate states, thus helping to transform the 'Eastern' European states into 'European' states' (Adler and Barnett, 1998, 420). This is surely what former Commission President Romano Prodi (2001) meant when he said that: 'our enlargement strategy ensures that these values are enshrined in the candidate countries before they can join the EU. Democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights will become the norm throughout the expanding Union'. The cognitive model was one which highlighted the transformation in Franco-German relations after the Second World War, as one which could be emulated in the re-constitution of German-Polish relations, Hungarian-Romanian relations, indeed any inter-state relationship previously characterised by tensions over territory, ethnic minorities, or disputed historical narratives. Thus the earlier patterns of peace building have been replicated in Central and Eastern Europe and indeed extended far beyond what was initially envisaged in the early 1990s. The EU has employed a virtually identical political-institutional mix in South Eastern Europe (Stabilisation and Association Process), the Euro-Mediterranean area (the Barcelona Process) and beyond (the Wider Neighbourhood policy), even if different (non-accession) outcomes are likely. The very success of EU community-building in Central and Eastern Europe thus promoted the extension of community-enhancing instruments to the wider Europe.

Analysis of the enlargement discourse employed by EU representatives indicates a clear attachment to the concept of an expanding security community. Former enlargement Commissioner Hans van den Bröek, in a 1997 speech, for example, referred to the EU as a 'genuine security community in which the very idea of war between any members can be dismissed out of hand'. It was of a pattern where the European Commission actively sought to create a we-feeling both amongst the applicant states from CEE and also, obviously, between the EU member states and the individual applicant states. The building of trust through enlargement-related institutional engagement and capacity building became a central preoccupation of EU strategists as EU-CEE relations deepened. This assertion is supported by a stream of Commission documentation that emphasises that the EU wanted to create in the East a 'psychological environment of mutual trust', and a 'feeling of belonging' (European Commission, 1994). Council and Commission officials regularly reiterated the importance of extending the post-1945 model of reconciliation and cooperation. Thus from the beginning eastern enlargement was conceptualised as a contemporary security enhancing project, one which would embed EU norms in the former communist states and ensure a successful extension of the existing pluralistic security community.

⁵ These include the non-EU organizations the Council of Europe (C of E), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and NATO.

Normalising existential threats through Desecuritisation

The scholarship of Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Atsuko Higashino and others on EU security provides the most useful template for understanding how the EU conceptualised eastern enlargement in community building terms and as a mechanism for normalising inter-state geopolitical relations. In particular Wæver's emphasis on 'securitisation' and 'desecuritisation' allows us to demonstrate how EU actors framed a specific geopolitical discourse intended to shape the development and direction of the eastern enlargement process. Securitisation theory highlights the significance of speech acts, of specific discursive constructs, which help frame issues in international politics and which influence the boundaries for action for each individual issue. Or as Wæver (1996, 106) puts it: 'Security is a practice, a specific way of framing an issue'. In the process the securitisation move is employed in order to transfer issues from the world of external or hard security into the internal or soft security realm. The patterns of issue transfer/transformation will of course vary according to the importance of the issue, the relative willingness of the actors to accept the securitisation move and the general macro security climate in which the issue is embedded. The process of securitising an issue begins with the declaration of it as a security issue, essentially as an existential threat to the peace and security of the region, which requires collective action in order to avoid escalation and conflict. The process of de-escalation is achieved through a desecuritising move, one which seeks to stabilise and normalise a state of existing or potential inter-state conflict by elite level discursive interventions targeted at transforming the existential threat into the everyday and normal.

It has often been asserted that the European integration process itself constituted the most outstanding example of desecuritisation in contemporary international politics (Higashino, 2004, 350). Such a view presents eastern enlargement as another important episode of desecuritisation through integration. This argument rests on the premise that in the aftermath of the Cold War the EU and Europe needed enlargement in order to avoid fragmentation and conflict, to guard against a future characterised by Hobbesian mistrust and recurrent wars. The logic here is that Europe, for most of its history, has been a conflictual inter-state system, where a number of great powers (constituted as city states, multinational empires and later nation states) competed for influence and allies, and where the collective management of geopolitical issues continually floundered on the rocks of Manichean calculation and the desire to achieve state security.

This conceptualization of eastern enlargement also contained a strong emphasis on the self-negating, self-transforming potential in relation to Europe itself. It posited Europe's contemporary 'other', the traditional enemy image, not in the form of an external state or empire or ideological system but rather Europe's own past which should not be allowed to become its future (Diez 2001; Higashino 2004). Proponents of this view routinely argued that the opportunity cost of non-enlargement would be the very patterns of

fragmentation leading to resurgent nationalism and a ‘back to the future’ geopolitical trajectory that manifested themselves so tragically in Yugoslavia (Higashino, 2004. 350). Enlargement was thus understood as part of an ongoing process of constituting Europe as a place of attraction rather than conflict, as centred on its own soft security values rather than a hard security enemy template. Just as the Franco-German rivalry of Europe’s past mutated into the Franco-German motor of integration, so the zone of instability in Central and Eastern Europe was to be transformed through a process of normalising state relations through the successfully established patterns of institutionalized cooperation associated with the European integration process. Integration is presented as the only option suitably robust enough to prevent a return to Europe’s tormented past. Desecuritisation was to be achieved through changing the terms of discourse through which individual and sometimes linked geopolitical issues were framed, from one based on traditional modes of security (reactions to material threats which emphasise the material resources to be employed in combating these threats) to a discourse which sought to consider the threats as part of the internalized everyday politics of the European integration process, in this case manifested in the rules of the enlargement process. The article goes on to identify the two most important existential threats identified by EU élites during the eastern enlargement process and to demonstrate how they were subject to a process of desecuritisation. The first was the threat of instability arising in Central and Eastern Europe itself and the second the different types of threat emanating from post-Soviet Russia.

Eastern enlargement as a mechanism for stabilising Central and Eastern Europe

From the earliest stages of the eastern enlargement process EU political representatives sought to securitise and then desecuritize a range of issues deemed to constitute geopolitical problems for the Union as a whole. We may also term these issues negative externalities arising out of the new EU-CEE interdependence of the early 1990s. These issues were gradually subject to a process of discursive framing as specific and existential threats to the peace, security and welfare of the EU; this in turn justified programmes aimed at issue transformation and transfer to the terrain of integration. Specifically I highlight two such issue areas which were subject to a securitisation move leading to a desecuritisation treatment within the framework of the enlargement process.

In the first place eastern enlargement brought onto the EU agenda a new set of environmental problems which were quickly framed as trans-European and as threatening to the macro security of all. As Hill (2002, 106) points out, eastern enlargement promised the opportunity of institutional regulation of the environmental problems associated with the old smokestack industries in Eastern Europe, and created new possibilities for protecting the peoples of both candidate states and existing member states from any future environmental disasters on their borders. The candidate states inherited daunting environmental challenges, however. Before 1989 air pollution was a major problem particularly in the northern region (Poland, the Czech Republic and former East Germany) due to heavy industries and reliance on brown coal for energy. Water pollution

in the form of hazardous substances and nutrients affected all CEE countries and soil degradation was also part of the negative inheritance from the past. As the transition process took hold economic and social restructuring presented new environmental problems particularly arising out of mass consumerism, the increase in all forms of transportation and sharp rises in waste disposal. In addition, the candidate states, faced with a myriad of economic challenges, did not prioritize environmental issues to the same degree as other Western states and the NGO sector that emerged in this area was generally weak (Birger Skjaereth and Wettestad, 2004). So in a myriad number of ways eastern enlargement threatened to impose a significant economic cost on the EU, and especially on those states which shared borders with the candidate countries. Thus an issue which during previous enlargement rounds remained relatively insignificant was elevated to the status of a trans-European security problem which necessarily required a forceful and coercive EU role in insisting on candidate state adoption of the entire EU environmental *acquis*. The EU strategy of securitisation and desecuritisation was even more evident in respect of the approach to nuclear power stations in the candidate states. Indeed the prioritisation of nuclear safety represented one of the best examples of such framing activities by EU representatives.⁶ Ignalina in Lithuania and Kozludy in Bulgaria ceased to be issues for bilateral negotiation between the EU and candidate countries. The existential threat which they constituted to the EU (future Chernobyl's waiting to happen) justified a securitisation move and a desecuritisation strategy built on the familiar integration dualism of EU capacity building (in the form of aid for decommissioning of aged plants) combined with conditionality/coercion.

As policy-makers considered the wider problems provoked by the emergence of a 'zone of instability' in CEE in the early 1990s it became clear that inter-state border conflicts represented the greatest threat to European security. In the wake of 1989 the Yugoslav conflict provided convincing evidence of the potentially fratricidal nature of future inter-state relations in the region. The volatility of Central and Eastern Europe was a function of long-standing historical grievances regarding territory, irredentist border claims, the presence of significant ethnic minorities in neighbouring states and their treatment by those states, and the weakness of the emerging governance structures in the new democracies. In the early 1990s many commentators argued that the worst potential flashpoint in Europe was that between Hungary and Romania. This dated back to the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 under which Hungary lost two thirds of its territory and sixty per cent of its population. In the aftermath of 1989 ethnic Hungarian populations of significance remained not only in Romania (2.7 million) but also in Slovakia (500, 000) and Vojvodina in Yugoslavia. Bulgaria contained within its territory a significant Turkish population that had been subject to a programme of discrimination and deportation under the Todor Zhikov regime in the 1980s. The sizeable Russian minorities in the Baltic States also presented a challenge to EU policy (Liebich 2002, 131-34). The historical legacy was compounded by the presence of a range of soft security issues such as cross border crime, transnational drug smuggling and people trafficking, and potentially large-scale out migration to Western Europe arising from the chaos of social disorder in CEE.

⁶ See European Commission (1998, 1-10) for a cogent example of such framing.

These were regularly cited by EU political representatives as disruptive geopolitical problems which necessitated innovative thinking and mechanisms of desecuritisation.

Taken together these issues constituted both a reason for EU caution regarding enlargement but also one of the primary geopolitical motivations for expansion. Thus the EU sought to put in place a substantive instrument for guarding against the possible corrosion of inter-state relations. This represented a crucial part of the EU's pre-accession strategy and was introduced at the Essen summit in 1994 and further developed through the 'Pact on Stability in Europe' (European Council, 1994). The central ambition for the Pact was to ensure that the EU model of peaceful co-existence and stable inter-state relations could be expanded east and south so as to ensure the elimination of all significant security issues.⁷ It would put an end to irredentist claims, encourage trans-border economic development and cooperation, and help inculcate the European spirit in a region more traditionally defined by ethnic tensions and lingering post War hostilities. In this the EU sought to minimise the security risk attached to enlargement and thus it constituted a substantive process of preventative diplomacy and desecuritisation (Baun 2000, 61). A combination of capacity building and coercion through conditionality was used throughout. And although as time went on the EU focused its efforts more on the transformation of domestic conditions as the optimum strategy, the Pact's significance in terms of norm generation and diffusion was of the utmost significance (de Witte 2002, 142). It certainly contributed to the building of trust and the dissipation of geopolitical tensions.

The Stability Pact and the other measures demanded of candidate states undertaken as part of the EU's pre-accession process can be viewed as classic instruments of desecuritisation. The EU sought to take issues which might traditionally have been negotiated in bilateral nation state fora, deliberately reclassify them as 'security' issues and then proceed to desecuritize them by subjecting them to processes of collective institutional cooperation under the rubric of the pre-accession process. Policy-makers saw enlargement as an opportunity to stabilise the EU's external environment and as such as a positive contribution to their own security. This was especially the case in respect of the Stability Pact's main goal of neutralising inter-state territorial disputes, but also the case in respect of guarantees of state protection of minority rights, environmental degradation and migration flows. All were classified as sources of potential instability, as macro geopolitical problems for the Union as a whole, rather than micro or jurisdictionally specific problems.

⁷ One of the many double standards evident in the eastern enlargement process was that the principle of achieving lasting resolution of border disputes was not applied to the accession of the Republic of Cyprus (Greek Cyprus). Although prior to the 2004 accessions one final effort was made to resolve the question (through the UN), the Greek threat to veto the entire eastern enlargement process was sufficient to ensure that the Cyprus question was treated differently to similar (if not as protracted) problems in Central and Eastern Europe. Greek Cypriot accession did not require *a priori* resolution of the Cyprus problem.

EU-Russian relations and Eastern Enlargement

The second recurring existential threat to be considered here is that of Russian power, both actual and potential, and Russian interpretations of and reactions to the eastern enlargement process. Although the implosion of the Soviet Union and the loss of its satellite states left the successor state - the Russian Federation – weaker, Russia in the 1990s continued to represent the greatest potential ‘existential threat’ to the power of the EU and to the peace and stability of the continent. In the first place Russia retained a formidable military capacity and significant natural resources. It provided over a fifth of EU energy needs and almost one third of Germany’s (*International Herald Tribune*, 11 April 2005). It boasted the largest standing army on the European continent, a significant air, land and naval capability and, most crucially, a nuclear arsenal far in excess of those of the UK and France, the EU’s only nuclear powers.

Changing the focus somewhat from pure power politics and geopolitical competition, the eastern enlargement of the EU can be much more convincingly portrayed as an effort to balance against the instability created by the fragmentation of Russian power and the lack of stability in Russia’s domestic politics. Russia, for Georg Sørensen (2001, 46), is akin to a drifting supertanker, uncertain of what kind of statehood it will end up with. Political institutions outside of the Presidency are impotent and citizenship has little substantive meaning. The success of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy in the Russian Parliamentary elections of December 1992, and the popularity of the ‘red/brown’ alliance (communist and nationalist) raised early concerns within the EU about the prospects for democracy in Russia, and increased fears in Central and Eastern Europe that a more nationalist and aggressive Russia would upset the geostrategic balance in the new Europe by seeking to reclaim its Empire. This triggered new demands from CEE and a EU response that privileged CEE accession as the only credible strategy whilst developing a new EU-Russia strategic partnership (Baun 2000, 54). It is not too difficult to envisage a sclerotic Russia turning toward a revived nationalism in whatever new form, increasingly causing difficulties with the Baltic States or Ukraine, for example.⁸ As Christopher Hill (2002, 105) argues, it would not be too dramatic a leap then for the EU and Russia to seem to each other like real security threats. President Putin’s rhetoric in the run up to the 60th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War unnerved many with its nostalgia for Russia’s imperial past and its message that Russia continued to define its interests at the expense of its neighbours.⁹

Of equal concern throughout the eastern enlargement process was the fact that Russian central government was extremely weak, under both Yeltsin and Putin. And where

⁸ The Russian minorities in Latvia and Estonia represent respectively 29.6 per cent and 28.1 per cent of the population, while the proportion is much smaller in Lithuania at 8.7 per cent. See Dov Lynch (2003, 84).

⁹ Putin referred to the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 as a measure to enhance Russia’s national security and went on to describe the collapse of the Soviet Union as the ‘greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century’. See Bugajski (2005).

Vladimir Putin acted to restore Moscow's prerogatives within the Russian federation this had the effect of convincing western policy-makers that he was taking Russia back to a more authoritarian and hostile form of state.¹⁰ The Putin government's actions against Mikhail Khodorkovsky and *Yukos* in 2004 only reinforced this perception. Putin's determination to reassert Russian power manifested itself most obviously in the 'near abroad' and on the Chechen question. Russian military adventurism in the Caucasus both undermined Russian power and contributed to growing instability on the EU's eastern frontiers. Continued interference in Georgia and manifest interference in Ukrainian domestic politics (especially during the Presidential election in 2004), left EU policy-makers convinced that the Russian threat was now defined by its propensity for creating instability as much as by any military threat it could wield. Thus EU policy-makers acknowledged this type of security externality and presented eastern enlargement as, in part, an effort to 'lock in' the CEE states into the EU orbit and guard against the westward migration of the problems generated by Russian instability.

Equally, however, EU representatives engaged in securitisation moves (discursive interventions and policy initiatives), which resulted in desecuritisation of Russia as an existential threat within the enlargement framework. EU policy was undoubtedly helped by the fact that Russian threat perceptions focused more on NATO expansion than EU expansion as the main threat it faced on its western borders. This was because the EU's development as a pluralistic non-military security community threatened few of Russia's vital national interests in the way that NATO was perceived to (Breslauer, 2003, 41). Undoubtedly also policy-makers on both sides could point to different types of interdependence to support desecuritisation moves. This was especially the case in the energy sector where Russia retained formidable leverage over the energy-dependent EU. But this power was balanced by the fact that Russia relied on crucial transit routes through the Baltic states for getting its oil and gas to western markets.

The EU's desecuritisation moves began with a series of efforts to reduce potential friction with Russia. Russia mutated over time from a 'strategic rival' to a 'strategic partner' in EU discourse. In the first instance the institution of a so-called 'Northern Dimension' to the eastern enlargement process was in part a desecuritisation move by the EU. Adopted in 1998-9 on the initiative of Finland, the Northern Dimension held as a crucial objective the desire to improve regional and sub-regional cooperative structures and to resolve the potential tensions with Russia through constructive engagement (Breslauer, 2003, 42). Second, the imposition of a minority-rights conditionality framework within the pre-accession process was designed in part to placate Russian concerns about the treatment of Russian nationals in the Baltic States. Indeed the decision to exclude Latvia from the initial accession negotiations, which were instituted in March 1998, was influenced by its relative failure to adhere to EU standards in this area (notwithstanding that these were quite ill-defined). The most important EU instrument of desecuritisation, however, was the institution of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Russia. This

¹⁰ This was most obviously demonstrated in the decision post-Beslan (the justification) to replace Russia's directly elected regional governors with governmental appointees.

became the central mechanism for building EU-Russian relations in the context of eastern enlargement. The PCA was initiated in 1994 but took more than three years to come into force. In some ways it replicated the instruments, modalities and institutional processes of the enlargement process. The crucial difference, however, was that it did not offer even a perspective on future Russian membership of the EU. Instead for the EU it was intended to strengthen mutual understanding and encourage a perception of common interests between Russia and the enlarging EU. The important point here is that threat reduction was to be achieved through ongoing and intense political dialogue and institutional interaction. The new common institutions were in some senses designed to socialise Russian elites into the everyday problem-solving structures of the European integration process without offering them the prospect of membership itself. The deepening of EU-Russian relations is very evident in the multiple arenas of dialogue where the Council, Commission and Parliament pursue continuous discussions with their Russian counterparts. As Schmitt (2003, 17) puts it: 'The PCA is not just an expression of good intentions; it has spurred the creation of tangible structures to ensure that good intentions are actually pursued'. Thus over time and in tandem with the eastern enlargement process the EU managed to build a relationship with Russia defined more by pragmatic cooperation and growing institutional confidence than by tension over persistent existential threats.

Conclusions

The article sought to analyse the EU's eastern enlargement from the hitherto neglected dimensions of security and geopolitics. Eastern enlargement arose out of the dramatic changes wrought by the 1989 revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. Enlargement quickly became a priority for the Union, if indeed others such as Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) were more quickly realised. From the outset geopolitical issues featured strongly in the calculus of EU leaders. Enlargement increased both the size of the EU population and the territory it covers by a significant degree (about one third in each case). This meant that the European Union stretched in 2004 from the Atlantic in the west to within miles of St. Petersburg in the east, and after 2007, to the Black Sea coast in the south east. Enlargement thus brought with it new dangers and new geopolitical opportunities for the Union. Realist interpretations of the eastern enlargement largely revolved around the re-definition of inter-state relations, the reconfiguration of the European power balance, and different types of threat perceptions. While eastern enlargement may have been a vehicle for containing both Russian power and the consequences of Russian state weakness, EU policy toward Russia was both assertive *and* conciliatory.

Enlargement is better understood as a specific geopolitical response to instability in Central and Eastern Europe and a determination to avoid the fragmentation and horrors of Yugoslavia. It was an indication of the success of the eastern enlargement that Serbia and Montenegro, for long outside of the loop of European integration, began to gravitate

toward the Community model which it had for long distained. Eastern enlargement helped stabilise and then normalise inter-state relations in Eastern Europe and ensure a peaceful transition from communism to European integration. Security considerations were especially important in both moving the enlargement process forward at critical junctures and also changing the contours of enlargement in specific ways. The article argued that a constructivist framework of analysis, which posits the EU as a pluralistic security community and eastern enlargement as the central vehicle propelling the expansion of that community, provides the most convincing explanation of the enlargement story. EU actors interpreted enlargement-related geopolitical issues as different types of security challenges. In the process of making securitising moves they laid the groundwork for a process of desecuritisation which transformed the external into the internal, the geopolitical into the everyday politics of European integration.

References

Adler, E. and Barnett, M. (1998) 'A Framework for the Study of Security Communities' in Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds), *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Baun, M. (2000) *A Wider Europe: the Process and Politics of European Union Enlargement*, (Lanham, Maryland, Rowman and Littlefield).

Birger Skjaerseth J. and Wettestad, J. (2004) 'EU Enlargement: Challenges to the Effectiveness of EU Environmental Policy', Paper presented at the ECPR Second Pan-European Conference, Bologna, 24-26 June <http://www.jhubc.it/ecpr-bologna>

Bort, E. (2002) 'Illegal Migration and Cross-Border Crime: Challenges at the Eastern Frontier of the European Union', in Jan Zielonka (ed.) (2002), *Europe Unbound: Enlarging and Reshaping the Boundaries of the European Union*, (London, Routledge), 191-212.

Breslauer, G.W. (2003) 'Russia, the Baltic states and East-West Relations in Europe', in Vello Pettai and Jan Zielonka (eds) (2003) *The Road to the European Union, Volume 2: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 25-45.

Bugaksaki, J. (2005) 'History is Politics in Putin's Russia', *Financial Times*, 27 April.

Checkel, J. (2003) 'Social Constructivisms in Global and European Politics', ARENA Working Paper 15/03.

European Commission (1998) *Accession Strategies for the Environment: Meeting the Challenge of Enlargement with the Candidate Countries in Central and Eastern Europe*,

COM (98) 294, Available at:
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/docum/98294en.pdf>, Accessed 20 October 2005.

European Commission (1994) 'The Europe Agreements and Beyond: A Strategy to Prepare the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe for Accession', COM (94) 320 final, Brussels.

European Council (1994) Presidency Conclusions, Essen Summit, 9-10 December.

George, J. (2000) 'Back to the Future?' in G. Fry and J O'Hagan (Eds) (2000), *Contending Images of World Politics*, (Basingstoke: MacMillan), 33-47.

Guzzini, S. (2000) 'A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations*, 6:2,147-82.

Higashino, A. (2004) 'For the Sake of Peace and Security'? The Role of Security in the European Union Enlargement Eastwards', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 39:4, 347-68.

Hill, C. (2002) 'The Geopolitical Implications of Enlargement' in J. Zielonka (ed.) (2002) *Europe Unbound: Enlarging and Reshaping the Boundaries of the European Union*, (London: Routledge), 95-116.

Jacobsen, J.K. (2003) 'Duelling Constructivisms: A Post-Mortem on the Ideas Debate in Mainstream IR/IPE', *Review of International Studies*, 29:1, 39-60.

Jørgensen, K.E. (2000) 'Continental IR Theory: The Best Kept Secret', *European Journal of International Relations*, 6:1, 9-42.

Liebich, A. (2002) 'Ethnic Minorities and Implications of EU Enlargement', in J. Zielonka (ed.) (2002) *Europe Unbound: Enlarging and Reshaping the Boundaries of the European Union*, (London: Routledge), 117-36

Lynch, D. (2003) 'Russia faces Europe', *Chaillot Papers*, No.60, May (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies).

Mearsheimer J. (1990) 'Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War', *International Security*, 15:4, 5-56.

Mungiu-Pippidi, A. (2002) 'Facing the 'desert of Tartars' : The Eastern Border of Europe' in J. Zielonka (ed.) (2002) *Europe Unbound: Enlarging and Reshaping the Boundaries of the European Union*, (London: Routledge), 51-77.

O'Brennan, J. (2006 – forthcoming) *The Eastern Enlargement of the European Union*, London: Routledge).

Onuf, N. (1989) *World of our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press)

Pippan, C. (2004) 'The Rocky Road to Europe: The EU's Stabilisation and Association Process for the Western Balkans and the Principle of Conditionality', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 9, 219-45.

Prodi, R. (2001) 'Bringing the Family Together', Speech to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Speech/01/158, Budapest, 4 April.

Risse Kappen, T. (1995) 'Democratic Peace – Warlike Democracies? A Social Constructivist Interpretation of the Liberal Argument', *European Journal of International Relations*, 1:4, 491-517.

Ruggie, J.G. (1998) 'What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge', *International Organization*, 52:4, 855-85.

Schmitt, B. (ed.) (2003) 'EU Cooperative Threat Reduction Activities in Russia', *Chaillot Papers*, No.61, June, (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies).

Smith, S. (1999) 'Social Constructivisms and European Studies: A Reflectivist Critique', *Journal of European Public Policy*, Volume 6, Number 4, .682-91.

Sørensen, G. (2001) *Changes in Statehood: The Transformation of International Relations*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave).

Van den Broek, H. (1997) Speech to the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party Conference, Bucharest, Speech 97/217.

Wæver, O. 'Insecurity, Security and Asecurity in the West European non-war Community', in Emanuel Adler, and Michael Barnett (eds), *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Wæver, O. (1996) 'European Security Identities', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 34, No.1, March, 103-32.

Wallace, W. (2002) 'Where Does Europe End? Dilemmas of Inclusion and Exclusion', in J. Zielonka (ed.), *Europe Unbound: Enlarging and Reshaping the Boundaries of the European Union*, (London: Routledge), 78-94.

Wendt, A. (1999) *Social Theory of International Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Wivel, A. (2004) 'The Power Politics of Peace: Exploring the Link between Globalisation and European Integration from a Realist Perspective', *Cooperation and Conflict*, Volume 39, No.1, 5-25.

Zielonka J. (ed.) (2002) *Europe Unbound: Enlarging and Reshaping the Boundaries of the European Union*, (London: Routledge).

8044 words incl. Abstract and Bibliography.