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“The EU’s Eastern Policy in the Light of Russian Revisionism:
From Normative Power to Geopolitics?”

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List of Abbreviations

AA	Association Agreement
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
COREPER	Comité des représentants permanents (eng. Committee of Permanent Representatives)
CSCE	Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EDA	European Defence Agency
EEAS	European External Action Service
ENISA	European Union Agency for Cybersecurity
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EP	European Parliament
ESS	European Security Strategy
EU	European Union
EUAM	European Union Advisory Mission
EUGS	European Union Global Strategy
EUISS	European Union Institute for Security Studies
HR/VP	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPE	Normative Power Europe
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation (European Union)
PFP	Partnership for Peace
RELEX	Directorate-General for External Relations (European Commission)
SMM	Special Monitoring Mission
TACIS	Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US / USA	United States / United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics / Soviet Union

Foreword

This master thesis has had its genesis in an incredibly challenging year. Not only had the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic disturbed international politics, global trade and economics but also our daily lives. This too included academic and university life which had been deeply affected by several Austrian-wide lockdowns and has seen university professors and students rise to the challenges of online courses and distance learning. It goes without saying that the closure and/or partial closure of university institutes and libraries, during various Austrian-wide lockdowns, has had an profound impact on the genesis of this master thesis.

I, therefore, want to express my deep felt gratitude to my family and friends as well as to all others that supported me and proved to be invaluable in this challenging time. Especially, I want to thank my mother for her ongoing support, without which many things would not have been possible. I would like to express a special thanks to my student colleagues from the European Studies master's program; our countless conversations had a deep impact on this thesis. Thanks to all who took their time to read parts of this thesis and thereby providing me with constructive and invaluable feedback. A big thank you also goes to Michael John Flynn who took his time to proofread my master thesis. His corrections and suggestions improved the readability of this thesis a lot. All those I forgot to mention I thank as well.

1. Introduction

Over the course of the last 16 years, the EU has seen itself and its immediate neighbourhood engulfed in various crises – be it the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the war in Georgia 2008, the Arab Spring, the crisis in Ukraine with the annexation of Crimea and the war in the Donbass, the rise of the IS, the war in Syria and Lybia, Islamist terrorism, the migration crisis, or very recently, the stand-off with Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean, and the ongoing protests against the fraudulent win of Alexander Lukashenko in the Belarusian presidential elections.

Over the years, the EU has addressed its neighbourhood through various policy formats. First, the 2004 European Neighbourhood Initiative (ENP) addressed the Union's entire Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood through a one size fits all policy. Later, Brussels regionalized its neighbourhood policy by launching the Union for the Mediterranean in 2008 for the south, and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in 2009 for the east. Russia's perception of the EaP as a geopolitical project has been the cause for ongoing frictions in EU-Russia relations that ultimately culminated in the Ukraine crisis, after the Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich under Russian pressure refused to sign the Association Agreement with the EU in Vilnius. This subsequently led to violent street protests in Kyiv, the annexation of Crimea, and the ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine.

With the aforementioned EaP, the EU sought to extend a range of cooperative measures to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Russia, in its geopolitical perception of the initiative, increasingly stuck to realist principles to neutralise the EU's attempt. The EaP states do not constitute a group of homogeneous countries, and they accordingly over time divided into a more pro-European and a more pro-Russian leaning group. However, some politicians, such as Alexander Lukashenko, sought to play off both, the EU and Russia against each other. The EU seemed not to realize the geopolitical battle that was taking place in its Eastern Neighbourhood, and assumed perhaps somewhat naively and foolheartedly that the countries of the region would naturally be drawn towards the EaP.

Some political commentators and analysts branded the EU's response to Russian aggression in the post-Soviet space as rather weak and indecisive, constrained by its member states diverging interests, the Union's lack of hard power as well as its unwillingness to engage

in geopolitics. Whereas, other commentators criticized the EU for not taking into account Russia's allegedly legitimate interests, thereby causing instability in the whole region. Nonetheless, the EU was able to adopt sanctions against Russia as well as Russian and Ukrainian individuals. The master thesis shows that the EU in the aftermaths of the Ukraine crisis became aware of the salience of geopolitical thinking in its Eastern Neighbourhood. However, whereas traditional geopolitical aspects and realist principles increasingly made it into the rhetoric of EU officials as well as EU documents – even leading Ursula von der Leyen to brand her newly appointed Commission as a geopolitical one – the thesis argues that this shift in rhetoric should not be seen as an embrace of traditional forms of geopolitics by the Union and its member states.

The aim of the thesis

The master thesis topic was chosen out of a particular interest in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, Russian foreign policy under Putin, and the situation in Ukraine post-Vilnius. Being fully aware that research in the area of geopolitics in the EU's foreign and neighbourhood policy approach hardly constitutes something new, the thesis nonetheless aims to provide the ongoing academic debates with a comprehensive analysis of the increasing salience of geopolitical thinking in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood. The relevance of this thesis lays in the attempt to piece together various strands of academic debate on the rise and salience of geopolitics in the EU's foreign and eastern policy into one coherent whole.

The aim of this master thesis is to assess whether or not the EU in its Eastern Neighbourhood as well as its EaP policy has become more geopolitical (in a traditional realist sense) in the wake of the Ukraine crisis and the subsequent Russia-Ukraine conflict. Has Russia's aggression made the EU aware of the salience of geopolitics in its Eastern Neighbourhood to an extent that led the EU to revise its strategy towards the region? If so, did the EU start to include geopolitical thinking in its foreign policy approaches towards the EaP region (e.g. by offering EaP states a membership perspective)? Even though Russia asserted its hard power all over the region in the last decade, the crisis in Ukraine that started in 2013/2014 will be the analytical focus of this thesis in order to narrow its scope. First, the thesis assesses how the EU responded to the Russian aggression in Ukraine, and then whether the European response led Brussels to revise its eastern policies and shift them more towards geopolitics. The analytical time frame to assess the EU's immediate response to the crisis will

start in 2013/2014 after the EaP Vilnius summit and extend until the Minsk II agreement. Whereas, the analytical time frame to assess whether any long-term policy shifts towards more geopolitical approaches within the EU's foreign and eastern policy occurred, stretches from 2014 to 2020.

Research questions

This master thesis has a core research question together with additional ones that explore three dimensions: (1) responses, (2) changes, and (3) impacts.

Thus, the core question of the thesis is:

Has the EU in its Eastern Neighbourhood as well as its EaP policy become more geopolitical (in a traditional realist meaning) in the wake of the Ukraine crisis and the subsequent Russia-Ukraine conflict?

The first crucial question, after assessing the EU's approach towards its Eastern neighbourhood pre-Vilnius, is how did the EU **respond** to the events unfolding in Kyiv, the Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine, and its annexation of Crimea? What kind of foreign policy tools at the EU's disposal were used to support Ukraine, and counter Russian aggression?

The second dimension of this thesis constitutes **changes**. How have Russian actions in Ukraine influenced EU foreign policy? An important aspect of the question of the EU's usage of foreign policy tools is what enabled and/or constrained the use of these tools? Additionally, were Russia's actions in Ukraine the catalyst for a more united and committed EU foreign policy and did this lead to a change in the EU's strategic long-term approach towards the EaP region?

After assessing whether or not the crisis in Ukraine led to new ways of exercising EU power and short-term policy adjustments, the third dimension of this thesis revolves around their **impact**. After the assessment of whether or not the crisis in Ukraine led to changes in the EU's foreign policy approach towards its Eastern Neighbourhood, it is necessary to ask the question if this led to long-term policy adjustments in the EU's foreign and eastern policy. If so, did they shift towards more geopolitical approaches or not?

Structure of the thesis

Apart from the introduction and the conclusion, the master thesis is structured in five parts. First, the thesis outlines a framework for analysis, within which it details various strands of debate concerning the EU's foreign policy as well as its actorness in this realm. This is followed by a critical presentation of the concept of Normative Power Europe, and an extensive part outlining different strands of geopolitical conceptualisations and thinking as well as the EU's approach to the matter. Finally, this part presents Cross and Karolewski's adaption of Baldwin's framework of relational power in order to judge what enabled and/or constrained the EU in its response towards the Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Second, the thesis covers both the EU's and Russia's approach towards their shared neighbourhood pre-2013. It does so by presenting EU-Russia relations as well as the EU's eastern policy and Russian foreign policy approaches towards its so-called 'near abroad'.

Third, the thesis offers a chronological description of events that unfolded in Ukraine. Starting in 2013, when Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, under Russian pressure, refused to sign the EU Association Agreement in Vilnius, thereby sparking a political crisis and massive pro-European demonstrations on Kyiv's central Maidan square that subsequently were attacked by police and special forces and spread across the country. These demonstrations were then followed by Russia's annexation of Crimea, and the war in Eastern Ukraine.

Fourth, the thesis details the EU's responses to the Russian aggression and the crisis in Ukraine. It first focuses on how the EU responded towards the political crisis in Kyiv and to the challenging situation resulting from the annexation of Crimea, the downing of the Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17, and the war in Eastern Ukraine. Secondly, this part analyzes the EU's decision to impose sanctions on Russia, what enabled them, and how they came to be.

The fifth and last part, before the thesis concludes, focuses on analyzing whether the Russian aggression, the crisis in Ukraine together with the subsequent Russia-Ukraine conflict, and the EU's responses to them had an impact on leading to any long-term strategic adjustments in the Union's foreign and eastern policies. Firstly, this part analyzes the debates leading to the genesis of the EU's first Global Strategy (EUGS) in 2016, which was a revision of the 2003 European Security Strategy. The EUGS is also analysed in view of a shift of the Union towards embracing geopolitics in its foreign policy as well as its Eastern Neighbourhood.

Secondly, this part analyzes the EaP and the EU's eastern policy post-Vilnius in order to identify if any shifts towards a more geopolitical impetus occurred.

This literature based master's thesis draws on an extensive amount of secondary literature, official documents, briefs, press releases, news articles, and online sources in order to answer its research questions. The first three parts of the thesis mainly use secondary sources, whereas the empirical part draws heavily on official documents, press releases, and news articles.

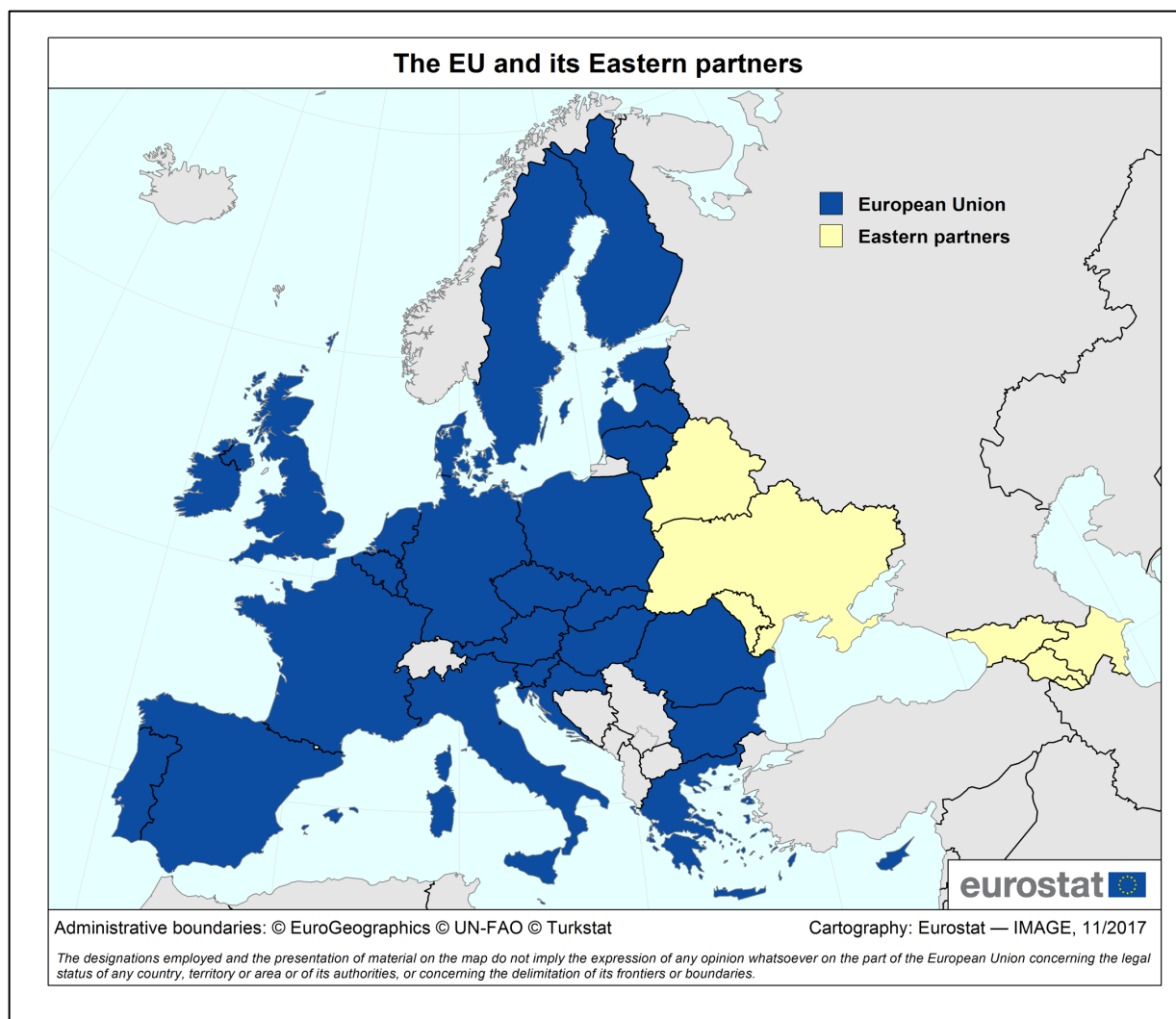


Figure 1. Map showing the 6 Eastern Partnership (EaP) states¹

¹ Eurostat. 2017. "Eastern partners - young and growing economies." November 24. Accessed January 3, 2021. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20171124-1?inheritRedirect=true&redirect=%2Feurostat%2Fen>; Note: due to Brexit the United Kingdom is no longer part of the European Union.



Figure 2. Map of Ukraine²

² Youngs, R. 2017. *Europe's Eastern Crisis: The Geopolitics of Asymmetry*. Cambridge University Press, 14.



Figure 3. Map of the Minsk II agreement³

³ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 15.

2. A Framework for Analysis

In order to orientate the empirical part of the thesis on how the European Union (EU) responded to the crisis that erupted in Ukraine in 2013, this chapter presents a framework for answering the questions regarding EU foreign policy changes towards a more geopolitical approach. Detailing different strands of theoretical debate on EU foreign policy, Normative Power Europe, and geopolitics, this chapter offers a framework for judging which factors led to changes in EU foreign policy actions and EU power projection in its Eastern Neighbourhood, post crisis. In addition, this chapter provides guidelines as to how the EU's responses led to long-term strategic adjustments towards Russia and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries.

2.1 The EU as a Foreign Policy Actor and European Foreign Policy

Each actor in the international system is somewhat distinctive from others. The EU's achievement in formally co-operating on foreign and security issues was not a big-bang event but rather a gradual process.⁴ Ever since its founding in 1951, the EU (and its precursors) has been conceived with security at its core. However, achieving a coherent common foreign and security policy over the last decades has not been an easy task. Alternating successes and setbacks contributed to the EU's disaggregated nature of power projection in the international system. Nonetheless, with every new treaty the EU has become less and less disaggregated.⁵ Of special importance is the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, which not only launched the European External Action Service (EEAS), but also created a permanent Council President. Among other things, the Lisbon Treaty, centralized power concerning foreign and security policy in a new position, namely that of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.⁶ The EU's many constituent parts, however, make it a somewhat disaggregated foreign policy actor still today. Each part, be it the EU's commissioners or the High Representative, the Council President, EU diplomats, member state leaders, *et cetera*, represents the Union's

⁴ Cross, M. K. D., and I. P. Karolewski. 2017. "What Type of Power has the EU Exercised in the Ukraine-Russia Crisis? A Framework of Analysis." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55 (1): 7.

⁵ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 7.

⁶ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 7; see also: Algieri, F. 2010. *Die Gemeinsame Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik der EU*. Vienna: Facultas, 61-71.

interests internationally at various times. Nonetheless, the EU is often able to speak with one voice on the international stage.⁷

An abundance of scholarly attention in the field of EU studies has focused on the nature of EU power, paying attention mostly to how decisions are being made within EU institutions. An overview on the rich literature concerning this subject, can be found in Bickerton *et al.*⁸ An ample number of analyses and case studies have established that there clearly are "important and dynamic processes and actors that together comprise the EU's ability to project power externally."⁹ The EU as a union of 27 (former 28) member states naturally has a high-level of internal debates that happen at multiple levels of analysis which in turn, ultimately, lead to decisions about what kind of power the EU wants to project externally.¹⁰

The EU is typically conceptualized as an actor that grounds its approach towards security on co-operations rather than antagonisms. Therefore, the Union as an actor seems to be intrinsically drawn to security policies that can be described as holistic and positive-sum policies. This leads to the EU's most common description as an ethical, liberal, normative or post-modern power – one that supposedly has an aversion against standard geopolitics.¹¹

This particular EU approach towards foreign policy seems to have been enshrined in the Union's seminal 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS). The strategy emphasized the

⁷ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 7; for a deep and comprehensive overview about the CFSP and the CSDP see, Algieri, *Die Gemeinsame Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik der EU*; and Diedrichs, U. 2012. *Die Gemeinsame Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik der EU*. Vienna: Facultas.

⁸ Bickerton, C., B. Irondelle, and A. Menon. 2011. "Security Co-operation beyond the Nation-State: The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49 (1): 1-21; For different approaches towards the nature of EU power, see also: Manners, I. 2002. "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40 (2): 235-258; Whitman, R. 2002. "The Fall, and Rise of Civilian Power in Europe?" National Europe Centre Paper 16, Australian National University, Canberra; Keukeleire, S. 2003. "The European Union as a Diplomatic Actor: Internal, Traditional, and Structural Diplomacy." *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 14 (3): 31-56; Meyer, C. O. 2006. *The Quest for a European Strategic Culture: Changing Norms on Security and Defence in the European Union*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Sjørusen, H. 2006. "What kind of Power: European Foreign Policy in Perspective." *Special Issue of the Journal of European Public Policy* 13 (2): 169-181; Rhinard, M, A. Boin, and M. Ekengren. 2007. "Managing Terrorism: Institutional Capacities and Counter-Terrorism Policy in the EU." In *The European Union and Terrorism*, edited by D. Spence, 88-104. London: John Harper Publishing; Howorth, J. 2007. "The Political and Security Committee and the Emergence of a European Security Identity." *IntUne Integrated and United: A Quest for Citizenship in an 'ever closer Europe'*, Siena, Italy; Laïdi, Z. 2008. *Norms over Force: The Enigma of European Power*. Palgrave Macmillan; Mérand, F. 2008. *European Defence Policy Beyond the Nation State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Cross, M. K. D. 2011. "Europe, A Smart Power?" *International Politics* 48 (6): 691-706; and Riddervold, M. 2016. "(Not) in the Hands of the Member States: How the Commission Influences EU Foreign and Security Policies." *Journal for Common Market Studies* 54 (2): 353-369.

⁹ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 8.

¹⁰ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 8.

¹¹ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 16.

notion that the EU's security may be best pursued by offering other states assistance in becoming stronger, more prosperous, and more effectively governed.¹² The EU's strategic philosophy laid out in the ESS is governed by the principle of cooperative inclusion.¹³ When closely examining the Union's policy documents and statements, it becomes visible that the EU frames itself as a post-modern security actor.¹⁴ The ESS states clearly that the Union's interests are best served by working together with other states in order to attain mutually beneficial advances in both, political and economic interests. Preventing other states from achieving their interests is neither a priority for nor in the interest of the EU.¹⁵ Rule-based behavior is the cornerstone of the EU's geostrategic identity as it is conceptualized in the ESS.¹⁶ The ESS insists that security cannot be an entirely defensive concept but that it must be broadened.¹⁷ This broadened approach needs to include soft security questions such as economic development, the combating of cross-border crime, counter-radicalization, human security, and environmental questions.¹⁸

According to Youngs, theoretical approaches concerning EU foreign policy "point to an internal process of ideational socialization around cooperative security norms very different from standard realpolitik."¹⁹ A comprehensive overview of various theoretical approaches of EU foreign policy can be found in *The SAGE Handbook of European Foreign Policy*.²⁰ Arguments brought forward by constructivists revolve around EU policy identities. Those identities now trump national calculations of self-interest, as emphasized by realists.²¹ Institutionalists underline the importance of institutions regularizing processes of coordination, processes which in turn cultivate common outlooks between EU member states around rule-based international action.²² Another approach towards the study of European security identity is the one of normative theory. Normative theory puts its emphasis on the centrality of rules

¹² European Union. 2003. *European Security Strategy: A Strong Europe in a Safer World*.

¹³ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 17; European Union, *European Security Strategy*.

¹⁴ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 17; see also European Union, *European Security Strategy*.

¹⁵ European Union, "European Security Strategy."

¹⁶ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 17.

¹⁷ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 17; European Union, "European Security Strategy."

¹⁸ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 17; and European Union, *European Security Strategy*.

¹⁹ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 17.

²⁰ Jørgensen, K. E., ed. 2015. *The SAGE Handbook on Foreign Policy*. London: SAGE Publications.

²¹ Aydın-Düzgüt, S. 2015. "Social-Constructivist and Discursive Approaches to European Foreign Policy." In *The SAGE Handbook of Foreign Policy*, edited by K. E. Jørgensen, 137-151. London: SAGE Publication; Reichwein, A. 2015. "Realism and Foreign Policy: Promises and Shortcomings." In *The SAGE Handbook of Foreign Policy*, edited by K. E. Jørgensen, 99-120. London: SAGE Publications.

²² Delreux, T. 2015. "Bureaucratic Politics, New Institutionalism and Principal-Agent Models." In *The SAGE Handbook of Foreign Policy*, edited by K. E. Jørgensen, 152-165. London: SAGE Publications.

and norms of governance, instead of on power.²³ Other concepts stress that the EU has found effective means to project influence beyond its boarder. These concepts of 'market-power Europe'²⁴ and 'functional-power Europe'²⁵ can be seen as distinctive in comparison to traditional strategies of pure interest-maximization.²⁶

When it comes to international security, 'governance' is seen to be the EU's primary approach. The concept of 'security governance' denotes a distinct form of security management comprised of five features, including "heterarchy, the interaction of multiple actors, formal and informal institutionalization, the existence of collectively held norms and ideas that structure the relationship between actors, and a collective purpose."²⁷ According to Youngs, this "reflects a less state-centric view of security that seeks the extension of a holistic security community, through policies involving different levels of actors and different sectors of action."²⁸ Rooted in common European identity, security policies emerge organically and do not take shape as "short-term interest-driven responses to external shocks."²⁹

According to George Christou, the EU's strategic way of thinking follows the line of human security – at least in principal.³⁰ Human security as a concept revolves around the idea that its focus shall be placed upon the security of individuals, rather than prioritizing traditional state-centric power interests.³¹ Youngs writes that this particular notion "has filtered into the EU's foreign policy culture", and stresses that "human security expressly pulls the EU away from what high-politics strategic interests might require."³²

²³ See: Sijrsen, H. 2015. "Normative Theory: An Untapped Resource in the study of European Foreign Policy." In *The SAGE Handbook of Foreign Policy*, edited by K. E. Jørgensen, 197-213. London: SAGE Publications;

²⁴ Damro, C. 2015. "Market Power Europe: Exploring a dynamic conceptional framework." *Journal of European Public Policy* 22 (9): 1336-1354.

²⁵ Lavenex, S. 2014. "The power of functionalist extension: How EU rules travel." *Journal of European Public Policy* 21 (6): 885-903.

²⁶ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 18.

²⁷ Bergmann, J., and A. Niemann. 2015. "Theories of European Integration." In *The SAGE Handbook of European Foreign Policy*, edited by K. E. Jørgensen, London: SAGE Publications, 174.

²⁸ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 19.

²⁹ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 19.

³⁰ Christou, G. 2014. "The European Unions's human security discourse: Where are we now?" *European Security* 23 (3): 364-381.

³¹ Paris, R. 2001. "Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?" *International Security* 26 (2): 87-102; for a comprehensive analysis of all definitions, critiques and counter-critiques of the concept of human security, see Tadjbakhsh, S., and A. M. Chenoy. 2007. *Human Security: Concepts and Implications*. London: Routledge.

³² Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 17; but see also, Christou, "The European Unions's human security discourse," 364-381.

After this brief outlining of key features that according to most theorists are signature 'EU'ropean approaches towards foreign policy and international security, it is now time to point out that a growing amount of writers have begun to stress their shortcomings.³³ Critics have pointed to an apparent decrease of European foreign policy commitment. According to Anand Menon and others, the European Union has suffered serious consequences from its antipathy towards geopolitics. Additionally, the EU's internal turmoil, such as the Eurozone (and migration crisis), undermined the Union's attraction as a model of governance to other countries around the world.³⁴

The 'standard' approach of the EU towards its neighbourhood and to global affairs is, according to Youngs, "to some extent an ideal-type, [that was] never fully implemented in practice and invariably diluted with tinges of traditional geopolitical actions."³⁵ Critics, such as Jens Wissel, point out that the EU's constrained ability to act geopolitically, derives from the increasing amount of clashes between EU institutions on the one side, and member state diplomacy on the other side. Wissel writes that "despite increasing integration, their interests diverge from one another to a strong degree", and in addition, "it can [...] be said that the supranational 'EU'ropean apparatuses are hardly able to bridge these differences in fundamental conflicts."³⁶ According to Youngs, many theorists, such as Frank Schimmelfennig, observe "a general drift back towards loose intergovernmentalism in European cooperation, cutting across EU-level foreign policy distinctiveness."³⁷ To summarize, a decrease in the EU's strength, unity and foreign policy distinctiveness, has been observed, by some writers. By Youngs' account, "internal and external trends were already asking searching questions of the EU's trademark foreign policy instruments and strategies", even before the crisis in Ukraine erupted.³⁸

³³ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 20.

³⁴ Menon, A. 2014. "Devided and Declining? Europe in a changing world." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 52 (Annual Review): 5-24; also, Youngs, R. 2014. *The Uncertain Legacy of Crisis: European Foreign Policy Faces the Future*. Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Kempin, R., and M. Overhaus. 2014. "EU foreign policy in times of the financial and dept crisis." *European Foreign Affairs Review* 19 (2): 179-194; and Smith, M. 2013. "Beyond the confort zone: International crisis and challenges in the EU's response to rising powers." *International Affairs* 89 (3): 653-671.

³⁵ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 20.

³⁶ Wissel, J. 2014. "The Structure of the 'EU'ropean Ensamble of State Apparatuses and its Geopolitical Ambitions." *Geopolitics* 19 (3): 505.

³⁷ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 20, based on Schimmelfennig, F. 2015. "Liberal intergovernmentalism and the euro area crisis." *Journal of European Public Policy* 22 (2): 177-195.

³⁸ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 20.

2.2 Normative Power Europe (NPE)

The concept of Normative Power Europe (NPE) developed by Manners can be described as a way to understand the EU as a normative power in addition to civilian or military power.³⁹ He argues that it is “possible to think of the ideational impact of the EU’s international identity/role as representing normative power”⁴⁰ and that “the notion of a normative power Europe is located in a discussion of the ‘power over opinion’, *idée force*, or ‘ideological power’, and the desire to move beyond the debate of state-like features through an understanding of the EU’s international identity.”⁴¹ However, Manners does not disregard the EU’s civilian or military power; he simply argues that much greater attention should be given to the EU’s ability to shape conceptions of ‘normal’ in international relations,⁴² and that normative power should only be considered a “valuable addition” to our understanding of debates revolving around the EU’s civilian or military power.⁴³ The **table** below visualizes Manners understanding of civilian, military and normative power:

<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Military</i>	<i>Normative</i>
Ability to use civilian instruments	Ability to use military instruments	Ability to shape conceptions of ‘normal’

Table 1. Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 240.

According to Manners, ‘civilian power’ is linked to economic power or the ability to use civilian instruments, ‘military power’ is linked to the ability to use military instruments, and ‘normative power’ is linked to the ability to shape conceptions of ‘normal’.⁴⁴ In his view, ‘normative power’ equals ‘ideological power’ or ‘power over opinion’.⁴⁵ In addition, Manners argues that the “most important factor shaping the international role of the EU is not what it does or what it says but what it is”, thus defining normative power as the power of example.⁴⁶

Manners states that “the EU’s normative difference comes from its historical context, hybrid polity, and political-legal constitution.”⁴⁷ The central component of his approach of

³⁹ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 253.

⁴⁰ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 238.

⁴¹ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 239.

⁴² Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 239.

⁴³ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 236.

⁴⁴ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 238-240.

⁴⁵ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 239.

⁴⁶ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 252.

⁴⁷ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 240.

Normative Power Europe is “that it exists as being different to pre-existing political forms, and that this particular difference pre-disposes it to act in a normative way.”⁴⁸ According to Forsberg, Manners can be understood to say that the EU does not only promote norms, but it also does it in a normative way.⁴⁹

The Union’s normative basis developed over time through various declarations, treaties, policies, *et cetera*; and has five core norms: (1) *peace*, (2) *liberty*, (3) *democracy*, (4) the *rule of law*, and (5) respect of *human rights* and fundamental freedoms. Additionally, there are four ‘minor’ norms, especially in the context of the constitution and practices of the EU. Those four norms are: *social solidarity*, *anti-discrimination*, *sustainable development* and *good governance*.⁵⁰

“Accepting the normative basis of the EU does not make it a normative power”; therefore, the question of how EU norms are diffused arises.⁵¹ The EU spreads its norms through six different mechanisms of diffusion (see **table** below):

⁴⁸ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 242.

⁴⁹ Forsberg, T. 2011. "Normative Power Europe, Once Again: A conceptual Analysis of an Ideal Type." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49 (6): 1183-1204.

⁵⁰ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 242-243.

⁵¹ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 244.

Contagion	"[The] diffusion of norms results from the unintentional diffusion of ideas from the EU to other political actors." ⁵² This means: "The EU leads by virtuous example and others replicate it – particularly when building regional integration." ⁵³
Informational diffusion	Policy declarations and initiatives disseminate EU norms.
Procedural diffusion	"Involves the institutionalization of a relationship between the EU and a third party, such as inter-regional co-operation agreement, membership of an international organization or enlargement of the EU itself." ⁵⁴
Transference	EU norms are spread through conditionality. This happens, when the acceptance of norms is tied to the exchange of goods or possible sanctions.
Overt diffusion	"Occurs as a result of the physical presence of the EU in third states and international organizations. Examples of overt diffusion include [...] monitoring missions like that deployed in the former Yugoslavia." ⁵⁵
Cultural filter	The cultural filter refers to "the interplay between the construction of knowledge and the creation of social and political identity by the subjects of norm diffusion." ⁵⁶

Table 2. Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 244.

Manners finished his initial article with the argument that "the ability to define what passes for 'normal' is the greatest power of all",⁵⁷ and concludes that "normative power in world politics is not a contradiction in terms."⁵⁸

Ever since Manners published its article *Normative Power Europe* in 2002, it has received an abundance of scholarly attention and generated debate as to whether or not the EU's role in international relation is unique. It has amassed numerous followers and critics,

⁵² Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 244.

⁵³ Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again," 1185.

⁵⁴ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 244.

⁵⁵ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 245.

⁵⁶ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 245.

⁵⁷ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 253

⁵⁸ Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again," 1186.

and has additionally found its way into policy papers and public diplomacy. However, Manners subsequently responded to criticism of his concept of NPE.

When we speak about Normative Power Europe, the question arises of how to distinguish the 'normative' from the 'non-normative'. Youngs argues that in contrast to normative action, there is strategic or self-interested action, even though those two categories can inform each other in reality.⁵⁹ One way of defining 'normative' is being more precise "about what norms we actually mean."⁶⁰ In his initial article, Manners focused on the norm of the abolition of capital punishment.⁶¹ According to Forsberg, he did not mean to say that the EU's normative power should be restricted to the promotion of human rights alone. On the contrary, in his original article he lists peace, liberty, the rule of law, human rights, social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development and good governance as "constituting the normative basis of the EU."⁶² But according to Diez, most of these norms are not uniquely European, and they do not distinguish the EU immediately from the United States.⁶³ All states support some kind of norms.⁶⁴ According to De Zutter, actors possess normative power if they simply diffuse their norms in the international system.⁶⁵ For Sijrsen, an actor is a normative power if it seeks to overcome power politics. It would do so by strengthening international and cosmopolitan law.⁶⁶ Manners went *d'accord* with Sijrsen, when he constituted that NPE means that "the EU promotes a series of normative principles that are generally acknowledged with the United Nations system to be universally applicable."⁶⁷ In their article about NPE, both Diez and Manners offer another modification about the nature of normativity, which is "reflection and reflectivity."⁶⁸

⁵⁹ Youngs, R. 2004. "Normative Dynamics and Strategic Interests in the EU's External Identity." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 42 (2): 415-435.

⁶⁰ Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again," 1187.

⁶¹ Manners, "Normative Power Europe."

⁶² Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again," 1187.

⁶³ Diez, T. 2005. "Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering 'Normative Power Europe'." *Millenium* 33 (3): 613-636.

⁶⁴ Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again," 1187; also Diez, "Constructing the Self and Changing Others".

⁶⁵ De Zutter, E. 2010. "Normative Power Spotting: A Ontological and Methodical Appraisal." *Journal of European Public Policy* 17 (8): 1106-1127.

⁶⁶ Sijrsen, H. 2006. „The EU as a "Normative Power": How Can This Be?“ *Journal of European Public Policy* 13 (2): 235-251.

⁶⁷ Manners, I. 2008. "The Normative Ethics of the European Union." *International Affairs* 84 (1): 46.

⁶⁸ Diez, T., and I. Manners. 2007. "Reflecting on Normative Power Europe." In *Power in World Politics*, edited by F. Berenskoetter and M. J. Williams. London: Routledge, quoted after Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again," 1188.

Scholars from the realist school of thought argue that the EU as an international actor does not differ from other great powers, especially since the EU's development of its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).⁶⁹ Manners responds to this particular criticism by arguing that "the EU's normative power is being undermined by the unreflexive militarization."⁷⁰ However, he also states that "militarization of the EU need not necessarily lead to the diminution of the EU's normative power."⁷¹ What Manners says is that the fact that actors possess and use military force does not necessarily contradict the idea of normative power as long as military power is subordinated "to the more fundamental normative ethos."⁷²

When it comes to 'civilian power', the argument could be made that 'normative power' is just a re-invention of the former.⁷³ Diez in response to Manners' original article noted that the difference between NPE and the EU as a civilian power should be analyzed more carefully.⁷⁴ Manners' definition of civilian power was an actor's ability to use civilian instruments.⁷⁵ However, his concept of 'civilian power' leaned more towards 'economic power'.⁷⁶

Criticism has also derived from the argument that the literature on NPE has not looked upon the real impact of the EU.⁷⁷ The argument brought forward by Diez was that discourse about a normative power Europe leads to the establishment of a self-identity for the EU, but it turns third parties into 'non-normative' others.⁷⁸ Merlingen, Scheipers and Sicurelli's argument goes in a similar direction.⁷⁹

This brief overview intended to give an indication about how much debate there is about the concept of NPE.⁸⁰ Forsberg notes that even though "NPE literature is widening to

⁶⁹ Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again," 1188.

⁷⁰ Manners, I. 2006. "Normative Power Europe Reconsidered: Beyond the Crossroads." *Journal of European Public Policy* 13 (2): 194.

⁷¹ Manners, "Normative Power Europe Reconsidered," 183.

⁷² Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again," 1188; also Diez and Manners, "Reflecting on Normative Power Europe," 187.

⁷³ Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again," 1188.

⁷⁴ Diez, "Constructing the Self and Changing Others," 636.

⁷⁵ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 240.

⁷⁶ Manners, I. 2006. "The European Union as Normative Power: A response to Thomas Diez." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 35 (1): 175-177.

⁷⁷ Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again," 1189.

⁷⁸ Diez, "Constructing the Self and Changing Others".

⁷⁹ Merlingen, M. 2007. „Everything is Dangerous: A Critique of "Normative Power Europe".“ *Security Dialogue* 38 (4): 435-453; Scheipers, S., and D. Sicurelli. 2007. "Normative Power Europe: A Credible Utopia?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 45 (2): 435-457.

⁸⁰ A detailed overview of the debate on NPE can be found in, Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again," 1186-1190.

empirical applications”, it has “often failed to distinguish causal, constitutive and normative aspects of the concept.”⁸¹ Manners in his later-on works states that his original intent when proposing the concept of NPE was more normative than empirical. However, at the very same time he claims that “the EU has been, is, and always will be a normative power in world politics.”⁸² His aim is “to promote normative approaches to the study of the EU in world politics.”⁸³ For Forsberg, the question that arises is not about what the EU is, but it is about “what it should be.”⁸⁴ According to him, it “borders on tautology if the key message is that from a normative point of view the EU *should* be a normative power.”⁸⁵ In three other articles, Manners’ approach towards NPE included normative theories that led to the development of the substance of the European norms.⁸⁶

The question of whether or not the EU is a normative power is difficult to answer since the “parameters have not been properly specified.”⁸⁷ That means when using the concept of NPE it has to be specified “in which sense we use it, and in this become and remain aware of its limited scope.”⁸⁸ This would mean that it makes no sense to call the EU a normative power, but instead to argue that the EU has “normative interests, behaves (usually) in a normative way, uses normative means of power and achieves normative ends when it does so.”⁸⁹ That makes it possible to use the concept of NPE “as a shorthand description of what the EU is and as an explanation for what the EU is doing, without necessarily implying that the EU also should be such [a normative power].”⁹⁰ In his article Forsberg distinguishes between persuasion, the invoking of norms, shaping the discourse of what is normal, and the power of example as distinctive mechanisms of the EU’s normative power.⁹¹ Forsberg’s take on NPE is “to focus on the mechanisms and concrete episodes of power in order to know whether a ‘normative power’ explanation holds and how ‘normative power’ works”.⁹²

⁸¹ Forsberg, “Normative Power Europe, Once Again,” 1189.

⁸² Manners, “The Normative Ethics of the European Union,” 45.

⁸³ Manners, “The Normative Ethics of the European Union,” 45.

⁸⁴ Forsberg, “Normative Power Europe, Once Again,” 1189.

⁸⁵ Forsberg, “Normative Power Europe, Once Again,” 1189.

⁸⁶ Manners, “The Normative Ethics of the European Union”; Manners, I. 2009. “Normative Power Europe: A Transdisciplinary Approach to European Studies.” In *The SAGE Handbook of European studies*, edited by C. Rumford. London: SAGE Publications; Manners, I. 2009. „The Social Dimension of EU trade Policies: Reflections from a Normative Power Perspective.“ *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14 (5): 782-805.

⁸⁷ Forsberg, “Normative Power Europe, Once Again,” 1190.

⁸⁸ Forsberg, “Normative Power Europe, Once Again,” 1199.

⁸⁹ Forsberg, “Normative Power Europe, Once Again,” 1199.

⁹⁰ Forsberg, “Normative Power Europe, Once Again,” 1200.

⁹¹ Forsberg, “Normative Power Europe, Once Again,” 1195-1198.

⁹² Forsberg, “Normative Power Europe, Once Again,” 1200.

For Larsen, two important axes of debate have been running almost independently from each other, one being the debate of the EU as a normative power, the other being the study of the external perceptions of the EU. Larsen finds this remarkable since findings offered by studies of external perceptions are central for the debate on NPE.⁹³ His article's central argument is that the EU's perception as a normative power depends on the geographical area. This means that in order for the EU to be seen as a normative power in a certain region or globally, other international actors have to acknowledge the EU's "special role in defining the normal or as beacon for norms."⁹⁴ If that is not the case, the EU will not be able to "influence conceptions of the normal in international politics through normative power."⁹⁵ However, since that does not need to be an either/or question, the EU, according to Larsen, may be "a normative power in some geographical or functional contexts and not in others."⁹⁶ In his article Larsen concludes that the EU is not predominantly seen as a normative power.⁹⁷ However, there are important geographical exceptions to his conclusion. Bengtson and Elgström state that the Eastern Partnership countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (but not Belarus) "readily recognize both the great power status of the EU and the attractiveness of its normative agenda."⁹⁸ Also the EU's "civilizing mission" is perceived positively in terms of "a contribution to desirable transformation."⁹⁹

To sum up Larsen's findings, firstly, the EU is perceived as a normative actor in its neighbourhood and in individual countries all over the world. However, generally speaking, the EU's dominant perception is that of an economic power. Secondly, the EU's image as a normative power "is the strongest in countries which hope to obtain closer links with the EU – and possibly membership."¹⁰⁰ Thirdly, the EU's normative power status in and around Europe is not necessarily shared by other actors in the international system. China and Russia, for example, do not acknowledge the 'norms' promoted by the EU to be universal and are, in particular, negatively disposed towards the Union's promotion of certain norms such as human rights and democracy. Both countries see the promotion of these norms as an

⁹³ Larsen, H. 2014. "The EU as a Normative Power and the Research on External Perceptions: The Missing Link." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 52 (4): 896.

⁹⁴ Larsen, "The EU as a Normative Power," 899.

⁹⁵ Larsen, "The EU as a Normative Power," 899.

⁹⁶ Larsen, "The EU as a Normative Power," 899.

⁹⁷ Larsen, "The EU as a Normative Power," 904.

⁹⁸ Bengtson, R., and O. Elgström. 2012. "Conflicting Role Conceptions? The European Union in Global Politics." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 8: 99.

⁹⁹ Bengtson and Elgström, "Conflicting Role Conceptions? The European Union in Global Politics."

¹⁰⁰ Larsen, "The EU as a Normative Power," 906.

interference in internal political affairs.¹⁰¹ This view puts China and Russia into the category of countries which see the EU as “a power that attempts to further its own norms rather than universal norms.”¹⁰²

2.3 Geopolitics and the European Union

Geopolitics

After the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, ‘geopolitics’ as an overarching model of explanation of international relations was out of fashion. Other strands of academic debate, including local and regional conditions as well as ethno-national and religious tensions received more attention.¹⁰³

However, in the aftermath of the crisis in Ukraine a wide variety of politicians, journalists and academics discussed the supposedly renewed importance of ‘geopolitics’.¹⁰⁴ In the West, particularly in the United States, China’s rise and to a lesser extend Russia’s growing role within the international system were perceived as a threat to the liberal world order. These perceptions led to Walter Russell Mead’s interpretation of a “return of geopolitics.”¹⁰⁵ A different point of view was brought into the debate by political scientist John Ikenberry.¹⁰⁶ According to him geopolitics can be brought into line with liberal approaches and does not necessarily have to be equated with a state-centered understanding and a focus on ‘hard power’.¹⁰⁷

The debate about ‘geopolitics’ as a level of scientific analysis and foreign policy strategy focus in order to understand and shape international relationships, processes and

¹⁰¹ Larsen, “The EU as a Normative Power,” 905-906.

¹⁰² Larsen, “The EU as a Normative Power,” 906.

¹⁰³ Binder, C., and S. Stachowitsch. 2019. “Die Rückkehr der Geopolitik? Möglichkeiten und Limitationen geopolitischer Analysen.” Arbeitspapier 105, OIIP: 5

¹⁰⁴ Mead, W. R. 2014. “The Return of Geopolitics: The Revenge of the Revisionist Powers.” *Foreign Affairs*. May/June. Accessed August 11, 2020. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2014-04-17/return-geopolitics>; also Auer, S. 2015. “Carl Schmitt in the Kremlin: the Ukraine crisis and the return of geopolitics.” *International Affairs* 93 (5): 953-968.

¹⁰⁵ Mead, “The Return of Geopolitics.”

¹⁰⁶ Ikenberry, J. 2014. “The Illusion of Geopolitics: The Enduring Power of the Liberal Order.” *Foreign affairs*. May/June. Accessed August 11, 2020. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2014-04-17/illusion-geopolitics>.

¹⁰⁷ Clover, C. 2016. “The Unlikely Origins of Russia’s Manifest Destiny.” *Foreign Policy*. July 27. Accessed August 11, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/07/27/geopolitics-russia-mackinder-eurasia-heartland-dugin-ukraine-urasianism-manifest-destiny-putin/>.

conflicts seems to be back once more.¹⁰⁸ Most participants in this discussion have argued for the EU to adopt a more 'geopolitical' stance towards its eastern neighbourhood.¹⁰⁹ However, there is no single generally agreed upon definition of the term 'geopolitics'.

A simple definition of 'geopolitics' would be emphasizing the role of geography, mostly in terms of territoriality and access to resources, as the engine of political action. However, historically, this perspective has always been subject to economic cycles resulting from trends in research and political contexts.¹¹⁰

The Problem of Definition

Geopolitics – one of the 'grand theories of International Relations – bears great legitimacy in scientific and political debates as a concept of analysis¹¹¹; however a single generally agreed upon definition of the term is largely lacking.¹¹² In its traditional sense, the concept of geopolitics revolves around the state, its borders and how the state acts beyond its borders, as well as its relationship to other states.¹¹³ Following this understanding of geopolitics, states try to exercise power beyond their borders. They do so in order to gain formal or informal control over less developed regions and their resources, overtaking other major powers in their quest for global or regional supremacy.¹¹⁴ Geopolitics has also been associated with classical realism "in that it focuses on the state, the means adopted to promote its interests and to ensure security."¹¹⁵ According to Buszynski, geopolitics ultimately:

"identifies the relationship between security policy and geography, and how diplomatic and military strategy including the deployment of military is undertaken by a state within a particular geographic situation. In this sense, it refers to the security of the state in its geographical setting and factors and influences that bear upon it."¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁸ Ikenberry, "The Illusion of Geopolitics"; Mead, "The Return of Geopolitics"; and Kagan, R. 2015. "The Weight of Geopolitics." *Journal of Democracy* 26 (1): 21-31.

¹⁰⁹ Auer, "Carl Schmitt in the Kremlin," 955; Youngs, "Europe's Eastern Crisis," 21.

¹¹⁰ Binder and Stachowitsch, "Die Rückkehr der Geopolitik?," 5.

¹¹¹ Sloan, G. 2017. *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategic History*. London: Routledge, 2.

¹¹² Binder and Stachowitsch, "Die Rückkehr der Geopolitik?," 6.

¹¹³ Binder and Stachowitsch, "Die Rückkehr der Geopolitik?," 6; also Heffernan, M. 1998. *The Meaning of Europe: Geography and Geopolitics*. London: Hodder Arnold; and Dodds, K. 2005. *Global Geopolitics: A Critical Introduction*. Harlow: Pearson.

¹¹⁴ Binder and Stachowitsch, "Die Rückkehr der Geopolitik?," 6, based on Agnew, J. 2003. *Geopolitics: Re-visioning world politics*. London: Routledge.

¹¹⁵ Buszynski, L. 2019. *Geopolitics and the Western Pacific: China, Japan and the US*. London: Routledge, 5.

¹¹⁶ Buszynski, *Geopolitics and the Western Pacific*, 5.

A broader, more general definition of the term 'geopolitics' comes from Tim Marshall:

"Broadly speaking: geopolitics looks at the ways in which international affairs can be understood through geographical factors; not just the physical landscape – the natural barriers of mountains or connections of river networks, for example – but also climate, demographics, cultural regions and access to natural resources."¹¹⁷

Historically, geopolitics describes the idea of individual states acting globally.¹¹⁸ The discovery of the world by European powers, the perception of this world as a unity and the development of the territorial state as a political ideal can be seen as the constituting principles of this idea.¹¹⁹ Therefore, the very concept of geopolitics is closely linked to European colonialism and imperialism. The concept reflects the Eurocentric view of the European colonial powers because geographical expansion was the material basis of the rise of Europe and later on that of the USA.¹²⁰ The term 'geopolitics' emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, when the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén coined and defined it in his 1899 seminal volume *Geopolitics*. Kjellén's definition meant the "science of State", and can be understood primarily as the science of war.¹²¹ Enduring impact had Halford Mackinder's 'Heartland' theory, first published in his 1904 article *The geographical pivot of history*. According to Mackinder's theory, power rivalries in the contested geopolitical 'heartlands' or 'pivot areas' of the Eurasian continent were the main forces driving international relations.¹²² Beside Mackinder, scholars such as Alfred Mahan, Fredrick Ratzel and Karl Haushofer can be considered as the most prominent geopolitical thinkers of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century.¹²³

During the Cold War 'geopolitics' was the overarching model of explanation of international relations. Hard power was deemed essential when it came to maximizing a relative advantage over other great power rivals. In order to guarantee one state's security and achieve a 'balance of powers', the power of others needed to be held in check.¹²⁴ Later

¹¹⁷ Translated into English from the German version of, Marshall, T. 2019. *Die Macht der Geographie: Wie sich die Weltpolitik anhand von 10 Karten erklären lässt*. München: dtv, 8.

¹¹⁸ Binder and Stachowitsch, "Die Rückkehr der Geopolitik?," 7.

¹¹⁹ Binder and Stachowitsch, "Die Rückkehr der Geopolitik?," 7, based on Agnew, *Geopolitics*.

¹²⁰ Dodds, *Global Geopolitics: A Critical Introduction*, quoted after Binder and Stachowitsch, "Die Rückkehr der Geopolitik?," 7.

¹²¹ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 21; also Buszynski, *Geopolitics and the Western Pacific*, 6.

¹²² Mackinder, H. J. 1904. "The geographical pivot of history." *Geographical Society* 23 (4): 421-437; and Mackinder, H. J. 1919. *Democratic Ideals and Reality*. London: Constable.

¹²³ Sloan, *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategic History*, xiv.

¹²⁴ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 21.

on the concept was broadened and it included an additional focus on “relative economic gain, through the notion of geo-economic power.”¹²⁵ In short, the concept of ‘geo-economics’ can be defined as advancing geostrategic goals and not mutually beneficial trade relations. This means geo-economics can be seen as “the geostrategic use of economic power.”¹²⁶ Geopolitics was later associated with academics like Samuel Huntington who argued that modern international relations were a “matter of adversarial struggle between cultural-religious blocs.”¹²⁷ Agnew distinguished in his book *Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics* between three types of geopolitical thinking. According to him, geopolitics can be shaped by civilizational, territorial and ideological competition.¹²⁸

In contrast to classical politics, critical approaches towards the concept took some of the core realist power-based premises into question.¹²⁹ Those approaches emerged as a reaction to classical geopolitics, were highly normative.¹³⁰ They took into account that by the end of the twentieth century “the very concept of geopolitics had acquired negative overtones of domination and seemed blind to the social, economic and environmental change unfolding across the world.”¹³¹ Whereas classical geopolitics referred to “a fixed and objective geography constraining and directing the activities of states [...] such as the disposition of states in relation to the distribution of the continents and oceans, or fixed processes of territorial-economic expansion relative to military strength [...] as determining the strategic possibilities and limits of particular states”, critical geopolitics took a different approach.¹³² According to Behnke, O’Tuathail and Sloan, the critical approach studied how the discourse of ‘geopolitics’ was used for the justification and legitimization of political authority and certain political practices both on the domestic and international level.¹³³ In other words, critical geopolitics focuses on “the extent to which geography can be a social construct that may be

¹²⁵ Youngs, *Europe’s Eastern Crisis*, 21.

¹²⁶ Wigell, M. 2016. "Conceptualizing regional powers' geo-economic strategies: neo-imperialism, neo-mercantilism, hegemony, and liberal institutionalism." *Asia Europe Journal* 14 (2): 137.

¹²⁷ Youngs, “Europe’s Eastern Crisis,” 21; see Huntington, S. 1991. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schusters.

¹²⁸ Agnew, *Geopolitics*.

¹²⁹ Binder and Stachowitsch, “Die Rückkehr der Geopolitik?,” 7; and Youngs, “Europe’s Eastern Crisis,” 22.

¹³⁰ Crombois, J. F. 2015. "Which Geopolitics for the European Union? The EU's Eastern Partnership." *International Relations and Diplomacy* 3 (7): 483.

¹³¹ Youngs, *Europe’s Eastern Crisis*, 22, based on O’Tuathail, G., S. Dalby, and P. Routledge. 2003. *The Geopolitics Reader*. London: Routledge.

¹³² Agnew, J., and S. Corbridge. 1993. *Mastering Space*. London: Routledge, 3.

¹³³ Behnke, A. 2006. "The politics of geopolitik in post Cold-War Germany." *Geopolitics* 11 (3): 396-419; O’Tuathail. 1996. *Critical Geopolitics*. St Paul, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Sloan, *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategic History*, 4-5.

used to legitimize political decisions.”¹³⁴ Reuber *et al.* sees critical geopolitics as a concept where geographical space is not a natural given, but as one of order that is “based on political logics of territorial representation.”¹³⁵ “Critical geopolitical research is therefore about identifying power relations within geopolitical statements and territorial ideas and examining those practices and representations that enable powerful actors to gain and legitimize control over territory and resources.”¹³⁶ According to Youngs, geopolitics was seen to be “a concept out of tune with contemporary global trends, running egregiously against the grain of a more liberal order”, and the West’s “conceptualization of geopolitics prevented other states and societies from developing; it was a means of protecting a narrow set of elite power interests.”¹³⁷ For Agnew, geopolitical imaginations never have complete power over the development of world politics. Instead, they generate meaning and offer some form of rationalization for the practices of political elites.¹³⁸

Geopolitics is often assumed to be a particularly objective and neutral concept; however, it is closely linked to a country’s foreign and security policy and its interests.¹³⁹ Concerning this matter, Binder and Stachowitsch write:

“Geopolitical thinkers generally advise their own national governments and strive to guide their respective foreign policy courses with their geopolitical analysis. Geopolitical statements and theories can therefore never be understood separately from power relations, because they justify specific policies and practices, right up to military interventions.”¹⁴⁰

Ever since the liberal order in general, and post-war order in Europe has been challenged by Russia, so geopolitics has made a comeback. Apart from Walter Russel Mead who postulated a “return of geopolitics”,¹⁴¹ others such as Haverluk, Beauchemin and Mueller argued for the necessity of a ‘neo-classical geopolitics’.¹⁴² Breaking with past excesses and embedded in the realist approaches of international relations, the concept of ‘neo-classical

¹³⁴ Crombois, “Which Geopolitics for the European Union?,” 483.

¹³⁵ Reuber, P., A. Strüver, and G. Wolkersdorfer. 2012. *Politische Geographien Europas: Annäherungen an ein umstrittenes Konstrukt*. Münster: LIT Verlag, quoted after Wehrmann, D. 2019. *Critical Geopolitics of the Polar Regions: An Inter-American Perspective*. London: Routledge, 12.

¹³⁶ Binder and Stachowitsch, “Die Rückkehr der Geopolitik?,” 7, based on O’Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*.

¹³⁷ Youngs, *Europe’s Eastern Crisis*, 22.

¹³⁸ Agnew, *Geopolitics*; quoted after Binder and Stachowitsch, “Die Rückkehr der Geopolitik?,” 7.

¹³⁹ Binder and Stachowitsch, “Die Rückkehr der Geopolitik?,” 7.

¹⁴⁰ Binder and Stachowitsch, “Die Rückkehr der Geopolitik?,” 7-8, based on Dodds, *Global Geopolitics*.

¹⁴¹ Mead, “The Return of Geopolitics.”

¹⁴² Haverluk, T., K. Beauchemin, and A. Mueller. 2004. “The three critical flaws of critical geopolitics: Towards a neo-classical geopolitics.” *Geopolitics* 19 (1): 19-39.

geopolitics' sees "competitive rivalry over territorial space to be a potent driver of international politics",¹⁴³ without the concept's unpleasant imperial roots.¹⁴⁴ In opposition to 'hard geopolitics' which refers to the usage of "military means [in order] to acquire political and territorial control over others", the concept of 'soft geopolitics' has established itself.¹⁴⁵ Competing states when deploying 'soft geopolitics', use political, economic and socio-cultural tools.¹⁴⁶ On the other hand, 'meta-geopolitics' refers to a concept where power calculations and zero-sum threats are allocated importance, while "seeing these as conditioned by a far wider range of factors than traditional geopolitical models allow for."¹⁴⁷ The consequence is that 'multi-sum security' requires a form of updated 'neo-statecraft'.¹⁴⁸

For Youngs, a rather interesting development to observe is the fact that geopolitics has gone from being seen as a rather "outdated concept" with a shady heritage to being a term used with a rather positive connotation. For some, the term now captures the "need for Western powers to 'get real' about the way that their vital interests are now [being] challenged by other, increasingly powerful states."¹⁴⁹

The EU and Geopolitics

Looking at the map of modern-day Europe, we can see that the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries lie within a zone which geopolitical analysts refer to as 'shatterbelt'¹⁵⁰, a strategically positioned and oriented region of deep internal division, encompassed in the competition between great powers.¹⁵¹ The region was for centuries fought over by the major European powers. This thesis concurs with Richard Youngs that the EU in its post-modern thinking and its belief in liberal world order seems to have neglected this particular circumstance.¹⁵²

This leads directly to the central question of the thesis, which is whether or not the EU in the wake of the crisis in Ukraine became more geopolitical and acted more geopolitically

¹⁴³ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 22.

¹⁴⁴ Crombois, "Which Geopolitics for the European Union?," 483.

¹⁴⁵ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 22.

¹⁴⁶ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 22; also: Buzan, B., and G. Lawson. 2015. *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 285.

¹⁴⁷ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 23.

¹⁴⁸ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 23, based on Al-Rodhan, N. 2009. *Neo-statecraft and Meta-geopolitics*. Berlin: LIT Verlag.

¹⁴⁹ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 23.

¹⁵⁰ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 23.

¹⁵¹ Cohen, S. 2003. *Geopolitics of the World System*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 43.

¹⁵² Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 23.

towards its Eastern neighbourhood. However, in order to find an answer certain parameters need to be defined, such as what is the EU's relation towards the concept of geopolitics, or does the Union reject the very notion of it completely?; and was the EU explicitly or implicitly pursuing geopolitical objectives in its Eastern neighbourhood through its framework of Eastern Partnership to begin with?

It is important to be clear that just because the EU might reject the thought of pursuing geopolitics or geopolitical objectives, this does not mean that the EU's foreign policy or EU foreign policy objectives are neither fully nor partly geopolitical. Equally, they may not be perceived as anti-geopolitical by other actors within the international system.

The EU in its post-modern thinking is widely regarded as being the anti-thesis of classical geopolitics. To quote Youngs:

"The founding tenets of EU foreign policy saw classical geopolitics as anathema. Indeed, they appeared to correspond to the notion of 'anti-geopolitics'. Geopolitics has not fitted easily into mainstream conceptual accounts of EU foreign policy."¹⁵³

Institutionalism, a theory widely recognized among EU scholars, emphasizes that embedded EU identities exert an influence on EU foreign policy making.¹⁵⁴ This makes the formulation of an instrumental geo-strategy less likely.¹⁵⁵ For Crombois, the EU only reluctantly engages in a geopolitical approach, especially in the formulation of its external policies towards its neighbours in the east. The explanation for this reluctance can be found in the special role the EU has assigned to itself as an international actor – that of a civilian and normative power.¹⁵⁶ Conversely, other scholars argue that the EU is and has never really been anti-geopolitics – it is merely acting geopolitically in a different and distinctive way. According to them, the EU is a competitive empire. The EU exercises its control over neighboring states by incorporating them into its own political system, largely via norm diffusion.¹⁵⁷ Other scholars criticize "the EU's normative power narrative as a means of imposing a form of

¹⁵³ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 23.

¹⁵⁴ Chelotti, N. 2016. *The Formulation of EU Foreign Policy: Socialization, negotiations and disaggregation of the state*. London: Routledge, 52-62.

¹⁵⁵ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 23.

¹⁵⁶ Crombois, "Which Geopolitics for the European Union?," 480.

¹⁵⁷ Behr, H., and Y. A. Stivachtis. 2016. *Revisiting the European Union as Empire*. London: Routledge; Zielonka, J. 2006. *Europe as Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; del Sarto, R. 2016. "Normative Empire Europe: The European Union, its Borderlands, and the 'Arab Spring'." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 54 (2): 215-232.

‘governmentality’ on other states.”¹⁵⁸ According to them, this form of control is highly securitized based on norms and rules.¹⁵⁹

Youngs writes that since the EU's "ideal-type approach to geopolitics was, perhaps, always more aspiration than reality", most "critics insist that while the EU might presume that its liberal, rules-based mode of action constitutes enlightened geo-strategy in a very generic sense, its foreign policy decisions often fail to embrace the kind of action needed to translate these into reality."¹⁶⁰ For Youngs, it seems as if the EU had rarely thought of its ‘geopolitics’ being actively neutralized by a serious power set onto directly opposing the EU's influence in its neighbourhood.¹⁶¹ To quote Youngs again:

"The analytical focus has been on the complex internal dynamics of bargaining between member states, leaving most articles on EU foreign policy strikingly bereft of any coverage of external geopolitical factors. Experts [such as Delcour, Conceição-Heldt and Meunier] increasingly call for a more systematic focus on how EU instruments interrelate with other powers' foreign policies."¹⁶²

Rogers, Stokes and Whitman criticize the EU for failing to develop a concrete ‘grand strategy’ that focuses on where and how the Union's considerable resources are to be deployed. For them, the EU is focused too much on the all-encompassing way of how it prefers to handle international relations.¹⁶³ Since the notion that collective identity underpins EU foreign policies is widely accepted,¹⁶⁴ other scholars call for a more precise tracing of how “such an identity is operationalized in particular policy choices – given that a number of strategic choices may be compatible with the EU’s embedded norms.”¹⁶⁵ However, according to Cladi and Locatelli, EU member states’ still prefer to bandwagon with the US, over the development

¹⁵⁸ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 23.

¹⁵⁹ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 23; Youngs, R. 2014. *Europe in the New Middle East: Opportunity or Exclusion?* Oxford: Oxford University Press; del Sarto, "Normative Empire Europe".

¹⁶⁰ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 24.

¹⁶¹ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 24.

¹⁶² Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 24; see also Delcour, L. 2017. *The EU and Russia in their 'Contested Neighbourhood': Multiple External Influences, Policy Transfer and Domestic Change*. London: Routledge; and Conceição-Heldt, E., and S. Meunier. 2014. "Speaking with a single voice: Internal cohesiveness and external effectiveness of the EU in global governance." *Journal of European Public Policy* 21 (7): 961-979.

¹⁶³ Rogers, J. 2011. *A New Geography of European Power?* Egmont Paper 42, Brussels: Egmont Institute; Stokes, W., and R. Whitman. 2013. "Transatlantic triage? European and UK 'grand strategy' after the US rebalance to Asia." *International Affairs* 89 (5): 1087-1107.

¹⁶⁴ See: Jørgensen, *The SAGE Handbook on Foreign Policy*.

¹⁶⁵ Hebel, K., and T. Lenz. 2016. "The identity/policy nexus in European foreign policy." *Journal of European Public Policy* 23 (4): 473-491, cited after Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 24.

of an indigenous and autonomous European geo-strategy that addresses specific EU interests.¹⁶⁶

Yet another strand of debate argues that due to the EU reifying its geography and borders in order to create a distinct identity as well as to legitimize itself,¹⁶⁷ the Union has imbued its geography with an profoundly universal character.¹⁶⁸ As De Zutter pointed out, this led to the framing of said values and norms as universal ones. Therefore, the EU had the duty as well as the right to promote them in other geographical spaces such as, for example, the Eastern Neighbourhood.¹⁶⁹ Scholars, such as Viera, Gering, Oberthür and Mühleck, point towards the EU's own understanding of its geographical dimension. For them, this understanding is entrenched in the EU's need for having a precise understanding of 'the other'.¹⁷⁰

For Berna, the process of reifying otherness, contributes to the EU's ability to shape the notions of what is 'normal' in international relations.¹⁷¹ The EU's notions of normality cover areas such as normal behavior, rules, values as well as the conceptualizations of how geography (ought to) underpin political communities. These are the set boundaries of what constitutes 'normal' within the EU's approach to regionalism.¹⁷² Therefore, the EU has argued that other regional integration projects should follow the Union's own successful example in terms of both structures as well as norms and values.¹⁷³ Following its own notions of

¹⁶⁶ Cladi, L., and A. Locatelli. 2013. "Worth a shot: On explanatory power of bandwagoning in transatlantic relations." *Contemporary Security Policy* 34 (2): 374-381.

¹⁶⁷ Chaban, N., O. Elgström, S. Kelly, and L. S. Yi. 2013. "Images of the EU beyond its borders: Issue-specific and regional perceptions of European Union power and leadership." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 51 (1): 433-451; Watson, N., and J. Zielonka. 2013. *The New Political Geography of the European Union*. London: European Council on Foreign Relations; Popescu, G. 2008. "The conflicting logics of cross-border reterritorialization: Geopolitics of Euroregions in Eastern Europe." *Political Geography* 27 (4): 418-438; Bialasiewicz, L., ed. 2011. *Europe in the World: EU Geopolitics and the Making of European Space*. Farnham: Ashgate.

¹⁶⁸ De Zutter, "Normative Power Spotting."

¹⁶⁹ De Zutter, "Normative Power Spotting."

¹⁷⁰ Vieira, A. 2015. "Ukraine, Russia and the strategic partnership dynamics in the EU's eastern neighbourhood: recalibrating the EU's 'self', 'we' and 'other'." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 29 (1): 128-150; Gehring, T., S. Oberthür, and M. Mühleck. 2013. "European Union Actorness in International Institutions: Why the EU is recognized as an actor in some International institutions, but Not in Others." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 51 (5): 849-865.

¹⁷¹ Berna, I. B. 2013. "The social construction and re-construction of EU's foreign policy. A critical discourse analysis." In *Tradition and Reform: Social Reconstruction of Europe*, edited by A. Sandu and A. Caras, 51-54. Bologna: Medimond.

¹⁷² Hajizada, M, and F. Marciacq. 2013. "New regionalism in Europe's black sea region: The EU, BSEC and changing practices of regionalism." *East European Politics* 29 (3): 305-327; quoted after Nitoiu, C., and M. Sus. 2019. "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU's Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood." *Geopolitics* 24 (1): 3.

¹⁷³ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU's Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 3.

normality, the EU has ignored alternative models of regional integration or even branded them as undemocratic, such as the Eurasian Union, for example.¹⁷⁴

The EU framed power politics and traditional forms of geopolitics as negative. According to Zielonka, the EU was thus able to claim moral high ground when trying to promote soft forms of geopolitics as the norm in international relations.¹⁷⁵ Youngs has shown that the EU's main means to promote its softer approach to geopolitics are vested within the Union's high cultural and economic attractiveness. Nonetheless, the Union's attractiveness is shared by many countries around the globe.¹⁷⁶ Concerning effective multilateral governance, the EU has framed itself as its most legitimate and successful promoter.¹⁷⁷ Nitoiu and Sus mention that "[m]ultilateralism is seen to draw on the EU's strengths and capabilities, but also a way of promoting the EU's distinct form of soft geopolitics, where acting through multilateral forums is conducive to cooperation across countries and regions."¹⁷⁸

Concerning geopolitical approaches towards the Eastern Partnership (EaP), proponents of a neo-classical approach emphasize the geopolitical nature of the EaP. Neo-classical geopolitical thinkers see the Eastern neighbourhood as a space of competition between the EU and Russia. This perspective explains Russia's reasons for opposing the EaP as an attempt to control the space between the EU and Russia – both, politically and economically.¹⁷⁹ Other scholars stick to more classical geopolitical approaches. Within these approaches, those scholars describe the EaP countries as the 'rimlands', resulting in a call for "the strengthening of political and security alliances between some of the Eastern neighbours and the 'West' through NATO membership and more economic and political closeness with the European Union."¹⁸⁰ An altogether different approach considers the EaP as a technocratic project in essence. According to them, the EaP is based on legally binding instruments, and therefore excludes all geopolitical implications. Proponents of this particular

¹⁷⁴ Nitoiu, C. 2017. "European and Eurasian Integration: Competition and cooperation in the post-soviet space." *Journal of European Integration* 39 (4): 469-475.

¹⁷⁵ Zielonka, J. 2008. "Europe as a global actor: Empire by example?" *International Affairs* 84 (3): 471-484.

¹⁷⁶ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*.

¹⁷⁷ Jørgensen, K. E. 2009. "The European Union in multilateral diplomacy." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 4 (2): 189-209.

¹⁷⁸ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU's Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 4.

¹⁷⁹ DeBattista, A. 2013. "Geopolitics, security, and the Eastern Partnership." *one Europe*. November 12. Accessed August 19, 2020. <http://one-europe.info/geopolitics-security-and-the-eastern-partnership>.

¹⁸⁰ Velenciuc, S. 2014. "Geopolitics of Eastern Partnership (LUCRARE DE LICENȚĂ-UNIVERSITATEA BABE Ș-BOLYA I CLUJ-NAPOCA)." Accessed August 19, 2020, cited after Crombois, "Which Geopolitics for the European Union?," 484.

approach call on the EU to develop a more political dimension to the EaP. This would also include a new geopolitical or geostrategic view.¹⁸¹

Concluding that there is no single agreed upon definition of 'geopolitics' and acknowledging that the term itself is highly contested, we can see that this is also reflected in the debate on EU foreign policy. According to Youngs, Rodt, Whiteman and Wolff, the debate's focus on "*sui generis* EU policy-making processes and rules has distracted analysts from developing a more eclectic mid-range theory capable of explaining the EU's role in international security."¹⁸²

2.4 The Framework for Analysis

In order to answer the question with regard to how the EU responded towards Russia's aggression in Ukraine and what factors *enabled* and/or *constrained* the EU's ability to project its power, the establishment of an analytical framework is needed. In order to do so, Cross and Karolewski's adaption¹⁸³ of Baldwin's framework¹⁸⁴ of power in international relations was chosen. Cross and Karolewski's adapted framework allows for the understanding of various types of power and provides an open-ended structure for empirical accounts of EU responses. Therefore, Cross and Karolewski's conceptual framework is the foundation on which the conditions that might *enable* and/or *constrain* EU power will be identified.¹⁸⁵

Coming from a relational perspective, Baldwin constitutes the following five dimensions of power: (1) *scope* (the issue at stake), (2) *domain* (actors subjects to its influence), (3) *weight* (the "reliability" of an actor's influence), (4) *costs* (whether it is costly or cheap to exercise power), and (5) *means* (symbolic, economic, military, diplomatic, but also "raw materials and any forms of power liabilities").¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Delcour, L. 2015. "Technical, geopolitical or transformative? What future for the Eastern Partnership." *Open Democracy*. May 23. Accessed August 10, 2020. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/laure-delcour/technical-geopolitical-or-transformative-what-future-for-eastern-pa>; Nitoiu, C. 2015. "The elephant in the room at Riga." *Open Democracy*. May 26. Accessed August 10, 2020. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/christian-nitoui/elephant-in-riga-room>; Crombois, "Which Geopolitics for the European Union?," 484.

¹⁸² Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 23; Rodt, A., R. Whitman, and S. Wolff. 2015. "The EU as an international security provider: The need for a mid-range theory." *Global Society* 29 (2): 149-155.

¹⁸³ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 3-19.

¹⁸⁴ Baldwin, D. 2012. "Power and International Relations." In *Handbook of International Relations*, edited by W. Carlsnaes, 273-297. London: SAGE Publications.

¹⁸⁵ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 9.

¹⁸⁶ Baldwin, "Power and International Relations," 275, see also: Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 11.

Cross and Karolewski's framework builds upon Baldwin's categories of relational power. According to both of them, these dimensions of relational power can either become *enabled* or *constrained* during a crisis.¹⁸⁷ Cross and Karolewski define *enabled* as "having new or stronger forms of power", whereas their definition of *constrained* is "being unable to change or strengthen existing forms of power."¹⁸⁸ This means:

"If the EU has become enabled as a result of the Russia–Ukraine crisis then we would expect to see elites using this crisis as an opportunity to open up new areas of power resources that had previously been off limits because of certain pre-existing political obstacles and differences within Europe. If the EU has become more constrained, or is not influenced at all in its exercise of power, then events in Russia and Ukraine are not likely to be seen by EU elites as sufficient to remove political obstacles that stand in the way of using latent power resources and influence."¹⁸⁹

The **table** below shows Cross and Karolewski's adaption of Baldwin's framework. Cross and Karolewski's adaption is not only actor-driven but also contextualized. Their framework allows for a direct application to and examination of specific actors within the EU.¹⁹⁰ Additionally, it allows for the EU to be substituted in its constituent parts, "such as Member States, national leaders, the Commission and so on."¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 11.

¹⁸⁸ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 11.

¹⁸⁹ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 11.

¹⁹⁰ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 11-12.

¹⁹¹ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 12.

Dimensions of EU power	What <u>enables</u> EU power in a crisis?	What <u>constrains</u> EU power in a crisis?
Domain (<i>actors involved</i>)	Break in trust outside actors (e.g. Russia), strong influence with other actors (e.g. US), and/or ability to get other actors to side with the EU <u>enable</u> actions that might not otherwise have been taken.	Outside actor's ideational power, strategies to divide EU Member States, and/or influence with other actors <u>constrain</u> EU options.
Scope (<i>the issue at stake</i>)	Capabilities mismatched or unsuited for the situation <u>enable</u> retooling of capabilities.	Inability to adjust capabilities quickly to circumstances (defensive to offensive) and/or appeal policy continuity <u>constrain</u> revision of strategies, that is, when the EU is surprised by circumstances, or has miscalculated because of complexity.
Weight (<i>reliability of power</i>)	Material capabilities shown to be insufficient <u>enable</u> build-up of capabilities.	Inability to increase capabilities quickly <u>constrain</u> short-term response.
Costs (<i>whether it is costly or cheap</i>)	Non-reliance on outside actor, such as ability to trade with others <u>enable</u> ability to sanction, etc.	Outside actor's non-reliance on the EU <u>constrains</u> the level of impact of power moves.
Means (<i>ways/tools to exercise power</i>)	A variety of tools for power that can be wielded at once – ideational, economic, military, diplomatic, technocratic – <u>enable</u> a multi-pronged approach.	Power liabilities, such as difficulty in speaking with one voice, sending conflicting messages, and/or having high uncertainty <u>constrain</u> the EU's ability to use the tools it has at its disposal (and may also constrain short-term or long-term learning).

Table 3: Drawing from Baldwin's framework, the table above visualizes Cross and Karolewski's approach towards assessing what might enable/constrain EU power during a crisis. Table taken from Cross and Karolewski's article for the JCMS.¹⁹²

Factors enabling and/or constraining EU Responses

What enables or constrains EU Power during a crisis? EU Power might be enabled by a sharp break in trust between the EU and an outside actor. Such a break could destabilize the *status quo* in that relationship, and therefore enable the EU to take actions which it might otherwise

¹⁹² Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 10.

not have taken. In addition, should there be an enhancement in solidarity with other actors at the same time, EU power might be enabled even further.¹⁹³

Also, a crisis might reveal that material capabilities are, either in terms of resources or strategic positioning, insufficient. Then, EU power could either be enabled by further integration, pooling and sharing, and interoperability of EU military capabilities (or economic resources); or restrained if there is a mismatch between the types of EU power resources and the crisis proofs to be a small enough impetus to “precipitate change.”¹⁹⁴

The amount of time needed to perform changes desired by the EU in order to shift priorities, buildup new resources, and revise strategies, can also be a constraining factor. Therefore, a key requirement for power conversion is the transformation of potential power into actual power.¹⁹⁵ Since time is of the essence during a crisis, this so called ‘paradox of unrealized power’ is a “potentially strong constraint on EU capabilities.”¹⁹⁶

Concerning *scope*, according to Natorski, EU actors may prefer policy continuity over innovation, thus also constraining EU capabilities.¹⁹⁷ Exercising power might come with a price. Therefore, the exercising of power constitutes another dimension of EU power in the international system.¹⁹⁸ Dahl argues that an actor’s power is enhanced if it can exercise it more cheaply.¹⁹⁹ According to Cross and Karolewski, the EU “has a significant degree of influence in the international system from its huge economy, but in crisis, if the EU is able to follow-through with sanctions that it would not otherwise want to consider, then its power to influence is further enabled.”²⁰⁰

Baldwin correctly writes that the means of exercising power are multiple. They can involve symbolic, economic, military or diplomatic tools.²⁰¹ Symbolic power is often ideational. Normative symbols can, according to Cross and Karolewski, often be “just as influential as economic or military tools, especially if they succeed in rallying others to the EU’s side in a crisis.” Cross and Karolewski continue that “if a crisis leads the EU to speak more strongly with

¹⁹³ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 12.

¹⁹⁴ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 12; 13.

¹⁹⁵ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 13.

¹⁹⁶ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 13.

¹⁹⁷ Natorski, M. 2015. "Epistemic (Un)certainty in Times of Crisis: The Role of Coherence as a Social Convention in the European Neighbourhood Policy after the Arab Spring." *European Journal of International Relations* 1-25; see also Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 13.

¹⁹⁸ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 12.

¹⁹⁹ Dahl, R. A. 1968. "Power." In *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, edited by D. L. Sills. New York: The Free Press.

²⁰⁰ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 12.

²⁰¹ Baldwin, "Power and International Relations," 275.

one voice, and appeal to international ideas, norms and laws that must be protected to correct injustice and prevent further violations, then its power in the international system is enabled.”²⁰² However, ideational power can also be a constraining factor. Ideational power can be distinguished between *power through ideas* and *power over ideas*.²⁰³ Cross and Karolewski write that *power through ideas* “enables actors to use ideas as a resource to change or influence the system around them, including the international system. In facing crisis situations, ideas can be particularly important in this regard. And they can emanate from the EU towards outside actors as well as evolve in reaction to outsiders’ ideas (such as, top-down and bottom-up).”²⁰⁴ According to Carstensen and Schmidt the EU also possesses *power over ideas* since EU actors often seek to “control and dominate the meaning of ideas.”²⁰⁵ Cross and Karolewski give the following example when it comes to ideational powers ability to enable and constrain EU power:

“This can be seen in the case of framing Russia’s actions as a violation of international norms. There has been a kind of ‘war of words’ with Putin in the media over how to understand his incursion into Ukraine. While he might have won this battle domestically, the EU has far more sympathizers internationally. Yet, there is constraint embodied in this form of power as well because the EU would be unable to pressure Russia to adhere to EU-espoused ideas of what is wrong or right, regardless of ‘intersubjective efficacy of the idea’. Indeed, the ability of Putin not to give into western ideas is a form of power over ideas that he possesses.”²⁰⁶

Such are the features that can *enable* and/or *constrain* EU power. However, even though there is an ample amount of factors to be chosen from, the limited scope of the thesis calls for a small selection. Based on the previously described conceptual framework by Cross and Karolewski, three factors have been chosen to be examined in order to identify the *enabling* and/or *constraining* features of EU power. All factors were chosen due to their relevance for answering the thesis’ research questions. Since the author of this thesis had neither the time nor the access to relevant decision-makers at the EU or member states level, the factors chosen take into account that the empirical part of this thesis needs to be based on official documents, newspaper articles, publicly available interviews as well as secondary literature. The three chosen factors thus are: (1) *history*, (2) *trust*, and (3) “*trojan horses*”.

²⁰² Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 13.

²⁰³ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 14.

²⁰⁴ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 14.

²⁰⁵ Carstensen, M. B., and V. A. Schmidt. 2016. "Power through, over and in ideas: conceptualizing ideational power in discursive institutionalism." *Journal of European Public Policy* 23 (3): 323

²⁰⁶ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 14.

(1) The Shadow of History

History and the perception of a particular episode of national history can play a not so unimportant part in a country's politics. For example, all the central and eastern European member states of the EU share the history of Soviet (read Russian) suzerainty over their territories. On the other hand, southern and western European member states have altogether different historical experiences with Russian power. Given these realities, it could be assumed that countries which had a rather negative experience with another country's power in their recent past would push for a harsher approach during crisis. Conversely, it could be argued that countries which did not have any such negative experiences would adopt a more balanced and conciliatory approach towards the resolution of a crisis.

The EU consists of member states that can be sorted into both the aforementioned categories. Whereas the central and eastern European as well as the Baltic states, and the UK (e.g. the Litvinenko affair, etc.) could be put into the category of states which had negative experiences with Russian power in their recent past, others such as France, Germany, Italy and Spain could be categorized as "strategic partners" (so-called *Russland- or Putinverstehers*). On the other hand, some EU member states, such as Austria, Belgium, Finland, Luxembourg or Portugal for example, stand somewhere in the middle of these categorizations.²⁰⁷

During a crisis – such as the Ukraine crisis – the mismatch among those member states which had negative historical experiences with Russian power and suzerainty, and those that had no such experiences, could prove to be a constraining factor in the EU's overall response to the crisis.

(2) Trust among the Member States

Trust among the member states and in the EU's decision-making process matter highly for the Union's power in international relation, especially, during a crisis.²⁰⁸ For Jonathan Mercer, the EU is a perfect case in which trust, over time, enabled international collaboration.²⁰⁹ While there still is little knowledge about 'trust' in the context of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), there is however plenty of evidence that intense socialization processes among the national diplomats had been ongoing since the very start of the European Political

²⁰⁷ See: Leonard, M., and N. Popescu. 2007. *A Power Audit of EU-Russia Relations*. London: European Council on Foreign Relations.

²⁰⁸ Natonski, M, and K. Pomorska. 2017. "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis: The EU's Response to the Events in Ukraine." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55 (1): 55.

²⁰⁹ Mercer, J. 2014. "Feeling like a State: Social Emotion and Identity." *International Theory* 6 (3): 525-529.

Cooperation (EPC) and the later CFSP. This led to the emergence of an informal code of conduct and a certain procedure of how to handle things in Brussels.²¹⁰ Ana Juncos and Karolina Pomorska point to the shared norms and beliefs of European integration as well as to the emergence of a 'we-feeling' among actors involved in the making of EU foreign policy.²¹¹ For Booth and Wheeler, overcoming of mistrust has helped in both the formation of a new identity as well as the 'we-feeling'.²¹² The authors point out that in order for trust to emerge it requires partners to behave in a reliable way; this also includes a predictable pattern of actions and attitudes.²¹³ However, Natorski and Pomorska state that an increased familiarity among 'like-minded' group members need not necessarily lead to an increase in trust as mistrust can still emerge at any given time. Therefore, the presence of high levels of trust for granted should not be taken for granted.²¹⁴

But how can trust be defined and identified? Same as Natorski and Pomorska in their contribution to the 2017 *Journal of Common Market Studies* special issue (JCMS, 2017, 55:1), my understanding of trust is based on Booth and Wheeler:

"Trust exists when two or more actors, based on the mutual interpretation of each other's attitude and behavior, believe that the other(s) now and in the future, can be relied upon to desist from acting in ways that will be injurious to their interests and values."²¹⁵

This means that "trust is to be considered as a continuum between functional cooperation (whereby trust emerges from confidence) and interpersonal bonding (where trust is a bond linked to emotions and may derive for example from friendship)."²¹⁶ Therefore, trusting relationships (or lack thereof) can be considered as the empirical manifestation of trust. The sharing of information, respecting each other's vulnerabilities towards a third party and decentralization (the delegation of tasks to lower levels of decision making), can thus be considered as the manifestation of trust among EU member states. In addition, the more

²¹⁰ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 55.

²¹¹ Juncos, A., and K. Pomorska. 2015. "Attitudes, Identities and the Emergence of an Esprit de Corps in the EEAS." In *The European External Action Service: European Diplomacy Post-Westphalia*, edited by D. Spence and J. Batore, 373-391. Basingstroke: Palgrave Macmillan, quoted after Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 55.

²¹² Booth, K., and N. Wheeler. 2008. *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics*. Basingstroke: Palgrave Macmillan, 233.

²¹³ Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, 244.

²¹⁴ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 56.

²¹⁵ Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, 230.

²¹⁶ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 56.

delegation and decentralization as to how decisions are being made throughout the crisis there are, the bigger the indication of the presence of trust.²¹⁷

What potential implications does trust within the EU have on the Union's capacity to exercise power towards Russia? For Natorski and Pomorska, power and trust "are inherently relational and shape the conditions of actors' performance", and both "develop in interactions between actors and determine actors' scope for action."²¹⁸ According to Booth and Wheeler, "power can be characterized by different degrees of vulnerability and dependency of actors."²¹⁹ Bachmann writes that while in trusting relations an actor assumes that another actor will behave in line with his preferences, in power relations this is not the case.²²⁰ Here an actor assumes "the possibility of undesirable behavior and attempts to ensure compliance through coercion and threats of sanctions."²²¹ This means that the more distrustful the relationship between actors is, the higher the possibility that they will rely on "coercive instruments of power in order to enforce the expected behavior."²²² As Natorski and Pomorska point out, "this is crucial during crises when trusting relationships are challenged."²²³

But how is trust linked to crisis? According to Booth and Wheeler, trust develops under uncertainty. This means that if things are certain, then trust is not needed.²²⁴ However, trust is also a heuristic device. It is used to cope with crisis and the condition of uncertainty.²²⁵ If actors cannot anticipate the outcome of a decision and, additionally, cannot assign probabilities to this outcome due to the fact that "information is not available, highly ambiguous or contradictory", uncertainty occurs.²²⁶ Therefore, trusting relations may account for a positive effect when one is dealing with crisis. In the event that trusting relations come out on top within the EU, the block's reaction to crisis may be more rapid since member states "will not engage in long searches for reliable information and trust the analysis and evidence

²¹⁷ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 56-57.

²¹⁸ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 57.

²¹⁹ Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, 233.

²²⁰ Bachmann, R. 2001. "Trust, Power and Control in Trans-organizational Relations." *Organization Studies* 22 (2): 350; quoted after Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 57.

²²¹ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 57; and Bachmann, "Trust, Power and Control," 350.

²²² Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 57.

²²³ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 57.

²²⁴ Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, 230.

²²⁵ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 57.

²²⁶ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 57.

provided by the partners.”²²⁷ Subsequently, this means that when member states expect that any future decisions will not be harmful to them, they will be more inclined to hand over certain decisions including their implementation.²²⁸

(3) The EU’s Trojan Horse Problem

The disaggregated nature of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) makes it somewhat susceptible to foreign actors efforts to cultivate Trojan horse governments within the Union. Scholars like Müller, Leonard and Popescu have already identified Russian attempts to cultivate Trojan horses within the EU.²²⁹ In this particular context, the use of the term Trojan horse is hardly original. However, it can be used to offer a theoretical perspective that helps with the explanation as to why the EU’s CFSP creates incentives for foreign actors (such as Russia) to persecute such a strategy, and why the very same incentives tend to increase as the CFSP strengthens.²³⁰

As previously mentioned, the EU’s CFSP is of a somewhat disaggregated nature, but in order to “develop a fully aggregated foreign policy, any federal or quasi-federal entity like the EU must simultaneously *establish* common policies and *prohibit* constituent states from engaging in independent policies.”²³¹ The EU in its disaggregated nature has thus far only *established* a Common Foreign and Security Policy and a Common Security and Defence Policy, but has not (until now) *prohibited* its member states from engaging in independent and sometimes contradictory foreign policies. The EU’s disaggregated foreign policy is not just the result “of the sort of generic inconsistency in foreign policy that afflicts many states. Rather, the EU suffers from a specific form of institutional disaggregation in which there is a risk that Member State governments will pursue policies that undermine the EU’s common policies.”²³² Those deficiencies make the EU vulnerable to Trojan horse strategies pursued by other actors.²³³

²²⁷ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 57.

²²⁸ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 57.

²²⁹ Müller, J.-W. 2014. “Moscow’s Trojan Horse.” *Foreign Affairs*. August 6. Accessed October 10, 2020. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/central-europe/2014-08-06/moscows-trojan-horse>; Leonard and Popescu, *A Power Audit of EU-Russia Relations*.

²³⁰ Orenstein, M. A., and R. D. Kelemen. 2017. “Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy.” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55 (1): 87-88.

²³¹ Orenstein and Kelemen, “Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy,” 88.

²³² Orenstein and Kelemen, “Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy,” 88; also Börzel, T. A., T. Risse, and A. Dandashly. 2015. “The EU, External Actors, and the Arabellions: Much Ado About (Almost) Nothing.” *Journal of European Integration* 37 (1): 135-153.

²³³ Orenstein and Kelemen, “Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy,” 88.

This approach clearly implies that as the EU's capacity to "act collectively and more collectively grows", so does the incentive of external actors to cultivate Trojan horse governments within the EU.²³⁴ Such a strategy might be deemed as particularly fruitful as it promises to divide and undermine the EU from within. Since the EU's foreign policy thus far only goes half way, it is likely to be unsustainable and unstable by nature.²³⁵ Greif and Laitin call this a 'self-undermining institution'. This means an institution is self-undermining itself when it encourages behaviors that "cultivate the seeds of their own demise."²³⁶ This leads to the conclusion that the disaggregated nature of the EU's foreign policy tends to invite such self-undermining behaviors. In addition, as "the EU seeks to pursue more common policies", the incentives for "this destructive behavior by Trojan horse states" tend to grow.²³⁷

2.5 Conclusions and Guidelines for the Thesis

The analytical chapter provides guidelines which should help to focus our gaze on the core questions of this thesis and to assess whether or not the EU and its Eastern Partnership gained a more 'geopolitical' impetus in response to the Ukraine crisis, as well as afterwards. Drawing from the outlined debates around Normative Power Europe, the EU's foreign policy, and different understandings of geopolitics, this thesis has three aims: First, to give a detailed account of how the EU responded towards Russian aggression and the crisis in Ukraine; secondly, to establish how EU power in response to the crisis in Ukraine was enabled and/or constrained; and thirdly, to assess if these possible new forms of EU power lead to short-term policy adjustments and a change in the EU's long-term strategic approach towards its Eastern Neighbourhood.

This thesis constructs the EU as a 'normal' actor in the international system. However this does not necessarily mean that it is a state-like actor in a traditional and realist sense. Additionally, in the realm of foreign policy the EU due to its many component parts constitutes a disaggregated actor.²³⁸ Even though there are many concepts about what the nature EU power actually is, the EU is typically conceptualized as an actor that grounds its approach on

²³⁴ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 88.

²³⁵ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 88.

²³⁶ Greif, A., and D. D. Laitin. 2004. "A Theory of Endogenous Institutional Change." *American Political Science Review* 98 (4): 634.

²³⁷ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 88.

²³⁸ Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 4.

security on co-operation and not on antagonism. The Union's drive towards positive-sum foreign and security policies led to its description as a post-modern and normative power, a power that is supposed to have an aversion against standard geopolitics.²³⁹

Being fully aware of the existence of other concepts on the nature of EU power, this thesis conceptualizes the EU as a normative power. In order to understand the EU's normative power in context of this thesis, certain parameters need to be specified. Normative theory emphasizes the centrality of norms and rule-based behavior in contrast to power.²⁴⁰ The European Security Strategy conceptualizes rule-based behavior as the cornerstone of the EU's geostrategic identity in contrast to pure national calculations of self-interest.²⁴¹

However, using the term normative power can imply that the EU should behave as such. This is not what the thesis wants to do. Therefore, it follows Forsberg's approach, arguing that the EU has "normative interests, behaves (usually) in a normative way, [and] uses normative means of power."²⁴² However, normative action and strategic or self-interest action can inform each other.²⁴³ Additionally, the EU is not intrinsically a normative power, but needs to be perceived as such by other actors in the international system.²⁴⁴ Since the EaP countries recognize the EU's normative agenda and its role as a beacon for norms,²⁴⁵ this thesis recognizes the EU as a normative power in its Eastern neighbourhood (but not *per se*). Nonetheless, since the EU's normative power narrative imposes a form of 'governmentality' on other states in its neighbourhood, it clearly has some geopolitical impetus.²⁴⁶

This means even though the EU, at its various levels, might have an antipathy against geopolitics, it can still be seen as a geopolitical actor by others in the international system, and, therefore, act 'subconsciously geopolitical'. The core question of this thesis hence is: did the EU, during the crisis in Ukraine become a 'conscious geopolitical' actor in its neighbourhood?

The first crucial question, after assessing the EU's approach towards its Eastern neighbourhood, is how did the EU *respond* to the events unfolding in Kyiv, Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine, and its annexation of Crimea? What kind of foreign policy tools at the EU's

²³⁹ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 16.

²⁴⁰ Manners, "Normative Power Europe."

²⁴¹ European Union, "*European Security Strategy*."; Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 17.

²⁴² Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again," 1199.

²⁴³ Youngs, "Normative Dynamics," 415-435.

²⁴⁴ Larsen, "The EU as a Normative Power."

²⁴⁵ Bengtson and Elgström, "Conflicting Role Conceptions," 99.

²⁴⁶ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 23.

disposal were used to support Ukraine, and counter Russian aggression? The EU's responses towards the events unfolding in its Eastern Neighbourhood will be highlighted in the thesis empirical part (chapter 5).

The second dimension of this thesis constitutes: *changes*. An important component to the question of the EU's usage of foreign policy tools is: what enabled and/or constrained the usage of EU foreign policy tools, and therefore allowing for actions the EU might otherwise not have taken? Cross and Karolewski's adaption of Baldwin's framework serves as the foundation for answering these questions. The factors chosen to examine enabling and/or constraining features of EU power are: *history*, *trust*, and "*Trojan horses*".

After assessing whether or not the crisis in Ukraine led to new ways of exercising EU power, and short-term policy adjustments, the third dimension of this thesis revolves around their *impact*. In order to assess what kind of impact the crisis had on the EU's long-term strategic approach towards its Eastern Neighbourhood, it is necessary to look at how the EU's seminal Security Strategy (ESS) and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) evolved post-crisis. First, the thesis analyzes the debates leading to the genesis of the EU's first Global Strategy (EUGS) in 2016, which constitutes a revision of the ESS. The EUGS is then analyzed in view of a shift of the Union towards embracing geopolitics in its foreign policy as well as its Eastern Neighbourhood. Second, the EaP and the EU's eastern policy post-Vilnius are analyzed, in order to identify if any shifts towards a more geopolitical impetus occurred.

3. The EU and Russia in their Shared Neighbourhood

First it is necessary to understand the evolution of the EU's policy towards the Eastern Neighbourhood, before the crisis erupted in Ukraine. The EU's eastern policy in the EaP region prior to 2013/2014 had not had an openly geopolitical impetus. Scholars studying the Union's neighbourhood policies viewed it overwhelmingly through the prism of EU governance, normative approaches, as well as functionalist and institutionalist dynamics. On the other hand, EU officials and policy makers did not think the Union's eastern policy and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative in geopolitical terms. For them the EaP was not an instrument to rival or neuter Russian interests in the region. Nonetheless, Russia saw the EaP as a geopolitical project and increasingly perceived it as a strategic threat. This mismatch of European and Russian perceptions of the EaP's geopolitical impetus in their shared neighbourhood laid the foundations for the subsequent crisis in Ukraine.

This chapter examines the EU-Russia relations as well as the record of the EU's neighbourhood and EaP policies prior to 2013/2014. This is necessary in order to identify and explain changes to the EU's foreign and eastern policy post-Vilnius. Conversely, this chapter also examines Russian foreign policy towards the post-Soviet space, its relations with Ukraine as well as Moscow's engagement with the EU and its member states. This, in turn, helps to explain the enabling and constraining factors of the EU response to the crisis.

3.1 EU-Russia Relations

Ever since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the relationship between the European Union and Russia had been going through various ups and downs. While the EU, subsequently, promised the central and southeastern European states the prospect of membership, or at least an association agreement, Russia had never been considered as a

potential candidate.²⁴⁷ In its relations with Russia, the EU hoped for a successful transformation of system and an ensuing community of values.²⁴⁸

However, the mutual relations became increasingly more tense over the years. The ENP in general and the EaP with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in particular, increasingly reinforced the Russian impression of integration competition between the EU and Russia in the post-Soviet space.²⁴⁹

The war in Eastern Ukraine and Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 can be seen as a critical juncture in the EU-Russia relations. With the annexation of Crimea and its military intervention in the Donbass, Russia broke international law and was thus no longer viewed as a partner by the EU.²⁵⁰

But let us briefly recapitulate the relations between the EU and Russia, beginning in 1991, when the first agreement on technical and financial cooperation was concluded. As part of this, the EU financed the *Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States* (TACIS) between 1991 and 2006. The programs primary focus was on cooperation in the field of education and on cross-border cooperation projects.²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ Drofa, A. 2013. "Strategische Partnerschaft zwischen der Europäischen Union und der Russischen Föderation im Wandel von Normativität zu Pragmatismus." Dissertation, Rheinisch-Westfälischen Technischen Hochschule, Aachen, 33.

²⁴⁸ Timmermann, H. 2008. "EU-Russland: Hintergründe und Perspektiven einer schwierigen Beziehung." *Integration* 31 (2): 160.

²⁴⁹ Pop, V. 2009. "EU expanding its 'sphere of influence,' Russia says." *EU Observer*. March 21. Accessed October 13, 2020. <https://euobserver.com/foreign/27827>.

²⁵⁰ European Parliament. 2019. "Fact Sheets on the European Union: Russia." November. Accessed October 13, 2020. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/177/russia>.

²⁵¹ Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. n.d. *TACIS*. Accessed October 13, 2020. <https://www.bpb.de/nachschlagen/lexika/das-europalexikon/177295/tacis>. The overall total of the TACIS programme, running for 15 year from 1991 to 2006 was around € 7,3 billion. The programme covered the 12 Eastern Europe and Central Asia countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. This constitutes as a substantial sum but it may still be considered limited given the size of the challenges it had to tackle and in comparison with the EU's PHARE programme which targeted the Central and Eastern European states. The total expenditure of the PHARE programme - running from 1989 to 2007 - was around € 18,7 billion. The PHARE programme covered the countries of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania. Albania, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina were also part of PHARE for a brief time, until the EU's CARDS programme provided financial assistance to the Western Balkans. See: Frenz, A. 2008. "The European Commission's Tacis Programme 1991 – 2006: A Success Story." October 17. Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/1/34459.pdf>; Business and Strategies Europe. 2015. "Evaluation of PHARE financial assistance to Bulgaria (BG), Cyprus (CY), Czech Republic (CZ), Estonia (EE), Hungary (HU), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Malta (MT), Poland (PL), Romania (RO), Slovakia (SK), Slovenia (SI): Final Report," 8, January 19. Accessed February 11, 2021. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/financial_assistance/phare/evaluation/2015/20150806-phare-ex-post-evaluation-final-report.pdf.

Furthermore, the EU maintains a permanent delegation in Moscow, whose task is to monitor developments in the areas of human rights, justice, freedom and security as well as in foreign and defense policy, and to represent the EU in its relations to Russia.²⁵² The delegation also supports the EU-Russia political dialogue. This bilateral dialogue was seriously affected by Russia's involvement in Eastern Ukraine and its illegal annexation of Crimea. The result of which led to the freezing of some of the policy dialogues and mechanisms of cooperation.²⁵³

The *Partnership and Cooperation Agreement* (PCA) was signed on June 24, 1994 and entered into force in December 1997. The PCA, being the general framework of EU-Russia political and economic relations, was limited to ten years, and expired in 2007. Renegotiations on an upgraded *New EU-Russia Agreement* based on WTO rules have so far been a failure.²⁵⁴

At the St. Petersburg Summit in May 2003, the EU and Russia launched a cooperation in the so-called 'four common spaces' within the framework of the PCA, the four common spaces being: (1) economy, (2) freedom, security and justice, (3) external security, and (4) research and education as well as cultural aspects. Initial negotiations started in 2008. However, due to the Russian war effort in Georgia, the negotiations already experienced their first setback at the very first round, and were temporarily suspended. The agreement was ultimately suspended due to Russia's annexation of Crimea, and its destabilization of Eastern Ukraine.²⁵⁵

When it comes to trade relations, the EU is Russia's most important trading and investment partner. Russia, conversely, is one of the main suppliers of energy to the EU. The EU is the largest investor in Russia. Putting imports and exports together, Russia is the EU's fourth most important trading partner.²⁵⁶ However, since 2015 Russia's share of trade with

²⁵² EEAS. 2019. "About the European Union Delegation to the Russian Federation." June 6. Accessed October 13, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/719/about-european-union-delegation-russian-federation_en.

²⁵³ EEAS. 2020. "The European Union and the Russian Federation." February 25. Accessed October 13, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/35939/european-union-and-russian-federation_en.

²⁵⁴ European Parliament. 2019. *Fact Sheets on the European Union: Russia*; EEAS, "The European Union and the Russian Federation."

²⁵⁵ European Communities. 1997. "Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation." *Official Journal of the European Communities* L 3327/3; EEAS, "The European Union and the Russian Federation."; European Commission. 2005. "EU/Russia: The four "Common Spaces", MEMO/05/103." March 18. Accessed October 13, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_05_103.

²⁵⁶ European Commission. 2020. "Countries and regions: Russia." May 20. Accessed October 13, 2020. <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/russia/>.

the EU has steadily decreased.²⁵⁷ This is partly due to EU sanctions imposed in the course of the Ukraine conflict as well as Russian counter sanctions, but is mainly due to Russia's plunge into recession after a collapse in natural resource prices in 2014.²⁵⁸

Energy policy plays a significant role in relations between the 'EU'ropean countries and Russia. Russia is the largest exporter of oil, gas and coal to the EU. An essential part of the EU's energy policy with Russia is the *EU-Russia Energy Dialogue* launched in 2000. The dialog's aim is to increase energy efficiency and nuclear safety, secure supplies, facilitate investments, reform monopolies, and separate network operators from producers.²⁵⁹

Further forums of cooperation between the EU and Russia are: the *Permanent Partnership Councils*, the *Parliamentary Cooperation Committee*, the *Partnership for Modernization* with its focus on economic and rule of law reforms, the *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights*²⁶⁰, and the *Northern Dimension*.²⁶¹

The EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) proved to be a problematic area in EU-Russia relations from the very beginning. Developed as a framework from 2004 onward, and formally launched in 2009, the Partnership's aim includes political dialogue, support for the democratization and development of the economy, and transition to promote market economy, including the promotion of trade and investment. Additionally, the goals of the EaP consist of safeguarding democracy, international law, human rights and the market economy.²⁶²

²⁵⁷ See: EEAS, "The European Union and the Russian Federation."; and European Commission, "Countries and regions: Russia."

²⁵⁸ Fischer, S. 2019. "Die Europäische Union und Russland." In *Jahrbuch der Europäischen Integration*, edited by W. Weidenfeld and W. Wessel. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 383.

²⁵⁹ European Commission. 2011. *EU-Russia Energy Dialogue: The first ten years 2000-2010*. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Energy; EEAS, "The European Union and the Russian Federation." According to the *European Commission*, the EU-Russia Energy Dialogue "provides the overall structure for energy cooperation between the EU and Russia going forward. Through the Dialogue, the EU and Russia seek to: (a) improve investment opportunities in the energy sector, including through the opening up of energy markets; (b) ensure secure and adequate infrastructure; (c) facilitate an increase in the use of environmentally friendly technologies and energy resources; (d) promote energy efficiency and energy savings on the way to a low-carbon economy; and (d) exchange information on legislative initiatives." See: European Commission, 2021. "EU-Russia energy dialogue." Accessed February 10, 2021. https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/international-cooperation/key-partner-countries-and-regions/russia/eu-russia-energy-dialogue_en.

²⁶⁰ Meier, C. 2000. "EU-Russland: Von pragmatischer Zusammenarbeit zu strategischer Partnerschaft?" In *Die Europäische Union als Akteur der Weltpolitik*, edited by K. Schubert and G. Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet. Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 106

²⁶¹ EEAS. 2016. "Northern Dimension." May 2. Accessed October 13, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/northern-dimension/347/northern-dimension_en.

²⁶² EEAS. 2016. "Eastern Partnership." October 19. Accessed October 13, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/eastern-partnership/419/eastern-partnership_en.

Russia which was worried about a hostile and anti-Russian stance of the EaP expressed concerns about it from the very start.²⁶³ The accumulation point of Russian fears was the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement signed in 2014. As a result, Russia terminated its free trade agreement with Ukraine in 2016. According to Moscow's line of argument, only protectionist measures could protect the Russian market from being flooded with EU products.²⁶⁴

3.2 The EU's Eastern Policy

The European Neighbourhood Policy was launched in 2004. The policies aim is to encourage the economic integration and political association of neighbouring countries with the Union. The ENP seeks to foster domestic reforms in political, economic and administrative areas in exchange for access to the internal market, financial aid and visa facilitations.²⁶⁵ According to David Cadier, the creation of the ENP was originally "motivated by geopolitical considerations: stabilizing the European peripheries and laying the foundations of an EU foreign policy beyond enlargement."²⁶⁶ For Rupnik, the EU wanted to capitalize on its successful experience in central Europe – a region where the Union spurred and shaped the transformation through the process of enlargement – even though 'enlargement fatigue' increasingly diminished the accession prospects of neighbouring countries.²⁶⁷ The EU's attempt to foster peace and stability in its neighbourhood by exporting its norms followed the same logic as during the enlargement process. However, the EU's main incentive, namely membership, was missing.²⁶⁸

Initiated by a drive to regionalize ENP policies and sponsored and advanced by Poland and Sweden, the EaP began as a low-level initiative in 2009. The EaP, launched under the umbrella of the ENP, was in its origins neither really an externally nor strategically driven

²⁶³ Pop, "EU expanding its 'sphere of influence,' Russia says."

²⁶⁴ See: Moscow Times. 2015. "Russia Suspends Free Trade Agreement with Ukraine." *The Moscow Times*. December 16. Accessed October 13, 2020. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/12/16/russia-suspends-free-trade-agreement-with-ukraine-a51261>; SZ. 2015. "Russland setzt Freihandel mit Ukraine aus." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. December 16. Accessed October 13, 2020. <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/wegen-westorientierung-russland-setzt-freihandel-mit-der-ukraine-aus-1.2786585>.

²⁶⁵ Commission of the European Communities. 2004. "European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper, COM (2004) 373." May 12. Accessed October 13, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/2004_communication_from_the_commission_-_european_neighbourhood_policy_-_strategy_paper.pdf.

²⁶⁶ Cadier, D. 2014. "Eastern Partnership vs Eurasian Union? The EU-Russia Competition in the Shared Neighbourhood and the Ukraine Crisis." *Global Policy* 5 (1): 77.

²⁶⁷ Rupnik, J., ed. 2007. *Les banlieus de l'Europe: Nouveaux Débats*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, quoted after Cadier, "Eastern Partnership vs Eurasian Union?," 77.

²⁶⁸ Cadier, "Eastern Partnership vs Eurasian Union?," 77.

initiative but rather a sort of trade-off against the equally new Union for the Mediterranean.²⁶⁹ However, after the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008, certain geopolitical concerns were surely present.²⁷⁰ Policy initiatives launched by the EaP revolved around trade, aid and low-level societal engagement. The EaP was designed for and consists of six Eastern European and Caucasus countries.²⁷¹ The countries in question include: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.²⁷² All of them welcomed the EU's initiative, while partly criticizing the Union's unwillingness to offer the carrot of enlargement as an incentive for economic and political reform. For the EU, the EaP was an opportunity to create a 'ring of friends' along its eastern border. According to Gerhard Mangott, this constitutes nothing short of an EU sphere of influence, even though one that was based on the Union's 'power of attraction'.²⁷³ Youngs points out that to the EaP countries, the new initiative seemed more like a rather "poor substitute than an important new umbrella for geopolitical protection."²⁷⁴

The EU – via the EaP – offers its eastern partners, Association Agreements (AAs). Under the conditions of those AAs, Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) are negotiated.²⁷⁵ The 2014 *Alternative Assessment Report* somewhat reinforced the notion of the EaP being a rather low-level technocratic than a high-level political project.²⁷⁶ According to Youngs, the EaP's offer of visa liberalization is its most powerful incentive, even though negotiations in this regard proceeded slowly due to EU's conditionality over an extensive amount of benchmarks that needed to be met.²⁷⁷

²⁶⁹ Lang, K.-O. 2008. *Eine Partnerschaft für den Osten: Der polnisch-schwedische Vorschlag zur Vertiefung der Kooperation mit den östlichen Nachbarn der EU*. SWP-Aktuell 66, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik; a brief overview on the genesis of the EaP can be found in, Meister, S., and M.-L. May. 2009. *The EU's Eastern Partnership - a Misunderstood Offer of Cooperation*. DGAPstandpunkt 7, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V., 1.

²⁷⁰ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 51; Stewart, S. 2009. *Russland und die Östliche Partnerschaft: Harsche Kritik, punktuell Kooperationeninteresse*. SWP-Aktuell 21, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 1; Mangott, G. 2019. *Von der Östlichen Partnerschaft zur östlichen Spaltung*. Policy Brief 9, ÖGfE, Vienna: Österreichische Gesellschaft für Europapolitik.

²⁷¹ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 51.

²⁷² Council of the European Union. 2009. "Brussels European Council: Presidency Conclusions, 7880/1/09." April 29, 19-21. Accessed October 13, 2020.

https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/106809.pdf.

²⁷³ Mangott, *Von der Östlichen Partnerschaft zur östlichen Spaltung*.

²⁷⁴ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 51.

²⁷⁵ Casier, T., E. A. Korosteleva, and R. G. Whitman. 2014. *Building a Stronger Eastern Partnership: Towards an EaP 2.0*. Policy Paper, Global Europe Centre, Kent: University of Kent, 3.

²⁷⁶ Eurasian Partnership Foundation. 2014. "Alternative Assessment Report, Implementation of the ENP Action Plan and EaP bilateral and Multilateral Roadmaps of 2013." Tbilisi.

²⁷⁷ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 51.

In addition to new aid initiatives, the European Commission doubled its aid to the Eastern Neighbourhood between 2009 and 2013.²⁷⁸ Most of the aid handed out by the EU went in the form of direct budget contribution to governments. However, civil society also gained greater support.²⁷⁹

Initiatives launched by the EaP were explicitly framed as non-geopolitical. Nelli Babayan's empirical account found that EU policies prior to 2014 aimed to support specific sectors of reform in the countries of the southern Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. However, the EU's initiatives failed to take into account Russia's increasing role as a 'democracy blocker'. This means that the EU failed to take into account this manifesting geopolitical reality, and to adjust its strategies accordingly.²⁸⁰ The new Central and Eastern European member states allocated greater importance towards the EaP. They wanted to rise the EaP's profile and firmly place democracy support at the initiatives core.²⁸¹ The new Central and Eastern European member states had their own strategic vision for the EaP region, that is one that had democracy support at its heart. However, due to the limited resources of these member states, their policies were mostly limited to non-intrusive means such as sharing their own transitions lessons and best practices.²⁸²

The post-Soviet space is not poor on conflicts. However, the EU's efforts in the region concerning de-escalation of those conflicts can be described as rather modest. Whether it be the Transnistria conflict or Georgia, the EU focused on cooperation and civil society actors by funding civil society initiatives in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, for example.²⁸³ In addition, the EU launched a Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia and a Border Assistance Mission in Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM). The EU also champions the solution of this conflicts through diplomatic processes. The EU's co-chairmanship of the Geneva talks on Georgia, and its special representatives to Georgia, Moldova and the South Caucasus, serve as an example. The EU, additionally, has been campaigning for the resumption of the 5+2 negotiations to resolve the Transnistrian conflict in Moldova, negotiations which have been on hold since 2006. The Union

²⁷⁸ Eurasian Partnership Foundation, "Alternative Assessment Report".

²⁷⁹ Shapovalova, N., and R. Youngs. 2013. *Civil Society Support in the Eastern Neighbourhood*. Madrid: Fríde.

²⁸⁰ Babayan, N. 2014. *Democratic Transformation and Obstruction: The European Union, United States and Russia in the South Caucasus*. London: Routledge, quoted after Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 52; see also: Wolfschwenger, J. 2019. *10 Years Eastern Partnership - The EU and its Strategic Dilemma*. Policy Brief 14, ÖGfE, Vienna: Österreichische Gesellschaft für Europapolitik.

²⁸¹ Petrova, T. 2014. *From Solidarity to Geopolitics: Support for Democracy among Postcommunist States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²⁸² Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 52.

²⁸³ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 52.

equally supports the efforts of the OSCE-Minsk Group to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.²⁸⁴ The EU seemed to prefer this particular approach towards conflict management rather than favoring one side over the other, or to confront Russia's involvement head on.²⁸⁵

The period before 2014 was marked by alternating EU policies of isolation and engagement in the case of Belarus, and cooperation with Russia. Under Obama, NATO pressed the 'reset' button by supporting cooperation with Russia while France together with Germany effectively grinded NATO expansion post-2008 to a halt.²⁸⁶

The Baltic states felt bound to go *d'accord* with EaP initiatives. However, they fundamentally disagreed with the EU mainstream eastern policy. This was due to the fact that these policies did not include any kind of geopolitical impetus. Moreover, EU policies did not include 'the Russian factor', meaning they did not take into account possible difficulties that might emerge from Russia's perspective on the EaP initiative.²⁸⁷

The EU is intrinsically drawn to positive-sum policies and cooperation. This was clearly expressed when Putin launched its new rivaling integration project in the post-Soviet space – the Eurasian Union.²⁸⁸ Energy policy is a factor prone to recurring tensions between the EU and Russia. One such tension flared up in 2012 when the Russian energy provider Gazprom was obliged to reduce prices to EU customers. However, even after the EU's pushback against the company's monopoly position, most member states increased their imports from Russia. This was because they viewed the post-Soviet area as a space where solutions due to cooperation over energy security could be negotiated.²⁸⁹

The EU and member states governments hoped that the EaP Vilnius summit on November 28-29, 2013 would open a 'new chapter' with its eastern European neighbours.

²⁸⁴ Lippert, B. 2011. *EU-Erweiterungen: Vorschläge für die außenpolitische Flankierung einer Beitrittspause*. SWP-Studie, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 18.

²⁸⁵ Dias, V. 2013. "The EU's post-liberal approach to peace: Framing EUBAM's contribution to Moldova-Transnistria conflict transformation." *European Security* 22 (3): 338-354; Pogodda, S., O. Richmond, N. Tocci, R. MacGinty, and B. Vogel. 2014. "Assessing the impact of EU governmentality in post-conflict countries: Pacification or reconciliation?" *European Security* 23 (3): 227-249.

²⁸⁶ Zygar, M. 2016. "The Russian Reset That Never Was: How palace intrigues in the Kremlin, the death of Qaddafi, and war in Ukraine ushered in a new era of mistrust between Russia and the United States under Obama." *Foreign Policy*. December 9. Accessed October 15, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/12/09/the-russian-reset-that-never-was-putin-obama-medvedev-libya-mikhail-zygar-all-the-kremlin-men/>; BBC. 2008. "Nato denies Georgia and Ukraine." *BBC News*. April 3. Accessed October 15, 2020. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7328276.stm>.

²⁸⁷ Raik, K. 2016. "Liberalism and geopolitics in EU-Russia relations: Rereading the 'Baltic factor'." *European Security* 25 (2): 237-255.

²⁸⁸ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 54.

²⁸⁹ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 54.

They planned to sign AAs with several EaP countries which, according to Youngs, were designed to integrate them to “a sphere of European influence and ensure progressive political and economic liberalization.”²⁹⁰

The summit attracted great interest all over Europe.²⁹¹ In the run-up to the summit, Germany as well as Sweden, Finland, and the Benelux countries intensified their diplomacy in the region. Diplomatic efforts concentrated especially on Ukraine, concerning the case of Yulia Tymoshenko.²⁹² However, as Youngs points out, there was “still little evidence of any precise assessment of where the EU’s strategic interests lay. Member states [...] claimed that they cared [...], but the EaP effort still felt like a lobbying exercise undertaken by a small minority of Central and Eastern European member states.”²⁹³

However, as the Vilnius summit continued to draw closer, the EU’s EaP process began to unravel. What previously seemed to be a relatively smooth summit became increasingly an exercise in damage limitation.²⁹⁴ The first setback happened in September 2013 when Armenia announced that it was pulling out of the AA talks and intended to join the Eurasian Customs Union (a precursor to the Eurasian Union).²⁹⁵ This was in essence a political decision, owing to Russia’s role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.²⁹⁶ Russia continuously tried to dissuade Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine from signing their AAs by either imposing sanctions or stirring up conflict.²⁹⁷ Responding to Russian sanctions on Moldovan wine, the European Commission announced “that it was ready to open fully the Union’s market to imports of wine from Chisinau, in advance of the envisaged provisional application of the bilateral trade deal.”²⁹⁸ In addition, the Commission sent out signals to Russia that both could work towards

²⁹⁰ Youngs, *Europe’s Eastern Crisis*, 54.

²⁹¹ Youngs, *Europe’s Eastern Crisis*, 54.

²⁹² Tolksdorf, D. 2013. “Die Östliche Partnerschaft nach dem Vilnius-Gipfel Ende November 2013: Zunehmende Konfrontation zwischen der Europäischen Union und Russland?” *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen* (6): 70-84.

²⁹³ Youngs, *Europe’s Eastern Crisis*, 54.

²⁹⁴ Youngs, *Europe’s Eastern Crisis*, 54.

²⁹⁵ Youngs, *Europe’s Eastern Crisis*, 54; Tolksdorf, “Die Östliche Partnerschaft nach dem Vilnius-Gipfel,” 75.

²⁹⁶ Tolksdorf, “Die Östliche Partnerschaft nach dem Vilnius-Gipfel,” 75-76.

²⁹⁷ Europolitics. 2013. “Vilnius Summit: EU vs Russia - Settling Scores.” *European Report*. November 23.

Accessed October 16, 2020.

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A350034957/AONE?u=43wien&sid=AONE&xid=1851c791>; Hovhannisyan, M., T. Sharashenidze, A. Valiyev, and A. Mammadli. 2013. “The Vilnius EaP Summit and the South Caucasus.” *Caucasus Analytical Digest*, December 18; Tolksdorf, “Die Östliche Partnerschaft nach dem Vilnius-Gipfel,” 70-84.

²⁹⁸ Europolitics, “Vilnius Summit”.

a wider free-trade area from 'Lisbon to Vladivostok' and cooperation concerning regulatory issues.²⁹⁹ Nonetheless, at the summit in Vilnius both Georgia and Moldova signed their AAs.³⁰⁰

The second major setback came when Ukraine shocked the EU by pulling out of its AA at the last minute. Azerbaijan signed a visa-facilitation agreement with the EU, and Belarus did not engage seriously in the summit.³⁰¹ The EU did not include offers of a possible future EU membership in the summit's conclusions.³⁰² According to Youngs, it seemed as if the EU's eastern policy suddenly was falling apart: "Russia pushed assertively to neuter many of its key policy instruments and EaP states complained vociferously that the EaP lacked content and strategic bite."³⁰³

3.3 Russian Foreign Policy in its 'Near Abroad'

Ever since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the relationship between Russia and the West has never been really easy. The relationship has been characterized by constant tensions, interrupted by brief periods of relatively smooth bilateral engagement. The relations between Russia and the West in times of non-crisis have never been really normal. "From the outset, there have been excessive expectations, major disappointments, and severe recriminations", writes Bobo Lo.³⁰⁴ According to him, not only have the successes been short lived, but have in some ways made things worse.³⁰⁵ The initial optimism around the 'new Russia' in 1992 was followed by subsequent feelings of disillusionment and betrayal. Almost the same happened post-9/11. The initial hopes for renewed constructive relations, revolving around common threats and challenges both parties faced, were severely disabused. In addition, the 'reset' initiated by the Obama administration was followed by a "geopolitical and normative

²⁹⁹ Füle, Štefan. 2013. "Speech at the National Round Table on European integration, SPEECH/13/810." October 11. Accessed October 19, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_13_810; Füle, Štefan. 2013. "Štefan Füle's speech at 10th Yalta Annual Meeting, in Yalta, Ukraine." *Europawire*. September 23. Accessed October 19, 2020. <https://news.europawire.eu/stefan-fules-speech-at-10th-yalta-annual-meeting-in-yalta-ukraine-8765123431234567/eu-press-release/2013/09/23/18/28/27/18947/>; Füle, Štefan. 2013. "EU-Ukraine: Dispelling the Myths About the Association Agreement, SPEECH/13/808." October 11. Accessed October 19, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_13_808.

³⁰⁰ Council of the European Union. 2013. "Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit, Vilnius, 17130/13." November 29. Accessed October 11, 2020. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/31799/2013_eap-11-28-joint-declaration.pdf.

³⁰¹ Hovhannisyanyan et al., "The Vilnius EaP Summit and the South Caucasus," 8; Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 55.

³⁰² Council of the European Union, "Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit, Vilnius, 17130/13."

³⁰³ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 55.

³⁰⁴ Lo, B. 2015. *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 165.

³⁰⁵ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 165.

chasm.”³⁰⁶ The 2014 Ukraine crisis and the subsequent Russia-Ukraine conflict have emerged as the most acute stand-offs between Russia and the West, post-Cold War, and can be seen as a critical juncture in Moscow’s relations with its western partners. In the aftermath of the crisis, there was talk of either some form of limited cooperative engagement based on close economic interdependence between Russia and the EU or of a new cold war in which Ukraine is just one front in a struggle between an authoritarian Russia and a liberal democratic West.³⁰⁷

Russia in its ‘Near Abroad’: A Historical Evolution

In the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet empire, the post-Soviet space ranked relatively low among Moscow’s foreign policy priorities.³⁰⁸ Moscow thought that the newly formed independent states would quite naturally gravitate towards Russia given their historic ties, but especially for economic reasons. In the early 1990s, Russia had its focus on handling its own transition, getting loans from the International Monetary Fund, and on redefining its relations with the West.³⁰⁹ As emphasized by Mankoff, Moscow saw the post-Soviet space as a somewhat burdensome relict from the past, one that was constraining Russia’s own development and its integration with the West.³¹⁰ As Cadier writes: “the structures established to handle the demise of the USSR were used by Russia to secure some assets for itself (e.g. nuclear weapons, a UN Security Council seat) but not to gain permanent and overarching control over its former vassals.”³¹¹ The newly formed Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was less the basis for an anewed reintegration but rather a “psychologically comfortable transition mechanism from empire to separate statehoods.”³¹²

³⁰⁶ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 165.

³⁰⁷ EEAS. 2015. "Issues Paper on Relations with Russia: prepared by the Foreign Affairs Council of the EEAS for the High Representative Frederica Mogherini." January 19. Accessed October 19, 2020.

<http://blogs.ft.com/brusselsblog/files/2015/01/Russia.pdf>; Trenin, D. 2014. "Welcome to Cold War II." *Foreign Policy*. March 4. Accessed October 19, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/03/04/welcome-to-cold-war-ii/>; Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 166.

³⁰⁸ Cadier, D. 2015. "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space: The Eurasian Economic Union as an Attempt to Develop Russia's Structural Power." In *Russia's Foreign Policy: Ideas, Domestic Politics and External Relations*, edited by D. Cadier and M. Light. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 158.

³⁰⁹ Trenin, D. 2011. *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 85-86.

³¹⁰ Mankoff, J. 2011. *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 221.

³¹¹ Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 158.

³¹² Trenin, D. 2009. "Russia's spheres of interest, not influence." *Washington Quarterly* 32 (4): 7.

According to Cadier, the CIS allowed Moscow to maintain the image of a regional power.³¹³ Within the CIS, Russia simulated “a sustained political dialogue”, and launched punctual peacekeeping missions.³¹⁴ In contrast to Cadier, Mankoff and Trenin, who saw the CIS more as a comfortable transition mechanism, Götz emphasises that “Russian policy-makers wanted to use the organization to check the foreign-policy autonomy of the other post-Soviet republics.”³¹⁵ He points to the CIS Charter's Article One which stated that “participating states will not enter into military alliances or participate in any groupings of states, nor in actions directed against another participating state.”³¹⁶ According to Götz, this means that “[t]he CIS, in this sense, was both an expression and instrument of Russia’s regional ambitions.”³¹⁷

Under the more realist-minded Yevgeny Primakov, Russian foreign policy became much more vigorous, and the mentioning of the post-Soviet space as Russia’s sphere of privileged interests became more frequent.³¹⁸ According to Tsygankov, Russia’s renewed attention towards the CIS should be linked to a broader context. On the one hand, Moscow all but abandoned the hope of security integration with the West, and, on the other hand, it grew increasingly worried about NATO enlargement.³¹⁹ In 1999, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joined NATO, consequently moving the alliance’s border closer to Russia. The very same year Moscow opposed NATO’s bombing of Belgrade. Russia’s lack of influence in European strategic matters – illustrated by NATO’s mandate-less campaign against Serbia – certainly served as a reality check for Moscow.³²⁰ Cadier emphasized that “specifying the post-Soviet area as Russia’s sphere of influence was a way of acknowledging this new regional dynamic while, at the same time, attempting to draw a red line about its spatial limits.”³²¹ Trenin argues that under Putin, Russia in the late 2000s stuck to the principle of “pervasive pragmatism”, acknowledging that its sphere had not only become much smaller but also

³¹³ Cadier, “Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space,” 158.

³¹⁴ Cadier, “Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space,” 158.

³¹⁵ Götz, E. 2016. “Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy, 1991-present.” *Contemporary Politics* 22 (3): 307.

³¹⁶ Article One of the CIS Charter quoted after Götz, “Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy,” 307.

³¹⁷ Götz, “Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy,” 307.

³¹⁸ Light, M. 2001. “Post-Soviet Russian foreign policy: The first decade.” In *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*, edited by A. Brown, 419-428. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Ofitserov-Belskiy, D., and A. Sushentov. 2018. “Central and Eastern Europe.” In *Routledge Handbook of Russian Foreign Policy*, edited by A. Tsygankov. London: Routledge, 285.

³¹⁹ Tsygankov, A. 2006. *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 91-94, quoted after Cadier, “Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space,” 158.

³²⁰ Cadier, “Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space,” 158.

³²¹ Cadier, “Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space,” 158.

“lighter”. Therefore he emphasized that rather than speaking of a sphere of influence, it should be named a sphere of privileged interests.³²²

In 1997, Russia signed a treaty on friendship, cooperation and partnership with Ukraine. In 1999, the largely declaratory Russian-Belarusian Union State was created. In October 2000, Moscow signed a treaty with Belarus and Kazakhstan establishing the Eurasian Economic Community (a precursor to the Eurasian Economic Union [EAEU]).³²³

Russian foreign policy took a different more active turn when Vladimir Putin took office, leading to a “deeper and more targeted engagement in the neighbourhood.”³²⁴ Where Yeltsin’s policies were “reactive and nostalgic”, Putin’s were “no-nonsense and assertive”, writes Trenin.³²⁵ Putin saw the former entities of the Soviet Union as foreign countries and not as parts of some “Greater Russia”. Therefore, advancing Russian interests in each of them was his primary objective. Trenin further writes that “the Russian Federation was no longer an empire, [...]; it was a great power, ready to throw its weight around in pursuit of naked self-interest.”³²⁶

Rising natural oil and gas prices allowed Russia to consolidate existing strategic footholds in its ‘near abroad’ or establish new ones. Moscow focused on acquiring shares in key sectors in CIS states’ economies as well as reinforcing its military presence in the region.³²⁷ According to Tolstrup, this led to Russia’s appliance of “economic sanctions and political pressure”, in order to push for a “greater geopolitical abidance and the facilitation of Russian investments and assets takeovers.”³²⁸ Cadier emphasizes that “this renewed and selective engagement was perceived as serving the dual purpose of pursuing Russia’s political and economic interests in the post-Soviet space and of preserving its national security.”³²⁹ Both objectives, described by Cadier, are written down in the 2000 Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation³³⁰, and the 2000 Russian Military Doctrine³³¹; both documents

³²² Trenin, "Russia's spheres of interest, not influence," 12.

³²³ Ofitserov-Belskiy and Sushentov, "Central and Eastern Europe," 285.

³²⁴ Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 159.

³²⁵ Trenin, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story*, 86.

³²⁶ Trenin, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story*, 86.

³²⁷ Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 159.

³²⁸ Tolstrup, J. 2013. *Russia vs. the EU: The Competition for Influence in Post-Soviet States*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 188; cited in Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 159.

³²⁹ Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 159.

³³⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 2000. *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*. Moscow; as quoted in Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 159.

³³¹ Russia’s Military Doctrine. 2000. *Nevsimaya gazeta*. reprinted at Arms Control Association. April 22. Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000-05/russias-military-doctrine>.

remained set throughout the decade. However, those objectives were rendered acute dependent on regional developments.³³² In the areas of the regions where ethnic conflict was simmering, Russia was not eager to change the status quo, but it recognized the borders of 1991. However, Moscow warned the warring parties that it would not allow them to change that status quo either.³³³

A critical juncture in Russia's policies towards its 'near abroad' can be observed after the color revolutions in Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004. Moscow interpreted both as a coup stirred up by the West. However, the Orange Revolution had the greater impact on Moscow, given Ukraine's strategic, economic, societal and symbolic importance for Russia.³³⁴

According to Mankoff, Ukraine's Orange Revolution "revealed deep underlying tensions within the [country's] political elite and exposed [it] to the competing geopolitical ambitions of Russia and the Western powers."³³⁵ For Wilson, these events triggered a redefinition of Russia's strategy in the region. This was due to Ukraine being the "most strategically important of the soviet successor states, as well as the birthplace of the Russian polity."³³⁶ Trenin, concerning Putin's thinking in 2003-2004, writes: "for any mega-project to succeed in the former Soviet space, Ukraine had to be part of it."³³⁷

Russia feared that some post-Soviet countries would lean towards Western integration in the military, political and economic realms. Thus Moscow changed its policies towards the region. "The strategic footholds established in neighbouring countries were not simply used as a platform to pursue Russia's interests but increasingly turned into levers activated to punctually foster political and economic destabilization and thus prevent states from turning towards Western structures," Cadier writes.³³⁸ Tensions grew when Ukraine and Georgia started pursuing NATO membership.³³⁹ Moscow's relations with Ukraine had never been easy but took a particular downturn throughout the Orange Revolution, and during both gas crises in 2006 and 2009. Russia-Georgia relations grew sour over the issue of the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, culminating in a short war in 2008.³⁴⁰

³³² Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 160.

³³³ Ofitserov-Belskiy and Sushentov, "Central and Eastern Europe," 285.

³³⁴ Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 160.

³³⁵ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*, 225.

³³⁶ Wilson, J. 2010. "The legacy of the color revolutions for Russian politics and foreign policy." *Problems of Post-Communism* 57 (2): 29; see also: Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 161.

³³⁷ Trenin, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story*, 88.

³³⁸ Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 161.

³³⁹ Trenin, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story*, 90; 93; also: Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 161.

³⁴⁰ Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 161; also: Trenin, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story*, 88-101.

After initially ranking low on Moscow's foreign policy priorities, the 'near abroad' celebrated its comeback at the top of Russia's foreign policy agenda by the second half of the 2000s.³⁴¹ Ever since then, the post-Soviet space has served as the crystallization point of Russian-Western antagonism, (e.g. Ukraine's and Georgia's drive towards NATO membership; the US ballistic missile defence shield in central Europe; or, the launch of the EaP).³⁴² When the EU launched the EaP in 2009, Russia immediately and vehemently condemned the program. In Moscow's view the EaP directly targeted Russia's positions in an effort to counter its influence in the post-Soviet space. Russia vociferously branded the initiative as an attempt to force the countries of the region to choose between the EU and Russia.³⁴³

During the early 2010s, relations with the West improved, leading to a 'reset' with the US, and a *Partnership for Modernization* with the EU.³⁴⁴ But most important of all, the situation in Ukraine seemed to turn out in Moscow's favor. In 2010, Yanukovich, swallowed by the Orange Revolution in 2004, was finally elected president of Ukraine, and renewed the lease of Russia's naval base in Sevastopol. In addition, he abandoned Ukraine's aspiration regarding NATO membership. Yanukovich, on the one hand gave Moscow the strategic reassurance not to politically and militarily integrate with the West while on the other hand he wished to develop economic relations with the EU. Herefore, he travelled to Brussels to negotiate a free trade agreement under the EU's EaP umbrella.³⁴⁵ According to Cadier, "in a context where Russia was eyeing Ukraine for its own economic integration plans (EAEU), this fuelled the geo-economic rivalry between Moscow and Brussels", culminating in the 2013/14 Ukraine crisis.³⁴⁶

Engaging with 'EU'rope

This chapter already provided a brief overview of EU-Russia relations. Hence, the following sub-chapter examines how Russia engages with Europe in a wider context. Ever since Putin became President, Russia has become evermore emboldened. Moscow increasingly

³⁴¹ Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 162.

³⁴² Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 162; for an overview on Russia-US relations, see Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 168-180.

³⁴³ See: Economist. 2010. "Europe's bear problem." *The Economist*. February 25. Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.economist.com/europe/2010/02/25/europes-bear-problem>; Pop, "EU expanding its 'sphere of influence,' Russia says."

³⁴⁴ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 169; Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 162.

³⁴⁵ Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 162.

³⁴⁶ Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 162.

challenged the assumption that the EU with all its values, norms, rules and institutions stands for Europe and 'European-ness' as a whole.³⁴⁷

Russia's approach in engaging with Europe has been a rather selective, conditional and fragmented one. Moscow prefers to engage directly with other countries and institutions on a bilateral basis. Russia's emphasis on bilateral relations with European countries on the expense of pan-European institutions such as the EU, the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights and the OSCE constitute the key features of Russia's foreign policy towards the continent.³⁴⁸

Germany

Of utmost importance to Russia's European direction is its relationship with Germany. This is due to Germany's dominant political and economic position in Europe.³⁴⁹ Germany is not only Russia's main trading partner in Europe, but also a primary energy customer.³⁵⁰ Most importantly, it opposed NATO's further enlargement in 2008 to include Georgia and Ukraine.³⁵¹ Then-US President George W. Bush proposed a fast-track admittance for both countries without waiting for them to qualify through a membership action plan, a move that was strongly opposed by Russia.³⁵² As reported by the *Financial Times*, Thomas Steg, Merkel's spokesman, said that "internal factors – political unrest in Georgia and divisions over Nato membership in Ukraine – meant they were 'not yet ripe' to gain Map [membership action plan] status, the final step before becoming an alliance member."³⁵³ The spokesman further stressed that "Russia's 'legitimate security concerns' regarding Nato's possible eastward enlargement must be considered by the alliance."³⁵⁴

Under Gerhard Schröder, Germany has taken a softer line towards Russia, especially concerning democratization and the rule of law. This circumstance has been seen quite favorably in Moscow since good relations with Germany are viewed as integral to

³⁴⁷ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 180.

³⁴⁸ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 181.

³⁴⁹ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 185.

³⁵⁰ Ernst & Young. 2013. "Russia 2013: Shaping Russia's Future." Ernst and Young's Attractivnes Survey, 22.

³⁵¹ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 185.

³⁵² DPA news agency. 2008. "Merkel Affirms German Stance Against NATO Expansion." *Deutsche Welle*. December 1. Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://www.dw.com/en/merkel-affirms-german-stance-against-nato-expansion/a-3840175>.

³⁵³ Williamson, H. 2008. "Germany blocks ex-Soviets' Nato entry." *Financial Times*. April 1. Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://www.ft.com/content/ab8eb6a6-ff44-11dc-b556-000077b07658>; also: DPA news agency, "Merkel Affirms German Stance Against NATO Expansion."

³⁵⁴ Williamson, "Germany blocks ex-Soviets' Nato entry."

strengthening Russia's position on the continent. Moscow hoped that Berlin would help in counterbalancing America's geopolitical position in Europe.³⁵⁵

Under Angela Merkel, relations have become more difficult due to her openly criticizing the authoritarian trends in Russia, in addition to its foreign policy. Importantly, Merkel did not give into Russia's constant attempts to sidestep the EU. Under her chancellorship, Germany supported a more effective multilateralism in Europe, thus becoming the 'antithesis' to Russia. The view of a sort of 'special relationship' between Berlin and Moscow is no longer true (if it ever was). The trend towards a more difficult relationship between Germany and Russia has been accelerated by the Ukraine crisis, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and ensuing crises.³⁵⁶

France

The relationship with France has been different to that with Germany in several aspects. The French public has been much more vociferous about human rights violations, arbitrary rule and pseudo-democracy in Russia.³⁵⁷ In the realm of economic and energy matters, Paris is of lesser significance to Russia than Berlin since "France is one of the European countries least dependent on Russian gas."³⁵⁸ Yet, another difference is France being much more actively engaged in international questions than Germany (e.g. in the Libyan case 2011, etc.).³⁵⁹

Seen from a historic perspective, the Franco-Russian relationship has been strong. Both countries see themselves as traditional great powers. In addition, leaders in both countries are accustomed to a realist view on international relations.³⁶⁰ Moscow particularly likes France's tradition of strategic independence.³⁶¹ In both countries there is strong Anti-Americanism, driving them "to ensure that the United States is not allowed to dominate world affairs."³⁶²

Until the crisis in Ukraine broke, Russia saw France's foreign policy as pragmatic and interest-driven. Together with Germany it argued for a central role for Russia in Euro-Atlantic

³⁵⁵ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 185-186.

³⁵⁶ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 186-187.

³⁵⁷ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 187; Mendras, M. 2013. "Russia-France: A Strained Political Relationship." *Russian Analytical Digest*, July 1, 7.

³⁵⁸ Mendras, "Russia-France: A Strained Political Relationship," 5-6.

³⁵⁹ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 187.

³⁶⁰ Gomart, T. 2007. "France's Russia Policy: Balancing Interests and Values." *Washington Quarterly* 30 (2): 147-148.

³⁶¹ Mendras, "Russia-France: A Strained Political Relationship," 2.

³⁶² Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 188.

security, but unlike Berlin, Paris “showed little inclination to speak out in support of smaller nations, whether within the EU or in the post-Soviet space.”³⁶³

Under François Hollande, France committed itself to building a more muscular EU. Paris also actively intervened in Libya. Moscow had hoped that it could steer Paris (as well as Berlin) away from a common European position.³⁶⁴ However, these hopes became increasingly unrealistic, largely due to French people whose perception of Russia and Putin took a nose-dive over time.³⁶⁵ As with Germany, the divides in Franco-Russian relations became ever wider following the Ukraine crisis, and the subsequent Russia-Ukraine conflict.³⁶⁶

Poland and the UK

Polish-Russian relations are historically problematic, a minefield full of all sorts of unresolved issues. Problematic issues include: the Polish-Russian wars in the sixteenth century, Imperial Russia’s role in the three partitions of Poland, Russian suppression of the Polish uprising of 1830 and 1863, the NKVD’s massacre at Katyn, Stalin’s alleged role in crushing the 1944 Warsaw uprising, and the Soviet Union’s suzerainty over Poland during the Cold War – to name just a few.³⁶⁷ Even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Polish-Russian relations remained difficult and were marked by a deep mistrust of each other. Warsaw constantly accuses Russia of harboring imperial ambitions, while Moscow tends to blame Poland for Russia’s flawed and difficult relationship with Europe.³⁶⁸

A slight improvement in the relationship started in 2009 after Putin had traveled to Gdansk in order to attend a ceremony commemorating seventy years since the start of World War II, and ended in 2010 when Polish president Lech Kaczyński and other Polish dignitaries died in a plane crash in Smolensk. Kaczyński was on his way to a joint visit with Putin at Katyn, the site where the NKVD massacred 22,000 Polish officers and civilians in 1940. Three days earlier Putin had knelt at the Polish memorial at Katyn and expressly laid the blame for the massacre on Stalin.³⁶⁹ However, at the same time Putin, during a press conference, accused

³⁶³ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 188.

³⁶⁴ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 188.

³⁶⁵ Mendras, "Russia-France: A Strained Political Relationship," 7.

³⁶⁶ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 188.

³⁶⁷ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 189; also Ozbay, F., and B. Aras. 2008. "Polish-Russian relations: History, geography and geopolitics." *Middle East Policy* 42: 29.

³⁶⁸ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 189.

³⁶⁹ Trenin, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story*, 113-114; Putin, V. 2010. "Владимир Путин о Катыни: "Этим преступлениям не может быть никаких оправданий" [Vladimir Putin on Katyn: "There can be no justification for these crimes"]." April 8. Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://hro.org/node/7908>; Quiring, M. 2010. "Putin

Poland of treating Russian prisoners of war badly during the Polish-Soviet war and alleged that this might have prompted Stalin's decision to order the massacre in 1940.³⁷⁰ According to Trenin, Russia's motives were more driven by political calculation, then historical reconciliation.³⁷¹

The relationship deteriorated even further after 2011. Russia reverted to its standard position concerning the World War II memory. Moscow spoke out against any attempts to rewrite history and the outcomes of the war, insisting that Poland and other countries in Eastern Europe are perpetually indebted to Russia due to its role in ending Nazi occupation.³⁷²

Tensions also mounted in the aftermath of the plane crash in Smolensk, in particular over the report by the commission investigating the crash in Russia, and Moscow's reluctance to return the remnants of the wreckage. The Kremlin's behavior only reinforced Polish suspicions of a Russian cover-up.³⁷³ Geopolitically, Moscow regards Warsaw as "one of the driving forces of the EaP and one of the key supporters of democratization, human rights, and efforts for greater EU cooperation with Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus—[and thus] playing against Moscow's interests."³⁷⁴

As with Poland, UK-Russia relations are highly problematic. Even though in the economic realm ties are considerable, the list of disagreements is long, including NATO enlargement, the wars in Iraq, Chechnya and Georgia, energy disputes, missile defense, Syria, and Ukraine. The UK and Russia virtually disagree on almost every high-profile foreign policy issue.³⁷⁵ According to Lo, for many in Moscow, "the UK is an irritating junior partner of the United States, largely alienated from the rest of Europe and with little independent influence in international affairs."³⁷⁶

und Tusk gedenken Massaker von Katyn." *Die Welt*. April 8. Accessed February 11, 2021.

https://www.welt.de/welt_print/politik/article7092828/Putin-und-Tusk-gedenken-Massaker-von-Katyn.html.

³⁷⁰ Putin, V. 2010. "Путин о роли Сталина в Катынской трагедии: Пресс-конференция на 7 апреля 2010 г. [Putin on Stalin's role in the Katyn tragedy: Press conference on April 7, 2010.]" *Youtube*. April 7. Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38NdPCmONQo>.

³⁷¹ Trenin, D. 2010. "Russia and Poland: a friendship that must not fail." *Open Democracy*. December 2. Accessed October 27, 2020. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/russia-and-poland-friendship-that-must-not-fail/>.

³⁷² Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 189.

³⁷³ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 189-190.

³⁷⁴ Wiśniewski, P. D. 2013. "Poland's Strategy for Dealing With Russia's Human Rights Record." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. March 1. Accessed October 27, 2020.

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2013/03/01/poland-s-strategy-for-dealing-with-russia-s-human-rights-record-pub-51087>.

³⁷⁵ Monaghan, A. 2013. "The UK and Russia - Towards A Renewed Relationship." *Russian Analytical Digest*, July 1: 8-10.

³⁷⁶ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 190-191.

The 'reset' in US and NATO relations with Russia, initially had a positive effect on UK-Russia relations too. Diplomatic dialogue was resumed after the Litvinenko affair.³⁷⁷ The murder of Alexander Litvinenko in London in 2006, and "the subsequent fractious requests for cooperation in the investigation and British demand for the extradition to the UK for trial of the Russian suspects, rejected by Moscow, not only resulted in mutual expulsions of diplomats, but has [also] created a block in the relationship" between London and Moscow.³⁷⁸ However, the 'reset' was not able to bridge the two fundamentally different positions of both countries, concerning Litvinenko, or the contents of their political and security relationship.³⁷⁹ London and Moscow set up the so called 2+2 format, wherein their respective foreign and defense ministers met.³⁸⁰ However, in contrast to their stated "readiness to resume relations", the official ties between London and Moscow remained "cool and insubstantial" at best.³⁸¹

The Ukraine crisis reinforced and invigorated simmering conflicts with Russia over various political issues in both Poland and the UK.

Russia's 'Trojan Horse' Policy towards the EU

Even though clear warning signs such as the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 existed, European capitals were relatively slow in recognizing Moscow's shift from strategic partner to strategic rival, in the late 2000s.³⁸² According to Orenstein and Kelemen, it is striking that major aspects of Russia's divide and rule campaign against the EU were barely noticed until the Ukraine crisis erupted in 2013-14.³⁸³

The question thereof is why did Russia turn against the EU? In order to understand this turn, it is pivotal to understand that Russia under Vladimir Putin sees itself as one of Europe's major powers. Following this understanding, Russia's fundamental interests are at odds with those of the European Union.³⁸⁴

³⁷⁷ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 191.

³⁷⁸ Monaghan, "The UK and Russia - Towards A Renewed Relationship," 10.

³⁷⁹ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 191.

³⁸⁰ Monaghan, "The UK and Russia - Towards A Renewed Relationship," 10.

³⁸¹ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 191; Monaghan, "The UK and Russia - Towards A Renewed Relationship," 9-10.

³⁸² Light, M. 2008. "Russia and the EU: Strategic Partners or Strategic Rivals?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 46 (Annual Review): 7-27.

³⁸³ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 90.

³⁸⁴ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 91.

The first conflict arises over the EU's normative agenda. The Union's focus on democracy promotion and free markets directly challenges Moscow. Since contemporary Russia is not a democracy, the EU's intent on spreading liberal democracy via the EaP is in direct confrontation with Moscow's preferred type of governing. The Kremlin much more prefers to surround itself with other regimes that embrace a similar kind of authoritarian politics and state capitalism, such as Lukashenko's Belarus or Viktor Yanukovich's Ukraine.³⁸⁵ For Putin, the EU's agenda of promoting democracy all throughout the post-Soviet space is a potential threat to his own regime.

The second conflict arises over the EU's material interests in the region, which many times are directly at odds with those of Russia. Since Russia's economy mainly relies on energy exports, the EU's efforts of coordination to strengthen its collective negotiating position concerning energy imports is detrimental for Moscow's economic interests.³⁸⁶ Equally threatening to Russia's economic interests in the region is the Union's promotion of preferential trade agreements with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.³⁸⁷

When Moscow started to perceive the EU as a competitor and existential threat to its governing regime, it sought to consolidate its own power in the region and across Eurasia. Additionally, Russia looked for ways in which it could undermine the EU and its position in the region. The disaggregated form of the EU's foreign and security policy made subtly deployed divide-and-rule tactics an obvious choice.³⁸⁸ Russian tactics were comprised of four elements.³⁸⁹

The first element of Russia's anti-EU strategy was an overt one. Its core feature was that the Kremlin sought to undermine EU power by simply not co-operating with EU institutions. Instead, Russia preferred to develop bilateral relations with individual EU member states. Moscow's goal was to make the EU look irrelevant and to show that only the national policies of the 'big three' – Germany, France and the UK – mattered. The Nord Stream

³⁸⁵ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 91; Cameron, D. R., and M. A. Orenstein. 2012. "Post-Soviet Authoritarianism: The Influence of Russia in its 'Near Abroad'." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 28 (1): 1-44; Tolstrup, J. 2009. "Studying a Negative External Action: Russia's Management of Stability and Instability in the 'Near Abroad'." *Democratization* 16 (5): 922-944.

³⁸⁶ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 91; see also: Lavrov, S. 2013. "State of the Union. Russia-EU: Prospects for Partnership in the Changing World." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 51 (Annual Review): 7-8.

³⁸⁷ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 91.

³⁸⁸ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 91.

³⁸⁹ According to Orenstein and Kelemen, Russia conducted its divide-and-rule tactics in a "multi-faceted" way. In total the authors present four dimensions of Russian divide-and-rule tactics. See: Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 91-92.

pipeline would be an excellent example of this policy. Additionally, the Kremlin firmly rejected efforts by the EU to have Gazprom comply with EU rules. By asserting that its own national legislation superseded that of the EU, Moscow denied the Union's authority. As if that was not enough, the Kremlin also actively encouraged nation states to ignore the EU, often in pursuit of natural resource profits, and thereby undermining EU unity.³⁹⁰

The second element of Russia's anti-EU strategy had a covert dimension. Ever since Putin had become President, Moscow sought to expand its presence in Brussels by „placing informants and agents of influence in EU institutions.“³⁹¹ This resulted in regular embarrassing leaks coming out of Brussels, mostly at times when issues regarding Russia had been discussed.³⁹² A notable example of this is the leaked EU draft proposal for revising sanctions on Russia in January 2015.³⁹³

The third element of Russia's anti-EU strategy sought to undermine the EU from within by actively cultivating 'Trojan horses' within the Union. This strategy tried to identify member states that were either disgruntled over the EU, or that could be persuaded to represent Russia's views within the Union.³⁹⁴ Scholars like Leonard and Popescu have tried to map out which EU countries have the closest ties to or sympathy with Russia.³⁹⁵ However, it has to be pointed out that the list of states with close ties to and sympathy with Russia is constantly changing. This is due to politicians who are favorably disposed or have an antipathy towards Russia, being constantly elected or leaving power.³⁹⁶ Nonetheless, certain countries are more likely to support pro-Russian policies, even though individual party preferences still exert a greater influence, as Carta and Braghiroli write.³⁹⁷

In 2015, the Russian International Affairs Council regarded Hungary, Italy, Greece and Cyprus as the most pro-Russian countries within the EU.³⁹⁸ Back in 2007, Leonard and Popescu also identified Greece and Cyprus as 'Trojan horses'. The same study defined Italy as a

³⁹⁰ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 92.

³⁹¹ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 92.

³⁹² Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 92.

³⁹³ Mogherini, F. 2015. "Rebutting Controversy, EU Foreign Policy Chief says Europe is United on Russia." *EEAS*. January 22. Accessed November 12, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/33053/rebutting-controversy-eu-foreign-policy-chief-says-europe-united-russia_fr.

³⁹⁴ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 92.

³⁹⁵ Leonard and Popescu, *A Power Audit of EU-Russia Relations*.

³⁹⁶ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 92.

³⁹⁷ Carta, C., and S. Braghiroli. 2011. "Measuring Russia's Snag on the Fabric of the EU's International Society." *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 7 (2): 260-290; quoted after Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 92.

³⁹⁸ Russian International Affairs Council. 2015. *The Ukrainian Challenge for Russia*. Working Paper 24/2015, Moscow: Russian International Affairs Council.

‘strategic partner’ and Hungary as a ‘friendly pragmatist’.³⁹⁹ All of the countries mentioned have substantial economic links with Russia; therefore, it is hardly surprising that they have prioritized their relations with Russia. Additionally, these countries were among those most outspoken against EU sanctions against Russia.⁴⁰⁰

The fourth and last element of Russia’s anti-EU strategy included Moscow’s support of anti-EU parties. Herein, the Kremlin’s goal was to weaken and divide the EU over the long term. Even before the Ukraine crisis, Russia quietly supported a variety of right and left-wing anti-EU parties. However, the Kremlin instrumentalized these parties in order to gain legitimacy for its invasion of Crimea.⁴⁰¹ Prominent European right-wing parties that (allegedly) were on Moscow’s pay-roll include the *French Front National*, Bulgaria’s *Ataka*, Hungary’s *Jobbik*, and *Golden Dawn* in Greece. Unsurprisingly, all of these parties are anti-EU, anti-NATO but positively disposed towards Moscow.⁴⁰² However, Russia did not only support right-wing anti-EU parties, but it also supported parties from the left spectrum, Germany’s *Die Linke* being the most prominent among them. An important tool with which the Kremlin has attacked the European (and Western) unity is its television network. Networks, such as Russia Today (RT), almost exclusively promote the voices of anti-EU parties.⁴⁰³

Orenstein and Kelemen point out that Russia took advantage of the EU’s specific form of disaggregation and engaged in “a concerted campaign to undermine the functioning of EU institutions in foreign and security policy by undermining their unity, subjecting them to damaging leaks, and promoting anti-EU viewpoints through party financing, media promotion, and, above all, the cultivation of ties with ‘Trojan horse’ states.”⁴⁰⁴

³⁹⁹ Leonard and Popescu, *A Power Audit of EU-Russia Relations*.

⁴⁰⁰ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 93.

⁴⁰¹ Mareš, M, and M. Laryš. 2015. "The Transnational Relations of the Contemporary Russian Extreme Right." *Europe-Asia Studies* 67 (7): 1056-1078.

⁴⁰² Klapsis, A. 2015. *An Unholy Alliance: The European Far Right and Putins Russia*. Brussels: Wilfried Martens Center for European Studies; Orenstein, M. 2014. "Putin's Western Allies." *Foreign Affairs*. March 25. Accessed November 12, 2020. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-03-25/putins-western-allies>; Political Capital. 2014. "The Russian Connection: The Spread of Pro-Russian Policies on the European Far Right." *Policy Documentation Center*. March 14. Accessed November 12, 2020. http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00007035/01/PC_Russian-Connection_2014.pdf; Polyakova, A. 2014. "Strange Bedfellows: Putin and Europe's Far Right." *World Affairs* 177 (3): 36-40.

⁴⁰³ Troianovski, A. 2014. "Russia Ramps Up Information War in Europe." *Wall Street Journal*. August 21. Accessed November 12, 2020. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-ramps-up-information-war-in-europe-1408675046>; Nelson, E., R. Orttung, and A. Livshen. 2015. "Measuring RT's Impact on YouTube." *Russian Analytical Digest*, December 8: 2-8.

⁴⁰⁴ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 93.

Russia-Ukraine Relations

Under Yeltsin, Russia promoted the CIS in the hope of binding Ukraine and other post-Soviet republics to Russia.⁴⁰⁵ Other than being a means for a civilized divorce,⁴⁰⁶ the CIS was, according to Götz, an organization used “to check the foreign-policy autonomy of the other post-Soviet republics.”⁴⁰⁷ However, Ukraine never really embraced its CIS membership.⁴⁰⁸ Kyiv not only amended the agreement numerous times before ratifying it, but was also not willing to grant the Russian military rights to have a military base on Crimea since it rejected anything that would limit Ukraine's sovereignty thus claiming “all military formations and facilities within Ukraine’s borders.”⁴⁰⁹ Irritated by the Ukrainian behavior, Moscow ramped up economic pressure by raising the price of natural gas exported to Ukraine.⁴¹⁰

In 1994, Ukraine joined NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PFP) program.⁴¹¹ After Kuchma became President of Ukraine in 1994, Kyiv continued its ‘flirt’ with NATO as part of its ‘multi-vectored’ foreign policy. The Kremlin showed its consternation with Kyiv by exerting diplomatic and economic pressure.⁴¹² Moscow stepped up its effort to keep its influence over Crimea and maintain a hold over the Black Sea Fleet that was based there.⁴¹³ In 1997, Russia and Ukraine signed an agreement splitting the Black Sea Fleet into two halves, the bigger of which went to Russia. In addition, the agreement enabled Moscow to lease several major

⁴⁰⁵ Götz, “Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy,” 307.

⁴⁰⁶ Trenin, “Russia's spheres of interest, not influence,” 7.

⁴⁰⁷ Götz, “Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy,” 307.

⁴⁰⁸ Götz, “Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy,” 307.

⁴⁰⁹ D’Anieri, P. 1997. “Dilemmas of Interdependence: Autonomy, Prosperity, and Sovereignty in Ukraine’s Russia Policy.” *Problems of Post-Communism* 44 (1): 21-22; Götz, “Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy,” 307. Kyiv's reluctance to CIS membership stems in part from discourse about Ukraine in Russian-elite circles. In 1992, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the leader of the far-right nationalist Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia, claimed that Ukraine has never been a state nor will it ever be one. In line with his inflammatory rhetoric, he not only called for the annexation of Crimea but of Poland, Finland, and Alaska as well – as these territories constitute as being within Russia's “historical borders.” Even the then Vice President of the Russian Federation, Aleksandr Rutskoy, questioned the rightfulness of Crimea's belonging to Ukraine, when he visited the peninsula in April 1993. On July 10, 1993, the Russian Parliament passed a resolution, declaring the Crimean city of Sevastopol – which harbours Russia's Black Sea Fleet – to be a Russian city. See: Der Spiegel. 1992. “Alaska inbegriffen.” *Der Spiegel*. June 22. Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13688975.html>; Schmemmann, S. 1993. “Russian Parliament Votes a Claim to Ukrainian Port of Sevastopol.” *The New York Times*. July 10. Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/07/10/world/russian-parliament-votes-a-claim-to-ukrainian-port-of-sevastopol.html>.

⁴¹⁰ Götz, “Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy,” 307.

⁴¹¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. 2020. “Relations with Ukraine.” November 11. Accessed January 3, 2021. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_37750.htm.

⁴¹² Miller, E. A. 2006. *To balance or not to balance: Alignment theory and the Commonwealth of Independent States*. Burlington: Ashgate, 106.

⁴¹³ Götz, “Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy,” 308.

naval facilities on Crimean territory, including Sevastopol's deep-water port, for the next 20 years.⁴¹⁴

Even though these agreements surely are beneficial to and a foreign policy victory for Russia, Kyiv still refused to join the CIS' Collective Security Treaty. Ukraine signed a partnership agreement with NATO instead, and thereby increased its cooperation with the Alliance.⁴¹⁵ Moscow worryingly looked upon the growing ties between Kyiv and NATO, and generally opposed the Alliance's eastward expansion. For Götz, this "broad-based opposition was partly a result of historical enmity with the Alliance, but it was also based on simple strategic calculations."⁴¹⁶

Under Putin, Russia initially took a soft power approach. Russian companies increased their economic operations in Ukraine by investing heavily in various economic sectors. This new approach seemed to pay off when Kuchma declared a 'strategic partnership' between Ukraine and Russia.⁴¹⁷

During the 2004 presidential elections in Ukraine, Moscow heavily supported Viktor Yanukovich, both financially and politically. Yanukovich's campaign got millions of dollars from the Russian government and state-owned firms. The Kremlin even sent its own political technologists to Kyiv, in support of Yanukovich.⁴¹⁸ However, the election turned out in a way, not expected and favored by Moscow. Yanukovich was initially declared the winner, but about half a million Ukrainians protested against the fraud election on Kyiv's Maidan square. The series of events that later became known as the Orange Revolution, prompted a re-vote which was won by opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko. Yushchenko had a more pro-Western orientation and re-orientated Ukraine more towards the EU and NATO.⁴¹⁹ Under Yushchenko,

⁴¹⁴ Miller, *To balance or not to balance*, 107.

⁴¹⁵ Wolczuk, R. 2003. *Ukraine's Foreign and Security Policy, 1991-2000*. London: Routledge, 107-110, quoted after Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 308.

⁴¹⁶ Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 308. In his explanation on what drove Moscow's strategic calculations, Götz quotes then-Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov: "If NATO [...] comes to engulf the territory of the Warsaw Pact, from our point of view, the geopolitical situation will deteriorate. Why? Because *intentions change*. [...] Obviously I do not believe that NATO will attack us. However, on a hypothetical level a situation might emerge in which we will be forced to act in a way which is not in our best interest." Quoted after Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 308-309.

⁴¹⁷ Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 309.

⁴¹⁸ Kuzio, T. 2005. "Russian Policy toward Ukraine during Elections." *Demokratizatsiya* 13 (4): 495-509; McFaul, M. 2007. "Ukraine Imports Democracy: External Influences on the Orange Revolution." *International Security* 32 (2): 70.

⁴¹⁹ Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 310.

Ukraine also announced its intentions to “not renew the Russian lease of military facilities in Crimea”, after 2017.⁴²⁰

Moscow thought to reign Kyiv in by increasing the price of fuel and petroleum products sold to Ukraine. In December 2005, TVEL (a subsidiary company of Rosatom) announced its plans to raise the price of nuclear fuel. Additionally, Putin informed Kyiv that Gazprom too would increase its gas prices for Ukraine.⁴²¹ Götz writes that even though Moscow presented its decisions as driven by purely commercial considerations, it is nonetheless fair to say “that Russia’s price-setting policy was animated at least in part by geopolitical considerations.”⁴²² Moscow also exploited dissatisfaction on Crimea, and sent a variety of state-linked organizations, such as Cossacks, the Orthodox Church, or Nashi⁴²³, to the peninsula.⁴²⁴

At its 2008 Bucharest summit, NATO “declared that Ukraine and Georgia would join the Alliance at a future date.”⁴²⁵ Unsurprisingly, Moscow was not happy and objected vociferously.⁴²⁶ In response to yet another dispute over gas prices, Moscow turned off the gas to Ukraine. In 2010, Ukrainian presidential elections worked out in Moscow’s favor, when Yanukovich was elected president.⁴²⁷

Yanukovich, re-orientated Ukraine’s direction towards Russia. Russia, on the other hand, employed a range of soft-power tools to woo Ukraine back into its orbit. The Kremlin offered Kyiv to write off parts of Ukraine’s energy debt, additionally promising favorable loans and credits. Moscow also agreed to keep gas prices low. In return, Kyiv agreed to extend the Russian lease concerning military facilities on Crimea until 2042.⁴²⁸ In addition, the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) passed a law that in its effect barred Ukraine from NATO

⁴²⁰ Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 310.

⁴²¹ Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 310.

⁴²² Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 310.

⁴²³ Nashi was a Russian youth organization founded in 2005 and dissolved in 2013. The aim of the organization was to support the political course of the United Russia party led by President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev. Nevertheless, it was not an officially recognized youth association of neither the party nor government. Opponents of the organization and western commentators also called Nashi – in analogue to the *Hitlerjugend* – the *Putinjugend*. See: Van Herpen, M. 2015. *Putin's Wars: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*. 2. Edition. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 123-142.

⁴²⁴ Kuzio, T. 2009. "Strident, Ambiguous and Duplicitous: Ukraine and the 2008 Russia-Georgia War." *Demokratizatsiya* 17 (4): 358-360.

⁴²⁵ Weitz, R. 2010. *Global Security Watch - Russia: A Reference Handbook*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 90-91, quoted after Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 311.

⁴²⁶ Weitz, *Global Security Watch - Russia: A Reference Handbook*, 90-91, quoted after Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 311.

⁴²⁷ Vanderhill, R. 2013. "Ukraine A Democratic Post-Soviet State?" In *International Dimensions of Authoritarian Persistence: Lessons from post-Soviet States*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 149-153.

⁴²⁸ Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 312.

membership.⁴²⁹ Moscow also built close ties with Kyiv in the fields of security and military cooperation and promoted regional integration projects (such as the EAEU). According to some scholars, the EAEU's aim was to consolidate Russia's influence over its neighbours, including Ukraine.⁴³⁰ Even though the EAEU might be considered to be "a genuine attempt to deepen economic cooperation between Russia and other post-Soviet countries", its primary aim, however, was "to curtail the influence of outside powers and trading blocs, such as the EU, in the post-Soviet space."⁴³¹

Still, Yanukovych did not completely abandon Ukraine's multi-vector foreign policy. Kyiv resisted Moscow's pressure to become a member state of the EAEU, and instead coquetted with building closer ties to the EU. Negotiations between Kyiv and Brussels over an AA intensified in 2012. Moscow unsurprisingly opposed the agreement and Kyiv's cuddling-up to the EU. The Kremlin's reasons to oppose the AA were not only economic, but much more of a geopolitical nature.⁴³² This was due to clauses included in the agreements that would set forth a close cooperation in matters of foreign and security policy between the EU and Ukraine.⁴³³

Given this background and Russia's realist foreign policy prism, it is hardly surprising that the Kremlin wanted to prevent Yanukovych from signing the AA.⁴³⁴ In order to dissuade Yanukovych from going through with it, Moscow used various tools to exert pressure on Kyiv including trade restrictions on Ukrainian goods. Simultaneously, Moscow offered Kyiv the carrot of forthcoming economic benefits.⁴³⁵ Initially, this dual track approach of carrot and stick seemed to work. At summit in Vilnius in November, 2013, Yanukovych, much to the shock

⁴²⁹ Kuzio, T. 2010. "Ukraine Closes Road to NATO Membership." *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 7(130). July 7. Accessed October 28, 2020. <https://jamestown.org/program/ukraine-closes-road-to-nato-membership/>; Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 312.

⁴³⁰ Adomeit, H. 2011. *Russia and its Near Neighbourhood: Competition and Conflict with the EU*. Natolin Research Papers 04/2011, Warsaw: Department of European Interdisciplinary Studies, College of Europe; Popescu, N. 2014. *Eurasian Union: The Real, the Imaginary and the Likely*. Chaillot Paper 132, Paris: EUISS; Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 312-313.

⁴³¹ Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 313; based on Adomeit, *Russia and its Near Neighbourhood*; and Popescu, *Eurasian Union*.

⁴³² Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 313.

⁴³³ See Article 7 of: European Union. 2014. "Association Agreement: between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part." *Official Journal of the European Union* 161: 3-2137.

⁴³⁴ Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy," 314.

⁴³⁵ Grytsenko, O., and S. Walker. 2013. "Ukraine faces critical east-west tug of war over EU association agreement." *The Guardian*. November 20. Accessed October 28, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/20/ukraine-eu-association-agreement-europe-russia>.

of the EU, withdrew from signing the AA in favor of a major economic deal with Russia.⁴³⁶ Yanukovych's decision led to protests on Kyiv's central Maidan square, paving the way for the events described in chapter four.

3.4 Conclusions and Take-Aways

EU-Russia relations even though never really easy have grown sour over the years to a point where some even talked about a new cold war. However, this renewed antagonism was not predestined. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, EU-Russia relations were free of the kind of hostilities that characterized the NATO-Russia relationship. The EU's 1999 Common Strategy for Russia attests to that by welcoming "Russia's return to its rightful place in the European family in a spirit of friendship, co-operation, fair accommodation of interests and on the foundations of shared values enshrined in the common heritage of European civilization".⁴³⁷ However, Putin's Russia became less and less interested in cooperation with the EU. This steady deterioration of the EU-Russia relationship has found its ultimate climax in the Ukraine crisis that led to the annexation in Crimea and the war in the Donbass.

In May 2009, the EU launched the Eastern Partnership addressed to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The EaP regionalized instruments of the pre-existing ENP. The ENP offers a framework that fosters domestic reforms in the political, economic and administrative realms. Thus, the EU offers privileged access to its internal market, financial aid and visa facilities in exchange (but not EU membership).⁴³⁸ When the EU launched its regionalized EaP framework, Russia condemned it vociferously.⁴³⁹ Russia viewed the ENP, on the one hand, as a "rather shrewd strategy"; additionally, there was "a certain appreciation of its rationale."⁴⁴⁰ On the other hand, Russia rejected the ENP altogether as it implied convergence to EU norms.⁴⁴¹ Cadier writes that "until the advent of the EaP, the ENP

⁴³⁶ Trenin, D. 2014. *The Ukraine Crisis and the Resumption of Great-Power Rivalry*. Moscow: Carnegie Moscow Center, 4-6.

⁴³⁷ European Council. 1999. *Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

⁴³⁸ EEAS, *Eastern Partnership*.

⁴³⁹ Pop, "EU expanding its 'sphere of influence,' Russia says."

⁴⁴⁰ Haukkala, H. 2010. *The EU-Russia Strategic Partnership: The Limits of Post-Sovereignty in International Relations*. London: Routledge, 165.

⁴⁴¹ Haukkala, *The EU-Russia Strategic Partnership*, 165.

was read more in relation to Russia's own status vis-à-vis the EU than in the light of its interests in the post-Soviet space."⁴⁴²

Before the crisis in Ukraine erupted, the theoretical and analytical frameworks concerning EU neighbourhood policy were guided by several assumptions. First, the EU's approach towards its Eastern Neighbours resembled to a certain extent the concept of 'critical geopolitics', as described in chapter two.⁴⁴³

Arguments advanced by academics revolve around the ENP pursuing normative ends through value-shaping persuasion and rules-based influence.⁴⁴⁴ For Schimmelfennig, the EU's aim was to support more accountable governance. This should be achieved by technical areas of sectoral cooperation based on the EU's own internal legal rules.⁴⁴⁵ Raik argues that the EU's core approach towards its neighbourhood is characterized by non-normative and cooperative mediation.⁴⁴⁶ Lavenex and Schimmelfennig advance the argument that "external governance proceeded primarily through participatory networks, mixed with a more hierarchically functionalist logic of rules-transfer to non-EU states."⁴⁴⁷ For Thomas, the EU's foreign policy is infused by an ethos of building a joint community. This ethos is based on cooperative rather than competitive bargaining.⁴⁴⁸

According to Youngs, ENP dynamics "were not about geopolitical rivalry but the way that governments weighed up the costs and benefits of adopting certain EU rules."⁴⁴⁹ Cadier argues, that the EaP was based on the EU's 'structural power'.⁴⁵⁰

Those are the theoretical and analytical prisms under which the ENP and EaP are viewed. However, those prisms predominantly avoid the shortcomings of traditional

⁴⁴² Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 166.

⁴⁴³ Makarychev, A., and A. Devyatkov. 2014. "The EU in Eastern Europe: Has Normative Power become Geopolitical?" PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo 310, George Washington University, Washington, DC.

⁴⁴⁴ Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again."

⁴⁴⁵ Schimmelfennig, F. 2011. "How substantial is substance? Concluding reflections on the study of substance in EU democracy promotion." *European Foreign Affairs Review* 16 (4): 727-734.

⁴⁴⁶ Raik, K. 2012. "The EU and mass protests in the neighbourhood: Models of normative (in)action." *European Foreign Affairs Review* 17 (4): 553-576.

⁴⁴⁷ Lavenex, S., and F. Schimmelfennig. 2011. "EU rules beyond EU borders: Theorizing external governance in European politics." *Journal of European Public Policy* 16 (6): 791-812, quoted after Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 56.

⁴⁴⁸ Thomas, D. 2011. *Making EU Foreign Policy*. Basingstoke: Macmillan; quoted after Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 56.

⁴⁴⁹ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 56.

⁴⁵⁰ Cadier, "Eastern Partnership vs Eurasian Union?," 78. "Structural power refers to the 'power to shape and determine the structures of the [regional] political economy within which other states, their political institutions and their economic enterprises have to operate", Strange, S. 1994. *States and Markets*. London: Continuum, quoted after Cadier, "Eastern Partnership vs Eurasian Union?".

geopolitical thinking. This led to a more critical view of the ENP/EaP.⁴⁵¹ For Börzel and van Hüllen the most striking fact about the standard ENP/EaP descriptions was that they made no reference to Russia, and were predominantly focused on variables internal to EU deliberations, institutional competences, and inter-state trade-offs.⁴⁵²

During and after the Ukraine crisis, the arguments advanced attested to the EaP's lack of geopolitical impetus as well as its insufficiently developed positive-sum form of inclusion. One particular criticism was that the EU's anti-geopolitical liberal principles would bring about all kinds of security gains. This led to the EaP being neither geopolitical nor an offer for full integration. Concerns were voiced that this halfway approach would turn the EaP into a mechanism for "keeping EaP partners away from Russia."⁴⁵³

The assessments offered by academics highlighted that the EU's approach of supporting reforms and building deeper networks of effective socialization had only been of limited success.⁴⁵⁴ Youngs writes that "EU policies were not able to cope with the incipient return of very old-style politics."⁴⁵⁵ For Wolczuk, the EU had a tendency towards "regulatory overload." Even worse, the EU provided "no road map to facilitate [the EaP states] economic integration even though the AA envisages [...] approximation of 80-90% of the [EU's] acquis."⁴⁵⁶ According to Wolczuk, EaP policies "approached in terms of what the single market can absorb rather than focussing on the interests and needs of the partner country to make integration into the single market a feasible prospect."⁴⁵⁷ Hence the EU, glossed "over the domestic and geopolitical context in the eastern neighbourhood", thereby "marginalizing the costs that the EaP countries had to pay for complying with EU's own offer but also the costs imposed by Russia for moving towards the EU."⁴⁵⁸ Forsberg and Haukala criticize that the EU simply did not see the emerging Russian threat, even though there were visible signs. For them, it should have been clear to European governments that liberal cooperation and

⁴⁵¹ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 57.

⁴⁵² Börzel, T. A., and V. van Hüllen. 2014. "One voice, one message, but conflicting goals: cohesiveness and consistency in the European Neighbourhood Policy." *Journal of European Public Policy* 21 (7): 1033-1049; quoted after Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 59.

⁴⁵³ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 59.

⁴⁵⁴ Korosteleva, E. 2013. "Evaluating the role of partnership in the European Neighbourhood Policy: The Eastern neighbourhood." *Eastern Journal of European Studies* 4 (2): 11-36, quoted after Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 59.

⁴⁵⁵ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 60, based on Lehne, S. 2015. *Time to Reset the European Neighbourhood Policy*. Brussels: Carnegie Europe.

⁴⁵⁶ Wolczuk, K. 2014. "Ukraine and the EU: turning the Association Agreement into a success story." Policy Brief, European Policy Centre, Brussels.

⁴⁵⁷ Wolczuk, "Ukraine and the EU."

⁴⁵⁸ Wolczuk, "Ukraine and the EU."

interdependence was not working as initially intended. One of the biggest errors of the EU was in not fully realizing that Russia started to perceive the basically harmless EaP policies as far more threatening than had been intended and anticipated.⁴⁵⁹

However, did Russia really perceive the EaP as a geopolitical threat? Some policymakers in the EU, notably in Poland and the Czech Republic, might have seen the EaP as an instrument to counter Russia's influence in the region. Nonetheless, the EaP's actual policy output can hardly be seen as an active rollback policy against Russia.⁴⁶⁰ According to Copsey and Pomorska, for the EaP to be accepted by all member states at the EU level, "it had to be designed in administrative rather than political terms, and it had to be infused with constructive ambiguity."⁴⁶¹

When it comes to explaining Russia's actions in the shared neighbourhood, different explanations are put forward. Among the various explanations, usually two strands of narrative are advanced predominantly. The first narrative presumes that Russia's history, geography and authoritarian political culture pushes the Kremlin towards expansionism, thereby seeking to impose its institutions on others. The second narrative sees Russia as simply reacting to Western strategic expansionism in the region. Even though these explanations might include some relevant factors such as domestic politics and security perceptions, both narratives nonetheless fail to sufficiently explain Russia's actions in the region, in particular towards the EaP and Ukraine.⁴⁶² David Cadier argues that "Moscow's policies partly proceed from a reaction to EU structural power in the region but that the interpretation of EU policies and the choice of instruments in response are mediated by domestic political factors and by collective beliefs about the nature of international relations and about Russia's security."⁴⁶³

Scholars, Trenin and Cadier among them, interpret Russia's EU policies in the post-Soviet space through the prism of geo-economic and geo-cultural competition. Both argue that competition between the EU and Russia concerning Ukraine's future geo-economic

⁴⁵⁹ Forsberg, T., and H. Haukkala. 2016. "Could It Have Been Different? The Evolution of the EU-Russian Conflict and Its Alternatives." In *Avoiding a New 'Cold War': The Future of EU-Russia Relations in the Context of the Ukraine Crisis*, edited by C. Nitoiu. London: LSE Ideas Report, 12.

⁴⁶⁰ Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 167.

⁴⁶¹ Copsey, N., and K. Pomorska. 2010. "Poland's power and influence in the European Union: The case of its eastern policy." *Comparative European Politics* 8 (3): 304-326, quoted after Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 167.

⁴⁶² Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 156-157.

⁴⁶³ Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 157.

orientation was the spark igniting the fire that led to the Ukraine crisis.⁴⁶⁴ The roots of the crisis can be traced back to the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, which effectively halted NATO expansion for Georgia as well as Ukraine.⁴⁶⁵ An additional contributing factor to the origin of the crisis can be found in the global financial crisis which, according to Trenin, gave “more credence to regional economic arrangements.”⁴⁶⁶ However, “the EU and Russia drew different conclusions from the war” in Georgia and the financial crisis.⁴⁶⁷ The EU launched the EaP in 2009 in order to associate Ukraine and five other countries of the region economically and politically with the EU. However, the EaP was not as a step towards future EU enlargement, but was rather an attempt to create a ‘ring of friends’ or a ‘zone of comfort’ along the Union’s eastern border by exporting the EU’s internal model (norms, standards and values).⁴⁶⁸ This led to Vladimir Putin to perceive the EU’s normative and regulative power as detrimental to Russia’s interests in the shared neighbourhood.⁴⁶⁹ This means that Moscow views the EU as a geo-economic competitor in the region and the EaP as the Union’s instrument in this competition.⁴⁷⁰

The second half of the 2000s can be characterized by “a growing clash of normative ambitions” between both parties.⁴⁷¹ Among the many conclusions Moscow drew from the color revolutions, the most important one was about the need to “master the Western tools of legitimizing the political processes in the post-Soviet space.”⁴⁷² Sergei Lavrov made this clear when he wrote that Russia needed to work towards presenting itself as a distinct value system. Moscow needed to offer an alternative political, economic and cultural model for the region.⁴⁷³

Therefore, Russia set up its own 'region-building' project, the Eurasian Customs Union initiated in 2009. The Customs Union was followed by the creation of the EAEU in 2014. Both

⁴⁶⁴ Trenin, *The Ukraine Crisis*, 4; Cadier, "Eastern Partnership vs Eurasian Union?"; Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space."

⁴⁶⁵ Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 157.

⁴⁶⁶ Trenin, *The Ukraine Crisis*, 4.

⁴⁶⁷ Trenin, *The Ukraine Crisis*, 4.

⁴⁶⁸ Trenin, *The Ukraine Crisis*, 4; Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 168.

⁴⁶⁹ Putin, V. 2014. "Speech at the meeting of the Customs Union Heads of State with President of Ukraine and European Union representatives." August 26. Accessed November 8, 2020. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46494>.

⁴⁷⁰ Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 168.

⁴⁷¹ Averre, D. 2009. "Competing rationalities: Russia, the EU and the "Shared Neighbourhood"." *Europe-Asia Studies* 61 (10): 1689-1713, quoted after Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 168.

⁴⁷² Frolov, V. 2005. "Democracy by remote control." *Russia in Global Affairs* 3 (4): 176.

⁴⁷³ Lavrov, S. 2007. "The present and the future of global politics." *Russia in Global Affairs* 5 (2): 8-21, quoted after Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 169.

projects envisioned Ukraine at their core.⁴⁷⁴ Through these projects Russia hoped to gain certain economic benefits and a better bargaining position vis-à-vis its big continental neighbours – the EU and China. For Russia, Ukraine with a population of almost 45 million would naturally be the most important country to join its regional project, thereby creating a “single economic space” in a “Greater Europe” from “Lisbon to Vladivostok.”⁴⁷⁵

Both the EU and Russia saw Ukraine as a vital part of their own (geopolitical/geo-economical) regional projects.⁴⁷⁶ In the end, Trenin writes that both “Russia and the EU came to see Ukraine’s choice [between the two opposing regional projects] as a zero-sum game and worked hard to influence the outcome.”⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁴ Trenin, *The Ukraine Crisis*, 4.

⁴⁷⁵ Trenin, *The Ukraine Crisis*, 4.

⁴⁷⁶ Trenin, *The Ukraine Crisis*, 4.

⁴⁷⁷ Trenin, *The Ukraine Crisis*, 4.

4. The Euromaidan Revolution and the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Ever since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has undergone many upheavals during the transformation of its political, economic and social system. The crackdown on the *Euromaidan* protests at Kyiv's central Maidan square in February 2014, together with the annexation of Crimea and the war in the Donbass, constitute without a doubt one of the bloodiest episodes of post-communism Ukrainian history so far.

In order to place the EU response towards the political crisis in Kyiv and Russian aggression in Eastern Ukraine, this chapter chronicles the events from Viktor Yanukovich's decision not to sign the Association Agreement with the EU at the EaP summit in Vilnius in 2013, to the Minsk II agreement.

4.1 Euromaidan

In November 2013, at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, the Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich shocked the EU when he refused to sign Ukraine's Association Agreement with the block. His bowing to Russian pressure and the refusal to sign the AA were a critical juncture that quickly led to a worsening political and societal situation in Ukraine.⁴⁷⁸ A couple of weeks later, Ukraine's political situation turned completely when Yanukovich entered into contractual commitments with Russia, including a \$ 15 billion financial package.⁴⁷⁹

The growing discontent with Yanukovich's decision and his rule in general erupted in spontaneous street protests on Kyiv's central Maidan square. The ongoing initially peaceful protests – which would later on be tagged as *Euromaidan* protests – increased by the day. January 16, 2014 can be seen as a catalyst for the protest movement.⁴⁸⁰ On that day, Yanukovich signed new laws into force, thereby restricting freedom of expression and

⁴⁷⁸ Malyarenko, T. 2016. "A gradually escalating conflict: Ukraine from Euromaidan to the war with Russia." In *The Routledge Handbook of Ethnic Conflict*, edited by K. Cordell and S. Wolff. London: Routledge, 350.

⁴⁷⁹ FAZ. 2013. "Putin gewährt Kiew Finanzhilfen in Milliardenhöhe." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. December 17. Accessed November 10, 2020. <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/ukraine-putin-gewaehrt-kiew-finanzhilfen-in-milliardenhoehe-12715687.html>.

⁴⁸⁰ Tchakarova, V. 2014. *Chronologie der Krise in der Ukraine: eine aktuelle Bestandsaufnahme (Teil 1)*. Fokus 3, AIES, Hainburg/Donau: Austria Institute für Europa- und Sicherheitspolitik, 1.

demonstration, and thus sparking a great wave of dissatisfaction among the protesters.⁴⁸¹ According to Tchakarova, "at this point, it was already clear that the protests spiraled out of control and that violence on the Maidan was threatening to escalate."⁴⁸² Especially, radical right-wing formations, such as the *Right Sector* or the *Svoboda Party*, showed themselves ready to use violence. On January 22, the first three protesters fell victim to the escalating violence in Kyiv's central Maidan Square.⁴⁸³ The Ukrainian police's special forces unit Berkut brutally moved in against the partially masked right-wing protesters.⁴⁸⁴

On January 22, Vitali Klitschko, the leader of the opposition UDAR party, issued an ultimatum to the government.⁴⁸⁵ However, shortly before that ultimatum expired, the Verkhovna Rada held a successful vote of no confidence in Yanukovych's government. As a result, the Ukrainian government announced its willingness to resign and agreed to a ceasefire. Nonetheless, the *Euromaidan* opposition that had already organised itself decided to break off negotiations with the Yanukovych government.⁴⁸⁶ A violent occupation of administrative buildings in Lviv, Rivne, Cherkasy, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk and Khmelnytsky followed on January 24-25.⁴⁸⁷ This resulted in Yanukovych offering the opposition leaders, Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Vitali Klitschko, the posts of prime minister and deputy prime minister respectively on January 25. However, both rejected Yanukovych's offer.⁴⁸⁸

Protesters on the Maidan square should not be viewed as being one monolithic block politically. In January 2014, there was a particularly radical split in the protest movement. The newly formed splitter group wanted to participate neither in political negotiations with Yanukovych nor in finding a compromise.⁴⁸⁹ These new circumstances forced the Ukrainian

⁴⁸¹ Black, J. L., and S. Plekhanov. 2016. "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II." In *The Return of the Cold War: Ukraine, the West and Russia*, edited by J. L. Black and M. Johns. London: Routledge, 240.

⁴⁸² Tchakarova, *Chronologie der Krise in der Ukraine*, 1.

⁴⁸³ Tchakarova, *Chronologie der Krise in der Ukraine*, 1; Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 240.

⁴⁸⁴ Malyarenko, "A gradually escalating conflict," 350.

⁴⁸⁵ Laender Analysen. 2021. "Chronikauszug der Länder-Analysen Ukraine: 10.12.2013 bis 01.03.2014." *Laender Analysen*. Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://www.laender-analysen.de/ukraine-analysen/chronik?c=ukraine&d1=2013-12-10&d2=2014-03-01&t=&download=pdf>.

⁴⁸⁶ Tchakarova, *Chronologie der Krise in der Ukraine*, 1.

⁴⁸⁷ Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 240.

⁴⁸⁸ Die Zeit. 2014. "Klitschko ringt Janukowitsch Verhandlungen ab." *Zeit Online*. January 19. Accessed November 10, 2020. <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2014-01/zusammenstoesse-kiew-polizei>; also: Malyarenko, "A gradually escalating conflict," 350; Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 240; Laender Analysen, "Chronikauszug der Länder-Analysen Ukraine: 10.12.2013 bis 01.03.2014."

⁴⁸⁹ Tchakarova, *Chronologie der Krise in der Ukraine*, 1.

president, on January 28, to repeal the controversial laws of January 16, and to accept Prime Minister Mykola Asarow's resignation.⁴⁹⁰

Beside small and repeated escalations, the Euromaidan protests were overall relatively peaceful until February 18. However, in the days following February 18, events developed fast. On 18 February 2014, "the Right Sector announced that it had 'neutralized' a police officer."⁴⁹¹ Yanukovych, viewing the chance for negotiations greatly diminished, decided to deploy anti-terrorist units in the capital.⁴⁹² This ended in a bloodbath on the streets of Kyiv. Over the course of the next two days, unidentified snipers murdered over 100 people and injured several hundred others.⁴⁹³

The drastically deteriorated situation led to intensified political consultations and mediation talks between the Ukrainian President and several EU member states. Especially the EU and its member states wanted to quickly mediate within this explosive situation. The mediation talks resulted in, Yanukovych signing an agreement with the foreign ministers of Germany, Poland and Sweden,⁴⁹⁴ as well as the opposition leaders Vitali Klitschko (UDAR), Oleh Tyahnybok (Svoboda) and Arseniy Yatsenyuk (Batkivshchyna), on February 21.⁴⁹⁵ The agreed truce called for protesters to lay down their arms; the police to withdraw from central Kyiv; the formation of a coalition government of national unity; and a constitutional reform which would reduce presidential power. The agreement would have left Yanukovych in power, but would have also obliged him to call for an early election.⁴⁹⁶

Following the agreement, the Rada slashed presidential powers by restoring the 2004 Constitution. Additionally, it voted to release Yulia Tymoshenko from prison.⁴⁹⁷ However, the Maidan protesters rejected the deal outright since they had no trust that Yanukovych would stay true to his word.⁴⁹⁸ On February 22, the president and his family flew to southeastern

⁴⁹⁰ Tchakarova, *Chronologie der Krise in der Ukraine*, 1; see also: Laender Analysen, "Chronikauszug der Länder-Analysen Ukraine: 10.12.2013 bis 01.03.2014."

⁴⁹¹ Tchakarova, *Chronologie der Krise in der Ukraine*, 2.

⁴⁹² Malyarenko, "A gradually escalating conflict," 350; also: Tchakarova, *Chronologie der Krise in der Ukraine*, 2.

⁴⁹³ Interfax-Ukraine. 2014. "Makhnitsky: Some 50 people to be charged with organizing killings of Ukrainians." *Kyiv Post*. February 24. Accessed November 10, 2020. <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/makhnitsky-some-50-people-to-be-charged-with-organizing-killings-of-ukrainians-337522.html>; Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 240.

⁴⁹⁴ Vladimir Lukin (Russia's special envoy) was also present, but did not sign the agreement.

⁴⁹⁵ Tchakarova, *Chronologie der Krise in der Ukraine*, 2; see also: Malyarenko, "A gradually escalating conflict," 350; Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 241.

⁴⁹⁶ Malyarenko, "A gradually escalating conflict," 350; Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 241.

⁴⁹⁷ Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 241.

⁴⁹⁸ Malyarenko, "A gradually escalating conflict," 350.

Ukraine (and later on to Russia).⁴⁹⁹ On the same day, Yanukovych released a videotaped TV interview in which he condemned the illegal 'coup' that forced him out. In the recordings, Yanukovych vowed not to resign and claimed that he had fled Kyiv to save his life.⁵⁰⁰ As a result of Yanukovych's flight, the Rada concluded that the president actively 'removed himself from carrying out his presidential duties', and therefore decided to schedule new elections for May 15, 2014. In the meantime, the parliament selected Oleksandr Turchynov as Acting President, and an interim government was formed.⁵⁰¹

4.2 Crimea

When the political crisis in Kyiv showed first signs of stabilization, reports of a deteriorating situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea emerged. On February 23, the local parliament withdrew its support for the agreement signed between Yanukovych and the Euromaidan opposition leaders.⁵⁰² Between February 26 and 27, several hundred unmarked armed and masked military troops took control of Simferopol Airport, the Sevastopol Military Airport, the Crimean parliament building as well as the building of the Cabinet of Ministers. At the same time, military and para-military troops set up check-points on roads between the Crimean peninsula and mainland Ukraine.⁵⁰³ Simultaneously, there was a change in the local government. Sergei Aksjonov became the new Prime Minister of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, thus forming a new a pro-Russian government.⁵⁰⁴ These events can be considered the starting point of Crimea's annexation by Russia.

In the following days, the local parliament decided that the Autonomous Republic of Crimea would separate from Ukraine, and become independent as the Republic of Crimea. In order to legitimize this decision, a referendum was set for March 25, 2014.⁵⁰⁵ The referendum asked the people of Crimea to decide between two options. Option one proposed broad

⁴⁹⁹ Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 241.

⁵⁰⁰ Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 241.

⁵⁰¹ Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 241.

⁵⁰² Tchakarova, *Chronologie der Krise in der Ukraine*, 3.

⁵⁰³ Malyarenko, "A gradually escalating conflict," 352; Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 242.

⁵⁰⁴ Tchakarova, *Chronologie der Krise in der Ukraine*, 3.

⁵⁰⁵ Tchakarova, *Chronologie der Krise in der Ukraine*, 3; see also: Walker, S., and I. Traynor. 2014. "Ukraine crisis: Crimea now part of Russia, local parliament declares." *The Guardian*. March 6. Accessed November 10, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/06/ukraine-crisis-crimea-part-of-russia-local-parliament-declares>.

autonomy for Crimea within Ukraine while option two recommended returning Crimea to the constitution of 1992.⁵⁰⁶

All the while, the Duma in Moscow voted for the authorization of military action against Ukraine on March 1, 2014. In the wake of the Duma's decision, the Crimean referendum's first option to stay in Ukraine was canceled. In addition, the date of the referendum was moved forward to March 16.⁵⁰⁷ Owing to the fact that unmarked Russian military troops (so-called 'little green men') appeared to be in control of Crimea and to the lack of impartial international observers from the OSCE, the referendum, unsurprisingly, turned out in Russia's favor.⁵⁰⁸ Immediately after the referendum, the Crimean parliament declared its independence from Ukraine, while simultaneously appealing for unification with the Russian Federation. On March 18, 2014, President Putin signed the agreement that recognized Crimea and Sevastopol as legitimate parts of the Russian Federation.⁵⁰⁹

4.3 Eastern Ukraine

The war in Eastern Ukraine was the second territorial conflict that broke out after President Viktor Yanukovych fled in February 2014. All throughout spring 2014, Eastern Ukraine saw violent clashes between *Euromaidan* supporters and opponents. Initially affected was a large area in the southeast of the country, stretching from Odessa to Mariupol and all the way to

⁵⁰⁶ Malyarenko, "A gradually escalating conflict," 351-352. In order to clarify, what 'returning to the constitution of 1992' means see, Buchanan, K. 2014. "Crimean History, Status, and Referendum." *The Library of the Congress*. March 13. Accessed November 10, 2020. <https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2014/03/crimean-history-status-and-referendum/>; "In 1992, being at odds with national powers, Crimean leaders declared the independence of the peninsula and passed a constitution that proclaimed Crimea to be a republic within Ukraine, provided that Crimean laws would have priority over Ukrainian laws, established Russian as the official language of the territory, and allowed Crimea to conduct its own foreign policy."

⁵⁰⁷ Malyarenko, "A gradually escalating conflict," 352.

⁵⁰⁸ Reuters. 2014. "Crimea referendum illegal, no OSCE monitoring - Swiss." *Firstpost*. March 12. Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://www.firstpost.com/world/crimea-referendum-illegal-no-osce-monitoring-swiss-1429931.html>; Reuters Staff. 2014. "Warning shots fired as OSCE mission turned away from Crimea." *Reuters*. March 8. Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-osce-shots-idUSBREA270HJ20140308>; see also: Malyarenko, "A gradually escalating conflict," 352.

⁵⁰⁹ The Kremlin. 2014. "Ceremony signing the laws on admitting Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation." March 21. Accessed November 10, 2020. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20626>; Malyarenko, "A gradually escalating conflict," 352; Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 246.

Donetsk and Luhansk.⁵¹⁰ Tragically, those protests cost several people their lives. On May 2, 2014, forty-two *Euromaidan* opponents lost their lives in a burning building in Odessa.⁵¹¹

Government buildings in numerous cities were occupied by insurgents, in addition to important transportation hubs and border crossings to Russia. However, the separatists failed to conquer larger regional centers such as Kharkiv, Odessa and Mariupol. Nonetheless, they were able to control other cities west of Donetsk and Luhansk, such as Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, for several months.⁵¹² In April 2014, Donetsk and Luhansk declared themselves People's Republics.⁵¹³ On May 11, both areas held internationally unrecognized referendums, under dubious conditions. According to the organizers, over 90 percent of those polled voted in favor of establishing the independent People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk.⁵¹⁴

During the first months of the asymmetric war in Eastern Ukraine, Kyiv was completely overwhelmed by the events. Therefore, the rebels had gained a military advantage. In April 2014, the interim government in Kyiv sent the Ukrainian armed forces, as part of an anti-terrorist operation, into Eastern Ukraine in order to combat the separatists.⁵¹⁵ Initially, the Ukrainian military had to cope with severe defeats. At the same time, there was an increasing amount of fighters and heavy weapons that crossed the Russian-Ukrainian border. However, over time and due to better military organization, the Ukrainian side managed to recapture numerous places occupied by the separatists.⁵¹⁶

On July 17, 2014, the Malaysian Airliner (MH17) was shot down by a Russian-made BUK surface-to-air missile over the combat zone.⁵¹⁷ All 298 passengers died. For the EU, USA and NATO, this was documented proof of Russia's involvement in the war. As a result, the Euro-Atlantic coalition tightened their sanctions.⁵¹⁸

In August 2014, despite Russian support, separatist forces were on the brink of military defeat. At this point, Russian troops actively intervened in the fighting and inflicted a heavy

⁵¹⁰ Fischer, S. 2019. *Der Donbas-Konflikt: Widerstreitende Narrative und Interessen, schwieriger Friedensprozess*. SWP-Studie 3, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 8.

⁵¹¹ Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 254; OHCHR. 2014. "Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine." March 15. Accessed November 10, 2020. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/HRMMUReport15May2014.pdf>.

⁵¹² Fischer, *Der Donbas-Konflikt*, 9.

⁵¹³ Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 249, 252.

⁵¹⁴ Fischer, *Der Donbas-Konflikt*, 9; Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 254; OHCHR, "Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine."

⁵¹⁵ Fischer, *Der Donbas-Konflikt*, 9; Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 249.

⁵¹⁶ Fischer, *Der Donbas-Konflikt*, 9; for a more detailed description see Malyarenko, "A gradually escalating conflict," 353-365.

⁵¹⁷ Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 262.

⁵¹⁸ Fischer, *Der Donbas-Konflikt*, 9; Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 262.

defeat to the Ukrainian side at Ilovaisk.⁵¹⁹ After this battle, the first ceasefire agreement was negotiated. On September 5, 2014, through international mediation, both sides signed a ceasefire agreement in Minsk (commonly known as Minsk I).⁵²⁰ Nevertheless, the fighting quickly escalated the following year. This led to the to the negotiation of a package of 13 concrete measures in order to implement the Minsk I agreement. This so called Minsk II agreement was adopted on February 12, 2015.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁹ Fischer, *Der Donbas-Konflikt*, 9.

⁵²⁰ Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 267; Fischer, *Der Donbas-Konflikt*, 9.

⁵²¹ Fischer, *Der Donbas-Konflikt*, 9; Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 279.

5. EU Responses to the Crisis in Ukraine

The following chapter maps the EU response to the political crisis in Kyiv as well as its reaction to Russia's annexation of Crimea and its involvement in the war in Eastern Ukraine. Firstly, it examines the EU approach to the political crisis in Ukraine as it continuously lent its support to the interim government in Kyiv. Secondly, it details how the EU was keen on promptly resuming the association process with Ukraine. Thirdly, it looks into the EU's regime of sanctions against Russia.

The second part of this chapter revolves solely around these sanctions and on how they came to be. This part analyses in detail what factors enabled and led the EU to impose sanctions on Russia as well as the processes of the EU's internal decision making that led to their implementation. The chapter heavily draws from interviews and research conducted by Sjursen and Rosén⁵²² as well as Natorski and Pomorska.⁵²³

5.1 Brussels Response to the Events in Ukraine

The 'EU'ropean response towards the events in Ukraine was threefold. Firstly, the EU and its member states recognized the new Ukrainian government straight away and provided political support for its consolidation. Secondly, the EU immediately sought to resume the Association Agreement. It did so by pressing ahead with the signing and preliminary implementation process of the Association Agreement with Ukraine. Third and lastly, the EU and its member states responded to Russia's annexation of Crimea and its military aggression in Eastern Ukraine via diplomacy and sanctions.⁵²⁴

The EU and the Revolution

The Ukrainian President's shock decision to not sign an AA with the EU at the November 2013 Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius still caused some headache across European capitals at

⁵²² Sjursen, H., and G. Rosén. 2017. "Arguing Sanctions. On the EU's Response to the Crisis in Ukraine." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55 (1): 20-36.

⁵²³ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis."

⁵²⁴ Juncos, A., and R. G. Whitman. 2015. "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 53 (Annual Review): 202-203.

the beginning of 2014. On the domestic front in Ukraine, protesters continued to occupy Kyiv's central Maidan square.⁵²⁵ During their December 2013 summit, the EU's Heads of State and Government clearly expressed their sympathy for the protesters.⁵²⁶ In addition, European leaders made clear that they saw the key towards reviving the association process in Yanukovych's departure from power.⁵²⁷

The EU's High Representative/Vice-President (HR/VP) Catherine Ashton visited Ukraine on several occasions between 2013 and 2014.⁵²⁸ So did a number of EU foreign ministers and members of the European Parliament.⁵²⁹ On February 10, the Foreign Affairs Council of the Union published its conclusions, saying that it was going to monitor abuses of human rights and cases of violence, intimidation, and missing persons. It also expressed its readiness to react rapidly to any deterioration of the situation on the ground.⁵³⁰ However, the manner of this reaction was not specified by the Council.

After the Ukrainian Parliament passed 10 anti-protest laws on January 16, the initially peaceful protests were brutally tackled by Police and Special forces.⁵³¹ The EU swiftly condemned the violence and threatened to impose sanctions on Ukrainian officials it deemed responsible for ordering the violence against the protesters. After the events turned even more violent, following the February 18-20 killings, the EU member states expressed their ongoing support for the protesters at their Foreign Affairs Council meeting.⁵³² The meeting took place on February 20, 2014, and called for political dialogue. The EU Heads of State and Government also agreed upon targeted sanctions. However, they could not agree upon who

⁵²⁵ Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 203.

⁵²⁶ Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 203.

⁵²⁷ European Council. 2013. "Conclusions, EUCO 217/13." December 20. Accessed November 23, 2020. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-217-2013-INIT/en/pdf>.

⁵²⁸ HR/VP Catherine Ashton visited Kyiv on December 10-11, 2013, as well as on February 4-5, 2014, where she also met with the opposition leaders. See: BBC. 2013. "Ukraine police move on protesters and opposition party." BBC. December 9. Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25307255>; RFE/RL. 2014. "Ashton Says 'A Lot More Work' Needed To Resolve Ukraine's Crisis." *Radio Free Europe*. February 5. Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-ashton-meeting-yanukovych/25253747.html>; UNIAN. 2014. "Opposition leaders hold meeting with Ashton ." *UNIAN Information Agency*. February 5. Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://www.unian.info/politics/880829-opposition-leaders-hold-meeting-with-ashton.html>; Laender Analysen, "Chronikauszug der Länder-Analysen Ukraine: 10.12.2013 bis 01.03.2014."

⁵²⁹ Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 203.

⁵³⁰ Council of the European Union. 2014. "Council conclusions on Ukraine: Foreign Affairs Council meeting Brussels, 10 February 2014." February 10. Accessed November 23, 2020. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/140960.pdf.

⁵³¹ Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 241.

⁵³² Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 203.

should be sanctioned and from when sanctions should be in force.⁵³³ Following the escalation at the end of February, events in Kyiv progressed quickly. On February 23, the HR/VP visited Kyiv – as Yanukovych fled to southeast Ukraine (and later on to Russia) – while the formation of a new interim government under Oleksandr Turchynov and the covert Russian takeover of Crimea was in progress.⁵³⁴

On March 3, 2014 the EU Heads of State and Government convened at an extraordinary Council meeting. There they issued a strong-worded statement, condemning the “clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces as well as the authorization given by the Federation Council of Russia on 1 March for the use of the armed forces on the territory of Ukraine.”⁵³⁵ Additionally, the EU called on Russia to “immediately withdraw its armed forces to the areas of their permanent stationing, in accordance with the Agreement on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet stationing on the territory of Ukraine of 1997.”⁵³⁶ On March 5, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted sanctions that had their focus on the freezing and recovery of misappropriated Ukrainian state funds.⁵³⁷ The meeting on March 3 was followed by yet another extraordinary Council meeting on March 6, 2014. The conclusions of the meeting made clear that the EU saw the solution to the crisis in the negotiations between the governments of Ukraine and the Russia, “including through potential multilateral mechanisms.”⁵³⁸ The EU also suspended “bilateral talks with the Russian Federation on visa matters as well as talks with the Russian Federation on the New Agreement.”⁵³⁹ It also supported “the decision of the European Members of the G8 and the EU institutions to suspend their participation in G8 Summit preparations until further notice.”⁵⁴⁰ Should no de-escalatory steps be undertaken, the EU set

⁵³³ Council of the European Union. 2014. “Council conclusions on Ukraine: Foreign Affairs Council meeting Brussels, 20 February 2014.” February 20. Accessed November 23, 2020.

<https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2016-03/EU-Council-conclusions-Ukraine--20-February-2014.pdf>.

⁵³⁴ Black and Plekhanov, “Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II,” 241; Juncos and Whitman, “Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?,” 203.

⁵³⁵ Council of the European Union. 2014. “Council conclusions on Ukraine: Foreign Affairs Council meeting Brussels, 3 March 2014.” March 3. Accessed November 23, 2020.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/28853/141291.pdf>.

⁵³⁶ Council of the European Union, “Council conclusions on Ukraine: Foreign Affairs Council meeting Brussels, 3 March 2014.”

⁵³⁷ European Union. 2014. “Council Regulation No 208/2014 of 5 March 2014: concerning restrictive measures directed against certain persons, entities and bodies in view of the situation in Ukraine.” *Official Journal of the European Union* 66: 1-10.

⁵³⁸ European Council. 2014. “Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine Brussels, 6 March 2014.” March 6. Accessed November 23, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/29285/141372.pdf>.

⁵³⁹ European Council, “Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine Brussels, 6 March 2014.”

⁵⁴⁰ European Council, “Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine Brussels, 6 March 2014.”

out further measures and “additional and far reaching consequences for relations in a broad range of economic areas between the European Union and its Member States, on the one hand, and the Russian Federation, on the other hand.”⁵⁴¹ The EU also condemned the decision by the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea to hold a referendum on the future status of the territory as contrary to the Ukrainian Constitution and therefore illegal.⁵⁴²

All the while, the new interim government in Kyiv had severe problems in establishing its authority across the country. This was particularly visible after the outbreaks of secessionist demonstrations in eastern Ukraine. The Russian response towards the political developments in Kyiv was hostile as well as belligerent.⁵⁴³ The EU continuously lent its support to the interim government in Kyiv.⁵⁴⁴ It also supported the Ukrainian presidential elections held on May 25, as well as the parliamentary elections on October 24, 2014.⁵⁴⁵ However, the EU considered “the holding of ‘presidential and parliamentary elections’ in Donetsk and Luhansk “People’s Republics” on 2 November [...] illegal and illegitimate [...],” as they were held under neither free nor fair conditions.⁵⁴⁶ For the EU “these so-called “elections”, as well as any acknowledgement or recognition of them”, were “in breach of the letter and the spirit of the Minsk Protocol.”⁵⁴⁷ Therefore, the EU called “on all sides to work towards early local elections [...] in accordance with Ukrainian law, as foreseen in the Minsk Protocol, as the only legal and legitimate means of renewing the democratic mandate of the local authorities.”⁵⁴⁸

Resuming the Association Process

After the regime change in Kyiv, Brussels was quick in resuming EU-Ukraine relations by signing the political provisions of the AA on March 21, 2014.⁵⁴⁹ The remaining parts of the

⁵⁴¹ European Council, "Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine Brussels, 6 March 2014."

⁵⁴² European Council, "Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine Brussels, 6 March 2014."

⁵⁴³ Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 204.

⁵⁴⁴ Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 204.

⁵⁴⁵ Council of the European Union. 2018. "Foreign Affairs Council, 12 May 2014." May 3. Accessed November 23, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2014/05/12/>.

⁵⁴⁶ Council of the European Union. 2014. "Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on "elections" in eastern Ukraine." November 5. Accessed November 23, 2020. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/145644.pdf.

⁵⁴⁷ Council of the European Union, "Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on "elections" in eastern Ukraine."

⁵⁴⁸ Council of the European Union, "Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on "elections" in eastern Ukraine."

⁵⁴⁹ Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 247.

agreement were signed on June 27.⁵⁵⁰ On November 1, the parts of the agreement that covered: respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and rule of law; political dialogue and reform; justice, freedom and security; and economic and financial co-operation came into force.⁵⁵¹ On December 15, 2014, the initial EU-Ukraine Association Council meeting took place under the Association Agreement. During that meeting both parties agreed on working to update the Association process between the EU and Ukraine in order to guide reforms and economic modernization in Ukraine.⁵⁵² The EU continuously applied autonomous trade measures, thereby granting Ukrainian exporters preferential access to EU markets without the need to wait for the trade provisions under the Association Agreement to come into force.⁵⁵³ The provisional application of the DCFTA's Energy and Transport part was delayed until January 1, 2016. The EU's intent behind it was to conduct consultations on its implementation with Russia as well as with both Ukraine and Russia in a trilateral format. Additionally, the Union moderated the discussions on energy security between Ukraine and Russia in bilateral gas talks. On October 30, 2014, both parties agreed on the outstanding energy debt issues and on an interim solution that enabled gas supplies to Ukraine continue throughout the winter.⁵⁵⁴

Through measures of financial support, Brussels also intended to support the new government in Kyiv.⁵⁵⁵ On March 5, 2014, the European Commission sent out a press release announcing that "€11 billion over the next couple of years from the EU budget and EU-based international financial institutions" could be available to Ukraine.⁵⁵⁶ The EU's package of support "sets out the main concrete measures that the Commission is proposing for the short and medium term to help stabilize the economic and financial situation in Ukraine, assist with the transition and encourage political and economic reform."⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁰ Black and Plekhanov, "Chronology of Key Events to Minsk II," 260.

⁵⁵¹ Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 204.

⁵⁵² Council of the European Union. 2014. "Joint Press Release following the first Association Council meeting between the European Union and Ukraine." December 15. Accessed November 23, 2020. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/146300.pdf.

⁵⁵³ Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 204; European Commission. 2014. "European Commission's support to Ukraine, MEMO/14/159." March 5. Accessed November 23, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_14_159.

⁵⁵⁴ Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 204-205.

⁵⁵⁵ Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 205.

⁵⁵⁶ European Commission, "European Commission's support to Ukraine, MEMO/14/159."

⁵⁵⁷ European Commission, "European Commission's support to Ukraine, MEMO/14/159."

On April 5, 2014, the Union temporarily removed customs duties on Ukrainian exports to the EU,⁵⁵⁸ while “anticipating the tariffs-related section of the Association Agreement’s provisions on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area without waiting for its entry into force.”⁵⁵⁹ Additionally, the European Commission decided to create a support group for Ukraine.⁵⁶⁰ The group was tasked to ensure “that the Ukrainian authorities have all the support they need in undertaking the political and economic reforms that are necessary to stabilize the country.”⁵⁶¹

Sanctions and Beyond

The EU, intrinsically drawn to positive-sum conflict resolution, responded to the crisis in Ukraine via diplomatic initiatives. It was clear from the start that the Union and its member states had neither the appetite nor really the resources for a direct intervention in support of the Ukrainian government that could have possibly led to a direct confrontation with Russian military personnel.⁵⁶² Surprisingly, the European diplomatic response to Russian aggression in Ukraine was led by Germany. This is surprising due to the fact that Germany’s lead can clearly be marked as a departure from its post-World War II role.⁵⁶³ In the Ukraine crisis Germany took “a high profile leading role on a major issue of international security.”⁵⁶⁴

Berlin’s main goal was to move the situation away from Russian military intervention and towards the establishment of a diplomatic process. Germany in part succeeded, since its effort resulted in the September 2014 Minsk agreement (commonly known as Minsk I).⁵⁶⁵ The agreements made in the first Minsk protocol included: ensuring an immediate ceasefire and its monitoring by the OSCE; decentralization in Ukraine, including a special status law for the disputed areas; the creation of a security zone along the Ukrainian-Russian border and its

⁵⁵⁸ De Gucht, K. 2014. "European Commission welcomes adoption of temporary tariff cuts for Ukrainian exports to the EU." April 14. Accessed November 23, 2020.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_14_118.

⁵⁵⁹ Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 205.

⁵⁶⁰ Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 205.

⁵⁶¹ European Commission. 2014. "Support Group for Ukraine, IP/14/413." April 9. Accessed November 23, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_14_413.

⁵⁶² Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 205.

⁵⁶³ Pond, E., and H. Kundnani. 2015. "Germany’s Real Role in the Ukraine Crisis: Caught Between East and West." *Foreign Affairs*. March/April. Accessed November 23, 2020.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/eastern-europe-caucasus/germanys-real-role-ukraine-crisis>.

⁵⁶⁴ Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 205.

⁵⁶⁵ Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 205.

monitoring by the OSCE; the release of all hostages and illegally detained people; a Ukrainian amnesty law; the continuation of a national dialogue; measures to improve the humanitarian situation in Donbass; local elections in controversial areas under Ukrainian control and international observation; the withdrawal of all illegal armed units from Ukraine; the adoption of a Donbass reconstruction program; and ensuring the personal safety of the participants in the consultations.⁵⁶⁶

Minsk I would not have been possible if not for “considerable efforts on part of [German Chancellor] Merkel.”⁵⁶⁷ Her personal communications and meetings with President Putin, together with German foreign minister Steinmeier’s “considerable diplomatic efforts with Ukraine, Russia, the US and EU Member States”,⁵⁶⁸ paved the way for the agreement. The Minsk I agreement set forth the framework in which the EU sought to contain and defuse the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Brussel-based players such as the HR/VP and the EEAS were mere “bystanders to this diplomacy” which saw member states in the driving seat of the EU’s overall diplomatic response.⁵⁶⁹

Sanctions on Russia definitely were a core element of the EU’s overall response to Moscow’s intervention in Ukraine. Following Russia’s annexation of Crimea on March 17, 2014, EU member states agreed upon a first set of sanctions.⁵⁷⁰ The EU adopted “restrictive measures against persons responsible for actions which undermine or threaten the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine as well as persons and entities associated with them.”⁵⁷¹ These measures targeted 21 persons with “a travel ban and a freeze of their assets within the EU”,⁵⁷² and “were further strengthened on four occasions [in] the following two months.”⁵⁷³

On July 25 and July 30, 2014, the EU member states agreed upon additional comprehensive sanctions. The sanctions came in the light of the “downing of the Malaysian

⁵⁶⁶ Fischer, *Der Donbas-Konflikt*, 12.

⁵⁶⁷ Juncos and Whitman, “Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?,” 206.

⁵⁶⁸ Juncos and Whitman, “Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?,” 206.

⁵⁶⁹ Juncos and Whitman, “Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?,” 206.

⁵⁷⁰ Juncos and Whitman, “Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?,” 206.

⁵⁷¹ Council of the European Union. 2014. “EU adopts restrictive measures against actions threatening Ukraine’s territorial integrity, 7786/14.” March 17. Accessed November 23, 2020.

https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/141603.pdf.

⁵⁷² European Union Delegation to the Russian Federation. 2020. “EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine.” Accessed November 23, 2020.

https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_restrictive_measures_in_response_to_crisis_in_ukraine_eng_web.doc.pdf.

⁵⁷³ Juncos and Whitman, “Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?,” 206.

Airlines Flight MH17 in Donetsk on July 17, 2014.”⁵⁷⁴ On July 22, the Foreign Affairs Council concluded that “those directly and indirectly responsible for the downing must be held accountable and brought to justice and calls on all states and parties to fully cooperate to this end.”⁵⁷⁵ The EU urged Russia “to actively use its influence over the illegally armed groups in order to achieve full, immediate, safe and secure access to the site, full cooperation with the work on recovering remains and possessions and full cooperation with the independent investigation, including unhindered access to the site of the downing for as long as needed for the investigation and possible follow up investigations.”⁵⁷⁶ Additionally, the conclusions stated that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Eastern Ukraine, “must be allowed to play its full role in facilitating and safe-guarding the access.”⁵⁷⁷ At its July 25 Council meeting, the EU adopted additional trade and investment restrictions for Crimea and Sevastopol.⁵⁷⁸ On July, 29, 2014, at the European Council meeting, the EU heads of States and Government agreed on an additional package of restrictive measures against Russia,⁵⁷⁹ this time “targeting sectoral co-operation and exchanges.”⁵⁸⁰ As requested by the European Council, the European Commission and the EEAS started proposing further steps that could be taken against Russia.⁵⁸¹ Those steps included “access to EU capital markets, defence, dual use goods and sensitive technologies.”⁵⁸²

Juncos and Whitman point out that “the agreement on these different rounds of sanctions between the Member States required considerable discussions to broker a common position that was acceptable to all Member States.”⁵⁸³ Following their assessment, the ability to maintain consensus between EU member states with their divergent set of views can be seen as a major achievement for the EU. According to both authors, “it was also a strong signal

⁵⁷⁴ Juncos and Whitman, “Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?,” 206.

⁵⁷⁵ Council of the European Union. 2014. “Council conclusions on Ukraine: Foreign Affairs Council meeting.” July 22. Accessed November 23, 2020.

https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/144090.pdf.

⁵⁷⁶ Council of the European Union, “Council conclusions on Ukraine: Foreign Affairs Council meeting.”

⁵⁷⁷ Council of the European Union, “Council conclusions on Ukraine: Foreign Affairs Council meeting.”

⁵⁷⁸ Council of the European Union. 2014. “EU sanctions over situation in Eastern Ukraine strengthened.” July 25. Accessed November 23, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/22025/144144.pdf>.

⁵⁷⁹ European Council. 2014. “Statement by the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy and the President of the European Commission in the name of the European Union on the agreed additional restrictive measures against Russia, EUCO 158/14.” July 29. Accessed November 23, 2020.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/22015/144158.pdf>.

⁵⁸⁰ Juncos and Whitman, “Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?,” 206.

⁵⁸¹ Juncos and Whitman, “Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?,” 206.

⁵⁸² Juncos and Whitman, “Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?,” 206.

⁵⁸³ Juncos and Whitman, “Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?,” 206.

to Russia of the willingness of Member States to subsume their differences to allow for an unambiguous position on the annexation of Crimea and Russia's military involvement in eastern Ukraine."⁵⁸⁴

On November 17, 2014, the newly appointed HR/VP Federica Mogherini chaired her first Foreign Affairs Council.⁵⁸⁵ She had been perceived as pro-Russian by some European capitals.⁵⁸⁶ In the light of "heavy shelling and reports of armed convoys moving into separatist-held areas from across the Russian border, the Council urged all parties to implement fully the Minsk Protocol and to respect the conditions of the ceasefire."⁵⁸⁷ On November 28, at the EU's Foreign Council meeting, further sanctions targeting separatists in Eastern Ukraine were imposed.⁵⁸⁸

After the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on January 19, 2015, Mogherini once more stressed that the EU's relations with Russia "can only change if and when [...] commitments that were taken in Minsk are implemented."⁵⁸⁹ She also stated that the EU's support for Ukraine and all other Eastern Partners remains and "is not going to change." Concerning the EU's sanctions regime, the HR/VP made clear: "any decision will be based on, first of all, the non-recognition policy of the annexation of Crimea and on the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, on the situation on the ground."⁵⁹⁰

In order to stop the still ongoing fighting in Eastern Ukraine, a new package of measures was agreed to on February 12, 2015. Under the observation of the OSCE, this so called Minsk II agreement was developed by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany during their Minsk summit on February 11. The Minsk II protocol listed concrete measures and steps in order to enforce the Minsk I agreement, by the end of 2015.⁵⁹¹

The **infographic** below provided by the *European Council / Council of the European Union* gives an overview on all EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine:

⁵⁸⁴ Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 206.

⁵⁸⁵ Juncos and Whitman, "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?," 206.

⁵⁸⁶ Tocci, N. 2016. "The making of the EU Global Strategy." *Contemporary Security Policy* 37 (3): 463.

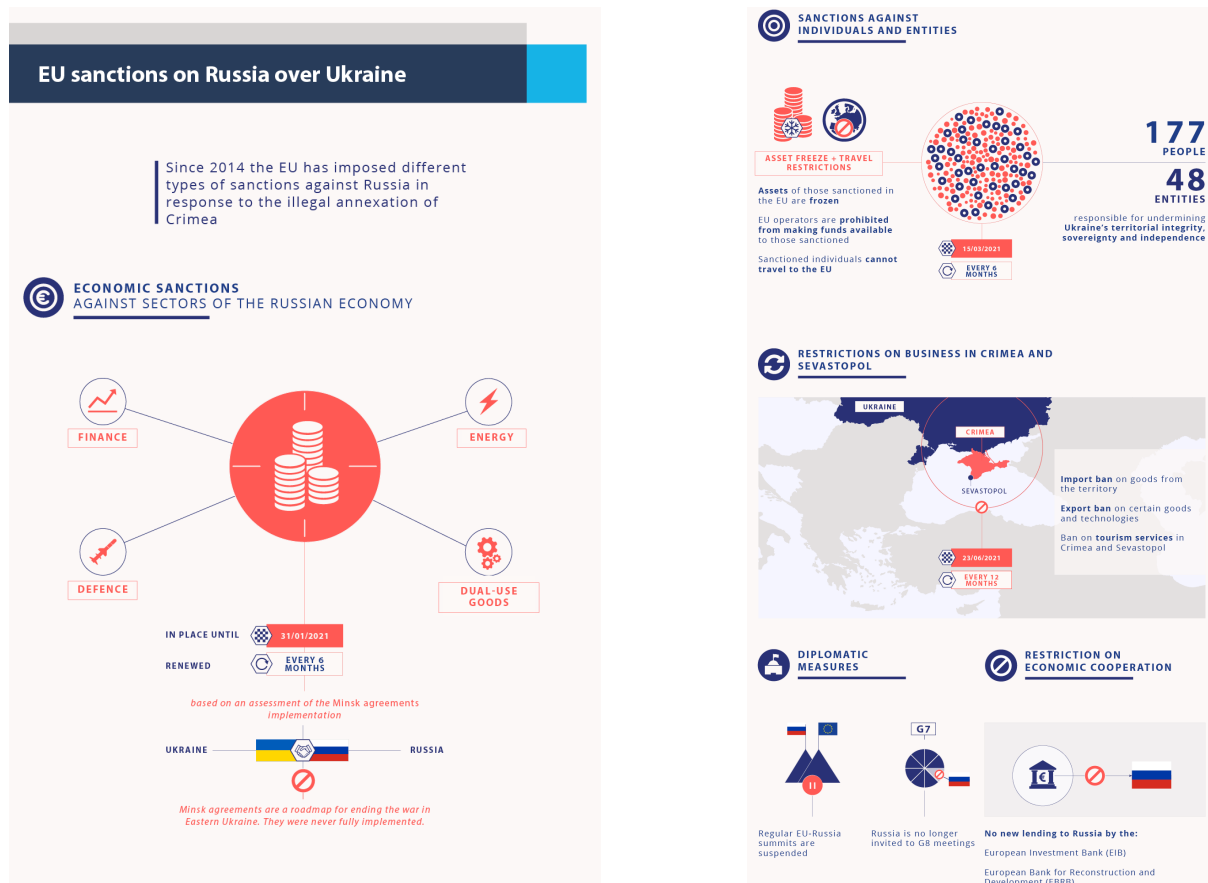
⁵⁸⁷ Council of the European Union. 2018. "Foreign Affairs Council, 17-18 November 2014." May 3. Accessed November 23, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2014/11/17-18/>.

⁵⁸⁸ Council of the European Union. 2014. "EU strengthens sanctions against separatists in Eastern Ukraine." November 28. Accessed November 23, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21990/145967.pdf>.

⁵⁸⁹ EEAS. 2015. "Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the press conference after the Foreign Affairs Council." January 19. Accessed December 15, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/6177/re...ce-president-federica-mogherini-press-conference-after-foreign_en.

⁵⁹⁰ EEAS, "Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the press conference after the Foreign Affairs Council."

⁵⁹¹ Fischer, *Der Donbas-Konflikt*, 12-13.



Infographic 1. EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine

Since 2014 the EU has imposed different types of sanctions against Russia in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea

Economic sanctions against sectors of the Russian economy: (a) finance; (b) energy; (c) defence, (d) dual-use goods

Sanctions against individuals and entities: Target 177 people 48 entities responsible for undermining Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence

The sanctions include: (a) EU based assets of those sanctioned are frozen; (b) EU operators are prohibited from making funds available to those sanctioned; (c) Sanctioned individuals cannot travel to the EU

Restrictions on business in Crimea and Sevastopol: (a) Import ban on goods from the territory; (b) Export ban on certain goods and technologies; (c) Ban on tourism services in Crimea and Sevastopol

Diplomatic measures: (a) Regular EU-Russia summits are suspended; (b) Russia is no longer invited to G8 meetings; (c) Restriction on economic cooperation:

No new lending to Russia by the: (a) European Investment Bank (EIB); (b) European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)⁵⁹²

⁵⁹² Infographic and Text taken and quoted from: Council of the European Union. 2020. "Infographic - EU sanctions against Russia over Ukraine." November 25. Accessed February 16, 2021. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/eu-sanctions-against-russia-over-ukraine/>. For more information on EU sanctions against Russia, see: Council of the European Union. 2020. "EU restrictive measures

Beyond sanctions, the EU and its member states pursued a more cautious approach. In order to assist Ukraine, the EU established a CSDP mission in July 2014. The Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform (EUAM) intended to provide Ukraine with “strategic advice for the development of effective, sustainable and accountable security services that contribute to strengthening the rule of law in Ukraine.”⁵⁹³ EUAM Ukraine has its headquarters in Kyiv and is an unarmed, non-executive civilian mission⁵⁹⁴ that was launched on December 1, 2014 with a budget of €13.1 million.⁵⁹⁵ The EU and its member states are strong supporters of a peaceful and sustainable solution to the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Therefore, the EU and its member states support the diplomatic efforts of the Normandy format, Trilateral Contact Group, and OSCE. The overall approach is to combine pressure through restrictive measures with diplomatic efforts and continuing dialogue. The EU and its member states are also the biggest contributors to the OSCE SMM, which monitors the implementation of the Minsk agreements, accounting for two thirds of the SMM’s budget, and monitors. In addition, the €50 million *EU Support to the east of Ukraine* program supports the implementation of reforms in conflict affected areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.⁵⁹⁶

The 2015 House of Lords European Union Committee’s report recognized that the EU experienced a major systemic failing on two accounts. Firstly, the EU misjudged Russia’s intentions and readiness to take direct actions against the EaP. Thereby, the Union was “sleep-walking” into the crisis.⁵⁹⁷ Secondly, the EU failed to take into account “the exceptional nature of Ukraine and its unique position in the shared neighbourhood.”⁵⁹⁸ In this context, Anan

in response to the crisis in Ukraine." October 5. Accessed February 16, 2021.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/>.

⁵⁹³ Council of the European Union. 2014. "EU establishes mission to advise on civilian security sector reform in Ukraine." July 22. Accessed November 23, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/24452/144079.pdf>.

⁵⁹⁴ European Union. 2014. "Council Decision 2014/486/CFSP of 22 July 2014: on the European Union Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine)." *Official Journal of the European Union* 217: 42-47.

⁵⁹⁵ European Union. 2014. "Council Decision 2014/800/CFSP of 17 November 2014: launching the European Union Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine) and amending Decision 2014/486/CFSP." *Official Journal of the European Union* 331: 24-25.

⁵⁹⁶ European Union. 2020. "Facts and Figures about EU-Ukraine Relations." Accessed November 23, 2020.

https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/eap_factsheet_ukraine.pdf; European

Union. 2017. "Facts and Figures about EU-Ukraine Relations." Accessed November 23, 2020.

<https://www.euneighbours.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2018-07/EAP%20SUMMIT%20FACTSHEET%20UKRAINE%20ENG%20PRINT.pdf>.

⁵⁹⁷ House of Lords. European Union Committee. 2015. *The EU and Russia: before and beyond the crisis in Ukraine*. 6th Report of Session 2014–15. London: The Stationery Office Limited, 63.

⁵⁹⁸ House of Lords. European Union Committee, *The EU and Russia*. 6th Report of Session 2014–15, 6.

Menon characterized the EU's behavior in international relations as "hard powerlessness" with "normative delusions."⁵⁹⁹

5.2 Arguing Sanctions: How they came to be

Ever since the crisis erupted in Ukraine, the EU and its member states have been criticized as regards how they handled the situation as well as their relations with both Ukraine and Russia. Critical voices insinuated that the EU and its member states miscalculated Russia's security concerns. According to them, Brussels did not take into consideration that offering Ukraine an AA might be seen by the Kremlin as an infringement of Russia's sphere of interest, and accordingly the Union was sort of "sleep-waking" into the crisis.⁶⁰⁰ These criticisms came along with suggestions on how the EU ought to have responded to Russian aggression. Suggestions included that the EU, its member states, and 'the West' in general needed to reinvigorate a foreign policy guided by geopolitical thinking. Authors such as Auer, Mearsheimer, Rynning, Sakwa and others, called for a EU foreign policy that takes into account "the realities of power."⁶⁰¹

Due to all the limitations, flaws, and the CFSP/CSDP's intergovernmental nature, it came as quite a surprise that the EU and its member states were able to agree upon a common response to the events in Ukraine. This surprise can be explained by the general assumption that the EU's capability of collective action and policy cohesion on "issues of low salience in international politics"⁶⁰² will most likely vanish, when faced with a major crisis.⁶⁰³

⁵⁹⁹ Menon, "Devised and Declining? Europe in a changing world," 14.

⁶⁰⁰ Kissinger, H. 2014. "To Settle the Ukraine Crisis, Start at the End." *The Washington Post*. March 5. Accessed December 11, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/henry-kissinger-to-settle-the-ukraine-crisis-start-at-the-end/2014/03/05/46dad868-a496-11e3-8466-d34c451760b9_story.html; MacFarlane, N., and A. Menon. 2014. "The EU and Ukraine." *Survival* 56 (3): 95-101; Mearsheimer, J. H. 2014. "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault. The Liberal Delusions that Provoked Putin." *Foreign Affairs*. September/October. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault>; Sakwa, R. 2015. "The death of Europe? Continental fates after Ukraine." *International Affairs* 91 (3): 553-579; Fischer, J. 2015. "Die Rückkehr der Geopolitik nach Europa." *Der Standard*. November 6. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000025220818/die-rueckkehr-der-geopolitik-nach-europa>; House of Lords. European Union Committee, *The EU and Russia*. 6th Report of Session 2014–15, 63.

⁶⁰¹ Auer, "Carl Schmitt in the Kremlin," 955; Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault."; Rynning, S. 2015. "The false promise of continental concert: Russia, the West and the necessary balance of power." *International Affairs* 91 (3): 549; Sakwa, "The death of Europe?," 566.

⁶⁰² Sjurson and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 20.

⁶⁰³ Hyde-Price, A. 2006. "Normative power Europe: a realist critique." *Journal of European Public Policy* 13 (2): 217-234; MacFarlane and Menon, "The EU and Ukraine."

Schimmelfennig and Thomas pointed out that “[s]ceptics often deride talk of an EU foreign policy as little more than wishful thinking.”⁶⁰⁴

Taking into account various factors, it was surely not unreasonable to think that the EU would fail in the establishment of a common response to the events in Ukraine. One obvious factor was that EU member states had varying “interests and policy priorities with regard to Russia.”⁶⁰⁵ MacFarlane and Menon have concluded that “Divisions between EU member states have become all the more apparent since the crisis in Crimea began. Once again, proximity to Russia served as a useful predictor of the positions adopted. While Poland and the Baltic countries in particular have pressed for a tough European reaction, member states such as Italy and Spain have been keen not to undermine their improving links with the Kremlin. Others (Germany and the United Kingdom) have long had substantial trade, investment and financial ties to Russia, and fear that these would be jeopardised by robust retaliation.”⁶⁰⁶ Sjursen and Rosén pointed out how some member states’ depend heavily on energy exports from Russia. Sweden and the UK, for example, were strong advocates of sanctions against Russia, whereas Italy, Greece and Hungary remained largely skeptical.⁶⁰⁷

Ever since the end of the cold war and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many EU member states have developed close ties with Russia, be they economic or political.⁶⁰⁸ Russia had no scruples about using its close ties with EU countries in order to cultivate ‘Trojan horse’ governments within the Union. For example, France had a contract to sell two Mistral-class amphibious assault vessels to Russia but ultimately suspended their delivery,⁶⁰⁹ and the Italian Energy Company (ENI) was involved in the planning of the South Stream pipeline with Gazprom.⁶¹⁰ Also, the City of London and political and financial sectors in other EU capitals have close ties with Russia’s financial elite.⁶¹¹ Greece, which by all accounts was Russia’s most

⁶⁰⁴ Schimmelfennig, F., and D. Thomas. 2011. “Normative Institutionalism and EU Foreign Policy in Comparative Perspective.” In *Making EU Foreign Policy. National Preferences, European Norms and Common Policies*, edited by D. Thomas. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 190.

⁶⁰⁵ Sjursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 20.

⁶⁰⁶ MacFarlane and Menon, “The EU and Ukraine,” 99-100.

⁶⁰⁷ Sjursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 20.

⁶⁰⁸ House of Lords. European Union Committee, *The EU and Russia*. 6th Report of Session 2014–15.

⁶⁰⁹ Euractiv and Reuters. 2014. “France suspends delivery of first Mistral warship to Russia.” *Euractiv*. November 26. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/france-suspends-delivery-of-first-mistral-warship-to-russia/>.

⁶¹⁰ Euractiv and Reuters. 2014. “Italy: South Stream pipeline is no longer a priority.” *Euractiv*. November 19. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/italy-south-stream-pipeline-is-no-longer-a-priority/>.

⁶¹¹ See: Bullough, O. 2019. “The toxic relationship between Britain and Russia has to be exposed.” *The Guardian*. November 19. Accessed December 11, 2020.

reliable ‘Trojan horse’ in the EU at that date, publicly opposed EU sanctions against Russia, but was at the same time still utterly reliant on the EU's bailout financing. Therefore, the EU had little difficulties to convince the Greek government of the necessity to be on board with sanctions. Cyprus, another country that had close connections with Russia also relied on the EU to support its banks. In Hungary, Orbán's government opposed sanctions, but needed the support of the European People's Party, so ultimately it went along and voted for sanctions in the European Council.⁶¹² In addition, several of the EU's eastern member states largely depend on gas imports from Russia. Russia is also an important buyer of agricultural products from Greece, Italy and the Netherlands.⁶¹³ These political and economic ties involve costs for EU member states when confronting Russia. Various reports and statements suggest that the these costs would be distributed unequally, affecting some member states more than others.⁶¹⁴

Yet another aspect that needs to be taken into account is the enormous difference of how EU member states historically experienced Russian power as well as their views on how to best organize relations with Russia. In Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands and Germany, “the question of how to deal with Russia”, was a politically and economically divisive domestic issue.⁶¹⁵ In other EU member states such as the UK and Sweden, the respective governments line was uncontroversial.⁶¹⁶ Therefore, the question naturally arises as to how the EU member states managed to agree on a common stance, given all their differences and the unequal burden of costs coming from possible sanctions.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/nov/13/relationship-britain-russia-money-report>; Harding, L., and R. Davies. 2020. "Moscow-on-Thames: Soviet-born billionaires and their ties to UK's political elite." *The Guardian*. July 25. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/25/moscow-on-thames-russia-billionaires-soviet-donors-conservatives>; Canadian Press. 2014. "Germany looks to target Russian oligarchs as pressure mounts in Ukraine." *iPolitics*. July 27. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://ipolitics.ca/2014/07/27/germany-looks-to-target-russian-oligarchs-as-pressure-mounts-in-ukraine/>; Talimonchuk, A. 2020. "EU needs to expand sanctions to Russian elites who are flying below the radar." *Euractiv*. February 3. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/opinion/eu-needs-to-expand-sanctions-to-russian-elites-who-are-flying-below-the-radar/>.

⁶¹² Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 97.

⁶¹³ Leonard and Popescu, *A Power Audit of EU-Russia Relations*.

⁶¹⁴ See: Euractiv. 2014. "EU countries weigh possible losses from Crimea escalation." *Euractiv*. March 20. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/eu-countries-weigh-possible-losses-from-crimea-escalation/>; Bond, I., C. Odendahl, and J. Rankin. 2015. "Frozen: The politics and economics of sanctions against Russia." Centre for European Reform, London; Giumelli, F. 2017. "The Redistributive Impact of Restrictive Measures on EU Members: Winners and Losers from Imposing Sanctions on Russia." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55 (5): 1062-1080; Sjursen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 22.

⁶¹⁵ Sjursen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 22.

⁶¹⁶ Sjursen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 22.

Notwithstanding their differences, EU member states managed to agree several times on collective action towards the crisis in Ukraine since its beginning in March 2014. Quite unsurprisingly there was consensus on Ukraine's right to self-determination as well as on supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.⁶¹⁷ Member states also supported far-reaching political, economic and social transformation in Ukraine, based on the implementation of the AA.⁶¹⁸ The Kremlin's destabilizing role in Ukraine changed the EU's traditionally accommodating approach.⁶¹⁹ In order to resolve the crisis the EU and its member states adopted a two-track policy approach. One strand of this approach was to engage in a diplomatic dialogue with Russia in order to mediate the conflict and hopefully influence Russia's foreign policy on Ukraine. The other strand concluded in a highly critical stance on Russia's annexation of Crimea and its aggression in eastern Ukraine.⁶²⁰ The EU "publicly condemned Russia and adopted a series of sanctions in reaction to the three key episodes of the crisis: the annexation of Crimea in March 2014, the downing of the Malaysian Airlines flight MH 17 in July 2014 and the war in Eastern Ukraine ongoing until February 2015 when a ceasefire was reached in the second Minsk agreement."⁶²¹

In this regard, Sjursen and Rosén point out that "[i]t is particularly difficult to understand how the agreement on sanctions came about because there are no formal opportunities for coercion within the EU's foreign policy system."⁶²² This means that "[d]ue to the intergovernmental nature of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), there is in principle little room for the supranational institutions to shape policy, and no possibility for them to enforce compliance."⁶²³ Since every EU member state regardless of its 'size' is equal and has a right to veto any EU foreign policy decision, more powerful states theoretically

⁶¹⁷ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 58.

⁶¹⁸ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 58; Council of the European Union. 2014. "Press Release, 3305th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs, 7196/14." March 3. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/28852/141294.pdf>; European Council, "Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine Brussels, 6 March 2014."; European Council. 2014. "Conclusions, EUCO 7/1/14 REV 1." March 21. Accessed December 1, 2020. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/141749.pdf.

⁶¹⁹ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 58.

⁶²⁰ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 58, see also: Natorski, "The EU and Crisis in Ukraine: Policy Continuity in Times of Disorder?," 177-196.

⁶²¹ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 58.

⁶²² Sjursen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 22.

⁶²³ Sjursen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 22.

cannot dictate policy.⁶²⁴ In such a policy-making system, “a collective decision on what to do must come about *voluntarily*.”⁶²⁵

For Natorski and Pomorska, the degree of consensus reached by EU member states in the Council was unexpected for the following two reasons: “the repeated experiences of ineffective EU policies towards Russia and the divergent views on the short-term Russian reactions to the EU positions.”⁶²⁶ EU-Russia relations needed to be seen through the prism of a variation of EU member states’ bilateral relations. However, these individual relations with Russia varied considerably.⁶²⁷ This would mean that trust among member states was undermined by conflicts and squabbling among themselves.⁶²⁸

As already highlighted, bilateral relations between EU member states and Russia were shaped under the conditions of different historical experiences. Therefore, member states had diverging levels of trust in Russia’s intentions. While some EU states, such as Poland, the Baltic States, or the UK, had a conflicted relationship with Russia, others had more co-operative relations. This discrepancy in member states relations with Russia reinforced the mistrust among themselves. This mistrust certainly constrained the EU’s initial response and invited Russian divide-and-rule tactics.⁶²⁹ The Eastern Partnership launched in 2008 serves as an example for this. Since the development of a good relationship with Moscow was important for various EU member states, this influenced quite heavily the EU internal debates on the characteristics of this new regionalized version of the European Neighbourhood Policy.⁶³⁰ For the EU, the EaP was not a geopolitical project as it clearly stressed. Brussels, therefore, “tried to avoid confrontation with Russia [...] even in the context of the Russia-Georgia war in August 2008.”⁶³¹ Russia was also invited to participate in the EaP Information and Coordination Group – an invitation Moscow did not pick up.⁶³² At the same time Poland, which was among the initiators of the EaP, was in the process of normalizing its relations with

⁶²⁴ For an introduction on EU foreign policy (dynamics), see: Algieri, *Die Gemeinsame Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik der EU*.

⁶²⁵ Sjurson and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 22.

⁶²⁶ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 58.

⁶²⁷ See: Leonard and Popescu, *A Power Audit of EU-Russia Relations*.

⁶²⁸ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 58.

⁶²⁹ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 59.

⁶³⁰ Wojna, B., and M. Gniadzowski. 2009. *Eastern Partnership: The Opening Report*. Warsaw: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych.

⁶³¹ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 59.

⁶³² Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 59.

Russia.⁶³³ Even though the EU seemed to have been aware of the EaP's geopolitical ramifications, it believed that an accommodating approach towards Russia would avoid a future confrontation with Moscow in the shared neighbourhood.⁶³⁴ As reported in the UK's House of Lords European Union Committee Report, representatives of the EU in 2015 justified the approach by asserting that "[a]t any of the meetings we had with Russia – summits twice a year, and several other meetings at ministerial and at a more technical level – they never said a word about what was going on with the association agreement or its negotiation" with EaP countries, until the Vilnius summit drew closer in summer of 2013.⁶³⁵ If all previously mentioned experiences and positions are taken into account, we can see why for some, the EU's adoption of sanctions –which would effectively lead to a confrontation with Russia over its role in Ukraine – came unexpectedly and as a surprise. Nonetheless, over time, during their Council meetings, the EU member states adopted increasingly far-reaching sanctions.

In order to explain the how's and why's of the agreement among EU member states, this sub-chapter closely examines the arguments that member states have brought forward in order to justify their views on what should be undertaken. Following Weber, this approach requires "explanation through interpretation"; this means that science has to concern itself "with the interpretative understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences."⁶³⁶ Therefore, it is not only required to understand each EU member states perception of the crisis. It is equally important to understand what kind of obligations each member state believed it had with regard to Ukraine as well as their thoughts on their individual response to the crisis. Hence, it is vital to uncover arguments that were made to ensure a collective EU action.⁶³⁷ According to Sjørnsen, only in uncovering these arguments is it possible to reveal the fundamentals on which collective action has been decided upon.⁶³⁸

⁶³³ Copsey, N., and K. Pomorska. 2014. "The Influence of Newer Member States in the European Union: The Case of Poland and the Eastern Partnership." *Europe-Asia Studies* 66 (3): 421-443.

⁶³⁴ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 59.

⁶³⁵ See: Pierre Vimont in, House of Lords. European Union Committee. 2015. "The EU and Russia: before and beyond the crisis in Ukraine. Oral and written evidence." *parliament.uk*. February 20, 338. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://old.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/eu-sub-com-c/EU-Russia/EU-Russia-EvidenceFINAL.pdf>.

⁶³⁶ Weber, M. 1978. *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 4.

⁶³⁷ Sjørnsen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 24.

⁶³⁸ Sjørnsen, H. 2002. "Why Expand? The Question of Legitimacy and Justification in the EU's Enlargement Policy." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40 (3): 491-513, quoted after Sjørnsen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 24.

In order to identify these perceptions, believed obligations and arguments for a collective EU response this sub-chapter is based on secondary literature, parliamentary debates, and statements made by EU governments. In addition, this sub-chapter draws on interviews conducted by Sijursen and Rosén with representatives of EU member states and institutions.⁶³⁹ Concurring with Natorski and Pomorska, this thesis sees the most crucial factor in the development of trust between the EU member states in the assurance of support for the most vulnerable member states by their partners. Natorski and Pomorska conducted several interviews with national diplomats to support their argument.⁶⁴⁰ Therefore, the following sub-chapters draw heavily on these interviews since a limited time schedule as well as other limitations did not permit similar interviews being conducted.

The Role of External and Internal Coercion

From the very beginning, various EU member states saw the crisis in Ukraine and the subsequent Russia-Ukraine conflict through the prism of security. This is particularly true for member states neighbouring Russia, such as Poland and the Baltic states. Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė stated in March 2014 that “having occupied Crimea, Russia is trying to redraw the neighbouring states’ borderlines, and that Moldova, the Baltic States and Poland could be next in line.”⁶⁴¹ But not only EU member states in close proximity to Russia or member states who experienced Russian suzerainty in the past voiced their security concerns. Sweden and the UK equally stressed the security dimension of the crisis in Ukraine when pushing for the development of a collective EU response.⁶⁴²

Interviews conducted by Sijursen and Rosén with national representatives confirmed that the Baltic states, Poland, Sweden and the UK had been vital during the first phase of the crisis with regard to “pushing the issue onto the EU’s agenda.”⁶⁴³ In addition, the UK supported an EU weapons embargo vociferously. UK Foreign Minister, William Hague, during a debate on Ukraine in the House of Commons, said that the crisis in Ukraine “is a compelling case for

⁶³⁹ Sijursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 20-36.

⁶⁴⁰ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 54-70.

⁶⁴¹ Quoted after Sijursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 26.

⁶⁴² United Kingdom, House of Commons. 2014. “Ukraine debate.” March 18. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2014-03-18/debates/14031867000001/Ukraine>; for Sweden see Sijursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 27.

⁶⁴³ Sijursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 27.

EU member states to act on defence export licences.”⁶⁴⁴ Therefore, beginning in March 2014, the government of the UK started to “suspend all extant licences and application processing for licences for direct export to Russia for military and dual-use items destined for units of the Russian armed forces or other state agencies which could be or are being deployed against Ukraine.”⁶⁴⁵ However, when examining the arguments advanced by the governments of Sweden, the UK and Germany, it appears that their main motivation was a sense of solidarity with other EU member states and was not based on a real concern for the security of their national territory. This can be seen in the points made about the three Baltic states by then German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier that *Euractiv* reported on March 17, 2014:

"We understand the worries of the people of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania ... and we understand that people are afraid of the situation...we will not leave you alone, your fears are our fears, your problems are our worries too.”⁶⁴⁶

The UK Prime Minister David Cameron in the House of Commons Debate held on July 21, 2014, argued similarly:

“When one sits in the European Council and listens to the testimony of the Baltic states or countries such as Romania, with their concerns about what is happening in Transnistria, one can see that if we do not act on this occasion firmly, clearly and consistently, while totally changing the approach we have taken, there will be other such problems to come.”⁶⁴⁷

Hungarian Foreign Minister János Martonyi, after a meeting of the Visegrad countries, reported that Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the German Foreign Minister, stated that the concerns of the Visegrad countries were “not Hungarian, or Czech, or Slovak or Polish worries but European worries, and therefore our concerns, too.”⁶⁴⁸

The security dimension clearly played a vital part in EU cohesion and in driving some EU member states to push for collective action. Germany’s Foreign Minister Frank-Walter

⁶⁴⁴ United Kingdom, House of Commons, "Ukraine debate."

⁶⁴⁵ United Kingdom, House of Commons, "Ukraine debate."

⁶⁴⁶ Euractiv and Reuters. 2014. "Germany, Poland warn Russia EU sanctions could start from 17 March." *Euractiv*. March 13. Accessed February 17, 2021. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/uk-europe/news/germany-poland-warn-russia-eu-sanctions-could-start-from-17-march/>.

⁶⁴⁷ United Kingdom, House of Lords. 2014. "Oral Answers to Questions." July 21. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm140721/debtext/140721-0001.htm#1407211000002>.

⁶⁴⁸ Hungary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2014. "Minister Martonyi: V4 countries would be hurt by EU sanctions against Russia." March 14. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-foreign-affairs/news/janos-martonyi-v4-countries-would-be-hurt-by-eu-sanctions-against-russia>.

Steinmeier said in a speech before the members of the German-Russia Forum in March 2014 that "Europe must stand as one and issue a common reply. Russia knows that, if splits were to arise within Europe on such a key issue, this would put an end to Europe's common foreign policy before it ever began."⁶⁴⁹ In March 2014, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, said during her statement to the Bundestag that "[i]n the event that Russia further destabilizes the situation in Ukraine", the German government would regard it as a threat to EU member states, bordering Russia.⁶⁵⁰ However, during parliamentary debates, the German government stressed that the crisis in Ukraine poses no threat to German security.⁶⁵¹ Hungary sent out mixed signals when it came to the possibility of a security threat to their respective countries. For example, Hungary's Foreign Minister, in an interview with *Die Welt* on September 5, 2014, stated that Hungary is "gegenwärtig nicht so bedroht wie die baltischen Republiken" [at present, not as threatened as the Baltic republics].⁶⁵²

This sub-chapter has not found any evidence that would suggest that the EU member states had a unanimous understanding of the Russia-Ukraine conflict with regard to concerns about their own security. For example, the governments of Germany, Sweden and the UK stressed that the conflict posed no threat to the territories of their respective countries. Nonetheless, concerns for the national security of EU member states as a result of the developments in Ukraine were present. However, statements made by representatives of member states' governments do not indicate that security concerns alone led to agreement. So, if external factors such as the political crisis in Ukraine and the conflict with Russia did not coerce EU member states into a collective response, the question naturally arises if there were any internal ones.

Quite a few arguments regarding EU foreign policy are being advanced along the line of a so called Great Power Directoire. This means it is assumed that France and the UK traditionally are the dominant powers in EU foreign policy.⁶⁵³ Interviews conducted by Sjørnsen

⁶⁴⁹ Germany, Federal Foreign Office. 2014. "Speech by Foreign Minister Steinmeier at the meeting of members of the German-Russian Forum, Berlin, 19 March 2014." March 20. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/140319-bm-dtrus-forum/260900>.

⁶⁵⁰ Germany, Bundesregierung. 2014. "Policy statement by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel on the situation in Ukraine ." March 13. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/chancellor/policy-statement-by-federal-chancellor-angela-merkel-on-the-situation-in-ukraine-443796>.

⁶⁵¹ Sjørnsen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 27.

⁶⁵² *Die Welt* . 2014. "Russland wird sich von Europa abwenden." *Die Welt*. September 5. Accessed December 11, 2020. https://www.welt.de/print/die_welt/politik/article131924817/Russland-wird-sich-von-Europa-abwenden.html.

⁶⁵³ Gegout, C. 2010. *European Foreign and Security Policy: States, Power, Institutions and American Hegemony*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, as quoted in Sjørnsen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 28.

and Rosén found that in order for such a Great Power Directoire to exist during the Ukraine crisis, it would have had to act through the Normandy format (consisting of France and Germany – instead of the UK –, Russia and Ukraine).⁶⁵⁴ However, the national representatives interviewed by Sijursen and Rosén clarified that negotiation on conflict resolution in Ukraine within the Normandy format did not start until summer 2014. Therefore, it “had nothing to do with the EU’s agreement on sanctions.”⁶⁵⁵

Findings by Sijursen and Rosén indicated that there is no evidence that would suggest the existence of a concerted effort by France, the UK and Germany “to force through sanctions.”⁶⁵⁶ Even though the UK was vital in the internal push for a strong reaction, it apparently acted independently from France and Germany since both of them were “reluctant to take a hard line”, in the beginning.⁶⁵⁷

National representatives confirmed in their interviews that for states advocating a strong reaction, it was significant to have the UK’s support, and that the “resistance of larger states (such as Italy) was more challenging than that of smaller states (such as Hungary).”⁶⁵⁸ Therefore, the assumption of “size matters”, could be made. However, Sijursen and Rosén found no evidence that the “size” of a member state was decisive in this particular case.⁶⁵⁹

By looking at elements of external and possible internal coercion, some factors that may have contributed to facilitating an agreement were identified. Nonetheless, these factors do not sufficiently explain the how’s and why’s of the agreement. On the one hand, the EU member states’ decision on sanctions was taken by intensive consultations. However, the mere fact that consultations took place on a large scale does not necessarily mean that they had been the decisive element. On the other hand, larger EU member states (such as the UK) did assume a prominent role during the consultations.⁶⁶⁰ Nonetheless, as statements made by member states officials and interviews conducted by Sijursen and Rosén have shown there is no evidence that would suggest that they imposed any form of a specific course of action on other member states. Equally, larger EU member states seemingly did not impose any form of buy-offs on reluctant member states.⁶⁶¹ Therefore, it is necessary to identify those factors

⁶⁵⁴ Sijursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 28.

⁶⁵⁵ Sijursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 28.

⁶⁵⁶ Sijursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 28.

⁶⁵⁷ Sijursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 28.

⁶⁵⁸ Sijursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 28.

⁶⁵⁹ Sijursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 28.

⁶⁶⁰ Sijursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 29.

⁶⁶¹ Sijursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 20-36.

that ensured agreement since it is not possible to explain agreement among EU member states with reference to the influence of larger states within the Union alone.

Sovereignty and Self-determination

Of vital importance and central to the EU member states agreement on collective action was the overarching notion that Russia broke fundamental principles of international law. All member states agreed upon the unacceptability of the violation on Ukraine's sovereignty and its citizens' right to self-determination.⁶⁶² Governments of several EU member states pointed towards fundamental principles of international law and territorial sovereignty when justifying EU sanctions. In Austria, Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz defended the governments support for sanctions in late April 2014, by saying:

"Meiner Meinung nach hat der Bundeskanzler aber vollkommen zu Recht dem Dreistufenplan in Brüssel zugestimmt, weil neutral zu sein, militärisch neutral zu sein nicht bedeutet, keine Meinung zu haben, und es bedeutet auch nicht, Völkerrechtsverletzungen nicht zu erkennen."⁶⁶³

Hungary's Foreign Minister János Martonyi supported EU sanctions by stating that the "territorial integrity and sovereignty of states must be respected, international laws must be obeyed, and there is no compromise possible in these matters. If the EU sets clear boundaries as to how far things can go, it must follow through consistently."⁶⁶⁴

In the UK's House of Lords' European Union Committee Report, Dr. Christoph Heusgen, Foreign Policy and Security Adviser to the German Chancellor, reportedly said that "he felt that the EU had a moral obligation to support countries under pressure from Russia. This included helping the citizens of Ukraine, who should have a sovereign right to choose the future path of their country"; and noted "that if Russia did not follow international laws, then EU Member States had to remain unified and continue to impose sanctions that had an impact on Russia."⁶⁶⁵ German Chancellor Angela Merkel framed the crisis in Ukraine as a clash of

⁶⁶² Sjurson and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 29.

⁶⁶³ Austria, Nationalrat. 2014. "Stenographisches Protokoll." Vienna, April 29, 157. Translation: In my opinion, the Federal Chancellor was completely right in agreeing to the three-stage plan in Brussels. Being neutral, militarily neutral, does not mean to have no opinion and it equally does not mean to recognize violations of international law.

⁶⁶⁴ Hungary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2014. "Minister Martonyi: Russian actions in Ukrainian crisis „shock“ for Europe." April 15. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-foreign-affairs/news/minister-martonyi-russian-actions-in-ukrainian-crisis-shock-for-europe>.

⁶⁶⁵ House of Lords. European Union Committee, *The EU and Russia*, 6th Report of Session 2014–15, 119.

different world-views, when saying that “[t]he law of the strong is being pitted against the strength of the law, and one-sided geopolitical interests are being placed ahead of efforts to reach agreement and cooperation.”⁶⁶⁶

In interviews, conducted by Sjursen and Rosén, representatives of EU member states confirmed that it was of fundamental importance that the EU stood united in their messaging towards Russia. Interviewees also confirmed that member states that did not favor sanctions had difficulties in arguing against the principle of the universality and non-violation of international law. Therefore, member states that argued against sanctions talked more about Russia as an important neighbour, rather than mentioning Crimea.⁶⁶⁷ One interviewed national representative highlighted the overall positive climate towards Ukraine that made it absolutely unacceptable to invoke one’s own national interests. The same representative pointed towards Germany and France’s “dramatic change” in position regarding Russia. He stressed that this change took place as the events in Ukraine unfolded, and claimed that it was “linked to the bloody events in Maidan plus the Russian intervention which was a clear breach of international law.”⁶⁶⁸

According to Sjursen and Rosén’s interviews, the shooting down of the Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in July 2014 did strengthen the commitment of EU member states concerning sanctions. However, it did not prove to be the decisive factor.⁶⁶⁹ During the interviews conducted, national representatives of EU member states argued that “a point of no return was reached once it was clear what had actually happened in Crimea [...]. When the truth was known, it became difficult to resist sanctions.”⁶⁷⁰ On September 10, 2014, Britain’s Foreign Minister Philip Hammond, during an ‘Answers to Questions’ session in the House of Commons, said that Russian actions in Ukraine constitute “a clear violation of the hitherto well-observed principle of international law that we do not resolve border disputes in Europe by force of arms. The fact that Russia has breached that principle has put at risk the whole edifice of European security that has served us so well for many years.”⁶⁷¹ On July 29, 2014, the EU heads of State and Government, during the European Council meeting, extended the

⁶⁶⁶ Germany, Bundesregierung, “Policy statement by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel.”

⁶⁶⁷ Sjursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 30.

⁶⁶⁸ Sjursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 30.

⁶⁶⁹ Sjursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 30.

⁶⁷⁰ Sjursen and Rosén, “Arguing Sanctions,” 30.

⁶⁷¹ United Kingdom, House of Commons. 2014. “Oral Answers to Questions.” September 10. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm140910/debtext/140910-0001.htm#14091024000002>.

sanctions on Russia. In a statement made afterwards, European Council President Herman Van Rompuy stated that this decision is meant “as a strong warning: illegal annexation of territory and deliberate destabilisation of a neighbouring sovereign country cannot be accepted in 21st century Europe.”⁶⁷²

The Strong Feeling of Having a Duty to Europe

A recurring theme in statements made by government representatives of EU member states refers to a particular sense of responsibility towards resolving the conflict in the geographically close Ukraine. Since Ukraine is a neighbourhood country, the EU could not do anything other than act collectively in the crisis. Sjursen and Rosén’s interviews with national diplomats confirm that.⁶⁷³

On March 6, 2014 the EU announced its first round of sanctions. In a statement made after the European Council meeting, the Heads of State and Government clearly expressed that the EU “has a special responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity in Europe.”⁶⁷⁴ In Sjursen and Rosén’s interviews, national representatives put an emphasis on the “long history of close co-operation between the EU and Ukraine.”⁶⁷⁵ In addition, interviewees pointed to the “historical ties between the EU and Ukraine, and how the EU has been engaged and invested in Ukraine over the past several years.”⁶⁷⁶ Therefore, the EU unquestionably should respond to the crisis, “given that it was Ukraine’s ambition to join the Union that prompted the crisis in the first place.”⁶⁷⁷

Poland’s Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, when asked about why his country was so “highly engaged in this conflict”, argued in a similar direction, stating that “[t]he Ukrainians are our neighbors. They are fighting for the same things we [the Polish people] did back in 1989 – for a country that is more democratic, less corrupt and is European.”⁶⁷⁸ In March 2014,

⁶⁷² European Council, "Statement by the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy and the President of the European Commission in the name of the European Union on the agreed additional restrictive measures against Russia, EUCO 158/14."

⁶⁷³ Sjursen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 31.

⁶⁷⁴ European Council, "Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine Brussels, 6 March 2014."

⁶⁷⁵ Sjursen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 31.

⁶⁷⁶ Sjursen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 31.

⁶⁷⁷ Sjursen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 31.

⁶⁷⁸ Der Spiegel. 2014. "Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski: Moscow Needs Our Money." *Spiegel Online*. March 10. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/polish-foreign-minister-discusses-weak-eu-position-in-ukraine-crisis-a-957812.html>.

Italian Foreign Minister Federica Mogherini, during a parliamentary session argued that the EU will be expected to support the Ukrainian Government and people.⁶⁷⁹ In July 2014, Mogherini pointed to the instability around the Union's borders and therefore deduced that there is "a direct responsibility of the EU to engage politically, on scenarios where [Brussels] can have an immediate impact."⁶⁸⁰ Later that year, in mid-November, when Mogherini was already the EU's new HR/VP, she again emphasized that the events in Ukraine are "clearly a European crisis."⁶⁸¹

Hungary too invoked a sort of collective responsibility on the EU's part. János Martonyi, Hungary's Foreign Minister, commented on the European response to the crisis in Ukraine by stating that "the European Union was not in a position to control the situation. Whatever its efforts, it can only respond. The EU must stand by its values and principles and put aside internal disputes amid the current state of affairs."⁶⁸²

The sense of a particular duty to Europe also expressed itself in arguments of EU governments concerning their relations with Russia vis-à-vis those of the US. David Cameron, Britain's Prime Minister, during a session of 'Prime Minister's Question' in the House of Commons, stressed multiple times that any EU sanctions against individuals require a legal footing, and that this might create some differences between the foreign policies of the EU and the US.⁶⁸³ In Austria, Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz explained to the European Affairs Committee that (unlike the US) "the EU refrains from initiating sanctions immediately, it only

⁶⁷⁹ Italy, Camera dei Deputati. 2014. "Resoconto stenografico, Seduta n. 8 di Martedì." March 4. Accessed December 11, 2020.

https://www.camera.it/leg17/1058?idLegislatura=17&tipologia=audiz2&sottotipologia=comunicazioneGovern o&anno=2014&mese=03&giorno=04&idCommissione=03c03&numero=0008&file=indice_stenografico.

Mogherini in the original: "C'è poi un elemento su cui in particolare l'Unione europea sarà chiamata ad attivarsi, quello del sostegno al Governo e al popolo ucraino."

⁶⁸⁰ Italy, Camera dei Deputati. 2014. "Resoconto stenografico, Seduta n. 11 di Giovedì." July 3. Accessed December 11, 2020.

https://www.camera.it/leg17/1058?idLegislatura=17&tipologia=audiz2&sottotipologia=audizione&anno=2014 &mese=07&giorno=03&idCommissione=03c03&numero=0011&file=indice_stenografico.

Mogherini in the original: "Che in questo momento è intorno ai nostri confini europei che c'è l'area di maggiore instabilità e maggiore crisi a livello globale, e quindi c'è una responsabilità diretta che può essere positiva dell'Unione europea se riusciamo a concentrarci politicamente sugli scenari su cui più immediatamente possiamo avere impatto."

⁶⁸¹ EEAS. 2014. "Remarks by High Representative Federica Mogherini after today's meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council." November 17. Accessed December 15, 2020.

https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/6739/re...ederica-mogherini-after-todays-meeting-foreign-affairs-council_en.

⁶⁸² Hungary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Minister Martonyi: Russian actions in Ukrainian crisis „shock” for Europe."

⁶⁸³ United Kingdom, House of Commons. 2014. "Oral Answers to Questions." March 26. Accessed December 11, 2020. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140326/debtext/140326-0001.htm>.

threatens them.”⁶⁸⁴ Sweden’s Prime Minister Frederik Reinfeldt, during a debate in the Swedish *Riksdagen*, said:

"It is a huge financial, economic and energy integration that Russia has with the rest of Europe." Therefore: "We must also remember that when the United States talks about economic sanctions with Russia, they do not have the same relationship with Russia that many of the European states have. It would be a huge measure to implement sanctions in breadth and depth. That is still what we are preparing for."⁶⁸⁵

Mistrusting Russia

EU-Russia relations had been tense even before Russia’s annexation of Crimea. Tensions between the EU and Russia spiked before the Vilnius summit due to the Kremlin’s pressure on Ukraine. At the EU-Russia summit in January 2014, Commission President José Manuel Barroso stressed the need for “mutual understanding and strategic trust” in EU-Russia co-operation. In addition, Barroso expected “open discussion” and “honest, forward-looking dialogue.”⁶⁸⁶ However, tensions intensified during Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine. The EU identified Russia as the sole responsible party for the developments in Crimea from the start of the crisis. The EU also pointed out that Russia’s actions on the ground were in stark contrast to its declarations.⁶⁸⁷ Freedman writes that Russia’s asymmetrical tactics of engagement in Ukraine enhanced opponents uncertainty.⁶⁸⁸ Concerning Russian hybrid tactics, Freedman writes: "As deception operations, these efforts were largely unsuccessful: few were deceived. Although the starting point for Russian operations was plausible denial, after a while it seemed as though Moscow no longer cared. The claims about a lack of direct Russian involvement in the fighting became progressively implausible and eventually incredible. Ukrainians did not rally en masse to the separatist cause. Russian positions taken in a series of awkward Security Council sessions were widely

⁶⁸⁴ Austria, Nationalrat. 2014. "IV-2 der Beilagen XXV. GP - Auszugsweise Darstellung der EU-Hauptausschuss Verhandlung." Vienna, March 6. Kurz in the original: "Die EU nehme daher Abstand davon, sofort Sanktionen in die Wege zu leiten, sondern drohe diese nur an."

⁶⁸⁵ Sweden, Riksdagen. 2014. "Riksdagens protokoll, 2013/14:89." Stockholm, March 25. Reinfeldt in the original: "Det är en enorm integration finansiellt, ekonomiskt och energimässigt som Ryssland har med övriga Europa." Therefore: "Vi ska också komma ihåg att när USA talar om ekonomiska sanktioner med Ryssland har de inte samma relation till Ryssland som väldigt många av de europeiska staterna har. Det skulle vara en enormt stor åtgärd att genomföra på bredd och till djup. Det är ändå det vi förbereder."

⁶⁸⁶ European Commission. 2014. "32nd EU-Russia Summit, IP/14/72, Brussels." January 28. Accessed November 30, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_14_72.

⁶⁸⁷ Natonski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 60.

⁶⁸⁸ Freedman, L. 2014. "Ukraine and the Art of Limited War." *Survival* 56 (6): 21-24.

disregarded and derided, and the country's standing fell internationally.⁶⁸⁹ Hence, Russia's hybrid tactics added to the feeling of mistrust of Moscow. The following example illustrates this. Putin on March 4, 2014 claimed that Crimea was annexed solely by local defence forces in reaction to the "anti-constitutional takeover, an armed seizure of power" in Kyiv.⁶⁹⁰ The EU refuted those claims vehemently.⁶⁹¹ In the light of these 'hybrid tactics', EU member states recognized that Russia would exploit any ambiguity in their position. Therefore, they unceremoniously condemned "the unprovoked violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by the Russian Federation and call on the Russian Federation to immediately withdraw its armed forces to the areas of their permanent stationing."⁶⁹²

Russian declarations continuously contradicted its actions on the ground. Therefore, they contributed to the mounting uncertainty about Moscow's true intentions. As a result, the EU distrusted Russia since it believed that disinformation was one of Russia's tools in the conflict.⁶⁹³ Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed her distrust when she warned other EU leaders that Putin "could not be trusted."⁶⁹⁴ During the crisis in Crimea, Putin "had lied to her several times and made promises that he then proceeded to break."⁶⁹⁵ In a statement made by European Council President Herman Van Rompuy, EU member states disapproved of the "mixed messages from Moscow" concerning the resolution of the conflict in Ukraine.⁶⁹⁶ In addition, the member states regretted that "strong Russian State sponsored nationalist propaganda continues supporting the illegal actions of armed separatists."⁶⁹⁷

EU member states had held different attitudes towards Russia, as Leonard and Popescu expounded.⁶⁹⁸ Nonetheless, their collective mistrust of Russia led to the mobilization of a common response. Member states mistrust influenced "the balance between the use of

⁶⁸⁹ Freedman, L. 2014. "Ukraine and the Art of Limited War." *Survival* 56 (6): 21-24.

⁶⁹⁰ Putin, V. 2014. "Vladimir Putin answered journalists' questions on the situation in Ukraine." March 4. Accessed November 30, 2020. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20366>.

⁶⁹¹ European Council, "Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine Brussels, 6 March 2014."

⁶⁹² European Council, "Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine Brussels, 6 March 2014."

⁶⁹³ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 60.

⁶⁹⁴ Der Spiegel. 2014. "Dancing with the Bear: Merkel Seeks a Hard Line on Putin." *Spiegel Online*. March 24. Accessed November 30, 2020. <https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/merkel-and-europe-search-for-an-adequate-response-to-putin-a-960378.html>.

⁶⁹⁵ Der Spiegel, "Dancing with the Bear: Merkel Seeks a Hard Line on Putin."

⁶⁹⁶ European Council, "Statement by the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy and the President of the European Commission in the name of the European Union on the agreed additional restrictive measures against Russia, EUCO 158/14."

⁶⁹⁷ European Council, "Statement by the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy and the President of the European Commission in the name of the European Union on the agreed additional restrictive measures against Russia, EUCO 158/14."

⁶⁹⁸ See: Leonard and Popescu, *A Power Audit of EU-Russia Relations*.

diplomatic engagement and coercive measures” as all of them “supported diplomatic solutions to the crisis” but had initially different opinions on the use of sanctions.⁶⁹⁹ According to Naturski and Pomorska, as mistrust towards Russia grew, it “enabled the EU to combine diplomatic engagement with the threat of sanctions, signaling distrust of Russian claims to honour its commitments.”⁷⁰⁰ German Chancellor Merkel stressed that “if there are no diplomatic options of any kind, if there is no progress on Russia’s side, sanctions must be taken.”⁷⁰¹ Ursula von der Leyen, then German Minister of Defence, declared that “Russia is not a partner. Partners adhere to joint agreements.” Von der Leyen explicitly pointed out that “Russia has destroyed a massive amount of trust.”⁷⁰² After Russia walked away from the talks in the Geneva format,⁷⁰³ consisting of the EU, the US, Russia and Ukraine, the EU called on Russia “to take effective steps with regard to fulfilling the commitments taken in Geneva.”⁷⁰⁴ As reported by the *EU Observer*, Catherine Ashton, the EU’s HR/VP, noted that “following an agreement on de-escalation in Geneva in mid-April, the EU ‘put on hold measures that we were considering’ on economic sanctions. But she added: ‘When we saw that we were not getting the results from Geneva, we pressed the start button again’.”⁷⁰⁵ Naturski and Pomorska write that “the subsequent Russian boycott of the Geneva talks and parallel threats concerning energy supplies limited diplomatic options and enabled a more coercive stance.”⁷⁰⁶

In the wake of the growing mistrust of Russia, the Union set forth the conditions of sanctions. Russia was reluctant to “engage in any meaningful negotiations on the peace plan for Eastern Ukraine.”⁷⁰⁷ Russian reluctance led the EU to link its use of sanctions to the

⁶⁹⁹ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 60.

⁷⁰⁰ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 60.

⁷⁰¹ Agence Europe. 2014. “Ukraine: EU Imposes Sanctions on Russia and Threatens Further Action.” *Bulletin Quotidien Europe*, March 7.

⁷⁰² von der Leyen, U. 2014. “Russia Has Destroyed a Massive Amount of Trust.” *Spiegel Online*. June 11. Accessed November 30, 2020. <https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/interview-with-german-defense-minister-on-russia-and-global-conflicts-a-974569.html>.

⁷⁰³ BBC. 2014. “Ukraine crisis: Russia rules out new Geneva talks.” *BBC News*. May 6. Accessed November 20, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27289897>.

⁷⁰⁴ Council of the European Union. 2014. “Press Release, 3312th Council Meeting, Foreign Affairs, 9542/14.” May 12. Accessed November 30, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/28335/142563.pdf>; see also: Borger, J., and A. Luhn. 2014. “Ukraine crisis: Geneva talks produce agreement on defusing conflict.” *The Guardian*. April 17. Accessed November 30, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/17/ukraine-crisis-agreement-us-russia-eu>.

⁷⁰⁵ Rettman, A. 2014. “EU and US draw new red line on Ukraine.” *EU Observer*. May 7. Accessed November 30, 2020. <https://euobserver.com/foreign/124041>.

⁷⁰⁶ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 61.

⁷⁰⁷ European Council. 2014. “Conclusions, EUCO 79/14, Brussels.” March 27. Accessed November 27, 2020. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST%2079%202014%20INIT/EN/pdf>.

fulfilment of four specific conditions.⁷⁰⁸ Since Russia did not adequately respond to these conditions, the EU proceeded with the extension of its sanctions.⁷⁰⁹ The EU, additionally, introduced sectoral sanctions and justified them by stating that the EU's appeal to "the Russian leadership to work towards a peaceful resolution [...] has been, in practice, left unheeded."⁷¹⁰ Conditionality has been a corner stone of the EU approach towards Russia in resolving the Ukraine crisis ever since. For the EU, the Minsk agreements and their subsequent complete implementation specified the preconditions for the lifting of sanctions and reminded "the Russian authorities' responsibility in this regard."⁷¹¹ Donald Tusk, then President of the European Council, explicitly stated that "words put down on paper must translate into real deeds."⁷¹² For Natorski and Pomorska, Tusk's remarks illustrated the "distrust about the prospects of de-escalation of the situation in Ukraine even after ceasefire had been agreed in February 2015 and confirmed that sanctions were being used to reinforce its implementation."⁷¹³ Therefore, the EU "backed diplomatic mediation, but with the support of coercive tools, given the mistrust of Russian intentions."⁷¹⁴

Respecting each other's Vulnerabilities

Of fundamental importance and therefore one of the most sensitive issues for the EU member states all throughout the crisis in Ukraine was how they would be affected by the sanctions and that there might be retaliation by Russia. Since every member state had their own vulnerabilities, each favored a slightly different position on the matter. As do Natorski and Pomorska, this thesis sees the most crucial factor in the development of trust between the EU member states in the assurance of support for the most vulnerable member states by their

⁷⁰⁸ European Council, "Conclusions, EUCO 79/14, Brussels."

⁷⁰⁹ European Council. 2014. "Conclusions, EUCO 147/14, Brussels." July 16. Accessed November 30, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/25640/143992.pdf>.

⁷¹⁰ European Council, "Statement by the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy and the President of the European Commission in the name of the European Union on the agreed additional restrictive measures against Russia, EUCO 158/14."

⁷¹¹ European Council. 2015. "Conclusions, EUCO 11/15, Brussels." March 20, 4. Accessed November 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_14_72.

⁷¹² Tusk, D. 2015. "Press statement by President Donald Tusk after the informal meeting of heads of state or government, EUCO 57/15." February 12. Accessed November 30, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/02/12/150212-remarks-tusk-after-informal-euco/pdf>.

⁷¹³ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 61.

⁷¹⁴ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 61.

partners.⁷¹⁵ In order to support their argument empirically, Natorski and Pomorska conducted several interviews with national diplomats. Therefore, the following sub-chapters draw in part on these interviews.⁷¹⁶

In order for trust between EU member states to emerge, they had to permanently ask themselves if their partners would always act “in a good faith”, and to answer this in the affirmative, as one interviewee stated.⁷¹⁷ Another national diplomat interviewed explained that it is always possible to doubt any information “and say no”; nonetheless, “there is certain trust around the table in other’s professionalism.”⁷¹⁸ The fact that EU member states shared among themselves their vulnerabilities and preferences was “already proof of a trusting relationship” as one diplomat stressed.⁷¹⁹

On March 6, 2014 at an emergency European Council meeting, the EU member states agreed upon the introduction of sanctions against Russia in three phases.⁷²⁰ The sanctions were embedded in a wider approach to the crisis in Ukraine, consisting of diplomatic negotiations, the involvement of other international institutions and the EU’s support for Ukraine’s economic, and political transformation.⁷²¹ As expressed in a statement of the EU member states’ Heads of State and Government, the EU adopted some limited diplomatic sanctions by suspending bilateral talks (phase one), and decided upon the postponement of individual travel bans and freezing assets (phase two). Lastly, the EU member states agreed upon the implementation of economic sanctions (phase three).⁷²² Reports suggest that the EU member states were able to reach an agreement that balanced their respective views. The three Baltic states were in favor of adopting sanctions. France, Poland and the UK hesitantly supported sanctions. Germany and Italy only reluctantly supported the sanctions, while Luxembourg and the Netherlands were indecisive.⁷²³ Nonetheless, all EU member states saw that they needed to agree upon a common position. However, the uncertain consequences of the sanctions in part explain their reluctant positions.⁷²⁴ As previously stated, Poland

⁷¹⁵ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 61.

⁷¹⁶ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 54-70.

⁷¹⁷ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 61.

⁷¹⁸ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 61.

⁷¹⁹ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 61.

⁷²⁰ European Council, “Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine.”

⁷²¹ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 61.

⁷²² European Council, “Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine.”, quoted after Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 61.

⁷²³ Agence Europe. 2014. “Ukraine: Announcement of Referendum in Crimea Influences EU's Decisions.” *Bulletin Quotidien Europe*, March 8.

⁷²⁴ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 62.

supported sanctions, but at the same time Poland's Prime Minister said that "sanctions, particularly from the second stage, could harm everybody."⁷²⁵ David Cameron, the British Prime Minister, said "[w]e have [...] tasked the European Commission to start work on additional measures, including travel bans and asset freezes", but warned that "the situation in Ukraine remains highly precarious – the slightest miscalculation could see it spiral out of control."⁷²⁶

For Natorski and Pomorska, the EU's "progressive approach to the introduction of sanctions enabled trust-building among the Member States. Countries with different degrees of uncertainty about Russia's intentions saw that the implementation of common positions respected their vulnerabilities. Even limited signals of prioritizing the common EU stance over bilateral interests created the dynamics of mutual trust-building."⁷²⁷ Their assessment is backed up by an interview they conducted with a diplomat, when he states that "German diplomats pushed for the exclusion of Russia from the G-8, [...] proving that Germany could be trusted as a country representing common interests."⁷²⁸ In interviews conducted with representatives from vulnerable EU member states, one diplomat stated that "it was unthinkable for any diplomat present during the Council negotiations to talk in terms of national interest."⁷²⁹ Another diplomat stressed that "countries preferred to outline the sensitive nature of some aspects of sanctions in order to find a compromise."⁷³⁰

The same process of trust-building was, according to Natorski and Pomorska, also visible "when the EU introduced individual sanctions."⁷³¹ The preparation process of the travel bans and asset freezing against Russian and Crimean officials may serve as example in this regard.⁷³² At first the EU member states could not agree upon a common position during the Political and Security Committee and COREPER II meetings. Therefore, the discussions concerning the list of individuals subject to sanctions moved up to the level of Foreign Ministers. During the ensuing Foreign Affairs Council meeting, the criteria for selecting the individuals subject to sanctions proved to be the most challenging and sensitive topic of the

⁷²⁵ Agence Europe, "Ukraine: EU Imposes Sanctions on Russia and Threatens Further Action."

⁷²⁶ Cameron, D. 2014. "EU meeting on Ukraine: David Cameron's speech." March 6. Accessed December 3, 2020. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/eu-meeting-on-ukraine-david-camerons-speech>.

⁷²⁷ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 62.

⁷²⁸ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 62.

⁷²⁹ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 62.

⁷³⁰ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 62.

⁷³¹ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 62.

⁷³² Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 62.

discussion. Some EU member states were undecided on whether or not to restrict the list of sanctioned individuals solely to officials from Crimea or to include Russian one as well.⁷³³ In the end, at the Foreign Affairs Council, the member states decided to introduce sanctions against 21 Crimean and Russian individuals “responsible for actions which undermine or threaten the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine.”⁷³⁴ At the ensuing European Council meeting, the EU Heads of State and Government agreed upon the extension of travel bans and asset freezing to 33 individuals, high-ranking officials, and politicians from Russia among them.⁷³⁵ Poland’s Prime Minister shed some light on the debate that took place during the European Council meeting, when he explained that the negotiations “gave rise to a considerable amount of emotion, as certain countries sought to negotiate, to correct (the list) on the basis, for example, of their relationship with the individuals.”⁷³⁶

An explanation as to why achieving a common position proved to be this difficult could be found in possible retaliatory actions by Russia and in “an [Russian] attempt to divide and expose the vulnerabilities of the EU.”⁷³⁷ This was particularly true for policy in the energy sector.⁷³⁸ The EU, aware of its vulnerabilities in this regard, subsequently addressed them by adopting a common stance on Russia’s energy threats.⁷³⁹ One national diplomat, in an interview conducted by Naturski and Pomorska, explained that despite initial difficulties, “the multiple extensions of visa travel bans and asset freezes took place without comparable quarrels and the EU measures affected 149 individuals, including Russian oligarchs and decision-makers, and 37 other entities.”⁷⁴⁰ The first decision, therefore, created a precedence.

⁷³³ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 62.

⁷³⁴ Council of the European Union. 2014. “Press Release, 3304th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs, 7764/14.” March 17. Accessed December 3, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/28722/141614.pdf>.

⁷³⁵ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 62.

⁷³⁶ Agence Europe. 2014. “Ukraine: Russian Deputy Prime Minister Rogozin among 12 New Figures Sanctioned by EU.” *Bulletin Quotidien Europe*, March 22.

⁷³⁷ Freeman, C., and B. Waterfield. 2014. “EU leaders divided over new sanctions to punish Russia for annexing Crimea.” *The Telegraph*. March 20. Accessed December 3, 2020. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10710268/EU-leaders-divided-over-new-sanctions-to-punish-Russia-for-annexing-Crimea.html>.

⁷³⁸ Freeman, and Waterfield, “EU leaders divided over new sanctions to punish Russia for annexing Crimea.”

⁷³⁹ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 63; see: European Commission. 2014. “Letter from President Barroso to President Putin, Statement/14/132.” April 17. Accessed December 3, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_14_132; Putin, V. 2014. “Message from the President of Russia to the leaders of several European countries.” April 10. Accessed December 3, 2020. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20751>.

⁷⁴⁰ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 63.

This precedent, together with the time to assess its consequences “streamlined the decision-making dynamics and set the path to include more individuals in the future.”⁷⁴¹

The approval of the European Council’s decision and its underlaying dynamics made again visible that the respect for each other’s vulnerabilities strongly contributed to trust-building among EU member states. Initially, EU member states were in disagreement on whether Russia’s annexation of Crimea could be seen as a strong enough motive to introduce economic sanctions.⁷⁴² Therefore, the European Council warned Russia of “far reaching consequences for relations in a broad range of economic areas between the EU and its Member States”, should it further destabilize the situation in Ukraine.⁷⁴³ However, after Crimea’s annexation, many EU member states expressed their discomfort about possible negative economic consequences and voiced their opposition to EU sanctions.⁷⁴⁴ Thus, approving economic sanctions remained controversial. On July 16, 2014, at the European Council meeting, the EU member states solely agreed upon the expansion of sanctions targeting entities “that are materially or financially supporting actions undermining or threatening Ukraine’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence.”⁷⁴⁵ However, the approval of economic sanctions was postponed again. The downing of the Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 in mid-July, causing the death of hundreds of EU citizens, finally led to the decision to adopt the phase-three sanctions. According to Natorski and Pomorska, this decision was also reached due to EU member states respecting each other’s vulnerabilities.⁷⁴⁶ The downing of MH17 clearly proved to be an escalation of the crisis, but also increased its uncertainty. Subsequently, Russia stepped-up its disinformation campaign. The Kremlin’s aim was to lay the blame for shooting down the aircraft on the Ukrainian side.⁷⁴⁷

After reassuring each other that any subsequent economic costs would be distributed equally among themselves, the EU member states agreed upon the sanctions. The European Council President Herman Van Rompuy confirmed that the package of sanctions discussed “strikes the right balance when it comes to cost/benefit ratio and scalability/reversibility over

⁷⁴¹ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 63.

⁷⁴² Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 63.

⁷⁴³ European Council, "Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine."

⁷⁴⁴ Agence Europe. 2014. "Ukraine: Crimea Gatecrashes Summit, No Economic Sanctions at this Stage." *Bulletin Quotidien Europe*, March 20.

⁷⁴⁵ European Council, "Conclusions, EUCO 147/14, Brussels."

⁷⁴⁶ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 63.

⁷⁴⁷ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 63.

time.”⁷⁴⁸ He stated that “it should have a strong impact on Russia’s economy while keeping a moderate effect on EU economies.”⁷⁴⁹ Van Rompuy, assured that the package of sanctions did in fact take into account all the EU member states’ reservations. Additionally, the European Commission would be responsible for assessing the impact of the sanctions on EU member states economies and report to the capitals.⁷⁵⁰ For Naturski and Pomorska, the EU member states that would be affected the most by the sanctions “trusted not only Van Rompuy’s declarations but also the other Council members, which were expected to honour the agreement.”⁷⁵¹ Van Rompuy publicly stressed that “the final decision now lies with the EU’s Member States, but I believe that is an effective, well-targeted and balanced package providing the flexibility to adjust our reaction to changes on the ground.”⁷⁵² At the September 9, 2014, Council meeting, the EU member states established a mechanism in order to optimize “efficiency, consistency and legal certainty in the implementation of EU restrictive measures”, by “improving information sharing, coordination and effectiveness” between EU member states and EU institutions.⁷⁵³

In September 2014, EU member states extended their economic sanctions. Since the sanctions already affected the economic sectors addressed in prior decisions, EU member states therefore seemed less hesitant in extending them.⁷⁵⁴ Following “Russia’s direct military involvement in eastern Ukraine in August 2014”,⁷⁵⁵ the EU member states expressed their readiness to “to take significant further steps, in light of the evolution of the situation on the ground.”⁷⁵⁶ In the light of the incipient ceasefire in Eastern Ukraine, the EU member states had different positions on whether to delay the introduction of new measures or to implement them quickly.⁷⁵⁷ In order to overcome the diverging positions, the Presidents of

⁷⁴⁸ Financial Times. 2014. "Van Rompuy's letter on Russia: the complete text." *Financial Times*. July 25. Accessed December 3, 2020. <https://www.ft.com/content/c5425254-2c49-3b28-8c6e-711b33b53b15>.

⁷⁴⁹ Financial Times, "Van Rompuy's letter on Russia: the complete text."

⁷⁵⁰ Financial Times, "Van Rompuy's letter on Russia: the complete text."

⁷⁵¹ Naturski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 63.

⁷⁵² European Commission. 2014. "Ukraine: European Commission adopts legislative proposals on restrictive measures, Statement/14/242." July 25. Accessed December 3, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_14_242.

⁷⁵³ Council of the European Union. 2014. "EU Sanctions Mechanism to optimize consistency in the application and monitoring of EU restrictive measures, 12977/14." September 9. Accessed December 1, 2020. <https://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/news/2014/sep/eu-council-eeas-sanctions-12977-14.pdf>.

⁷⁵⁴ Naturski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 64.

⁷⁵⁵ Naturski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 64.

⁷⁵⁶ European Council. 2014. "Conclusions, EUCO 163/14." August 30. Accessed December 3, 2020. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/144538.pdf.

⁷⁵⁷ Agence Europe. 2014. "Ukraine: EU Considers Further Sanctions." *Bulletin Quotidien Europe*, August 30.

the European Council and the Commission affirmed that any new sanctions would be following the same criteria of “effectiveness, cost/benefit, balance across sectors and Member States, international coordination, reversibility/scalability, legal defensibility/ease of enforcement.”⁷⁵⁸

The question of trust between the EU member states was, according to Natorski and Pomorska, “directly linked with the engagement of Germany and France in the so-called Minsk talks in the Normandy format that produced a ceasefire in February 2015.”⁷⁵⁹ In interviews conducted with national diplomats by Natorski and Pomorska, they emphasized that there was “no decrease in trust towards Germany. On the contrary, the conduct during the negotiations and intense information-sharing practice, in particular Merkel’s efforts to keep the partners on-board through not only Brussels channels but also bilaterally somewhat reassured them about Germany ‘acting in good faith’.”⁷⁶⁰ According to two other national diplomats interviewed, both Germany and France were “well aware of representing the EU in very sensitive matter”, and therefore “consulted the positions with other partners and reported back on the progress of talks conducted in the Normandy format in order to maintain the common EU position on the relation between sanctions and cease-fire.”⁷⁶¹ Another interviewee stressed that national diplomats were “satisfied with the information received and regarded them as solid and unproblematic.”⁷⁶² An additional factor that “reflected the trusting relationship among the Member States” was the circumstance that without a formal mandate, both “Germany and France acted on behalf of the EU.”⁷⁶³ As one diplomat, interviewed by Natorski and Pomorska’s, explained: “Even though Germany during Minsk negotiations preferred the controversial option of freezing the conflict, its efforts received leverage when all Member States declared their readiness to adopt further sanctions.”⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁵⁸ European Commission. 2014. "Joint letter by the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, and the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, on restrictive measures against Russia, STATEMENT/14/273." September 5. Accessed December 3, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_14_273.

⁷⁵⁹ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 64.

⁷⁶⁰ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 64.

⁷⁶¹ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 64.

⁷⁶² Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 64.

⁷⁶³ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 64.

⁷⁶⁴ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 64.

The Process of Decision-making

In March 2014, during the extraordinary meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council and the European Council, most of the key discussions concerning the response to the crisis in Ukraine took place. The discussion were held under the light of the Russian annexation of the Crimean peninsula. According to Natorski and Pomorska, both the volatility of the situation and the sensitivity of the decisions brought the EU member states to marginalize the lower levels of decision-making and EU institutions, when it came to shaping these decisions.⁷⁶⁵ Therefore, the EEAS and the Commission were tasked with preparing policy proposals that would form the basis for adopting “sensitive decisions by the COREPER II and the RELEX Working Group.”⁷⁶⁶ Both the EEAS and the Commission also provided vital intelligence to all relevant parties involved in the decision-making process.⁷⁶⁷ For example, by March 31, 2014, the EU Satellite Centre prepared 105 First Impression Reports on Crimea. The EU Satellite Centre provided information on military and para-military activities, analysis of military facilities, infrastructure assessment, and reports on border crossing points and industrial facilities related to weapons of mass destruction.⁷⁶⁸

Natorski and Pomorska point out that “the Commission and the EEAS reinforced the relations of trust between Member States by balancing their vulnerabilities and uncertainties in the preparation of policy options and played key roles in the provision of information to the Member States.”⁷⁶⁹ In March 2014, the member states asked the Commission and the EEAS to prepare travel bans and asset freezes as well as measures targeted at economic sectors.⁷⁷⁰ One national diplomat, interviewed by Natorski and Pomorska, affirmed that the Commission together with the EEAS effectively prepared the next round targeted measures.⁷⁷¹ In addition, both institutions tried to take into account the sensitivities of each EU member state. The Commission and EEAS informed EU member states regularly on all policy options available. This happened during the COREPER II and the Working Party on Eastern Europe and Central

⁷⁶⁵ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 65.

⁷⁶⁶ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 65.

⁷⁶⁷ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 65.

⁷⁶⁸ Touron, H. 2014. “The European Union Satellite Centre: GEOINT Analysis for the European Union. The Use of Space in the Framework of CSDP”. Presentation at the War Museum.” April 10, Slide 19. Accessed December 1, 2020. https://netzpolitik.org/wp-upload/touron-SATCEN_Space_10Apr14-Athens.pdf.

⁷⁶⁹ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 65.

⁷⁷⁰ European Council, “Conclusions, EUCO 7/1/14 REV 1.”

⁷⁷¹ Natorski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 65.

Asia meetings.⁷⁷² A leaked policy paper by the Commission illustrates this process. In this policy paper, the Commission presents three different intensities of sanctions (low, middle, and high), and sets forth how they would affect the economies of EU member states.⁷⁷³ Another different policy proposal offered positions concerning the non-recognition policy with respect to Crimea.⁷⁷⁴ Yet another proposal, brought forward by the Commission and the EEAS offered positions on measures to restrict trade with and investment in Crimea/Sevastopol.⁷⁷⁵ According to a national diplomat, interviewed by Naturski and Pomorska, "the EEAS and Commission framed numerous decisions despite the fact that [...] it would always be possible to have potential doubts about their independence."⁷⁷⁶

In July 2014, the European Council adopted the decision on economic sanctions, brokered by the Commission and the EEAS. This decision came to be because the war in Eastern Ukraine grew more intense and Russia did not de-escalate the conflict – a condition set forth by the European Council.⁷⁷⁷ During the Council meeting, the EU "launched a process of preparation of another round of sanctions in COREPER II."⁷⁷⁸ The EEAS informed the COREPER about the situation on the ground in Ukraine as well as the fulfilment of the conditions set forth by the European Council, while the Commission provided information about options available with regard to the financial co-operation with Russia and the trilateral

⁷⁷² Naturski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 65.

⁷⁷³ Pop, V., and A. Rettman. 2014. "Leaked paper: EU options on 'stage three' Russia sanctions." *EU Observer*. July 22. Accessed December 1, 2020. <https://euobserver.com/foreign/125075>.

⁷⁷⁴ Council of the European Union, "EU Sanctions Mechanism to optimize consistency in the application and monitoring of EU restrictive measures, 12977/14."

⁷⁷⁵ European Commission/EEAS. 2014. *Concept paper/ proposal for measures to restrict trade with and investment in Crimea/Sevastopol*, MD 163/14. July 23; quoted after Naturski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 65. This is due to the document not being publicly available. The Council of the European Union explains this as follows: The document in question is a meeting room document "pertaining to the adoption of the Union's legislation imposing restrictive measures pursuant to the crisis in Ukraine. The Council has checked each of these documents individually but found that public release of any of them would enable third countries to assess the differences between the proposals for sanctions and the final outcome. This would enable third countries to determine to what extent the Union is prepared to go with its restrictive measures policy. Revealing that information would be detrimental to the Union's ability to use restrictive measure to their maximum effect. For this reason, public access is refused under Article 4(1)(a), third indent (protection of the public interest as regards international relations). Pursuant to Article 4(6) of the Regulation, the General Secretariat has assessed for each document whether any part of it would not fall within this exception but determined that this is not the case." See: Council of the European Union. 2014. "General Secretariat of the Council - Working Party on Information: Public access to documents, 15034/14." November 3, page 28. Accessed December 1, 2020. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15034-2014-INIT/en/pdf>.

⁷⁷⁶ Naturski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 65.

⁷⁷⁷ European Council, "Conclusions, EUCO 147/14."

⁷⁷⁸ Naturski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 65.

consultations between the EU, Russia, and Ukraine.⁷⁷⁹ The 2014 European Council Conclusions of July 16 show that the EU member states extended the scope of previously approved sanctions on the one hand, but were not sure whether to impose full-scale economic sector sanctions, on the other hand.⁷⁸⁰

The Foreign Affairs Council asked the Commission and the EEAS for the finalization of preparatory works on economic sanctions, but without formally approving them after a Russian-made BUK missile downed the Malaysian Airlines flight MH17. The Commission and the EEAS followed this request and provided an additional assessment on the possible impact of adopted measures.⁷⁸¹ As detailed by Valentina Pop, these papers provided by the Commission and the EEAS appeared to have appropriately addressed the EU member states concerns and vulnerabilities.⁷⁸² According to Naturski and Pomorska, these “ground-breaking on economic sanctions” had been taken on the level of COREPER II.⁷⁸³ After that, they were finalized at “the working level of officials within the RELEX Working Group who prepared all necessary legal instruments adopted formally in a written procedure by the Council.”⁷⁸⁴ According to them, the European Council President delivered the final impulse “for the adoption of the third-phase sanctions.”⁷⁸⁵ The European Council President wanted to avoid yet another emergency meeting; hence, he asked the European heads of state and government to delegate the adoption of the decision to COREPER II.⁷⁸⁶

The Commission and the EEAS were responsible for monitoring the effectivity of the sanctions. European Council President Herman Van Rompuy recalled in a statement that the EU member states at the level of COREPER would be responsible for assessing the implementation of the peace plan. The member states’ assessment would constitute the basis for any future amendment, suspension or repeal of the sanctions.⁷⁸⁷ In an interview conducted by Naturski and Pomorska, a national diplomat affirmed the increased role of

⁷⁷⁹ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 65-66.

⁷⁸⁰ European Council, “Conclusions, EUCO 147/14”; see also: Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 66.

⁷⁸¹ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 66.

⁷⁸² Pop, V. 2014. “EU blacklists more Russians, prepares economic sanctions.” *EU Observer*. July 24. Accessed December 1, 2020. <https://euobserver.com/foreign/125100>.

⁷⁸³ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 66.

⁷⁸⁴ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 66.

⁷⁸⁵ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 66.

⁷⁸⁶ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 66.

⁷⁸⁷ European Council. 2014. “Statement by the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy on further EU restrictive measures against Russia, EUCO 179/14.” September 11. Accessed December 1, 2020. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/144867.pdf.

transnational institutional actors as reflected in their “close association to the dynamics of negotiations within the Normandy format, which is key in the context of the implementation of Minsk ceasefires and sanctions’ conditionality.”⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁸ Naturski and Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis,” 66.

6. Long-term Strategic Adjustments?

The crisis in Ukraine and the war in its east sent out geopolitical shockwaves all across the region. This chapter assesses the long-term impact of the crisis on the EU's foreign and eastern policy. It shows that Russia's annexation of Crimea and its aggression in Eastern Ukraine together with other crises in the EU's eastern and southern neighbourhood led the Union to finally revise its already over a decade old Security Strategy in order to formulate the EU's very first Global Strategy. The chapter also highlights how the EU shifted its strategy and aims regarding the EaP countries. It shows that the EU and its member states still lack a coherent approach towards the EaP and its participating countries: the EU sought to embrace the Partnership states, while simultaneously trying to keep them at bay. This is best visualized in the question whether to offer EaP states a membership perspective or not; something EU member states are deeply divided over. Notwithstanding minor adjustments to its foreign and neighbourhood policies, this chapter reveals that up until now the EU's biggest shift towards embracing geopolitics has occurred on the level of rhetoric.

6.1 The EU Global Strategy: A New Security Strategy for Europe

The European Council conclusions of December 20, 2013, tasked the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy "to assess the impact of changes in the global environment, and to report to the Council in the course of 2015 on the challenges and opportunities arising for the Union, following consultations with the Member States."⁷⁸⁹ The European Council, in June 2015, mandated the new HR/VP Federica Mogherini with the preparation of a new EU strategy, and invited her to present it to the European leaders in June 2016.⁷⁹⁰ In the course of the ensuing one and a half years, from December 2013 to June 2015, a lot happened within and around Europe's borders. The EU found itself engulfed in multiple

⁷⁸⁹ European Council, "Conclusions, EUCO 217/13."

⁷⁹⁰ EEAS. 2016. "Federica Mogherini sends the EU Global Strategy to the Member States." June 26. Accessed December 16, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/6717/federica-mogherini-sends-eu-global-strategy-member-states_en; European Council. 2015. "Conclusions, EUCO 22/15." June 26. Accessed December 16, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21717/euco-conclusions-25-26-june-2015.pdf>.

crises, happening in its immediate neighbourhood: Ukraine, Libya, Syria and Iraq, transnational terrorism, and the migration crisis.

On November 18, 2014, the EU Defence Ministers, at their meeting in Brussels underlined that "Europe's security environment is evolving significantly, rapidly and dramatically. Ongoing conflicts and instability in our immediate and wider neighbourhood, such as in Iraq, Libya, the Sahel, Syria and Ukraine, remain a particular cause for great concern."⁷⁹¹ Therefore, the EU and its member states needed "to assume increased responsibilities to act as a security provider, at the international level and in particular in the neighbourhood, thereby also enhancing their own security and their global strategic role by responding to these challenges together."⁷⁹² The EU Defence Ministers tasked HR/VP Federica Mogherini with the assessment on "the impact of changes in the European Neighbourhood as well as in the global environment and to report back in view of the European Council in June 2015."⁷⁹³

Mogherini's mandate to prepare a new EU strategy reflected the European Council's ambiguous position on this issue. According to Nathalie Tocci, EU member states such as "Finland, Italy, Poland, Spain and Sweden, had been pushing for a new ESS since 2009."⁷⁹⁴ Other member states, such as France, Germany and the UK, opposed a new EU strategy.⁷⁹⁵ In October 2016, not long after the strategy had been adopted, Mogherini herself pointed out Sweden's important role in formulating the EU's new Global Strategy.⁷⁹⁶

After her first 100 days in office at the 51st Munich Security Conference, Mogherini expressed her clear intention to produce a new strategy by stating that "[w]e need a sense of direction. We need an ability to make choices and to prioritise. We need a sense of how we

⁷⁹¹ EEAS. 2014. "Foreign Affairs Council discusses enhancement of EU military capability and strengthening of the defence industry." November 18. Accessed December 16, 2020.

https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/2482/f...-enhancement-eu-military-capability-and-strengthening-defence_en.

⁷⁹² EEAS, "Foreign Affairs Council discusses enhancement of EU military capability and strengthening of the defence industry."

⁷⁹³ EEAS, "Foreign Affairs Council discusses enhancement of EU military capability and strengthening of the defence industry."

⁷⁹⁴ Tocci, N. 2015. "Towards an EU global strategy." In *Towards an EU global strategy – Background, process, references*, edited by A. Missiroli. Paris: EUISS, 117-118; see also: Pomorska, K., and S. Vanhoonacker. 2016. "Europe as a Global Actor: Searching for a New Strategic Approach." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 54 (Annual Review): 207.

⁷⁹⁵ Tocci, N. 2015. "Towards an EU global strategy," 118.

⁷⁹⁶ EEAS. 2016. "Speech by Federica Mogherini at the public seminar "EU as a Global Actor"." October 10. Accessed December 16, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/11588/speech-federica-mogherini-public-seminar-eu-global-actor_en.

can best mobilise our instruments to serve our goals and in partnership with whom. We need a new strategy."⁷⁹⁷ The need for the EU to have a common vision as well as to think long-term, to think strategically in order to not stumble from crisis to crisis, is a recurring theme in HR/VP Mogherini's speeches and public statements.⁷⁹⁸ For example, on January 14, 2015, Mogherini spoke to the European Parliament (EP) of the need to revise the European Security Strategy. In her statement to the EP, the HR/VP lamented that the EU lacks "long-term strategies and long-term visions."⁷⁹⁹ Mogherini also emphasized a collective "European interest" when invoking the need of a coordinated EU Common Foreign and Security Policy.⁸⁰⁰

Of what nature are the arguments referring to the purpose of such a new EU strategy? Quite a lot of the challenges and conflicts the EU faced in 2014/2015 undermined the very foundations of the cooperative global order the EU aims at. During a speech at the University of Leiden, in a reference to Francis Fukuyama⁸⁰¹, Mogherini said that "[t]he illusion about the 'end of history' is long gone. In our neighbourhood, [...] violent conflicts go hand in hand with a battle of ideas. Nowhere is the urgency to protect our fundamental interests and values clearer than in the crises at our Eastern and Southern borders. We see fundamental principles flouted as borders and national sovereignty are violated. What makes these conflicts so dangerous is that they combine beliefs we thought belonged to a bygone era – the law of the stronger and disregard for individual dignity – with the trappings of the modern age. So the crises we face to our East and to our South are much more than violent confrontations – they are also a battle for hearts and minds."⁸⁰²

⁷⁹⁷ Mogherini, F. 2015. "Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at Munich Security Conference." February 8. Accessed December 16, 2020. <https://libyannewswire.com/speech-by-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-at-munich-security-conference/>.

⁷⁹⁸ EEAS. 2015. "Keynote address of the High Representative and Vice-president at Leiden University, the Netherlands." April 16. Accessed December 16, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/3462/ke...epresentative-and-vice-president-leiden-university-netherlands_en.; EEAS. 2015. "Keynote Speech at Chatham House By the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini." February 24. Accessed December 16, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/3226/k...am-house-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini_en.

⁷⁹⁹ EEAS. 2015. "Extracts from Mogherini's speech at the European Parliament." January 14. Accessed December 16, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/1567/extracts-mogherinis-speech-european-parliament_en.

⁸⁰⁰ EEAS, "Extracts from Mogherini's speech at the European Parliament."

⁸⁰¹ In his book "The End of History and the Last Man", published in 1992, the American political scientist Francis Fukuyama argued that with the ascendancy of Western liberal democracy – which occurred after the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union – humanity has not just reached the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such. Fukuyama means that the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government, marks the end-point of mankind's ideological evolution. See: Fukuyama, F. 1992. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: The Free Press.

⁸⁰² EEAS, "Keynote address of the High Representative and Vice-president at Leiden University, the Netherlands."

Another theme in Mogherini's arguments is that in responding to these challenges the EU does not need new principles. So one purpose of a new EU strategy lies in finding new ways to project them. Since the EU has an interest in promoting its values and norms around the globe, the EU's interests and values need to go hand in hand. The articulation of the EU's interests needs to be imbedded in its fundamental values, Mogherini argued.⁸⁰³ Therefore, the EU needs a "strategy to protect proactively our interests, keeping in mind that promoting our values is an integral part of our interests."⁸⁰⁴ In her speech at the University of Leiden, the EU's HR/VP emphasized the purpose of a future EU strategy lies in protecting "our values and enshrine them in any future order."⁸⁰⁵ This means that the EU needs to start thinking strategically, "more than we ever did, starting with our Region."⁸⁰⁶

In 2015, when outlining the features of a future EU strategy, in reference to the 'ring of fire' around the EU Mogherini also stressed that reacting to crises is essential. However, the EU must not just think only about the next move, but about the following ones too. Therefore, if the Union wants to achieve lasting solutions, it needs to stay engaged. This would require a combination of fast action and negotiations.⁸⁰⁷ Mogherini made crystal clear that the EU needs "to sanction those that threaten the global order and create incentives for working together towards peace."⁸⁰⁸ The EU needs "hard and soft power"; it needs "conflict prevention and post crises management."⁸⁰⁹

Even though Mogherini emphasized that security and defence will be an integral part of any new EU strategy, she dismissed calls for a more aggressive EU foreign policy, calling instead for a rational strategy. In mid-November 2015, during a speech at the EDA Annual Conference in Brussels, the HR/VP said that "[t]he military, and military intervention, can

⁸⁰³ EEAS. 2015. "Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the EUISS Annual Conference." October 9. Accessed December 16, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/3133/re...tivevice-president-federica-mogherini-euiss-annual-conference_en.

⁸⁰⁴ EEAS, "Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the EUISS Annual Conference."

⁸⁰⁵ EEAS, "Keynote address of the High Representative and Vice-president at Leiden University, the Netherlands."

⁸⁰⁶ EEAS, "Keynote address of the High Representative and Vice-president at Leiden University, the Netherlands."

⁸⁰⁷ EEAS, "Keynote address of the High Representative and Vice-president at Leiden University, the Netherlands."; EEAS, "Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the EUISS Annual Conference."

⁸⁰⁸ EEAS, "Keynote address of the High Representative and Vice-president at Leiden University, the Netherlands."

⁸⁰⁹ EEAS, "Keynote address of the High Representative and Vice-president at Leiden University, the Netherlands."

never be the only solution [in order to solve a crisis]. Still, the military is and remains a crucial part of our overall toolbox.”⁸¹⁰ With regard to military and defence spending, Europe not only needs to spend better, but must also spend enough. Mogherini stressed that the new strategy would also require a strong focus on the building of partnerships and alliances “in a more cooperative global framework”, acknowledging that the EU’s “ambition to lonely take charge of our neighbourhood backfired.”⁸¹¹

Nathalie Tocci, the then Deputy Director of the Istituto Affari Internazionali in Rome, and Special Advisor to HR/VP Mogherini, described the purpose for a new EU strategy as following: “the primary purpose of an ‘external’ strategy is actually internal. Russia notwithstanding, the divisions between member states in 2015 are nowhere as deep or impassioned as they were in 2002-2003 [when the first EU Security Strategy was discussed]. Member states do have different priorities and different readings of the ‘ring of fire’ surrounding the Union. But there is no major schism that threatens to bring EU foreign policy to a standstill. So far at least, and no doubt to Moscow’s surprise and chagrin, EU unity, while fragile, has been maintained.”⁸¹²

After a process of strategic reflection to guide the EU’s foreign and security policy,⁸¹³ the HR/VP involved a broad range of stakeholders from member states governments, national parliaments, the academia, think tanks and NGOs in the process of formulating the EU’s first Global Strategy.⁸¹⁴ This approach reflects the “need to work at it together and share it from the very beginning.”⁸¹⁵ During the formulation process of the EU’s new strategy, member states were given the chance to see the draft as it evolved in a series of private reading room exercises, *Euractiv* reported.⁸¹⁶ One diplomat reported that EU member states had “the chance to submit observations and comments.”⁸¹⁷ However, there was no obligation for

⁸¹⁰ EEAS. 2015. “Extracts of the speech of HRVP Mogherini at the EDA Annual Conference.” November 16. Accessed December 16, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/5571/extracts-speech-hrvp-mogherini-eda-annual-conference_en.

⁸¹¹ EEAS, “Extracts of the speech of HRVP Mogherini at the EDA Annual Conference.”

⁸¹² Tocci, N. 2015. “Towards an EU global strategy,” 116.

⁸¹³ EEAS, “Keynote Speech at Chatham House By the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini.”

⁸¹⁴ EEAS, “Keynote address of the High Representative and Vice-president at Leiden University, the Netherlands.”

⁸¹⁵ EEAS, “Keynote address of the High Representative and Vice-president at Leiden University, the Netherlands.”

⁸¹⁶ Gotev, G. 2016. “All eyes focus on language about Russia in EU Global Strategy.” *Euractiv*. May 19. Accessed December 16, 2020. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/all-eyes-focus-on-language-about-russia-in-eu-global-strategy/>.

⁸¹⁷ Gotev, “All eyes focus on language about Russia in EU Global Strategy.”

Mogherini to take those on board.⁸¹⁸ This post-modern approach towards the formulation of an EU Global Strategy, which does not solely take into account the interests of the member states governments, but also tries to bridge Europe's different histories, perspectives, and interests in the realm of foreign policy, is clearly expressed in one of HR/VP Mogherini's remarks: "Foreign policy is no longer the exclusive domain of diplomats, or of policy makers, or even of the foreign policy community [...]. Foreign policy concerns all of us [...]. That is why we all have a role to play in shaping it. This is the reason why an EU Global Strategy cannot be drawn up behind closed doors. We are gathering as many voices as possible to feed into the debates on an EU Global Strategy for foreign and security policy."⁸¹⁹

This consultation process, however, was not without friction. Despite the 2016 EUGS adopting a more open and integrative consultation process with EU governments, think tanks, and civil society organizations in contrast to Solana's 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) a few EU member states still expressed their dissatisfaction about not being consulted in a sufficient manner. Equally, they complained about Mogherini and that she pursued too much of her own agenda.⁸²⁰ The consultation process on the EU's new strategy was mostly intra-EU. However, the EUGS acknowledgements list some third countries that have also "contributed with initiatives and ideas": Brazil, Georgia, Japan, Norway, and the US.⁸²¹

One of the more sensitive issues for the EU member states was what kind of language on Russia the strategy might entail. One diplomat from a small Western member state stated that the text itself was unproblematic, but "some countries saw the resolutions on Russia as being weak, while others wanted them softened. All of us have interest in [the text on Russia], but for some, it is particularly sensitive."⁸²² Another diplomat said that concerning Russia the "basis of the language used in the draft were the European Commission's 'five principles'⁸²³ of

⁸¹⁸ Gotev, "All eyes focus on language about Russia in EU Global Strategy."

⁸¹⁹ EEAS, "Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the EUISS Annual Conference."

⁸²⁰ Pomorska and Vanhoonacker, "Europe as a Global Actor," 207-208.

⁸²¹ European Union. 2016. "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy." June, 55. Accessed December 16, 2020.

https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf.

⁸²² Gotev, "All eyes focus on language about Russia in EU Global Strategy."

⁸²³ The EU's five guiding principles for EU-Russia relations are: the full implementation of the Minsk agreements; closer ties with Russia's former Soviet neighbours; the strengthening of EU resilience to Russian threats; selective engagement with Russia on certain issues such as counter-terrorism; and the Union's support for people-to-people contacts. See: European Parliament Think Tank. 2018. "The EU's Russia policy: Five guiding principles." February 8. Accessed February 10, 2021.

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI\(2018\)614698](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2018)614698).

EU-Russia relations."⁸²⁴ He confirmed that some EU member states found these "formulations too prescriptive and wanted them softened, while others insisted that the country should be named as aggressor in Ukraine."⁸²⁵ The same diplomat is reported to have said: "The main part of this language is limited engagement with Russia on issues of other interest. [...] Russia, as I remember, would be labelled as a 'strategic challenge'. Not a partner, not an adversary, but a strategic challenge, which I think is very good diplomatic language."⁸²⁶

On June 28, 2019 at the EU summit in Brussels, HR/VP Mogherini finally presented the EU Global Strategy on foreign and security policy to the EU Heads of State and Government; the strategy was subsequently adopted.⁸²⁷

A Strategic Shift?

After presenting various HR/VP Mogherini's arguments on what a new EU strategy ought to be, it is now time to examine what it actually entails and how it differs from the EU's seminal Security Strategy. Does the EUGS constitute a shift from the EU's normative foreign policy approach more towards a geopolitical one?

What is visible from the start when comparing the 2003 ESS to the 2016 EUGS is the scope, the EUGS being a much more comprehensive document than the ESS including its implementation report. Yet another striking difference can be found in the wording of both documents. The ESS' opening words read as follows: "Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free."⁸²⁸ This is quite surprising since EU member states and EU membership candidates were deeply divided over issues such as the war in Iraq in early 2003.⁸²⁹ According to Karin Smith, the EES was "both a European response to the external context and a way to demonstrate internal unity."⁸³⁰ The EUGS strikes an altogether different tone by stating that

⁸²⁴ Gotev, "EU to label Russia a 'strategic challenge'."

⁸²⁵ Gotev, "EU to label Russia a 'strategic challenge'."

⁸²⁶ Gotev, G. 2016. "EU to label Russia a 'strategic challenge'." *Euractiv*. May 31. Accessed December 16, 2020. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/eu-to-label-russia-a-strategic-challenge/>.

⁸²⁷ EEAS. 2016. "High Representative Mogherini presents EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy." June 28. Accessed December 16, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/7337/hig...herini-presents-eu-global-strategy-foreign-and-security-policy_en; European Council. 2016. "Conclusions, EUCO 26/16." June 28. Accessed December 16, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21645/28-euco-conclusions.pdf>.

⁸²⁸ Council of the European Union. 2003. "European Security Strategy, 15895/03." December 8. Accessed December 16, 2020. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15895-2003-INIT/en/pdf>.

⁸²⁹ Smith, K. E. 2017. "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?" *LSE Research Online*, 11. Accessed December 16, 2020. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/75896/1/Smith_EU%20global%20strategy_2017.pdf.

⁸³⁰ Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?"

“the purpose, even existence, of our Union is being questioned” and “our wider region has become more unstable and more insecure.”⁸³¹ Nathalie Tocci, who was a special adviser to HR/VP Mogherini, stated that “we live in more far more turbulent times than we did back then [...]”⁸³² Given that in 2003, wars were fought both in Afghanistan and Iraq with European involvement, Tocci’s assessment seems highly questionable. Karen Smith points to the notable fact that “both major EU strategies were born out of a sense that the EU was in a severe crisis and surrounded by crises.”⁸³³ However, the ESS, in comparison, was written in a more optimistic tone.

The EUGS starts off with a list of the EU’s shared interests and principles, including: promoting the interests and prosperity of its people, a rules-based global order, and principled pragmatism (this is defined as “a realistic assessment of the strategic environment as from an idealistic aspiration to advance a better world”⁸³⁴); engaging with the wider world, developing a strong sense of responsibility, address the root causes of conflicts and poverty, and promoting human rights.⁸³⁵ This is then followed by the declaration that the EU will pursue five broad external action priorities, which are based on these shared interests and principles. These five priorities are: the security of the Union (in the sense of addressing threats to security), State and societal resilience to the EU's East and South, an integrated approach to conflicts and crises, cooperative regional orders, and global governance for the 21st century.⁸³⁶

According to Tocci, the EUGS meant to identify a set of common interests and goals as well as the means to achieve them. The EUGS, therefore, “would bring together into a coherent whole all the dimensions of EU external action, security and non-security related.”⁸³⁷

In the realm of defence, the EUGS calls upon EU member states to reach a “sufficient level of expenditure.”⁸³⁸ The strategy also stressed the need for improvement with regard to intelligence gathering and sharing.⁸³⁹ The EU’S CSDP must improve in its effectiveness as well as its capacity to deploy civilian personnel and military forces rapidly.⁸⁴⁰ Under global governance for the 21st century, the EUGS calls upon the improvement of diplomatic actions

⁸³¹ European Union, “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe,” 3.

⁸³² Tocci, N. 2015. “Towards an EU global strategy,” 116.

⁸³³ Smith, “A European Union global strategy for a changing world?,” 11.

⁸³⁴ European Union, “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe,” 16.

⁸³⁵ European Union, “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe,” 13-16.

⁸³⁶ European Union, “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe,” 18-39.

⁸³⁷ Tocci, N. 2015. “Towards an EU global strategy,” 117.

⁸³⁸ European Union, “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe,” 44.

⁸³⁹ European Union, “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe,” 45.

⁸⁴⁰ European Union, “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe,” 47-49.

in order to be able to better respond to challenges the EU is and will be facing.⁸⁴¹ Additionally, the EU's development policy needs to "become more flexible and aligned with our strategic priorities."⁸⁴² The EUGS calls for a "joined-up" EU external action, especially in the fields of energy diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and economic diplomacy; internal and external security; security and development policy; and human rights and gender issues.⁸⁴³

Commentators have a rather ambivalent view when it comes to assessing the EUGS. For Karen Smith, there "has been more agreement on short-term responses to challenges from a revisionist and authoritarian Russia, but little indication of a long-term strategy."⁸⁴⁴ Sven Biscop asks the question whether the EUGS "gives us something to work with to render EU foreign and security policy more effective. The answer is: yes, and quite a lot."⁸⁴⁵ For Kristina Kausch, the EUGS "reveals a good deal of sensible and innovative thinking amid a generally toned-down level of transformative rhetoric", and therefore, it is a "forceful reminder that the union stands for a liberal internationalist world order that Europeans need to stand up for much more vigorously."⁸⁴⁶ Annegret Bendiek is less euphoric and more critical: "This document, however, largely lacks the core features of a strategy: a clearly stated objective, a defined (longer) timeframe, and a methodical approach."⁸⁴⁷

One reason why the EUGS is greeted with that much ambivalence might be found in its promotion of a list of broadly shared values, interests and objectives that are not so different from the EU's previously set out foreign policy objectives. According to Smith, the EU "has long sought to promote a rules-based global order (centred on the United Nations), engage with the wider world, address the root causes of conflict and poverty, promote human rights, enhance the security of the EU, and foster regional cooperation around the world."⁸⁴⁸ In addition, the EUGS quite often calls upon member states to "do something" with regard to a wide range of policy issues, but lacks indications of how and when the EU and its member states might meet these priorities. The EUGS, equally, does not rank the priorities with regard

⁸⁴¹ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 46-49.

⁸⁴² European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 48.

⁸⁴³ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 49-51.

⁸⁴⁴ Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 13.

⁸⁴⁵ Biscop, S. 2016. *From Global Strategy to Strategic Compass: Where Is the EU Heading?* Egmont Security Brief 121, Brussels: Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, 1.

⁸⁴⁶ Kausch, K. 2016. "The EU Global Strategy in the Shadow of Brexit." *Carnegie Europe*. July 7. Accessed December 16, 2020. <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=64034>.

⁸⁴⁷ Bendiek, A. 2016. *The Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy*. SWP Comments 38, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 1.

⁸⁴⁸ Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 15.

to their importance.⁸⁴⁹ Sometimes the EUGS clearly calls upon the EU and its member states to do rather obvious things. Examples for this might be the call on the EU's support for neighbourhood countries to implement their DCFTA's⁸⁵⁰ or to not recognize the Russian annexation of Crimea.⁸⁵¹ Nonetheless, the strategy, in many parts is largely vague. For example, when it comes to an integrated approach to conflicts and crises, the EUGS states that the EU "will 'invest in [the] prevention, resolution and stabilization [of a conflict], and avoid premature disengagement when a new crisis erupts elsewhere. The EU will therefore engage further in the resolution of protracted conflicts in the Eastern Partnership countries."⁸⁵²

For some Commentators, such as Karen Smith, the EU's objectives as set out in the EUGS became "more 'realistic' than in previous strategies, where the clear sense was that the EU was a 'force for good' in the world."⁸⁵³ Others remained skeptical about the EU's ability to be a force for good. For Adrian Hyde-Price, the EU had become the "institutional repository of the second-hand normative concerns of EU member states."⁸⁵⁴ What Hyde-Price means is that the EU was ignorant of the fact that others not always perceived it as such a force for good. In addition, the EU was also weak in protecting its member states interests on economic and security issues.⁸⁵⁵ In its new strategy the EU acknowledges that "principled pragmatism will guide our external action in the years ahead."⁸⁵⁶ Therefore, the Union will "engage the world manifesting responsibility towards others and sensitivity to contingency."⁸⁵⁷ Sven Biscop comments on this as follows: "Where the ESS proved to be overoptimistic [...], the EUGS is more conscious of the limits imposed by our own capabilities and by others' intractability, and therefore more modest."⁸⁵⁸

Even though the rhetoric that led to the genesis of the EU's new strategy portrayed quite clearly the 'ring of fire' that surrounded the Union, the EUGS does not sufficiently link the challenges posed by these crises with the fulfilment of the EU's set objectives.⁸⁵⁹ Strikingly,

⁸⁴⁹ Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 16.

⁸⁵⁰ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 25.

⁸⁵¹ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 33.

⁸⁵² European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 28-29.

⁸⁵³ Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 16.

⁸⁵⁴ Hyde-Price, A. 2008. "A 'tragic actor'? A realist perspective on 'ethical power Europe'." *International Affairs* 84 (1): 31.

⁸⁵⁵ Hyde-Price, "A 'tragic actor'? A realist perspective on 'ethical power Europe'," 32.

⁸⁵⁶ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 16.

⁸⁵⁷ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 16.

⁸⁵⁸ Biscop, *From Global Strategy to Strategic Compass*, 1.

⁸⁵⁹ Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 16.

the EUGS at no point acknowledges the resistance the Union faces on the world stage. Sonia Lucarelli and others have shown that the EU's perception is not a universally positive one.⁸⁶⁰ Therefore, "as power diffuses internationally, Europe inevitably will struggle to exercise influence."⁸⁶¹

As regards Russia, the EUGS talking about 'The European Security Order' stresses that "peace and stability in Europe are no longer a given. Russia's violation of international law and the destabilisation of Ukraine, on top of protracted conflicts in the wider Black Sea region, have challenged the European security order at its core. The EU will stand united in upholding international law, democracy, human rights, cooperation and each country's right to choose its future freely."⁸⁶² Then, the EUGS acknowledged that the EU's relations with Russia pose a "key strategic challenge."⁸⁶³ This is a clear shift from the EU's earlier terminology that saw Russia as a strategic partner. The document further explains that any substantial change in EU-Russia relations can only be based upon the "full respect for international law and the principles underpinning the European security order, including the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter."⁸⁶⁴ The EU will not "recognise Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea nor accept the destabilisation of eastern Ukraine."⁸⁶⁵ Therefore, the EUGS calls upon the EU and its member states to enhance "the resilience of [its] eastern neighbours, and uphold their right to determine freely their approach towards the EU."⁸⁶⁶

When reading the EUGS, "resilience" is the term one comes across quite often. According to Smith, the concept of resilience "is a step away from previous EU rhetoric on democracy promotion."⁸⁶⁷ However, "the EU has long tilted more towards the promotion of civil and political rights rather than democracy per se, and has privileged stability more than the spread of democracy."⁸⁶⁸ For Wagner and Anholt, EU officials and policy-makers see resilience as the "perfect middle ground between over-ambitious liberal peace-building and

⁸⁶⁰ Lucarelli, S. 2007. "The European Union in the Eyes of Others: Towards Filling a Gap in the Literature." *European Foreign Affairs Review* 12 (3): 249-270.

⁸⁶¹ Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 16.

⁸⁶² European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 33.

⁸⁶³ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 33.

⁸⁶⁴ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 33.

⁸⁶⁵ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 33.

⁸⁶⁶ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 33.

⁸⁶⁷ Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 18.

⁸⁶⁸ Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 18.

the under-ambitious objective of stability.”⁸⁶⁹ To illustrate this, during a speech at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Mogherini said:

“Everyone noted that ‘resilience’ is the key word in the Strategy. One of our core ideas is that we won’t manage to end or prevent conflicts if societies and States are not resilient enough. And I say societies and States because the resilience of a State alone will never make the States resilient for real. You need societies to be open and resilient, and that is what makes also institutions in the long run resilient. Human development, job creation, institution building, climate action and the protection of human rights are for us integral part of our work on security.”⁸⁷⁰

This approach, however, is problematic in its own way. By focusing solely on resilience – as in strengthening a society’s and state’s capacity to withstand crisis – the EU risks that actors implementing such a strategy, avoid tackling the sources of said crisis.⁸⁷¹ Biscop notes that “[i]ncreasing the resilience of a state against external threats can easily lead to increasing the resilience of a repressive regime.”⁸⁷² Smith argues that “[f]ostering resilience can merely cement the status quo, which may be undesirable.”⁸⁷³

What is noticeable, when reading the EUGS, is its strong focus on the EU’s own security as well as the Union’s need to develop effective military capabilities. The EU’s HR/VP Federica Mogherini clearly underlined this in her speech at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace when she said that the EU’s engagement with the world needs to be a “smart mix of soft and hard power. The old idea that ‘Europeans are from Venus’ doesn’t reflect a changing reality. Actually it is quite outdated. Our Union is already more than a purely civilian power. The future of our security is one where hard and soft power are much more blended than in the past. This is why the Strategy calls for Europe to seek the full spectrum of defence capabilities.”⁸⁷⁴ Karen Smith argues that Mogherini “seems to be trying to move the EU away from an identity as a normative, ethical or civilian power towards what some have referred to as a ‘normal’ power, that is, a country willing to use power, including military power, in its own interests.”⁸⁷⁵

⁸⁶⁹ Wagner, W., and R. Anholt. 2016. “Resilience as the EU Global Strategy’s new leitmotif: pragmatic, problematic or promising?” *Contemporary Security Policy* 37 (3): 415.

⁸⁷⁰ EEAS. 2016. “Speech by the High Representative / Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.” July 22. Accessed December 16, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/7288_en.

⁸⁷¹ Wagner and Anholt, “Resilience as the EU Global Strategy’s new leitmotif,” 419-422.

⁸⁷² Biscop, *From Global Strategy to Strategic Compass*, 3.

⁸⁷³ Smith, “A European Union global strategy for a changing world?,” 18.

⁸⁷⁴ EEAS, “Speech by the High Representative / Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.”

⁸⁷⁵ Smith, “A European Union global strategy for a changing world?,” 20.

After the adoption of the EUGS in June 2016, several EU member states, but also EU officials, pushed for strengthening the block's defence cooperation.⁸⁷⁶ On October 17, 2016, at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting, the EU Foreign Minister's fleshed out a roadmap for the European Union's Global Strategy.⁸⁷⁷ In the run-up to the Council meeting, one diplomat said that the EUGS was a "good document," but added that the obvious question was "what does it mean in practice."⁸⁷⁸ Therefore, "the roadmap will be the Strategy's implementation plan", especially on security and defence.⁸⁷⁹ Another diplomat is reported to have said that the level of EUGS ambition on security and defence issues is not yet agreed. The diplomat stressed that an agreement was still "necessary on issues like the level of autonomy the Union should enjoy, what [...] permanent structures of cooperation it should use, whether it should receive more common funding and how this menu will be brought together."⁸⁸⁰ The aim was that the roadmap "could be discussed at the joint meeting of foreign and defence ministers in November and be adopted at the EU summit in December [2016]."⁸⁸¹ The need for quickly implementing the EUGS as well as strengthening the block's defence cooperation acquired more urgency when Donald Trump won the US elections and was set to become the 45th President of the United States. Trump, during his election campaign, frequently criticized EU countries – Germany in particular – for not contributing enough to NATO. He clearly viewed the Alliance in transactional terms.⁸⁸² Just a few days after Trump's election, the EU Defence Ministers agreed upon the EUGS implementation plan on security and defence.⁸⁸³

Even though the EUGS has a clear focus on the development of the EU's defence capabilities, it leaves quite a few important questions unanswered. Karen Smith pointed out the following: Firstly, it remains elusive as to how the EU wants to use its yet to improve

⁸⁷⁶ See: Euractiv and Reuters. 2016. "German defence minister wants EU military to match NATO." *Euractiv*. November 8. Accessed December 16, 2020. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/german-defence-minister-wants-eu-military-to-match-nato/>; Mützel, D. 2016. "European Defence Union: The return of 'hard power'." *Euractiv*. November 30. Accessed December 16, 2020.

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/security/news/european-defence-union-the-return-of-hard-power/>.

⁸⁷⁷ Gotev, G. 2016. "Foreign ministers to flesh out Global Strategy roadmap." *Euractiv*. October 13. Accessed December 16, 2020. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/foreign-ministers-to-flesh-out-global-strategy-roadmap/>.

⁸⁷⁸ Gotev, "Foreign ministers to flesh out Global Strategy roadmap."

⁸⁷⁹ Gotev, "Foreign ministers to flesh out Global Strategy roadmap."

⁸⁸⁰ Gotev, "Foreign ministers to flesh out Global Strategy roadmap."

⁸⁸¹ Gotev, "Foreign ministers to flesh out Global Strategy roadmap."

⁸⁸² Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 20.

⁸⁸³ Council of the European Union. 2016. "Implementation Plan on Security and Defence, 14392/16." November 14. Accessed December 16, 2020. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14392-2016-INIT/en/pdf>; Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 20.

capabilities in order to increase the Union's internal and external security as set out in the EUGS. Secondly, the EUGS does not specify if increased military capabilities mean that the EU plans on being more interventionist. Thirdly, if the Union plans on becoming so, the EUGS equally, leaves the question open of what might be the EU's geographical priorities for interventions. And lastly, the EUGS does not specify if the EU would only intervene with a mandate by the UN Security Council. When assessing whether the EUGS constitutes a shift from the EU's normative approach to foreign policy more towards a geopolitical one, the document offers little concrete.⁸⁸⁴ Or, as Karen Smith puts it: "Military capabilities are not a magic wand, and simply having them may not make the EU more effective and influential in any given situation."⁸⁸⁵

6.2 The Eastern Partnership: Turning Geopolitical?

As the previous sub-chapter has shown, the Ukraine crisis in combination with other crises has deeply affected the EU's understanding of its role on the global stage. EU and member states officials seem to have opened up to the idea of a more strategic, long-term thinking and geopolitical EU.⁸⁸⁶ According to many scholars, the EU's warming up to geopolitics and the formulation of a grand strategy should have occurred much sooner.⁸⁸⁷

The EU, when developing its foreign policy, put much focus on the creation of a strong presence in the international order. Drawing from the Union's nature and capabilities, this presence, however, is of a sort of hybrid nature and differs from those of traditional nation

⁸⁸⁴ Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 20-21.

⁸⁸⁵ Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 21.

⁸⁸⁶ Costa, A. 2018. "Speech by the Prime Minister of Portugal, António Costa, to the European Parliament." March 14. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/eu/Speech-by-Portuguese-Prime-Minister-Costa-at-the-European-Parliament.pdf>; EEAS, "Extracts from Mogherini's speech at the European Parliament."; EEAS, "Extracts of the speech of HRVP Mogherini at the EDA Annual Conference."; EEAS, "Keynote address of the High Representative and Vice-president at Leiden University, the Netherlands."; EEAS, "Keynote Speech at Chatham House By the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini."; EEAS, "Speech by Federica Mogherini at the public seminar 'EU as a Global Actor'."; EEAS, "Speech by the High Representative / Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace."; Youngs R. 2017. "Is 'hybrid geopolitics' the next EU foreign policy doctrine?" June 19. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/euorpblog/2017/06/19/is-hybrid-geopolitics-the-next-eu-foreign-policy-doctrine/>.

⁸⁸⁷ Howorth, J. 2010. "The EU as a global actor: Grand strategy for a global bargain?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 48 (3): 455-474; Rynning, S. 2011. "Realism and the common security and defence Policy." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49 (1): 23-42; Smith, M. E. 2016. "Implementing the global strategy where it matters most: The EU's credibility deficit and the European Neighbourhood." *Contemporary Security Policy* 37 (3): 446-460.

states.⁸⁸⁸ Following this logic, the EU perceived geopolitics as the root cause of conflict in global affairs.⁸⁸⁹ Thus, the EU framed itself as a project of peace and cooperation, as a post-modern actor that aimed at transcending Westphalian characteristics of nation state thinking.⁸⁹⁰

According to Nitoiu and Sus, "the EU has always had geography (understood as geographical spaces) and power at the center of its design."⁸⁹¹ What does this mean? It means that firstly EU membership has a not so insignificant geographical component; and secondly, the Union's foreign policy usually tries to address different geographical areas around the globe through distinct policies. The EU's Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood (addressed through the Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean) are two prime examples of how geography directs the nature of the Union's external action. Other actors in the international system when engaging in great power politics merely relegate their neighbourhood to spheres of influence/interests.⁸⁹² The EU in contrast due to its clear delineation of its neighbourhood has a much stronger focus on the need to help its neighbouring countries in the region to develop and "learn from the EU's own recipe for success."⁸⁹³

When looking upon the Union's development and behavior in its Eastern Neighbourhood after the crisis in Ukraine erupted, we might notice an increasing salience of traditional geopolitical considerations. Cadier, Ikani, Pänke, Raik and Youngs emphasize that the EU's hybrid nature can also be observed in its approach to geopolitics.⁸⁹⁴

The capabilities the EU has at its disposal can be largely put into the category of soft power, even though the 2009 Lisbon Treaty allows for the development of a considerable amount of EU hard power (if EU member states wish to develop them, and are able to agree upon it).⁸⁹⁵

⁸⁸⁸ Nitoiu, C. 2014. "British press attitudes towards the EU's global presence: from the Russian-Georgian war to the 2009 Copenhagen Summit." *Comparative European Politics* 13 (6): 615-635.

⁸⁸⁹ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU's Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 2.

⁸⁹⁰ Zielonka, "Europe as a global actor: Empire by example?" 472-475.

⁸⁹¹ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU's Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 2.

⁸⁹² Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU's Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 2.

⁸⁹³ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU's Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 2.

⁸⁹⁴ Cadier, D. 2019. "The Geopoliticisation of the EU's Eastern Partnership." *Geopolitics* 24 (1): 71-99; Ikani, N. 2019. "Change and Continuity in the European Neighbourhood Policy: The Ukraine Crisis as a Critical Juncture." *Geopolitics* 24 (1): 20-50; Pänke, J. 2019. "Liberal Empire, Geopolitics and EU Strategy: Norms and Interests in European Foreign Policy Making." *Geopolitics* 24 (1): 100-123; Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*.

⁸⁹⁵ Article 42(2) TEU: "The common security and defence policy shall include the progressive framing of a common Union defence policy. This will lead to a common defence, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides. It shall in that case recommend to the Member States the adoption of such a decision

Consequently, the EU's actorness and identity have been "been shaped by the lack of sources of hard power."⁸⁹⁶ Creating an EU army and the pursuit of EU strategic autonomy has meandered through various successes and setbacks in the last six decades.⁸⁹⁷ The development of the 2016 EU Global Strategy, together with narratives initiated by the EEAS and the previous Commission's⁸⁹⁸ High Representative Federica Mogherini, gave the debate about the development of EU military capabilities a strong new impetus.⁸⁹⁹ Nonetheless, even though the new EU Commission under Ursula von der Leyen aspires to be a geopolitical Commission,⁹⁰⁰ it is still unclear what practical consequences this might entail. However, it can be concluded that this might be a clear signal regarding a shift in the Union's perception of the role of more traditional forms of geopolitics.

Geopolitics on the Rise?

Over the course of the last six years, a steep rise of traditional geopolitical aspects could be observed in the language used by EU officials.⁹⁰¹ According to scholars such as Beauguitte, Richard, and Guérin-Pace, the EU traditionally sought to "export the European model to neighbouring countries and to act as a soft power to secure its borders."⁹⁰² However, Brussels

in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements." [Emphasis added], see: European Union. 2012. "Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union." *Official Journal of the European Union* 326: 13-45.

⁸⁹⁶ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU's Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 4.

⁸⁹⁷ See: Algieri, *Die Gemeinsame Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik der EU*; Diedrichs, U. 2012. *Die Gemeinsame Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik der EU*.

⁸⁹⁸ The Juncker Commission: 2014-2019.

⁸⁹⁹ Tocci, "The making of the EU Global Strategy."

⁹⁰⁰ See: European Parliamentary Research Service. 2020. "Briefing: The von der Leyen Commission's priorities for 2019-2024." Accessed January 5, 2021.

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/646148/EPRS_BRI\(2020\)646148_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/646148/EPRS_BRI(2020)646148_EN.pdf); Bayer, L. 2019. "Meet von der Leyen's 'geopolitical Commission'." *Politico*. December 4. Accessed January 5, 2021.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/meet-ursula-von-der-leyen-geopolitical-commission/>; Subotić, S. 2019. "A 'Geopolitical' Commission – What's in the Name?" *European Policy Centre*. September 19. Accessed January 21, 2021. <https://cep.org.rs/en/blogs/a-geopolitical-commission/>.

⁹⁰¹ Juncker, J. C. 2017. "State of the Union Address 2017, SPEECH/17/3165." September 13. Accessed December 30, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_17_3165; Juncker, J. C. 2018.

"State of the Union Address 2018." September 12. Accessed December 30, 2020.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/soteu2018-speech_en_0.pdf; EEAS, "Extracts from Mogherini's speech at the European Parliament."; EEAS, "Extracts of the speech of HRVP Mogherini at the EDA Annual Conference."; EEAS, "Keynote address of the High Representative and Vice-president at Leiden University, the Netherlands."; EEAS, "Keynote Speech at Chatham House By the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini."; EEAS, "Speech by Federica Mogherini at the public seminar 'EU as a Global Actor'."; EEAS, "Speech by the High Representative / Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace."

⁹⁰² Beauguitte, L., Y. Richard, and F. Guérin-Pace. 2015. "The EU and its neighbourhoods: A textual analysis on key documents of the European neighbourhood policy." *Geopolitics* 20 (4): 854.

appeared to have neglected existing realities in its neighbourhood. Still, the EU's foreign policy has in part been under the influence of a hybrid type of geopolitical thinking.⁹⁰³

However, developments in international affairs over the course of the last six years has little by little shattered the EU's illusion of operating within a stable global and regional environment.⁹⁰⁴ The multitude of crises that have sprung up in the EU's Southern and Eastern Neighbourhood have completely transformed the Union's bordering regions from a 'ring of friends' back in 2003,⁹⁰⁵ to a 'ring of fire'⁹⁰⁶.⁹⁰⁷ In its Eastern Neighbourhood, other actors see the Union's foreign and neighbourhood policy in a highly competitive way. The fact that the EU's foreign policy is not predominantly viewed by others in cooperative terms has not gone unnoticed in Brussels.⁹⁰⁸ Therefore, in the wake of Russia's constant undermining of the international order and China's steep rise, policymakers in the EU have been forced to recognize that for other actors within the international system, the concept of 'might is right' is natural. Or in other words the EU had to recognize that there is an ample amount of states that simply do not buy into the Union's postmodern view of international relations.⁹⁰⁹

Due to the shifts in world politics in the last six years, a wide set of equivocal ideas and principles has been imbued in official EU statements, documents and foreign policy practices.⁹¹⁰ For Nitoiu and Sus, this has reinforced "the EU's hybrid approach to geopolitics. The most novel and rather unexpected (considering the normative power rhetoric) is the acknowledgement that the EU should have a pragmatic approach to foreign policy and put its interests first. To some extent, this mimics the 'America first' catch phrase that has become

⁹⁰³ Beauguitte, Richard, and Guérin-Pace, "The EU and its neighbourhoods," 853-879.

⁹⁰⁴ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU's Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 6.

⁹⁰⁵ Council of the European Union, "European Security Strategy, 15895/03."

⁹⁰⁶ Tocci, N. 2015. "Towards an EU global strategy," 116.

⁹⁰⁷ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU's Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 6.

⁹⁰⁸ Korosteleva, E. 2016. "The European Union, Russia and the Eastern region: The analytics of government for sustainable cohabitation." *Cooperation and Conflict* 51 (3): 365-383; Nilsson, M., and D. Silander. 2016. "Democracy and security in the EU's Eastern neighborhood? Assessing the ENP in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine." *Democracy and Security* 12 (1): 44-61.

⁹⁰⁹ See: Juncker, "State of the Union Address 2017, SPEECH/17/3165"; Juncker, "State of the Union Address 2018."

⁹¹⁰ European Commission. 2017. "Report on the Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy Review, JOIN(2017) 18 final." May 18. Accessed December 31, 2020. https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2_en_act_part1_v9_3.pdf; Juncker, "State of the Union Address 2017, SPEECH/17/3165"; Juncker, "State of the Union Address 2018."; European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe."; EEAS, "Extracts from Mogherini's speech at the European Parliament."; EEAS, "Extracts of the speech of HRVP Mogherini at the EDA Annual Conference."; EEAS, "Keynote address of the High Representative and Vice-president at Leiden University, the Netherlands."; EEAS, "Keynote Speech at Chatham House By the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini."; EEAS, "Speech by Federica Mogherini at the public seminar 'EU as a Global Actor'."; EEAS, "Speech by the High Representative / Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace."

staple of Trumps foreign policy. However, the EU still claims not to renounce its ethos of promoting universal norms around the world.”⁹¹¹

Perspectives on the Rise of Geopolitics in the Eastern Neighbourhood

When studying the Joint Declarations of Eastern Partnership summits post 2013, one can hardly read the EU's embrace of geopolitics in its Eastern Neighbourhood into it. While a 'hard security' dimension played only a minor or even non-existent role in these declarations before 2013 – which focused predominantly on democracy, good governance and stability, economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies, energy security as well as contacts between people – this gradually started to change beginning with the Vilnius summit. Within the Joint Declaration of the EaP Vilnius summit, the participants highlighted “the importance of dialogue and cooperation in the field of foreign and security policy as a key component of enhancing political association between the EU and the interested partners.”⁹¹² Participants welcomed “the launch of a CSDP [...] Panel to facilitate dialogue on developments concerning CSDP, including on CSDP crisis management operations and exercises. Moreover, under the Partnership bilateral dimension, the conclusion and implementation of CSDP Framework Participation Agreements provide partner countries with the legal basis and practical means to engage in EU-led crisis management operations.”⁹¹³

Two years later at the EaP Riga summit, the EU and Partnership countries, similarly agreed on further strengthening the “multilateral and bilateral security dialogue and practical CSDP cooperation including opportunities for the participation of the partners concerned in CSDP activities, missions and operations, enhancing their capacities in this respect.”⁹¹⁴ The participating countries equally acknowledged the important role of the EU's CSDP missions in Georgia and Ukraine. The summit participants in Riga also welcomed the EU's contribution to the promotion of stability as well as its strengthened role in conflict resolution, and underlined the need for a stronger EU engagement in this regard.⁹¹⁵

⁹¹¹ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU's Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 6.

⁹¹² Council of the European Union, "Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit, Vilnius, 17130/13," 9.

⁹¹³ Council of the European Union, "Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit, Vilnius, 17130/13," 9.

⁹¹⁴ Council of the European Union. 2015. "Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit, Riga." May 21-22, 8. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21526/riga-declaration-220515-final.pdf>.

⁹¹⁵ Council of the European Union, "Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit, Riga," 3.

The Joint Declaration of the EaP's Brussels summit in November 2017, in reference to the 2016 EUGS, highlighted the "importance of strengthening state, economic and societal resilience both in the EU and the partner countries, and the role of the Eastern Partnership in this respect in the European Union's neighbourhood as also outlined in the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy and the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy."⁹¹⁶ All participants repeated that they welcomed the EU's strengthened role in conflict resolution in the EaP "framework or in support of existing agreed negotiating formats and processes, including through field presence, when appropriate."⁹¹⁷ In addition, the summit participants highlighted the importance of enhancing security dialogue and the cooperation in the area of CSDP. In addition, participants at Brussels summit agreed upon 20 Deliverables for 2020, which were organized in five thematic blocks: (1) cross cutting deliverables, (2) economy, (3) governance, (4) connectivity, and (5) society.⁹¹⁸ Under stronger governance, the deliverables call for a stronger security cooperation. Therefore, the strengthening of "security dialogue and practical CSDP cooperation, including enhancement of training opportunities and capacity building in the Common Security and Defence Policy/Common Foreign and Security Policy (CSDP/CFSP) area will support the contributions by the partner countries to the European civilian and military missions and operations."⁹¹⁹

The EaP summit in May 2019 in Brussels, which marked the Partnership's 10th anniversary, ended without a Joint Declaration, but merely with the Chair's Conclusions,⁹²⁰ since the participants could not agree on the wording of the document.⁹²¹ Azerbaijan expressed its dissatisfaction with the declaration as it did not mention 'territorial integrity',

⁹¹⁶ Council of the European Union. 2017. "Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit, Brussels, 14821/17." November 14, 2. Accessed December 30, 2020.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/31758/final-statement-st14821en17.pdf>.

⁹¹⁷ Council of the European Union, "Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit, Brussels, 14821/17," 3.

⁹¹⁸ Council of the European Union, "Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit, Brussels, 14821/17."; European Union. 2017. "Eastern Partnership. 20 Deliverables for 2020: Bringing tangible results for citizens." Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://www.euneighbours.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2017-11/eap-generic-factsheet-digital.pdf>.

⁹¹⁹ Council of the European Union, "Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit, Brussels, 14821/17," 15.

⁹²⁰ Council of the European Union. 2019. "Press Release 353/19. Eastern Partnership foreign ministers' meeting: Chair's conclusions on the occasion of the Eastern Partnership 10th Anniversary." May 13. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/05/13/eastern-partnership-foreign-ministers-meeting-chair-s-conclusions-on-the-occasion-of-the-eastern-partnership-10th-anniversary/pdf>.

⁹²¹ Istrate, D. 2019. "Landmark Eastern Partnership summit ends without joint declaration." *Emerging Europe*. May 15. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://emerging-europe.com/news/landmark-eastern-partnership-summit-ends-without-joint-declaration/>.

“pointing to the country’s position [with regard to] the breakaway region of Nagorno Karabakh.”⁹²² The Chair’s conclusions stressed the EaP’s importance, celebrated its successes and achievements and reflected upon the future of the Partnership.⁹²³ However, it did not mention anything new for obvious reasons.

Concerning the EaP’s geopolitical impetus, the HR/VP Federica Mogherini, at the High-level conference for the 10th anniversary of the Partnership, said in her speech that “the idea of having a policy that could have been seen or interpreted as a geopolitical instrument or as a work on sphere of influences risked to be prevailing from time to time.”⁹²⁴ However, the EU “managed to show that this [the EaP] has nothing to do with geopolitics or spheres of influence. This is not the way in which the European Union thinks and works. Because, [the EaP] is all about people and a cooperative approach.”⁹²⁵ Mogherini’s rhetoric with regard to the EaP’s geopolitical direction is strikingly low-key, when comparing it to her remarks before and during the genesis of the EUGS as well as afterwards where she stressed the Union’s need for more ‘hard power’ – especially in the neighbourhood.⁹²⁶

At the Council meeting on May 11, 2020 in Brussels, the EU adopted the ‘Council conclusions on Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020’. In its conclusion, the Council reaffirmed the EaP’s strategic importance. Concerning the security dimension, the Council acknowledges that global challenges affecting both the EU and the Eastern partners as a whole need to be addressed. Therefore, the Council noted the European Commission’s Joint Communication on the Eastern Partnership beyond 2020, which identified new challenges and opportunities in the Eastern Partnership region.⁹²⁷ In this context, the Council conclusions emphasized that “strengthening resilience as an overriding policy framework will be one of the key goals for the Eastern Partnership during the next years, in particular resilience in the areas of democracy, society, economy, energy, security, cyber, media, environment, health,

⁹²² Istrate, “Landmark Eastern Partnership summit ends without joint declaration.”

⁹²³ Council of the European Union, “Press Release 353/19. Eastern Partnership foreign ministers’ meeting: Chair’s conclusions on the occasion of the Eastern Partnership 10th Anniversary.”

⁹²⁴ EEAS. 2019. “Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the High-level conference for the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership.” May 14. Accessed December 27, 2020.

https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/62340/speech-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-high-level-conference-10th_en.

⁹²⁵ EEAS, “Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the High-level conference for the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership.”

⁹²⁶ EEAS, “Keynote address of the High Representative and Vice-president at Leiden University, the Netherlands.”

⁹²⁷ European Commission. 2020. “Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience - an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all, JOIN(2020) 7 final.” March 18. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0007&from=EN>.

notably in the context of the current Covid-19 pandemic, and human security as outlined in the Joint Communication."⁹²⁸ The Council noted that "strategic communication should remain a key task, in order to promote the visibility and benefits of the cooperation between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries, not least in the wake of growing disinformation."⁹²⁹ In addition, the Council recalled "the importance to strengthen capacity and resilience of Eastern partner countries against disinformation."⁹³⁰ Furthermore, "cooperation with Eastern partners in the area of security and disaster risk management need special attention for the stability of the whole region."⁹³¹ The Council in its conclusions, also, valued "the importance of enhancing, security dialogues and the cooperation in the area of CSDP", and in this regard welcomed "the Eastern partners' valuable contribution to EU missions and operations."⁹³²

The European Commission in its Joint Communication to the European Parliament about the Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020 addressed the security dimension as well as conflict prevention and resolution by stating that "the EU will [...] continue providing assistance to populations affected by conflicts to enhance their resilience. Security dialogues and practical Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) cooperation will also be strengthened to support contributions by partner countries to the European civil and military missions and operations. The EU will consider providing training opportunities and capacity building to the partner countries, including on countering hybrid threats, where appropriate."⁹³³ In line with the EUGS, the Commission in its Joint Communication therefore proposed, "strengthening resilience as an overriding objective."⁹³⁴ Together with its member states the Union acknowledged that it should work towards five long-term policy objectives for the EaP post-2020: (1) resilient, sustainable and integrated economies; (2) accountable institutions, the rule of law and security; (3) environmental and climate resilience; (4) a resilient digital transformation; and (5) a resilient, fair and inclusive societies.⁹³⁵

⁹²⁸ Council of the European Union. 2020. "Council Conclusions on Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, 7510/1/20." May 11, 5. Accessed December 30, 2020.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/43905/st07510-re01-en20.pdf>.

⁹²⁹ Council of the European Union. 2020. "Council Conclusions on Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, 7510/1/20."

⁹³⁰ Council of the European Union. 2020. "Council Conclusions on Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, 7510/1/20."

⁹³¹ Council of the European Union. 2020. "Council Conclusions on Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, 7510/1/20."

⁹³² Council of the European Union, "Council Conclusions on Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, 7510/1/20," 6.

⁹³³ European Commission, "Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, JOIN(2020) 7 final."

⁹³⁴ European Commission, "Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, JOIN(2020) 7 final."

⁹³⁵ European Commission, "Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, JOIN(2020) 7 final."

The Commissions Joint Communication to the European Parliament was accompanied by the joint staff working document on the 'Structured Consultation on the future of the Eastern Partnership'. This joint staff working document summarizes the results of the structured consultation on the future of the Eastern Partnership. In addition, it outlines the methodology of the structured consultation process as well as its main outcomes.⁹³⁶ With regard to how the security dimension of the EaP could be further strengthened, the document states the following:

"A significant number of respondents mentioned security as a priority area for the EaP; however, the responses are widely ranging in tone. There is a call for more cooperation and integration of partner countries into EU security and resilience structures such as EU Agency for Cyber Security (ENISA)/Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the possible participation of partner countries in common security and defence policy (CSDP) missions. This call is particularly strong from the three associated countries [Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine]. Cooperation should continue on prevention, preparedness and response to disasters. More joint efforts are needed on cyber security and hybrid threats, and on fighting disinformation and fake news, with respondents to the consultation sending a clear message about the need to improve cooperation, exchanges and capacity building with partner countries."⁹³⁷

When reading through EU documents as well as statements from EU and EaP countries officials, a certain evolvement of the EU's Eastern initiative becomes visible. The EU responded to the Partnership countries wishes for a more individual and tailor made instead of the one size fits all approach. More tricky of an issue is the question of a membership perspective for EaP countries. The EU and its member states itself are divided over this question. Some EU countries would wish to see certain EaP countries join the EU in the future while other member states are either undecided or against such a future membership.⁹³⁸ Additionally, the EaP countries do not present a united front on this issue. Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine want closer association with the EU and a membership perspective⁹³⁹ while Armenia and Belarus joined the Russian led EAEU, and Azerbaijan wants close affiliation neither with the EU nor

⁹³⁶ European Commission. 2020. "Joint Staff Working Document: Structured Consultation on the future of the Eastern Partnership, SWD(2020) 56 final/2." March 18, 4. Accessed December 30, 2020. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0056\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0056(01)&from=EN).

⁹³⁷ European Commission, "Joint Staff Working Document: Structured Consultation on the future of the Eastern Partnership, SWD(2020) 56 final/2."

⁹³⁸ Makszimov, V. 2019. "Future of Eastern Partnership: EPP backs trio plan, Commission cautious." *Euractiv*. November 21. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/future-of-eastern-partnership-epp-backs-trio-plan-commission-cautious/>; Lithuanian EPP Delegation in the European Parliament. 2019. "Non-paper: Our Strategy on the Future of Eastern Partnership." October. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://tsajunga.lt/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/LT-EPP-Trio-Strategy-2030.pdf>.

⁹³⁹ Agenda News. 2019. "Georgia-Ukraine-Moldova deal, requesting EU+3 format for sectoral integration, new benefits." *Agenda.ge*. December 5. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2019/3317>.

with Russia but wants to chart an independent course.⁹⁴⁰ Notwithstanding these complexities, the EU has over the years managed to increase the security dimension of the EaP, following the Partnerships conditional approach of 'more-for-more' and 'less-for-less'. Especially, those countries with a frozen conflict and/or a Russian military presence on their territory (Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) pushed for and welcomed the EU's strengthened security commitment.⁹⁴¹ In this case, it could be argued that this constitutes a form of 'securitization-light' of the EaP.

In March 2020, the European Commission produced a document envisioning the future of the *Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020*.⁹⁴² However, one hoping for Ursula von der Leyen's 'Geopolitical Commission'⁹⁴³ to live up to this ambition by drawing the guidelines for the long-term perspective of its Eastern policy – one of the most important geopolitical vectors for the EU – must surely be disappointed.⁹⁴⁴ The European Commission's document contains no geopolitical impetus or rhetoric. The low-key rhetoric of the document suggests a business as usual approach towards the EaP region. Given the regions geopolitical significance to the EU, this is quite surprising.

In July 2019, when the EaP celebrated its 10th anniversary, the EU's own Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) reviewed the initiative in a Chaillot Paper by Stanislav Secieru and Sinikukka Saari. According to this review, ever since the creation of the EaP, the rise of polycentrism gathered pace within the Eastern Neighbourhood. EaP countries diversified their foreign policy options by engaging with other regional powers, such as the US, Turkey, Iran and China.⁹⁴⁵ This trend was not met with cheers in the Kremlin; therefore, Moscow first tried to impede this trend and later to reverse it. Therefore, Russia's ever more assertive foreign

⁹⁴⁰ Maksimov, V. 2020. "Ukraine ambassador offers preview of Eastern Partnership virtual meeting." *Euractiv*. June 18. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/ukraine-ambassador-offers-preview-of-eastern-partnership-virtual-meeting/>.

⁹⁴¹ Secieru, S., and S. Saari. 2019. *The Eastern Partnership a decade on. Looking back, thinking ahead*. Chaillot Paper 153, Paris: EUISS; Tkeshelashvili, E., N. Popescu, and P. Klimkin. 2020. "It is time for the EU to build security partnerships with its neighbours." *Euractiv*. June 18. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/opinion/it-is-time-for-the-eu-to-build-security-partnerships-with-its-neighbours/>.

⁹⁴² European Commission, "Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, JOIN(2020) 7 final."

⁹⁴³ Brzozowski, A. 2020. "'Geopolitical' Europe could struggle to take shape in troublesome 2020." *Euractiv*. January 3. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/geopolitical-europe-could-struggle-to-take-shape-in-troublesome-2020/>.

⁹⁴⁴ Maksimov, V. 2020. "Eastern Partnership's champions expect more from the 'geopolitical Commission'." *Euractiv*. March 9. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/eastern-europe/news/eastern-partnerships-champions-expect-more-from-the-geopolitical-commission/>; Maksimov, V. 2020. "Georgian ambassador: Eastern Partnership communication 'weak' on political signalling." *Euractiv*. May 4. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/interview/georgian-ambassador-eastern-partnership-communication-weak-on-political-signalling/>.

⁹⁴⁵ Secieru and Saari, *The Eastern Partnership a decade on*, 7-11.

policy vis-à-vis the countries of the post-Soviet space has aggravated the security deficit in the region. For Secieru and Saari, this negative trend conversely demanded a bigger EU engagement, and it also demanded the EU to transform into one of the region's security managers.⁹⁴⁶ In this context, the review comes to the conclusion that the Eastern Neighbourhood increasingly becomes more heterogeneous. The countries of the Eastern Neighbourhood increasingly make their own political and economic choices as well as the interpretation and re-interpretation of their shared history is done along the lines of their respective national perspectives. This, however, could be a constant source for conflict with Russia since it opens up the door for future geopolitical struggle in the neighbourhood.⁹⁴⁷ Secieru and Saari have identified six megatrends within the EaP region: (1) Russia challenging the rise of polycentrism, (2) a growing regional security deficit, (3) a trend towards a "post-post-Soviet" region⁹⁴⁸, (4) a change from subjects to citizens, (5) demographic decline, and (6) a trend towards embracing the digital age.⁹⁴⁹ Furthermore, both authors emphasize that these megatrends do not run in parallel, but many of them are "interlinked in complex ways" as well as "mutually reinforcing."⁹⁵⁰

Concerning Russia's actions in the neighbourhood, Secieru and Saari assess that Moscow's engagement in Georgia in 2008 "marked a turning point in Russia's response to the rising influence of external actors in the region."⁹⁵¹ Russia's engagement in Georgia in 2008 was its first massive use of force in the region in almost 20 years. Even though Russia proved to be reasonably effective in its military engagement in Georgia, Moscow's "inability to compete with the EU economically, [as well as] its restored military capabilities bolstered [the Kremlin's] asymmetric foreign policy strategy and proclivity for coercion. Rather than trying to compete with the EU on the EU's terms, it chose a strategy that built on its relative strengths: coercive capabilities and readiness to use them swiftly. Moscow embarked on a

⁹⁴⁶ Secieru and Saari, *The Eastern Partnership a decade on*, 11-13.

⁹⁴⁷ Secieru and Saari, *The Eastern Partnership a decade on*, 13-16.

⁹⁴⁸ According to Secieru and Saari the term 'post-Soviet' refers to the former Soviet republics who gained their independence after the collapse USSR. Both authors emphasize that the "longevity" of this term comes from its vagueness, since it can refer to any number of things – from shared history, and/or shared culture, shared economic ties, or a shared set of challenges (transition to one form of government and economy to another; corruption; oligarchic structures) or all of them at once. However, as almost three decades past since the beginning of the 'post-Soviet' era, Secieru and Saari started to question the shared grounds that defined these states. According to both authors, the resonance of the term 'post-Soviet' is fading "as the states' political, economic and cultural paths gradually diverge and become more nationalised." Therefore, they are starting to become 'post-post-Soviet'. See: Secieru and Saari, *The Eastern Partnership a decade on*, 13.

⁹⁴⁹ Secieru and Saari, *The Eastern Partnership a decade on*, 7-27.

⁹⁵⁰ Secieru and Saari, *The Eastern Partnership a decade on*, 27.

⁹⁵¹ Secieru and Saari, *The Eastern Partnership a decade on*, 8.

policy of flaunting its military might and applying geo-economic pressure in an attempt to outplay other regional actors in the neighbourhood.”⁹⁵² Therefore, Secieru and Saari conclude that “[i]ronically, through its military action in Georgian territory and later in Ukraine, including the illegal annexation of Crimea, Russia inadvertently forced the EU to step in and start getting involved in deploying missions and enforcing sanctions.”⁹⁵³ In addition, since the goal of those actors who are involved in the region are to a large part incompatible, an unfortunate zero-sum logic occurs. This would mean that in order to foster stability in an uncertain security environment, the EU would need to step up as a security provider.⁹⁵⁴

Secieru and Saari offer a comprehensive analysis of the EaP’s first ten years. They have shown how attitudes towards the program have evolved in EaP states over the years as well as which of its elements have worked and which have not.⁹⁵⁵ However, both authors put a strong focus on Russia’s negative role within the region without critically questioning EU policies in the Eastern Neighbourhood too much. Reading Secieru and Saari’s assessment leaves the impression of the EU sleepwalking from crisis to crisis in the region, and it not realizing the possible salience of geopolitical competition in a polycentric neighbourhood.

The geopolitical factor in the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood has received quite a lot of scholarly attention over the last few years. For Velina Tchakarova, the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood and the bordering Black Sea area were and will remain a space of competitive agendas and a struggle for geopolitical influence, and therefore keeping the situation in the region volatile.⁹⁵⁶ Tchakarova sees a trend towards a decreasing but more assertive Russian and Turkish influence, on the one hand, while on the other hand, the participation of the EU and the US in the region increases. This in turn has opened up the possibility of a potential complementary policy between Russia and Turkey in the region.⁹⁵⁷ Tchakarova highlights divergence between the approaches of the EU and the US. While the former one puts its emphasis “more on soft power by promoting the political, economic and social transformation” in the EaP countries, the latter one has its focus on “military buildup and exercises along the [NATO’s eastern flank] as well as defense cooperation with some countries

⁹⁵² Secieru and Saari, *The Eastern Partnership a decade on*, 9.

⁹⁵³ Secieru and Saari, *The Eastern Partnership a decade on*, 11.

⁹⁵⁴ Secieru and Saari, *The Eastern Partnership a decade on*, 13.

⁹⁵⁵ Secieru and Saari, *The Eastern Partnership a decade on*, 28-105.

⁹⁵⁶ Tchakarova, V. 2017. *Competing geopolitical approaches towards Eastern Europe*. Fokus 4, AIES, Hainburg/Donau: Austria Institut für Europa und Sicherheitspolitik, 5.

⁹⁵⁷ Tchakarova, *Competing geopolitical approaches towards Eastern Europe*, 5.

in the region.”⁹⁵⁸ According to Tchakarova, even though progress in deepening the relations has been made between the EU and the EaP countries, “they are still caught in a geopolitical dilemma of ‘either-or-decision’ in their foreign and security policy orientation towards Brussels and Moscow.”⁹⁵⁹ The biggest question mark that remains for Tchakarova is how China’s footprint in the region will evolve since its assumed long-term interests could reshuffle the dynamics of the entire region. Therefore, due to the rise of polycentrism in the region, the various actors different approaches towards the region will most likely compete with one another. This, in turn, will add layers of complexity to the geopolitical situation in the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood.⁹⁶⁰

Bendarzsevszkij, Cloet, Havlicek, Longhurst, Maksak, Plenta, Przybylski and Usov, too view China as an emerging actor in the Region. For them, “[t]he current differences will be intensified because of countries’ choice of the economic, political and normative framework offered by the European Union, the Russian Federation or by the intensification of cooperation with other external players. The EaP finds itself in a contested normative space: especially the civilisational choice between the EU and Russia represents a serious dilemma.”⁹⁶¹

Johann Wolfschwenger also sees the EU in a strategic dilemma.⁹⁶² For him, the aspirations of one day becoming a member of the EU are the driving forces behind some EaP states domestic democratic reform process. Conversely, this European traction feeds the geopolitical instability in the region, therefore creating a climate in which the democratic transformation of those states and their subsequent EU integration seem hardly possible.⁹⁶³ For Wolfschwenger, Moscow’s policy responses determine to a significant part the outcome of EU policies in the Eastern Neighbourhood. The EU is not only divided internally over the future course of its EaP policies, but also over how to structure the relations with Russia.⁹⁶⁴ Therefore, Wolfschwenger suggests that the way out of the EU’s strategic dilemma lies in the

⁹⁵⁸ Tchakarova, *Competing geopolitical approaches towards Eastern Europe*, 2.

⁹⁵⁹ Tchakarova, *Competing geopolitical approaches towards Eastern Europe*, 1.

⁹⁶⁰ Tchakarova, *Competing geopolitical approaches towards Eastern Europe*, 5.

⁹⁶¹ Bendarzsevszkij, A., Q. Cloet, P. Havlicek, K. Longhurst, H. Maksak, P. Plenta, Przybylski W., and P. Usov. 2019. "Eastern Partnership 2030 Trends." Visegrad Insight, 8.

⁹⁶² Wolfschwenger, J. 2020. *The EU’s Eastern Partnership between a rock and a hard place*. Fokus 9, AIES, Hainburg/Donau: Austria Institut für Europa- und Sicherheitspolitik, 1.

⁹⁶³ Wolfschwenger, *10 Years Eastern Partnership*, 5.

⁹⁶⁴ Wolfschwenger, *10 Years Eastern Partnership*, 1.

understanding of the EaP in its entire complexity “as an interplay of geopolitics and domestic politics.”⁹⁶⁵

Kamala Valiyeva examined the EaP “through the lens of theoretical debate between constructivist and rationalist approaches with a specific focus on the normative and geopolitical dimensions of the EU’s power projection” in the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood.⁹⁶⁶ Valiyeva argues that the ambivalent actorness of the EU in its Eastern Neighbourhood can be seen as a fundamental reason behind the policies failure.⁹⁶⁷ The EU’s current ambiguous actorness in the region is, on the one hand, shaped by values as well as self-interest, while on the other hand it lacks any strategic coherence. For Valiyeva, the EaP “represents a policy which combines two aspects – a geopolitical instrument for competing with Russia in the region and a framework for supporting partner countries’ democratization reforms.”⁹⁶⁸ This means that the EU wants to attach the countries of the region to Brussel’s sphere of influence, while it simultaneously wants to spread core European values in its Eastern Neighbourhood. Valiyeva concludes that if the EU wants to its eastern policy to be a success, it should better balance it between geopolitical interests on the one hand and values on the other hand.⁹⁶⁹

“The EU has often been conceived of as a ‘normative power’ in the sense [of it exerting] influence by promoting values and norms through technocratic cooperation as well as diplomacy” in its neighbourhood.⁹⁷⁰ Cristian Nitoiu argues that the Ukraine crisis has encouraged the “EU to adopt a more geostrategic approach to its Eastern Neighbourhood, particularly in its relations with Russia.”⁹⁷¹ He sees the EU’s understanding of its role on the global stage deeply affected by the Ukraine crisis. However, the crisis led European capitals to warm-up to the idea of adopting “a more strategic approach to the politics of the Eastern Neighbourhood.”⁹⁷² For Nitoiu, the discourse within the EU has become “slightly more assertive” since the start of the crisis in Ukraine, but EU officials for the most part have still

⁹⁶⁵ Wolfschwenger, *10 Years Eastern Partnership*, 1.

⁹⁶⁶ Valiyeva, K. 2016. "The EU’s Eastern Partnership: normative or geopolitical power projection?" *Eastern Journal of European Studies* 7 (2): 11.

⁹⁶⁷ Valiyeva, "The EU’s Eastern Partnership: normative or geopolitical power projection?," 11.

⁹⁶⁸ Valiyeva, "The EU’s Eastern Partnership: normative or geopolitical power projection?," 27.

⁹⁶⁹ Valiyeva, "The EU’s Eastern Partnership: normative or geopolitical power projection?," 27.

⁹⁷⁰ Nitoiu, C. 2015. "The Ukraine crisis is forcing the EU to abandon normative power and act more strategically in its eastern neighbourhood." March 3. Accessed December 30, 2020.

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/euoppblog/2015/03/03/the-ukraine-crisis-is-forcing-the-eu-to-abandon-normative-power-and-act-more-strategically-in-its-eastern-neighbourhood/>.

⁹⁷¹ Nitoiu, "The Ukraine crisis is forcing the EU to abandon normative power and act more strategically in its eastern neighbourhood."

⁹⁷² Nitoiu, "The Ukraine crisis is forcing the EU to abandon normative power and act more strategically in its eastern neighbourhood."

“embraced the idea that they were working for a normative power.”⁹⁷³ Nitoiu argues that the EU does not necessarily shift its foreign policy approach from “technocratic politics to high politics”, when emphasizing strategic thinking or geopolitics, since that would be “very difficult given the level of embeddedness of the former approach in the EU’s institutions.”⁹⁷⁴ According to him, this move should be understood as the EU trying to signal to Russia “that it has the potential and the willingness to back up the promotion of its values and norms with strategic actions.”⁹⁷⁵ In this context, strategic thinking for Nitoiu means that “the EU will pay more attention to the geopolitics of the region before devising new integration initiatives.”⁹⁷⁶ While the rhetoric of Brussels and other EU capitals has increased in its assertiveness, the EU’s toolbox to materialize this rhetoric has not changed. Sanctions, up to now, have still remained the EU’s sole significant mechanism of coercion.⁹⁷⁷ Therefore, Nitoiu asks the question whether “the EU’s new adoption of strategic thinking will have any clear impact on the ground.”⁹⁷⁸

Richard Youngs asked himself the question whether the EU integrated a geopolitical imperative in its policies after the crisis in Ukraine. In order to answer this question, Youngs in search for a mid-range theory presents his own framework on how EU foreign policy, in the light of the Kremlin’s policy in Eastern Europe, could be conceptualized and evaluated.⁹⁷⁹ In handling the crisis in Ukraine, the EU opted neither for offensive nor for defensive geopolitics, but acted in a rather asymmetrical way – something Youngs termed ‘liberal-redux geopolitics’. This so called ‘liberal-redux’ geopolitical category constitutes a middle ground between offensive and defensive geopolitics and can be seen as a sort of hybrid response.⁹⁸⁰ For Youngs, ‘liberal-redux geopolitics’ refers to a more calibrated and selective use of liberal-cooperative practices.⁹⁸¹ These practices combine: (1) a “cooperative management of [the]

⁹⁷³ Nitoiu, “The Ukraine crisis is forcing the EU to abandon normative power and act more strategically in its eastern neighbourhood.”

⁹⁷⁴ Nitoiu, “The Ukraine crisis is forcing the EU to abandon normative power and act more strategically in its eastern neighbourhood.”

⁹⁷⁵ Nitoiu, “The Ukraine crisis is forcing the EU to abandon normative power and act more strategically in its eastern neighbourhood.”

⁹⁷⁶ Nitoiu, “The Ukraine crisis is forcing the EU to abandon normative power and act more strategically in its eastern neighbourhood.”

⁹⁷⁷ Nitoiu, “The Ukraine crisis is forcing the EU to abandon normative power and act more strategically in its eastern neighbourhood.”

⁹⁷⁸ Nitoiu, “The Ukraine crisis is forcing the EU to abandon normative power and act more strategically in its eastern neighbourhood.”

⁹⁷⁹ Youngs, *Europe’s Eastern Crisis*, 25-30.

⁹⁸⁰ Youngs, *Europe’s Eastern Crisis*, 212.

⁹⁸¹ Youngs, *Europe’s Eastern Crisis*, 213.

EaP space [that is] more cognisant of Russia", (2) a "bounded containment of Russia" with "Neutrality-lite", and (3) "[d]emocratic values as geopolitical tool, but [with] instrumental variation across EaP states."⁹⁸² According to Youngs, the EU became more aware of the salience of geopolitical thinking,⁹⁸³ while simultaneously adhering to a sort of "low-cost system maintenance."⁹⁸⁴ Youngs emphasizes that in contrast to the traditional state-centric, realist approach of international security which is narrowly defined by the use of hard power to address geopolitical issues, the EU in its post-modern thinking has built its external policies based on a cooperative model which it had developed internally. As emphasized by Youngs, in this model, norms and governance matter more than power.⁹⁸⁵

Nikki Ikani in an article for *Geopolitics* explored the EU's change and continuity in its geopolitical approach to the Eastern Neighbourhood. Ikani, who is critical of explanations that have their focus on historical institutionalist perspectives, argues that "long periods of continuity or [...] brief outbursts of dramatic change [...] tend to both overemphasize continuity and oversimplify how crises can engender change" and therefore, insufficiently explain "how exactly crises lead to change [...] of [foreign] policy."⁹⁸⁶ Therefore, Ikani "improves" historical institutionalism in order to be better able to understand periods of continuity and brief outbursts of dramatic change (critical junctures) that have appeared in the EU's geopolitical approach towards its Eastern Neighbourhood.⁹⁸⁷ Ikani concludes that "policy inertia and continuity are such a dominant feature in Western democracies and especially the EU, one should not be surprised that in the case of the ENP reform after the Ukraine crisis there has been little change."⁹⁸⁸ However, these changes cannot be seen as a major geopolitical transformation (in the traditional meaning of geopolitics) of the EU approach. Taking into account Ikani's analysis, Nitoiu and Sus argued that the EU's geopolitical approach has undergone only a minor revision due to the multitude of crises in its neighbourhood, such as the Arab Spring, the Ukraine crisis or the migrant crisis.⁹⁸⁹

⁹⁸² Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 213.

⁹⁸³ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 217.

⁹⁸⁴ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 215.

⁹⁸⁵ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*.

⁹⁸⁶ Ikani, "Change and Continuity in the European Neighbourhood Policy," 41.

⁹⁸⁷ Ikani, "Change and Continuity in the European Neighbourhood Policy," 26-30.

⁹⁸⁸ Ikani, "Change and Continuity in the European Neighbourhood Policy," 41.

⁹⁸⁹ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU's Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 9.

In contrast to Ikani, David Cadier in the same issue of *Geopolitics* argued that ever since the Ukraine crisis started, a "*geopoliticisation* of the EaP" occurred.⁹⁹⁰ This has been made visible in the fact that Russia has been labelled a threat and a strategic challenge. For Cadier, geopolitics too allows the EU to act in its Eastern Neighbourhood on legitimate external and internal grounds as "the geopoliticisation of the EaP was not simply exogenous, but also carried forward from within the European policy community."⁹⁹¹ Cadier also highlights that the EaP "showed tendency on the part of European actors to geopoliticise not just Russia's behaviour but also, to some extent, the EU's own policies."⁹⁹² According to him, the EU's policies in its neighbourhood were always motivated by interests. However the Union's shift towards the explicit acknowledgment of the prioritization of its own interests in foreign affairs occurred only recently.⁹⁹³

Julian Pänke, writing in the same issue of *Geopolitics* as Ikani and Cadier, follows a different approach. By focusing on the EU's imperial paradigm, Pänke intends to highlight causes and effects of the "balance between the promotion of the Union's interests and norms."⁹⁹⁴ Pänke argues that "due to its imperial nature, the EU [had] to adopt a [seemingly opposing] 'dual strategy'" in order to advance its policies.⁹⁹⁵ Subsequently, this means that "[t]ensions between the norm- and interest-driven components of imperial strategies are therefore unavoidable" when it comes to defining and recreating the EU as a liberal empire.⁹⁹⁶ Given the current international environment and the rise of geopolitical thinking, Pänke has shown that the EU did not abandon its liberal approach in favour of interest based strategies. However, Brussels has seemingly put more emphasis on the latter one. For Pänke, these circumstances had important ramifications for the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood. The EU's impact in the region has become somewhat diminished, but more targeted and pragmatic. After the revision of the ENP in 2015 and the establishment of the 2016 EUGS, Brussels now focuses on interests as well as norms.⁹⁹⁷ In contrast to Cadier, Pänke advocates that the EU should not put interests at the forefront of its geopolitical approach, since "adopting a merely rationalist foreign policy—along with the formulation of an explicitly securitised set of

⁹⁹⁰ Cadier, "The Geopoliticisation of the EU's Eastern Partnership," 73.

⁹⁹¹ Cadier, "The Geopoliticisation of the EU's Eastern Partnership," 73.

⁹⁹² Cadier, "The Geopoliticisation of the EU's Eastern Partnership," 89.

⁹⁹³ Cadier, "The Geopoliticisation of the EU's Eastern Partnership," 88-91.

⁹⁹⁴ Pänke, "Liberal Empire, Geopolitics and EU Strategy," 101-102.

⁹⁹⁵ Pänke, "Liberal Empire, Geopolitics and EU Strategy," 102.

⁹⁹⁶ Pänke, "Liberal Empire, Geopolitics and EU Strategy," 117.

⁹⁹⁷ Pänke, "Liberal Empire, Geopolitics and EU Strategy," 112.

interests—would furthermore weaken the legitimacy and credibility of the European project. The Union's liberal norms establish a more convincing base for inclusive societies and economic prosperity than exclusive and protectionist nationalist agendas."⁹⁹⁸

The Eastern Neighbourhood and Geopolitics

The EU has delineated political spaces in its neighbourhood when creating the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2004. The ENP reflected the EU's hybrid approach, since, on the one hand, it intended to stabilize the entire region in order for the Union to further deepen its integration, while, on the other hand, it sought to create a 'ring of friends' around the Union's borders, by promoting values, norms and regulations in order to make the neighbourhood more democratic and developed.⁹⁹⁹ The EU's region building efforts that are concentrated in the ENP merely mirrored the Union's own view of 'self' and 'the other'. Both regions within the ENP, the Eastern as well as the Southern Neighbourhood, were addressed through a one size fits all policy, which did not account for the huge differences between those two regions.¹⁰⁰⁰ Later on the EU sought to regionalize the ENP by addressing its Eastern Neighbourhood through the EaP and its Southern Neighbourhood through the Union for the Mediterranean. However, as Schumacher pointed out, the EU regionalized the ENP based on its own perspective, while neglecting these regions specific characteristics as well as their countries agendas and interests.¹⁰⁰¹ In a similar way as the ENP, the EaP, when it was created, grouped together states within the post-Soviet space and "provided a one size fits all approach to the adoption of European integration."¹⁰⁰² The EU also believed that its neighbourhood initiatives were completely anti-geopolitical in nature, since their sole aim was "to expand a

⁹⁹⁸ Pänke, "Liberal Empire, Geopolitics and EU Strategy," 117.

⁹⁹⁹ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU's Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 7, based on: Biscop, S. 2010. "The ENP, security and democracy in the context of the European Security Strategy." In *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, edited by R. G. Whitman and S. Wolff, 73-88. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Biscop, S. 2016. *Geopolitics with European Characteristics: An Essay on Pragmatic Idealism, Equality, and Strategy*. Egmont Paper 82, Brussels: Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations.

¹⁰⁰⁰ DeBardeleben, J., ed. 2007. *The Boundaries of EU Enlargement: Finding a Place for Neighbours*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

¹⁰⁰¹ Schumacher, T. 2015. "Uncertainty at the EU's borders: narratives of EU external relations in the revised European Neighbourhood Policy towards the southern borderlands." *European Security* 24 (3): 381-401.

¹⁰⁰² Secieru and Saari, *The Eastern Partnership a decade on*, 29; see also: Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU's Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 9.

series of universal norms and values.”¹⁰⁰³ Nonwithstanding the EU’s own perception, this thesis has already established that other actors in the region, such as Russia, perceived the EU’s region building efforts as highly geopolitical – and therefore viewed them as a threat to their interests in the region (see chapters 2 and 3).

For Nitoiu and Sus, the EU used its neighbourhood as a laboratory in which it could develop and refine its foreign policy.¹⁰⁰⁴ Nonetheless, the EU in its policy documents made clear that its motivation for continued engagement in the region lies within the need to promote its interests as well as to ensure stability.¹⁰⁰⁵ In order to promote its interests and ensure stability, the EU, extended its “mode of governance in the region, and thus its legitimate jurisdiction for action.”¹⁰⁰⁶ All the EaP countries have their Soviet history in common. However, they quite strongly differ with regard to their cultures and political systems. Nonetheless, the EaP initially provided a one size fits all approach for a group of very heterogenous countries.¹⁰⁰⁷

Over the past 11 years, the EU gradually has moved towards providing individual approaches to each EaP country. This change in the EU’s approach occurred because the countries in the region wished for an individual approach respectively.¹⁰⁰⁸ Recently, the EU moved towards offering the EaP countries a list from which they could choose the steps they want to take in order to achieve their desired level of integration.¹⁰⁰⁹ An approach Secieru and Saari, in their EUISS Chaillot Paper, labeled as ‘smart differentiation’.¹⁰¹⁰ This seems to correlate with the EUGS call for a more pragmatic and detached engagement. This move in part signals the EU’s shift towards being ready to promote its interests over its norms and values.¹⁰¹¹ Ostrowska-Chałupa, and Theuns advance the argument that the EU is finally

¹⁰⁰³ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU’s Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 7.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU’s Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 8.

¹⁰⁰⁵ European Commission. 2015. "Joint Consultation Paper: Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy, JOIN(2015) 6 final." March 4. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/neighbourhood/consultation/consultation.pdf>.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU’s Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 8.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Secieru and Saari, *The Eastern Partnership a decade on*.

¹⁰⁰⁸ See: European Commission, "Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy, JOIN(2015) 6 final," 13; Secieru and Saari, *The Eastern Partnership a decade on*.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU’s Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 8.

¹⁰¹⁰ Secieru and Saari, *The Eastern Partnership a decade on*.

¹⁰¹¹ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe."

acknowledging its importance. Therefore, the EU's shift towards promoting its interests can be explained with the rise traditional geopolitics.¹⁰¹²

Due to the EU being confronted by a multitude of crises in its neighbourhood as well as disorder and ongoing shifts in the international order in the past six years, this chapter wants to advance the argument that in the wake of all these crises, the Union has become more conscious about traditional forms of geopolitics. In addition, the EU shows an increased will to think and talk as well as act along these lines. However, changes in the EU's rhetoric about and approach towards the Eastern Neighbourhood and EaP countries should not be seen as an embrace of traditional geopolitics. As emphasized by scholars, it should rather be viewed as an adaption of its hybrid approach towards the concept.¹⁰¹³ As the chapter about the EUGS has made visible, the clearest shift in this regard has occurred at the level of rhetoric. Here, the Union increasingly argued through a realist prism of power and competition on the global stage. Even though it would be folly to argue that solely the Russia-Ukraine conflict caused the EU to revise its 2003 Security Strategy, it still contributed, together with other crises in the neighbourhood, to the genesis of the EU's first Global Strategy. In its Global Strategy, the EU emphasizes that geopolitics increasingly is an integral part of world politics.¹⁰¹⁴ The European Commission's Joint Consultation Paper on reviewing the ENP argued that the Union's neighbourhood needs to be understood as a space of increased geopolitical tensions, one in which the EU needs to engage in conflict resolution.¹⁰¹⁵

¹⁰¹² Ostrowska-Chałupa, M. 2016. "ENP after EEAS: Impact, changes, implications for its delivery." *Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe* 14 (6): 165-182; Theuns, T. 2017. "Promoting democracy through economic conditionality in the ENP: A normative critique." *Journal of European Integration* 39 (3): 287-302.

¹⁰¹³ Cadier, "The Geopoliticisation of the EU's Eastern Partnership."; Ikani, "Change and Continuity in the European Neighbourhood Policy."; Pänke, "Liberal Empire, Geopolitics and EU Strategy."; Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*.

¹⁰¹⁴ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe."

¹⁰¹⁵ European Commission, "Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy, JOIN(2015) 6 final."

7. Conclusion

At the beginning of 2021 the Ukraine crisis is still not fully resolved. The Crimean peninsula continues to be annexed by Russia, the simmering war in Eastern Ukraine is ongoing, while the Minsk agreements still await their full implementation. Ukraine's political situation continues to be volatile from time to time, as the comedian Volodymyr Zelensky's election to the office of President has shown. Over the years, instability across the EaP region only intensified with the ongoing street protests against the fraudulent win of Alexander Lukashenko in the Belarusian presidential elections and the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh as the two most recent examples. After covering the period from the EaP Vilnius summit until 2020, the conclusions of this research now reflect on how the EU responded towards Russian aggression and the crisis in Ukraine and the subsequent Russia-Ukraine conflict, the changes the EU's foreign and eastern policy has undergone, as well as what impact these changes had in order to answer the thesis overall question whether the EU in its Eastern Neighbourhood as well as its EaP policy has become more geopolitical, ever since the crisis in Ukraine started.

The European Union: a normative power in the Eastern Neighbourhood

This master thesis constructs the EU as a 'normal' actor in the international system. Conversely, this does not mean that it acts as a state-like actor in a traditional and realist sense. Due to its many constituent parts, the Union constitutes a disaggregated actor in the realm of foreign policy.¹⁰¹⁶ Even though there are many concepts about what the nature of EU power actually is, the thesis conceptualized the EU as an actor that grounds its approach towards security on co-operation and not on antagonism. The Union's drive towards positive-sum foreign and security policies has led to its description as an post-modern and normative power, a power that is supposed to have an aversion against standard geopolitics.¹⁰¹⁷

Notwithstanding other concepts on the nature of EU power, this thesis conceptualized the EU as a normative power. Normative theory emphasizes the centrality of norms and rule-based behavior in contrast to power.¹⁰¹⁸ The European Security Strategy conceptualized rule-

¹⁰¹⁶ Here the thesis is following the argumentation of Cross and Karolewski, "What Type of Power," 3-19.

¹⁰¹⁷ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 16.

¹⁰¹⁸ Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 235-258.

based behavior as the cornerstone of the EU's geostrategic identity in opposition to pure national calculations of self-interest.¹⁰¹⁹ Using the term normative power can imply that the EU should behave as such. Disregarding this implication, the thesis followed Forsberg's approach in arguing that the EU has "normative interests, behaves (usually) in a normative way, [and] uses normative means of power."¹⁰²⁰ Even though, normative action and strategic or self-interest action can inform each other.¹⁰²¹

The thesis has also shown that the EU is not intrinsically a normative power, but needs to be perceived as such by other actors in the international system.¹⁰²² Since some EaP countries recognize the EU's normative agenda and its role as a beacon for norms, the thesis recognized the EU as a normative power in its Eastern Neighbourhood (but not *per se*). Nonetheless, it has also shown that since the EU's normative power narrative imposes a form of 'governmentality' on other states in its neighbourhood, it clearly has some geopolitical impetus.¹⁰²³ This means even though the EU at its various levels might have an antipathy against geopolitics, it can still be seen as a geopolitical actor by others in the international system, and, therefore, act 'subconsciously geopolitical'.

The EU and Russia in their shared neighbourhood

The master thesis has analyzed the development of the EU's Eastern Policy as well as Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet space prior to 2013. The EU sought to address the EaP countries through a framework that fosters domestic reforms in the political, economic and administrative realms by offering privileged access to the Union's internal market, financial aid and visa facilities – but not EU membership – in exchange. It thus created a 'ring of friends' along the Union's eastern border through the export of the EU's internal model (norms, standards and values). Russia viewed the Union as a normative and regulative power, thereby perceiving Brussels as being opposed towards Russian interests in their shared neighbourhood.¹⁰²⁴ Russia under Putin took a deeper, more targeted, and aggressive approach to the neighbourhood. Putin saw the advancement of Russian interests in its

¹⁰¹⁹ European Union, "*European Security Strategy*."

¹⁰²⁰ Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again," 1199.

¹⁰²¹ Youngs, "Normative Dynamics," 415-435.

¹⁰²² Larsen, "The EU as a Normative Power," 896-910.

¹⁰²³ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 23.

¹⁰²⁴ Putin, "Speech at the meeting of the Customs Union Heads of State with President of Ukraine and European Union representatives."

neighbourhood as the primary objective. Ever since the color revolutions in Georgia 2003 and Ukraine 2004, the post-Soviet space has served as the crystallization point of Russian-European (read Western) antagonism: Ukraine's and Georgia's drive towards NATO membership, the US ballistic missile defence shield, and the launch of the EaP are just a few examples of this. In particular, the EaP has drawn Moscow's ire since the Kremlin viewed the policy as an effort to counter Russian influence in the post-Soviet space. For Moscow, the EU is seen as a geo-economic competitor in the region, and the EaP as the Union's instrument in this competition.¹⁰²⁵

The thesis has also shown how Russia arranged its relations with the EU. Moscow circumvented Brussels-based institutions for the most part, while preferring to handle its relations with Europe through bilateral relations, especially with Germany and France. By playing-off EU member states, the Kremlin hoped to be better able to achieve its goals. Russia's selective, conditional and fragmented approach towards Europe that seeks to emphasise bilateral relations with EU member states at the expense of pan-European institutions constitutes a key feature of Russian foreign policy. This particular approach towards pan-European and Brussels-based institutions led Moscow to pursue a strategy of cultivating 'Trojan horse' governments within the Union in order to erode intra-EU foreign policy consensus that might be detrimental to Russian interests.

The EU response to the events in Ukraine

The EU and its member states response towards the events in Ukraine was threefold: firstly, the EU and its member states recognized the new Ukrainian government straight away and provided political support for its consolidation; secondly, the EU immediately sought to resume the Association process with Ukraine by pressing ahead with the signing and preliminary implementation process of the Association Agreement; thirdly, the EU and its member states responded to the Russian annexation of Crimea and Moscow's military aggression in Eastern Ukraine via diplomacy and sanctions.

Concerning diplomacy, the EU continuously lent its support to the interim government in Kyiv. While initially the diplomatic effort to resolve the crisis was led by the EU via HR/VP Catherine Ashton, it then shifted towards the member states. France and Germany both took the lead in European diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis. This was particularly visible in

¹⁰²⁵ Cadier, "Policies towards the Post-Soviet Space," 168.

their participation in the Normandy format, the Trilateral Contact Group, as well as in both their efforts in the negotiations that led to the Minsk agreements. The fact that Germany took the lead on a major issue of international security is particularly interesting since it constituted a clear shift from its post-World War II foreign policy role,¹⁰²⁶ meaning that during the Ukraine crisis Berlin took “a high profile leading role on a major issue of international security.”¹⁰²⁷ Due to considerable efforts in Berlin and Paris, it was able to reach consensus on both Minsk agreements. Brussels based institutions, such as the HR/VP and the newly formed EEAS, were mere “bystanders in this diplomacy” which saw member states in the driving seat of the EU’s overall diplomatic response.¹⁰²⁸

Apart from diplomacy, sanctions were a key component of the EU’s response to Moscow’s involvement in Ukraine. After the Russian annexation of Crimea on March 17, 2014, EU member states agreed upon a first set of sanctions. Brussels expanded its sanctions on several occasions, one of which was the downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 on July 17, 2014. Ever since then, the EU member states have continuously approved extension of these sanctions every six months. With regard to the Union’s sanction regime, the EU has continuously made clear that any of its decisions will be based on the non-recognition policy of the annexation of Crimea on the one hand, as well as on the full implementation of the Minsk agreements on the other hand.

Apart from sanctions, the EU and its member states pursued a more cautious approach. In order to assist Ukraine, the EU established a CSDP mission in July 2014. The EU’s unarmed civilian *Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform* (EUAM) sought to provide Ukraine with “strategic advice for the development of effective, sustainable and accountable security services that contribute to strengthening the rule of law in Ukraine.”¹⁰²⁹ The EU and its member states, equally, supported the diplomatic efforts of the Normandy format, Trilateral Contact Group, and OSCE. The EU’s overall approach towards resolving the crisis can be described as a combination of pressure through restrictive measures with diplomatic efforts and continuing dialogue. In accordance with this approach, the EU and its

¹⁰²⁶ Pond and Kundnani, “Germany’s Real Role in the Ukraine Crisis.”

¹⁰²⁷ Juncos and Whitman, “Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?,” 205.

¹⁰²⁸ Juncos and Whitman, “Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?,” 205.

¹⁰²⁹ Council of the European Union, “EU establishes mission to advise on civilian security sector reform in Ukraine.”

member states are also the biggest contributors to the OSCE SMM, which monitors the implementation of the Minsk agreements.¹⁰³⁰

EU internal assessment of the European response towards the political crisis in Kyiv and the subsequent Russia-Ukraine conflict was rather harsh. The UK's 2015 House of Lords European Union Committee's report recognized that the EU experienced a major systemic failing on two accounts. According to the report, the EU misjudged Russia's intentions and readiness to take direct actions against the EaP. Thereby, the Union was "sleep-walking" into the crisis.¹⁰³¹ Also, the EU failed to take into account "the exceptional nature of Ukraine and its unique position in the shared neighbourhood."¹⁰³² This led Anan Menon to characterize the EU's behavior in international relations as "hard powerlessness" with "normative delusions."¹⁰³³

The EU, surely, failed to recognize Russian assertiveness all throughout the EaP region. Equally, the EU and its member states lack a coherent strategy on how to respond to Russia's aggressive behaviour against its neighbours, as the Russia-Georgia war and Moscow's general behaviour vis-à-vis its European neighbours exemplify. Even though the EU miscalculated Ukraine's unique position in Moscow's strategic thinking, it nonetheless managed to come up with a unified and targeted response. Given the diverging interests and different relationships with Russia the EU member states espouse, this is no small achievement, however limited in actually resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict it might be.

Mapping enabling and constraining factors of the EU response

The EU and its member states have been subject to heavy criticism on how they handled Russian aggression, the crisis in Ukraine as well as their relations with both Ukraine and Russia. Given all the varying interests EU member states espouse, in combination with the EU's disaggregated nature in matters of foreign and security policy as well as the CFSP/CSDP's intergovernmental nature, it is quite surprising that the EU and its member states were able to agree on a common response to the events in Ukraine; nonetheless they did. How were they able to?

¹⁰³⁰ See: European Union, "Facts and Figures about EU-Ukraine Relations."; European Union, "Facts and Figures about EU-Ukraine Relations."

¹⁰³¹ House of Lords. European Union Committee, The EU and Russia. 6th Report of Session 2014–15, 63.

¹⁰³² House of Lords. European Union Committee, The EU and Russia. 6th Report of Session 2014–15, 6.

¹⁰³³ Menon, "Devided and Declining? Europe in a changing world," 14.

Dimensions of EU power	What <u>enabled</u> EU power in the Ukraine crisis?	What <u>constrained</u> EU power in the Ukraine crisis?
Domain (<i>actors involved</i>)	Break in trust with Russia as well as the increase of intra-EU trust, <u>enabled</u> the EU to adopt sanctions.	While Russia's strategy of cultivating 'Trojan horse governments' within the Union, <u>constrained</u> the EU in formulating a new approach to its relations with Moscow, it had little to no impact on the EU's ability to adopt sanctions.
Scope (<i>the issue at stake</i>)	Given the lack of EU hard power in the military realm, the Union's vast economic power <u>enabled</u> it to deploy economic sanctions against Russia.	The EU response was certainly, in part, <u>constrained</u> by the slow working process of intra-EU decision making in the realm of foreign policy (which requires unanimity), as well as member states' diverging positions on how to best respond to the crisis and Russian aggression.
Weight (<i>reliability of power</i>)	The EU's military capabilities to counter Russian aggression, even though not the focus of this thesis, are only limited. The Ukraine crisis <u>enabled</u> the EU to commit itself at least at the level of rhetoric to: building and improving the Union's defence capabilities (see: EUGS), and using its limited capabilities to launch a civilian CSDP mission to Ukraine.	However, the EU's inability to increase its defence and military capabilities quickly, surely <u>constrained</u> Brussels options of short-term responses.
Costs (<i>weather it is costly or cheap</i>)	The ability of member states to share the cost as well as to trade amongst themselves and with other liberal-democratic states, such as the US for example, minimized the costs of sanctions against Russia. This, too, <u>enabled</u> the Union to adopt said sanction.	EU member states' heavy dependence on Russian fossil products <u>constrained</u> the level of impact of EU sanctions.
Means (<i>ways/tools to exercise power</i>)	The variety of tools for power at the EU's disposal, ranging from the ideational, economic, diplomatic, technocratic, but not military, <u>enabled</u> the Union's multi-pronged approach towards the crisis.	Framing itself as a post-modern power that acts on norms and values rather than interests together with its member states multifaceted and sometimes diverging interests and Russian Trojan horse tactics have <u>constrained</u> the EU's ability to use some of the tools it had at its disposal (e.g. such as deploying its limited military capabilities). It also <u>constrained</u> , in part, the EU's long-term strategy towards Russia and the EaP.

Table 4. Factors that enabled and constrained EU power in the Ukraine crisis (own depiction).

Normative arguments of sovereignty and self-determination

Based upon Sjursen and Rosén's research, the thesis has shown that EU member states were able to accept the political and economic cost of sanctions against Russia due to a sense of collective commitment to the following two principles: sovereignty and self-determination.¹⁰³⁴ After analyzing the arguments made by member states representatives, it becomes clear that intra-EU agreement on sanctions was not due to a concern for the territorial integrity of the EU or its member states. Equally, as interviews conducted by Sjursen and Rosén have shown, there appeared to be no form of internal coercion since they found little evidence with regard to threats or considerations of the costs of non-compliance.¹⁰³⁵ However, intra-EU agreement cannot be explained by a sort of 'normative convergence' alone as EU member states disagreed on various occasions over a variety of issues from cost to different assessments of the events in Ukraine and how to best respond to them. While different types of normative arguments existed, Sjursen and Rosén have shown that intra-EU agreement was only made possible due to the reference to these two specific norms of sovereignty and self-determination.¹⁰³⁶ Conversely, this highlights the fact that even though the EU in this particular case presented itself as neither weak nor divided, it does not mean that EU member states will be able to achieve similar consensus in any future crisis.

The perception of history in the EU's crisis response

The thesis has shown that history proved to be a rather ambivalent factor, since it neither enabled nor constrained the EU in responding to the crisis in Ukraine. It rather underlied member states' diverging positions on how to best respond to the crisis. Whereas Poland, Sweden, the UK and the Baltic states, most of which had negative experiences of Russian power, advocated a harsher response and sanctions against Russia, other member states who shared similar experiences, such as Hungary, did not. Similarly, states who saw the crisis through the prism of security, such as Poland and the Baltic states, invoked their history of Russian suzerainty, when voicing their security concerns, while France, Italy, Austria, Greece and others who did not share those same experiences, did not. Eastern European states' history of Russian suzerainty may have pushed Western European member states towards being solidaric with their eastern peers and adopting a harsher approach towards Russian

¹⁰³⁴ Sjursen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 20-36.

¹⁰³⁵ Sjursen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 20-36.

¹⁰³⁶ Sjursen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 20-36.

aggression than was initially intended. However, the thesis has found little to no empirical evidence to suggest so.

Trust in intra-EU decision making

The thesis equally examined the role of intra-EU trust as well as on the role of trust in the Union's relations with Russia. Both mattered greatly in how the EU acted during crisis. In its theoretical part, the thesis followed Natorski and Pomorska and stated that trust matters when mistrust towards a third-party actor helps to unite member states in a common response, when the respect for each other's vulnerabilities facilitates intra-EU agreement, and when trust in relationships contributes to decentralized decision-making including the involvement of actors such as the European Commission and the EEAS.¹⁰³⁷ The empirical part, which drew heavily on interviews conducted by Natorski and Pomorska, has shown that to be the case. Member states respected the "norms of co-operation in which they were socialized" as well as each other's vulnerabilities.¹⁰³⁸ This may be exemplified by the internal situation in the Council and the fact that member states trusted Germany and France to conduct negotiations on behalf of the interests of the Union as a whole vis-à-vis Russia and within the Normandy format. This is of particular importance, as due to the intergovernmental design of the Union's CFSP/CSDP that allows for member states to pursue their own foreign policies independently, the EU has a track record of diverging foreign policy approaches that sometimes undermined a coherent common foreign policy strategy. Even though in the realm of diplomacy, the member states sat in the drivers seat, the European Commission and the EEAS played nonetheless an important role during the crisis in Ukraine. This means that intra-EU trust mattered greatly during the Ukraine crisis as it enabled the Union to adopt a collective response as well as coercive instruments of power, such as sanctions.

Trojan horses within the EU

The thesis has shown that due to the disaggregated nature of the EU's foreign and security policy, Brussels is able to determine common policies on the one hand, while on the other hand it is unable to prevent EU member states from the pursuit of their own independent foreign policies. This disaggregated nature equipped Russia with powerful incentives to deploy

¹⁰³⁷ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 66.

¹⁰³⁸ Natorski and Pomorska, "Trust and Decision-making in Times of Crisis," 66; Sjørnsen and Rosén, "Arguing Sanctions," 20-36.

a strategy of cultivating 'Trojan horse' governments within the EU. In addition, it means that the more powerful and coherent the EU's CFSP/CSDP becomes, the more these incentives intensify.¹⁰³⁹ This dynamic could be observed prior to the Vilnius summit as well as afterwards. Before the crisis in Ukraine broke, the EU was unable to grasp the threat Russia could pose to its institutional set-up. Conversely, Russia miscalculated the Union's ability to unify in crisis and when directly challenged. Whereas, Brussels seemed to ignore early warning signs of increased Russian assertiveness in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, such as its involvement in the war in Georgia as well as its vociferous opposition to the EaP, Russia on the other hand perceived Brussels-based institutions as weak and indecisive. Therefore, Moscow thought that it could neuter the EU's foreign and security policy by simple divide-and-rule tactics. Since these tactics seemed to have worked in the past for Moscow, the Kremlin appeared to have lacked the imagination that the EU could be able to act collectively if challenged directly. The Kremlin appeared to have miscalculated the possibility of the EU being able to slap sanctions on Russia in response to its annexation of Crimea, its involvement in the war in Eastern Ukraine, and its cover up of the circumstances surrounding the shooting down of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17. Regardless of Russian divide-and-rule tactics, the crisis proved that the EU has become a somewhat capable security actor on the continent, albeit only in the realm of economics. In any case, Moscow's tactic of cultivating 'Trojan horses' within the Union has not worked, rather the opposite, as the Kremlin's actions have united France, Germany and the UK against Russia.

Changes in the EU's foreign and eastern policy

The EU undoubtedly raised its commitment to the Eastern Neighbourhood in the wake of the Ukraine crisis. As the thesis has shown, the EaP occupied much more attention in Brussels and became more high profile post-Vilnius. This was due to the fact that the EaP presented the EU and its member states with a multitude of strategic challenges.

The geopolitical imperative the Ukraine crisis and the war in Eastern Ukraine posed was interpreted differently in Moscow and European capitals. In Moscow, the crisis was seen as existential since its outcome would determine Russia's status on the global stage and in the region. For the EU, on the other hand, the crisis was certainly a major shock, but it did not pose any existential threat to its very continuance. This was also visible in the EU's response

¹⁰³⁹ Orenstein and Kelemen, "Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy," 88-89.

to the events in Ukraine. While rhetoric deployed by EU and member states officials stressed the crisis 'strategic challenge', the actions undertaken were not in line with the Union's own rhetoric.

The EU's position vis-à-vis Russia shifted from inclusion to partial exclusion, from 'strategic partnership' to 'strategic challenge'. Whereas hostile Russian responses to the ENP/EaP were not seen as strategic challenges prior to 2013, they afterwards shifted more towards the center of the EU's eastern policy definition. Even though the Union used sanctions before, the Russia-Ukraine conflict constitutes the most prominent case of restrictive measures being used as a central component of European statecraft.¹⁰⁴⁰ The showdown in the economic realm can be seen as the most notable element of EU power projection.¹⁰⁴¹

With regard to its eastern policy, the EU neither had the ambition to tighten its control over EaP states nor to significantly withdraw from the region. The EU sought to deepen the inclusion of the EaP region, but without carrying it through in a comprehensive way. This is made visible in the fact that the crisis in Ukraine and the subsequent Russia-Ukraine conflict proved to be not serious enough to compel EU member states to offer EaP states a membership perspective. Equally, the EU did not significantly step-up its security commitment to the Eastern Neighbourhood as it did not provide Ukraine and other EaP countries with security guarantees. This means the EU offered no guarantees that it would defend EaP states from Russian aggression. The Russia-Ukraine conflict did not compel the EU and its member states to offer EaP states any hard-security protection for their countries national sovereignty, even though this was the very thing these states asked for.

The impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict

With regard to the Russia-Ukraine conflict's impact on long-term strategic adjustments, the thesis has analyzed the 2016 European Union Global Strategy (EUGS) as well as its genesis. It was made visible that in comparison to the EU's seminal Security Strategy (ESS), the EUGS differed not only in scope but also in wording. The ESS was written in a more optimistic tone than the EUGS. The EU, when initiating the EUGS, sought to "bring together into a coherent whole all the dimensions of EU external action, security and non-security related."¹⁰⁴²

¹⁰⁴⁰ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 218.

¹⁰⁴¹ Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*, 218.

¹⁰⁴² Tocci, N. 2015. "Towards an EU global strategy," 117.

However, the thesis has also shown that the EUGS is viewed in a rather ambivalent way. While for some it constitutes less a long-term strategy and more an agreement on short-term responses to certain challenges,¹⁰⁴³ others view the strategy in a more positive light, seeing it as a positive impetus in rendering EU foreign and security policy more effective.¹⁰⁴⁴ This ambivalence towards the EUGS can, in part, be explained by the strategy's promotion of a list of broadly shared values, interests and objectives that are not so different from the EU's previously set out foreign policy objectives. Yet another part of the explanation of this ambivalence lies within the EUGS' call upon member states to "do something" with regard to a wide range of policy issues without giving any indication on how and when the EU and its member states might meet these priorities. The analysis of the EUGS also highlighted that the strategy does not rank its priorities with regard to their importance.¹⁰⁴⁵ In addition, analysis has shown that the EUGS, in some cases, calls upon the EU and its member states to do obvious things, such as the EU's support for neighbourhood countries to implement their DCFTA's or to not recognize the Russian annexation of Crimea.¹⁰⁴⁶ Nonetheless, in many parts the strategy is rather vague. Even though the rhetoric that led to the genesis of the EU's new strategy portrayed quite clearly the 'ring of fire' that surrounded the Union, the thesis has highlighted that the EUGS lacks in sufficiently linking the challenges posed by these crises with the fulfilment of the EU's set objectives.

The analysis has shown that with regard to Russia, the EUGS acknowledges that "peace and stability in Europe are no longer a given",¹⁰⁴⁷ and that Russia's increasing assertiveness as well as its "continued violation of international law and the destabilisation of Ukraine [has] challenged the European security order to its core."¹⁰⁴⁸ However, far from detailing a strategic approach towards neutralizing Moscow's assertive foreign policy, the EUGS merely labels Russia a 'strategic challenge', and vows to uphold international law, democracy, human rights, cooperation, and each country's right to choose its future freely.¹⁰⁴⁹ However, this meager response still constitutes a clear shift from the EU's earlier terminology that saw Russia as a strategic partner, for the Union's relations with Russia can only be based upon the "full respect

¹⁰⁴³ Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 13.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Biscop, *From Global Strategy to Strategic Compass*, 1.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 15.

¹⁰⁴⁶ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 25, 31.

¹⁰⁴⁷ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 33.

¹⁰⁴⁸ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 33.

¹⁰⁴⁹ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 33.

for international law and the principles underpinning the European security order, including the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter."¹⁰⁵⁰

The thesis' analysis of the EUGS has highlighted the strategy's strong focus on the EU's own security as well as the Union's need to develop effective military capabilities. Within its Global Strategy as well as in statements accompanying it, the EU acknowledged that it needed a smart mix of soft and hard power in order to deal with the rising challenges of realist thinking on the world stage. Therefore, some scholars saw the EU becoming a 'normal power'; as an actor that was moving away from a normative, ethical or civilian power identity, towards an actor that was willing to use power, including military power, in its own interests.¹⁰⁵¹

However, even though the EUGS has a clear focus on the development of EU hard power capabilities, it leaves quite a few important strategic questions unanswered. Karen Smith pointed out the following:

First, it remains elusive as to how the EU wants to use its yet to improve capabilities in order to increase the Union's internal and external security as set out in the EUGS. Second, the EUGS does not specify, if increased military capabilities mean that the EU plans on being more interventionist. Third, if the Union plans on becoming so, the EUGS equally, leaves open the question, of what might be the EU's geographical priorities for interventions. And fourth, the EUGS does not specify if the EU would only intervene with a mandate by the UN Security Council.¹⁰⁵²

When assessing whether the EUGS constitutes a shift from the EU's normative approach to foreign policy more towards a geopolitical one, the document offers little concrete evidence that any major shift occurred. However, with its Global Strategy, the EU at least indicates "that it has the potential and the willingness to back up the promotion of its values and norms with strategic actions."¹⁰⁵³

The EU's eastern policy

The thesis has highlighted that the Russia-Ukraine conflict in combination with other crises has deeply affected the EU's understanding of its role on the global stage. EU and member states officials have increasingly opened up to the idea of a more strategic, long-term thinking and geopolitical EU.

¹⁰⁵⁰ European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," 33.

¹⁰⁵¹ Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 20.

¹⁰⁵² Smith, "A European Union global strategy for a changing world?," 20-21.

¹⁰⁵³ Nitoiu, "The Ukraine crisis is forcing the EU to abandon normative power and act more strategically in its eastern neighbourhood."

By analyzing, EU policy documents, press releases, speeches, and news paper articles, and by drawing on secondary literature, the thesis has shown that ever since the crisis in Ukraine erupted, an increasing salience of traditional geopolitical considerations have been noticable in the EU's rhetoric. The developments in international affairs over the course of the recent years have shattered the EU's illusion of operating within a stable global and regional environment. The multitude of crises that have sprung up in the EU's Southern and Eastern Neighbourhood have completely transformed the Union's bordering regions from a 'ring of friends' to a 'ring of fire'. The thesis highlighted that the EU's foreign and neighbourhood policy is not seen universally in positive and cooperative terms, but in highly competitive terms, by other actors in the international system. It has shown that Brussels started to recognize that other states, such as Russia or China for that matter, simply do not buy into the Union's postmodern view of international relations. EU policymakers increasingly recognized that for other actors in the international system concepts such as sovereignty, spheres of influence, or the use of force, are natural.

The thesis has also established that other actors in the region, such as Russia, perceived the EU's region building efforts as highly geopolitical – and therefore viewed them as a threat to their interests in the region. Nonetheless, the EU in its policy documents, made clear that continued engagement in the region is motivated by the need to promote its interests as well as to ensure stability. The EU promoted its interests and ensured stability in the EaP space by extending its “mode of governance in the region, and thus its legitimate jurisdiction for action.”¹⁰⁵⁴ The EaP being a regionalized version of the ENP initially provided a more or less uniform approach for the six very heterogenous Partnership countries. However, over the past 11 years the EU has gradually moved towards providing tailor-made approaches to each EaP country. In addition, the EU gradually added an increased security dimension to the EaP. This change in the EU's approach occurred because the countries in the region wished for this more individual approach as well as more EU commitment in the realm of security respectively. This approach seems to correlate with the EUGS call for a more pragmatic and detached engagement, signaling a shift to the EU being ready to promote its interests over its norms

¹⁰⁵⁴ Nitoiu and Sus, "Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU's Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood," 8.

and values in the region. For some scholars, this shift can be explained by the rise of traditional geopolitics.¹⁰⁵⁵

The thesis has shown that due to the EU being confronted with a multitude of crises in its neighbourhood as well as disorder and ongoing shifts in the international order over the past couple of years, it has become more conscious of traditional forms of geopolitics. The thesis has also shown that the EU is increasingly open to thinking, talking as well as acting along these lines. However, changes in the EU's rhetoric about and approaches to the Eastern Neighbourhood and EaP countries should not be seen as an embrace of traditional forms of geopolitics. Many scholars saw the revision of the EU's foreign and eastern policy as an adaption of the Unions hybrid approach towards the concept of geopolitics.¹⁰⁵⁶ As the thesis' analysis of the genesis of the EU's Global Strategy has made visible, the clearest shift with regard to geopolitics has occurred on the level of rhetoric. The Union increasingly started to argue through a realist prism of power and competition on the global stage.

Final thoughts

Even though it would be folly to argue that solely the Russia-Ukraine conflict caused the EU to revise its Security Strategy as well as its eastern and neighbourhood policies, it still contributed in combination with other crises in the neighbourhood to the genesis of the EU's first Global Strategy. In its Global Strategy, the EU emphasizes that geopolitics increasingly is an integral part of world politics. Equally, in its Joint Consultation Paper on reviewing the ENP, the European Commission argued that the Union's neighbourhood needs to be understood as a space of increased geopolitical tensions, one in which the EU needs to engage in conflict resolution.¹⁰⁵⁷

The capabilities the EU has at its disposal can be largely put into the category of soft power, even though the 2009 Lisbon Treaty allows for the development of a considerable amount of EU hard power.¹⁰⁵⁸ The development of the 2016 EU Global Strategy, together with narratives initiated by the European Commission, the HR/VP, and the EEAS, gave the debate

¹⁰⁵⁵ Ostrowska-Chałupa, M. 2016. "ENP after EEAS: Impact, changes, implications for its delivery." *Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe* 14 (6): 165-182; Theuns, T. 2017. "Promoting democracy through economic conditionality in the ENP: A normative critique." *Journal of European Integration* 39 (3): 287-302.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Cadier, "The Geopoliticisation of the EU's Eastern Partnership."; Ikani, "Change and Continuity in the European Neighbourhood Policy."; Pänke, "Liberal Empire, Geopolitics and EU Strategy."; Youngs, *Europe's Eastern Crisis*.

¹⁰⁵⁷ European Commission, "Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy, JOIN(2015) 6 final."

¹⁰⁵⁸ See: Article 42(2) TEU

about the development of EU strategic and geopolitical thinking as well as the development of its hard power a strong new impetus. Even though the new EU Commission under Ursula von der Leyen aspires to be a geopolitical one,¹⁰⁵⁹ it is still unclear what practical consequences this might entail. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that this might be a clear signal regarding a shift in the Union's perception of the role of more traditional forms of geopolitics.

Overall, it can be said that the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and other crises in the neighbourhood, sparked an EU internal reflection process on the nature of the Union's future foreign and neighbourhood policies as well as on the future design of its ENP and EaP initiatives. This process led the EU to acknowledge the rising importance of principles of realist thinking and the increased salience of traditional geopolitics in its Eastern Neighbourhood. Even though the EU started to incorporate elements of traditional geopolitics and realist thinking in its revised foreign and neighbourhood policies, it would be an overstatement to argue that the Union entirely dropped its normative approach for a full-on geopolitical one.

The thesis' core question whether the EU in its Eastern Neighbourhood in the wake of the Ukraine crisis became more geopolitical (in a traditional sense) must be answered in a differentiated manner. The EU neither abandoned its normative and value-based foreign policy approach nor shifted towards traditional forms of geopolitics. The EU's biggest shift towards the concept of traditional geopolitics occurred on the level of rhetoric. In the aftermaths of the Ukraine crisis and the subsequent Russia-Ukraine conflict, the EU due to the development of the EUGS shifted more towards a commitment to deploy its core political norms more strategically. This commitment is also visible in the EU's revised ENP policy as well as in its approach towards the EaP post-Vilnius. However, the clearest shift towards embracing traditional geopolitical thinking in the Union's Eastern Neighbourhood would be if the EU and its member states started to offer EaP states a clear membership perspective – an offer they are clearly not yet willing to make.

¹⁰⁵⁹ See: European Parliamentary Research Service, "Briefing: The von der Leyen Commission's priorities for 2019-2024."; Bayer, "Meet von der Leyen's 'geopolitical Commission'."; Subotić, "A 'Geopolitical' Commission – What's in the Name?".

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Abstract (English)

Keywords: *Eastern Partnership (EaP), EU foreign policy, EU Global Strategy, European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), Geopolitics, Normative Power Europe, Russia-Ukraine conflict, Ukraine crisis*

Over the last couple of years the EU had to deal with a multitude of crises in its neighbourhood. When the political crisis in Kyiv over Ukraine's future foreign policy trajectory erupted, which subsequently led to the Russian annexation of Crimea and Moscow's involvement in the war in Eastern Ukraine, the EU needed to decide on how to respond to the challenges presented. Conceptualized as a normative power, and based on Cross and Karolewsik's adaption of Baldwin's framework of relational power the thesis maps what enabled and constrained EU power during the crisis. Based on secondary literature, official documents, briefs, press releases, news articles and online sources, the thesis details the effect the crisis had on the EU's strategic thinking by analyzing the debates that led to the genesis of the EU Global Strategy, and changes made to the Eastern Partnership initiative. The thesis assesses whether or not the EU in its Eastern Neighbourhood as well as its EaP policy has become more geopolitical (in a traditional realist sense) in the wake of the Ukraine crisis and the subsequent Russia-Ukraine conflict. Has Russian aggression made the EU aware of the salience of geopolitics in its Eastern Neighbourhood, up to a point that led the EU to revise its strategy towards the region? The overall conclusion finds that the Ukraine crisis and the subsequent Russia-Ukraine conflict in combination with other crises in the neighbourhood sparked an EU internal reflection process on the nature of the Union's future foreign and neighbourhood policies as well as on the future design of its ENP and EaP initiatives. This process led the EU to acknowledge the rising importance of principles of realist thinking and the increased salience of traditional geopolitics in its Eastern Neighbourhood. Even though the EU started to incorporate principles of realist thinking and elements of traditional geopolitics in its revised foreign and neighbourhood policies, it would be an overstatement to argue that the Union entirely dropped its normative approach for a full-on geopolitical one. However, the thesis central question must be answered in a more differentiated manner. The EU neither abandoned its normative and value-based foreign policy approach nor shifted towards traditional forms of geopolitics. The thesis concludes that the EU's biggest shift towards the concept of traditional geopolitics has occurred on the level of rhetoric.

Abstract (Deutsch)

Schlüsselwörter: Östliche Partnerschaft (ÖstP), EU-Außenpolitik, Globale Strategie der EU, Europäische Nachbarschaftspolitik (ENP), Geopolitik, Normative Power Europe, Russland-Ukraine-Konflikt, Ukraine-Krise

In den letzten Jahren hatte die EU mit einer Vielzahl von Krisen in ihrer Nachbarschaft zu kämpfen. Als in Kiew die politische Krise über die künftige außenpolitische Ausrichtung der Ukraine ausbrach, die zur russischen Annexion der Krim und zur Beteiligung Moskaus am Krieg in der Ostukraine führte, musste die EU entscheiden, wie sie auf die Herausforderungen reagieren sollte. Die vorliegende Masterarbeit konzipiert die EU als *Normative Power* und greift auf Cross und Karolewsiks Adaption von Baldwins Framework für relationale Macht zurück, um darzulegen, welche Faktoren die Macht der EU während der Krise ermöglichten und einschränkten. Basierend auf Sekundärliteratur, offiziellen Dokumenten, Briefings, Pressemitteilungen, Nachrichtenartikeln und Online-Quellen, zeigt die vorliegende Arbeit die Auswirkungen der Krise auf das strategische Denken der EU anhand einer Analyse jener Debatten, die zur Entstehung der Globalen Strategie der EU und zu Revisionen der Östlichen Partnerschaft geführt haben. Die Arbeit untersucht, ob die EU in ihrer östlichen Nachbarschaft im Zuge der Ukraine-Krise und des anschließenden Russland-Ukraine-Konflikts geopolitischer (im traditionellen realistischen Sinne) geworden ist. Hat die Aggression Russlands die EU auf die Bedeutung der Geopolitik in ihrer östlichen Nachbarschaft aufmerksam gemacht, so dass die EU ihre Strategie gegenüber der Region überdenken musste? Die allgemeine Schlussfolgerung lautet, dass die Ukraine-Krise sowie der anschließende Russland-Ukraine-Konflikt – zusammen mit anderen Krisen in der Nachbarschaft – einen Reflexionsprozess innerhalb der EU über die Art der künftigen Außen- und Nachbarschaftspolitik der Union sowie über die künftige Gestaltung der ENP und ÖstP ausgelöst haben. Dieser Prozess hat die EU dazu veranlasst, die zunehmende Bedeutung realistischen Denkens sowie die zunehmende Bedeutung des traditionellen geopolitischen Denkens in ihrer östlichen Nachbarschaft anzuerkennen. Auch wenn die EU damit begonnen hat Grundsätze des Realismus und Elemente der traditionellen Geopolitik in ihre überarbeitete Außen- und Nachbarschaftspolitik aufzunehmen, wäre es eine Übertreibung zu behaupten, dass die Union ihren normativen Ansatz zugunsten eines umfassenden geopolitischen Ansatzes vollständig aufgegeben hat. Die zentrale Frage der These muss daher differenzierter beantwortet werden. Die EU hat ihren normativen und wertebasierten außenpolitischen Ansatz keineswegs aufgegeben und sich auch nicht den traditionellen Formen der Geopolitik zugewendet. Die vorliegende Arbeit kommt zu dem Schluss, dass die größte Verschiebung der EU in Richtung traditioneller Geopolitik auf der Ebene der Rhetorik stattgefunden hat.