

BORDER REGIONS IN RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY. THE CASE OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION AND THE BLACK SEA REGION

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Abstract: *Regional policy became a real test for EU- Russia relationship. The common neighborhood can play an essential role in defining the structure of their relationship and establishing a set of rules for their interaction. Facing new realities, Russia was forced to rethink its approach to borders and regionalism, and to integrate this region building process in the design of its foreign policy. The aim of this article is to analyze Russia's involvement in region building process at the border with EU and the way the considered regions reflect its foreign policy conception. The analyze will start from defining the role regionalism plays in the construction of Russia's foreign policy and its approach to this concept, followed by an examination of its interest in the two regions selected and the role they play in Russia's internal debate over security. I will analyze, then, the construction of Russia's foreign policy and its reflection in the relationship with other players, especially EU, in order to summarize this study in several points that could help EU's policy in the common neighborhood with Russia. Are these regions a reflection of EU-Russia policy? Is Russia an active player or does it only react to the evolutions imposed by other actors? The way Russia takes part in the construction of these two regions differs and I will try to examine the factors that lead to this different approach, paying attention to the role of regional identity, as well as the EU stance in the region. It is interesting to analyze in this context if the Russian approach in these two different regions follows a strict conception of foreign policy or it's an adaptation to the regional actors and evolutions. For this, it is necessary to examine also the internal debate over the foreign policy design and the way these two regions are envisaged in this design.*

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