EUROPEAN- RUSSIAN POWER RELATIONS IN TURBULENT TIMES

**Mai'a K. Davis Cross and
Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski, Editors**

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*Edited by Mai'a K. Davis Cross
and Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski*

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I | Introduction

Power Dynamics in EU-Russian Relations

Mai'a K. Davis Cross and Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski

After many years of gradually closer ties between Russia and the European Union (EU), this relationship has taken a turn for the worst, signaling possibly the darkest era in security on the continent since the end of the Cold War. Indeed, at the beginning of the 21st century, it was almost taken for granted that Russia, under Vladimir Putin's leadership, was gradually moving closer to the West and valued its relationship to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Many observers pointed to Russia's strategic partnership with the West,¹ and there was even talk of Russia's future possible membership in NATO, or even the EU. However, this trajectory began a sharp slide backward as a result of the Russo-Georgian War in 2008, with major implications for Europe, the US, and even the liberal world order at large.²

Indeed, the international system today is transforming. The liberal world order is coming under threat on various fronts with the rise and growth of nondemocratic states, violent and criminal nonstate actors, asymmetric conflict, and cyber war, among other things.³ What is perhaps most surprising, as John Ikenberry points out, is that the biggest threat to the liberal world order actually stems from the most powerful "hostile revisionist power . . . it has begun to sabotage the order it created . . . it sits in the Oval Office, the beating heart of the free world."⁴ With this climate of uncertainty and insecurity, many states are reverting to less cooperative forms of interaction in the international system, oftentimes resulting in crisis. The Russia-EU relationship is one of the central dynamics behind the emergence of this less stable system. For the EU, increasing Russian aggression and disregard for international law through its encroachments

into Ukraine is of particular concern. To add to this challenge, the rise to power of the Trump administration created a fundamental rift in the transatlantic security community, compelling Europe—especially the European Union—to rethink its approach to dealing with Russia. Indeed, the Trump administration's destabilizing approach to foreign policy so fundamentally undermined the US image as a trustworthy actor that its impact on the international system is likely to be long-lasting, even if future American presidents try to repair the damage. The challenges at hand are complex, as they do not only involve Russia's hybrid warfare in Ukraine but also Russia's attempts to influence elections in Europe and the US, manipulation of public opinion through support for pro-Russian right-wing parties, and Russian military pressure against NATO in Europe and in the Middle East. The isolationist policies of the Trump administration added even more to this complexity. While there are many ways in which the liberal world order is under strain, the impact of Russia's pivot away from the West disrupts the very core of its foundations, and throws into question what lies in store for the future.

Our study examines the transformations in the Russia-EU relationship from two directions. Part I of the book assesses the ways in which EU foreign policy has changed in light of the Russia threat, and part II of the book shows how and why Russia's actions toward the West have changed over time—both the domestic and international causes. Putting these two major pieces together, we conclude that EU power has been largely reactive, which serves as a source of weakness during these complex and challenging times. However, we also show that recent developments in EU foreign policy indicate that we are potentially turning the corner toward a more proactive EU, which could be a significant source of strength as the liberal world order continues to be tested.

To be clear, we do not seek to analyze “both sides” in a crisis. Rather, we primarily seek to explore the limitations of the EU's “reactive power.” From various perspectives, part I of the book reveals how the EU behaved in the Ukraine crisis (and beyond) as a reaction to Russia's measures. Part II is not intended to give Russia's perspective or “side” in the current crisis, but rather features chapters on Russia to provide broader context for understanding the EU's actions. Underlying this approach is the recognition that we are dealing with two very different actors that do *not* find themselves in a similar situation in this crisis: the EU is a complex, democratic, institutional, and hybrid (quasi-federal) type of actor, while Russia is an authoritarian country that is highly secretive and has violated international norms of intervention. The evidence in this book ultimately

points to the possibility that the EU contributes to the resilience of the liberal world order, even as this order is tested and undergoes transformation. Indeed, for a variety of reasons, some scholars have urged that it is premature to give up on the liberal world just yet.⁵

The chapters in this volume together address three key dimensions of this tumultuous period in Europe-Russia security in the shadow of a new transatlantic divide. First, how and why the power status quo that had been maintained since the end of the Cold War has changed in recent years, as evidenced by Russia's newly aggressive posturing. Second, the extent to which the EU's power has been enabled or constrained in light of Russia's actions. And third, the risks entailed in Europe's *reactive power*—that is, the tendency to act after the fact instead of proactively toward Russia. This third dimension includes the underlying thread of the transatlantic divide.

Thus, this book's overarching goal is to shed light on the nature of the deteriorating security relationship between Europe and Russia, and the key implications for this. What led to this low point in Russia-Europe relations? How has this changed the foreign policy of the EU and other European countries? And what might be the outcome of these potentially explosive tensions, especially as Donald Trump questioned the viability of NATO and seemingly throws his support behind Putin in seeking a new US-Russia alliance in the Middle East? This book is one of the first in-depth analyses of past and present challenges to Europe's territorial integrity in light of a resurgent Russia, particularly against the backdrop of the new uncertainty and lack of coherence in US foreign policy.

To be sure, there have been several other recent books that seek to address the causes of the deteriorating relationship between Russia and the West. For example, Vicki Birchfield and Alasdair Young examine the “triangular diplomacy” that emerged among the EU, the US, and Russia in reaction to the Ukrainian crisis.⁶ Given the timing of this crisis, the dynamic on which they focus is mainly that of the US and EU standing together to pressure Russia to back down from its aggressive stance toward Ukraine. Shortly after the beginnings of the Ukraine crisis, with the election of Donald Trump in 2016, the dynamic in this triangular diplomacy changed fundamentally, and the implications have become much broader and more complex than they were just a couple of years earlier. Similarly, in their book, Tom Casier and Joe DeBardeleben explore why EU-Russia relations went from cooperation (1992–2003), to pragmatic competition (2004–14), to confrontation (2014–present).⁷ Using a constructivist approach, they show how the mutual perceptions and self-perceptions of

the two actors evolved, influencing how each interpreted and assigned meaning to the other's behavior. An analysis of Trump and the transatlantic divide, however, is beyond the scope and timing of their research. Most recently, Mitchell Orenstein's book takes, at the same time, both a broader and more micro perspective on Russia's relations with the West, tracing how various forms of domestic-level hybrid attacks by Russia against Western countries have led to the breakdown in the relationship between the two, as well as polarization in the larger international system.⁸

We also draw out the long-term lessons from this period with the aim of shedding light on how increasing cooperation between global actors can turn into rapidly escalating conflict. Beyond this, we seek to take into account the new political landscape that the isolationist foreign policy of the Trump administration made far more turbulent and unpredictable. While it is possible that the relationship between Russia and Europe can ultimately be restored, it is also necessary to understand why it was undermined in the first place and what factors, both domestic and international, contributed to it. The fact that these transformations are taking place against the backdrop of an uncertain transatlantic relationship makes this investigation all the more pressing.

In this introductory chapter, we first provide an explanation of how we see the concept of power as a general approach to understand the EU-Russian relationship. Second, we provide a brief overview of the EU as a foreign policy actor, and explain why we choose to examine it as a "normal" actor in international relations. We review the literature on the internal sources of EU power, but ultimately aim to focus on the outward projection of these internal sources, and how external events, such as Russia's changing approach to foreign policy, have caused changes to EU power and behavior in the international system.⁹ Third, we describe the main milestones in Russia's foreign policy, including the Ukraine crisis, to set the stage for the empirical analysis in this book and highlight some of the ways the EU has reacted to these events. Finally, we elaborate upon the major issues this book addresses to shed light on the changing power relationship between Russia and the EU.

Approach of the Book

Power in international relations is central to the various empirical contributions to this book. Drawing upon David Baldwin's work, we situate our approach in the classic literature on power.¹⁰ His framework for under-

standing various types of power enables us to relate to a widely recognized approach in the general international relations literature and identify the conditions that might constrain or enable the exercise of power.

We first acknowledge that power must typically be understood as relational, and not simply about resources or material forms of power.¹¹ One cannot simply count the amount of power resources or property an actor has at its disposal to explain and predict its influence in the world. A realist approach would prioritize material resources and the hierarchy of the international system, such as whether it is characterized as unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar, and the consequences of that.¹² While it is true that material resources matter, they must be put into a relational context internationally to understand the outcomes they might produce.

Thus, rather than starting at a neutral position in assessing power interactions between Russia and the EU, we recognize at the outset that it is primarily *Russia's* behavior that has and is changing in this relational dynamic. The story is not simply one of tit-for-tat in which Russia and the EU vie for power in a competition for similar goals, that is, material self-interest. As will be described, Russia and the EU both have *different* goals as actors in the international system, and the nature of EU power projection toward Russia has evolved in relation to Russian behavior. The two parts of the book show the necessity of analyzing each actor differently. The EU is a relatively new foreign policy actor, but it is also a collection of democratic states with sovereignty of their own. This means that some areas of policy will be more coherent than others. Russia is a long-standing actor with an authoritarian leader that is able to act unilaterally, but comes up against international norms and backlash from other states. Both the EU and Russia are highly capable of change for different reasons and in both political systems domestic factors seem to strongly affect foreign policy decision-making.

Second, we recognize variations in the nature of power. These variations can be understood through looking at “particular kinds of effects,” specifically “the capacities of actors to determine the conditions of their existence.”¹³ As Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall argue, by embracing different conceptions and forms of power, we can better “understand how global outcomes are produced and how actors are differentially enabled and constrained to determine their fates.”¹⁴ Thus, the exercise of power can involve a range of different tools besides material resources, such as norms, ideas, communicative action, diplomacy, and persuasion. Each of the contributors to this book shows how the EU and Russia have relied on different tools for power in influencing each other and others in

the international system, as well as how these vary depending on the issue at stake. Recent changes in Russian behavior and in the context of US isolationism have prompted the employment of a wider range of tools, ranging from hard to soft, and many involving a kind of hybrid of the two.

Third, at the same time as acknowledging numerous types of power, our approach is also consciously actor-driven. In particular, we examine the possible changing nature of power of the EU and Russia in the context of international *crisis* as an “intermediate state between peace and war.”¹⁵ In particular, international crises create openings in terms of the way in which the EU as a somewhat disaggregated actor might become more constrained or enabled in its response. As Uriel Rosenthal, Michael Charles, and Paul ’t Hart write, a crisis presents “a serious threat to the basic structures or the fundamental values and norms of a social system, which—under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances—necessitates making critical decisions.”¹⁶ Crises bring with them uncertainty because they enable a much larger range of possible actions than during noncrisis periods. Giovanni Capoccia and R. Daniel Kelemen write that critical junctures have two main outcomes: “the range of plausible choices open to powerful political actors expands substantially and the consequences of their decisions for the outcome of interest are potentially much more momentous.”¹⁷ Thus, given the need to respond in a limited time frame, crises naturally have the potential to open up new possibilities in relational power. Thus, just as Russian actions have evolved significantly, and US foreign policy signaling changed dramatically under the Trump administration, the EU has acted in ways that would have been unexpected in the absence of such provocation.

Given our actor-driven, relational approach, what characterizes the two key actors under examination here—the EU and Russia? We now turn to a brief overview of European and Russian foreign policy in the 21st century to set the stage for understanding the power relationship between the two.

The EU as a Foreign Policy Actor

The EU is still relatively new to foreign policy—the Common Foreign and Security Policy was only launched in 1992 and did not really become operational until the advent of the Common Security and Defence Policy in 2003—and there has been a tendency for scholars to assume that the EU is not strong enough yet to do something significant in IR.¹⁸ It is still “in the

making.” Or, indeed, this is because of the widespread belief that the EU is pretty much always a failure when it encounters issues that really matter. By contrast, our approach treats the EU as a “normal” actor on the international stage, and understands the EU’s influence in the world through recognizing its embeddedness in an unpredictable and uncertain international system.¹⁹ This does not mean that the EU is necessarily successful overall or state-like in the traditional sense, but that just like other states and nonstate actors, it uses different forms of power in different situations. The EU can at times be highly successful at exerting influence, such as using access to its single market as leverage, persuading others to abide by stricter environmental standards to mitigate climate change, or supporting Ukraine’s energy security against Russia’s pressure by applying reverse gas flows into Ukraine. However, at other times it might be less successful, such as when the EU failed to get its way with the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership agreement and Copenhagen climate change agreement. In both cases, the US was able to undermine the realization of the EU’s goals. Just like for any actor in the international system, even across the same policy field, the power of the EU can vary. However, this does not distinguish the EU as an international actor fundamentally different from states. After all, even more conventional state actors, such as the US, often follow inconsistent and incoherent foreign policies.²⁰ These challenges are not simply a product of EU decision-making. To give in to a double standard for the EU would be to deny our ability to understand this key actor in the international system. At the same time, we do not deny that the EU is a highly disaggregated political system where multi-level decision-making, plurality of political actors, and a high degree of informal politics turn it into a rather unconventional actor in IR.

Although we start with the argument that the EU can be studied in the same way as other foreign policy actors, it is still useful to review its particular qualities as each actor in the international system is distinctive in some way. For the EU, achieving formal cooperation in foreign and security policy has been a gradual process. Since its founding in 1951, the precursor to the EU—the European Coal and Steel Community—was nonetheless conceived of with security at its core. The efforts and setbacks in achieving a coherent, common foreign policy over subsequent decades have contributed to the disaggregated nature of the EU’s projection of power in the international system. Over time, however, the EU has very clearly become *less* disaggregated, especially with the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, which launched the European External Action Service, created a “permanent” Council president, and centralized power in a new position equiva-

lent to EU foreign minister (the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and vice president of the Commission), among other things.

Thus, the EU is somewhat of a disaggregated foreign policy actor, with many component parts representing its interests on the world stage at various times (such as its commissioners, the High Representative, the Council president, certain member-state leaders, EU diplomats, the troika, special delegations, and so on), but it often also acts as one on the international stage. To name a few examples, the EU speaks with one voice in the United Nations, even on controversial issues involving the Middle East, around 97 percent of the time, and has been a leading actor in climate change negotiations.²¹ Still, just because we treat the EU as a “normal” actor in international relations does not mean that it is necessarily “ordinary” or state-like in the traditional, realist sense. There are all kinds of actors in the international system, ranging from pacifist, normative, neutral, disaggregated, international, transnational, and so on. The EU is not a monolithic actor, even when it “speaks with one voice,” but neither are other actors, even states. Thus, we contend that at this stage in its development, the EU is as coherent as others in the international constellation of actors.²²

Many scholars in the field of EU studies have researched the nature of EU power from the perspective of how decisions are made within EU institutions, creating a rich literature based on analyses of hundreds of case studies.²³ For example, Michael Smith and Frédéric Mérand take a historical approach, tracing the emergence of a common security and defense policy within Europe since the mid-20th century, focusing on a variety of actors, such as member states, EU institutions, citizens, statesmen, soldiers, and diplomats.²⁴ Christoph Meyer examines differences in security culture across member states and how that helps or hinders foreign and security policy.²⁵ Burkard Schmitt carefully documents transnational integration across defense and aerospace technology firms in Europe.²⁶ Darnis et al. examine how internal decisions about defense budgets impact EU foreign and security policy, and why some sectors have advanced more quickly than others.²⁷ Jeffrey Checkel shows how socialization within EU institutions contributes to cooperation and integration within Europe.²⁸ Christopher Bickerton also takes a constructivist approach, focusing on institutional rivalry and European identity behind the process of building EU foreign policy.²⁹ Giovanni Grevi, Damien Helly, and Daniel Keohane explain how processes of policy convergence and policy coherence are necessary conditions within Europe

before external action can be taken. Stephen Keukeleire points out that even when the EU fails to exert influence externally there can be significant internal effects. Member states may still feel that they have been successful internally by achieving, through strong diplomacy, some degree of mutual solidarity.³⁰

Some scholars also focus on the nexus between internal and external security, arguing that as internal security integration has progressed more quickly, the external dimension of this has also strengthened the EU's foreign policy.³¹ A number of scholars have researched the role of working groups and committees within the Council that take on a life of their own in terms of influencing foreign policy beyond what we might expect from member states alone.³² Others have argued that supranational institutions, such as the Commission, are gradually taking on a stronger role in foreign and security policy.³³ And since the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, scholars have shown a similar interest in the internal workings of the European External Action Service.³⁴ Others have focused more on the kind of power the EU possesses as a result of its internal values. Normative power,³⁵ civilian power,³⁶ humanitarian power,³⁷ soft power,³⁸ and smart power³⁹ have all been used to describe the nature of EU influence. In this context, scholars have highlighted the role of the institutional identity of the EU and its policies of "exporting" it to its neighborhood as a key aspect of the EU's power projection.⁴⁰

These numerous studies have clearly established that there are important and dynamic processes and actors that together comprise the EU's ability to project power externally. Given that the EU is comprised of 27 democracies, there is naturally a high level of internal debate, happening at multiple levels of analysis, including society (anti-EU vs. pro-EU political parties, Euro-skeptic voices, media), member states governments, the Big Three (UK, France, and Germany), national leaders, EU leaders (e.g., High Representative, Commission president, Council president, troika, and so forth), and EU institutions (e.g., European Council, European External Action Service, European Commission, European Parliament, Coreper or permanent representative committee, the Political and Security Committee). These processes of debate, and power struggles within Europe, ultimately lead to decisions about the kind of power the EU projects externally. We now have much to draw upon in understanding decision-shaping and decision-making within Europe.

However, while most studies of EU foreign policy focus on the internal politics and processes of policy-making, it is appropriate in this study to emphasize the factors that impact the *outward* projection of EU power, in

particular, how *external* events, such as US or Russian actions, may trigger changes in power, and, in turn, EU behavior in the international system. Given the climate of the times and the largely unanticipated changes in the behavior of both Russia and the United States, we seek to shed light on the power dynamics involved. If the EU has become largely reactive in its external projection of power, what does this mean for its influence as an international actor?

Russian Foreign Policy toward Europe

To understand the changing nature of the EU's projection of power, it is useful to review the major shift in Russia's foreign policy more recently. After the end of the Cold War, Russia was subject to domestic destabilization, a rapid transition to crony capitalism, and loss of influence in Eastern Europe and in the post-Soviet space due to the political and economic implosion of the Soviet Union. The Russian economy and the government budget were on the brink of collapse, which also had consequences for the security policy of the West. The main concern in 1990–95 was the Russian nuclear scientists offering their expertise to Pakistan, North Korea, and terrorist organizations as well as the inability of the Russian government to keep its stockpiles of nuclear weapons safe.⁴¹ Boris Yeltsin shifted Russia's policy radically toward collaboration with the West, while the US and other Western countries supported him as Russia's new president and partner on the international stage.⁴² However, the chaotic transition to crony capitalism, the rise of oligarchs, and weak democracy left Russian society in a state of despair. The mass impoverishment of the society, growing unemployment, and the chronic nonpayment of wages became the signs of the Yeltsin era as well. Nonetheless, Yeltsin won the presidential elections in 1996 (with considerable support from the oligarchs), which was interpreted as support for the further Westernization of Russia and an expression of belief in the market and democracy within Russian society.⁴³ Under Yeltsin, the withdrawal of Russia troops from eastern Germany and Central and Eastern European countries was successfully negotiated and Russia agreed to NATO enlargement to include Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in 1999. In this period, Russia's foreign policy focused mainly on keeping its influence in the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Russian Federation, while the secessionist war in Chechnya became the symbol for Russia's domestic disintegration pressures.

The ascent of Vladimir Putin to power did not immediately change the collaboration of Russia with the West. Putin oversaw a kind of rapprochement with the West at first. Russian citizens were happy to embrace this direction, too, as Putin kept the Western course of Russian foreign policy, but focused on regaining domestic state power vis-à-vis the oligarchs and limiting the centrifugal tendencies of Russia's regions. Putin's public support was closely connected to economic performance, increasing living standards, and Westernization of lifestyles, contingent on economic and political collaboration with the West.⁴⁴ Russia's rising economic performance was trade driven, as it was fueled by the export of natural gas and oil to European countries as well as rising energy prices.

Until 2008, the collaboration between Russia and the West took place without any major crises. Despite some disagreements, for instance regarding NATO's intervention in Serbia (or formally in the remainder of Yugoslavia) in 1999,⁴⁵ and further NATO enlargement including the Baltic states in 2004 (the only post-Soviet states to become NATO members), the security cooperation between Russia and the US was even strengthening, not least through the NATO-Russia Council established in 2002, among other things. This was due to increased security collaboration between Moscow and Washington after 9/11 and during the subsequent NATO intervention in Afghanistan. For instance, Russia provided logistical support for the transport of NATO troops into Afghanistan and exchanged military intelligence with NATO members in Afghanistan. Putin decided not to intervene in the US talks with the Central Asian governments to use their airbases for the US war on the Taliban and even offered to sell parts of Russia's oil reserves to stabilize nervous world markets after 9/11.⁴⁶ Even during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 and despite the Russian influence on the ground in favor of the pro-Russian presidential candidate Viktor Yanukovich, the conflict could be resolved peacefully. Russia did not intervene militarily and accepted that after the repeated elections the Russia-skeptical opposition candidates Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko had become president and prime minister, respectively.

However, things started to shift in 2008 with the Russo-Georgian War. There are a number of possible factors that contributed to this shift. First, in 2008 Vladimir Putin's official term as president of the Russian Federation ended and he became prime minister. But what followed in 2008 was a "tandem rule" with the new president, Dmitry Medvedev, that gave Putin an unusually high degree of influence in the Russian political system. Despite his official status as prime minister, Putin maintained his

control of the Kremlin's domestic and foreign policy, and remained Russia's most popular politician. Moreover, during Putin's presidency in 2000–2008, he had recruited a large number of *siloviki* (people that previously served in the military and security agencies) into government service, which led some experts to label the new Russian power elite a “militocracy” and suggested that this elite might have been partially responsible for a neoauthoritarian turn in both the domestic and foreign policy of Russia.⁴⁷

Second, Russia was highly critical of Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008 and the West's recognition of this new state. After the NATO military intervention against Serbia in 1999, which was justified on the grounds of averting genocide in Kosovo (but turned out to be based on false intelligence), and the establishment of the de facto EU protectorate in Kosovo, Russia not only started to view the West's policy in the Balkans as a violation of international law but also as a self-serving policy by the West to the detriment of Russia's interests.⁴⁸ In this vein, Putin calculated that a similar status of independence could be achieved for Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two separatist regions that were formally part of Georgia's territory but de facto under Russian control. Since the 1990s Russia had been granting Russian citizenship en masse to the inhabitants of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, thus laying the ground for its later policy of protecting Russian citizens living abroad. This “passportization” came to be regarded as a novel instrument of foreign policy that could be used as an argument for military intervention through hybrid warfare.⁴⁹

Third, after 2005, Russia managed to maintain and expand long-term gas contracts as well as a system of pipelines to keep and make a large number of European countries dependent on its energy supplies (some of them, such as Bulgaria, Slovakia, Bosnia, Serbia, and Macedonia, are 100 percent dependent on Russian gas). Both the EU and several EU members in Eastern Europe put the goal of reducing this dependency on the agenda, but this was never fully achieved in some countries. That Russia was willing to use its gas supplies as political leverage became obvious during the 2005–6 gas conflict between Russia and Ukraine, when on January 1, 2006 Russia cut off the supply of gas to Ukraine and, as a result, to a number of other European countries. In 2009, following failed price negotiations, Russia again cut off gas supplies to Ukraine and a number of other countries. These two cases could be viewed as tests for Russian power projection in Europe, proving that Russia was willing to cause damage to European economies.⁵⁰

Fourth, Russian leaders strongly opposed NATO membership for

Ukraine and Georgia, countries Moscow viewed as within its zone of influence. As a result of Russian resistance, Germany and France blocked the US push for any further NATO enlargement to the East, and during the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008 both Ukraine and Georgia were denied NATO membership. Some observers argued that this might have emboldened Russia's *siloviki* to become more belligerent about Georgia in August 2008,⁵¹ while others suggested that the Russo-Georgian conflict was provoked by irresponsible actions of Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili who wrongly assessed that the US would support Georgia militarily in a conflict with Russia.⁵² After a long-lasting conflict between Georgia and the two separatist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Georgia initiated a surprise attack against South Ossetia on August 7, 2008, which followed artillery attacks against Georgian villages and Georgian peacekeepers by Russia-backed Ossetian separatists, breaking a 1992 cease-fire agreement. This provoked Russia's large-scale invasion of Georgia on August 8, as Moscow not only supported South Ossetia's forces in the separatist regions but also moved its land, air, and sea forces into Georgia's territory. While the Russian navy blockaded part of the Georgian coast, the Russian air force attacked targets in undisputed parts of Georgia. Cyber warfare was activated during and after the conflict, making it the first military conflict in history that was accompanied by active cyber measures. In the Russo-Georgian War, the Russian military was used for the first time after the collapse of the Soviet Union against an independent state. It can thus be viewed as a radical shift in the relations between Russia and Europe, since the conflict showed the Russian readiness to wage a full-scale war to achieve its political goals. Russia's actions have proven to be effective in undermining US and EU political objectives. Georgia's NATO membership was averted, while the EU-sponsored Nabucco gas pipeline connecting oil and gas reserves in Central Asia with Europe via Georgia was thwarted. The Russo-Georgian War can also be regarded as the beginning of the increased investments in the military capabilities of Russia and a rapid modernization of the Russian forces including nonlinear warfare, hybrid measures, and cyber attacks. The Russo-Georgian War showed both the strengths and weaknesses of the Russian military (e.g., the latter regarding the communication capabilities between the units) and in this sense fulfilled a double function of power projection and a training exercise.

The reactions of the EU and the US to the Russo-Georgian conflict were rather calm, as they did not impose sanctions on Russia. French president Nicolas Sarkozy, on behalf of the EU (France was at the helm of

the rotating EU Council presidency), negotiated a cease-fire and was keen on fast negotiations toward a peace plan involving, among others, the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia, but also from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Despite the agreement, the Russian military never left the secessionist provinces, and they were subsequently recognized as independent states by the Russian Federation. After the election of Barack Obama for president in 2008, the new US administration launched a “reset policy” toward Russia that was supposed to improve relations with Russia as part of the US pivot to Asia. For instance, in September 2009, President Obama announced that the US would drop the plan to build a missile defense shield in Eastern Europe, which Russia had been criticizing as a direct military threat and which has been seen by some EU countries (e.g., Germany and France) as a hurdle in EU-Russia relations. For the Obama administration, the “reset” was supposed to win Russia over in a US attempt to impose sanctions against Iran and to sign a nuclear agreement that would stop the nuclear program of Tehran. In addition, Washington wanted to rebuild relations with Moscow as part of a more comprehensive collaboration scheme on the international stage. However, the “reset policy” proved to be ineffective (or even reckless, according to some observers), and with the official return of Vladimir Putin to presidency in 2012, Russia’s foreign policy has become increasingly conflictual and the domestic politics authoritarian. In this sense, the Russo-Georgian conflict did not change the policy of the West toward Russia toward a more assertive stance, but it seems to have been a turning point for Russia.

Then, in 2014, the Ukraine-Russia crisis led to the most serious conflict in Europe since the brutal civil war in former Yugoslavia, and the most significant confrontation between the West and Russia since the end of the Cold War. Moreover, it is important to recognize that the conflict in Ukraine was fundamentally *about* the EU. The so-called Euromaidan (a wave of civil unrests) was triggered when the President Yanukovich declined to sign an association agreement with the EU. This prompted the Ukrainian people to take to the streets, many of them waving EU flags. In this context, the EU has played an active and multifaceted role from the very beginning.

As Russian soldiers launched their military operation on February 27, resulting in the occupation and annexation of Crimea, the EU quickly reacted, imposing increasingly restrictive measures against the Russian Federation, including canceling the EU-Russia Summit and holding a Group of 7 (G7) meeting in Brussels in June 2014 instead of a G8 summit in Russia. Moreover, the EU supported the suspension of negotiations

over Russia's joining the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Energy Agency. At the same time, the EU also focused its efforts on de-escalating the crisis in Ukraine by further engaging Russia in diplomatic dialogue, and supporting Ukraine financially and organizationally to prevent the conflict-torn country from political and economic collapse.

Following the escalation of the conflict the EU declared numerous times that a solution of the crisis must involve the unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Whereas Russia claimed that as a result of a right-wing coup in Kiev the Russian-speaking citizens in Crimea and eastern Ukraine needed protection from the Russian Federation, an extraordinary meeting of the Council of the EU on March 3, 2014 condemned the violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity through acts of Russian armed aggression, specifically criticizing the Federation Council of Russia for authorizing the use of force. The EU called on Russia to immediately withdraw its armed forces, but in the absence of de-escalatory steps by the Russian Federation, on March 17, 2014 the EU imposed the first travel bans and asset freezes on a number of Russian and Ukrainian officials.

These measures have continued in the form of prohibition of imports originating from Crimea and Sevastopol, arms embargos to and from Russia, freezing of loans to Russian owned-banks, and sanctions across a range of sectors, among other things. At the same time, the EU advanced a variety of measures to support Ukraine. And through all of this, the EU has tried to avoid completely alienating Russia. The European Union, in particular Germany and France, were crucial in reaching agreement between Ukraine and Russia on the cease-fire in February 2015. The so-called Minsk II talks were organized in response to the collapse of the Minsk protocol cease-fire in January–February 2015 and led to a deal between Russia and Ukraine overseen by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.⁵³

Since the Ukraine war broke out, Russia has reportedly been involved in numerous cyber attacks, fake news campaigns, and elections tampering in Ukraine, EU member states (e.g., in the Netherlands during the April 2016 referendum on the EU Association Agreement with Ukraine and in the 2017 French presidential election in favor of Marine Le Pen), and the US 2016 presidential elections. Russian intelligence services and Russian hackers have reportedly been engaged in cyber activities, from distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks to data exfiltration and cyber sabotage. At the same time, Russia used false information to discredit foreign politi-

cal leaders or government institutions by releasing this information to newspapers and news outlets like Wikileaks (e.g., during the French presidential campaign in 2017, WikiLeaks published 21,075 emails associated with the Emmanuel Macron campaign).⁵⁴

The jury is still out on the collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia, but Russia has consistently supported a number of anti-EU parties and politicians through various media outlets (e.g., Sputnik France or Russia Today in Germany), and has engaged in systematic internet trolling. The first reported case of Russian cyber attacks took place in 2007 after the Estonian government moved a memorial commemorating the Soviet liberation of the country from the Nazis to a less prominent location in the Estonian capital of Tallinn in April 2007. This decision provoked cyber attacks against Estonia's critical economic and political infrastructure.⁵⁵ Experts argue that Russia's political elite believes in the power of information to advance political and military goals, both domestically and abroad.⁵⁶ In the Ukrainian conflict, the use of cyber warfare was ubiquitous, as already since 2010 the authorities of Ukraine had been targets of Russian espionage malware (e.g., "Turla"), while during the Crimea military takeover Russian soldiers without insignia were described by Russian propaganda as "friendly people."⁵⁷ Just to name one example, the hacker group Cyberberkut (named after the Russia-loyalist police force Berkut that was responsible for the killing of civilians during the Euromaidan demonstrations) gained access to e-mail correspondence between Ukrainian, EU, and US officials, and made some of them public. In addition, cyber attacks targeted Ukrainian electricity distributor Prykarpatyablen-ergo as well as Ukraine's railway transportation-system operator in May 2014. In March 2015, further cyber attacks were directed against a Ukrainian television broadcaster.⁵⁸

In 2015, Russian hackers reportedly gained access to the White House e-mail network as well as to a key network in the Pentagon including the e-mail systems of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁵⁹ In 2016, it was reported that two Russian intelligence agencies (the domestic Federal Security Service, or FSB, and the military Main Directorate of the General Staff, or GRU) were able to penetrate (by using hacker groups known as Fancy Bear and Cozy Bear) the networks of the Democratic National Committee and the e-mails of staffers on the Hillary Clinton campaign. The goal was arguably to influence the 2016 US presidential elections by persuading voters to choose Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton.⁶⁰

Furthermore, Russia has been using "troll farms" to influence both its domestic politics and foreign policy. "Troll farms" have been used to

spread out pro-Russian opinions and to crowd out anti-Russian positions, particularly in the context of the Ukraine war but since 2014 also increasingly in Europe and the United States. As Michael Connell and Sarah Vogler argue, “Trolls are reportedly paid to comment on anti-Russian news articles, ‘dislike’ anti-regime videos and use false online profiles on social media sites such as Facebook to overwhelm the comments of anti-Russian posts, and create and maintain pro-Russian blogs.”⁶¹ One such disinformation campaign was waged against NATO soldiers in the Baltic states in the wake of an increase in NATO’s presence in those countries in 2017.⁶² Russia was reportedly behind a false report of a rape by German soldiers in Lithuania, which was intended to undermine support for NATO’s new eastern presence.

This brief overview of the main highlights in Russian foreign policy shows that new power dynamics are at work that affect the EU directly.

Organization of the Book

The book is divided into two parts: (1) the EU’s foreign policy toward Russia, and (2) the underlying causes of Russia’s foreign policy toward Europe. Each chapter addresses a different aspect of this dynamic, examining both direct and indirect influences. While some chapters are directly concerned with hard power such as changes in military balances and the sanctions regime, others examine how core policies toward Russia have knock-on effects, such as maritime security and the evolution of the European External Action Service. In the second part, the chapters that focus on Russia’s approach provide fresh insight into the outward strategy of Putin’s regime, while also looking within the country at the role of propaganda and identity. In addition to focusing on specific aspects of this contentious relationship, all of the chapters provide background on how we arrived at this turbulent period as well as forecasting possible future scenarios.

In part I of the book, Kaija Schilde and Rosella Cappella Zielinski find that the Russia threat has specifically precipitated an enabling of EU power in the form of increased institutional cooperation on defense. Similarly, Marianne Riddervold examines the development of a new EU foreign policy pertaining to maritime security. She finds that as the Russia threat became more apparent, EU countries that were not previously interested in an integrated approach to the maritime area suddenly became convinced of the need to work together. By contrast, Guri Rosén and Helene Sjursen argue that the EU has long been in the midst of a transformation

of their common security structures that is bringing them closer together regardless of the response to various international challenges. According to their account, the EU has been increasingly projecting power because of an institutionalized norm of cooperation. Focusing on EU diplomacy, Cristian Nitou finds that the European External Action Service was actually tested beyond its limits in the face of new Russian aggression, but the Ukraine crisis led to a renewed will on the part of the EU to revamp its diplomacy. Evidence of this is a revamped approach to Europe's neighborhood as well as the launch of the 2016 Global Strategy. Although each author examines a different dimension of EU power, they all agree that, if anything, Russia's shift in foreign policy has encouraged a stronger, more integrated, and strategic approach for the EU.

The second part of the book seeks to understand the Russia-Europe power relationship from the standpoint of Russia's domestic and international contexts. Molly Krasnodębska examines how Russia's self-identity, stemming from its historical strategic culture, is wrapped up in its desire for dominance in its own region. She finds that Russia's perception that the EU has encroached upon this space led to a sense of threat to its ontological security. Dimitar Bechev focuses on the nature of Russian influence in Southeast Europe, especially the western Balkans, Greece, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Slovenia. On many dimensions, he finds that Russia is making inroads getting these countries to see Russia as an opportunity rather than a threat. Similarly, Yulia Nikitina investigates Russian influence in Eurasia, where the country had a unique window to influence the post-Soviet space given that the West was less interested. Comparing Eurasia with the EU as communities of practice, Nikitina sheds light on the highly contrasting perceptions of each other in the two regions.

Ryan Maness examines the cyber aspect of Russia's new role in the international system, finding that in the absence of the ability to pursue traditional great power competition, Putin has pursued a hybrid approach that has a significant cyber component. He argues that Putin has been able to successfully manipulate information to promote the Russian worldview and display power. Vsevolod Samokhvalov traces how various slights over time in the relationship between Europe and Russia, which came to a head when the EU did not recognize the Eurasian Economic Union—Putin's attempt to promote economic integration in the post-Soviet space—as a negotiating partner, prompted Russia to revert to traditional power politics. Like in the first part of the book, the second part showcases a number of different dimensions of Russian power, identity, and motivations. However, all authors agree that, in various ways, Russia

has been successful at extending its influence in unprecedented ways since the end of the Cold War.

Together the chapters bring together a comprehensive range of empirical findings on the EU-Russia security relationship to show that the power dynamics underpinning EU-Russian relations are complex and multilayered. Moreover, tensions have clearly ratcheting up as each actor becomes increasingly enabled in power terms, but particularly on the Russian side where the perception is that much more is at stake domestically. Each author also highlights how the absence of the US as a global leader and a highly unpredictable president served to intensify these dynamics. In the concluding chapter, we analyze what these empirical findings mean as a whole, and the implications for EU and Russian power over the longer term. We also attempt to map out the future developments of Europe-Russia security relations, taking into account the growing uncertainty that affects Europe's, Russia's, and the US's foreign policies.

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NOTES

1. E.g., Bukkvoll 2003; Treisman 2002; Baranovsky 2000.
2. Sakwa 2013; Karagiannis 2013; Allison 2008.
3. Walt 2016; Simpson 2016; Acharya 2017; Kagan 2017; Haass 2018.
4. Ikenberry 2017.
5. Nye 2017; Deudney and Ikenberry 2018.
6. Birchfield and Alasdair 2018.
7. Casier and DeBardeleben 2018.
8. Orenstein 2019.
9. Behavior is defined as “beliefs, attitudes, opinions, expectations, emotions, and/or predispositions to act” (Baldwin 2002).
10. Baldwin 2005. This approach draws upon Cross and Karolewski 2017.
11. Baldwin 1989; Barry 1976; Dahl 1957; Laswell and Kaplan 1950.
12. Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2001.
13. Barnett and Duvall 2005.
14. Barnett and Duvall 2005, 41.
15. Natorski 2015, 2.
16. Rosenthal, Charles, and t'Hart 1989, 10.
17. Capoccia and Keleman 2007, 343.

18. Lindley-French 2002; Toje 2010.
19. Cross and Karolewski 2017.
20. For example, with regard to the Arabellion, see Börzel, Risse, and Dandashly 2015.
21. Data from the European Commission: http://eu-un.europa.eu/documents/info/pack/en/EU-UNBrochure-2_en.pdf
22. When we refer to the EU, we also include its component institutions such as the Parliament, Commission, European External Action Service, and so on.
23. For an overview, see Bickerton, Irondelle, and Menon 2011.
24. Smith 2004; Mérand 2008.
25. Meyer 2006.
26. Schmitt 2000.
27. Darnis et al. 2007; also see Stumbaum 2009.
28. Checkel 2005.
29. Bickerton 2011.
30. Keukeleire 2003.
31. Pastore 2001; Mitsilegas, Monar, and Rees 2003; Rhinard, Boin, and Ekengren 2007.
32. Lewis 2005; Duke 2005; Juncos and Pomorska 2006; Howorth 2007; Juncos and Reynolds 2007; Cross 2011b.
33. Riddervold 2015.
34. Juncos and Pomorska 2013; Batora 2013.
35. Manners 2002.
36. Duchêne 1972; Bull 1982; Whitman 2002.
37. Sjursen 2006.
38. Laïdi 2008; Nye 2004.
39. Cross 2011a.
40. Karolewski 2011.
41. Felkay 2002; Medvedev 2000; Lane 2000.
42. Krastev 2006.
43. Mason and Sidorenko-Stephenson 1997; McFaul 1995.
44. Treisman 2011.
45. Lynch 1999.
46. Trenin 2010.
47. Bremmer and Charap 2007; Kryshstanovskaya and White 2003. But see Rivera and Rivera (2006) for the opposite view.
48. Antonenko 2007; Levitin 2000; Hughes 2013.
49. Agarin and Karolewski 2015.
50. Stulberg 2015; Larrabee 2010.
51. Kuzio 2017.
52. Hudson 2009.
53. Among other things, Germany and France agreed to the signing of the document by the representatives of the east Ukrainian separatists from the Lugansk People's Republic and the Donetsk People's Republic.
54. Connell and Vogler 2017.
55. Herzog 2011.
56. Jaitner 2015, 89.

57. Jaitner 2015, 90.
58. Shackelford et al. 2017, 325.
59. Shackelford et al. 2017, 323.
60. Shackelford et al. 2017, 324.
61. Connell and Vogler 2017, 25.
62. Standish 2017.

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The EU's Foreign Policy vis-à-vis Russia

2 | European Military Power

Institutional Legacies and External Threat in EU Defense Cooperation

Rosella Cappella Zielinski and Kaija Schilde

In 2017, European member states took a significant step toward formal defense cooperation with the formation of the European Defence Fund (EDF) and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). The European Commission launched the EDF to coordinate, supplement, and amplify national investments in defense by pooling member resources. Similarly, PESCO deepened European defense cooperation through treaty-based, “binding commitments” to “jointly develop defense capabilities and make them available for EU military operations” differentiated by “the binding nature of the commitments undertaken by participating Member States.”¹ Within two months of the PESCO agreement, the Commission initiated legal action against member states not in compliance with European Union defense cooperation.² While prior forms of defense cooperation were voluntary and informal, the EDF and PESCO transferred significant aspects of decision-making authority from states to the European level.

The rapid enactment and formalization of the EDF and PESCO is puzzling to many observers. Defense cooperation enables individual European member states to achieve greater output and develop defense technology and equipment that would not be feasible alone. Economically, pooling resources decreases costs by eliminating duplication and enabling economies of scale. Militarily, coordination promotes standardization and interoperability between European armed forces. Despite these benefits, defense cooperation is difficult to achieve. Formal cooperation requires states to relinquish sovereignty, and these sovereignty costs limit the extent to which states will delegate coercive capacities to international

organizations.³ Moreover, even when supranational governance is necessary to achieve joint gains, the difficulty of committing to a distribution of those gains can impede the formation of supranational institutions.⁴

Indeed, European defense cooperation has been noted more for its ineffectiveness and failures than for institutional robustness. Since 1950, despite multiple calls by European states and EU leaders for formal and binding cooperation, cooperation and corresponding institutions have been consistently informal and nonbinding with authority remaining at the state level versus delegation to a supranational entity. Bilateral and multilateral efforts to improve defense cooperation proliferated during the Cold War with the Western European Union, Organization for Joint Armaments Cooperation (OCCAR), and the Western European Armaments Group (WEAG). However, such efforts never progressed to a formal supranational institution. Post-Cold War efforts such as the creation of European Security and Defence Cooperation in 1999, the 2003 European Security Strategy, and the 2004 European Defence Agency were relatively more formal in their institutionalization than their predecessors, though they remained voluntary in nature. In regard to PESCO, while the origins of the framework began in the 2009 with the Lisbon Treaty, little progress was made in subsequent years.⁵ As recently as 2013 formal defense cooperation remained remote, with EU High Representative Catherine Ashton concluding that “the appetite to move forward seems limited at this stage.”⁶ It was not until the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014 that formal institutions accelerated. These developments toward formal and supranational European defense cooperation were a “game changer” for defense after “years of stalling EU efforts.”⁷

This chapter explores shifts from informal and voluntary defense cooperation to cooperation characterized by formal and supranational institutions. We document defense cooperation efforts leading up to both European Defence Community (EDC) and PESCO and argue these efforts created a rich institutional foundation for further integration.⁸ We posit that a history of informal cooperation is a necessary preexisting condition for formal institutionalization. Over time, informal institutional layering produces a latent capacity that provides the building blocks for formal institutional cooperation. However, latent capacity may remain latent. We argue that when there is sufficient informal institutional layering, an exogenous shock in the form of a change in the international threat environment may provide a tipping point prompting institutional formalization.

We explore this heuristic framework around two time periods: (1) World War I through the 1950 EDC, and (2) the 1954 EDC collapse to

2014–17. The examination of these periods shows that the onset of formal defense cooperation in the 1950s and 2000s was preceded by decades of informal cooperation. By the early 1950s European defense planners, including Jean Monnet, James Arthur Salter, and René Pleven, had worked together since World War I in various informal institutions including defense planning and coordination councils. Over time, repeated informal cooperation resulted in institutional layering and, in turn, a robust latent capacity. With the rise of the Soviet threat in 1950, and specifically with the Korean War, European politicians and bureaucrats were able to capitalize on the preexisting latent capacity to quickly generate formal institutions. Similarly, in the post-2017 formal EU defense institutions, the economic rationale for defense cooperation was an important but not urgent objective of member states. Throughout the 2000s there were multiple defense cooperation pilot projects, informal institutions, and efforts to formalize cooperation. A significant shift in both formalization and supranationalization occurred after 2014, catalyzed by an increasingly revisionist and aggressive Russian state. Put simply, the threat environment immediately shifted, and European planners were able to build upon the layers of formal and informal efforts to produce a formal supranational defense framework in the form of PESCO and the EDF.

Our chapter sheds light on the consequences of recent shifts in the international power status quo that had been maintained since the end of the Cold War, as evidenced by Russia's newly aggressive posturing. Shifts in the international environment can alter the threat perceptions of EU states, produce changes in the structure and authority of EU political institutions, and change the relative power of the EU. Indeed, these changes are not necessarily optimal for the EU's political development. While the EU's political development can accelerate and become more formal and supranational in response to international shifts, this can both constrain and enable EU power vis-à-vis other actors. The existence of formal, supranational military cooperation at the EU-level after 2017 may allow the EU more international flexibility and influence. However, it might also narrow EU options on the international stage as the EU is perceived, in turn, by Russia and other competitors as a strategic actor. The rest of this chapter proceeds in four sections. First, we discuss how previous works have assessed attempts at European defense cooperation. Second, we present a framework to understand the onset of formal defense cooperation. Third, we compare two cases: the layering of European defense institutions from World War I through the formal-

ization of cooperation in the 1950s and the layering of institutions from mid-20th century through the formalization of defense cooperation after 2014. Fourth, we conclude with a discussion of the implications of our proposed framework.

The Starts and Stops of European Defense Cooperation

Scholars studying European defense cooperation describe cooperation efforts as a “chaotic path”⁹ of at best ‘disjointed incrementalism,’¹⁰ and “at worst one of dithering, drift, and perceived impotence.”¹¹ From the negotiation of the Treaty of Dunkirk (1947) through the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the 1990s, attempts at coordinated defense capacity were “constantly frustrated.”¹² Indeed, the existing literature emphasizes the relative ineffectiveness, low stature, and institutional failure or stagnation of previous efforts at formalized cooperation, particularly the failure to create a standing European army. Failures in formal cooperation have been attributed to rivalry between the UK and France,¹³ political culture,¹⁴ and institutional pathologies.¹⁵

Since the end of the Cold War, scholars have theorized the underlying drivers of defense cooperation among European states.¹⁶ The 2000s saw an increase in European defense cooperation, including the creation of institutions such as the European Defence Agency (EDA), the EU Military Staff and the Political and Security Committee. These cooperation efforts are attributed to demands for burden sharing in international alliance operations such as NATO¹⁷ or as soft balancing against the US.¹⁸ However, these explanations of EU defense cooperation are lacking, as their explanations are inconsistent with the timing of cooperation and key counterfactuals of noncooperation such as the failure of the EU to adequately contain or respond to conflict in the Balkans in the 1990s.

In contrast, international relations scholars address defense cooperation as an international cooperation dilemma, evaluating the functional value of multilateral action¹⁹ and state coordination via international bodies.²⁰ Other questions, such as institutional design, institutional formality, and state strategies of defense cost sharing have been largely overlooked. Similarly, works that address burden sharing emphasize who bears the burden, not the role or creation of supporting international institutions.²¹ The vast wartime alliance literature addresses alliance formation and cohesion, but places less emphasis on how states pool and redistribute resources.²² Hence, scholars overlook institutional growth in the realm of

defense cooperation, in particular the informal organizational and market dynamics of coordinating or directing acquisition, finance, and professional training.

Argument: Institutional Layering and External Changes

Rather than thinking of European defense as an unrelated pattern of false starts and failures, or a functional and rational alliance regime, we propose a different image: one of European defense cooperation as an aggregation of institutions,²³ with key junctures driven by changes in the international environment. Over time, informal cooperation has a substantive effect as each effort—from the expansion of preexisting informal institutions to the creation of additional related, parallel, and overlapping institutions—makes formalization more likely. Such institutional efforts layer to create and build up to a latent institutional capacity, increasing the likelihood of formalized institutionalization in future iterations. Formal cooperation, however, is triggered by changes in the external environment, often in the form of changes in threat or alliances. In brief, when European states are sensitive to changes in the international environment, they may respond by formalizing preexistent informal institutions.

First, we distinguish between informal and formal institutions. Informal institutions coordinate aspects of politics outside of official or binding authority structures. Examples of informal institutions include memorandums of cooperation or agreement and public-private partnerships. Here cooperation occurs outside of formal treaties in the form of regular meetings,²⁴ operating under “unwritten rules, shared expectations for norms within international organizations that substantially modify or substitute for formal treaty provisions.”²⁵ In contrast, formal institutions are characterized by standard operating procedures and chains of command, delegation, and codified policies that “provide stable and predictable outputs, secretariats and are legally binding and enforceable.”²⁶

Second, we concern ourselves with the conditions that allow for informal endogenous change. Hence, we explore the cumulative effect of institutions and related processes over time.²⁷ International institutions such as the EU can evolve beyond the design intended by their member states. Likewise, international institutions can coordinate,²⁸ orchestrate,²⁹ or proliferate³⁰ multilateral policy-making without the direct involvement of member states. Under certain conditions, international institutions can appear to grow as agents without the direct involvement of their princi-

pals.³¹ One mechanism for this development is “cross-national layering” where the growth of international organizational structures replaces or subsumes institutions over time.³²

As time goes on, layering results in international regime complexity: the presence of nested, partially overlapping, and parallel international institutions that are not hierarchically ordered.³³ Such international regime complexity generates small group environments in which a collective of individuals develop expectations, norms, shared goals, and differentiated roles for members.³⁴ International regime complexity contributes to the creation of small group environments by

multiplying the number of international venues, and thus the occasions for state representatives to interact. Because international agreements are technical, diplomacy is a skill, and language knowledge is useful for international bargaining, it is increasingly the case that a single office and even a single individual will handle multiple portfolios.³⁵

Consequently, layering increases the density of knowledge, memory, expertise, and connections among a select group of bureaucrats and related institutions.³⁶ Such an increase creates a latent capacity that can be turned into formal institutions. However, while layering creates latent capacity ripe for the formalization of institutions, layering can also stymie change.³⁷ Actors that favor the status quo may adapt institutional frameworks by adding pieces that help secure their policy preferences in spite of changed external circumstances.³⁸ In addition, actors can pit one institution against another to maintain the status quo, pursue narrow interests, and vie for supremacy.

Third, to explain the conditions in which informal defense cooperation shifts into cooperation characterized by formal institutions, we introduce the role of exogenous shocks.³⁹ In the case of European defense cooperation, exogenous shocks come in the form of changes to the external environment. If the status quo, the preexisting institution, is unable to address international change, states task individuals and organizations to find new frameworks and methods to solve the crisis.⁴⁰ While defenders of the status quo may be able to preserve the original rules, they are unable to prevent the introduction of amendments and modifications or institutions. Each new element may be a small change in itself, yet these small changes can accumulate and lead to significant change over time.⁴¹ A change in the external environment makes it difficult for status quo

defenders to continue to guard against institutional change.⁴² Moreover, the decisions of key actors are freer as changes to the status quo weaken structural constraints. This opens up space for divergence to emerge and “there is a substantially heightened probability that agents’ choices will affect the outcome of interest.”⁴³ Thus, when structural constraints weaken in the face of an exogenous shock, motivated bureaucrats can capitalize on the preexisting latent capacity to quickly formalize institutions.

In sum, changes to the external environment act as exogenous shocks to layered institutions. When the status quo is no longer sufficient to address international change, motivated bureaucrats capitalize on the preexisting density of knowledge, memory, expertise, and connections among a select group of bureaucrats and related institutions to create formal institutions.⁴⁴

From Informal to Formal Defense Cooperation

World War I to the European Defence Community

The formal European defense cooperation that culminated in the EDC traces its origins to the institutions of World War I. Wartime Allied needs were so great that resource cooperation was indispensable to sustaining the war effort. As resources became increasingly scarce, the Allies created informal institutions to avoid duplication of efforts, control the costs of war, and ensure necessary materials matched state and warfighting needs. Throughout the war, and later during the interwar period and at the onset of World War II, informal institutions proliferated, overlapping, subsuming, or coordinating with each other. Institutional layering resulted in a latent capacity ripe for formalization: a network of associations and bureaucrats with expertise in interstate defense cooperation. Prompted by the Soviet threat, the layered, overlapping informal institutions and experts transmuted into formal defense institutions.

To cope with the scope and intensity of World War I, the Allies created informal institutions to pool and redistribute resources.⁴⁵ The 1914 Inter-Allied Supplies Commission was the first.⁴⁶ Britain, France, and Russia agreed to inform each other of orders placed in Britain to prevent the market from being flooded, enable the British government to foster direct links between buyers and sellers, and eliminate competition between purchasers.⁴⁷ As British director of ship requisitioning James Arthur Salter noted, the organization “marked an important development in the mecha-

nism of Allied co-operation.” In peacetime, “if the French Ministry of Commerce wanted something from the British Board of Trade it would transmit its request through the British Embassy in Paris. . . . The communications of two specialized departments on any technical matter thus passed four times through the hands and pens of non-specialists.” However, due to the war, a network of bureaucrats began to develop informal linkages that bypassed diplomatic channels and “compelled direct contact between the specialized Ministers and officials of the several countries.” While national interests remained, “they continued to become less important and . . . they were ultimately argued out and settled by specialists of the different countries.”⁴⁸

While the Inter-Allied Supplies Commission existed until the Armistice, it was inadequate for controlling prices.⁴⁹ However, many noted its bureaucratic network and organizational linkages, including Jean Monnet:

Imperfect as it was, the International Supply Committee seemed to me full of potential. . . . It comprised representatives of the Allied powers who were to come to know each other and to learn to work as a team. . . . But what might have been a sterile affair became by the force of circumstances the first step towards closer co-operation.⁵⁰

Etienne Clémentel, the French minister of commerce from 1915 to 1919, along with Jean Monnet, his representative in London, wanted a system whereby Allied resources would be pooled and allocated by inter-Allied bodies in accordance with need.⁵¹ The resulting institution was the Wheat Executive, created in November 1916.⁵² France, Great Britain, and Italy each appointed a representative in London with full powers to form an executive commission for the purchase and transport of cereals. The Wheat Executive necessitated the establishment in London of inter-Allied missions composed of technicians. While it was an informal institution, it was a model for interstate cooperation and expanded the network of bureaucrats trained in defense cooperation.

According to Monnet, “the ‘Wheat Executive’ was to be the prototype of a series of inter-Allied institutions for the joint handling of essential commodities. . . . already there was a foretaste of something more, because in practice the [country representatives] behaved as if they were a single entity acting for the common good. . . . [Signing the Wheat Executive agreement was] the first step on the long road that led me gradually to

discover the immense possibilities of collective action.⁵³ Monnet proposed that the Wheat Executive was evidence that “when men are put in a certain situation they see that they have common interests, and they are led towards agreement. . . . A single purchasing programme was drawn up; a central body put it into effect.”⁵⁴

Due to scarcity of tonnage, the Allies needed to create a common import program. Clémentel, Monnet, and Salter met with US representatives to work out a plan. Based on the Wheat Executive, a number of inter-Allied committees were created to set import programs for commodities. Committee members were specialists representing national administrations so that committee decisions automatically become the policy of each national government.⁵⁵ The institutions themselves were informal⁵⁶ and reported to the Allied Maritime Transport Council with representatives from France, Italy, the US, and Great Britain, which coordinated shipping. The report of the Paris conference noted the creation of permanent staffs.⁵⁷ The Allied Maritime Transport Council met frequently in the intervals between council meetings and each of its members was in contact with his own ministers as well as with Allied colleagues.⁵⁸

The creation of nested, partially overlapping, and parallel international institutions continued. In July 1917, the Inter-Allied Council was created to further coordinate Allied resources. To attain the “maximum of administrative efficiency the council would carry out most of its work through sub-committees and would so far as possible utilized Inter-Allied organizations already existing in London.”⁵⁹ Institutional layering continued in 1918 with the creation of the Committee of Representatives. The Committee of Representatives coordinated the supply programs of the various executives into one general program of supply, forming the sole channel of communication between the several commissions, and acting as a permanent secretariat to the Inter-Allied Supply Council.

At the end of World War I, the various coordinative institutions were disbanded.⁶⁰ Despite their termination, a latent capacity remained in the form of bureaucratic specialists, institutional knowledge, and newfound experiences to draw upon for defense coordination. Indeed, inspired by wartime cooperation, there were attempts at formal peacetime institutional cooperation. Clémentel, who represented the French government in postwar negotiations and whose views on postwar economic problems were formally accepted by Prime Minister Georges Clémenceau, drew upon his wartime experiences to shape postwar defense cooperation.⁶¹ Clémentel believed “wartime feelings of comradeship and solidarity provided an ideal environment for the formation of such a [an Allied] block,

and once it came into being, the Allied organization would be the core of a larger international system.” Additionally, Clémentel stressed the importance of establishing inter-Allied control of raw material: “the Allied governments would directly ration out, at prices set by them, the vast supplies of raw material they controlled. Such an arrangement would be the key feature of the Allied-led economic bloc he hoped to see emerge in some form from the war.”⁶² The control of raw materials was accepted, but only for the period of economic restoration.⁶³ In another example, Monnet noted the failed attempt to create a body resembling the Wheat Executive at the Brussels Conference in 1920: “It was the first Conference that the League [of Nations] had held. . . . It embodied the still lively hopes of our London team. We still believed in the possibility of an organized peace . . . we thought, we might be able to restart some of the machinery that we had put to the test in the wartime Executives.”⁶⁴ Monnet’s contribution toward the League of Nations was the idea of a “supranational” executive, based on the efficiencies he had experienced in earlier transnational committees.⁶⁵ Salter also proposed an entity funded by a common import tariff with a supranational secretariat to “determine how the distribution [of those funds] should be made.”⁶⁶ While interwar efforts to sustain international institutions failed, such attempts resulted in further institutional layering.

With the outbreak of World War II, the institutional capacity created during World War I to facilitate allied defense cooperation was immediately invoked. Whereas during World War I the machinery to effectively coordinate Allied resources took years to erect, World War II institutions were promptly established. Thus, drawing upon the World War I experience, French prime minister Édouard Daladier and British prime minister Neville Chamberlain agreed to establish five permanent executive committees for food, armaments and raw materials, petroleum, aircraft, and shipping,

“to ensure the best use . . . of raw materials, means of production, etc., and to share fairly between the two countries any cuts that may be imposed by the need to reduce the programmes.” [and] be effected by a single purchasing agency . . . under the authority of an Anglo-French Coordinating Committee with eight members chosen from among their own senior officials. Above this, at Ministerial level, there was to be an Anglo-French Council, which would meet periodically, and an Economic Section was to be formed within the Supreme War Council. The real power, however, would

lie with the Coordinating Committee, since it would be in permanent session and would have the technical staff. It was to be based in London, and it seemed natural that its Chairman should be French.⁶⁷

The result was the Anglo-French Purchasing Board, tasked to coordinate the work of the permanent executive committees, address differences of opinion, and coordinate the work of Allied Purchasing Missions abroad.⁶⁸

Similar to the end of World War I, the various Allied organizations formed to manage wartime resources were disbanded after World War II, yet latent capacity in the form of informal institutional layering legacies endured. Defense institutions continued to be created after World War II. Within the NATO framework, European states established a Military Production and Supply Board (1949), but it proved insufficient to meet armaments demands for conflicts such as the Korean War.⁶⁹ In 1951 the Temporary Council Committee, led by Jean Monnet, Averell Harriman, and Edwin Plowden, was created. Building upon the network of defense individuals and institutions, they managed to “rapidly devis[e] procedures for annually reviewing NATO members’ activities, with the aim of eliminating redundant procurement programs and standardizing members’ armaments.”⁷⁰

In 1950, formalization of defense institutions began to occur. Unlike previous postwar attempts, 1950 was a turning point in defense cooperation, catalyzed by the rise of the external Soviet threat. While René Pleven, Robert Schuman, and Jean Monnet are all credited with their involvement in early European defense cooperation, Monnet was the most responsive to changes in the international system. Whereas other European elites perceived Germany as the greatest threat, Monnet was convinced that European integration “first and foremost should strengthen the ‘Atlantic community’ in order to confront the Soviet threat.”⁷¹ Monnet’s views on the Soviet threat shifted with the Korean War. He was “convinced that Stalin has the same plan for Europe as for Korea. What is happening there is a dress rehearsal of what is waiting for us here.”⁷² For Monnet, the “psychosis of 1950” was that “war seemed inevitable,”⁷³ with “all political actions”—including the creation of a European Community—“understood as a contribution to the [intensifying] Cold War.”⁷⁴ By May 1950, Monnet was convinced that all European efforts must now “crystallize on a simple and dangerous goal: the cold war,” and that “in fact, we are already at war.”⁷⁵ Moreover, the NATO alliance was not enough, because “in no degree can the security of France be secured by the Atlantic pact, because the Americans have only two divisions [in Europe].”

Monnet was at the forefront of promoting his vision of the EDC as a single, independent supranational executive,⁷⁶ playing a greater role in its creation than initially recognized by historians.⁷⁷ In his memoirs, he stated that taking care of military affairs was a “necessity” he faced in 1914, 1938–45, and again in the creation of the EDC for which he had no inherent “taste [n]or competence.” It was only after his perception of international threat conditions changed that he agreed it would be necessary “to tackle the problem of Europe through defense . . . which would undoubtedly be one of the attributes of the future federation, but in my opinion not the most powerful nor the most determining motive of the Union.”⁷⁸ He warned that the absence of Europe “in great decisions of the world . . . is precisely the cause of the imbalance against which you think to protect ourselves. On the contrary, we need to actively resume our place in the regulation of problems where the West is totally engaged.”⁷⁹

Preexisting European defense cooperation networks combined with the Soviet threat resulted in the rapid development of formal defense institutions. In 1950, Pleven proposed a plan for far-reaching defense integration, including the creation of a European army and the appointment of a European minister of defense. After two years of negotiations, all six members of the European Coal and Steel Community signed the “Treaty establishing the European Defence Community,” envisaging a common European army with 40 divisions of 13,000 soldiers in a common uniform, with a common budget, joint military procurement, and common institutions.⁸⁰

While Monnet retreated from his support of the European Defence Community effort after it failed in 1954, he was still vehemently arguing for it in 1953. Monnet linked the EDC to the Soviet threat, a lack of US credibility, and European existential survival. In 1953, he argued that the

Americans are clear. They [will] not indefinitely pursue a policy that does not happen. If Europeans prove incapable of uniting and transforming ourselves, we will draw the consequences against our will. The [US] administration, Congress, [and] public opinion [will] not continue to expose forces, invest resources, build bases and lines of communication in a region devoid of real security. The cost of modern engines, their range, the speed of the eventual attack have become such that the security of Western Europe exceeds the separate efforts of each of the countries which comprise it, even with the help of the United States. This security depends on the creation of an integrated European army.⁸¹

Although it did not ultimately survive, the formalization of the EDC in the 1950s was both enabled by the latent capacity of preexisting informal institutions and catalyzed by international threat. From the start of World War I, 35 years of experience in armaments and wartime cooperation with many of the same officials overlapping in their leadership roles resulted in a layering of organizations and an actual informal network of involved bureaucrats. However, it was not until a rise in the Soviet threat that formalization occurred.

Failure of the EDC to 21st Century Defense Cooperation

From the mid-1950s to 2014, European defense cooperation efforts resulted in a new round of slow and intermittent institutional layering. European states coordinated their defense needs via bilateral and multilateral efforts both within and outside EU structures, and through NATO. Throughout the era, these informal institutions layered into new institutions with greater scope, subsuming the old institutions. Because the institutions were focused on improving capabilities cooperation, each new institution increased latent institutional capacity in European defense cooperation. During this time period, the agendas of the informal and formal international institutions aligned, creating more European armaments cooperation. Consequently, informal institutions enhanced and created the latent capacity for formal institutions, rather than undermining or competing with formal institutions or hindering institutional change. At the end of the Cold War layering accelerated, increasing latent capacity. Aspects of European defense institutions formalized at different points in time, such as 1999 and 2004. However, we argue that the biggest shift occurred after 2014 in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Russia's actions prompted policymakers to harness informal institutional capacity at the European level, allowing policymakers to formalize defense cooperation in the form of PESCO and the EDF with little political effort.

Latent institutional capacity took decades to build, with a very slow start in the early Cold War. After the French rejection of the EDC in 1954, European defense cooperation efforts lulled.⁸² Attempts were rare, but included the 1963 Franco-German Elysee Treaty to institutionalize bilateral armaments collaboration, which was “symbolic and momentary, rather than practical and long-term,”⁸³ as well as the Euromissile initiative to develop joint Franco-German antitank guided missiles and air defense systems.⁸⁴ Cooperation attempts were limited to program-specific aerospace projects organized on a “purely intergovernmental, ad hoc basis.”⁸⁵

Until the mid-1960s, informal defense cooperation initiatives emanated primarily from NATO. The NATO EuroGroup (1968) was a forum for European states to improve NATO effectiveness by increasing defense industry competitiveness.⁸⁶ It was constrained by European concerns that an increase in European defense capabilities would decouple the US security guarantee and by US concerns that a strong Europe would divide the alliance. Hence, the EuroGroup remained informal throughout its duration in the form of regular meetings of national armaments directors and the establishment of a Eurogroup of National Armament Directors (EURONAD).⁸⁷ The EuroGroup was subsumed by its organizational offshoots in the following decades, each of which developed capacities that the EuroGroup initially lacked, but with the same agenda and goals.

By the late 1960s, transatlantic commercial competition drove informal defense cooperation.⁸⁸ European states stressed opening national armaments markets to cross-border competition and promoting standardization. In 1970, EuroGroup members launched the European Defence Improvement Program to enhance NATO's common infrastructure and improve national NATO-designated forces. The European Defence Improvement Program was then subsumed in 1976 by the Independent European Programme Group (IEPG). The IEPG, an informal European NATO defense forum to foster cooperation on armaments procurement, was an organizational "offshoot" created to overcome the perceived shortcomings of the Eurogroup, including an independence from NATO, and incorporate France in the decision-making structure.⁸⁹ The IEPG structure shared the agenda of its predecessor organizations, but had an increased capacity to improve European defense competitiveness through industry protections, including resisting NATO standardization.⁹⁰ In 1984 its capacity increased further with European defense ministers regularizing their meetings, fostering a more cooperative relationship with corporate actors, including granting official advisory status to the European Defence Industrial Group, an umbrella group representing defense industries. IEPG capacity was further strengthened by the 1986 Vredeling report, which called for greater European collaboration in weapons production.⁹¹ In 1992 the IEPG was subsumed into the Western European Union (WEU), and the Western European Armaments Group (WEAG) was created to replace the IEPG.⁹²

Another informal institution created in the 1970s was European Political Cooperation (EPC), which was established to regularize consultation on major foreign policy questions.⁹³ The EPC did not develop enough capacity to coordinate in response to international crises such as the Soviet

invasion of Afghanistan, which “proved too much for the EPC to handle.”⁹⁴ Crises exposed EPC weaknesses, but also led to attempts to “strengthen the EPC and broaden its policy agenda by including security and defence matters” in future institutional reforms. Proposals to increase the capacity of the EPC include the 1981 London Report to coordinate force structure, the Genscher-Colombo proposal, and the 1983 Stuttgart Solemn Declarations to develop “common principles” and “joint actions” for all “political and economic aspects of security.”⁹⁵ The language and organizational structure of the EPC provided the organizational layering for the creation of the CFSP introduced in the 1991 Maastricht Treaty.⁹⁶ The existence of the EPC and the bureaucratic procedures it created facilitated the organizational layering that made the creation of later institutions possible.

During the period from the 1970s to the 1990s, defense cooperation was organized outside of the institutions of the EU as a “loosely connected” network.⁹⁷ A lack of EU institutions in defense cooperation did not hinder informal cooperation but rather fueled it.⁹⁸ Informal efforts continued throughout the 1990s through vehicles such as WEAG (which replaced the IEPG in 1992) and the 1990 European Defence Industrial Group, which was “closely linked to the work within IEPG.”⁹⁹ The WEAG agenda included a proposal for the creation of formal EU defense cooperation, including centralized defense armaments and technology agencies.¹⁰⁰ A 1993 proposal created a Western European Armaments Organization (WEAO, 1996–2006) as a WEAG subsidiary and nascent European armaments agency. The informal WEAG and WEAO were embedded in the formal WEU, and were subsumed in 2005–6 with the establishment of the European Defence Agency. Another informal framework subsumed by the EDA was the Letter of Intent (LoI) Framework Agreement Treaty (2000) with the goal of establishing a European Defence Technological and Industrial Base.¹⁰¹

The 1990s and 2000s also saw a flurry of increasingly formalized defense cooperation within the EU framework. This defense cooperation had some, but not all, aspects of institutional formality. While many EU institutions had secretariats, they still had aspects of informality such as intergovernmental coordination and voluntary participation. The new era of defense cooperation was marked by the 1998 bilateral St. Malo Declaration, but it was preceded by a continuous institutional layering in defense over the decade. The 1993 EU KONVER program was initiated as a European Union policy to “provide support and assistance to defence-dependent regions experiencing substantial job losses in defence indus-

tries or military bases.”¹⁰² In 1992 EU member states established the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) alongside the Maastricht Treaty. Member states tasked the Western European Union to “elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications,” and to address all questions related to EU security “including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence.”¹⁰³ The 1995 ad hoc European Armaments Policy Council Working Group was a formal forum within the Committee of Permanent Representatives setting recommendations on armaments.

Further formalizations came with the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty creation of the EU High Representative for the CFSP and incorporation of the informal 1992 “Petersberg Tasks” into the CFSP.¹⁰⁴ The 1999 Helsinki Summit and the Cologne European Council established joint proposals to set criteria (Headline Goals) toward defense capabilities and clarified the desire for autonomous EU military action.¹⁰⁵ The same year also produced the Anglo-Italian informal European Defence Capabilities Initiative. The 2001 Nice Treaty proposed military independence with force integration and shared Brussels-based formal institutions, as well as an informal European Capabilities Action Plan developed at the 2001 Laeken European Summit to address shortfalls in the Headline Goals, leading to a 2003 European Council agreement on a formal European Armaments Agency. The EU adopted a common Security Strategy in 2003, “a framework for financing operations having military or defence implications”¹⁰⁶ in 2002, with approval in 2004 of the “Athena” mechanism “for organizing the common costs of EU military and defence related missions.”¹⁰⁷

Institutional layering increased over the 1990s at the NATO level. For example, the 2003 EU-NATO Berlin Plus agreement was intended to provide the EU with NATO assets and capabilities for EU-led crisis management operations, itself a legacy of “previous arrangements between the Western European Union (WEU) and the Alliance inaugurated in Berlin in 1996.”¹⁰⁸ It was a continuation of the goals set forth at the 2002 NATO Prague Summit that reorganized NATO European command and enhanced European armed forces. Informal initiatives to consolidate and coordinate defense supplies continued to layer, including the Sintra Defence Ministers Meeting (2000) that laid the groundwork for the Capabilities Commitment Conference and the European Council at Santa Maria da Feira (2000), which set up four ad hoc EU-NATO committees. Additional agreements include the series of Nordic efforts that came out of the Support for Industry Cooperation in the Defence Material Area (2001-), which produced the 2009 Nordic Defence Cooperation (NOR-

DEFCO), the 2010 General Security Agreement, and 2014 Agreement on Cooperation in the Defence Materiel Area.¹⁰⁹

With the 2004 establishment of the EDA, a number of additional informal organizational structures were created including the European Defence Equipment Market (2005), a Defence Procurement Code of Conduct (2006), a Joint Investment Program on Research and Technology (First 2007, Second 2008), a Declaration of Intent to Establish European Air Transport Fleet (2008), a European Framework Cooperation (2011), a New Initiative on Effective Procurement Methods (2011), and an informal EDA-OCCAR arrangement (2012).¹¹⁰ The 2009 Lisbon Treaty renamed European Security and Defence Cooperation the Common Security and Defence Policy, created a mutual assistance and solidarity clause, and formed a formal European External Action Service for international foreign and security policy diplomatic representation.¹¹¹ The 2010 “Ghent Initiative,” presented during an informal meeting of the defense ministers, introduced the concept of “pooling and sharing” national military capabilities followed by the 2012 Code of Conduct for Pooling and Sharing.

After the Lisbon Treaty, scholars observed a slowdown in institutional growth (both formal and informal) at the EU level. Major initiatives were either bilateral or occurred outside of EU institutions. A 2010 “Lancaster House” treaty between the UK and France on defense and nuclear cooperation signaled a move away from EU-level coordination and back to bilateral or multilateral efforts. In addition to the formation of Nordic Battle Groups and a UK Joint Expeditionary Force, a 2013 German-led initiative introduced the Framework Nations Concept to NATO.¹¹²

A shift toward formalization in European defense cooperation, the most serious attempt at formalization since 1950, began in 2014 with a change in the external threat environment.¹¹³ In 2014, after a decade of increasing hostility, Russia annexed Crimea and Russian-backed separatists shot down a civilian airliner. Russia’s actions fueled EU decision-makers’ fears that European security was at risk. In defense coordination documents from 2013, the EU identified only “the lack of investment in research and innovation” as a threat, and not any geopolitical imperatives.¹¹⁴ EU discourse post-2014 references “deter[ring] Russian aggression” as being linked to European integration.¹¹⁵ A 2015 European Commission report states that although the “threat of war in Europe was unthinkable until recently, it does not require a great deal of imagination to picture one now” and “military confrontation is no longer a relic of the past but a serious risk for the future.”¹¹⁶ The EDF proposal references “the most severe security challenges of the past 60 years . . . new threats at

home and in the EU's neighbourhood."¹¹⁷ The Commission's framework on hybrid threats emphasizes "enhancing our resilience and security from within while increasing our capacity to counter emerging external threats."¹¹⁸ The European Parliament debated "geopolitical shifts in the EU's neighbourhood."¹¹⁹

The Russia-Ukraine crisis has been a tipping point along multiple dimensions in European security. At the national level, it has provoked defense spending increases, as well as strategic reinvestments in capabilities and force structure. At the EU level, it has led to the creation of formal defense cooperation institutions after 10 years of a slowdown in European defense cooperation since the Lisbon Treaty. Immediately, the 2014 crises prompted a collective EU response in the form of a targeted sanctions regime, and NATO states pledged defense expenditure increases at the 2014 Wales Summit. In addition, European states began to invest in a different force structure, away from the dominant pattern of expeditionary capabilities toward territorial capabilities.¹²⁰

In regard to the formalization of informal institutions, the period from 2014 to 2017 saw a flurry of increasingly formal cooperation, culminating in the 2017 European Defence Fund and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) frameworks.¹²¹ While talks began in 2010 to create a "Permanent Structured Cooperation," as envisioned in Articles 42(6) and 46 of the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, the formalization efforts came after 2014. Indeed, in 2011 EU defense ministers decided not to "proceed with the activation of the Mechanism" created in 2010.¹²² In 2014, in response to Russian actions in Eastern Europe, renewed efforts were embodied in the New Deal for European Defence Action Plan, the 2015 European Agenda on Security, the 2016 EU Global Strategy, 2016 Franco-German Papers proposing an EU Defence Union, a 2016 EU-NATO Joint Cooperation Declaration, the 2016 presentation of a European Defence Action Plan, and the 2017 command and control reform of the EU Military Committee.¹²³

Conclusion

This chapter explores the conditions under which formalized European defense cooperation may arise. Over time, informal cooperation efforts may have a substantive effect as each effort—from the expansion of preexisting informal institutions to the creation of additional related, parallel, or overlapping, institutions—makes rapid formalization more likely. Such institutional layering results in international regime complexity—the

presence of nested, partially overlapping, and parallel international institutions. International regime complexity generates small group environments in which a collective of individuals develop expectations, norms, shared goals, and differentiated roles for members. Consequently, layering increases the density of knowledge, memory, expertise, and connections among a select group of bureaucrats and related institutions, resulting in a latent capacity that can be turned into formal institutions.

While latent capacity may remain latent, we argue that a change in the international system, specifically the onset of an existential threat, provides an exogenous shock that prompts policymakers to capitalize on pre-existing latent capacity. When there is sufficient informal institutional layering, a dramatic shift in the threat environment creates a tipping point, prompting formalization to occur.

We examine the various forms—formal and informal—of European defense cooperation since the onset of World War I. We compare the creation of the EDC in the early 1950s and the EDF to post-2014 efforts such as the formalization of PESCO in 2017. Our findings suggest that defense cooperation ranges from more informal to formal institutions. Informal cooperation is either temporally or functionally limited: it occurs for a finite time period, such as armaments or finance committees during wartime or over limited areas of defense policy. Formal defense cooperation is rare.

Our findings shed light on the historical inability of European politicians to respond to various international crises or threats. Many of these failures in defense cooperation may have occurred at a moment in time when there was insufficient institutional layering preceding the demand for cooperation. While we have not ex-ante theorized the degree, level, duration, and density of what would constitute “sufficient institutional layering,” there have been critical moments when state interests were aligned toward defense integration due to threat changes, but policymakers were constrained by insufficient bureaucratic activity and defense capacity. Examples include the Balkan wars of the 1990s, when Europe was supposed to rise to the occasion in “the hour of Europe,” the post 9/11 environment when there was a great deal of effort to create more European security institutions, and most recently the 2011 threat posed by Libya, in which European politicians led NATO planning in the operation. All of these examples occurred within only a few years of major EU treaty authority developments, and—per our theory—would not have had sufficient institutional depth for responding to international change with significant preexisting defense cooperation. According to our argument,

these international events produced changes in the international environment that European politicians wanted to respond to, but presently lacked the ability. In the current phase of post-2014 defense cooperation prompted by international changes such as Brexit, Russian threats, and US domestic politics weakening NATO, the preceding decades of institutional layering in European defense might provide a building block for stable and formal institutionalization.

NOTES

1. European Union External Action 2008.
2. US News 2008.
3. Abbott and Snidal 2000; Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001; and Koremenos 2016.
4. Buthe 2016.
5. Council of the European Union 2017.
6. EU High Representative, "Preparing the December 2013 European Council on Security and Defence, Interim Report by the High Representative," Brussels, 24 July 2013, http://eeas.europa.eu/library/publications/2013/24072013_hr_interim_report_en.pdf
7. Peel 2017.
8. Devore 2012, 432–58.
9. Bickerton, Irondelle, and Menon 2011, 1–21; Mérand 2008.
10. Wallace, *Government without Statehood: The Unstable Equilibrium* 1996, 439–60.
11. Howorth 2004, 211–34.
12. Howorth and Menon 2009, 727–744, 35.
13. Howorth 2014, 36.
14. Dinan 2005, 37–54.
15. Rynning 2011, 23–42.
16. Devore 2013, 1–28.
17. Howorth 2014.
18. Pape 2005, 7–45; Brooks and Wohlforth 2005, 72–108; Art 2005, 6; Posen 2006, 149–86.
19. Abbott and Snidal 1998, 3–32; Talberg 2002, 23–46.
20. Keohane 1984; Hawkins, et al. 2006, 13–15.
21. The majority of such works are rooted in the public goods literature, emphasizing who contributes what to the alliance. These contributions are dictated by member size (Olson and Zeckhauser 1966), the degree of private benefits the member receives (Conybeare and Sandler 1990; Gates and Terasawa 1992), and the form of contribution (Sandler and Hartley 2001).
22. E.g., Snyder 1984; Morrow 1991, 1994; Siverson and Starr 1994; Leeds 2003; Gibler and Rider 2004; Leeds and Savun 2007; Cranmer, Desmarais, and Kirkland 2012.
23. The foundational text exploring the effects of endogenous developments that unfold incrementally on institutional change is Mahoney and Thelen's *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power* (2009).

24. Vabulas and Snidal 2013; see also Pevehouse et al. 2004 for a discussion of institutional characteristics that comprise formal versus informal intergovernmental organization. See Lipson 1991 regarding various forms of informal agreements.

25. Stone 2013, 123.

26. Stone 2013, 124; Abbott and Snidal 1998; Stone 2013; Vabulas and Snidal 2013; Pierson and Skocpol 2001, 693–721; Pierson 2004, 82–83.

27. Pierson and Skocpol 2001, 696; Pierson 2004.

28. Abbott 1992, 34.

29. Abbott, Genschel, et al. 2016, 719–29; Abbott and Hale 2014, 195–212.

30. Johnson 2017.

31. Koromenos 2013, 139.

32. Farrell and Newman 2014; Shanks, Jacobson, and Kaplan 1996 discuss a similar mechanism, emanation, in which second-order international governmental organizations are created through actions of other IGOs. They find they most IOs are created by other IOs. In 1992, emanations comprised more than 70 percent of the IGO population; of these, almost 25 percent were third-, fourth-, or fifth-generation IGOs; that is, they were themselves created by emanations or even emanations of emanations (Shanks, Jacobson and Kaplan 1996). James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen present a related definition of layering that “occurs when new rules are attached to existing ones, thereby changing the ways in which the original rules structure behavior” (Mahoney and Thelen 2009, 16).

33. Alter and Meunier 2009, 13.

34. Alter and Meunier 2009, 18.

35. Alter and Meunier 2009, 18.

36. Cumulative causes suggest the probability of a particular outcome increases steadily over time and, thus, would not present compressed moments in which an agent’s decisions are particularly likely to affect outcomes (Farrell and Newman 2014, 499); see also Capoccia and Kelemen 2007, 351.

37. Thelen 2004.

38. Moschella 2016, 805; see also Farrell and Newman 2014, 349.

39. Greif and Laitin 2004, 633–52.

40. Ikenberry 2000; Jupille, Mattli, and Snidal 2013; Capoccia 2016, 97.

41. Mahoney and Thelen 2009, 17.

42. Jupille, Mattli, and Snidal 2013.

43. Capoccia and Kelemen 2007, 348; Sofier 2012, 1573.

44. See “The Study of Critical Junctures” (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007), 83–87, for a discussion of threshold effects.

45. While numerous institutions addressed Allied resource needs we use those created to address cereals and shipping as examples.

46. Often referred to as the Commission de Ravitaillement, or the C.I.R.

47. Salter 1921, 134–35.

48. Salter 1921, 135–36.

49. To further coordinate purchases in 1915 the Allies created a Joint Committee. Yet it was unable efficiently to coordinate Allied purchases (Monnet 1976, 54).

50. Quoted in Cappella Zielinski and Poast 2020. Salter also notes that “personal relations between these specialists grew and direct contact developed” (Salter 1921, 136).

51. Trachtenberg 1977, 323.
52. Burk 1985.
53. Quoted in Cappella Zielinski and Poast, *Grown by War*.
54. Quoted in Cappella Zielinski and Poast, *Grown by War*.
55. Trachtenberg 1977, 324
56. "The program committees are to have no executive power." The Acting Secretary of State to the French Ambassador Jusserand, October 16, 1917. *FRUS*, 1917, Part I: The Continuation of the War—Participation of the United States (Washington: Government Printing Office, 573).
57. Allied Maritime Transport Council Minutes of First Session at Lancaster House, London, March 11–14, 1918, 9.
58. Salter 1921, 177–78.
59. The British Ambassador Spring Rice to the Secretary of State, August 31, 1917. *FRUS*, 1917, Part I: The Continuation of the War—Participation of the United States (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 568–69). The Report of the Representative of the U.S. War Trade Board promoted the Inter-Allied Council for its closer coordination, "A central inter-Allied committee, with the needs of each neutral nation before it, as well as the available tonnage could operate effectively, and would make possible through a single agency a closer co-ordination of the various war committees, and thereby tend to greater efficiency in the prosecution of war. Report of the War Trade Board McCormick, December 6, 1917. *FRUS*, 1917, Part I: The Continuation of the War—Participation of the United States (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), 404.
60. Trachtenberg 1977, 326.
61. Trachtenberg 1977, 318.
62. Trachtenberg 1977, 319.
63. Trachtenberg 1977, 321–22.
64. Monnet 1976, 95–96.
65. Fransen 2001.
66. Salter, *The United States of Europe and Other Papers* 1933.
67. Monnet 1976, 128; see also Letter Monnet to Sir Edward Bridges, 1 October 1939. FDR Archive: Box 2—Bullitt, William C Papers.
68. In 1940, the Anglo-French purchasing commission became the British Purchasing Commission with the French surrender. In 1942, the US and Britain extended their cooperation agreements to create the Combined Production and Resources Board. Monnet again drew upon World War I experiences: "All this brought me back to my constant preoccupation, which had taken me to London in 1914 and again in 1940, and from there to Washington: the need to take a common view of common problems, to combine the resources of the Allies, and to organize a unified defence effort—in short, to see that we all waged and won the same war. . . . When what is needed is also obvious, there is no time to hesitate or relax. The struggle to establish what came to be called the Combined Production and Resources Board went on until the beginning of June. I used the same arguments, and in some cases the same notes, that had convinced Daladier and Chamberlain in 1939." Monnet 1976, 175.
69. Devore 2013, 8.
70. Devore 2013, 9; Monnet also proposed another NATO institution, a Military Standardization Agency 1952, which achieved defense industrial standardization.

71. Segers 2012a, 364.
72. Monnet 1976, 397.
73. Monnet 1976, 343.
74. Rieben, Camperio-Tixier, and Nicod 2004, 453.
75. Found in the Jean Monnet Archive; document number: AMI-004-001-001, Le 3 Mai 1950, Notes de Réflexion.
76. Dwan 2001, 147.
77. Dwan 2001; accounts written later in Monnet's life claim he was not central to the EDC project, and maintained a distance from them; see Lerner and Aron 1957 and Monnet 1976. Earlier accounts relied on Monnet's claims that he did not support the EDC in the aftermath of its acrimonious political collapse. The contemporary record of 1950–52 tells a more nuanced story.
78. Monnet 1976, 397.
79. Monnet 1976, 343.
80. In 1954, however, after ratification by the Benelux countries and Germany, the project encountered a political impasse in France. In 1954, European states turned to the 1948 Brussels Treaty on Economic, Social and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Self-Defence to create the Western European Union. The WEU was the formal institution tasked with coordinating European collective defense. The primary purpose of the WEU organization was to offer mutual military assistance in case of external aggression and the development of European defense cooperation. While it was a formal institution in that it had a secretariat and a treaty, it was intergovernmental in nature, compared to the supranational EDC. See Deighton, *Western European Union 1954–1997: Defence, Security, Integration* 1997; and Deighton and Ramacle 1998.
81. Found in the Jean Monnet Archive, AMI-023-003-010, AMI 23/3/10, 29/12/53, REFLECTION NOTE.
82. An exception was the 1961 Fouchet Plan, which deGaulle proposed to establish wider intergovernmental cooperation in foreign policy and defense.
83. Job 1993, 26, 422–24.
84. European Defence Agency n.d.
85. Schmitt 2003.
86. The Eurogroup in NATO 1972.
87. Aybet 1997, 102.
88. Devore, *Explaining European Armaments Cooperation: Interests, Institutional Design and Armaments Organizations* 2013, 1–28.
89. Aybet 1997.
90. Based on findings in U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, *Arming Our Allies: Cooperation and Competition in Defense Technology* 1990.
91. Found in U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, *Adjusting to a New Security Environment: The Defense Technology and Industrial Base Challenge—Background Paper* 1991.
92. Schmitt 2003.
93. *European Union Foreign Policy: A Historical Overview* 2010, 19.
94. Larivé 2014, 62.
95. Larivé 2014, 63; *European Union Foreign Policy: A Historical Overview* 2010, 24.
96. Larivé 2014.
97. Mörth 2005, 143.

98. Mörtz 2005, 41.
99. CEPS 1996, “The representatives of EDIG [European Defence Industrial Group] are also part of NIAG in NATO. Two years later, in 1992, the European defense ministers decided to transfer the IEPG’s function to the WEU” (found in Mörtz 2005).
100. Schilde 2017a, 238.
101. While most informal institutions from the 20th century were subsumed into 21st-century EU institutions, some continued into the 21st century, including the Visegrad Group Defence Cooperation and OCCAR. The Visegrad Group 1991– exists via a series of informal meetings with the goal to increase defense cooperation between the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Poland, and Hungary, while OCCAR 1996– includes six Western European states, and has become increasingly formal over time, with legal status in 2001 and an executive board.
102. Hooper and Cox 1996, 75–94; see also Sandler and Hartley 1999, 213.
103. Details found at <http://europa.eu.int/en/record/mt/title1.html>, European Union 1992.
104. EEAS 2016.
105. United Kingdom House of Commons 1999.
106. Gnesotto 2004, 270.
107. Gnesotto 2004, 278.
108. EEAS 2016.
109. Brauer and Dunne 2004.
110. European Defence Agency n.d.
111. EEAS 2016.
112. Braw 2017.
113. Salm 2016.
114. European Commission 2014.
115. Rettman 2017.
116. European Political Strategy Centre 2015.
117. European Commission 2017.
118. European Commission 2016.
119. Salm 2016.
120. Schilde 2017b, 37–53.
121. European Commission 2017.
122. It is necessary to distinguish between the “structured cooperation” of Articles 42 and 46 of the Treaty of European Union TEU and the “enhanced cooperation” of Article 3292 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union TFEU, which dates from the Amsterdam Treaty, and the “tasks” that can be entrusted to a group of willing member states, in accordance with Article 44 of the TEU. Anghel and Bacian 2016, 3.
123. Commission 2014; EEAS 2016; Koenig and Walter-Franke 2017, 4; Union 2017.

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Editors' Introduction to "Arguing Sanctions: On the EU's Response to the Crisis in Ukraine"

In the following article, Helene Sjursen and Guri Rosén examine why EU member states were able to agree to launch a wide-ranging sanctions regime against Russia during the Ukraine crisis despite the fact that the bilateral relationships between EU member states and Russia have historically been divergent.

The EU's sanctions regime was devised in three steps: (1) restricting diplomatic relations, including halting Russia's participation in the G7; (2) after the occupation of Crimea, introducing travel bans and asset freezes; and (3) following the downing of the Malaysian airplane MH17 in July 2014, economic sanctions. The latter includes restrictions on access to EU financial markets, an arms embargo, and restrictions on the export of dual-use goods, as well as some technologies used in the oil sector. The authors find that the strength of certain arguments, especially related to Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and self-determination, were crucial for consensus on sanctions against Russia. As this chapter shows, the imposition of the sanctions regime enabled EU power in this crisis. At the same time, the case study throws into contrast the US's approach to Russia under the Trump administration where sanctions against Russia continue, but the importance of deliberation over norms is questionable, and the US position on Russia is filled with contradictions. The structure of the EU's sanctions regime has remained more or less unchanged, although more people and entities have been added to the list of restrictive measures. The sanctions have been reinforced several times. The latest prolongation to date took place in June 2019, where the economic sanctions were maintained for six more months. As highlighted in the article by Sjursen and Rosén, this was held to be a European crisis, where the EU had a particular responsibility to respond to Russia's actions in Ukraine.

Regardless, the continuation of a transatlantic approach to sanctions against Russia is one area in which the US and EU are in alignment, at least in terms of keeping the sanctions regime in place. Should the US drop its sanctions against Russia for any number of reasons—for example, because the investigation into Russian interference in US elections gets derailed—it will certainly put pressure on the EU's stance on Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty.

3 | Arguing Sanctions

On the EU's Response to the Crisis in Ukraine

Helene Sjursen and Guri Rosén

The EU's ability to agree on a response to the crisis in Ukraine was unexpected.¹ It is generally assumed that the EU is only capable of collective action on issues of low salience in international politics, and that any cohesion will evaporate in the face of major crises.² As Frank Schimmelfennig and Daniel Thomas³ note, "Sceptics often deride talk of an EU foreign policy as little more than wishful thinking." In this article, we discuss why cohesion was achieved with regard to the crisis in Ukraine and, more specifically, why the EU member states managed to agree on imposing sanctions against Russia. What enabled this agreement to come about?

There were many reasons to expect that the Union would fail to establish a common stance in response to events in Ukraine. EU member states have diverging interests and policy priorities with regard to Russia, with some states heavily dependent on Russian energy exports. Whereas countries such as Sweden and the United Kingdom advocated strong sanctions against Russia from the start of the crisis, others (such as Italy, Greece, and Hungary) repeated their skepticism throughout.⁴ How is it, then, that in spite of all these differences and the cost to member states, they managed to agree on what to do?

We find that collective action was anchored in an agreement on the

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need to sanction what was seen as a clear breach of Ukraine's territorial integrity as well as Ukrainian citizens' right to self-determination. This finding, which suggests that norms trumped interests, is in line with the insights of "constructivist" scholarship on EU foreign policy.⁵ But how can we account for such an outcome? Why are norms important and how do they lead to a determinate outcome? Drawing on a deliberative perspective, we suggest that in order to explain the agreement it is necessary to identify the substantive argument that made it possible.⁶ We further suggest that a deliberative perspective provides the theoretical ammunition lacking in constructivist scholarship: it enables us to counter realist and rationalist expectations that unless they are subject to coercion, EU member states will never agree on a policy beyond the lowest common denominator.

I. The Approach

The EU and its member states have been criticized for their handling of relations with Russia and Ukraine. It has been suggested that the Union underestimated Russian security concerns and failed to consider that offering an association agreement to Ukraine might be seen as an infringement on Russia's sphere of influence.⁷ Such criticisms are frequently accompanied by suggestions that in response to Russian aggression, the EU and "the West" need to return to a foreign policy inspired by a logic of geopolitics and take into account "the realities of power."⁸

Rather than contribute to this normative discussion on what the EU "ought" to do, we seek to explain the choices that were actually made. We aim to determine why the EU's member states agreed on a common response and, more specifically, how they managed to concur on imposing sanctions against Russia.⁹ As noted in the introduction, this agreement was surprising for many reasons. Since the end of the Cold War, most of the EU's member states have developed close economic and political ties with Russia. Indeed, according to a hearing in the UK House of Lords, "EU Member States and Russia are heavily economically interdependent."¹⁰ For example, at the beginning of the crisis, France was on the brink of selling two military ships to Russia, and the Italian Energy Company was planning the South Stream pipeline with Gazprom. The financial sectors in many EU member states and capitals, including the City of London, have close ties with Russian financial elites. Several of the East European member states depend heavily on

Russian natural gas imports. Russia also constitutes an important market for agricultural exports from member states such as Greece, Italy, and the Netherlands. These various economic ties confirm the potential costs involved for most member states in confronting Russia, and also suggest that these costs would be higher for some countries than for others.¹¹ Furthermore, there are enormous differences in the member states' historical experiences with Russian power, as well as in their views on how best to organize relations with Russia. In member states such as Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands, and Germany, the question of how to deal with Russia was also domestically divisive for political as well as economic reasons, whereas in the United Kingdom and Sweden, the line chosen by the executive was uncontroversial.

It 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. Due 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. In addition, because each member state has an equal right to veto decisions it disagrees with, in theory the more powerful states cannot dictate policy. In this policy-making system, a collective decision on what to do must come about *voluntarily*. Classical realists,¹² structural realists,¹³ and rational institutionalists¹⁴ converge in predicting that, in the absence of coercion, "Cooperation in the second pillar will remain limited to a set of 'second order' concerns agreed on the basis of the lowest common denominator."¹⁵ However, Ukraine was not an issue of "second order concern" for the EU and its member states, and the outcome was clearly beyond the lowest common denominator of member state preferences.

Drawing on a constructivist approach, some scholars have pointed to a fundamental transformation in European foreign policy-making, finding that member states have developed similar understandings, a sense of community and belonging, and even a sense of common purpose.¹⁶ They further highlight the importance of EU institutions and structures in shaping the positions of member states.¹⁷

When seeking to account for the observed changes, these scholars draw on a concept of socialization.¹⁸ As Ana Juncos and Karolina Pomorska have suggested, "Socialisation would . . . lead group members to a consistent compliance with the groups' norms."¹⁹ Or, as Tonra asserts, "Processes of social learning . . . mediate the position of individual agents and the regime as a whole, with the result that these agents have a commit-

ment to, and an investment in, the protection of the rules and norms underpinning the policy structure.”²⁰ To the extent that these observations are correct, they may help us to understand how certain minimum conditions for achieving agreement came to be in place. However, if we are to understand an agreement on what to do with regard to a concrete issue, such as the crisis in Ukraine, references to socialization are insufficient.

This is so because the idea of socialization points to a process of transformation that is indeterminate.²¹ Even if socialization has been at work, and member state perspectives have become more similar, this does not mean that they will agree on what to do in all instances. In order to explain a specific agreement, the decisive factor that triggered that agreement must be identified.

What is more, the concept of socialization is theoretically underspecified. It does not identify the mechanism whereby member states might be convinced to change their positions on a specific issue. Nor does it provide a theoretical account of what could trigger the longer-term transformation in national perspectives and the development of common views that is implied in this concept.

Realists would suggest that the decisive factor triggering agreement was some form of coercion. In order to seriously consider the possibility that there was a *voluntary agreement* on sanctions, we draw on a deliberative perspective.²² Although the deliberative perspective shares with constructivist scholarship the assumption that agreements can be achieved due to normative convergence, it departs from constructivism in decisive ways.²³ Most importantly, it proposes a theoretical account of change by emphasizing the force of reason.

In a deliberative perspective, norms are considered “autonomous sources of motivation owing their validity to their impartial justification i.e. that they can be defended in an open, free and rational debate (among all affected).”²⁴ It is through a deliberative process in which norms are rationally assessed that their relevance and binding nature is established.²⁵ This diverges from constructivist accounts, in which norm following is linked to habit, a specific role conception, or identity.²⁶ Following a norm is instead conceived of as a “rational choice,” as rationality is linked to actors’ ability to justify and explain their actions and to the ability to evaluate arguments presented by others.²⁷ Deliberation is thus seen as an action coordination mechanism and one might expect that support for sanctions was obtained through a process in which there was an exchange of arguments and reasons. The agreement need not have been an ideal

consensus. Rather, we may conceive of a working agreement in which actors concur based on different but mutually acceptable reasons.²⁸

But what kind of argument could have convinced states that from the outset were against sanctions to comply with a joint sanctions regime? We distinguish between two different types of norm-based reasons that may have produced such a change. The first type refers to value-based norms, which are linked to ideas of a common good that are grounded in the identity of a specific community. The idea of a duty to cohesion could be defined as a value-based norm, as it indicates what is considered appropriate behavior for countries that are part of the European Union. Rights-based norms, on the other hand, refer to ideas of what is just or right regardless of an actor's connection to a particular community.²⁹ For example, rights-based norms may be linked to the right to self-determination or to the respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states. These two norms differ to some extent, as the latter is a legal norm, but they are also interconnected, as the right to sovereignty can only have normative justification insofar as it ensures citizens' right to self-determination in a democratic world. And, vice versa, this right will be breached if the principle of sovereignty is overruled.

Methodology and Sources

In order to explain the agreement between the EU member states, we have examined the arguments that they put forward to justify their views on what should be done.³⁰ Such an approach is particularly useful for establishing whether normative considerations played any part in the decision to impose sanctions. It further leaves it open to empirical investigation to determine the relative importance of different kinds of normative considerations *as well as* the importance of any pragmatic considerations concerning costs and benefits. Thus, this approach provides a more nuanced understanding than analyses that only consider material factors as relevant.

Our approach follows the tradition of “explanation through interpretation” in the Weberian sense: social science in this view “is a science concerning itself with the interpretative understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences.”³¹ This suggests that in order to understand an action, we need to make the goals for which it was undertaken intelligible.³² In our case, the task is not only to understand how each individual member state saw the crisis, what obligations they believed they had with regard to the crisis and how they indi-

vidually thought that they should respond; we must also identify the arguments that were used to ensure collective action. Only when these arguments are uncovered will it be possible to reveal the basis upon which collective action was decided.³³

Our analysis draws on relevant secondary literature, primary documents such as parliamentary debates and speeches, and statements by government representatives.³⁴ We have also carried out ten semistructured interviews with representatives of member states and EU institutions.³⁵

Realists may often be correct in claiming that “talk is cheap” and thus that the arguments presented by the actors are not a reliable source of information. In order to compensate for such potential shortcomings, we have checked all the written evidence for consistency over time and in different contexts as well as across actors. Although it may be easy to lie once or twice, it is more difficult to do so over time and in a variety of contexts. It is even more difficult for different actors with different interests and values to lie in a coordinated fashion. Further, the arguments in publicly available documents have been compared to interview data as well as secondary literature. Analysis of the written material permits a fairly precise quantitative indication of the arguments that were most frequently used by all actors across different contexts. However, frequent repetition does not necessarily mean that an argument becomes convincing. Consequently, the interviews were also important in that they allowed us to check which arguments the actors found most difficult to rebut and why. In addition, even the most powerful politicians are subject to expectations of consistency and coherent argumentation. Furthermore, in order to be considered credible by their European colleagues political leaders must live up to expectations of truthfulness and consistency also when they coordinate behind closed doors.

The analysis proceeds in two steps. We first explore what insights into our research question may be gained through constructivist and realist perspectives. Building on these insights, we then discuss in the second step the extent to which it is possible to fill remaining gaps and lacunas in the account by drawing on a deliberative perspective.

II. The Possibility of Ideational Consensus

It is not entirely self-evident how constructivists’ emphasis on socialization can be translated into a concrete hypothesis on a specific issue such as why there was agreement on sanctions against Russia. Dirk Leuffen et

al.³⁶ take the constructivist proposition to be that integration in foreign policy is the result of an ideational consensus on the appropriateness of a European approach.³⁷ In a similar manner, Frank Schimmelfennig and Daniel Thomas³⁸ suggest that constructivists posit preference convergence. However, it is far from clear that this is consistent with the claims made by constructivist analyses of EU foreign policy.³⁹ Constructivist scholarship on EU foreign policy has identified changes in the ways in which national perspectives are defined. Moreover, they point to an expectation of unity and a commitment to seek agreement. They also find evidence of member state behavior that is consistent with efforts to comply with this commitment. While they attribute these observations to processes of socialization, they do not suggest that socialization has brought about (nor do they expect to find) convergent preferences or indeed an ideational consensus.⁴⁰

Our findings do confirm much of what is suggested by constructivist scholars. Member states factored in the views of their partners when defining their own positions. A statement by Foreign Minister William Hague to the House of Commons in early March 2014 illustrates the quest for collective responses. Hague emphasized the importance of a coordinated EU response to the crisis in Ukraine and declined requests to elaborate on the UK's position before the European Council had agreed on a position.⁴¹ Similar statements were made by German government representatives. For instance, in its answer to an inquiry from Die Linke on the topic of Russian sanctions, the government referred to the abolition of sanctions as a political issue that had to be determined “in the circle of the 28 member states of the EU.”⁴² Statements by Swedish foreign minister Carl Bildt also indicated the need for consultation. Bildt did not want to enter into a discussion about who to sanction before Catherine Ashton had made her recommendations—“then we'll decide on our position.”⁴³

To be sure, these statements could merely be evidence of the executives' efforts to prevent critical scrutiny of their policies; on their own, they do not prove any real intent to coordinate with European colleagues. However, the member states' commitment to engage in a permanent process of information sharing and to test and assess what might be considered an acceptable course of action from the perspectives of other member states comes across very strongly in the interviews (I #7, 8, 9, 10). While acknowledging that they did not have any formal commitments, interviewees stressed that, in their view, membership entails a normative obligation. As one interviewee put it when explaining why it was necessary to seek consensus, “We are members of a Union” (I #7). Interviewees

also confirmed instances in which they had to change their initial position after learning the positions of their European colleagues (I #7, 10). Furthermore, in line with such a culture of consensus, member states were also concerned about not isolating countries that had difficulties with a specific policy (I #7, 8).

Further in line with constructivist scholarship, our findings also suggest that the Brussels-based institutions have gained considerable autonomy to define policy, and that they used this to push for a cohesive response. Although the decision to sanction was made by the member states, these institutions were directly involved in working out the specific list of measures to be undertaken (I #5). In order to pin down a final agreement on economic sanctions, the European Commission made separate country fiches that outlined the cost of sanctions for each of the member states. These were not shared among the states, but they provided the basis for bilateral discussions between each member state and the Commission on what kinds of sanctions should be introduced. Subsequently, the list of sanctions was presented to the Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER) in a closed session. Member states were given 10 minutes to consult with their home ministries over the list prepared by the Commission before the meeting started. Similar time constraints were placed on the member states by the European External Action Service, which prepared the list of people who would ultimately be subject to political sanctions (I #9, 10).

The close interactions between the member states, as well as the involvement of the EEAS and the Commission, probably facilitated agreement. But it is difficult to conclude that they alone ensured it. As noted in the introduction, such processes of interaction are indeterminate and cannot therefore explain how member states ultimately agreed on a specific course of action.⁴⁴ In order for the member states' commitment to seek common solutions to have triggered agreement, it would have had to *overrule* the many divergent preferences, perspectives, and values involved. There is not sufficient evidence to suggest that it did. Most IR scholarship would then assume that agreement did after all come about due to some form of coercion, either from the most powerful states within the Union or from the EU's external environment. Was this the case?

III. The Limited Role of Coercion

Security Concerns: The Importance of a Sense of Threat

Realists would suggest that agreement was not due to any particular normative commitment; rather, they would consider it due to a purely prag-

matic assessment of the cost of standing alone in a situation in which national security was at stake.⁴⁵ Member states that under normal circumstances operate independently might have considered that in a global context of contestation and competition for power, threats to national security weighed more heavily than anything else. Such extraordinary circumstances could trigger what would most likely be a temporary agreement on common action. It is reasonable to assume that incentives to cooperate were particularly high for this crisis, as the United States signaled from the outset a desire to play a minor role. This meant that there was no obvious alternative venue for European states with a desire to demonstrate strength in the face of an external security threat.

To be sure, security concerns were critical for several of the member states from the very onset of the crisis. In particular, Russia's close neighbors and former members of the Warsaw Pact (such as Poland and the Baltic States) defined the Ukrainian crisis primarily in terms of security. In early March 2014, Lithuanian president Dalia Grybauskaitė was reported as stating 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."⁴⁶ In line with this perspective, these countries actively sought reassurance from their partners. However, it was not only states geographically close to Russia or with past experiences of Russian dominance that stressed the security dimension of the crisis; the UK and Sweden also raised security issues in their justifications for why the EU needed to develop a collective response to the crisis.⁴⁷

These states (Poland, the Baltic States, the United Kingdom, and Sweden) played a particularly important role in the first phase of the crisis in terms of pushing the issue onto the EU's agenda (I #7, 9, 10). The UK was also an outspoken supporter of an EU weapons embargo and, according to Foreign Minister Hague, decided to start suspending licenses bilaterally in March 2014.⁴⁸ It would seem, though, that the Swedish and British governments were mainly driven by a sense of solidarity with the Central and East European states, rather than by a concern for the security of their national territories. For example, in a debate in the House of Commons in late July, UK prime minister David Cameron argued:⁴⁹

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.

In a similar manner, in a meeting with the Visegrad countries, the German foreign minister is reported to have said that their concerns were “not Hungarian, or Czech, or Slovak or Polish worries but European worries, and therefore our concerns, too.”⁵⁰

Security concerns unquestionably drove some of the member states to press for collective action. There is some evidence of security concerns being directly linked to EU cohesion. According to German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, “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.”⁵¹ However, neither the publicly available documentation nor the interviews suggest a unanimous understanding of the Ukrainian crisis as raising security concerns for the EU’s member states. Many governments clearly stressed that they did not consider the events in Ukraine to entail any threats to their own territory (I #7, 8, 9, 10). In a statement to the Bundestag in March, German chancellor Angela Merkel confirmed that any further destabilizing actions on the part of Russia would be seen as a threat to its European neighbors.⁵² At the same time, German authorities emphasized to the parliament that the crisis was not seen as a threat to German security.⁵³ Member states such as Hungary and Slovakia, who share a border with Ukraine, sent at best contradictory signals with regard to the potential security threat. In an interview with *Die Welt*, the Hungarian foreign minister insisted that “at present, we are not as threatened as the Baltic republics.” At the same time, however, he stressed that when NATO—in response to a Baltic bid for reassurance—made a show of its presence in the Baltic area, Hungary could also feel safe.⁵⁴ Although these somewhat ambivalent statements indicate that Hungary might have been feeling threatened as well, it does not seem to have been a decisive factor in the definition of their position.

Paradoxically, much of the Realist critique of the EU’s policies during the crisis confirms that security was not a vital concern. The Realist argument is that the EU *ought* to take the security threats seriously. However, by promoting this claim, they confirm that the events were not understood as a security crisis by the EU. Instead, as Realists also stress, the crisis represented a clash of worldviews between Russia and the EU.⁵⁵ As Stefan Auer argues, “In order to challenge Putin’s Russia effectively, I argue, Europe and Germany should indeed reclaim geopolitics for their own purposes.”⁵⁶

Consequently, while there were concerns for national security as a

result of the events in Ukraine, there is little evidence to suggest that these concerns alone produced agreement among the EU's member states.

Internal Threats and the Possibility of a Great Power Directoire

But if external coercion, in the form of a security threat, does not account for the agreement, could it have come about as the end result of some form of internal coercion? It is often argued that EU foreign policy is run by a Great Power Directoire,⁵⁷ and it is usually assumed that the United Kingdom and France are the dominant foreign policy powers. To the extent that such a directoire was at work during the Ukrainian crisis, it would have acted through the so-called Normandy format, which consisted of France and Germany (not the UK), as well as Russia and Ukraine. However, the Normandy negotiations over how to resolve the situation in Ukraine only started in the summer of 2014; it therefore had nothing to do with the EU's agreement on sanctions (I #6, 9, 10). Normandy could potentially have influenced the discussion on the continuation of sanctions beyond 2014, but that lies beyond the scope of this chapter.⁵⁸

There is no evidence of a concerted effort by France, the UK, and Germany to force through sanctions. Although the UK played an important role internally in pushing for a strong reaction, it appears to have been acting separately from France and Germany. In the early stages of the crisis, both France and Germany were reluctant to take a hard line. For Germany's part, this was linked to internal divisions between Chancellor Merkel and Foreign Minister Steinmeier. Ultimately, Merkel's prosanctions stance won out. Furthermore, the UK was not included in the many *démarches* concerning Ukraine. This is widely considered to be due to the country's conflict with Russia and President Putin over the Litvinenko affair. Nevertheless, states that pushed for a strong reaction early on in the crisis confirm that it was important to have the support of the United Kingdom. They further confirm that the resistance of larger states (such as Italy) was more challenging than that of smaller states (such as Hungary). This suggests that size matters, but there is no evidence to suggest it was decisive in this case. In fact, contrary to the expectation that the size of a country determines its influence, interviewees also stressed for example that the Netherlands, despite being a small country, is "a country that is listened to" (I #9, 10).

Arguably, there was an element of arm-twisting in the way in which the EEAS and the Commission ensured agreement on the specifics of the

sanctions. Yet the idea that the supranational institutions coerced member states into agreement does not at all match the conception of EU foreign policy as run by a great power *directoire*. Moreover, the Commission could have considered it to be in its own interest to protect commercial interests in Russia, suggesting that it would oppose sanctions on these grounds. Most importantly, however, in order for the realist-inspired conception of EU foreign policy as determined by the most powerful states to be confirmed, there would have to be a specific interest on the part of the great powers to drive through an agreement on sanctions. Even realists themselves have confirmed that this was not the case: “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.”⁵⁹

In sum, drawing on Constructivist and Realist insights, it was possible to identify some factors that may have contributed to facilitating agreement. But these are not sufficient to explain how agreement came about. First, the decisions on sanctions appears to have been taken through intensive consultation; however, the fact that consultation took place on a large scale (and involved state and nonstate actors) cannot have been decisive. We need to identify the specific factor that ensured agreement. Second, the larger states did play an important role; however, there is no evidence to suggest that they imposed a specific course of action on other states, nor that they bought off reluctant states. We cannot explain agreement with reference to their influence alone. Can the remaining gaps and lacunas in the explanation be filled by drawing on a deliberative perspective?

Deliberative theory posits the ability of actors to act on generalizable reasons. It thus suggests an explanation based on the insight that impartial arguments can explain collective decisions. This need not imply the establishment of an ideal consensus. Actors may agree with different, but mutually acceptable arguments.⁶⁰ From this perspective, then, the challenge is to identify the substantive argument that *convinced* member states that it was necessary to respond with sanctions. In the first part of the article, we sought to refine the general reference to “normative arguments” in constructivist scholarship by suggesting a distinction between two types of arguments, building on different normative evaluations. The first of these arguments were ethical political arguments that could be revealed through references to values and traditions seen as constitutive of European identity. Concretely, this might include references to particular obligations that the EU and its member states had toward Ukraine as a European state. The second argument was moral, suggesting a reference to justice

and rights that would have a broader appeal, beyond any specific identity. Could such arguments have triggered agreement?

IV. Sovereignty and Self-Determination

We find that collective action was anchored in an agreement across all member states that fundamental principles of international law were breached. The arguments in this regard point unambiguously toward agreement on the unacceptability of a breach of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, accompanied by arguments concerning the need to respect human rights and Ukrainian citizens' right to self-determination.

In all countries we investigated, heads of state and government justified the EU's sanctions with reference to international law and territorial sovereignty. Such arguments played a particularly important role in countries like Austria, where the government had to defend its support for sanctions in parliament. In the words of Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz, "the Bundeskanzler was completely right in agreeing to the three stage-plan in Brussels, because to be neutral, militarily neutral, does not mean to have no opinion, and it does not mean to recognize violations of international law."⁶¹ The Hungarian foreign minister, János Martonyi, expressed general support for the EU's sanction regime on the grounds 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."⁶²

In a similar manner, in speaking to representatives from the House of Lords, Christoph Heusgen, foreign policy and security adviser to Chancellor Merkel, was reported to have 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."⁶³ Merkel herself described the conflict as a clash of global perspectives, portraying the EU and its member states as committed to international law: "The right of the mighty is put up against the strength of law, unilateral geopolitical interests against understanding and cooperation. . . . It is about the territorial integrity of a neighbouring European country, about the respect for the principles of the United Nations, about principles and methods for balancing interests in the twenty-first century."⁶⁴

In the words of one interviewee, a key reason why it was necessary for

the EU to stand united was to send a uniform message to Russia that “you just cannot behave this way; you cannot break international law . . . and invade other countries” (I #1). Another interviewee confirmed that “it was indeed very difficult for those that did not want sanctions to argue against this principle,” and “when they argue against sanctions, they never mention Crimea. Instead they talk about Russia as an important neighbor” (I #10). Another interviewee stressed, “The overall climate towards Ukraine was so positive that it was totally unacceptable to put forward one’s own interest” (I #9). The same interviewee highlighted the dramatic change in the positions of both Germany and France with regard to Russia that took place as events in Ukraine unfolded, claiming that “it is linked to the bloody events in Maidan plus the Russian intervention, which was a clear breach of international law.”

Although the downing of the Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in July 2014 further strengthened member states’ commitment to sanctions, it was not decisive (I #9, 10). Instead, interviewees argued that a point of no return was reached once it was clear what had actually happened in Crimea: “We lost six weeks because we did not know what really happened in Crimea” (I #10). When the truth was known, it became difficult to resist sanctions. As British foreign minister Philip Hammond put it, Russia’s actions represented “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.”⁶⁵ In announcing the extension of sanctions at the end of July 2014, the European Council stated that it was intended as a severe warning: “illegal annexation of territory and deliberate destabilisation of a neighbouring sovereign country cannot be accepted in 21st century Europe.”⁶⁶

Arguments referring to a particular moral obligation to uphold certain principles do seem to have been the key to agreement among the member states. They did trump interests, and paved the way for a collective stance on sanctions. Still, citizens’ right to self-determination is jeopardized regularly in many parts of the world, without this leading to such a clear and cohesive policy response from the EU’s member states. So why did the concern for these principles have such a unifying effect this time? Arguments emerge in a particular context, and it would seem that the particular context of this crisis was vital for the agreement to come about. The references to the importance of respecting the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the Ukrainians’ right to self-determination did not stand alone; often they were combined with references to the fact that these principles were breached *in Europe*.

V. . . . and a Particular Duty to Europe

What comes across in a number of statements from member states is the sense of a particular responsibility to contribute to resolving the conflict due to the EU's strong involvement with Ukraine, as well as the fact that Ukraine is so geographically close to the Union. The EU thus had to act collectively in the Ukraine crisis because "it's the neighborhood" (I #8).

For example, in announcing the decision on the first round of sanctions, the European Council declared that the EU "has a special responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity in Europe."⁶⁷ This statement resonates with how interviewees stressed the long history of close cooperation between the EU and Ukraine. One interviewee described it as "completely natural" that the EU should respond, given that it was Ukraine's ambition to join the Union that prompted the crisis in the first place (I #1). The EU could not have chosen to remain passive in the conflict because the Union had become closely tied to Ukraine through the preparations for an association agreement and the Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (I #1). Other interviewees also emphasized the historical ties between the EU and Ukraine, and how the EU has been engaged and invested in Ukraine over the past several years (I #8).

Similar assertions are found in the written documentation. Polish foreign minister Radosław Sikorski contended that Poland was engaged in the Ukraine crisis because the Ukrainians were neighbors, fighting for the same rights as the Poles did in 1989.⁶⁸ Italian foreign minister Federica Mogherini echoed this sense of responsibility in her statement to the Italian Parliament in March 2014, in which she argued that the European Union "in particular" would have to take action to support the Ukrainian government and its people.⁶⁹ Four months later, she stated that this was a crisis "around our European borders . . . , and so there is a direct responsibility of the European Union" to engage.⁷⁰

Even Hungarian foreign minister Martonyi referred to the concept of a collective duty on the part of the EU. When commenting on the EU's response to the crisis, he argued that the EU can "only respond"; it "must stand by its values and principles and put aside internal disputes amid the current state of affairs."⁷¹

In the same vein, EU governments also described Europe's relations with Russia as different from those of the US. British prime minister Cameron stressed that EU sanctions against individuals require a legal underpinning, which may create differences between the foreign policies of the EU and the US.⁷² Austrian foreign minister Kurz emphasized that the EU's

strategy was to threaten sanctions rather than to introduce them immediately.⁷³ And Sweden's prime minister, Fredrik Reinfeldt, highlighted the fact that Europe's integration with Russia was enormous—financially, economically, and in terms of energy: “We need to remember that when the US is talking about economic sanctions against Russia, they do not have the same relationship with Russia that many of the European states have. It would be a very big move to go through with both in breadth and depth. Still, that is what we are preparing.”⁷⁴

Arguments referring to the need to react to a violation of the right to self-determination seem to have been the key to ensuring agreement among member states. Nevertheless, the many references to Europe indicate that an additional reason why agreement was reached had to do with the fact that it was European citizens who were suffering. We cannot conclude from this that member states would not have agreed if this had concerned a country further from home; however, all things otherwise being equal, it certainly suggests that agreement would have been far more difficult to achieve with regard to a crisis outside Europe.

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter has been to determine how EU member states managed to agree to impose sanctions on Russia in response to the crisis in Ukraine. In accordance with a tradition of explanation through interpretation we have examined the different reasons presented by the actors involved. On the basis of our analysis, we found that member states accepted the political and economic costs of sanctioning Russia due to a sense of collective commitment to the principles of sovereignty and self-determination. This finding echoes constructivist scholarship in international relations in that it suggests that agreement was due to normative convergence. However, it moves beyond this scholarship in particular in two ways. First, it moves beyond the simplistic dichotomy between interests and norms upon which most constructivist scholarship rests. To be sure, agreement did not stem from concerns for the territorial integrity of the EU itself or of its member states, nor was it due to coercion from internal actors, as there was little evidence of threats or considerations of the costs of noncompliance. But this does not mean that a general reference to “normative convergence” suffices as an explanation. In fact, there were heated disagreements within the EU *both* over the cost of sanctions *and* divergent political and normative assessments of how best to respond to

the events. Thus we have distinguished between different types of normative arguments and found that agreement was only made possible due to the references made to the specific norms of sovereignty and self-determination.

Second, the analysis moves beyond constructivist scholarship by highlighting the normative force of arguments as a key mechanism that can trigger a change in position. This emphasis on an argumentative process provides a theoretical underpinning for the general concept of processes of socialization within EU institutions, and it also allows for a theoretical account of agreement that is on par with that of bargaining. Thus, it facilitates the investigation of concrete cases of decision-making within foreign policy that would allow constructivists to counter the standard objection of realists and rationalists, who claim that “socialization is possible, but its impact is either nil or negligible.”⁷⁵

Perhaps paradoxically, the findings here raise some doubts regarding the robustness of European foreign policy cohesion that is often implied in constructivist scholarship. Although the EU turned out not to be weak or divided with regard to this particular crisis, this does not mean that member states will be able to maintain cohesion in future crises. In fact, our analysis suggests that the CFSP is an unsettled political system. On the one hand, there is a constant risk of great power dominance, as is visible in particular through the Normandy format. On the other hand, the decision-making process was characterized by ad hoc solutions, which deviated significantly from the prescribed procedures of the CFSP. While this might point to a necessary flexibility in times of crisis, it could also imply that there is an element of unpredictability and uncertainty in the system. In sum, cohesion does seem linked to the specificity of this crisis.

NOTES

1. United Kingdom, House of Lords 2015, 345.
2. Gegout 2010; Hoffmann 1966, 1982; Hyde-Price 2006; Menon 2013.
3. Schimmelfennig and Thomas 2011, 190.
4. MacFarlane and Menon 2014.
5. Juncos and Pomorska 2006, 2011; Juncos and Reynolds 2007; Meyer 2006; Smith 2001, 2004; Tonra 2003.
6. Eriksen 2013/2014.
7. Kissinger 2014; MacFarlane and Menon 2014; Mearsheimer 2014; Sakwa 2015. See also the investigation in the British House of Lords (United Kingdom, House of Lords 2015), which concluded that the EU was “sleepwalking into the Ukraine crisis.”
8. Auer 2015; Mearsheimer 2014; Rynning 2015; Sakwa 2015.

9. The EU's response to the crisis encompasses a number of political, diplomatic, and economic initiatives. The key element in the EU's response—and what is most difficult to explain—is the sanctions against Russia, which were imposed in three increasingly wide-ranging stages. It is the agreement on these sanctions, as well as the EU's ability to sustain them, that this chapter aims to explain.

10. United Kingdom, House of Lords 2014.
11. On the expected costs of sanctions, see also EurActiv 2014; BBC 2014.
12. Hoffmann 1966, 1982; Menon 2013.
13. Hyde-Price 2006.
14. Gegout 2010.
15. Hyde-Price 2006, 231.
16. Juncos and Pomorska 2006, 2011; Meyer 2006; Tonra 2003.
17. Allen 1998; Howorth 2003, 2010; Smith 2001; Smith 2004.
18. Adler 1997; Checkel 2005; Johnston 2001.
19. Juncos and Pomorska 2011.
20. Tonra 2003, 749.
21. Eriksen 2013/2014.
22. Eriksen 2013/2014.
23. Eriksen 2013/2014; Eriksen and Weigård 2003.
24. Eriksen and Weigård 2003.
25. Habermas 1984.
26. Checkel 2005.
27. Eriksen and Weigård 2003; Sjørnsen 2003, 2006.
28. Eriksen 2009, 49–53.
29. Habermas 1993.
30. Sjørnsen 2002.
31. Weber 1978, 4.
32. Kratochwil 1989, 24.
33. Sjørnsen 2002.

34. Systematic searches have been made in parliamentary and governmental databases in Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Sweden, and the UK. In addition, searches have been performed in the databases of the foreign ministries of the Czech Republic and Latvia. The governmental databases encompass speeches by ministers—mainly prime ministers and foreign ministers—as well as the ministries' reports and press releases that match the search terms. The material from the parliamentary databases is mainly plenary debates and parliamentary questions (oral and written), but also includes inquiries and minutes from committee meetings. All official documents for the period from November 2013 to December 2014 were collected. The broad range of member states was selected in order to cover states that were in favor of a strong reaction (the United Kingdom, Sweden, the Baltic States, and Poland), those that held more of a middle ground (Germany, France) and those that were relatively reluctant to impose sanctions (Austria, Hungary).

35. The interviews were conducted between September 2015 and March 2016. The interviewees were high-level diplomats from EU institutions and the member states. All interviewees were promised anonymity. In order to clarify whether quotes come from the same or different interviewees, the interviews are numbered from 1 to 10.

36. Leuffen, Rittberger, and Schimmelfennig 2013.
37. Leuffen, Rittberger, and Schimmelfennig 2013, 205.
38. Schimmelfennig and Thomas 2011, 180.
39. We would like to thank one of the anonymous referees for pointing this out to us.
40. Howorth 2010; Juncos and Pomorska 2011; Tonra 2003.
41. United Kingdom, House of Commons 2014a.
42. Germany, Bundestag 2014a.
43. Sweden, Riksdagen 2014b.
44. Eriksen 2013/2014.
45. Hyde-Price 2006; Menon 2013; Walt 1987; Waltz 1979.
46. Lithuania Tribune 2014.
47. United Kingdom, House of Commons 2014e; Sweden, Riksdagen 2014b.
48. United Kingdom, House of Commons 2014e; also Sweden, Riksdagen 2014a.
49. United Kingdom, House of Commons 2014b.
50. Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014b.
51. German Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014; see also United Kingdom, House of Commons 2014d.
52. Germany, Bundestag 2014b.
53. Germany, Bundestag 2014c.
54. Kalnoky 2014.
55. Auer 2015; Mearsheimer 2014; Rynning 2015.
56. Auer 2015, 958.
57. Gegout 2010.
58. The potential for great power coercion would be important in particular if Germany and France had struck a deal with Russia in the Normandy format, as they would most likely have needed the other member states to back up the agreement, for example, by easing the sanctions regime.
59. MacFarlane and Menon 2014, 100.
60. Eriksen 2009.
61. Austria, National Council 2014a, 157–58.
62. Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014a.
63. United Kingdom, House of Lords 2015, 119.
64. Germany, Bundestag 2014b.
65. United Kingdom, House of Commons 2014c.
66. European Council 2014b.
67. European Council 2014a.
68. Der Spiegel 2014; Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014.
69. Italy, National Assembly 2014a.
70. Italy, National Assembly 2014b.
71. Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014a.
72. United Kingdom, House of Commons 2014d.
73. Austria, National Council 2014b, 1–6.
74. Sweden, Riksdagen 2014a.
75. Gegout 2010, 181; also Schimmelfennig and Thomas 2011, 180.

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4 | Crisis and Cooperation

How the Ukraine Crisis Enabled the EU's Maritime Foreign and Security Powers

Marianne Riddervold

1. Introduction

How, if in any way, has increased Russian aggression in Ukraine and beyond affected the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) powers? This chapter contributes in answering this question by a study of the EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS).¹ The EUMSS was unanimously adopted by the EU member states in June 2014, following a four-year-long policy-making process. Followed by a detailed and regularly updated action plan, it “covers both the internal and external aspects of the Union's maritime security. It serves as a comprehensive framework, contributing to a stable and secure global maritime domain, in accordance with the European Security Strategy (ESS), while ensuring coherence with EU policies, in particular the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP), and the Internal Security Strategy (ISS).”² Being cross-sectoral, the EUMSS includes policies such as fisheries, port state control, maritime training, environmental protection and a substantial EU common foreign and security policy—including defense—component. Examples of foreign and security actions include the EU's two naval missions, border control and information exchange systems, maritime surveillance, maritime capabilities, naval operations, and defense industry cooperation, in addition to EU coordination in international organizations dealing with maritime issues and the integration of maritime issues into all of the EU's external actions and the work of the EU External Action Service (EEAS).³ The EU's newest naval mission in the Mediterranean, “Sophia,” and the newly estab-

lished border control system both fall under this framework.⁴ In terms of competences and policy tools, the EUMSS indeed takes EU foreign and security integration a big step forward, adding substantially to the EU's powers on the international scene.

From the outset, however, it was far from self-evident that the member states would agree to develop a stronger EU foreign and security policy in the maritime domain. In fact, only a few years earlier, there was fierce resistance from several of the member states to *any* strengthening of the EU's external powers within the maritime security domain due to the national sensitivity both of maritime and of security and defense issues.⁵ Many European states have strong economic or strategic maritime interests, and have been keen to act upon these as they see fit, without the involvement of the EU institutions or other member states.⁶ Some member states were moreover particularly concerned with the possibility that a cross-sectoral maritime security strategy would take the role of the European Commission deep into the intergovernmental CFSP territory—something that is already happening with the EUMSS's gradual implementation.⁷ For these reasons, several member states, including the UK and Germany, as late as in 2010 therefore opposed any legal reference to a distinct EU maritime security strategy. So why then was the EUMSS nonetheless adopted four years later? What changed—why was there opposition and disagreement in 2010 and agreement on a common policy in 2014?

This chapter makes the argument that Russian aggression in the EU's neighborhood is key to understand this development. In the words of Mai'a Davis Cross and Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski (chapter 1, this volume), Russia's actions in Ukraine have *enabled* the EU's international powers in a policy area not directly linked to the Ukraine crisis as such, namely the maritime domain. In this sense, the EUMSS is also an example of the EU projecting a *reactive* type of foreign policy power vis-à-vis Russia. This chapter adds to this argument by showing how geopolitical developments in one area (in this case, Russian aggression in Ukraine) may contribute to create consensus on new foreign and security policies in other policy areas (in this case, maritime foreign and security policy).

To substantiate the argument that Russia's actions in Ukraine are the key to understand the adoption of the EUMSS and the consequent strengthening or enabling of the EU's external powers, the analysis contains two main parts. The first part briefly discusses EU maritime security cooperation before the Ukraine crisis. I will describe the development of the EUMSS since its first mention in 2010 until a first text suggestion

reached the member states' negotiations in the form of a Joint Communication from the Commission and the EU External Action Service, the EEAS, in March 2014. In the second part, I explore the impact of the Russia/Ukraine crisis. I discuss Russia's impact on the member states' final negotiations from March to June 2014, resulting in their unanimous adoption of the EUMSS. To tease out the impact of the crisis on the EUMSS, I also discuss the relevance of two alternative explanations that instead link the EUMSS to internal EU factors. First, that the EUMSS was adopted due to member states' economic interests and concerns, and in particular the need to pool and share resources and strengthen the EU shipping industry in times of economic austerity. Second, that the EUMSS process was driven mainly by EU institutional actors—the Commission and the EEAS—with a vested interest in further EU integration in the domain. Having explained the enabling of EU maritime foreign policy powers, I discuss the implications of these findings for our understanding of the EU's foreign policy behavior. If Russian aggression is key to understand the development of an EU maritime foreign and security policy, as a neo-realist perspective would predict, does this thereby also imply that the EU no longer behaves as a “normative” or “humanitarian” foreign policy power? The conclusion sums up the findings and discusses their main implications for the overall questions of the book.

2. Enabled by Russia's Actions in Ukraine?

2.1. *EU Maritime Security before the Ukraine Crisis*

PHASE ONE: SPAIN ACHIEVES A FIRST CONSENSUS—PUTS AN EUMSS ON THE EU AGENDA. Although being cross-sectoral and thus also covering issues that are not strictly security-related, decision-making on the EUMSS falls under the intergovernmental Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) framework and is thus “subject to specific rules and procedures” (Article 24.1(2) Treaty on European Union). Decision-making powers lie with the member states in the Council and its preparatory bodies, most importantly the member states' ambassadors in the Political and Security Committee, who decide on the basis of unanimity among the member states.

In a first phase, the EU member states adopted their first conclusions (i.e., a legal reference) on an EU maritime security strategy in April 2010.⁸ According to the interviewees involved in the process, the proposal was first put on the member states' agenda by Spain, which held the EU presi-

dency, in cooperation with France at an informal EU defense meeting earlier the same year.⁹ According to actors who were present at both the informal and the formal Council 2010 meetings, “the first idea came from the naval people . . . the Spanish navy and defence ministry initiated it, saw the need . . . against the geopolitical situation.”¹⁰ Also according to Commission and EEAS officials, “it was driven by defence ministers,” with the support of their navies, in particular from Spain and France.¹¹ The fact that the EU member states had been able to reach agreement on a first EU naval mission, ‘Atalanta’—the EU’s counterpiracy operation outside Somalia—two years earlier is moreover key to understanding why the suggestion came in 2010. The CFSP has had a maritime component ever since it was established in 1994, and the importance of different threats linked to the sea, such as terrorism and piracy, was recognized earlier both among member states and EU actors. However, due to opposition among many of the member states in particular to the security and defense aspect of this, until *Atalanta* was launched, the question remained of “when, how and to what exact purpose EU naval capabilities were going to be employed.”¹² But “against the *Atalanta* background,”¹³ with global geopolitics increasingly turning toward the sea, and with the support of EU countries such as “France and the Weimar countries, (who in general) are supportive of EU military structures,”¹⁴ there was a window of opportunity that Spain could act upon to place a maritime security strategy on the formal EU agenda when its presidency gave it the chance.

However, although the Spanish presidency in 2010 managed to reach a compromise on a brief and rather vague reference to the “possible elaboration of a Security Strategy for the global maritime domain,” several member states resisted the idea of actually translating this into any concrete policy actions. To the contrary, the “early attempts by the 2010 Spanish EU Presidency to promote a fully-fledged ‘Security Strategy for the global maritime domain’ were resisted by other capitals . . . due to the . . . military scope of the exercise.”¹⁵ Actually, even reaching a compromise on a very brief reference to a maritime strategy in the 2010 Council conclusion was difficult to achieve. Due to the sensitivity of defense issues some of the member states, including UK and Germany, initially even opposed *any* such legal reference to an EU maritime strategy. However, together with the Council secretariat, the Spanish and French-led coalition managed to craft a short text that was eventually accepted by all.¹⁶ After all, this was a presidency priority, and the presidency has many tools to draw on to reach consensus on its main priorities.¹⁷ Part of the compromise was also to strictly place any future developments within the special intergovernmen-

tal CFSP decision-making framework.¹⁸ But resistance to going forward with maritime security cooperation remained: although maritime issues are “very topical in Brussels these days,” they were “not particularly popular amongst the member states” in 2010—it was simply too sensitive.¹⁹

PHASE 2: THE EEAS AND THE COMMISSION DRIVES THE EUMSS FORWARD. Commission and EEAS initiatives are key to understand both that the EUMSS moved forward despite initial opposition from several of the member states and that the EUMSS changed from a military oriented to a cross-sectoral strategy: from mid-2012, the two started working on a joint communication, that is a draft text proposal, for an EUMSS—a process involving 11 different Commission directorate-generals and different parts of the EEAS.²⁰ “As put by the Council secretariat: “The Commission’s Integrated Maritime Policy [from 2007] was almost dying and the EEAS had nothing, so this was an opportunity. Both gained from working together on this, of getting an EUMSS.”²¹ And through writing the Joint Communication, the Commission and the EEAS strongly influenced the EUMSS’s content.²² Most importantly, they reframed the strategy from a purely military focused to a cross-sectoral strategy, thereby also increasing the Commission’s future influence and competences within EU maritime security substantially.²³

To a large degree, the member states did not control this process or its outcome. During the Commission and EEAS process of drafting a joint cross-sectoral communication, both the EEAS and the Commission consulted member states informally.²⁴ However, according to both EEAS, Commission, and national delegations, informal consultations with member states during this phase were controlled by the EEAS and the Commission. Their aim was to anticipate member states’ positions and try to get support for suggestions in line with their preferences.²⁵ Thus, there is not coincidence that the pro-EUMSS coalition countries discussed above (Spain, France, Italy, and Greece) cooperated particularly closely with the two, producing nonchapters in favor of the EUMSS²⁶ and pushing “for this strategy to be finalized.”²⁷ However, in general, according to interviewees from different member states, the process was run “without consulting the member states.”²⁸

The Joint Communication that came out of this process is key to understand that the EUMSS developed from a first noncommittal brief compromise conclusion to a comprehensive cross-sectoral strategy. At the EU Council’s December 2013 meeting “the main decision regarding the CSDP itself was to put the High Representative, in cooperation with the

Commission and the European Defence Agency (EDA) in charge of working on two strategy documents: an EU Maritime Strategy to be adopted by June 2014 and a Cyber Defence Policy Framework to be presented by 2014.”²⁹ More precisely, in their conclusions, EU leaders called for “an EU Maritime Security Strategy by June 2014 on the basis of a Joint Communication from the Commission and the High Representative, taking into account the opinions of the Member States, and the subsequent elaboration of action plans to respond to maritime challenges.”³⁰ And with the Joint Communication published in March 2014, the member states had a basis for further discussions.³¹ As argued by a member state chief negotiator when interviewed shortly afterward, “The difference now is the communication from the EEAS and the Commission . . . then we had a starting point, so it was easier to find a common ground.”³²

However, why a final EUMSS was adopted by the member states only three months later, and followed up in a concrete action plan, still remains puzzling: After the Joint Communication was published in March 2014, it was up to the Greek presidency to take it further, and all decisions were to follow the intergovernmental decision-making procedures, in line with the 2010 compromise: a unilateral decision by the member states was needed for its adoption. So why did they all support the EUMSS in June 2014, when so many of them had opposed it just a few years earlier? After all, reluctant member states such as the UK and Germany could have vetoed it for the same reasons as they opposed it in 2010. In 2010, even member states that initially opposed the very mention of an EU maritime strategy compromised on a short text in line with the Spanish presidency’s priorities, but the compromise underlined that the member states should remain in control of the process and the policy outcome. When adopting the EUMSS, however, the member states agreed to “a lot of action that wasn’t intended” in 2010,³³ reducing member states’ control of developments in the domain.³⁴ Opposite to many member states’ positions in 2010, its “consequences will be big”³⁵ not least due to a wide number of “actions that directly involve the military” (i.e., the defense dimension), the need to “work across the pillar structure” (i.e., the supranational elements), and “the civilian military link” between many issues.³⁶ For these reasons, many of the member state interviewees referred to the national sensitivity of maritime security issues not only in 2010 and 2011 but also in 2013 and 2014.³⁷ Similarly, a key Commission official in 2014 revealed that “I am a bit surprised, because a few years ago this was a nontopic . . . because the issue is too sensitive.”³⁸ So what changed?

2.2. *The Turning Point: The Ukraine Crisis and The EU's Maritime Security Strategy*

The data clearly suggest that geopolitical events and not least the Russia/Ukraine crisis are key to understanding this transformation from disagreement to agreement, resulting in the adoption of the EUMSS. Once the Joint Communication was published, and in line with the intergovernmental CFSP decision-making procedures, the Greek presidency took over the process. However, the suggested maritime strategy presented in the Joint Communication was much broader, cross-sectoral, and more comprehensive than what was first suggested by Spanish and French led coalition in 2010.³⁹ And such a cross-sectoral approach did not really fit with the intergovernmental CFSP decision-making structure. On the one hand, the proposal contained a lot of foreign and security, even defense, actions, and, formally, decisions were to be taken following the intergovernmental CFSP procedures. On the other hand, a lot of suggested actions and policies cut across a variety of policy areas that fell under the Commission's competences, including fisheries, transport, port state control, training, research, and defense procurement. Several of the member states were very clear on the need to keep these areas under member states' control. There was still opposition to many of the suggested actions in the Joint Communication, and many countries, including the UK but also conventionally more integration-friendly countries such as the Netherlands, were particularly keen to control the Commission's involvement both in this particular process and in future decisions on implementation of different maritime security actions and policies.⁴⁰ Following much debate between the Commission, the EEAS, and the member states (in particular the Greek presidency), the solution was to activate a "Friends of the Presidency group," an informal forum led by the presidency where the member states send "experts" of their own choosing and where all discussions are in English. In this case, member states' representatives included everything from Political and Security Committee ambassadors and military staff to defense, foreign affairs, transport, and even fishery ministry officials.⁴¹ Both the EEAS and the Commission were present at all of these meetings and had the right both to speak and to propose amendments.⁴² And during six long meetings altogether in this very informal forum, different revisions were made and discussed before the member states eventually agreed and the EUMSS could be unanimously adopted by the General Affairs Council in June 2014.⁴³

The data clearly suggests that the Russia/Ukraine crisis affected mem-

ber states' preferences in favor of adopting the EUMSS: this was the tipping point that brought the member states together on the EUMSS, in spite of their previous disagreements. Russia invaded Ukraine just 12 days after the EUMSS Joint Communication was launched, placing security at the top of the agenda. And due to the EUMSS process, as a consequence, the member states were literally sitting down and discussing security issues in an informal, preparatory forum when the Ukraine crisis escalated. Data across various sources suggest that the Ukraine crisis and the uncertainty it created had a strong impact on these discussions by affecting member states' positions in favor of more EU security cooperation, and thereby also their positions in favor of the maritime security strategy that at the moment was on the table. The impact of the Russia/Ukraine crisis for the discussions, context, and eventual adoption of the EUMSS was underlined by the member states' representatives themselves.⁴⁴ An illustrative example is this quote from a Political and Security Committee ambassador during the final negotiations when asked about the impact of the Ukraine crisis on the EUMSS discussions: "For example, there was nothing about the Black Sea in the communication, now we have Ukraine and everyone wants the Black Sea in. . . . For the Baltic states the vital concern is sovereignty vis-à-vis Russia—they are really scared."⁴⁵ Other interviewees underlined how the Russian annexation affected their positions on the need for more CFSP cooperation in general, and thus also for the EUMSS. And against this background, the Greek presidency, supported by the EEAS and the Commission, could gather support for adoption of the EUMSS. Several countries, including France, Spain, Italy, and Portugal, were already in strong support of an EU maritime security strategy, in line with their traditional security orientations. However, member states that earlier had opposed an EU maritime strategy were clearly affected by the insecurity caused by the Russia/Ukraine crisis. Not least, because of this crisis and the consequent uncertainty suddenly facing them, the member states' discussions on the EUMSS were taken up to a level of discussing EU security and defense cooperation more generally rather than maritime security more specifically.⁴⁶ According to the participants themselves, and evident in the different working documents, due to the crisis and at the expense of discussing other and specifically maritime issues, all of the member states' discussions focused on a few general EU security and defense issues. As put by a member state official interviewed in between these meetings: "The evolving tensions are whether or not to keep the references to NATO, what is meant by territorial disputes, and also maritime zones. And what is the consequence of referring to them?

What should be the role of the EU? And what should be the tools? Permanent or ad hoc?”⁴⁷ These issues were solved during the six intensive weeks of negotiations. And once agreed, all the member states were ready to adopt the EUMSS—in spite of their initial reluctance to adopt the maritime actions in the strategy and without even discussing many of them.

The impact of the Russia/Ukraine crisis and the corresponding new security situation facing the member states on this process and its outcome is evident also in the EUMSS drafts and in the final text. Instead of basing the member states’ discussions on the Joint Communication text, in the face of the increasing tensions over Ukraine, the Greek presidency decided that it “wanted its own chapter,”⁴⁸ instead drafting a much more security and defense oriented text that formed the basis of the member states’ discussions. The cross-sectoral approach was kept, but the conventional security focus was much stronger—in all the different informal drafts and in the final strategy (Council of the European Union 2014b; unpublished drafts and working documents).⁴⁹ For example, in the EUMSS: “The Union stresses the importance of its assuming increased responsibilities as a global security provider, at the international level and in particular in its neighbourhood, thereby also enhancing its own security and its role as a strategic global actor”—including by the use of military tools.⁵⁰ This is a clear reference to the EU’s eastern neighbor, Russia.⁵¹ In comparison, the Joint Communication that was written *before* the crisis only mentions the EU’s neighborhood once, and then linked to the need to improve “information-sharing arrangements with international partners.”⁵²

A last key indication of the crisis’ impact on the EUMSS process and outcome is the sudden new focus on energy security. In the Joint Communication, there are no references to energy security.⁵³ However, after the Russian invasion of Crimea, this is referred to as a main concern both by interviewees and in informal and formal documents. An example underlining how the crisis had such an impact can be found in the first informal Greek drafts that were discussed at the Friends of the Presidency meetings in early April 2014. In this first draft, the second paragraph said: “Maritime transport is key to Europe’s energy security. . . . 90% of oil is transported by sea.”⁵⁴ Following discussions, this was amended to “Europe’s energy security largely depends on maritime transport and infrastructures” in the final text, but clearly shows how the crisis directly affected the member states’ concerns and discussions.⁵⁵ Another example underlining the impact of the crisis on the discussions is how the member states discussed a proposal on adding “The protection of the EU against

maritime security threats, the safeguarding of the supply of energy by the sea...” as a key EU security interest that needed a common response (second draft, unpublished document, underscore in original). This was amended back to the initial Joint Communication of “the protection of critical maritime infrastructure, such as specific areas in ports and port facilities, off-shore installations, energy supply by the sea, underwater pipelines,”⁵⁶ but again clearly shows the impact of the crisis on member states’ concerns and discussions.

To sum up, the Russia/Ukraine crisis in other words had a major impact on the EUMSS process and outcome: it allowed Greece and other actors with an interest in increased maritime EU foreign and security cooperation to put this on top of the EU agenda. The crisis changed member states’ preferences in favor of more EU security cooperation, thereby also affecting their preferences in favor of the EUMSS—the topic of their discussions just when the crisis escalated. The crisis, in other words, helped form a consensus among the member states on the need to adopt the EUMSS, leading to more common policies in the face of clearer common EU interests. What then about other possible explanations? So far, the main discussion has focused on the impact of external factors—the impact of the Russia/Ukraine crisis on the adoption of the EUMSS. However, it might also be that other factors internal to the EU are more or at least equally important for understanding the EUMSS.

Building on the existing EU integration literature, two such internal factors seem of particular importance. First, much of the EU integration literature links common policy developments to the member states’ economic interests. Building on the neoliberal assumption that any EU cooperation is linked to instrumentally rational member states’ perceptions of economic gain in the face of economic interdependence, one may thus hypothesize that the EUMSS was adopted mainly due to member states’ economic concerns.⁵⁷ The member states’ needed to shrink their defense budgets in light of the financial crisis while at the same time they were faced with a number of maritime threats that needed to be addressed. Thus, more importantly than the crisis, over time, they might have found that it is cost-efficient to cooperate and share resources within different maritime sectors instead of going it alone. This might be all the more so in light of increasing seaborne immigration—after all, as discussed above, many of the new policy suggestions on border control fall under the EUMSS. However, if cost-efficiency and economic considerations can explain the EUMSS, one would also expect the EUMSS to be justified in such terms. Cost-efficiency calculations would have been conducted sys-

tematically and referred to in the member states' justifications for the EUMSS. This hypothesis is not substantiated by the data, however. Neither the interviews nor other data suggest that economic considerations linked to the pooling and sharing of naval capacities mattered much when EU maritime security was first suggested by Spain and first referred to in a Council conclusion in 2010. According to the interviewees, this first step was driven mainly by defense ministries—not economic actors. And regarding pooling and sharing, to the contrary, “the process of industrial cooperation in the naval sector has been more complex compared to cooperation in other sectors. . . . States like France, the UK, Germany or Italy, which have an important naval industry . . . have usually been unwilling to engage in cooperative naval procurement programmes.”⁵⁸ In 2014, economic factors and efficiency consideration linked to EU maritime security cooperation had become much more important: an increased awareness of the economic importance attached to maritime issues clearly worked in favor of the EUMSS. So did the efficiency considerations linked to dealing with seaborne immigration. Both “France and the UK are highly maritime nations,” and are very much “affected by events such as Lampedusa and piracy.”⁵⁹ “Many European countries’ economic interests are linked to the sea, and bad things happen here. Piracy, pollution, organized crime. Maritime issues have become very popular, also in the UK.”⁶⁰ As argued by a key EEAS official, “the developments since 2011 showed how dependent EU member states are on open sea-lanes. The more interconnected the world gets, the more popular the EUMSS gets.”⁶¹ However, although the member states’ economic interests may have worked in favor of the EUMSS and *simplified* its adoption, this is not a key explanatory factor behind its content and adoption. The formal and informal documents contain some references to the need for pooling and sharing within the domain, but this was not a reason given by the interviewees themselves for why their countries or institutions supported the EUMSS. Instead, all the interviewees who were present at the Friends of the Presidency discussions underlined the importance of the broader geopolitical picture and not least the Russia/Ukraine crisis for understanding the EUMSS.⁶² The very fact that “Spain and the French did not succeed in making a maritime strategy earlier”⁶³ further underlines the importance of such external events for understanding how the EUMSS was finally adopted. If economic factors were what mattered the most for the adoption of the EUMSS, as one would expect following a neoliberal proposition, one would rather expect its support to have been high among all the countries affected by issues such as piracy or the economic crisis from a

much earlier stage. Neither is there evidence to suggest that any cost-benefit calculations were made to identify the economic benefits of any common EU maritime security policies, neither by the member states nor the EU institutions.⁶⁴ And the immigration crisis exploded later. Although immigration affected Greece and Italy in 2012 and 2013 and was among their main motivations for promoting the EUMSS during their 2014 presidencies, this was not a main topic during the member states' discussions in the spring of 2014.⁶⁵

What then about the role of the EU institutions, the EEAS and the Commission? As already discussed, the two played an important role in substantiating and driving the EUMSS forward after the first Council decision in 2010. Other studies have shown that the common EU institutions are more important for understanding EU integration and cooperation than state-based bargaining perspectives assume, including within the area of security and defense.⁶⁶ In particular, building on so-called rationalist institutionalist assumptions, empirical studies have suggested that the Commission has a vested interest in increased integration to increase its own competences across different policy fields—and that it is often successful in such attempts.⁶⁷ On this basis one might thus hypothesize that the EUMSS process was driven foremost by institutional EU actors; that rather than being linked to external events, the main explanatory factor behind the EUMSS's content and adoption was the EEAS and the Commission's behavior and influence. Again, the data does not fully support this alternative hypothesis. As already shown, the Commission and the EEAS strongly influence both the EUMSS process and its outcome: they were key to take it further after the 2010 compromise and their impact is the main reason why the EUMSS is cross-sectoral.⁶⁸

However, although the Joint Communication is a *necessary condition* for understanding that the EUMSS moved forward despite member states' resistance after 2010 and for understanding its cross-sectoral nature, it is *not sufficient* to explain its final form and adoption. As discussed above, after the Joint Communication was published in March 2014, it was up to the Greek presidency to take it further, and all decisions were to follow the intergovernmental decision-making procedures; a unilateral decision by the member states was needed for its adoption. There was no automatic process from the presentation of the Joint Communication to the adoption of the EUMSS. This being said, the Russia/Ukraine crisis is also important for understanding why many of the EEAS and not least the Commission's initial inputs to the EUMSS were kept in the final document and action plan, despite initial opposition from the member states on

many of these issues. Due to the crisis, the discussions focused on CFSP issues, and many issues falling under the Commission's competences were therefore simply not a topic during these meetings, and therefore were kept in the final strategy.⁶⁹

Instead, the impact of Ukraine crisis on the EUMSS and the corresponding increased importance of maritime issues for the EU member states are further underlined by a parallel maritime focus both in 2014 EU-NATO discussions and in NATO with the "Alliance Maritime Strategy." For example, the NATO Wales conclusions from September 2014 states that "the geopolitical and economic importance of the maritime domain in the 21st century continues to grow. . . . Greater co-ordination, cooperation, and complementarity with relevant international organisations, including the EU . . . will be an important element of the implementation of the Alliance Maritime Strategy."⁷⁰ We welcome the adoption of the EU's Maritime Security Strategy in June 2014, which will potentially contribute to the security of all Allies."⁷¹ According to all the interviewees, including from the UK and Poland, maritime security is moreover an area where a coordinated EU policy is particularly important *in addition* to NATO precisely due to events such as in Ukraine and seaborne immigration following international conflicts. Interviewees from different states who are members of both organizations argued that EU maritime security integration is necessary because EU security and defense cooperation are "not traditional security policies. . . . The EU conducts a different type of policy than NATO—it is not only defense. Therefore, the internal and external policies are tied together."⁷² "NATO is crucial but not enough because the EU is much broader."⁷³ Similarly, according to an official from one of the traditionally very pro-NATO big member states, "We need very strong maritime naval forces to secure energy, etc. So we need NATO, that is the US. But the US has its own interests that are not necessarily in line with the EU's. So we need the EU, with capabilities. . . . NATO is a military organization. EU is a political and military organization, where, like a country, defence is only a small part of it. . . . So even if NATO is extremely important, it is not enough with NATO. We also need the EU."⁷⁴

2.3. No Longer a "Humanitarian" Maritime Power?

So far, the analysis shows that Russia's actions in Ukraine are key to understand EU maritime foreign and security cooperation. This crisis created a security environment that was acted upon by the Greek presidency, cer-

tain member states, and the EU institutions to *enable* EU maritime security powers.

At the outset, the relevance of the Russia/Ukraine crisis for the adoption of the EUMSS seems to be in line with neorealist expectations about why states cooperate in the field of foreign and security policy. Following such perspectives, states are mainly concerned with their relative security, and their external behavior is thus mainly driven by structural factors. Although one would not expect states to give up their veto powers, changes in their security environment might therefore trigger them to cooperate to become stronger in the face of common threats. In particular, states might want to join forces to increase their collective power and hence balance other states, which is how the CFSP is most often explained from a neorealist perspective.⁷⁵ And at the outset, this seems to fit rather well with what happened in the EUMSS case. True, EU maritime security cooperation has developed gradually over a number of years, not least due to the increased threat posed by piracy to EU shipping and the increasing number of refugees coming by sea to Europe. And as also discussed above, the EEAS and the Commission were key actors in driving the EUMSS forward and are key to understand its cross-sectoral content. However, this chapter suggests that the Russia/Ukraine crisis is the most important factor for understanding the final adoption of the EUMSS by changing member states' positions in favor of more EU security cooperation and integration in the face of increased uncertainty and instability.

Has this also affected the type of policies that the EU conducts in the maritime domain? Another key debate in the literature on EU foreign and security policy has been linked to whether or not the EU's policies really fit with neorealist expectations, and in particular with whether or not they are focused on the promotion of norms rather than material interests.⁷⁶ Based on empirical studies, the EU has, among other things, been described as a "normative," "humanitarian," "ethical," and "soft" foreign policy power.⁷⁷ Do the findings in this chapter suggest that this is no longer the case? Is the EU, when responding to external threats by increasing security cooperation, also behaving more like a realist great power in its foreign policies by becoming more oriented toward the protection and promotion of the member states' material interests at the expense of norms, as a neorealist perspective would predict? If so, one would not only expect EU policies to be driven by external geopolitical events and factors. One would also expect the EUMSS to reflect the sum of the member states' foremost strategic interests. Following a neorealist perspective, all foreign policy actors foremost (at will) promote their strategic interests when act-

ing on the world scene.⁷⁸ If this is the case with the EUMSS, one would thus expect EUMSS policies and actions to be directed toward identifiable security threats to the member states' territories or their strategic interests. One would not expect EU institutions to influence beyond their delegated powers (as agents of the member states), and any normative considerations would be secondary to material interests only.⁷⁹

So far, the data do not seem to fit these expectations. A first important difference between neorealist and other foreign policy approaches is the strong role played by EU institutions. The fact that the EU institutions, including the supranational Commission, both controlled inputs and influenced outcomes during this phase in what was formally (and very intentionally) an intergovernmental policy process is not what one would expect following a neorealist foreign policy model. In fact, both Commission and EEAS officials influenced the EUMSS much more than one would expect following *any* state-focused perspectives assuming that such institutions are merely agents of the member states.⁸⁰ Second, the policies described in the EUMSS are not in line with neorealist expectations about foreign policy behavior either. Rather than focusing on particular territorial security threats and their foremost military response, the main aim and tool referred to in the EUMSS is global regulation. The overall external objective is "to promote better rules-based maritime governance and make effective use of the EU instruments at hand."⁸¹ "Respect for international law, human rights and democracy and full compliance with UNCLOS [UN Convention on the Law of the Sea], the applicable bilateral treaties and the values enshrined therein are the cornerstones of this Strategy and key principles for rules-based good governance at sea."⁸² In line with this, "maritime security is understood as a state of affairs of the global maritime domain, in which international law and national law are enforced, freedom of navigation is guaranteed and citizens, infrastructure, transport, the environment and marine resources are protected."⁸³

Without doing a systematic study of the EUMSS, these examples seem to suggest that the policies described in the EUMSS are more in line with what one would expect of a "humanitarian," norm-oriented foreign policy actor than a traditional, neorealist great power. Following Helene Sjursen,⁸⁴ the main indicator of a humanitarian foreign policy actor is precisely that it is promoting a change from power politics and "an exclusive emphasis on the rights of sovereign states within a multilateral order to the rights of individuals in a cosmopolitan order."⁸⁵ Further in line with such a foreign policy model, the rule-oriented EU approach and the weight put on this approach during negotiations were underlined by the participants them-

selves, both from the member states and the EU institutions.⁸⁶ Also the Commission—the EU actor traditionally most focused on EU policies’ economic aspects—argued that although the “maritime strategy makes sense from a military economic perspective, the starting point is a military perspective. But the military EU perspective is different from a traditional geopolitical military focus. The military perspective of the EEAS is one that promotes global regulation of the maritime global commons.”⁸⁷ That’s because “when a particular maritime space is not particularly governed, you can’t enforce rules.”⁸⁸ This focus on the EU as a different type of actor was also evident in the interviews with the member state officials, across the different countries and groupings.⁸⁹

The consistent reference to global regulation as the main aim and means of the EUMSS—across member states, institutions, and different documents—suggests that such normative considerations may actually form the basis of EU maritime foreign and security policies, more in line with what one would expect of a humanitarian foreign policy actor. For such a proposition to be substantiated, the EU’s behavior must also be consistent with such norms in its actions, and it must be willing to bind itself to global law, including in cases where this involves costs to the EU or to the member states themselves.⁹⁰ As the EUMSS and action plan further substantiate, future studies should explore whether its humanitarian aims and tools are also followed up in the EU’s actual behavior.

3. Conclusion

This chapter has shown how Russia’s actions in Ukraine led to increased integration in a different but interrelated and increasingly important policy field—maritime security—developed in parallel to but not independently of this still ongoing foreign and security crisis. Due to Russian aggression, member states and EU institutions with an interest in strengthening the CFSP were able to gather support for a policy that might otherwise not have been adopted. In the words of Mai’a K. Davis Cross and Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski,⁹¹ Russian aggression has *enabled* the EU’s external powers in the maritime domain.

Although the Ukraine crisis was a key explanatory factor behind adoption of the EUMSS, the data does not suggest that the EU is thereby necessarily also changing the type of external policies conducted. Contrary to a neorealist understanding of power politics, the policies described in the EUMSS seem to be more in line with what one would expect of a humani-

tarian power. Whether this focus on global law will be followed up in the EU's future behavior will be the real test of whether the EU will remain a "humanitarian" or "normative" power in the maritime domain—or if security considerations eventually will trump norms in the new and tougher geopolitical environment the EU member states now are facing. Although more studies are needed, the EU's newest naval mission, EU Sophia, launched in response to the migration crisis, may indicate that the difference between words and deeds will grow as the EU faces an increasingly volatile environment in parallel to internal crises.⁹²

These findings have implications for several of the broader questions raised in this volume. First, the analysis suggests that EU foreign and security policies indeed may be *enabled* by external factors and events. Second, it also suggests that the EU is rather *reactive* in the foreign and security policy domain: geopolitical factors and threats drive the EU member states to the negotiation table in a quest for solutions through common EU policies. This chapter adds to this argument by showing how external security threats interact with other integrative factors in the development of the CFSP, indicating how a strong security threat may indeed be a main triggering factor when bigger steps are taken in the development of new policies. As discussed by Cross and Karolewski in the introduction to this volume, external events such as Russia's actions in Ukraine function as critical junctures allowing actors with particular interests to suggest and get support for new or different policies.⁹³ This does not, however, thereby imply that an external crisis or a strong security threat is a necessary condition for EU foreign and security policy integration. Nor does it necessarily imply that EU foreign and security policies by definition are unstable and unpredictable. As this study has shown, other factors, not least the actions of the EU institutions, are important for understanding integrative moves in the domain.⁹⁴ Once big decisions are taken, further integration moreover takes on a life of its own, as new initiatives and actions incrementally are taken forward by actors such as the EEAS and the Commission.

Other studies have shown that threats may enable common EU security policies, and that the EU in such cases tends mainly to react to events that have already taken place.⁹⁵ Marianne Riddervold and Mai'a Davis Cross,⁹⁶ for example, find that "increased Russian aggression in the Arctic and beyond, not least in Ukraine, is key to understanding why the EU has recently taken such a strong interest in the Arctic." Seen together with other findings in this book, it may hence look like the EU so far has been reactive rather than proactive in its foreign policies vis-à-vis its increasingly aggressive neighbor. After the Cold War, the EU's strategy toward Russia was dialogue and cooperation, based on the idea that cooperation

in common institutions would serve as a better security guarantee than deterrence. In spite of the conflict in Georgia in 2008, Russia's aggression in Crimea came as a surprise not only to the EU but also to the West more broadly, completely turning the European security landscape on its head. Suddenly, Russia was again perceived as a potential threat, not least in the Central European countries. A changing US foreign and security policies, not least under Trump, has further exaggerated the new uncertainty felt in many European states. In light not only of Russian aggression but also a realization that the US security guarantee and key focus on Europe cannot be taken for given, the reactivity identified in this chapter might not be sufficient in today's European geopolitical landscape. And, indeed, as suggested, for example, in a 2018 *Journal of European Integration* special issue,⁹⁷ there is evidence to suggest that the EU is on its way to developing a stronger foreign and security policy that is not only reactive. In light of EU crises, Russia's behavior, and a changing US foreign policy, there is a "gradual realization that the EU must take more responsibility for its own security. . . . Although perhaps not a superpower, the EU is without doubt more autonomous and indeed a stronger foreign and security player today than ever before, and it expresses a clear ambition of further strengthening its strategic autonomy."⁹⁸ In the words of Angela Merkel, "The era in which we could fully rely on others is over to some extent. . . . We Europeans truly have to take our fate into our own hands."⁹⁹ This will have consequences for the EU project across shifting US administrations. After all, once big steps are taken to further EU integration in a particular domain, it is seldom or never reversed. Whatever the future brings for Europe and its neighborhood, it is hence likely that the EU will become a stronger and more independent power, both in Europe and beyond.

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NOTES

1. Data in this chapter consists of the following sources: twenty-seven interviews with actors involved in the EUMSS decision-making process from different member

states and the different EU institutions, including the EEAS, the Commission, and the Council secretariat, conducted between 2010 and 2015. Key informants from the EEAS and the Commission were interviewed several times. To allow for triangulation, all relevant documents where downloaded from the different EU institutions. The different, informal drafts, both of the communication and the text discussed by the member states, before adoption were obtained from the key informants, and I observed some of the informal discussions held between the Commission and some of the member states between the launch of the EUMSS Joint Communication and the final Council decision.

2. Council of the European Union 2014a.
3. Council of the European Union 2014a; Council of the European Union 2014b; Germond 2015; Landmann 2015; Riddervold 2016.
4. Council of the European Union 2014a; Council of the European Union 2014b); see also Germond 2015; Landmann 2015; Riddervold 2018.
5. Interviews 2010, 2013, 2014; see also Frontini 2014.
6. Germond 2015; Riddervold 2018.
7. Landmann (April, 2015).
8. Council of the European Union 2010.
9. Interviews with Commission, Council secretariat, EEAS, and member state delegations (2013 and 2014).
10. Council interview 2010.
11. Commission and Council interview 2010–2015.
12. Germond and Smith 2009, 573–93.
13. EEAS #3.
14. EEAS #5.
15. Frontini 2014.
16. Riddervold 2018.
17. Tallberg 2004, 999–1022.
18. Interviews with the Commission and national delegations (2010, 2013, and 2014). See also see Riddervold 2018.
19. Comm #3.
20. Interviews with the Commission and national delegations (2010, 2013, and 2014). Also see Riddervold 2016, 353–69.
21. CSekr #1.
22. Interviews 2013, 2014.
23. Interviews 2013, 2014.
24. Comm #5, EEAS #1, EEAS #3, NatDel #2.
25. Comm #2, Comm #5, EEAS #3.
26. Comm #5.
27. NatDel #2.
28. NatDel #11.
29. Ricci 2014.
30. Council of the European Union 2013.
31. Frontini 2014.
32. NatDel #10.
33. Comm #4.
34. NatDel #9.

35. Comm #4.
36. Comm #4.
37. NatDel #2–13.
38. Comm #3.
39. Interviews (2010, 2013, 2014); unpublished drafts; observations (2014).
40. Interviews (2010, 2013, 2014); unpublished drafts; observations (2014).
41. Comm #4; EEAS #1; EEAS #4; NatDel #8–13; Observations (2014); unpublished meeting documents.
42. Comm #4; EEAS #1; EEAS #4; NatDel #8–13; Observations (2014); unpublished meeting documents.
43. Comm #2; Comm #4; EEAS #4; NatDel #8–13; observations (2014); unpublished drafts.
44. NatDel #8–13.
45. NatDel #11.
46. Comm #4; EEAS #4, NatDel #8–13; unpublished drafts.
47. NatDel #8.
48. Comm #4; NatDel #8–9.
49. Council of the European Union 2014a; unpublished drafts; working documents.
50. Council of the European Union 2014a.
51. Interviews with participants 2014.
52. Council of the European Union 2014a.
53. Council of the European Union 2014a.
54. Draft, author's copy.
55. Council of the European Union 2014a.
56. Council of the European Union 2014a.
57. Moravcsik 1998; Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2009, 67–87.
58. Germond 2015, 573.
59. NatDel #11.
60. NatDel #10.
61. EEAS #3.
62. Comm #3, EEAS #3, NatDel #8–13.
63. NatDel #10.
64. Interviews (2010, 2013, 2014); official documents; unpublished drafts.
65. Interviews (2010, 2013, 2014); official documents; unpublished drafts.
66. Cross 2010; Riddervold 2016.
67. Cram 1994; Pollack 1997.
68. Interviews (2010, 2013, 2014); unpublished drafts; see also Riddervold 2016.
69. Author's copies; NatDel #8–13; also see Riddervold 2016, 2018.
70. NATO 2014.
71. NATO 2014, point 71.
72. NatDel #9.
73. NatDel #10.
74. NatDel #11.
75. Hyde-Price 2006, 2012; Posen 2006; Waltz 2000, 5–41; Walt 1998, 29.
76. For overviews, see among others, Kurowska and Breuer 2012; Risse 2011, 192–202; Sjørnsen 2015.

77. See Kurowska and Breuer 2012; Risse 2011, 192–202; Sjursen 2015.
78. Hyde-Price 2006, 2012.
79. Hyde-Price 2006, 2012.
80. NatDel #8–13; Observations (2014).
81. Council of the European Union 2014b, 10.
82. Council of the European Union 2014b, 5.
83. Council of the European Union 2014b, 3.
84. Sjursen 2006.
85. Sjursen 2006, 215.
86. Comm #3; EEAS #4; NatDel #8–13.
87. Comm #2.
88. Comm #5.
89. NatDel #1–13.
90. Eriksen 2009; Sjursen 2006.
91. Cross and Karolewski 2017, 3–19.
92. Riddervold and Cross 2019.
93. See also Riddervold 2018; Riddervold and Cross 2019.
94. See also Riddervold 2016; Riddervold 2018.
95. Riddervold and Cross 2019.
96. Riddervold and Cross 2019, 2.
97. Riddervold and Newsome 2018, 505–21.
98. Riddervold and Newsome, 2018, 505–21.
99. Paravicini 2017.

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5 | The European External Action Service and the Ukraine Crisis

The Case of the 2015 Revision of the European Neighbourhood Policy

Cristian Nitoiu

The Ukraine crisis has proven to be a difficult test for the ability of the European Union to maintain a strong presence in world politics and extend its system of governance. Throughout much of the decade that preceded the Ukraine crisis the EU experienced a romantic period in foreign policy and operated under the illusion that it was an important actor in the international arena. This approach was encapsulated by the idea that the EU, unlike nation-states, would not be guided in external relations by the need to further its own interests, but by the goal of promoting a principled approach based on universal norms and values. Principled behavior based on multilateralism would be the main way of constructing world affairs embodied by the EU. Nevertheless, the EU tended to ignore or sideline the fact that much of the non-Western world—including the United States—was still entrenched in a more *realpolitik* approach to world affairs, where geopolitical considerations rather than universal norms and values were seen as key drivers in foreign policy.¹ Hence, the Ukraine crisis (together with the other salient crises that have recently impacted the EU, i.e., the Arab Spring, Brexit, or the migrant crisis) has provided a wakeup call to the EU, and has made its leaders increasingly conscious of the fact that current world politics are not well suited for a normative approach. This, in turn, has pointed to the need to revise the EU's foreign policy, and to try to come to terms with the less ordered nature of world politics. In this process of rethink and renewal the EU's neighborhood

plays a central role. The normative power image was emboldened by the success of the enlargement toward post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), and prompted the Union to seek to attain a more important global role. Acting in a coherent and effective manner in the neighborhood (and managing to extend the EU's model of governance in the region) was perceived as a testing ground for the EU's ability to play a major role at the global level.² One of the other salient hallmarks of the EU's turn of the century ambition to have a strong presence in the international arena has also been the need to speak with one voice and be recognized by other major actors (e.g., the US). The development of a distinct diplomatic service was identified as the solution, with the idea leading to the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS), which was thought to bring more coherence and coordination in EU foreign policy.³ In this context, the chapter focuses on the two central aspects of the normative power narrative that underpinned the EU's ambitions in the post-Soviet space: the neighborhood (with a focus on the post-Soviet Space) and the EEAS. Its main purpose is to explore the way in which the EEAS acted within EU foreign policy as a result of the Ukraine crisis.

The chapter argues that the Ukraine crisis prompted the EEAS to start a process of revision and renewal in the EU's foreign policy. This first implied revamping the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and then drawing on the lessons learned from this process in devising a new Global Strategy for the EU. The chapter focuses primarily on the revision of the ENP, which took place throughout 2015, as the most important activity that the EEAS has been involved in the neighborhood following the onset of the Ukraine crisis. To that extent, the most important change of paradigm that the review of the ENP introduced was the need to enhance the ownership of ENP initiatives among the neighborhood states. The next two sections focus on the two artifacts of the romantic period in the EU's foreign policy and their impact on this policy area. This is followed by a discussion of the framework of the chapter and the role of the EEAS in the revision of the ENP. The chapter finds that the revision of the ENP allowed the EEAS to test a series of policy ideas and practices that would then be developed during the strategic review that led to the Global Strategy. These ideas included the need to be clear about the promotion of EU interests in the neighborhood, including Russia in the trilateral negotiations for the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA) with Ukraine, and promoting the need to enhance ownership among neighborhood countries. The chapter highlights that the revision of the ENP allowed the EEAS to enhance its ability to contribute to the design and

implementation of the ENP, as well as enhancing cooperation and coordination with the EU's institutions and the member states.

The EEAS and EU Foreign Policy

One of the key post-Cold War goals in the foreign policy of the EU has been the creation of a distinct diplomatic service. First, the most publicized rationale behind this approach was the need for the EU to speak with one voice, because various states (e.g., the US) had been complaining that it is hard to know who to contact in the EU (as there are various key leaders, i.e., the president of the Council, the president of the European Commission, the rotating presidency of the Council, or the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, as well as leaders of key member states such as Germany or France). At the same time, there was a fear that with the rotating presidency of the EU (and the whole host of other key EU figures) it would be difficult to bind the EU to agreements, as they may change according to who was in charge.⁴ Second, the absence of a diplomatic service was frequently identified as the key cause for problems in coordination among the foreign policies of the member states and the EU's institutions. Sharing expertise and information, as well as spearheading new common initiatives in foreign policy, usually took place in an ad-hoc manner, in the absence of a common EU level framework.⁵ Third, an EU diplomatic system was also considered to cure more systemic issues regarding the EU's overall coherence in foreign policy, and the alignment between its goals, capabilities, policy tools, and outcomes—that is, the so-called capabilities expectations gap.⁶ Fourth, the EEAS was to provide policy solutions and initiatives that would aid the EU's goal to have a strong presence in the international arena.

The development of the EEAS emerged and was implemented during a romantic period in the foreign policy of the EU. In practice, the EEAS deals with most of the issues that motivated its creation: it organizes the EU's representation in third countries, it provides expertise and support to the EU's institutions and member states, and it develops various policy solutions and initiatives. The latter part is very important, as it has the potential to play a key role in strengthening the EU's presence in world politics. Nevertheless, during the first period following its creation, the EEAS—under the leadership of Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP)—was criticized for its lack of initia-

tive and unwillingness to set the agenda in EU foreign policy. Ashton focused most of her efforts on building the EEAS and its technical issues, and easing the whole range of issues and tensions that arose in relations with other EU institutions and the member states. That being said, the EEAS played a key role in negotiations with Iran, and in the transition in Myanmar.⁷ Federica Mogherini's leadership at the helm of the EEAS brought a new phase, with the service more involved in the revision of the EU's foreign policy, particularly coming to the terms with the rise of geopolitics and the need to accommodate a less ordered neighborhood than a decade before.⁸ In relation to the neighborhood, however, Anita Sęk⁹ highlights that judging by the number of news items published by the EEAS, the eastern neighbors were not a priority, as the total number of news items referring to external relations increased at a significantly much higher rate than those referring to ENP countries in the period from 2009 to 2013. Nevertheless, since the start of the Ukraine crisis and the Arab Spring, the EEAS has indeed focused more attention on the eastern neighborhood, by increasing the number of documents, press releases, and experts in the region.¹⁰

The EU's Foreign Policy in the (Eastern) Neighborhood

In the build-up to the big bang enlargement toward Central and Eastern Europe there were significant expectations that the EU would start playing a more important role in international affairs. The 2003 Security Strategy highlighted the fact that the EU was undergoing a period of deep transformation that, together with the positive international context, would allow it to become a more important actor in the international arena.¹¹ The EU's neighborhood was seen to be a circle of friends where the EU had the duty to expand its system of governance based on its values and norms—aimed at helping the countries in the region democratize and prosper. Having an effective presence in the neighborhood was a prerequisite for highlighting the EU's ability to play a more important role in the international arena. The enlargement particularly expanded the EU to border the post-Soviet space, a region where it encountered an important challenge to its policies from Russia. In the southern neighborhood the EU was rather free and unconstrained to act as there was no other major claim for hegemony. However, at the time of the enlargement, Russia was generally perceived in the EU as being committed to integrating into the liberal world order, and too weak to mount significant opposition in the post-Soviet space.

Moscow's inability to shape the development of the international agenda, such as the conflicts on Kosovo, the fragility of its economy and institutions, as well as its overall withdrawal from world affairs, contributed to this image.¹² Moreover, the color revolutions that displaced pro-Russian authoritarian elites in Georgia and Ukraine strengthened the perception that Russia was not willing or able to put a halt to the promotion of the liberal agenda by the EU and US in the post-Soviet space.

The EU's initiatives (in the framework of the ENP) in the eastern neighborhood have been for the larger part of the last decade characterized by a lack of differentiation among the states in the region. A one size fits all approach was generally employed, which offered the eastern neighbors a set menu for achieving various reforms and incorporating the EU system of governance. The main result of this approach was the lack of ownership from the neighborhood states and the poor outcomes of the EU's initiatives.¹³ The EU was also careful to avoid engaging in solving various sensitive security issues in the regions: that is, frozen conflicts. Part of the rationale behind this was the EU's own limited capacity and willingness to engage in conflict resolution in the region.¹⁴ At the same time, the presence of Russia in the region, and the need to preserve working relations with Moscow, up until the Ukraine crisis, played an additional role in keeping the EU unengaged in security issues in the eastern neighborhood. Various scholars have also argued that in practical terms the ENP is mainly an extension of the EU's rules and enlargement. For example, Teodor Lucian Moga¹⁵ shows how in devising its approach toward the eastern neighborhood the EU drew on its experience from the CEE enlargement and operated on the assumption that similar approaches and tools would produce equivalent results. Hence, one of the biggest criticisms that the ENP attracted was the fact that it disregarded the needs and desires of the countries in the neighborhood. Much of the initiatives under the ENP have thus been largely focused on replicating the EU's internal realities and presenting to the neighborhood a menu of what the EU believes they should do.¹⁶

Up until the onset of the Ukraine crisis, the EU managed to create the image of a strong normative actor in the eastern neighborhood. The EU's status and influence in the region was generally recognized by both internal and external actors.¹⁷ To that extent, the neighborhood states themselves were asking the EU to step up its engagement in the region, and commit more resources. They also called for the EU to take the lead in solving various security challenges such as frozen conflicts. In the lead-up the Ukraine crisis—that is, during the final phases of the negotiations for the DCFTAs with Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia—Russia also started to

recognize the importance of the EU in the post-Soviet space and the threat that it posed to Moscow's claims for hegemony. This happened despite the fact that throughout the 2000s Russia did not really take seriously the advance of the EU in the post-Soviet space, as it doubted the unity of the member states.¹⁸

The EU has managed to support into power various liberal minded elites in countries like Georgia, Moldova, or Ukraine. Nevertheless, there are important question marks regarding the commitment of these elites to European integration and the extent to which they don't just pay lip service to the EU's values and agenda in order to get funding and support for their sometimes deeply corrupt regimes. The EU has managed to push for various reforms in the area of rule in countries like Moldova and Georgia. Even though these countries have developed new legislation in tackling corruption and the capture of state funds, it is not clear whether these reforms are self-sustainable, and a rollback can occur at any point.¹⁹

The Georgian-Russian War of 2008 raised important questions for the EU regarding the challenge posed by Russia in the eastern neighborhood. This, to some extent, validated the long-standing claims of some of the CEE member states such as Poland or the Baltic states that Russia never ceased to pose a key threat for the region. Thus, the EU started to take the Russian threat more seriously, even though it still perceived Moscow as weak. The Eastern Partnership was a way to strengthen the EU's commitment in the post-Soviet space and to tackle Russia's own actions. Moreover, it started to negotiate a series of Association Agreements (AAs) with the neighborhood countries, which focused on various technical and political issues that ranged from specific trade regulations to the adoption of various reforms in the area of rule of law. The EEAS through the EU's delegations was involved particularly in the negotiations with each particular country, as well as monitoring these states and feeding back information to the European Commission in Brussels and the member states. In the case of Ukraine, the negotiations for the AA encountered various challenges, as former president Viktor Yanukovich frequently stated the country's desire to sign the agreements, but in practice not much progress was made in adopting the range of reforms sought by the EU, especially in the area of justice system reform.²⁰

The recent strategic review (as well as the 2015 review of the ENP) highlights the fact that the neighborhood has transformed from a ring of friends to a fire. It also advocates a more pragmatic approach and interest approach, which emphasizes the need to increase the resilience of the neighborhood states and the EU itself. This is indeed a slight withdrawal from the EU's previous ambitious goals, which did not really take into

account the structural factors in the region. Nevertheless, the EU has not given up its principled and cosmopolitan approach, even though its normative power is increasingly challenged. In spite of the numerous internal and external crises that have affected the EU's legitimacy the EU's power attraction still remains one of its most important assets in the region.²¹

Even though there is not a very clear and formal division of labor between the EU's institutions and the member states, the Commission has generally been the driving force behind the development and implementation of the ENP. The member states that have an interest in the eastern neighborhood (e.g., Germany, France, Britain, or the ones from CEE) have also used their expertise and influence in the region to shape the agenda of the EU or to help implement the EU's programs in the region. The European Parliament (EP) has generally been supportive of the EU's approach, and at times got involved through various avenues (e.g., parliamentary missions, debates, or relations with other parliaments) in order to further the EU's policy.²² As was previously noted, the EEAS generally played a supporting role, primarily through the work of the delegations of the EU in Ukraine and other eastern neighborhood countries. Nevertheless, the EEAS has had a rather marginal role in designing the ENP, even though it has played an important part in supplying expertise and information to other EU actors.²³

There have also been various issues regarding coordination between the various actors involved in designing and delivering: the Commission, the member states, and the EEAS.²⁴ It has not been entirely clear which actor should take the lead in implementing the EU's policies, and the whole process has been affected by a lack of coordination and information sharing, as well as increased competition between these actors. The creation of the EEAS has managed to partly solve some of these issues, although they have still persisted when it comes to the post-Soviet space. It is true that not all member states or the EU's institutions share similar interests in the neighborhood (or the post-Soviet space), but their different levels of commitment and willingness have placed doubt on the purpose of the ENP within the EU's broader foreign policy. In this context, the next section sets out the way in which the EEAS's approach toward the (eastern) neighborhood is analyzed in the chapter.

Analyzing the Activity of the EEAS in the Eastern Neighborhood

The chapter analyzes the involvement of the EEAS in the revision of the ENP following the Ukraine crisis along three levels. First, the EEAS plays

a key role in providing expertise and policy ideas in EU foreign policy. It supplies them not only to the EU's institutions (e.g., the Commission or the EP) but also to the member states (especially those that do not have extensive diplomatic resources and manpower). In terms of expertise the chapter focuses on the amount of resources that the EEAS allotted to dealing with the Ukraine crisis. Developing and providing expertise generally enhances the legitimacy of institutions such as the EEAS. Expertise is also a crucial ingredient for effective and grounded policy ideas. In the absence of relevant expertise, policy ideas most often are based on misguided assumptions and lead to failed outcomes when implemented. However, the development of expertise is not enough to explain the emergence and evolution of policy ideas. Policy ideas based on internal expertise rather than more general information or insights from external actors tend, to a larger extent, be embraced by the whole institution.²⁵ The construction of policy ideas, regardless of their point of origin, is generally based on broader institutional culture, as well as available resources and expertise.²⁶ Here the chapter focuses particularly on how the institutional culture of the EEAS adapted to the challenges created by the Ukraine crisis (together with other crises such as the Arab Spring or the migrant one), and how this is reflected in the policy ideas created within the EEAS. I also focus on the age-old question in social science regarding why some policy ideas gain preeminence over others. This point is more relevant when looking at policy ideas that provide solutions to various key issues, but can also relate to the prioritization of the latter.

Second, the chapter looks at the way policy ideas are implemented with a particular interest in identifying innovation at the level of diplomatic and institutional practice. Such innovations generally refer to new ways of identifying problems, providing solutions, setting benchmarks, and applying them in practice. The focus in the chapter is on the latter aspect, namely how innovations affect the practice of foreign policy with the EEAS at the helm. Examples of diplomatic innovations include sending ad-hoc missions composed of high-level individuals to deal with complex issues of situations (e.g., the Vince Owen mission in the former Yugoslavia, or the EP's mission to Ukraine during the build-up to the crisis headed by Pat Cox and Aleksander Kwasniewski). Other examples involve engaging a larger number of stakeholders in third party states, or even using nonstate actors in those countries as proxies for the promotion of one's own foreign policy. Nevertheless, innovation should not be judged here in absolute terms, that is, appearing for the first time in diplomatic practice around the world. Rather we evaluate innovation using actors' own prac-

tice and benchmarks, which means that changes intentionally made to practice in a bid to improve policy outcomes can be seen as innovations. Similarly, innovations in institutional practice refer, for example, to the creation of new forums, agencies, and departments within the various institutions as a way of dealing with new challenges. To a large extent, the creation of the EEAS itself can be seen as an institutional innovation as it was partly aimed at providing an answer to the lack of coordination and coherence in EU foreign policy.²⁷

Third, the chapter analyzes the way in which EEAS relations with the other EU institutions (particularly the Commission and the EP) and the member states evolved during the Ukraine crisis. During this time, the EEAS was managing a process of revising the security strategy of the EU, an endeavor in which it had to coordinate with a large number of stakeholders both in Brussels and in the member states. At the same time, during the period of the Ukraine crisis, the EEAS was also involved in the revision of the ENP, which, as in the case of the strategic review, entailed consultations with an even wider range of stakeholders from the EU and the neighborhood states. While the EEAS plays a key role in supplying expertise to the EU's institutions and the member states, and carries out various diplomatic functions at the EU level, its interactions with other EU actors are characterized by a mixture of cooperation, complementarity, and competition. In terms of the EU's institutions I evaluate whether the Ukraine crisis allowed the EEAS to bring more coordination and coherency in EU foreign policy in the case of the revision of the ENP. The analysis in turn highlights that the EEAS sought to secure enhanced agency in design and the implementation of the ENP, as well as developing new ways of coordinating with the member states and the other EU institutions.

The Revision of the ENP

Policy Ideas

The Arab Spring, the Ukraine crisis, together with various other stumbling blocks in the EU's approach toward the neighborhoods, shaped the decision of the HR/VP Mogherini to seek to revise the ENP in early 2015. A broad consultation²⁸ with various stakeholders in the neighborhood was announced in March with the final report being published in November of that year.²⁹ While the EEAS was not at the forefront in the design of

the review, it did have a significant role in the implementation of the consultation process and in feeding in expertise and various policy ideas.³⁰ The new Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) in the commission in charge of enlargement and the neighborhood led the whole process with Commissioner Johannes Hahn acting as its public face.³¹ Nevertheless, the EEAS played an important role in gathering expertise and policy ideas from the EU's delegations (and subsequently stakeholders in the neighborhood) through formal and informal means. These in turn were fed to the Commission and the EP.³² In this regard the EEAS pushed three key policy ideas that shaped in various degrees the final report on revision of the ENP: the need to be clear about the promotion of EU interests in the neighborhood, including Russia in the trilateral negotiations for the DCFTA with Ukraine, and promoting the need to enhance ownership among neighborhood countries.

The first refers to the need to acknowledge the fact that the EU's approach in the neighborhood is primarily aimed at promoting its interests. The push for a more interest-based approach was present even before 2015, but the events of the crisis reinforced the fact that a principled approach carried with it a geopolitical agenda. This new mode of thinking was heralded by the new HR/VP (Mogherini), who also saw bringing interests to the fore as a way of putting her own mark on EU foreign policy, and providing more scope to the activity of the EEAS.³³ In this regard, expertise coming from the delegations in eastern neighborhood countries and collected by the EEAS has generally pointed to the fact that the states in the region do not really buy in to the EU's normative identity.³⁴ Moreover, the eastern neighbors perceived the norms-based discourse that characterized the ENP only as a smokescreen in order to hide the EU's interests (which up until 2015 the EU itself was not prepared to admit to). Nevertheless, neighbors such as Moldova and Georgia accepted the EU's norms-based approach as they were firmly entrenched on a path toward European integration, and relished the benefits brought by this process.³⁵

It should be noted, however, that the interest-based approach is not very strongly emphasized in the document. Rather, the revision of the ENP is a first attempt from the EEAS and the EU push forward a new strategy which would be more upfront regarding the EU's interests in its neighborhood but also more globally. The idea is emphasized to a larger extent in the Global Strategy published a year later by the EEAS.³⁶ The need to think strategically regarding the EU's presence and role in the neighborhood is also a key aspect that the EEAS entrenched in the revision. Most importantly, the document highlights that one of the problems

behind the ENP was the lack of overall strategic thinking on the part of the EU that would bring coherency to the EU. The EEAS, in various documents, highlighted the fact that unlike a decade ago the world and especially the neighborhood (which transformed from a ring of friend to a ring of fire) was not as conducive to EU leadership.³⁷ This signaled an important shift in the way the EU saw world politics. It was an opportunity that the EEAS instrumentalized in order to play a more important role and gain increased agency in the design of EU foreign policy, and to justify the need for a new strategic approach that would put interests in the limelight. The deterioration of stability and order in the eastern neighborhood also allowed the EEAS to push for clearer language regarding the EU's involvement in security issues in the region. Even though the eastern neighbors have been asking for many years that the EU get involved in the resolution of various conflicts the region, the EU has been rather reluctant to push forward on this issue.³⁸ The revised ENP does give some hints regarding the need for the EU to have a more meaningful presence in the area of security, but provides no real tangible ways to implement this goal.³⁹ Nevertheless, the EU, while committing to have an increased presence in areas such as tackling cross-border crime, terrorism and radicalization, cybersecurity or crisis management, avoids arguing that it would engage in a significant manner in the resolution of the frozen and active conflicts in the eastern neighborhood (e.g., Transnistria or eastern Ukraine).⁴⁰ Such an approach is a prelude to the emphasis on the need to make the EU resilient to such conflicts, which was spearheaded by the EEAS a year later in the Global Strategy.

The second salient contribution of the EEAS focused on including Russia in the negotiations for the implementation DCFTA with Ukraine, through trilateral discussions regarding the time frame.⁴¹ To a large extent this was in line with the preoccupation of the EEAS with EU-Russia relations and its approach of trying to bring Moscow in:⁴² similarly, Russia was included in an energy relations trilateral dialogue. The negotiations for the DCFTA and AAs with Ukraine (and with other eastern neighbors) played a crucial role in setting the agenda for the revision of the ENP. The consultations sought to identify the various problems and strong points of the negotiation processes for the AAs and DCFTAs. While again the EEAS did not play a key part in designing the content of negotiations, it did take part in the way they played out, both in Brussels and through the EU's delegations in the region. Moreover, the EEAS had a stake in shaping the way in which the DCFTAs were presented in the revised ENP, as it administers the financial aspects of the ENP. More flexibility and differentiation

in the financial programs of the ENP and the trade regulations of the DCFTA were ideas supported by the EEAS based on the expertise and consultations it gathered on the ground in countries like Ukraine and Moldova. These include lighter and more flexible trade regulations for countries that choose to sign DCFTAs with the EU, and more flexibility in dealing with those that opt for other types of engagements (drawing particularly on demands from countries like Azerbaijan and Armenia). In this process the EEAS has been gathering information on this topic for the periodic reports on the implementation of the AAs and DCFTAs.

Even though the EEAS brought Russia into the negotiations on the time frame of the implementation of the DCFTA, Moscow is barely mentioned directly in the revised ENP. Most sections that indirectly refer to Moscow cover the need to make the eastern neighbors more energy independent, as well as the EU's commitment to assuring the territorial integrity of its eastern neighbors. On the one hand, this might highlight the fact that the EEAS was still cautious and hoping to mend relations with Russia by not pushing for strong language in the document. On the other hand, it highlights the continuity in its approach toward the eastern neighborhood, which it has chosen to treat separately from Russia, and thus have two types of approaches, which have not always been in sync or coherent.⁴³

Third, the most important change of paradigm that the review of the ENP introduced was the need to enhance the ownership of ENP initiatives among the neighborhood states.⁴⁴ In the eastern neighborhood, for many years the EEAS had been collecting through the EU's delegations criticisms and grievances from national officials (e.g., Moldova and Ukraine) that the EU's initiatives are very much one-sided and do not take into account the needs and desires of the neighborhood countries. To that extent, following the start of the Ukraine crisis, the EEAS and the HR/VP frequently claimed that the neighbors of the EU should be allowed to have more input in the design and implementation of ENP initiatives. In practice this meant that the EEAS pushed for equality between the interests of the EU and those of the neighbors, and the need to focus on those initiatives that prove effective from the perspective of both the EU and its neighbors.⁴⁵

Practices

The most important innovation introduced by the EEAS in relation to the review of the ENP was the consultation process with broad sections of

stakeholders from the neighborhood countries, as well as from the member states. In the Eastern Partnership countries, the EEAS, through the EU's delegations, organized various forums, meetings, and events where government officials, civil society groups, and individual citizens could voice their views on the ENP. The joint consultation paper published in March 2015 set out the way in which the dialogue was to be carried up until June.⁴⁶ What is interesting is that the EEAS also aimed to set the agenda of the consultations, as in the joint paper it highlighted four key areas: flexibility, differentiation, ownership, and focus. Nevertheless, the consultation did follow the same pattern of the EEAS engaging with those actors and organizations in the neighborhood that were willing and open to participate in the process. Moreover, for most civil society actors or individuals that are not accustomed to the EU's language and procedures, taking part in the consultations has proved to be difficult, in spite the EEAS's goals of creating more ownership and flexibility.⁴⁷ The experience of the consultation process served as a test run and template for the wider consultation that followed during the strategic review in 2016.⁴⁸ The ultimate aim of such consultations has been to enhance coordination among the actors and stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of the EU's policies in the neighborhood. The EEAS effectively managed the consultation process with the eastern neighbors, even though, as various studies have shown, it lacked both adequate staff and resources (in the headquarters and in the delegations), lack of *esprit de corps*, and lack of representation from the "new" CEE member states, which can be seen as having crucial expertise about the eastern neighborhood.⁴⁹

The innovative practices of the EEAS should be analyzed bearing in mind the fact that the creation of the agency itself can be broadly considered to be a diplomatic innovation at the EU level as it drove overarching changes in foreign policy.⁵⁰ The degree to which the EEAS has actually managed to bring about such ambitious changes is debatable at best. However, the EEAS has designed its own diplomatic innovations throughout the years. These generally involve coming up with new ways of designing and implementing diplomatic action. Most have focused on the organization of the EU's diplomatic service, appointment of personnel, or the role of EU delegations in third party actors.⁵¹ While the EEAS has not traditionally played a central role in the design and implementation of the ENP, the revision of this policy has allowed the service to test out a novel way of gathering information and consulting with stakeholders. Hence, the broad consultation process organized by the EEAS (with the help of its delegations) sought to engage with a broad range of stakeholders from the ENP

countries as well as the member states. The final document revising the ENP, in turn, highlighted a number of concerns often emphasized by stakeholders in the neighborhood (e.g., the need to increased ownership in the neighborhood, as well as greater differentiation among the neighbors in the EU's approach). To that extent, the consultation process can be seen as a successful example of a diplomatic innovation, which was then further fine-tuned and implemented in funding the strategic review that led to the publication of the Global Strategy in 2016.

Relations with Other Institutions

Even though the literature tends to highlight that the relationship between the Commission and the EEAS does not always go smoothly, in the case of the revision of the ENP, DG NEAR and the EEAS collaborated efficiently during the consultation process and in the drafting of the final report.⁵² Moreover, a 2011 joint Commission and Council document on the previous revision of the ENP identified the HR/VP and EEAS as agents that can facilitate change in the neighborhood.⁵³ There was effective sharing of expertise between the two institutions with HR/VP Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn maintaining continued and strong dialogue. Nevertheless, the EEAS has often been criticized for not preparing sufficient substantial information for the member states at Council meetings and for not taking the initiative or providing strategic guidance in the neighborhood and more generally in EU foreign policy.⁵⁴ There were indeed various criticisms regarding the EEAS's inability to coordinate a common approach toward Russian actions in Ukraine, but these were not due to its turf wars, but more to disagreement between the member states. Moreover, when it comes to Russia (and the EEAS's approach of constructing a strategic partnership with Moscow), the service was keen for the revised ENP to mention Russia indirectly, but still send a strong message to the neighborhood states that the EU continues to support their territorial integrity, path to democratization, and quest for energy independence.⁵⁵ Cooperation between DG NEAR and the EEAS was also facilitated by the fact that EEAS prefers to secure deals at lower levels with the other institutions and the member states before elevating such issues to the next levels.⁵⁶

The EEAS gathered expertise from the EU's delegations and shared it with the other EU institutions and the member states. This is in line with the usual activity of the EEAS in the ENP, where it comes up with proposals for initiatives based on its expertise and provides regular exchanges of

information with the Council, the EP, and the Commission (in order to report on progress in various ENP initiatives). Together with the EP or the European Economic and Social Committee, the EEAS organized various debates and information events during the consultation period for the revision of the ENP. Similar events were also organized in the member states and the eastern neighbors with the help of national think tanks or ministries of foreign affairs. Nevertheless, not all member states⁵⁷ shared the same level of interests and commitment in the revision.⁵⁸ To that extent, the final report highlights that the member states should show more commitment and willingness to get involved in the design and implementation of the ENP. The revision of the ENP also changed the way the EEAS consulted with the member states and provided expertise. Prior to 2015, the EEAS annually drafted a series of regional and country reports for the ENP drawing on input from the EU delegations, after which it also sought input from the Commission and its DGs. The member states were not generally involved in the consultations prior to the publication of the reports.⁵⁹ This new mode of engaging with the member states was a prelude for the wide consultation process during the strategic review in 2016, contributing to an overall increased coherence in EU foreign policy. Moreover, the EEAS played a key role, in the case of the DCFTA negotiations, in reminding the EU's institutions and member states of the Union's commitment to helping Ukraine develop. EU documents often claimed that the EEAS and the EU "delivered unprecedented levels of support to help Ukraine in its efforts for launching this renewed reform process."⁶⁰

Discussion and Conclusions

The recent crises that affected the EU, such as the Ukraine crisis, the Arab Spring, and the migrant crisis, have prompted the EU to recognize the fact that, unlike a decade ago, the neighborhood and the world are no longer conducive to the EU's normative leadership. For much of the decade that preceded the Ukraine crisis the EU experienced a romantic period, characterized by high expectations that it would play a key role in and shape world politics based on its principled approach, which shunned geopolitics and interest-based foreign policy. This realization has led the EU to embark on a process of revision and renewal in its foreign policy. This chapter has focused on the way two artifacts of the romantic period in EU foreign policy have affected and are involved in the recent process of revision and renewal: namely, the EEAS and the neighborhood. While the

EEAS was seen as a cure to various systemic issues in EU foreign policy (e.g., the need to speak with one voice and the lack of coherence and coordination), the neighborhood has been generally perceived as a testing ground for the EU's ability to gain and maintain a strong presence in the international arena. Following the start of the Ukraine crisis, one of the most important activities that the EEAS was involved in revolved around the revision of the EU's policy toward the neighborhood (the ENP). The fact that revision of the ENP and the strategic review (leading to the Global Strategy) were the most important priorities for the EEAS in the recent period has been somewhat disappointing and an example for the agency punching below its weight, as Volker Stanzel put it.⁶¹

The past few months have exposed two serious problems for the EU, which have the potential to turn into problems for Europe's partners too. Under the Lisbon Treaty, European foreign policy is supposed to evolve out of the work of the European External Action Service. Where has the EEAS been? The major ideas, initiatives, and concrete measures throughout the Ukraine crisis came from member states. EU foreign policy emerged from inter-governmental co-operation, much as it did before Lisbon. This kind of process is often necessary, if only to integrate parliaments and constituencies back home. But the EEAS was created to provide impetus, to stimulate, and to initiate a coherent European foreign policy, to convince citizens in the member states.

The EU's recent shift in foreign policy is not entirely surprising. During the last 20 years the literature has pointed out that the EU tends to reframe its goals and expectations when material reality and political outcomes don't match its ambitions. This approach is to a large extent shaped by the EU's aversion to and fear of admitting failure both internally and externally.⁶² The recent years have indeed confirmed the fear that admitting failure would lead to a loss of prestige and status in the world order. The inability to deal effectively with the Arab Spring, the migrant crisis, and to prevent and manage the Ukraine crisis have damaged the reputation and image of the EU in the eyes of third-party states. If around a decade ago, studies showed that stakeholders in non-EU countries viewed and expected the EU to act as a strong international actor, currently the EU is seen as being on the retreat.⁶³ Thus reframing policy goals and expectations rather than admitting failure is a way of providing an alternative narrative for the EU that can deflect negative external perceptions. Con-

versely, internally the unity and consensus in foreign policy among the member states (even though it has gradually improved) is still rather unpredictable. Nevertheless, as this chapter highlights, the EEAS has recognized this fact and tried to deal with it, even though not perfectly. This is primarily shown by the efforts of the EEAS to spearhead the revision of the Global Strategy, to shape the revision of the ENP by organizing consultations with a large body of stakeholders in the neighborhood, and to feed ideas into the policy cycle.

At the center of the drive for a more united EU foreign policy has been a progressive vision that does not really leave too much space for failure and setbacks. Hence, not admitting failure has allowed the EU to not address in a significant manner the problem underlying the lack of unity and difference in level of commitment when it comes to achieving a common foreign policy.⁶⁴ Such reframing of goals and expectations has frequently occurred in the neighborhood. For example, during the initial phases of the creation of the EEAS for HR/VP Catherine Ashton argued that the EU was set on promoting an abstract and rather undefined notion of deep democracy in the neighborhood.⁶⁵ However, the development of Arab Spring hindered the EU's efforts, and EEAS and the Commission virtually abandoned the concept of deep democracy (which itself was introduced as a response to the Arab Spring). Moreover, in Moldova, which was considered up until a few years ago the star pupil of the ENP, the EU constantly reframed its goals and expectations regarding the implementation of reforms, due to the corrupt nature of political elites in Chisinau, the Moldovan capital. Brussels not only changed the goal posts for evaluating progress in Moldova, but also turned a blind eye to the corruption promoted by pro-European politicians in Chisinau.⁶⁶ While currently the image of Moldova as a model student has faded, the EU has still not admitted failure in its approach toward the country. From this perspective the 2015 revision of the ENP is an example of the EU reframing its approach toward the neighborhood in order not to admit the failure of its policies. Moreover, the emphasis on resilience allows the EU to deflect virtually any kind of criticism regarding the effectiveness of its approach within the ENP.⁶⁷ It highlights the fact that now the EU argues that it is resilient to the potential failure of the neighbors to become resilient with the support of the EU.

Trump's presidency seems to have marked a rift between the US and the EU in world politics, and further compounded the range of crises affecting Brussels. This is very much relevant in the case of Iran, but also when it comes to Syria and Russia. The emphasis on interests, resilience,

and principled pragmatism highlighted by the EEAS and Global Strategy during the last two years to some extent has prepared the EU for coming to terms with the decline of liberalism in the world order. This assessment was initially made on the basis of the EU's interactions with states like Russia and China, and the increasingly disordered nature of the neighborhood. Paradoxically, it seems now that the US is also seeking to revise the terms of the world order, in what can be seen as a U-turn from a series of liberal values and commitments. It is difficult to conceive that the EU will have the same level of success and effectiveness in promoting liberal value around the world if they go against the efforts and policy of the US. To that extent, the EEAS has been rather slow to respond to the turn in US foreign policy. Similarly to the Ukraine crisis, it is leaders from key member states such as France or Germany that have taken the lead in trying to steer the EU's partnership with the US. While the US shift in foreign policy affects the EU's overall approach to world politics, and makes it rethink the best way in which to preserve the liberal order, it is unlikely that the EU's policy toward its neighbors will be very much affected. The US has largely withdrawn from playing a key role in North Africa or in the post-Soviet space, a process that was at work during Obama's administration. Consequently, the value of the neighborhood for the EU's foreign policy is as high as ever, as the Union has now more scope and influence to promote its liberal values in the region rather than globally. This harkens back to the context of the 2003 Security Strategy and the big bang enlargement, when the EU was very much dominated by a progressive approach that stated that the EU has both the right and duty to promote its values in the neighborhood. Extending the EU's model of governance to the neighborhood and influencing the region were seen as real possibilities and a test of the EU's potential to have a strong presence in world politics. Currently, influencing the neighbors is increasingly linked to the EU's own stability more than anything. Successfully enhancing the resilience of the neighborhood is now the main rationale for seeking to promote the EU's values in the region; this is perceived to enhance the EU's own resilience at a time when it is confronted with a whole host of crises.

The revision of the ENP also marks the persistence of a dichotomy between conflict and cooperation in relations between Russia and the EU.⁶⁸ On the one hand, the EU, unexpectedly considering the track record of disunity among the member states in their relationship to Moscow, managed to maintain a united front on sanctions against the Kremlin. On the other hand, the revised ENP barely mentions Russia's actions as a threat to the stability that would require an enhanced presence and activ-

ity from the EU. References to Moscow's assertiveness in the region are only indirect and symbolize the fact that the EU has preferred to continue to maintain a degree of separation between its policy toward its eastern neighbors and that toward Russia. At the same time, the inclusion of Russia in the trilateral talks on the implementation of the DCFTA with Ukraine, as well as the less intensive engagement with Moldova, point to the idea that the EU is less willing to make the views of the eastern neighborhood one of its main priorities in foreign policy. Such a move can be caused at the same time by the multiple crises that the EU is facing internally and the need to refocus resources toward them. Nevertheless, the EU has suffered a loss of status and reputation in the region, with studies showing that enthusiasm for the EU is waning even in countries that used to exhibit high degree of pro-European attitudes.⁶⁹

The revised ENP signals increased willingness from the EU to respond to the needs and interests of the neighbors. The broad consultation process that unfolded during the review process of the ENP is indeed evidence that the EU, unlike its past endeavors, is to a larger extent willing to be more responsive to the needs of the neighbors. However, as was noted earlier, the focus on resilience allows the EU to shift the burden of failure in the ENP to the neighborhood countries rather than to Brussels. At the same time, coupled with the larger emphasis on geopolitics and interests inscribed in the 2016 Global Strategy, the revised ENP does not really mark a significant departure from the EU's habit of "imposing" self-centered policies on third-party actors. There is indeed more leeway for the EU's neighbors to devise individual relationships with the Union according to their needs. The EEAS has played a key role in gathering feedback more efficiently from neighbors through the EU's representation and then feeding it back to the other EU institutions and the member states. To that extent, the EEAS has actively urged that the interests and perspectives of the neighbors be reflected more closely in the EU's policies. However, as we have seen in the case of Moldova, in the period following the 2015 revision of the ENP, the EU has been inclined to apply a *take it or leave it* approach. Moldovan leaders have more agenda-setting power in relation with the EU, but Brussels, on the other hand, is much less willing to accept compromises that damage the Union's interests or values, for example, the corrupt activities of political elites.

In this context, this chapter has analyzed the activity of the EEAS in the revision of the ENP along three levels: policy ideas, practices, and relations with other the other member states. Most of the efforts of the EEAS were geared toward attaining enhanced agency in the design and imple-

mentation of the ENP. While the EEAS did not lead the revision, it played an important role in gathering expertise from the EU's delegations on the ground in the neighborhood states, and pushed for the inclusion of the need to develop a more interest-based and pragmatic approach toward the neighborhood—an idea that would be fully developed during the 2016 strategic review and discussed in the subsequent Global Strategy. At the same time, it also introduced two concepts that the neighborhood states had been demanding for some time: increased ownership for the neighborhood states and their equality in terms of interest with the EU. As the leading figure in the EU's policy toward Russia, it also strived for the revised ENP to have a balanced approach toward the Kremlin, and for Moscow to be included in the negotiations for the implementation timeline of the DCFTA with Ukraine.

In terms of innovative practice, the EEAS aimed to secure enhanced agency in the design of the ENP by organizing and engaged in a wide process of consultation with a broad range of stakeholders in the neighborhood countries as well as the member states. Similar practices and structures would later be employed during the consultation process of the strategic review. Finally, the revision of the ENP also marked an improvement in the EEAS's relations and interaction with other EU institutions and the member states. For example, the norm up until the Ukraine crisis and the revision of the ENP was for the EEAS to share information and expertise with the member states only after releasing official documents or strategy papers. Conversely, during the consultation process for the revision of the ENP the EEAS was constantly keeping the member states and the EU's other institutions in the loop. That being said, one of the most important achievements of the EEAS following the start of the Ukraine crisis was to increase coordination in foreign policy, as well as coherence. From the point of view of the EEAS's involvement in the review of the EP, this represented a rehearsal or testing ground for various ideas and practices that were fully implemented during the strategic review that led in 2016 to the Global Strategy.

NOTES

1. Nitoiu 2016a; Youngs 2017.
2. Haukkala 2008.
3. Allen 1998; Batora 2010.
4. Balfour et al. 2012.
5. Batora 2013.

6. Hill 1998.
7. Spence and Batora 2015.
8. Youngs 2017.
9. Sęk 2013.
10. Ostrowska-Chałupa 2016.
11. Council of the European Union 2003.
12. Nitoiu 2016a.
13. Delcour 2015.
14. Biscop 2010.
15. Nitoiu 2017a.
16. Schumacher 2015; Bouris and Schumacher 2017.
17. Chaban et al. 2017.
18. Forsberg and Haukkala 2016.
19. Nilsson and Silander 2016.
20. Nitoiu and Sus 2017.
21. Tocci 2016.
22. Nitoiu 2017b.
23. Ostrowska-Chałupa 2016.
24. Schumacher et al. 2017.
25. Beland 2009.
26. Blyth 2010.
27. Batora 2013.
28. European Commission 2015d.
29. European Commission 2015c.
30. Nevertheless, as Ostrowska-Chałupa (2016, 177) argues when it comes, for example, to annexation of Crimea the EEAS was unable to draft a declaration, and this had to be done by the Council. Her interviews with diplomats in Brussels highlight that “that EEAS has not proved to possess sufficient knowledge of the region and the situation on the eastern border of the EU.”
31. Hahn 2016.
32. Blockmans 2015; Delcour 2015.
33. Spence and Batora 2015.
34. European Commission 2015d; Blockmans 2015.
35. Baltağ and Smith 2015; Delcour and Wolczuk 2015.
36. Tocci 2016.
37. The Senior European Experts 2016.
38. Nilsson and Silander 2016.
39. According to Dominika Krois, the coordinator of cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe within the EEAS, the reasons for this is lack of political will: “We saw in this region both frozen conflicts and postponed conflicts. We tried to be here as an intermediary in the solution of such conflicts. But I think that the main barrier is the lack of political will to at least start a negotiation format.” See frontnews.eu 2017.
40. The 2017 evaluation of the revised ENP finds that particularly in the area of communication the EU has enhanced its approach due the establishment the East Strategic Communication (StratComm) Task Force. This has been especially active in exposing Russian and supporting campaigns against corruption in countries like to

Moldova or Armenia, as well as communicating to citizens the benefits of European integration (e.g., the AAs and the DCFTAs) in various countries in the neighborhood. See European Commission 2017b.

41. Wolczuk and Dragneva-Lewers 2015; Gotev 2015.
42. Nitoiu 2016b.
43. Casier 2016.
44. European Commission 2015c.
45. European Commission 2015b.
46. European Commission 2015d.
47. Nizhnikau 2017.
48. Tocci 2016.
49. Balfour et al. 2012; Spence and Bátora 2015.
50. Spence and Bátora 2015.
51. Kostanyan 2017.
52. Kostanyan 2017.
53. Council of the European Union 2011.
54. Spence and Bátora 2015.
55. European Commission 2017a; European Commission 2017b.
56. Kostanyan 2013.
57. Countries like Germany, Sweden, or the member states from CEE showing a greater degree of interest in the ENP and more willingness to collaborate with the EEAS.
58. Blockmans 2015.
59. Kostanyan 2013.
60. European Commission 2015a.
61. Stanzel 2014.
62. Nitoiu 2013; Schumacher 2015b; Cianciara 2017.
63. Chaban and Holland 2008; Zarembo 2017
64. Bickerton 2011.
65. Nitoiu 2013.
66. Baltag and Smith 2015.
67. Korosteleva et al. 2017.
68. Nitoiu 2016b.
69. Zarembo 2017.

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Russia's Foreign Policy: The Domestic and International Context

6 | Confrontation as Ontological Security

Russia's Reactions to the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement

Molly Krasnodębska

In preparation for the Association Agreement (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) between the EU and Ukraine, which was expected to be signed at the Vilnius Summit in November 2013, the EU made significant efforts to defuse Russian concerns about negative implications of the agreements. The negotiations were kept transparent. The EU emphasized that “there is nothing in the Association Agreement which changes any aspect of the trade and economic relationship between Ukraine and Russia, or between Ukraine and any other trading partner.”¹ Despite these efforts, Moscow actively tried to prevent the agreement by exerting pressure on Ukraine's president, Viktor Yanukovych. Indeed, just shortly before the anticipated signing of the AA, Yanukovych unexpectedly backed out and declared that Ukraine would enter a customs union with Russia instead. However, this decision triggered pro-European protests in Kiev, which turned into the Maidan Revolution and eventually led to government change in Ukraine. Shortly after, Moscow launched efforts to destabilize the country by instigating a separatist war in eastern Ukraine and annexing the Crimean Peninsula.

From the perspective of conventional IR theories, which define state interest in terms of material and security gains, Russia's reaction seems puzzling. Little evidence suggests that the AA posed either a serious economic or security threat to Russia. On the contrary, independent studies suggest that the implementation of the agreement would have benefitted Ukraine's economy, which would in turn have had a positive impact on its major trading partners, including Russia.²

It was also unlikely that the Association Agreement created a direct path toward membership in the EU, let alone in NATO. By contrast, the Ukraine crisis became very costly for Moscow. Following the annexation of Crimea the West imposed economic sanctions and began to isolate Russia in the international arena. Considering only economic and material factors it would therefore be difficult to argue that the AA posed a security dilemma for Russia.

To address this puzzle, this chapter builds on the theoretical work on ontological security in international relations.³ Proponents suggest that states seek not only physical security and economic prosperity but also ontological security. They draw on Anthony Giddens who claims that all individuals seek a fundamental feeling of existential certainty.⁴ For states, ontological security lies in a stable and consistent identity as international actors that is affirmed and routinized through relations with significant others. When accustomed routines are disrupted in such a way that an actor's self-identity is put into question, an ontological security crisis occurs.

The hypothesis of this chapter is that Russia's self-identity is strongly tied to a close hierarchical relation with its neighborhood, especially Ukraine, as well as to its relations with the West—the United States and Europe—as “significant others.” With the Maidan Revolution the orientation of Ukraine's public and new governing elite shifted toward the EU. This shift was predominantly ideological but nevertheless empowered the EU. Closer ties between the EU and Ukraine disrupted routines outside of Moscow's control, which threatened to alter the established status quo between Russia and the West since the end of the Cold War. Russia therefore regarded it as a serious ontological security threat.

This chapter tests this hypothesis by tracing crucial elements of Russian strategic culture, a set of historically shaped practices, ideas, and narratives ingrained in the collective consciousness, that guide foreign policy. Through the lens of strategic culture, the chapter seeks to understand what role Ukraine plays in Russia's self-identity and how this relationship connects to Russia's self-definition as an international actor. The advantage of this approach is that it covers a range of existing explanations for Russian actions, such as the perception of “spheres of influence” or threat to Russia's role in the “region.” Yet, instead of identifying individual factors, such as a threat to economic and business ties, which is methodologically challenging, it gives more weight to the collective perceptions of foreign policy elites, in this case in Russia.

Ontological (In)security and Foreign Policy

Conventionally the need for security is understood as the need for protection from physical harm or death. In other words, it is the need for physical survival. Individuals have an innate need to seek security, yet physical safety cannot be guaranteed with absolute certainty as it is impossible to predict and completely eliminate possible threats, much less to indefinitely avert death. Thus, while physical security can never be absolute, individuals derive the feeling of comfort and safety from other sources. The sociologist Anthony Giddens argues that besides physical security individuals obtain the basic feeling of safety from the continuation and consistency of the Self as an immaterial entity and a sense of predictability of the world around them.⁵ Jennifer Mitzen therefore describes ontological security as a subjective sense of safety that is independent of the objective level of uncertainty.⁶ Maria Mälksoo contrasts the difference between ontological security and physical security as the difference between the “security of being” and the “security as survival.”⁷ Ontological security is rooted in a stable and consistent set of narratives about oneself and one’s environment, which constitute modes of orientation, by which an individual makes sense of the world and his or her own role in it. Giddens argues that “obtaining such trust becomes necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-being and avoid existential anxiety.”⁸

An important condition of ontological security is the relationship with other actors. Routines in relationships with other actors have an essential role in an individual’s universe and are sources of order. Other actors also play an important role in affirming an individual’s notion of self. Conversely, if there is discrepancy between an individual’s self-perception and the perception by relevant “others,” a sense of order can be destabilized, which can lead to ontological insecurity.

Furthermore, ontological security is closely tied to agency. Giddens argues that a basic sense of order and continuity provides individuals with meaning to their actions.⁹ When the narratives that make up an individual’s sense of safety are threatened, it can lead to anxiety that limits the individual’s ability to act. Thus, while ontological security can help to cope with the lack of absolute physical security, threats to ontological security can have a detrimental effect on an individual, even when a person’s physical security is not endangered.

Scholars who advance the study of ontological security in international

relations argue that the concept of ontological security can be transposed on collective actors, such as states.¹⁰ The idea that security-as-being is a basic inherent need of states expands the understanding of security from conventional IR approaches. Traditionally, the security of states is understood as the elimination of physical threats, such as the invasion of their territory by others, attacks against their populations, or other forms of physical violence. The highest form of physical insecurity is conventionally assumed to be the threat of annihilation or “state death.” IR scholars usually consider this to be the case when a state loses its sovereignty, when it ceases to be an independent international actor. Tanisha Fazal, for example, defines “state death” as the loss of control over one’s own foreign policy and the ability to conduct independent international relations.¹¹

In contrast, ontological security theory suggests that a threat to a state’s ability to act is imaginable without the employment of physical force. According to Maria Mälksoo, besides the security of “body,”

each state also wishes to secure its being as a certain sort of being; to guarantee its cohesiveness in order to reduce the fundamental unpredictability of the surrounding environment and its own vulnerability vis-à-vis other political actors.¹²

This means that a state wishes to preserve a specific identity that it is attached to. A state’s identity is inscribed in historically shaped narratives and practices. According to Jennifer Mitzen, losing a sense of a state’s distinctive identity may threaten the ontological security of its citizens. Therefore, states are motivated to preserve the national group identity.¹³ This continuity of a state’s distinctiveness is also necessary for its elites to formulate ends and means of foreign policy actions. This does not mean that a state’s identity is unchanging, only that policymakers will seek to maintain fundamental aspects of identity and basic norms. If the normative order in which a state operates is seriously challenged or disrupted, the state’s ability to act is constrained. Thus, the realm of dangers to which foreign policy actors react includes both physical and normative or ontological threats.

In the following section I will depict three main components on which the ontological security of a state depends. First, as already mentioned, ontological security requires a stable identity as an international actor. Following Filip Ejdus, a stable identity means that states require “biographical continuity,” which implies that they must have a coherent set of narratives bundling past and present experience.¹⁴ Foundational myths,

narratives about past experiences, common values, and ideologies hold together collective communities. Identities are therefore rooted in interpretations of the past, but, as Runa Das suggests, identity narratives are under constant construction in response to the unfolding international environment.¹⁵ This occurs, Das argues, because the sense of safety and danger and of “otherness” and “familiarity” is produced out of the context in which people give meaning to their actions and make sense of the world around them. In a constantly changing environment, political actors discursively define meanings but they draw upon cultural beliefs and interpretations of past experience engrained in society in order to attain a sense of comfort and consistency. While within states there are competing ideas regarding identity and dominant views are internally contested, we can expect that states have a discrete set of main debates and dominant assumptions about identity around which these discussions evolve.

An international actor’s identity has to be both internally and externally affirmed. A state depends on legitimacy in the eyes of its own population, which requires the ability to provide ontological security “by fixing social relations” with other states “into a symbolic and institutional order.”¹⁶ One example is its status in relations with others (e.g., whether it’s a great power or a small state), and what is its most important group of belonging (e.g., whether it defines itself as a liberal democracy). Ontological security is therefore both relational and subjective. According to Brent J. Steele, a state’s sense of “Self” helps to process the “relevant” elements of the environment.¹⁷ The environment can in turn impose or suppress certain identities. Many states’ foreign policies are strongly focused on establishing or maintaining a particular kind of international identity (e.g., the United States as “force of good,” Germany as “civilian power”), which is often just as fundamental as the pursuit of physical security. At the same time, identity has to be affirmed by others in the international environment. Mitzen argues that states need stable routines in relations with others in order to be actors at all.¹⁸ Some international actors have a special role in a state’s self narrative: its neighbors, its friends, and its foes.

The second component of ontological security is the predictability of the international environment. According to Filip Ejdus, to feel ontologically secure, collective international actors, such as states, need to have trust in the continuity of their external environment.¹⁹ They need to possess a practical understanding of what to expect from it. For example, a state needs to expect that an international institution it is part of is durable. Nevertheless, states can tolerate a level of unpredictability and preserve ontological security as long as relationships with important others remain

predictable because these relationships affirm the state's identity. The predictability of relationships with other actors is based on routines. Without routines that provide a basic level of certainty about what to expect from significant others, it is difficult for policymakers to relate ends and means.²⁰ In an unpredictable environment it becomes unclear how to pursue foreign policy priorities because policy elites focus only on immediate needs, as Mitzen points out. Therefore, states seek to avoid such a disruption. Mitzen argues that although international actors with a basic sense of ontological security can cope with disrupted routines, they nevertheless seek to restore these routines.

Finally, the third component is the ability of a state to act and exercise its subjectivity. Subjectivity means the ability of a state to act as itself. This is dependent on the previously mentioned two components of ontological security: *agency* requires a predictable environment and a stable sense of self. Since threats to ontological security can restrain actors' abilities to pursue a certain path, actors might be inclined to take radical actions to escape this trap and restore their agency. This implies, as Mitzen suggests, that actors sometimes choose conflict over unpredictability when it provides them with ontological security.²¹ This is because in certain situations conflict provides more predictability than peaceful relations that are difficult to control.

Threats to ontological security can therefore pose security dilemmas that are as significant for foreign policy decisions as physical security dilemmas. What constitutes ontological security is distinctive for each individual state. The methodological challenge is to define the representational elements of identity that influence foreign policy. It requires an analysis of dominant narratives that give meaning to foreign policy actions, of key modes of self-representation, and ideas regarding the workings of the international environment, which guide the actions of foreign policy elites.

Fundamentals of Russia's Ontological Insecurity

Understanding the sources of Russia's ontological insecurity requires analyzing the narratives that make up Russia's perceptions of itself as an international actor, which I refer to as strategic culture. A state's strategic culture should be broadly understood as a set of ideas, narratives, and fundamental debates regarding self-identity as a state and regarding the nature of the international environment, which have prescriptive implica-

tions for foreign policy.²² This section will look at aspects of Russian strategic culture that emerge as particularly relevant for understanding Russia's actions during the Ukraine crisis. It will look at Russia's self-definition as an international actor, ideas regarding its relationship with significant others, specifically with Ukraine and the European Union.

(1) Russia's Self-Perception

Scholars who study Russian foreign policy tend to agree that one element that has been consistent for centuries is the attachment of Russian elites to the idea of great powerhood.²³ This is conditioned by the fact that Russia's appearance as a foreign policy actor went hand in hand with its imperial expansion. With the victory over Sweden in 1709 under Peter the Great, Russia began to establish itself as a European power over the course of the eighteenth century. However, despite its territorial size, Russia had been struggling to match its material status with its aspirations. The Russian Empire represented an anachronistic economic and social model. It relied on an agrarian economy when the rest of Europe began to industrialize. As Ayşe Zarakol points out, around the time that Russia made its case for inclusion into the society of European powers, Western Europe went through a fundamental ideational transformation starting with the French Revolution. As an absolutist monarchy Russia began to look backward in comparison. Thus, "in a way, Russia become an 'outsider' inside the new European society of states almost as soon as it managed to gain entry to the club."²⁴ While I will further elaborate on Russia's relations with Western Europe, this example demonstrates that Russia's great power status was from the beginning insecure. This experience shaped a strategic culture that is focused on compensation for the stigma of backwardness through an ambitious foreign policy of territorial expansion. Zarakol argues that the ambition to catch up with the West both economically and by representing an innovative model of society also guided the Soviet Union's foreign policy since the 1930s.²⁵ This attempt was ultimately unsuccessful and resulted in the collapse of the Soviet economy in the 1980s, and Russia's economic crisis of the late 1990s.

Russia's current self-identity is defined, according to Vsevolod Samokhvalov, by an "imbalance between the material and ideational dimension of great powerhood."²⁶ Drawing on Hedley Bull's definition of "great power," Samokhvalov points out that apart from purely objective material criteria there are two additional ideational attributes of great powerhood. To be a great power a state must be recognized as such by other interna-

tional actors and must be conceived by their own leaders and citizens as having special rights and duties in the international arena. The idea of great powerhood therefore contains a subjective understanding of one's special status, which comes with a special responsibility to preserve peace in the international system, and an intersubjective affirmation of that understanding, namely a mutual recognition of this special status as members in an "exclusive club." Samokhvalov argues that the tension between Russia's self-perception as a great power and the perceptions of others defines Russian foreign policy.

After the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia as the successor state faced new questions about its identity. Significant loss of territory and population, economic downfall, and the relative irrelevance of military power posed a new challenge to Russia's international standing. One might have expected that Russia as the "defeated superpower" would redefine its identity and abandon its great power status analogous to Germany and Japan after World War II. In practice, this would mean that Russia would decide to trade the aspiration for great power status and foreign policy autonomy for prosperity and security within an increasingly integrated community of nations, and assume an identity as a medium-sized regional power. However, in Jeffry Mankoff's view, while this idea might have resonated with ordinary citizens, Russia's elites "remained wedded to the idea of their country as a major power." He cites Alexei Arbatov, a Duma deputy and scholar who as early as 1994 claimed:

There is an overwhelming consensus on the main goal of strategic and national security: that Russia should remain one of the world's great powers.²⁷

In contrast to a total defeat on the battleground, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union was mainly a defeat in the ideational realm.²⁸ Russian elites under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev coped by discursively framing the events not as a defeat but as a mutual victory of the USSR and the West and argued that the Soviet Union had chosen to open to the West.²⁹ As a result, against expectations in the West, Russia as a successor state of the USSR did not fundamentally rewrite its identity following 1991.

This does not mean that Russia did not adjust its identity. Initially, Moscow chose cooperation with Western institutions and propagated the idea of a multipolar system in which it saw a role for itself as one of the

major poles. Yet at least since the late 1990s the idea of great powerhood became more important than that of partnership with the West. With the coming to power of President Vladimir Putin Russia embarked on an attempt to rectify the “internal excesses of the 1990s,” namely Russia’s pursuit of democracy that became associated with internal chaos and the rise of oligarchs and economic decline, and Russia’s external loss of status.³⁰

Thus, one of the central elements on which Russia builds its international identity is the attachment to a status as a great power. The attachment to the idea of great powerhood, which has been persistent over the centuries but has not been always matched by material reality, creates a reoccurring threat to Russia’s ontological security. What makes this threat particularly serious is that Russian political elites and public intellectuals formulate maxims about Russia’s need for great powerhood. As Iver Neumann frames it, “a constant within the overall Russian debate” about itself is that “Russia has to be a great power, or it will be nothing.”³¹ Since great powerhood not only depends on material status but also on recognition by other actors, the relationship with Russia’s significant others must be examined to understand Russia’s potential ontological security dilemmas.

(2a) The West and the EU

The main “other” for Russia has tended to be “the West,” initially Western European powers and from the mid-20th century the United States. This implies that these actors constituted main points of comparison for Russia, but it does not suggest that Russia necessarily saw itself as an outsider of Europe or the West. For centuries, the questions about Russia’s place in Western civilization, and the struggle to define its relationship with Europe, have fundamentally influenced internal political debates in Russia. Concerns about backwardness in relation to Western Europe have shaped a chronic sense of ontological insecurity for Russian elites, at least since the eighteenth century.³² Iver Neumann describes Russian politics as a permanent struggle between two competing camps.³³ The one (“Westernizers”) claimed that Russia’s success would come from emulating the West and believed that Russia needed to learn from Europe in order to catch up. This view created a central dilemma because it was difficult to reconcile with Russia’s great power identity. The other Neumann refers to as “Slavophiles” referring to the 19th-century idea that praised the distinctiveness of Slavic culture, emphasized Russia’s uniqueness, and claimed that Russia represented a better and “unspoiled” version of Europe. However, what both camps had in common was that Western Europe remained

a central point of reference. This, according to Viatcheslav Morozov, is the reason for Russia's key identity struggle.³⁴ He argues that Russia's discursive space has been fully "Europeanized" during several centuries of catching up modernization; and the social structure has evolved in a way that there are no groups within the country developing an alternative articulation of Russian identity. Against this background, Ayşe Zarakol suggests that the Marxist revolution was, among other things, a Russian response to its *stigma* in relation to the West, and the Soviet Union was a project that aimed at overtaking the West materially and ideologically.³⁵

This historically contentious relationship with the West shaped Russia's contemporary strategic culture and continues to influence its foreign policy. The West as a collective abstraction remains a key reference point for the conduct of foreign policy. Russia's relationship with the West is defined, on the one hand, by the pursuit of recognition as part of an "established club" of leading powers. On the other hand, the possibility that the West stigmatizes, excludes, or simply ignores Russia, and thereby undermines Russia's great power status, constitutes a potential ontological security threat.

Since the end of the Cold War Russia has routinized its relationship with the main actors that constitute the broad coalition of the West. These routines provided some ontological security in the face of the dissolution of the USSR and Russia's economic crisis. As Jeffry Mankoff argues, after the end of the Cold War Russia still regarded itself as a rival of the United States and aspired to become a power analogous to the US in a multipolar world order.³⁶ Since NATO, against Russia's hopes, was not dissolved, Moscow strived to make the institutional landscape in Europe more pluralistic. To counterbalance the role of NATO, it has continuously advocated strengthening the role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe. During the early years of Boris Yeltsin's presidency Russia pursued inclusion into Western institutional structures.

The most serious challenge for Russia in the post-Cold War period became NATO's eastward expansion in 1999 to encompass countries that were formerly part of the Warsaw Pact. Whether or not NATO's eastern expansion created a conventional security dilemma for Russia, as some IR scholars argue,³⁷ it certainly posed a serious ontological security problem. NATO's expansion into its former sphere of influence undermined Russia's "special role" in the region. However, because at the time Russia was too weak to prevent it, it coped by appealing to mutual declarations that both the West and Russia would take part in the formation of a new post-

Cold War international order. For example, in an interview in 2000, when asked about the possibility of Russia joining NATO, Putin said “why not?” and stressed that after all Russia was part of European culture.³⁸

Indeed, the West acknowledged Russia’s claim to an identity as a global power and took actions to include Russia into the new institutional order. In 1997 Russia became a member of the G8. NATO-Russia cooperation was advanced through the Partnership for Peace Programme in 1994 and the NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations of May 1997, which “defined the goals and mechanisms of consultation,” including the creation of the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council.³⁹ In 2002 the NATO-Russia Council was established as a forum to advance cooperation. All this suggests that the United States and other NATO members acknowledged that Moscow was an important partner that needed to be consulted as much as possible. This provided a bearable level of ontological security for Moscow against the uncertainty that came with the rapidly changing institutional landscape in Europe and Russia’s economic struggles in the 1990s and the early 2000s.

Russia’s relationship with Europe in the post-Cold War period has been in many ways even more differentiated than its relationship with the transatlantic West (the United States and NATO). Russia came to regard post-Cold War Europe as a web of institutions, such as the EU, NATO, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, but also their individual members. The attitude to the EU significantly evolved since the early 1990s. Initially, Russia viewed the EU as a “project in the making.” With its postmodern attitude to security the EU nevertheless represented a better part of the West than NATO and the United States for Moscow. Also, individual EU member states, for example Germany under Gerhard Schröder or Italy under Silvio Berlusconi, considered Russia an important partner and had more favorable attitudes to cooperation than the United States. At the same time, the existence of the European Union as a closely integrated community, which was reluctant to expand, especially following the “big bang” of 2004, made it more difficult for Russia to become an integral part of Europe. Instead, Russia would have to come to terms with its status outside of a closely integrated Europe. Moscow therefore preferred to focus on bilateral relations with major EU powers, and—if necessary—to play them off against the institutional center. This was part of what emerged as Russia’s general strategy to strengthen its relative position by exploiting divisions within the West.⁴⁰ Moscow therefore welcomed the ideological rift that emerged between the United States and key EU powers, for instance, over the Iraq War of 2003.

With the launch of the European Security Strategy (2003) and the European Neighborhood Policy (2005) the EU began to pursue a more ambitious and coordinated policy toward its neighborhood.⁴¹ It entailed a more strategic approach toward the Eastern neighborhood, including through the promotion of “European” norms, such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. This led to the Eastern Partnership in 2009, following the advocacy of Sweden and Poland, to deepen and strengthen relations between the EU, its member states, and its six Eastern neighbors: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.⁴² While these policies were limited in scope and had mixed effects, they contributed to a change in Russia’s perception of the EU as a “significant other.”

According to Richard Sakwa, a catalyst for the change in Russia-EU relations were the prodemocratic “color revolutions” in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgistan (2005), which also demanded greater autonomy from Moscow.⁴³ The endorsement of these movements by the United States and EU members led Russia to believe that the color revolutions themselves were part of a Western plot to weaken Russia’s position in the former Soviet space. These developments coincided with a decreasing involvement of the United States on the European continent following the Iraq War, which meant that the EU became the main “Western” actor in the former Soviet space.

Samokhvalov, who describes different representations of Europe in Russian discourses, argues that elites in Moscow began to negatively associate the EU with the concept of “Civilizing Europe.”⁴⁴ “Civilizing Europe” represents a Russian idea of Europe that acts as a missionary while at the same time aiming to expand its ideational sphere of influence. According to Sakwa, it was Moscow’s perception that the West, including the EU, was using democracy promotion as a cover to advance its strategic objectives, including regime change, in Russia’s neighborhood, that triggered the switch toward the policy of “neo-revisionism” under President Vladimir Putin.⁴⁵ Such a discourse implies that the EU’s action became a challenge to what Russia considered an acceptable status quo established in the 1990s. This policy strategy aimed not so much at changing the fundamentals of international order but to ensure that Russia (and other rising powers) continued to be treated as equals to the West.

It is important to note that even though Russia’s foreign policy was becoming increasingly revisionist and confrontational under Vladimir Putin, up until the Ukraine crisis of 2013–14 Russia’s actions in the close neighborhood did not seriously disrupt relations with the West. This was illustrated by the Russo-Georgian War of 2008.

After a very vague promise of NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia at the summit in Bucharest, long-term tensions over South Ossetia, an autonomous republic within Georgia, escalated. In the months preceding the conflict, Moscow was involved in reigniting tensions, among other things, through cyber attacks and violations of Georgian airspace, and issuing Russian passports to South Ossetian separatists. In March 2008, the lower chamber of the Duma recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. When Georgia launched a military offensive to regain control over South Ossetia, Russian forces invaded Georgia proper. The war delayed Georgia's membership perspective in NATO indefinitely, which was a strategic success for Russia.

The conflict also exposed deep fault lines within the West, which worked to Moscow's advantage. The United States criticized Russia's disproportionate attack on Georgia but did not become involved.⁴⁶ The EU, represented by French President Nicolas Sarkozy, handled the peace negotiations but decided against economic sanctions.⁴⁷ The war was largely treated as a regional conflict. Although a group of Central and Eastern European states protested, other EU members, particularly Italy but also Germany and France, did not want to compromise broader EU-Russia cooperation. The EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement negotiations, which were briefly suspended following the conflict, were quickly resumed. Most importantly, there was also no change in the general attitude toward Russia, and the EU quickly returned to "business as usual" in relations with Moscow.

To sum up, perceptions of the EU in Russia's strategic culture have gradually evolved. Initially, it was seen as a rather insignificant actor and played a marginal role for Russia compared to the United States and individual European states, such as Germany or France. Yet with projects like the European Neighborhood Policy and later the Eastern Partnership the possibility that the EU would become a competitor for Russia in the region became a growing ontological security threat. Until the Ukraine crisis this threat was balanced by the fact that overall the EU affirmed Russia's identity as a major power, in particular its claim to a special role in the former Soviet space. While not all members agreed with this, major EU member states continued to treat Russia as a partner and took its interest in the region into consideration. Berlin, for example, emphasized that Russia was an "important partner for overcoming regional and global challenges."⁴⁸ The overall consensus was that the EU's foreign policy of democracy promotion in its eastern neighborhood could not happen at the expense of stability in the region.

(2b) Ukraine and Neighborhood

The other main point of reference in Russian foreign policy are the countries of its close neighborhood. The close neighborhood, which broadly speaking includes countries of the former USSR, the Black Sea region, and the Balkans, fulfills an important role for Russia's self-identity as a great power. Ukraine has an especially central place in Russia's identity narratives. Since the Grand Duchy of Muscovy expanded in the sixteenth century it drew on the myth of the Kievan Rus', a federation of East Slavic duchies with its first capital in Kiev ruled by the Rurik dynasty from the ninth century. In the thirteenth century the Rus' Federation had fallen to the Mongols. Calling itself the direct heir of the Kievan Rus', Muscovy legitimized its competition over former Rus' territories with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Mongol khanate of the Golden Horde, which occupied large parts of today's Russia and Crimea.⁴⁹ This territorial expansion was referred to as the "collection of Russian lands."⁵⁰ The successful overthrow of the Golden Horde under Ivan Grozny marks the beginning of imperial Russia.

The ancient Rus' also plays a role for Russia's religious identity. The conversion to Orthodox Christianity in 998 AD by the Kievan prince Vladimir the Great endowed the modern Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian nations with a shared religion.⁵¹ In Russian religious traditions Orthodox Christianity is also connected to the religious philosophical concept of the Holy Rus', which combines elements of religion and statehood, and stresses the religious connectedness of the people of today's Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. As the geographical place of origin of Russia's foundational myths Ukraine came to be considered the heartland of Russian culture. Kiev is often believed to be the "mother of all Russian cities," a reference that Russian president Putin made in a speech on March 18, 2014 shortly after the annexation of Crimea.⁵²

Besides the religious mythology associated with the ancient Rus' a second component that defines Russia's relationship with Ukraine is the idea of Russia as the manifestation of a "Slavic Empire." This idea goes back to the late 18th and 19th century. After the partitions of Poland between 1773 and 1795, the Russian Empire became the only Slavic state encompassing most of Eastern and East Central Europe. This gave rise to intellectual movements such as Pan-Slavism. Associated particularly with Nikolay Yakovlevich Danilevsky, Pan-Slavism emphasized the connectedness of all Slavic people and believed in the political triumph of a single Slavic empire. This ideology returned in Soviet times as a justification of spread-

ing communism throughout Eastern Europe. Another intellectual movement developed in the 19th century by intellectuals, including Nikolai Trubetzkoy, which continues to inform Russia's strategic culture, is Eurasianism. It is the idea of a third continent between Europe and Asia—"Eurasia"—which represented a separate civilization, distinctive from both Europe and Asia.⁵³ This intellectual tradition also influences the thinking of the contemporary Russian philosopher Aleksandr Dugin. Sometimes cited as the intellectual who inspires Putin's foreign policy, Dugin propagates the idea of a clash of civilizations between the West and Eurasia.⁵⁴ As Andreas Umland argues, according to Dugin's neo-Eurasianism, the main conflict of world history consists in the confrontation between the collectivist and traditionalist Eurasian land powers and individualistic and liberal Atlantic maritime powers.⁵⁵ This argumentation is used to justify Russia's claim to Eastern and East Central Europe as a better civilizational alternative.

Thus, Russia's claim to a special role in the Slavic parts of Eastern Europe has simultaneously legitimized its claim to "great powerhood." In the post-Cold War era Russia's role as a great power in the post-Soviet region is dependent on upholding the narrative that countries of this region belong to a common cultural and geopolitical bloc. However, while Russia could bear the estrangement of its "outer empire," such as Poland, maintaining a close connection to its heartland, particularly Ukraine, has been essential. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia has sought to maintain a close affiliation with its former members through the Commonwealth of Independent States and by giving substance to Eurasian integration. Besides hard measures (e.g., threats of "gas wars"), Russia has been investing in soft power and cultural capital to keep Ukraine close.⁵⁶ The view that Russia and Ukraine are two aspects of a single civilization is promoted by the ruling elites under Putin, and widespread in Russia.⁵⁷ However, Ukrainians have been divided in this regard.

The above discussion points to the importance of Ukraine in Russian self-narratives. This implies that any striving for autonomy on the part of Ukraine constitutes an ontological security threat for Russia, and historically was met with opposition. The Russian Empire suppressed Ukrainian nationalist movements and attempts to create an independent Ukrainian political entity. Similarly, as Timothy Snyder explains, during the early Soviet era authorities in Moscow, on the one hand, supported the creation of modern (Soviet) Ukrainian culture.⁵⁸ On the other hand, Stalin launched a campaign to crush all national movement and resistance against Sovietization, resulting in the Great Famine of 1932–33. Fatefully, it

was also Ukrainian independence in December 1991, supported by an overwhelming 90.3 percent of Ukrainian voters, that led to the eventual dissolution of the USSR. Ukraine's aspiration for autonomy was one of the major factors that ultimately determined the end of the Soviet era, and therefore became one of the most serious challenges to Russian ontological security in the last century.

Finally, Ukraine, especially the Crimean Peninsula, constitutes an important access point to the Black Sea, which has both strategic and symbolic meaning in Russian identity narratives. Crimea is framed as the heartland of Russian nationhood since it was there that Prince Vladimir adopted Orthodoxy as the official religion of the people of Rus'. The conquest of Crimea from the Golden Horde and the expansion to the Black Sea basin was considered the defining moment in the rise of imperial Russia. Crimea had also been the last remaining seat of the Tatars, which Russia could only obtain in the late eighteenth century under Catherine the Great—an important symbolic victory. However, half a century later it was lost again in the Crimean War. Russia's defeat in 1854 to an alliance between the Ottoman Empire, Britain, and France simultaneously marked a turning point in the history of the Russian Empire. According to Iver Neumann, it was this defeat that led Russian elites to acknowledge that their empire was lagging behind Western Europe.⁵⁹ Vsevolod Samokhvalov's analysis of Soviet Russian textbooks reveals that particularly the Black Sea and the Balkans are depicted as the "Holy Grail for Russia," a Promised Land that is the final yet unattainable point of the empire's North-South Movement. The feeling of "greatness and exceptionality was to come from the accounts of Russia's involvement in the South."⁶⁰ The Black Sea is at the same time depicted as a place of civilizational struggle between European and "oriental" civilizations. Crimea and the Black Sea basin have therefore come to symbolize the struggle for imperial power in Russian national narratives.

To conclude, Russia's ontological security is tied to its identity as a great power, which again is strongly tied to its ability to manage the former Soviet space and the Black Sea region. This status also depends on recognition by significant others, that is, the countries of the former Soviet region and the "West." On the one hand, since the end of the Cold War the eastward expansion of Western institutions constituted a chronic ontological security threat for Russia. Russia could not take any meaningful actions to alleviate this threat. On the other hand, the West largely accepted Russia's great power status and special role in the former Soviet space. Whereas the United States took a harder line on Russia

it became increasingly disengaged in Europe toward the end of the presidency of George W. Bush.

Russia derived its ontological security from a routinized relationship with the West, which overall accepted Russia's claim to a global power status and its special role in the former Soviet bloc region. Even through these routines were occasionally disrupted, such as during the color revolutions, they were quickly recovered.

The European Union had initially only played a marginal role in Russia's strategic culture. However, the EU's "civilizational action" in Russia's neighborhood created some concerns for Moscow. In the next section, I will argue that the EU's Association Agreement with Ukraine and the EU's support of the Maidan Revolution posed the threat of an irreversible change in Ukraine's orientation and in the West's attitude toward the former Soviet bloc region. It was threatening the mutual recognition that Moscow needs to be consulted regarding matters in that region.

Russia's Response: Restoring Agency

The above analysis suggests that the EU's involvement in Russia's close neighborhood, particularly in Ukraine, constituted a lingering ontological security threat to Russia. While the EU has long been eager to attend to Russia's concerns about potential negative economic implications, and physical security concerns, it did not eliminate Russia's ontological security concerns. The EU was promoting the Association Agreement with Ukraine as an ambitious project to improve prosperity and stability for the region, which would benefit not only the participating parties but also Russia. Leading up to the Vilnius Summit in 2013, during which the EU was supposed to sign the AA/DCFTA with Ukraine and install the AA/DCFTAs with Moldova and Georgia, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy Štefan Füle claimed:

These agreements would represent a qualitative leap forward towards real transformation in our neighbourhood. This on its own would be a fantastic achievement. I call it a game changer.⁶¹

At the same time, the EU had abandoned any membership plans for Ukraine, and the Association Agreement was intended to replace a membership perspective. Apart from that, the EU was emphasizing that the AAs were about "soft" element that were supposed to promote reforms in

the partner countries toward democracy and the rule of law and foster economic development. There were no geopolitical ambitions tied to the agreement, also because the EU, at least at that point, lacked a clear overall strategic orientation in the relationship with its eastern neighbors.⁶²

Nevertheless, Russia saw the AA as an intervention of “civilizing Europe” into the heart of its “sphere of influence.” Therefore, Russia attempted to prevent it. Putin held a secret meeting with Ukrainian president Yanukovich to persuade him not to sign the agreement, and instead to enter a customs union with Russia.⁶³ On November 21, Yanukovich unexpectedly, for the EU and Ukrainian citizens, announced his withdrawal from the agreement. Russia’s attempt to prevent the signature of the AA was therefore nearly successful. It can be expected that the EU would have accepted the decision of the Ukrainian president to withdraw. After all, the EU itself had serious reasons to doubt the appropriateness of signing the AA with Ukraine. Given that Yanukovich’s Ukraine had failed to fulfill important reform plans in the area of human rights and the rule of law, there were loud voices in the EU advocating against the agreement.⁶⁴

On the night following the announcement, demonstrators gathered in Independence Square in Kiev to protest the decision to withdraw from the AA. While it later became about much more than the EU, initially the Maidan protests used the EU as a symbol. Thus, against its intentions, the EU became involved in a struggle over Ukraine’s future path.⁶⁵ The new government in Kiev openly rejected the “Russian vector” in Ukraine’s foreign policy and turned toward the EU. At this point, the EU decided to support Ukraine’s pro-Western choice. This created a serious ontological security threat to Russia because it undermined accustomed routines with both the EU and Ukraine that had been in place since the end of the Cold War. As Samokhvalov argues, “Even though the Revolution of Dignity was the expression of much deeper currents in Ukrainian society, the events were still read in Russia as Europe’s plot against Russia’s great Powerhood.”⁶⁶

Russia may have had reasons to perceive the AA as a threat not just to its ontological but its conventional security. Richard Sakwa argues that Russia saw the AA as a significant step toward Ukraine’s membership in the EU, which in turn was seen as an automatic precursor of NATO expansion, and therefore a threat to the current security order.

The project of European economic integration, and its associated peace project, effectively merged with the Euro-Atlantic security partnership, a fateful elision that undermined the rationale of both and which in the end provoked the Ukraine crisis.⁶⁷

According to Sakwa, the asymmetrical end of the Cold War effectively shut Russia out of the European alliance system and failed to establish a genuinely inclusive and equal European security system. The Ukraine crisis was therefore a result of the attempts to overcome existing asymmetries, which Russia had pursued since the coming to power of President Vladimir Putin.

However, first, it is unlikely that Russia had considered the EU's institutional expansion, the European Neighborhood Policy and Eastern Partnership, a physical security threat given the EU's limited military potential and strategic autonomy. More likely, Russia may have been threatened by the EU's activities in its neighborhood that promoted its social and economic model because it was aware of the possibility that Ukrainians would find the European model more attractive. Ceasing to be an ideologically attractive model in Ukraine would undercut Russia's role as a great power in the whole region. This in turn would undermine its legitimacy as a regional power and challenge a foundation of its identity. Second, negotiations of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement came at a time when relations between the West and Russia were stable and cooperation advanced. While the war with Georgia of 2008 had created a dip in Russia's relations with the West, relations with the EU had recovered fast. Also, the United States under the Obama administration had pushed the symbolic "reset button" in 2009. EU membership for Ukraine was not effectively considered.

It was not until the Maidan Revolution that accustomed routines became disrupted. That is because the EU and the United States changed their attitude toward Ukraine. For both, supporting pro-EU and pro-Western movements became a higher priority. With President Yanukovych being deposed, Russia's ability to control Ukraine's foreign policy was reduced, and with this its ability to control Ukraine's interaction with Europe. Moreover, the Maidan Revolution created the possibility of pro-Western movements in other parts of the former Soviet space. Accustomed routines of interaction with the West were therefore threatened to change more sustainably than after prior clashes, for example, over Georgia. Given that Russia's ontological security has developed to depend on its privileged relationship with Ukraine, it became a zero-sum situation. To regain agency, Russia entered and sustained the conflict. When the West reacted with sanctions to Russia's breach of international law, Moscow's elites framed it as an affirmation of their suspicion that the West had never been serious about cooperation. Mikhail Margelov, the head of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Russian Federation Council, claimed: "Since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis the West has failed to forsake

the principle according to which only Western interests are legitimate.”⁶⁸ Through representations of the West as an adversary Russian elites could legitimize their foreign policy actions. Russia therefore began to derive ontological security from conflict with the West.

Conclusion

Russia's reaction to the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement has been considered in the light of a conventional security dilemma. Proponents argue that the post-Cold War structure created disadvantageous conditions for Russia that generated security dilemmas, culminating in the Ukraine crisis.⁶⁹ In contrast, this chapter argues that there was no serious threat to Russia in the conventional security sense. Instead, the chapter shows that the AA challenged Russia's *ontological* security, which was based on an ambition of Russian policy elites to project power in the close neighborhood.

Already before the Ukraine crisis Putin's Russia had followed an increasingly neorevisionist policy in the neighborhood. Yet, at the same time, Moscow still pursued cooperation with the West, including the EU, since the West constitutes a “significant other” for Russia. Cooperation was affirming its role as a global power. The West, or at least important actors in the West, acknowledged this role and recognized that they needed to include Russia in dialogues regarding the region of the former Soviet bloc. This routinized relationship became a source of Russian ontological security after the turbulent period of the early 1990s. Where possible, Russia could additionally strengthen its position by exploiting divisions within the West. Routines were temporarily challenged by NATO enlargement, the color revolutions, and the Russo-Georgian War but were quickly restored.

However, the importance of Ukraine and the Black Sea region for Russia's great power status implied that the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement had potential for undermining Russian ontological security more effectively and sustainably. If Ukraine drifted toward the EU, Russia would lose its status in the region, which would undermine key elements of Russia's self-identity. Although Russia successfully coerced Ukrainian president Yanukovych to back out of the AA, the Maidan Revolution and the overthrow of Yanukovych became a critical juncture. It showed that a radical change of Ukraine's society and foreign policy orientation was possible. Both the public and the new elites in Kiev declared their commit-

ment to a “European path” for Ukraine. This significantly strengthened the EU’s soft power in the entire post-Soviet region for which the EU itself had not been prepared. The EU’s endorsement of the transformation in Ukraine was a departure from previously established routines in relations with Russia. This constituted the most serious ontological security crisis for Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union and thus reduced its agency. To restore its agency, Russia took the risk of deteriorating relations with the West with the annexation of Crimea, a clear violation of international law. The EU and the United States reacted to this with sanctions. This changed Russia’s relationship with the West from an assumed partnership to a more conflictual one, but the conflict allowed Russia to assert its status in the neighborhood, which provides ontological security.

Since the Ukraine crisis Russia has therefore derived ontological security from a conflictual relationship with the West. For the West it has increased uncertainty. The EU has only gradually shifted its foreign policy orientation to become a more strategic security actor. The election of Donald Trump as US president in 2016 complicated this situation further. On the one hand, the Trump administration supported continued sanctions on Russia and the strengthening of NATO’s eastern flank. On the other hand, isolationism and threats about US withdrawal from NATO made some Europeans consider the United States an unreliable partner. This further motivated EU members to take actions to increase the EU’s “strategic autonomy” through initiatives such as Permanent Structured Cooperation, the Preparatory Action on Defence Research, and the European Defence Industrial Development Programme. At the same time, the transatlantic crisis incentivized various groups of politicians and lobbyists within the EU to advocate for a return to cooperation with Russia.⁷⁰ While these voices remained marginal throughout President Trump’s tenure, they alarmed particularly member states on the “eastern flank.” This uncertainty can further enable Russia’s power as Moscow could exploit these divisions within the West.

NOTES

1. Tombinski 2013.
2. See Bildt 2015: 7.
3. See, e.g., Mitzen 2006; Zarakol 2011.
4. Giddens 1991.
5. Giddens 1991.
6. Mitzen 2006.
7. Mälksoo 2015, 224.

8. Giddens 1991, 38–39.
9. Giddens 1991.
10. Huysmans 1998; Kinnvall 2004; Mitzen 2006; Zarakol 2010; Mälksoo 2015; Ejodus 2018; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017; Mitzen and Larson 2017.
11. Fazal 2007.
12. Mälksoo 2015, 224.
13. Mitzen 2006.
14. Ejodus 2018.
15. Das 2010.
16. Huysmans 1998, 142.
17. Steele 2008.
18. Mitzen 2006.
19. Ejodus 2018.
20. Mitzen 2006.
21. Mitzen 2006.
22. See Longhurst 2004; Meyer 2006; Das 2010.
23. See Mankoff 2009; Neumann 2017; Samokhvalov 2017.
24. Zarakol 2011, 204.
25. Zarakol 2011.
26. Samokhvalov 2017, 12.
27. Cited in Mankoff 2009, 22.
28. Zarakol, 2011, 224.
29. See Clines 1992.
30. Sakwa 2016, 28.
31. Neumann 2017, 186.
32. Zarakol 2011.
33. Neumann 2017.
34. Morozov 2015.
35. Zarakol 2011.
36. Mankoff 2009, 153.
37. E.g., Kydd 2001.
38. Cited in Sakwa 2016, 45.
39. Mankoff 2009, 167.
40. Mankoff 2009, 17.
41. See Smith 2005.
42. See Krasnodębska 2016.
43. Sakwa 2016, 34.
44. Samokhvalov 2017, 150–52.
45. Sakwa 2016.
46. Asmus 2010.
47. *Euractiv*, August 25, 2008.
48. Meister 2014, 3.
49. Halecki 1952.
50. Zientara 1995, 79.
51. Sakwa 2016, 8.
52. *Washington Post* 2014.
53. Nowak 2004, 290–302.

54. See Tolstoy and McCaffray 2015.
55. Umland 2018.
56. Feklyunina 2016.
57. Sakwa 2016: 8.
58. Snyder 2003.
59. Neumann 2017, 52.
60. Samokhvalov 2017, 50.
61. Füle 2013.
62. See Howorth 2017.
63. *Guardian* 2013.
64. See Krasnodębska 2016.
65. See Krasnodębska 2018.
66. Samokhvalov 2017, 224.
67. Sakwa 2016, xii.
68. Cited in Sakwa 2016, 5.
69. See Sakwa 2016; Kydd 2001.
70. See, e.g., Buck 2018; RFE/RL 2018.

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7 | Death by a Thousand Cuts

Is Russia Winning the Information War with the West?

Ryan C. Maness

With the 2016 US presidential election fresh in memory, the Emmanuel Macron campaign for French president had not ruled out the fact that it may suffer the same fate as the Hillary Clinton campaign, which was infiltrated by the APT 28 hacking group, colorfully known as Fancy-Bear.¹ Indeed, on the Friday before the May 7 runoff election with far-right candidate Marine Le Pen, a large trove of information that seemed to originate from the Macron campaign's "information systems and mail accounts from some of his campaign managers"² was released through various social networks. In what seemed to be a repeat of the DNC hacks, where Russian hacking groups breached the US political party's emails and networks and subsequently released them through the whistleblowing site WikiLeaks, at the time it was becoming apparent that Russia was willing and able to meddle in the free elections of the world's two oldest democracies.³

In addition to US and French data breaches, Russian hacking fingerprints have also been found all over data breaches in Ukraine, and to a lesser degree in Georgia, Estonia, Lithuania, the UK, Poland, Canada, Spain, and Germany, among others.⁴ A large part of these cyber incidents has been disruptive and probing campaigns, but a growing number of more recent cyber actions have been actions with the intent to steal information for political gain, and then using this stolen information to launch disinformation campaigns at critical times in these countries' election cycles.⁵

These accusations of Russian effects on Western democratic norms, institutions, and principles pose an important question that this chapter will

attempt to answer: Is Russia winning the information war with the West? There have been declarations that they are winning this war, but these are largely based on emotive reactions, partisan bias, and worst-case thinking. This chapter will attempt to measure the effects of this cyber and information campaigns by looking at the certain institutional attributes of several countries, which include the US and EU countries and their recent electoral outcomes to see if Russian influence campaigns are more successful in some Western democracies and less successful in others. Utilization of the comparative method,⁶ also known as qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), to uncover necessary and sufficient conditions for successful Russian information warfare campaigns in Western democracies is undertaken.

Previous research⁷ has found that for the years 2000 to 2014, states in the international system have been relatively restrained from using cyber tactics that could lead to escalatory relations with their rivals. Instead, we have seen a majority of state-based cyber incidents being low level disruptive attacks such as website defacements or distributed denial of service (DDoS) incidents, or economic espionage cyber campaigns, largely from China.⁸ Russia had been as restrained as any state in the international system in the cyber domain, as it had only been launching defacements and DDoS campaigns against its former Soviet vassals or probing campaigns against its longtime rival, the United States, from around 2006–11.

From 2012 on, Russia has changed its strategies against the West as Moscow began to feel more and more threatened by US and EU incursions into post-Soviet space with talk of more NATO expansion, Western capital investments, and support for pro-Western, anti-Moscow political campaigns in these countries.⁹ Post-Soviet Russia's weakened state had it on the defensive, and raw hard power has not been enough to compel the West out of what Russia saw as its exclusive sphere of influence. An old Soviet tactic was revived for Russia's 21st century conflict for Russia by General Vasyli Gerasimov, who became head of the armed forces' general staff and pushed for an old approach in a new domain (cyber) for Russian power projection in the modern age.¹⁰ Popularly known as hybrid warfare, but more specifically the strategy of reflexive control or nonlinear warfare, is now taking shape in Russian military doctrine as well as practice. Explained in more detail in the following pages, the use of the cyber domain to swiftly spread disinformation not only in one's enemy's government, but also in its larger population, is a key part of this old Soviet strategy applied to modern Russia's foreign policy outlook.

The reflexive control theory "is defined as a means of conveying to a partner or an opponent specially prepared information to incline him to

voluntarily make the predetermined decision desired by the initiator of the action,”¹¹ or “a method by which a controlling party can influence an opponent into unknowingly making bad decisions by interfering with its perceptions.”¹² One could posit that as Russia continues to wane in power on the economic and military fronts when compared with its Western counterparts, it is in the cyber domain where Russia can seize the advantage and use its power of cyber and disinformation capabilities to achieve its national interest while at the same time weakening the United States and its EU allies, all without escalation in the military domain.

This old Soviet theory is now being tested in and possibly succeeding in the cyber domain. It is the intent of this chapter to see what conditions institutionally as well as contextually allow for Russian cyber and disinformation campaigns in recent political campaigns in the United States and Europe to succeed or not; using the qualitative comparative analysis method.¹³ The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows: first, an overview of what mainly Western scholars call the “Gerasimov Doctrine” of nonlinear warfare is unpacked and discussed that will set up the hypotheses of the empirical analyses of this study;¹⁴ second, a historical background section on Russian identity and its place in the world that will describe the motive behind Russia’s recent actions in cyberspace. A research design section will then lead into the data analysis section that will segue into an assessment of the findings, with concluding remarks about possible policies that Western governments can use to ebb the flow of Russian disinformation campaigns in their political and electoral processes.

Nonlinear Warfare and Election Interference

Russia’s current strategies in the digital realm can be traced back to Soviet military doctrine in the 1970s.¹⁵ The Russian integration of information campaigns into military doctrine goes back decades, and the cyber domain has allowed for these strategies to be used in arguably more effective ways. This doctrinal theory is known as reflexive control, where a geopolitical actor enacts action that encourages or provokes its enemy into behaving in a way that is in the interest of the initiator.¹⁶ Deception, disruption, and disinformation are tools to achieve this goal.¹⁷ Russia resurrected this military strategy in 2012 partly as a result of the promotion of General Valery Gerasimov to chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia, as well as that country’s deputy defense minister.¹⁸ The redirection of Russian

military strategy went back to its Soviet roots, and is known more commonly as “hybrid” warfare, or nonlinear or political warfare.¹⁹ This chapter will use the more apt term nonlinear warfare.

Nonlinear warfare loosely defined is using the combination of military, cultural technological, information, diplomatic, and economic tactics as leverage to reach a strategic objective and in turn support Russia’s national interest.²⁰ Which tactics will be utilized against an enemy depends on not only the goals of the Kremlin but also the attributes of the target state it is attempting to subvert. Since the ouster of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych in Ukraine in 2014, Russia has used every lever of power in the nonlinear model to subvert Kyiv’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, critical infrastructure, and the overall morale of the government and general population.²¹ From the annexation of Crimea, to the mysterious shooting down of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17, to the degrading of Ukrainian power plants through espionage and cyber means, to the rampant disinformation campaigns in Ukrainian cyberspace, Russia has created a divided Ukraine where its EU and NATO membership ambitions to integrate with the West is now a long way from achievement.²²

Russian nonlinear tactics in the United States and European countries are more limited when compared with Ukraine. Nearly all tactics launched against these countries are in the digital realm, with occasional diplomatic overtures of denial that the Kremlin is responsible for any wrongdoing in Western cyberspace.²³ These “gaslighting” tactics are part of the nonlinear 4D strategy of dismiss, distort, distract, and dismay so that confusion and doubt take hold in the body politic of these countries and the West slowly becomes preoccupied with its own internal divisions to worry about Russian foreign policy actions.²⁴ As Russia cannot match the United States in conventional military circles without escalation to possible nuclear war, and has no economic levers of power on much of the West, it utilizes its power in cyber capabilities and expertise in disinformation campaigns.²⁵

Russia’s cyber and disinformation campaigns against Western countries are a result of the challenge to status quo politicians and policies due to widespread dissatisfaction over many in the electorate over globalization, migration, and continued international institutional integration that has allowed for great peace and prosperity since the end of World War II.²⁶ However, the neoliberal order that has been championed by the status quo has also led to a backlash by many in the West as it has not addressed wage stagnation, unwanted immigration, and a sense of a loss of national identity.²⁷ Russia is taking advantage of these political fissures through the cyber domain; it’s a cheaper, easier, and, perhaps most importantly, non-

escalatory foreign policy tactic that is helping the countries of the EU and the United States divide themselves from within, allowing more freedom for Russia to pursue its national interests in global affairs.²⁸

During the 2016 US presidential election, along with the strategic hacking of Democratic Party organizations and individuals, followed by the strategically timed release of this stolen information to whistleblowing site WikiLeaks, Russia also used its state-owned media organizations such as RT and Sputnik to spread pro-Russian narratives and propaganda that were picked up by biased news organizations such as Breitbart and the Drudge Report; used social media sites such as Facebook to set up divisive fake political pages, such as DC Leaks; and used Twitter to troll unsuspecting users with bots created by employees of several “troll farms” spread throughout Russia.²⁹ Although it is not clear that getting populist candidate Donald Trump elected to the White House was the ultimate goal, painting Hillary Clinton in a negative light and dividing the US electorate was a clear goal of these disinformation campaigns.³⁰

The Russian effort in the United States was extensive, and these efforts were similarly found in the countries under examination in the data analysis below: the United Kingdom, Ukraine, Spain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria. For all of these countries, the cyber and disinformation campaigns targeted candidates and policies that defended the status quo in order for insurgent candidates or policies to gain popularity. In the United States it is estimated that Russian ad buys on Facebook reached roughly 126 million users, with an additional 20 million being exposed to Russian efforts on Instagram.³¹ Twitter has reported that 2,752 accounts were engaged in spreading disinformation on the platform, with an additional 36,000 Russian bots that tweeted 1.4 million times during the election period.³² Google reports that 1,108 videos appeared on YouTube with 43 hours of propagandist content from Russia.³³ Similar efforts are now assumed to have happened in Europe as well.

Russian reflexive control military doctrine is being waged against the United States and its EU allies. What has driven Russia to use these tactics that use Western institutions against themselves? The freedom of information and the pillars of liberal democracy have been exploited by Russian nonlinear warfare. The question that remains is, why? The next section uncovers that Russian identity issues may be behind the motivations of Gerasimov and Putin to weaken the West with a cheap yet effective strategy that simultaneously leaves a weak Russia to pursue its great power ambitions.

Rivalry, Russian Identity, and Great Power Status

Russia is in an identity crisis, and this is not the first time. In the late 17th century, Peter the Great saw that for Russia to be on par with the other great powers of Europe, it had to become European as well. He built a European capital from scratch in St. Petersburg, a port city with access to Europe and a naval port for his growing Russian navy. A century later, Tsar Alexander I saw Russia's role in European stability as the tipping point in defeating Napoleon. Stalin saw the scourge of the Nazis on the European continent during its "Great Patriotic War" as a calling for Russia to eradicate. Today, Russian president Vladimir Putin sees Russia's special role once again, this time to bring stability to the region of post-Soviet space, as well as to be a balancing factor with China against the global hegemon, the United States. For all of these examples, Russian rulers have perceived their state as a great power that has a role to play in countering Western power and interests around the globe. Contemporary times are no different.

Great power identity is thus uniquely important to the Russian state, and Andrei Tsygankov³⁴ asserts that the peculiarities of Russian national identity are the key factors in explaining why Russians mistrust the West and seek to reassert Russian power in whatever form they can. Putin has been a key factor in this process as his administration revived, for many, the idea of a great and powerful Russia able to protect and project its interests across the globe. However, post-Soviet Russia's dependence on energy prices for its economic health limits its abilities to assert its will in the conventional military domain when compared its ability during Soviet times. For today's Russia, power projection is seen as achievable through more unconventional means, first through its energy power, although it is limited due to global price fluctuations. Another power projection that has gained focus more recently is Russia's use of information manipulation through the cyber domain, not only against its former vassal states such as Estonia, Georgia, and Ukraine but also its Western rivals, namely France, Germany, and the United States.

Ryan Maness and Brandon Valeriano³⁵ have found that power politics and their use in international interactions are mainly present in two contexts: rivalries and salient issues. Power politics tactics can both create and make enduring an international rivalry.³⁶ For states embroiled in a rivalry, power politics and the use of coercive diplomacy becomes part of what is known as the normal relations range of interaction.³⁷ Past interactions

between two rival states need to be examined to understand the challenges that states face in stopping rivalry behavior.³⁸ In other words, the past shapes the future, and the use of cyber tactics by the Russian government and its proxies can be analyzed in this context. Conflict events, even in the distant past, influence how states respond to contemporary challenges.

The other form of interactions involving power politics behavior are salient critical issues that can take on symbolic stakes. These issues are typically territorial issues, but they can also take the form of transcendent issues that can become intangible.³⁹ These include regime leadership, hierarchical power relationships, or political ideology in a region. For Russia, keeping the states of the former Soviet Union within its sphere of influence and out of the West's, NATO expansion, EU and US sanctions, and great power identity are all on the top of the list as salient issues for Moscow.⁴⁰ Using cyber tactics as a result of these interests being threatened in some way, therefore, is expected, especially when the United States is the culprit threatening these salient issues and interests.

Rivalries are the most conflict-prone pairs of states in the international system.⁴¹ Major aspects of the behavior of rivals include the desire to burn the other side regardless of the cost to the initiating rival state, the use of power politics to achieve zero-sum gains, and the addiction to this cycle of conflictual relations.⁴² The post-Soviet space region for Russia provides buffer zones to make it feel more secure. One of post-Cold War Russia's major foreign policy goals is to keep and maintain these buffer zones. This has been hampered, as NATO expansion in 1999 and 2004 has brought the anti-Soviet alliance to Russia's borders.⁴³ Furthermore, Western incursions either diplomatically, economically, or militarily due to the relative weakness of the Russian state in the 1990s have made Russia's reassertions over the region particularly difficult for the Putin administration.

Therefore, Russia's desire to reestablish control over post-Soviet space increases the probability of discordant relations and conflict. This is especially apparent when there is the presence of a rivalry in the region. Here the US and Russia spar over differences in foreign policy preferences in the European and Caucasus regional security complexes. Russia wishes to dominate the region for energy monopolization, security, and prestige. The US seeks economic liberalization, political pluralism, and, more recently, an intensified security relationship based around energy issues.⁴⁴ Rivalries, I argue in this chapter, can therefore be exacerbated by economic discord.⁴⁵ The Russian economy is now suffering in the face of low oil and gas prices and has turned to the cyber realm to project its power with the United States and the West, leading to the first hypothesis:

H1: *Russian cyber and information strategies will be successful with its rivals rather than its nonrivals.*

Russian rivals to be used in this analysis, according to the Klein, Diehl, and Goertz dataset, include the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine. These leave as nonrivals France, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, and Austria.⁴⁶ Russia is currently limited in its energy power projection due to low energy prices, which it depends upon to fill state coffers to spend on military hardware, innovation, and interventions abroad. The Kremlin is exhausting its resources as it continues to intervene in the Syrian civil war on President Bashar al-Assad's behalf and on behalf of the separatist rebels in the Ukrainian civil conflict. If oil and gas prices continue to remain low through 2017 and 2018, Russia's financial sustainability will be in peril, with its reserves projected to run out in mid-2018 if it continues its spending on foreign interventions at its current rate.⁴⁷ However, when projecting its power against its Western rivals, it has found a cheaper and easier way: utilizing its cyber capabilities and disinformation skills to sow discontent and division within Western governments as well as within their populations. With the nuclear option off the table and the fact that the United States and NATO countries outmatch Russia both militarily and economically, it is in the cyber domain where Russia will engage its rivals as well as its nonrivals to project its power and promote its national interests.

Western Institutional and Contextual Variables

In addition to rivalry, what other variables could influence the success or failure of these Russian digital incursions into Western political processes? Do presidential systems allow for more success than parliamentary ones? Do different restrictions or allowances for the press allow for the Russian disinformation to spread or be contained in the hearts and minds of the electorate? Are federal democracies more susceptible than those with strong central governments? What about the amount of minority populations in a country? Is the country under examination overly dependent on Russian oil or natural gas? This leads to the second and third hypotheses:

H2: *The institutional variables of types of electoral systems, free press operations, and federalist structures of Western countries will influence the success or failure of Russian cyber and information operations.*

H3: *The contextual variables of minority populations and Russian energy dependence will influence the success or failure of Russian cyber and information operations.*

Presidential systems will be more susceptible to Russian information operations than parliamentary systems because the presidential system is more likely to attract cults of personality. These systems are composed of electoral campaigns that are usually candidate centered rather than party centered, where showmanship and individuality matter more to electoral victory than do policy proposals or party platforms.⁴⁸ Russian information operations will be able to influence potential voters around a populist individual more easily with a simplistic message than they will a multipolicy, technocratic party platform. How the press operates in a country, where bias and unequal reporting can sometimes mire the truth and trickle down into voting sects, can allow Russian disinformation to spread rapidly and enter the political discourse in free societies, with voters making decisions based on information that is not true.⁴⁹ This could allow for Russian information operations to gain traction and change the political status quo in these countries. Social network giants such as Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and the like that reach large amounts of people and specific demographics are also potential influence platforms for Russian internet “trolls” that are part of the Kremlin’s sophisticated information operations. Finally, whether a Western democracy is a federal republic or not will have an effect in terms of influence from Russian disinformation campaigns. Federal systems have more layers of government and diffusion of power, which can lead to regional identities that Russian information operatives can exploit and sow divisions within Western countries’ populations.⁵⁰ A prime example is the Catalonia independence movement in Spain.

These coded binary institutional variables, which will be disseminated in the following section, assume that Russia is taking advantage of the freedoms enjoyed and oftentimes taken for granted in Western political culture. The different ways elections are decided, how much the press is compelled to report without bias and allow for equal time for different points of view operates in a society, and how much power is diffused from the central government, are all attributes of Western democracies that Russia exploits and sees as a weakness and therefore an opportunity to weaken its geopolitical opponents in Europe and North America. Therefore, these three attributes are considered in finding conditions that may allow for Russian information operations in the West to have influence and are coded as variables for the analysis below.

There are two contextual variables that will be taken into consideration and explained more in the research design below. The first is whether or not there is a large minority population in the Western country. If so, Russian information operatives will be able to exploit the ethnic or racial cleavages that may be simmering within the population through social media platforms, as Russia is known for doing in the United States during the 2016 election cycle. Heterogenous populations should lead to conditions where Russian information operations will have more influence. Another contextual variable that may lead to more effort by Russian information operations is key to the Kremlin's wallet: whether the Western country is dependent on Russian natural gas imports for energy sustainability. Russia, it can be posited, would want to make sure its most energy dependent customers remained so and would want to influence candidates or political movements to ensure that this economic relationship remains in place. Ukraine and Germany are countries highly dependent on Russian energy, so it can be expected that Russian information operations will be more concentrated and better funded in these countries.

Caveats to this analytical approach are many. In the research design that is mapped out below, this analytical approach is dealing with events that are grounded in theories of complex systems and nonlinear warfare.⁵¹ The basic premise behind these schools of thought is that small, incremental events, when taken together, can have much larger, disproportionate effects. Applied to Russian information operations in the West, the combination of cyber espionage and strategic information dumps to WikiLeaks, the news reporting on RT and Sputnik, the fake news sites and social media pages set up by Russian operatives, and the Twitter "troll" factories that cause division and anger on the social media site all have small effects in isolation but, taken as a whole, the idea is that these operations have the capability to sway elections, cause irreparable divisions, and, in extreme cases, lead to civil unrest and war.⁵² In the social sciences, both quantitative and qualitative usually require linear association, that X will lead to Y, and complex and nonlinear approaches are usually difficult to apply to the behavioral sciences. The comparative method, also known as qualitative comparative analysis, is suited for this task and will be the next topic of discussion.

Research Design

The qualitative comparative analysis was introduced and developed by sociologist Charles Ragin⁵³ for social science research. QCA is a useful

methodological tool for analyses with a limited amount of cases but multiple independent variables. As this analysis is limited in cases, and is not assuming a linear relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, QCA is the appropriate method for uncovering the research question of Russian information warfare success or failure in Western countries. Each independent variable in the following analysis will be treated as additive and will be considered to have equal explanatory power on the outcome variable of the presence or absence of status quo change in the body politic for each country under examination.

There are two forms of QCA analysis that can be utilized: fuzzy set and crisp set analysis.⁵⁴ This chapter uses the crisp set method, which involves binary coding for all variables and uses the logic of Boolean algebra.⁵⁵ All variables are coded as either “1” or “0” depending on the presence or absence of the coding threshold for each variable, which is discussed below. The ultimate goal of QCA analysis is to find necessary and sufficient conditions for the outcome variable to occur, or be present. A necessary condition is one such that an independent variable must be present for the outcome variable to occur.⁵⁶ A sufficient condition translates to a situation where if an independent variable is present, the dependent variable must follow; in other words, x guarantees y .

Crisp set QCA takes the logic of Boolean algebra and applies it to social and political phenomena. Independent binary variables are measured against the presence or absence of the dependent variable for each case, and reductions are made to uncover the necessary and sufficient conditions. A truth table is constructed that displays the various combinations for each case in the analysis to get a sense of which independent variables could be necessary or sufficient conditions.⁵⁷ For this study, different combinations of the independent variables of the presence or absence of rivalry, presidential electoral systems, press operations, federal systems of government, significant minority populations, and Russian natural gas dependence for Western countries and their effects on the presence or absence of Russian information warfare success or failure. These truth tables are then used for steps that lead to the answers as to which independent variables are necessary and sufficient conditions and these steps include Boolean addition, multiplication, combinatorial logic, and minimization.⁵⁸

The unit of analysis is Western countries that have been recent victims of Russian information campaigns in their political space. The independent variable of the presence or absence of rivalry is coded based on results of the James Klein, Gary Goertz, and Paul Diehl⁵⁹ dataset on enduring

rivals. A Western country is considered to be a rival with the Russian state, where the presence of recent conflict must happen within a certain time frame. If rivalry is present in the dyad of a Western country, the variable is coded as “1,” “0” otherwise. If a rivalry is present in a case in this analysis, it is expected that Russia would put more resources and effort into the cyber and disinformation campaigns in the Western country in order to disrupt the political status quo and cause internal strife so that the government is distracted from other priorities such as world affairs. Russia would then be able to pursue its national interest with less pushback from that Western country.

The next independent binary variable in the QCA analysis measures the presence or absence of a presidential, nonproportional representation electoral system for Western countries and the dataset constructed by Nils-Christian Bormann and Matt Golder⁶⁰ is utilized. A variable for each case is coded as “1” if the Western country has this electoral system, “0” otherwise. Presidential and single-member district systems allow for campaigns to be more centered around individual candidates rather than party platforms that are more prevalent in parliamentary, proportional representation democracies. Voters in presidential systems are therefore more likely to be attracted by individual charisma and rhetoric rather than the party platforms to which voters in proportional systems are more likely to be drawn.

How the press operates in a Western country is the next binary variable in the QCA analysis presented in the next section. Some Western countries have either mandates or statutes for media companies that require equal time for political viewpoints. In some countries such as the United States, there has been a proliferation of media entities that report only one viewpoint on the political spectrum where consumers of their reports are exposed to this limited viewpoint that reinforces itself over time. Russian information operatives then capitalize on this political bias and spread more misinformation that sows more divisions and discontent within the general population. Fake news runs rampant on social media sites, where in some cases violence can even be inspired.

To decide on the presence or absence of country press operations that have the potential to allow for Russian information operations to proliferate in this manner, the Reporters Without Borders data on press freedoms is utilized.⁶¹ This index measures press freedom based on seven macro indicators that ask members of the press in each country 87 questions. These indicators include pluralism, which measures the degree to which opinions are represented in the media; media indepen-

dence, which measures how independently the media is allowed to operate free of influence not just from parties and the government but also from business and religious power; environment and self-censorship, which looks at the overall environment in which news and information providers operate; legislative framework, which looks at the overall governance of the media by legislatures; transparency, which measures the transparency of the institutions and procedures that affect production of the news; infrastructure, which measures the quality of the infrastructure that supports the production of news and information; and abuses, which measures the level of abuses and violence against the media in a country.⁶² The index is a descending scale, where the lower the score, the more free the press is considered to be in a country.

As all Western countries have a more or less free press, deciding on the logical cut points for media operations and freedom is subjective. However, there are some Western countries that have certain requirements for the press, including equal time for different political perspectives and penalties for the reporting of false stories and fake news. Reporters Without Borders considers countries with index scores fewer than 15 is considered the freest media in this regard, with many Western countries being coded above this score. Therefore, this is considered the best cut point for the binary coding for the QCA in this chapter, and countries that have a score above 15 in the RWB index are coded as “1,” and are coded as “0” if they are scored below 15 in the index. Fifteen is the median score for the countries under examination, and it is expected that countries with scores of “1” will be more susceptible to Russian influence operations.

The next independent variable measures the presence or absence of federal systems of government in Western countries. If a Western country is considered to be federalist, where there are multiple layers of government at the local, regional, and national levels, that country is coded as “1,” “0” if the Western country has a strong central national government that wields most of the power. It is expected that federal systems will be more prone to influence by Russian information campaigns, as regional differences and loyalties can be exploited to divide the electorate and sow discontent in the body politic more easily than in countries that have a primarily national identity. The Catalanian independence movement in Spain is an example of this regional identity that Russian information operations can exploit.

The presence of large minority populations in Western countries can also be a point to exploit by the Russian information warfare apparatus. Racial and ethnic divisions in the West have become more apparent with

the rise of populist candidates, and fanning the flames of this prejudice and racism can be exploited to great effect by Russian disinformation operatives on social media platforms. This contextual variable is coded as “1” if a Western country has over a 15 percent minority population, “0” otherwise. The reason 15 percent is chosen as the cut point is because it is the median minority population for the sample of eight countries under examination. Therefore, it is expected that half will be above this cut point, and half below. Data for this variable is extracted from Infoplease.⁶³

The final independent variable is also contextual and measures dependence on Russian natural gas for the Western countries in the QCA analysis. Countries that rely on Russian natural gas are important to the Kremlin’s bottom line, and governments that may seek alternative means of energy would be a blow to Russia’s national interest. Therefore, it would be expected that Russian influence campaigns would be more prevalent and sophisticated in these countries, where the victory of the party or candidate that would continue dependence on Russian hydrocarbons would be the goal. For this variable, where the data is extracted from the European Council on Foreign Relations, countries that are dependent on Russia for 30 percent or more of their gas imports are coded as “1,” “0” otherwise.⁶⁴ It is assumed that if a country is dependent on Russian gas, this dependence is utilized by the Kremlin geopolitically.

The dependent variable measures the success or failure of Russian information operations in target Western countries. Conceptualization of this variable is subjective and reducing success or failure into a binary variable can be seen as an overgeneralization of more complex events. However, as we are not looking for causal relationships in this analysis, and each country has endured its own unique dynamics regarding Russian interference in their political spheres. The simplest way to measure success or failure regarding Russian disinformation campaigns is to see whether or not the status quo has been changed in that country after a high-profile electoral campaign. Did the group or party that was targeted by Russian information operations lose in their campaign that led to status quo change in the country is the main question asked when coding this variable.⁶⁵

It must be reiterated that we are not assuming that Russia single-handedly tipped the scales for populist candidates or platforms challenging the status quo in these countries—that is, we are not assuming linear relationships or causality. As Russian disinformation campaigns are considered part of its nonlinear strategy of warfare, these tactics’ effects are also assumed to be nonlinear.⁶⁶ Divisions and discontent in the political

arena in Western countries already exist; it is assumed that Russian cyber and disinformation campaigns exploited these divisions, and tipped the electorate to change the status quo that is in the national interest of Russia, which is primarily to keep the West occupied with its internal problems so that it can more freely pursue its geopolitical goals. We now turn to the results of the QCA analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Table 7.1 reports the truth table summarizing the binary variable combinations for the institutional and contextual variables of Western countries and the outcomes of Russian information operations' possible impact on status quo change in Western politics. Looking at the table, it appears that two independent variables stand out regarding cases where Russian information operations are deemed successful: press restrictions and minority populations. Regarding press restrictions, not requiring equal time by major networks and newspapers can lead to preconceived biases for consumers of only one or two sources of information in these countries. Russian information cyber and information operations would be able to capitalize on these preconceived views, as they did during the 2016 presidential election by hacking the DNC and releasing doxed information to the whistleblowing site WikiLeaks. Russian information operatives also set up false Facebook pages that appealed to these low-information, right-leaning voters that fanned the flames of the perception of Hillary Clinton and Democrats not just as political opponents, but as enemies of the American people.⁶⁷ The same was done for mainstream media outlets such as CNN, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*. Russian trolls and bots were also used on Twitter and flooded the mentions of tweets such as Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, and Bernie Sanders to sow discontent among American voters.⁶⁸ It is therefore no surprise that the allowance of biased media outlets seem to be an important explanatory factor in successful Russian information operations.

Table 7.1 also shows that the presence of a sizeable minority population is also an important factor when it comes to Russian information success. Racial and ethnic divisions in a country have long been a focal point of division and discontent in countries that have minority populations. The concept of an "other" as the source of discontent in majority populations has always been a political tool for ambitious politicians. For the US the perception of nonwhite immigrants taking jobs from white Americans

was met with widespread appeal for the Trump campaign.⁶⁹ “Leave” proponents in the Brexit campaign sold to the public that Europeans and immigrants from other parts of the world were holding native British back and leaving the EU was the way to fix this.⁷⁰ Ethnic Russians in Ukraine were targeted by Russian information tactics in order for these citizens to develop stronger ties and loyalty to Russia rather than the Kyiv government that was portrayed as fascist.⁷¹ This laid the groundwork for the Crimean annexation and the separatist movements in eastern Ukraine that exist to this day. For Ukraine, its ambitions for EU and NATO membership are now a very distant possibility due to Russian actions. The Catalanian independence movement in Spain is also a point of contestation that the Russian information warfare apparatus has exploited. At the time of this writing, the Catalanian referendum voted to leave Spain, the legislature had declared independence, and the central government in Madrid had dissolved the regional Catalanian government.

The final independent variable that shows explanatory promise is the one measuring rivalry. Three of the four cases where Russian information operations (IO) are considered a success have this variable present. Only Spain is not considered Russia’s geopolitical rival in this group.⁷² Furthermore, all of the cases where Russian IO success is not present are not considered rivals of Russia. This leaves the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine as the geopolitical rivals of Russia in the data analysis, and all three countries have recently had the political status quo uprooted. It is therefore not surprising to observe this connection in the truth table analysis. Next is an appraisal of the QCA analysis that minimizes our independent variable combinations into necessary and sufficient conditions.

TABLE 7.1. Truth Table for Western Institutional and Contextual Variables and Outcomes of Russian Information Operations

Country	Rivalry	Presidential System	Press Restrictions	Federalism	Minority	Gas Dependence	Status Quo Loss?
US	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
UK	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
Ukraine	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Spain	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Germany	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
France	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
Netherlands	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Austria	0	0	0	1	0	1	0

Table 7.2 reports the results of the minimized product via the Quine-McCluskey algorithm of the QCA analysis. The frequency cutoff denotes that a certain combination of independent variables must occur a minimum number of times. This is more important for larger datasets, and as there are only eight cases in this small-*N* analysis, the cutoff is set at one. The consistency cutoff is also set at one (100 percent), and this is the point where if the consistency of certain combinations does not make this minimum threshold, they are eliminated from the analysis. The combination of press restrictions and minority populations are present in all of the cases where Russian IO is successful, and therefore these two variables are considered necessary conditions. This means that for Russian IO to be successful, these variables must be present. If they are not present, Russian IO will not succeed. Therefore, not requiring equal time for political points of view as a requirement for major news organizations can be a huge impediment to various publics of the West to absorb different points of view in an objective manner. Furthermore, the degree to which political party, business, and religious influence is outside of the contours of the operation of the free press is also important. The absence of self-regulation of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter can also allow for demonstrable effects from information campaigns in countries that have been coded as “1” for this category.

Minority populations in a Western country being a necessary condition is Russia exploiting an already present source of division in that society. Racial divides split populations into polarized voting blocs and these divides can be more easily emphasized through based and positioned news channels, publications, and websites. Social media platforms can also be a hotbed for stoking racial divisions more actively during cam-

TABLE 7.2. The Attributes of Successful Russian Information Warfare with the West

Conditions	Western Institutional and Contextual Variables
	(absence)
Necessary	Press Restrictions Minority Populations
Sufficient	Rivalry Presidential Systems Federalism Oil Dependence (Presidential Systems) (Federalism) (Oil Dependence)

Note: Frequency Cutoff, 1.00; Consistency Cutoff, 1.00.

paign seasons. The particular racial divides in each Western country where Russian IO success is coded are discussed in more detail above.

Rivalry is considered to be a sufficient condition for Russian IO success but not necessary, as indicated in table 7.2. The remaining independent variables are also sufficient, but can be either present or absent and Russian IO success is still possible. Therefore, the presence of rivalry is the only true sufficient independent variable for this QCA analysis. This is to be expected as a degree of enmity is already present between Russia and its Western rivals. Russia would be more prone to target its long-standing enemies rather than its nonrivals with its nonlinear cyber strategies, and only since the sweeping sanctions on the Kremlin for its actions in Ukraine has the Kremlin targeted nonrivals with its cyber and disinformation campaigns in response.

Table 7.3 shows the cases with independent variable combinations with more than 50 percent membership in the solution term. The raw coverage measure in the table measures the proportion of memberships in the outcome explained by each term in the solution for independent variables

TABLE 7.3. Cases with Greater Than 50 Percent Membership in the Solution Term

Variable Presence (Absence)	Raw Coverage (Unique Coverage)	Episode Examples
Press Restrictions	.500	UK
Minority Populations	(.500)	Spain
(Presidential System)		
(Federalism)		
(Oil Dependence)		
<i>Rivalry</i>	.250	US
Presidential System	(.250)	
Press Restrictions		
Federalism		
Minority Populations		
(Oil Dependence)		
<i>Rivalry</i>	.250	Ukraine
Presidential System	(.250)	
Press Restrictions		
Minority Populations		
Oil Dependence		
(Federalism)		
Necessary Conditions		
<i>Sufficient Conditions</i>		
Solution Coverage 1.00		
Solution Consistency 1.00		

that lead to Russian IO success. The unique coverage percentage measures the proportion of memberships in the outcome explained solely by each solution term. For a QCA analysis with eight total cases and only four that show successful Russian IO, these coverage terms are self-explanatory in table 7.3. The solution coverage score of one (100 percent) means that the three solution terms in table 7.3 explain 100 percent of all successful Russian IO in the dataset. Similarly, the solution consistency percentage of 100 percent explains the degree to which membership in the different combinations of independent variables is a subset of membership in the dependent variable of Russian IO. All cases are present in table 7.3; therefore, 100 percent of the cases are present.

This QCA analysis is small and therefore broad generalizations about Russian IO success must be taken with caution. However, some important takeaways can be made. Western countries need to be aware of the fact that with the internet has come a plethora of new information access for consumers never seen before. Social media platforms have allowed easy access to this information. However, with this new medium there has also been an explosion in politically biased news and information outlets as well as pages that report false stories and fake news. Countries with laws that require equal time for various political stances and requirements that powerful outside influence, such as from parties, business, or religious organizations, is limited with the media, seemed to have fared better against Russian IO. Western countries must find creative ways to filter false and biased information as cyber and disinformation techniques continue to become more sophisticated. Russia is using the West's liberal principles against it, and resilience to these threats is key to safeguarding democracy in the future.

Western countries with heterogenous populations face a very difficult task ahead as racial and ethnic divides are perhaps one of the most unsolvable political issues throughout history. Russia has been sure to exploit these long-standing societal divisions into polarized stances that can lead to the status quo being changed in the body politic. As a harbinger of liberal ideas and behaviors, Western countries must continue integration strategies and policies so that these divisions cannot be weaponized against them by Russian IO campaigns.

Russian rivals have been dealing with Russian aggression, military posturing, and realpolitik foreign policy for decades. That they fell victim to Russian IO is partially their own fault. Regarding the US and the UK, Russian reflexive control operations are familiar to the defense communities of these long-standing rivals of the Soviet Union and then Putin's Russia. That

Russia was able to so deeply infiltrate political parties, the news media narratives, and social media platforms is a defensive failure on the part of two very technologically advanced countries. Becoming more resilient in the cyber domain is crucial to prevent such widespread cyber and disinformation campaigns by Russia in the future. Furthermore, compelling Russia to stop doing these types of actions with credible threats backed with action need to be considered by these Western countries, with US and EU cyber, economic, and military power and resolve in the lead.

Conclusions

Russia is a fledgling major power. Modern Russia cannot project the same kind of military and economic power as it did in the past as the Soviet Union. However, being perceived as a great power with global influence is critical to the Russian collective psyche and national identity. However, projecting this power with a fossil-fuel-dependent economy and limited military spending operations has proven challenging in the traditional domains of air, land, and sea. For Russia, the cyber domain is a cheaper and more effective way to pursue its national interests. The Kremlin is no match for the raw conventional military power or the diverse economic power of the countries of Europe and North America. However, the expansion of NATO to its borders, US and EU influence in post-Soviet space, and crippling economic sanctions have put Russia in a corner where it is now fighting back. Its operational choice to hit back at the West is through the cyber domain, using the West's own institutions and societal flaws against it.

Due to the nature of Western liberal societies combined with their dependence on the internet, Russia has been able to infiltrate and interfere with the various political narratives that very well could have affected recent electoral outcomes. The US now has a president that is at best indifferent to Russian foreign policy actions in Ukraine, Syria, and the cyber domain. Without credible US pushback, Russia has been able to entrench itself and its interests in these hotbeds of conflict. The UK has voted to leave the European Union, which has proven quite difficult, and will be preoccupied with this process for years to come. The Brexit vote has also led to a rift in Europe, where nationalist divisions have taken hold in countries on the continent as well, as the Catalanian independence movement demonstrates. Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereign borders are now in flux due to full-scale use of Russian nonlinear strategy, which

includes a substantial amount of cyber and disinformation operations. As a result, ambitions for Ukrainian membership in NATO or the EU are now more challenging than ever. When looking at the results of these recent events where Russian information warfare is subjectively deemed successful, the argument can be made that Russia is winning the information war with the West. Internal disputes within societies as well as external squabbling between once tight-knit allies is a result of status quo change in these countries.

However, there have been instances where Russian information warfare has not contributed to a tipping point where the status quo has been changed in the body politic of a Western country. In France, the center held with the election of En Marche candidate Emmanuel Macron. His party also won supermajorities in the parliamentary elections that followed. Angela Merkel won an unprecedented fourth term as chancellor of Germany, with her center-right CDU winning a plurality of votes in coalition in the German Bundestag. Centrist coalitions were also won in the Netherlands and Austria.

Yet these status quo victories must be interpreted with caution. Although the center held in these four cases, far-right parties gained unprecedented amounts of votes and seats in legislatures. The Austrian parliamentary elections resulted in a party founded by Nazis likely to form a collation government.⁷³ Thirteen percent of Bundestag seats have been won by far-right nationalist party AfD in Germany, a number not seen in over 60 years.⁷⁴ Marine Le Pen, France's far-right nationalist party National Front's leader, made it to the runoff election against Emmanuel Macron.⁷⁵ Geert Wilder's PVV party came in second in terms of percentage of seat won in the Dutch parliament at 13 percent.⁷⁶ As nationalist parties gain traction in Europe, the more susceptible the electorate may become to Russian disinformation operations in future electoral campaigns.

Therefore, defensive and compellent strategies and policies must be enacted immediately if liberal Western ideas and institutions are to endure through this current surge in populism. Russian political warfare in the cyber domain is a relatively new phenomenon, and credible threats backed with action need to be communicated to the Kremlin that this type of digital activity will not be tolerated. Furthermore, resilience in the cyber domain is the key to a better defense from these sorts of activities. This includes better societal-wide cyber hygiene practices. Most of the cyber espionage launched by Russia was achieved via social engineering. Training populations how to spot suspected spear phishing or other techniques can go a long way in preventing the number of data breaches the West has

been enduring. Filtering out false information and adding policies that promote equal time in the media sphere in countries can also allow for less division in societies and votes based on facts rather than emotions. These are just several immediate steps the West can take to turn the tide on Russian information warfare.

The big unknown is the extent that the transatlantic divide persists with the United States under President Trump. As the current US president has been critical of the NATO alliance, has bemoaned the EU as “the enemy” in terms of trade policy, and takes a more confrontational approach in world affairs with friend and foe alike, the question remains whether the countries of the EU will stand with the United States on issues over trade, security, and the global order in general. A divided transatlantic alliance gives Russia a freer hand to play in world affairs, and Moscow will continue to take advantage of widening these divisions. Putin’s goal is sanctions relief, and so far the alliance has remained united on this front. Yet as populist movements on both sides of the Atlantic continue to grow, the divisions among the countries of the alliance will also. Angela Merkel is leaving the chancellorship of Germany, Emmanuel Macron’s popularity in France as president is waning and has turned violent with the “yellow jacket” protests, the UK’s economy is on the verge of collapse with the Brexit reality, and Italy is now being run by the fringes of both the left and right of the political spectrum. A Trump reelection in 2020 could spell doom for the close ties that the United States and Europe have had for over 70 years.

NOTES

1. Riechmann 2017.
2. Riechmann 2017.
3. Inkster 2016.
4. Maness, Valeriano, and Jensen 2019.
5. Valeriano, Jensen, and Maness 2018.
6. Ragin 2014.
7. Valeriano and Maness 2014, 2015; Maness and Valeriano 2015, 2016; Valeriano, Jensen, and Maness 2018.
8. Valeriano, Jensen, and Maness 2018.
9. Giles 2016.
10. Galeotti 2014; Snegovoya 2015.
11. Thomas 2004, 17.
12. Snegovoya 2015, 10.
13. Ragin 2014.
14. Gerasimov 2013; Galeotti 2014.

15. Valeriano, Jensen, and Maness 2018.
16. Gerasimov 2013.
17. Jaitner 2015.
18. Galeotti 2014.
19. Galeotti 2014.
20. Giles 2016; Snegovaya 2015.
21. Kostyuk 2015.
22. Snegovaya 2015.
23. Giles 2016; Inkster 2016.
24. Snegovaya 2015.
25. Valeriano, Jensen, and Maness 2018.
26. Balz 2018.
27. Balz 2018.
28. Valeriano, Jensen, and Maness 2018.
29. Maness and Jaitner 2016.
30. Inkster 2016.
31. Timberg et al. 2017.
32. Timberg et al. 2017.
33. Timberg et al. 2017.
34. Tsygankov 2010.
35. Maness and Valeriano 2012, 2015.
36. Valeriano 2013.
37. Azar 1972.
38. Diehl and Goertz 2000.
39. Mansbach and Vasquez 1981.
40. Maness and Valeriano 2015.
41. Diehl and Goertz 2000.
42. Valeriano 2013.
43. NATO 2013.
44. Maness and Valeriano 2015.
45. Levy and Ali 1998.
46. Klein, Goertz, and Diehl 2006.
47. Tabakh 2016.
48. Shugart and Haggard 2001.
49. Graber and Dunaway 2017.
50. Erk and Anderson 2009.
51. Lawson 2013.
52. Galeotti 2014.
53. Ragin 2000, 2014.
54. For a description of fuzzy set QCA, see Ragin 2000.
55. Ragin 2014.
56. Ragin 2014.
57. Ragin 2014.
58. Ragin 2014.
59. Klein, Goertz, and Diehl 2006.
60. Bormann and Golder 2013.
61. Reporters Without Borders website 2017.

62. For a more detailed description of the methodology, see <https://rsf.org/en/detailed-methodology>

63. Infoplease 2017.

64. Chyong and Tcherneva 2015.

65. Examples of status quo change include the election of Donald Trump to president of the United States in 2016 (Tumulty et al. 2016), the referendum in the United Kingdom to leave to European Union in 2016 (BBC News 2016), the Catalanian independence vote in Spain in 2017 (Minder 2017), and the Crimean decision to leave Ukraine and become part of Russia in 2014 (Snegovoya 2015). These countries' dependent variables are coded as "1." Countries receiving a coding of "0," where the status quo held after an electoral campaign include the reelection of Angela Merkel's CDU Party in Germany and her fourth term as chancellor in 2017 (Erlanger and Eddy 2017), the election of centrist Emmanuel Macron and his party En Marche in France at the expense of the far-right National Front led by Marine LaPen in 2017 (Rubin et al. 2017), the election of a coalition government in the Netherlands where the incumbent party VVD was given the highest share of votes and Prime Minister Mark Rutte retained his position in 2017 (Henley 2017), and the Austrian presidential election in 2016 where Green Party candidate Alexander Van Der Bellen defeated right-wing populist Norbert Hofer by a slim margin in 2016 (Tisdall 2016).

66. Lawson 2013; Galeotti 2014.

67. Inkster 2016.

68. Maness and Jaitner 2016.

69. Masciotta 2017.

70. Reeves 2016.

71. Jaitner 2015.

72. Klein, Goertz, and Diehl 2006.

73. New York Times Editorial Board 2017.

74. Erlanger and Eddy 2017.

75. O'Donnell 2017.

76. Henley 2017.

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8 | The Russian Challenge in Southeast Europe

Dimitar Bechev

Russian influence abroad is currently on everyone's lips, whether in Europe or America. Policymakers in both the European Union (EU) and in the United States are looking with marked concern at Russia's moves in regions closer to its borders. In February 2015, Secretary of State John Kerry stated, "Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, other places. They're all in the firing line [together with] Georgia, Moldova, Transnistria" (U.S. Senate 2015).¹ He seconded German chancellor Angela Merkel, who said Russia "[was] trying to make certain Western Balkan states politically and economically dependent" (Welt am Sonntag 2014). Even Federica Mogherini, dismissed as too dovish on Russia when she originally took up the position of a EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, has warned the Balkans are turning into "a geopolitical chessboard" (EUObserver 2017). More than that, speculations have cropped up that tensions in ex-Yugoslavia can escalate into war, with Vladimir Putin intervening on the side of Russia's nationalist allies in Serbia, Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and elsewhere (Schindler 2017; Stronski and Himes 2019; Deimel 2019).

Fears and anxieties are not unfounded. Russia has demonstrated its willingness and ability to manipulate the rifts in Balkan politics. Thus, its embassy in Sarajevo consistently provided cover to Republika Srpska's president Milorad Dodik threatening to hold a secession referendum and wreck the Dayton Peace Accords of 1995. Moscow has furthermore toughened its rhetoric against NATO and even EU expansion to the Western Balkans, which—in the not-so-distant past—it tacitly accepted as inevitable. Its security services stand accused of hatching a coup attempt in Montenegro in October 2016 whose ostensible aim was to stop the country from entering the Atlantic alliance (RFE/RL 2017). Russia has stepped

up security and defense cooperation with nonaligned Serbia, which otherwise claims integration into the EU is a priority (Szpala 2014; Reljić 2017; Deimel 2019; Vuksanović 2019).

Importantly, Russian influence runs well beyond the Western Balkans and into the adjacent member states of the EU such as Greece and Bulgaria (Bechev 2015; Conley et al. 2017; Filis 2017; Orenstein and Kelemen 2017). Leaders in Athens and Sofia have voiced criticism of the Western sanctions as counterproductive, ineffective, and harmful for their countries. Just like Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece have remained in Russia-initiated infrastructure projects in the area of natural gas. Further to the northwest, Croatia and Slovenia are similarly exploring ways to deepen economic ties with Russia, not unlike their neighbor Serbia. In October 2017, Croatian president Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, once a deputy secretary-general of NATO, grabbed the headlines with a three-day visit to Russia that culminated in talks with Putin in his Sochi residence (Samorukov 2017a). With the exception of Romania, most nations in the region tend to view Russia as a source of opportunities, rather than as a threat. Little wonder that the Kremlin has welcomed such attitudes as it looks for ways to drive a wedge within the EU and NATO and undercut the sanctions.

This chapter looks at Russia's policies and influence in Southeast Europe. It shows that the region has been a fertile ground for Moscow to assert its interests. Lacking a grand strategic plan, Russia nonetheless exploits weak spots and gaps to outmaneuver and put pressure on the EU and the US. The balance of power in the region has not shifted dramatically since the heyday of Western preeminence in the 1990s and the 2000s. The countries of the Balkans gravitate in economic and geopolitical terms to the EU and the Atlantic alliance. However, Russia has become more skillful in exploiting the cracks in the regional order. That includes both interstate and domestic political challenges to do with unresolved sovereignty disputes, rampant ethnonationalism, the deficit of rule of law, and state capture. The inability of EU integration to provide a quick fix to these structural impediments empowers Russia to push more aggressively in Southeast Europe and even claim the role of an alternative pole of gravity.

The chapter begins by briefly discussing the notion of Southeast Europe as a regional unit. Then it proceeds to sketch out Russian involvement since the early 1990s. Finally, the chapter looks at areas where Moscow's role looms large: Balkan security, the economy, and, last but not least, its influence on society and domestic politics.

Defining Southeast Europe

As any “region,” that of Southeast Europe is not immune to contestation. There has been a debate in both academia and in the diplomatic realm as to where its boundaries lie, which country is in, which is out, and the criteria for inclusion and exclusion (Todorova 1997; Bracewell and Drace-Francis 1999; Bechev 2004, 2011). Thanks to the 1990s, much of the focus has been on former Yugoslavia whose successor states are tied together by denser political, economic, social, and cultural linkages. But the EU also packages Albania into the “Western Balkans,” while Slovenia and Croatia have effectively been out of the grouping since joining the Union as members. Historically, countries such as Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania are also considered part of the Balkans, with all caveats given Romania’s strong connection to Central Europe (as is the case in Slovenia, Croatia, and even part of Serbia). Greece has ties to both the Balkans and the Mediterranean or Southern Europe (Koliopoulos and Veremis 2002).

What brings this diverse group of countries together is, first, geographic contiguity, second, historical bonds, and, third and most important, the impact of the EU and, to some degree, NATO, which have promoted region building and integration since the end of the Yugoslav wars as a method of conflict resolution and economic growth (Kavalski 2008; Bechev 2011). This strong link to Western organizations is reflected, among other things, in the very name Southeast Europe, the label of choice for diplomats and policymakers to whom “the Balkans” brings up mainly negative connotations, as the term “Balkanization” suggests (Todorova 1997).

It is the EU that sustains Southeast Europe as a grouping. Starting with Greece in 1981, the Union has brought in local countries as its members. The Republic of Cyprus joined in 2004 along with Slovenia, followed by Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, and Croatia in 2013. The rest are lining up at the gates of the Union. The EU remains the principal trading partner for the region, accounting for up to 80 percent of trade depending on the country. It is also the main source of foreign direct investment and development aid (World Bank 2017). Enlargement has blurred pre-1989 divides in Southeast Europe: Greece now trades heavily with its neighbors to the north, which were once part of the Soviet sphere or pursued their own model of socialism, as was the case of Yugoslavia and Albania. The EU also underwrites collective institutions tasked with the promotion of regionalism, such as the Sarajevo-based Regional Cooperation Council (Bechev 2011; Minić 2013).

The Russian Federation plays second fiddle to the EU. It is excluded from or loosely associated with regional institutions and occupies a less prominent place in local economies. While the Russian Federation supplies gas and crude oil to the region, it is not a significant export market or purveyor of foreign direct investment. What is more, economic relations are skewed in Russia's favor. Virtually every country runs large trade deficits with Russia due to imports of natural gas (sold at prices that are on average higher than those charged elsewhere in Europe) and crude oil. The picture has not changed dramatically by the fact that countries such as Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and (North) Macedonia refused to join the Western sanctions in 2014 and, as a result, were not targeted by countermeasures. By and large, they have not been able to overturn the trade deficit. The Russian Federation has a free trade agreement with Serbia but even that is incomplete and riddled with exceptions. For instance, cars are not covered, which bars Serbian-manufactured Fiats from competing in the Russian market (Bechev 2017, 13–16).

Though it has taken a step back since the times the Clinton administration led Western interventions in the region, the United States continues to play a key role in the region, complementing the EU (Bugajski 2018). It was evident, for instance, in the State Department's intervention in the Macedonian political crisis in the spring of 2017. Under the Obama administration, Vice President Joe Biden was a relatively frequent guest to the region as was Hillary Clinton as secretary of state. The United States looks at the region through the prism of NATO enlargement and relations with Russia, too. The election of Donald Trump as president made the connection even stronger, even if during the campaign he and his team argued that Moscow could be a partner in tackling threats such as radical Islamic terrorism. The backlash in Washington, fears of Russian meddling in US domestic affairs, and growing assertiveness abroad toughened America's policy. Congress stepped in more assertively. Thus, it helped speed up Montenegro's accession to NATO in June 2017, after the Senate overwhelmingly backed the expansion.² Vice President Mike Pence visited the region to reassure allies of US support and issue a warning against Russia (Wilson, Marušić, and Bedenbaugh 2017). In October 2019, the Senate ratified the accession of yet another Balkan country, North Macedonia, which became a NATO member in March 2020. The US has boots on the ground—with troops in Kosovo (part of NATO's KFOR), Romania, Bulgaria and Greece. Last but not least, Washington views Southeast Europe as critical for the diversification of energy supplies to Europe, thanks to the so-called Southern Gas Corridor connecting the EU to the Caspian

Sea and, possibly, Central Asia (Winrow 2019; Abbasov 2014) as well as deliveries of US liquefied natural gas. In October 2019, Trump appointed ambassador Richard Grenell as a special envoy with a mandate to facilitate a settlement between Serbia and Kosovo (Bytyci 2019).³ Overall, there has been more continuity than change in the US approach to the region.

Russia's Evolving Strategy

Russia treats Southeast Europe as a regional cluster. That is visible in the academic domain, where Balkan studies is an established field, as well as in the output of Moscow-based think tanks, including those affiliated with the state. More proof of this is Russia's energy diplomacy. Large-scale infrastructure projects, like South Stream and its successors, usually have a regional focus. For what is worth, the Russian foreign policy doctrine singles out Southeast Europe as a conduit for Russian energy exports (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2013).⁴ But Moscow also differentiates: its policy is much more assertive in the Western Balkans, lying outside the EU and NATO, where it also has greater chances to appear as a bona fide peer of the West. Moreover, Russia has institutional ties to countries of that subgroup: for example, a defense agreement (2013) and free trade agreement with Serbia—recently extended to a trade deal with the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) (RFE/RL 2019)—and membership in the Peace Implementation Council overseeing the Dayton Accords.

In strategic terms, Southeast Europe lies beyond Moscow's claimed privileged sphere of interest in the former Soviet Union. It lies largely outside the purview of institutions such as the EEU or the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which are all central to the Russian bid to reestablish regional hegemony.⁵ Still, Russia sees Southeast Europe as weak spot on the EU periphery, exposed to its influence (Krastev 2015; Deimel 2019; Stronski and Himes 2019). To compete with the West, it has been leveraging links to politicians, parties, and civil society groups; co-opting governments; and appealing to public opinion by stirring grudges against the United States and, more recently, EU institutions (Pomerantsev and Weiss 2014; Bugajski and Assenova 2016; Conley et al. 2016; Galeotti 2017; Committee on Foreign Relations 2018).

Russian objectives and policies in Southeast Europe have undergone an evolution since the collapse of the Soviet Union. They have evolved over time along with Moscow's relations with the West.

The initial phase of Russia's engagement with the region was closely

linked to the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia, which broke out in the summer of 1991, just when the USSR was on its dying legs. Under President Boris Yeltsin and Foreign Ministers Andrei Kozyrev (1992–96) and Evgeny Primakov (1996–98), Moscow aspired to play a leading role in the management of the conflicts in Bosnia (1992–95) and Kosovo (1998–99). The stakes were high: it was not just the Balkans at issue but the future of Europe's security architecture, Moscow's position relative to NATO, and the shape of transatlantic ties. Yeltsin and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs struggled to strike a fragile balance—cooperating with the West at both the UN Security Council and the so-called Contact Group set up in 1994 but also nurturing ties with Slobodan Milošević and the Bosnian Serbs as a bargaining chip. Assertive policies in ex-Yugoslavia were also aiming at silencing the hardline anti-Western opposition entrenched in the Russian legislature. Russia suffered many setbacks: it failed to prevent NATO interventions in Bosnia and especially Kosovo (March–June 1999). It was also taking risks. The so-called dash to Prishtina in June 1999, when Russian paratroopers moved overnight from Bosnia to Kosovo, led to a dangerous standoff with the NATO expeditionary forces, which were also moving following the cease-fire agreement that had been struck with the Serbian army (Simić 2001; Antonenko 1999; Levitin 2000; Headley 2008). In the main, activism proved counterproductive. More than once, Russia was forced to compromise and bandwagon with the West. It endorsed international administrations at the UN Security Council and deployed peacekeepers as part of NATO missions (Implementation Force, or IFOR, and Stabilization Force, or SFOR, in Bosnia, Kosovo Force, or KFOR, in Kosovo). The Balkans of the 1990s came to symbolize post-Soviet Russia's diminished status in international affairs (Allison 2013).

Putin's arrival to power in 1999–2000 brought about changes in Russia's approach. Moscow disengaged from former Yugoslavia, its commitments there considered more of a liability than a geopolitical asset. The new master of the Kremlin had his priorities closer to home: consolidating the regime domestically, asserting Russian leadership within the Commonwealth of Independent States, and pursuing a partnership with the US and its allies in the context of the post-9/11 war on terror (Trenin 2011). Moscow accepted EU enlargement and made no noises when Romania and Bulgaria joined NATO in 2004. It withdrew its peacekeepers from Kosovo and Bosnia in the summer of 2003 (Bechev 2017, 54–55).

What brought Russia back to the region in the middle of the decade was growing competition with the West in Putin's second term (2004–08) (Tsygankov 2016, 177–209). Moscow took a lead in pushing back against

Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence, announced in February 2008, and supported by the US and the great majority of EU members. It forged a common front with Serbia, rekindling ties that had gone stale after the ouster of Milošević (Ker-Lindsay 2011).

Russia's squabbles with Ukraine's leadership after the 2004–05 Orange Revolution also directed attention to Southeast Europe as a transit route for Russian energy bound for the EU (Baev and Øverland 2010). Along with the northern route through the Baltic Sea, the Balkans offered an alternative to the Ukrainian grid, which had been the main export conduit since East-West gas trade got off the ground in the late 1960s (Högselius 2013). By 2009, the South Stream pipeline—a pet project of Vladimir Putin's—enlisted all countries in the region, from Bulgaria to Slovenia, as partners. High-profile business deals such as the privatization of the NIS (Naftna Industrija Srbije), Serbia's national oil and gas company, the Burgas-Alexandroupolis oil pipeline undertaken with Bulgaria and Greece, and the project to build a nuclear power plant in Bulgaria underscored Russia's renewed prominence (Bechev 2017, chap. 7). President Dmitry Medvedev's term in office (2008–12), marked by a thaw between Russia with both the EU and the US, saw the peak of Moscow's influence. Balkan governments could, seemingly, have their cake and eat it too: pursue integration into the West and cash in on economic links to Russia.

The Ukraine crisis of 2013–14 ushered in a dramatic turnaround, a whole new phase in relations between Russia and Southeast Europe. Putin's confrontation with the West took a toll on its Balkan ventures. In the summer of 2014, South Stream was effectively cancelled as Europe's political will to resolve a long-standing legal dispute between Gazprom and the European Commission expired (Stern, Pirani, and Yafimava 2015). Russia upped the ante. It assumed the role of a spoiler—challenging and thwarting the West at every step, taking advantage of opportunities. Russia invested in media mouthpieces such as the Serbian branch of the *Sputnik* news agency and upgraded ties to parties and civic groups with a radically anti-Western agenda. It intervened in the constitutional deadlock in Bosnia, providing diplomatic cover to the Republika Srpska president Milorad Dodik as he defied the central state institutions in Sarajevo along with the international community (Mujanović 2017; Samorukov 2017b). The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs became vocal on the political crisis in Macedonia between 2015–17 and later on sought to undermine the agreement signed with Greece to resolve the long-standing “name issue.” Russia mobilized allies in the EU members of the region too. In Bulgaria, the xenophobic right-wing party Ataka, having hailed the annexation of

Crimea in March 2014, rallied against Western sanctions (Bechev 2015). Mainstream politicians, for example, Bulgarian prime minister Boyko Borisov of the center-right GERB, similarly spoke of them as an unwanted burden on the national economy. In Greece, Alexis Tsipras, of the radical leftist Syriza, flirted with the Kremlin in the first half of 2015 as the prospect of a wholesale financial meltdown loomed large (Orenstein and Kelemen 2017). The Balkans had turned, in the eyes of many, into yet another battlefield in the contest between Russia and the West.

From Russia's perspective, links with Serbia, Republika Srpska, the Montenegrin opposition, and other political actors mean opportunities to obtain extra leverage vis-à-vis the West. Along with Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia declined to join the EU sanctions in response to Crimea's annexation and the war in eastern Ukraine. Even members of NATO and the EU in ex-Yugoslavia, such as Slovenia and Croatia, have been eager to upgrade economic cooperation with Moscow (Gower 2015; Marini 2016; Samorukov 2017a, 2017b). In other words, Russia can meddle in Europe's backyard in order to reciprocate what it sees as Western interference in its "near abroad." But intervening in the Balkans is also driven by the desire to gain recognition as a principal player in the power politics of the Old Continent as a whole, a recurrent theme in Russian foreign policy since the 1990s.

The Region's Perspective on Russia

The large majority of the countries in Southeast Europe look at Russia as a potential ally or source of economic benefits, or both. This view is a function of a host of factors: historical links and memories, religious identity (Orthodox Christianity being the dominant faith in a number of local countries), geographical location (Russia is removed and does not pose a direct threat to states outside the Black Sea littoral), a complicated relationship with the US and key Western European powers more recently or in the past, and lingering connections dating back to the Cold War period. No single one of those factors explain in full the preference for engaging Russia. For instance, the oft-repeated assertion that Serbia and Russia feel instinctive sympathy to one another because of their deep-running historic connection is only half true at closer reading. During most of the Cold War, Serbia (as part of Yugoslavia) saw the Soviet Union as much as a security menace as a partner. Further back in time, in the interwar period, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia welcomed many White Russians and

was hostile to the Soviet Union. Next door, Bulgaria, half-jokingly referred to as the 16th Soviet republic back in the day, actually fought against Russia in the First World War as an ally of Germany and Austria-Hungary, having doggedly resisted the Tsarist Empire's interference in its domestic politics in the 1880s and 1890s (Jelavich 1991). With the exception of Serbia, which was the target of a NATO bombing campaign in 1999, no other state in the region has had any qualms about pursuing membership in NATO. Not even Montenegro, which had the reputation of being the most faithfully pro-Russian part of former Yugoslavia and, as an independent principality in 1904, actually declared war on Japan. History does not explain the fact that Turkey, heir to the Ottoman Empire, which was imperial Russia's rival in the region, transformed into a foreign policy partner of Moscow after the end of the Cold War, either (Kınıklioğlu and Morkva 2007; Bechev 2017: Chapter 5).

What explains the preference to work with Russia is the pragmatic bent of Balkan political elites. While they see their present and future in Europe and seek security through links to the US and NATO, Russia is offering additional economic benefits (e.g., in the form of rents and side payments from energy projects), providing additional bargaining chips in strategic interactions with the West, and helping co-opt domestic constituencies hostile to the West. That is equally true of members of EU or NATO, or both, such as Greece, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Cyprus, as it is of the Western Balkan countries outside those organizations. In a way, Southeast Europe is a mirror image of Belarus. Whereas for the Alexander Lukashenko regime the primary point of gravity is Russia and relations with the West are a useful add-on, Balkan governments look West but pursue deals with Moscow in order to further their interests (Bechev 2017).

Romania, of course, is an outlier. Its elites and the public at large see Russia as a threat to national security, as was also the case under Ceausescu's isolationist regime in the 1970s and 1980s. There are of course nuances. In the early 1990s, for instance, the post-Communist left was more open to cooperation with Moscow than the opposition, which exploited the memories of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the loss of Bessarabia (today's Republic of Moldova and part of Ukraine's Odessa oblast) to mobilize support. Still, the left was firmly in favor of joining NATO—and remains so to this day. Russia's resurgence under Putin, the war in Georgia, and especially the annexation of Crimea have reinforced the view of Moscow as a strategic competitor. Romania and Russia have furthermore been involved in a direct race for influence over the Republic of Moldova. All this puts Romania in a category apart, differentiating it

from the rest of Southeast Europe (Linden 2009; Bechev 2009; Denca 2013; Micu 2013; Goşu and Manea 2015).

The Security Dimension

Russia's weight in global politics is, first and foremost, a function of its military might. Though it lags far behind the US and even the leading Western European nations in terms of hard power (e.g., measured through defense spending) and certainly of technological sophistication, it possesses a nuclear arsenal, which equals that of the US. Russian conventional forces are also improving, thanks to the reforms undertaken since the late 2000s. Even more important, the annexation of Crimea, the war in the Donbas, and, before that, the clash with Georgia in August 2008, demonstrated that Moscow views the unilateral use of military power (whether direct or by proxy as in Ukraine) as a legitimate instrument in foreign affairs. Added to that is Russia's expanded capability to conduct "nonlinear" or "nonconventional" warfare: through tools such as cyber attacks, disinformation campaigns, and fake news aimed at discrediting the West, and "active measures" (*aktivnyye meropriatiya*) by its security agencies (Federal Security Service [FSB], Main Directorate of the General Staff [GRU], and Foreign Intelligence Service [SVR]) (Pomerantsev and Weiss 2014; Galeotti 2017). One should not forget that there are instruments that have to do with defense but are not coercive in nature, but rather co-optative. Local militaries' continued reliance on Soviet-made hardware and, in some cases, new purchases of weapons from Russia add to Moscow's clout. Humanitarian assistance—most recently during the COVID-19 crisis—plays a role as well.

As far as defense and security is concerned, there are two groups of countries. On one side are those that border directly with the post-Soviet space and Russia itself. First and foremost are Romania and Bulgaria, both Black Sea littoral nations as well as members of NATO. The second group is composed of countries that do not have Russia next to their borders: Greece, the Western Balkans, including Croatia, member of both EU and NATO, and Albania and Montenegro (both in NATO). For this cluster, Russia does not pose a direct menace. The military buildup in annexed Crimea, which ushered in near Russian dominance in the Black Sea, of direct concern to Romania, Turkey, and Bulgaria (Goşu and Manea 2015; Bugajski and Doran 2016), has less dramatic ramifications for Group 2. It is also within the Western Balkans where Russia has its closest partner in Southeast Europe, Serbia.

Since the conclusion of a defense cooperation agreement in 2013, Russia and Serbia have seen their ties deepen. Under a parliamentary resolution of 2007, Serbia is committed to a policy of nonalignment, which rules out accession to military blocs. However, that has been no obstacle to developing relations with the Russians. The two militaries train regularly since November 2014, both in Serbia and in Russia (Vukasnović 2019). After lengthy negotiations, Moscow agreed to donate to Belgrade six surplus MiG-29 fighter jets, 30 T-72 tanks, and 30 BRDM-2 armored reconnaissance vehicles (Božinovski 2016). There have been further deliveries of equipment from both Russia and Belarus since then (Bechev 2019b). Progovernment media in Serbia hailed the deliveries as a step toward evening the balance with neighboring Croatia (an adversary in the wars of the 1990s), which has been modernizing its armed forces. Serbia enjoys an observer status in the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization. It has been hosting a Russian “humanitarian center” in the southern city of Nish, not too far from Kosovo, which Western officials suspect is an intelligence outpost under the guise of a search and rescue mission (Djurdjić 2017).⁶

At the same time, Serbia is pursuing active cooperation with NATO. It signed an Individual Partnership Agreement with NATO in January 2015. Content-wise, it follows closely the membership action plans signed with accession candidates. Serbia has a partnership with the Ohio National Guard, too. Serbian officials point out that in 2016 the army has carried out 200 activities with NATO and the US as opposed to just 17 with Russia (Wilson, Marušić, and Bedenbaugh 2017). In the spring of 2016, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić refused to cave in to pressure from pro-Russian demonstrators to hold a referendum on NATO membership (which would clearly have resulted in a resounding “no”). In the fall of 2019, relations between Belgrade and Moscow suffered a blow after it transpired that Russian security services had been spying on Serbia (Walker 2019). Overall, Serbian security policy has been one of balancing between Russia and the West (Konitzer 2012; Szpala 2014; Reljić 2017; Marciacq 2019; Vuksanović 2019). But Belgrade’s policy of equidistance, or “sitting on two chairs” as US State Department envoy for the Balkans Hoyt Brian Yee characterized it (Rudić 2017), has allowed Moscow to insert itself in the region.

Another pillar in Russia’s policy is the vehement opposition to NATO enlargement in former Yugoslavia. Montenegro, a country where Russian investment has played a prominent role since the 1990s, has been at the epicenter of the conflict. Kremlin’s loyalist media and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs backed antigovernment protests in October

2015 as thousands rallied in the capital Podgorica against NATO membership and high-level corruption. The crisis continued into 2016. On the eve of the parliamentary elections in October authorities announced they had foiled a plot to overthrow the government, assassinate Prime Minister Milo Djukanović, and derail Montenegro's entry into NATO. The alleged conspiracy was led, according to the prosecutors, by rogue security officers from Serbia instructed by the GRU, Russia's military intelligence, and in contact with the anti-NATO opposition. In the immediate aftermath of those revelations, Nikolai Patrushev, head of the Russian Federation's Security Council and former director of the Federal Security Service (FSB), rushed to Belgrade to hold urgent talks with Prime Minister Vučić whose life had also, according to allegations, been at risk (Borger et al. 2016).

The crisis in Montenegro ultimately played into the hands of the Democratic Party of Socialists, heir to the Yugoslav communists that has held power since the 1990s under Djukanović's leadership. The Democratic Party of Socialists has branded all their opponents as stooges of Russia. While many of the government's critics have been motivated by their hostility to NATO, others have taken issue with the pervasive corruption and state capture in the Balkan republic. Yet the government's narrative has prevailed. Opposition leaders Andrija Mandić and Milan Knežević have been charged over the alleged coup attempt of October 2016 and put on trial (RFE/RL 2017). Knežević subsequently received a sentence (Bechev 2019b). Meanwhile, Montenegro's case for NATO membership received a boost, at a time a new administration in Washington, D.C. was debating the merits of America's foreign entanglements.

Another way Russia affects security perceptions is by interfering in outstanding disputes throughout former Yugoslavia. Moscow suffered a setback in 2010 when Serbia took the decision to shift toward the EU as a mediator on Kosovo (Economides and Ker-Lindsay 2015). That happened after the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion ruling that the 2008 unilateral declaration of independence had not violated international law. The International Court of Justice case resulted from a joint Serbian-Russian initiative that, ultimately, proved counterproductive. But Russia is in position to take advantage of the recurrent crises between Belgrade and Prishtina, despite the "normalization" talks overseen by the EU since 2013. In January 2017, the Kosovo president, Hashim Thaçi, accused Serbia of plotting "a Crimean scenario" in Serb-majority municipalities in the north (Bytyci 2017).⁷ Russian activism and connections to Serb actors on the ground are given as a reason to transform the

Kosovo Security Force into an army. That would no doubt trigger a spat with Serbia and undermine the EU's effort at reaching a settlement, which is also backed by the US. But more recently the Kosovo leadership softened toward Russia. Thaçi held talks with Putin during the centennial of the end of the First World War in Paris in November 2018 and argued that Russia was "neither friend nor a foe" of his country. Putin himself voiced support for the negotiations with the Serbian president Aleksandar Vučić to resolve the sovereignty dispute between Belgrade and Prishtina. By keeping channels open to Kosovars, while not abandoning the alliance with Serbia, Moscow is, yet again, asserting its role as a power broker in the Balkans.

Russia's role in Bosnia and Herzegovina has also raised concerns. In September 2016, Republika Srpska carried out a referendum to have its "national holiday" in defiance of both the West and the state Constitutional Court. On the day itself (January 9, 2017, the feast of St. Stephen), the entity's capital, Banja Luka, witnessed a military parade, bringing back the painful memories of the 1990s war (Mujanović 2016). Throughout these episodes, Russia has stood by the side of Republika Srpska's president Milorad Dodik, blocking efforts to censure him at the Peace Implementation Council's Steering Board. Dodik, for his part, has used all available opportunities to showcase his close personal ties with Putin, paying a visit to the Kremlin on the eve of the referendum. He has also cooperated with Russian nationalist conservatives such as the oligarch Konstantin Malofeev, put on the Western sanctions list because of his sponsorship of the paramilitaries that initiated the so-called Russian Spring in the Donbas in 2014 (Grozev 2017).

Russia became involved in the acute crisis in Macedonia between February 2015 and May 2017. Moscow slammed the protests that swept through the capital, Skopje, galvanized by revelations of elite corruption and abuse of power by the center-right government of Nikola Gruevski, as yet another incidence of a Western-backed color revolution against the legitimate authorities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs blamed the West for conspiring to destabilize the Balkans and pushing it into the abyss of ethnic conflicts. It echoed Gruevski's arguments that the EU and US were colluding with or providing cover for radicalized Albanians whose demands for greater cultural and linguistic rights were laying the groundwork for partition and annihilation of the state. Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov accused Albania and Bulgaria of plotting to carve up Macedonia, referring to a conspiracy theory aired by the TV news broadcaster RT, which is controlled by the Russian government (EurActiv 2015). After

power changed in May 2017 to a pro-Western cabinet led by Zoran Zaev, Russia became the target of accusations of meddling in the country's domestic affairs with the goal of undermining accession to NATO. In August 2018, the Greek authorities took the unprecedented decision to expel two Russian diplomats and deny entry to two more on charges of working to obstruct the implementation of the so-called Prespa Agreement resolving the long-standing name dispute with Skopje and restarting the neighboring country's accession to both NATO and the EU. Zaev himself pointed a finger at Greek Russian tycoon Ivan Savvidi, a resident of Thessaloniki, for funding nationalist groups in North Macedonia. There have also been reports about the GRU's attempts to recruit serving and retired military officers and security operatives in North Macedonia (Belford et al. 2017).

Russian interference in Bosnia, Macedonia, and Montenegro created an appearance of the West as weak and of Russian influence as being on the ascendant. Reality was more nuanced, however. The deadlock in Macedonia was resolved in May 2017 with mediation from both the EU and the US. Following an inconclusive election at the end of 2016, the pro-Western opposition succeeded in forming a cabinet thanks to the main Albanian party, the Democratic Union for Integration, switching sides. Similarly, Montenegro became a NATO member in June 2017 and North Macedonia was welcomed by the summit in London (December 3–4, 2019) as part of the alliance.

Russia is a key factor in the security calculations of Black Sea countries Bulgaria and Romania. The full-blown militarization of Crimea has made them vulnerable, notably to the cruise missiles Russia has equipped the new naval ships and submarines with that it is deploying on the peninsula. Just like in the Baltic, Russian jets have been routinely flying on the edges of the national airspaces, straining the air defense (Goşu and Manea 2015). As a response, both Romania and Bulgaria subscribe to the NATO strategy of containment—or “enhanced forward presence”—enunciated at the summits in Wales (2014) and Warsaw (2016). However, while Romania takes a hawkish stance, for example, by lobbying hard for a NATO naval presence in the Black Sea, Bulgaria is seeking to avoid direct confrontation with the Russians. Romania, which hosts a multinational framework brigade (a deterrent to a putative Russian attack) and elements of NATO's Ballistic Missile Defense, has made much greater progress in modernizing its armed forces and meeting the 2 percent of GDP NATO target for defense spending (Bugajski and Doran 2016). Bulgaria has lagged behind on both counts. For instance, its air

force is still composed of aging MiG-29s serviced by a contractor in Russia. That alone bolsters Moscow's leverage in a critical area. Last but not least, both countries have been exposed to cyber attacks believed to be linked to Russia. Citing intelligence, Bulgarian president Rosen Plevneliev pointed a finger at Moscow for the shutdown of the Central Electoral Commission's website coinciding with the local elections and national referendum held in October 2015 (Corera 2016).

The Economy

The fact that the EU by far outstrips Russia in trade, investment, and financial transfers to Southeast Europe (foreign direct investment, remittances, money channeled from banks based in Western Europe to local subsidiaries) does not make Russia irrelevant. As a 2016 report by the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies observes, its economic footprint is rather large—thanks to foreign direct investment, in some cases channeled through EU members such as the Netherlands, Austria, and Cyprus. According to the authors, Russia's share reaches a full 22 percent of GDP in Bulgaria and around 14 percent in Serbia. What is more, "Russian companies in [Central and Eastern Europe] have tended to be concentrated in a few strategic economic sectors, such as energy and fuel processing and trading, whereas EU countries have a more diversified investment portfolio that spans different manufacturing subsectors" (Conley et al. 2016, 11).

Energy occupies a special place. Major Russian firms, such as Gazprom, GazpromNeft, and Lukoil, dominate the oil and gas markets in the region. Their role grew exponentially in the 2000s. In 2008, for instance, Serbia decided to sell a controlling stake in its national oil company NIS (Naftna Industrija Srbije) to GazpromNeft, Gazprom's oil branch (Simonov 2009). The privatization deal drew criticism by economic experts at the time but it rested on a political rationale. It was to seal the partnership between Moscow and Belgrade in pushing against Kosovo's independence and, more importantly, working side by side on South Stream. Even though South Stream did not happen and the alliance with Moscow did little to help Serbia in Kosovo, NIS ties Serbian economy to Russia.

Another key player in local markets is Lukoil, Russia's second largest oil company. In Serbia, it privatized large retailer Beopetrol back in 2003, a deal intended to reinforce political ties between the two countries. Since 1999, Lukoil has been the owner of Bulgaria's sole refinery near Burgas,

which is also the region's largest (excluding Greece). The largest company in the country (as NIS is in Serbia), Lukoil Neftochim profits from a virtual monopoly over the Bulgarian wholesale and retail market of petrol and especially diesel (Maltby 2015; Sorensen 2016). Its long-time CEO Valentin Zlatev was among the most prominent business personalities in Bulgaria and was even called in a US Embassy cable "a vastly influential king-maker and behind-the-scenes power broker" (Wikileaks 2006). In contrast to government-controlled Gazprom, Lukoil is nominally a private company driven by business interest rather than geopolitics. But in the final analysis it is also dependent on the Kremlin's good graces and therefore can easily be transformed into a foreign policy instrument if need be.

Having no access to alternative supplies of gas and limited storage capacity, Southeast European countries such as Bulgaria, Serbia, and Bosnia suffered immensely during the two cutoffs in 2006 and 2009 (Kovačević 2009). Those events underscored, among other things, their dependence on Russia. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that local countries tend to consume relatively limited volumes of gas—and mainly for heating. That is the case of larger economies such as Greece, Romania, Serbia, and Bulgaria. There are countries such as Montenegro, Kosovo, and Albania that use no natural gas at all. That is in clear contrast with both Central and Western Europe, where the rates of gasification are relatively high, as well as with the post-Soviet countries. A larger consumer such as Croatia, where households do have access to gas, has indigenous production and the infrastructure connections enabling it to import gas from suppliers other than Gazprom (Oxford Analytica 2015). The corollary is that gas is not necessarily an instrument of coercion wielded by Russia, though it is also true that Gazprom traditionally has been in a powerful position to dictate the commercial terms to local governments and national energy companies (Vavilov and Nicholls 2013; Henderson and Pirani 2014).

Oil and gas played the role of a carrot for Russia to co-opt Southeast Europe. All governments without exception, from Greece to Bulgaria to Serbia and Bosnia, signed up for South Stream in 2008–12 in the hope of generating investment and taking in revenue from transit fees for the gas flowing from Russia to customers in Western Europe.⁸ In Serbia's case, the authorities were prepared to sell such key assets as NIS and acquiesce in obtaining a 49 percent stake, as opposed to a majority of the shares, in the pipeline's section going through the country. Virtually all the countries of the region have entertained grand visions of turning into "an energy hub" thanks to Russian gas as well as gas from the Caspian and the Middle East

flowing into the region. After South Stream was called off by Putin in December 2014, Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, and others expressed interest in being included in the replacement project, TurkStream. Russia settled on a route from the Turkish border to Austria via Bulgaria, Serbia, and Hungary. TurkStream's Balkan leg, known as TurkStream 2 or Balkan Stream, is a scaled down replica of South Stream. It was expected to come online in 2020 but was delayed because of legal disputes in Bulgaria and, subsequently, the COVID-19 emergency. In theory, the new pipeline is open to Gazprom's competitors. In practice, no other major companies apart from Russia's state-owned outfit have booked capacity (Bechev 2019a).

But natural gas is increasingly an area where Russia has been put on the backfoot by the EU. In order to build infrastructure on the territory of Union members in the Balkans, Gazprom has to abide by the so-called Third Energy Package, which requires that its competitors should be able to ship gas using the same pipelines. The EU has pushed for the interconnection of national grids, which would boost competition. The same policy objective is central to the Energy Union, a flagship initiative of the Juncker Commission since 2014. Though the interconnection projects, along with grand plans for constructing liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals in Croatia (the island of Krk) and northern Greece (near Alexandroupolis) are developing at a depressingly slow pace due to lack of money and bureaucratic inefficiency, the destination is clear. The sharp decrease of LNG prices has led to a surge of imports in Turkey and Greece in 2019–2020. Finally, Brussels put Gazprom under pressure with an antitrust case that revealed illegal practices across Central and Eastern Europe. In the case of Bulgaria, this occurred when it linked support for South Stream to price discounts on the long-term agreement under which it buys Russian gas. Gazprom is likely to persist with similar tactics as the supply deals to local countries come up for renewal, capitalizing on its (near) monopoly position. To cut a long story short, Russia may remain a dominant supplier of gas but thanks to the EU gas is turning more and more into an economic rather than a zero-sum political issue.

The trend toward marketization of the gas trade is not bringing Russia's influence to a speedy end, however. As long as public energy companies in the Balkans are mismanaged and turned into political fiefdoms, there is always scope for Russian business actors (acting independently or in coordination with the Kremlin) to insert themselves in local corruption schemes. Srbijagas, the national gas company, has long been a fiefdom of the Socialist Party of Serbia, a coalition partner of Vučić's Serbian Progress-

sive Party. As elsewhere in Eastern Europe, gas sales to Serbia are carried through opaque intermediate business entities, raising suspicions of side payments and kickbacks. In Bosnia's Republika Srpska, the sale of the only local refinery to a Russian bidder, Zarubezhneft, without a tender in 2007 has also been a matter of controversy. It was overseen personally by Milorad Dodik (at that time serving as prime minister). Yet another example comes from Bulgaria where, in late 2013, the Russian company Stroytransgaz, owned by Putin's personal friend Gennady Timchenko won the contract to build the leg of South Stream through the country without going through a competitive tender (Georgiev et al. 2016). A host of politically connected Bulgarian companies were added to the consortium, which inflated the cost of the project several times. South Stream Bulgaria was a state capture venture, which was cut short only when the European Commission cut vital funds to the Sofia government over the violation of the competition rules on tendering.

Russian capital often enters the region through third countries, some of which are EU members. To quote from an in-depth study of Russia's footprint in the Macedonian economy, "the Russian mining company Solway, which operates a lead, zinc, and copper mine in Macedonia, but is officially registered in Switzerland. Another is a large Russian power plant operator, TKG, which owns a joint-venture, the TE-TO Combined Cycle Heat and Power Plant near Skopje, through a Cypriot offshore intermediary" (Center for the Study of Democracy 2018, 3). European integration has therefore been as much of a challenge to Russian business and official foreign policy as an opportunity.

Russian money has penetrated other sectors beyond energy, with the blessing of local politicians. In 2005, Montenegro sold Aluminium Plant of Podgorica, the largest enterprise in the country, to a Russian oligarch, Oleg Deripaska, via a Cypriot offshore intermediary. The deal was personally brokered by President Milo Djukanović. Though he and Deripaska subsequently fell out and a complicated legal battle for the Aluminium Plant of Podgorica ensued that is still not over, this case study illustrates the intimate links between Russian business and Balkan political elites (Reuters 2013). The real estate sector, which is by definition a soft target for money laundering activities in jurisdictions where the rule of law is shallow, is another transmission belt of corruption—and by extension of political influence.

As elsewhere in Europe, Russian money could make or break political careers. In Croatia, for instance, Tomislav Karamarko, leader of the principal center-right party Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), ten-

dered his resignation in June 2016 after a scandal concerning a donation from a murky Russian foundation (Marini 2016). The affair shed light on the close contacts between Russia and political and business elites in the post-Yugoslav state, which, unlike Serbia, rarely comes into the spotlight when Moscow's influence is discussed. Agrokor, Croatia's largest company, accounting for full 16 percent of national GDP, owes €1.3 bn to Russian lenders Sberbank and VTB (operating through their subsidiaries in Austria). The company has been teetering on the edge of bankruptcy since early 2017, which gives Moscow a strong bargaining chip (Samorukov 2017a).

Russia has been fending for the interests of its companies in the region. For instance, it has been pressing the Bulgarian government to fulfill obligations to Rosatom's subsidiary Atomstroyexport, under a contract to build a nuclear power station at Belene. Sofia walked out in early 2012 due to the lack of funds and the uncertain market prospects of the venture. But then in 2018, Sofia revived the project, having lost an arbitration case to Atomstroyexport (Reuters 2018). However, Russia has been reluctant to take up a more ambitious role. In 2013, it refused to bail out Cyprus, which was struggling with a dramatic banking crisis that affected a vast number of Russian depositors. Likewise, Putin did not respond positively to the appeal of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras in April 2015 for loaning Greece money to avoid both bankruptcy and the heavy conditions Germany and her allies from the eurozone had attached to a new rescue package (Bechev 2017, chap. 4). At the end of the day, Russia avoided taking long-term risks in Southeast Europe, arguing it was for the EU to prop up the struggling economies of the region.

Russia's Influence on Societies and Domestic Politics

Soft power, that is, the ability to appeal and attract, constitutes yet another aspect of Russian influence. Russia and Vladimir Putin are hugely popular in societies with Orthodox Christian majorities—Serbia and Republika Srpska, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece. That is a fact registered by numerous sociological surveys over the years. Russia cultivates the image of a historical ally and protector of its Balkan brethren against the twin perils of the arrogant West and radical Islam.

Russian “soft power” is a function of the negative attitude toward the West, in particular, and less to a genuine attraction to Russian culture, society, and domestic institutions. Moscow's policies tap into indigenous

resentments dating back to the Yugoslav wars and the early postcommunist transition of the 1990s and, in the case of Greece, to the bruising experience of the Civil War (1946–49) and the military dictatorship (1967–74). The EU has also become a target, particularly in the past several years. It is faulted for the economic dislocation experienced in the region since the global financial crisis, for the imposition of liberal values (especially on sensitive matters such as the rights of ethnic and sexual minorities), as well as for the influx of refugees. Russia, on the other hand, casts itself as a champion of traditionalism and as a bulwark against encroachment by the West on sacrosanct norms of national sovereignty.

Russia wins popularity thanks to expectations, often misplaced, for investment and trade benefits. A poll in Serbia has shown that a majority sees Russia as a donor on a scale similar to that of the EU, whereas in fact it lags far behind what the EU and even Japan have disbursed in monetary assistance. In Bulgaria, the effect of the EU sanctions against Russia has turned into a vigorously debated issue. One opinion maker after another has bemoaned the negative consequences they have on the country's economy, despite the fact that Russia is not a significant export partner to start with. Russian energy projects have also enjoyed approval. The nuclear power plant at Belene has been touted as a shortcut to “reindustrialization,” reversing the decline of heavy industries in Bulgaria after the end of communism.

Such favorable views facilitate Russia's “strategic communications.” The Kremlin's line on the war in Ukraine, the intervention in Syria, and the EU's refugee crisis, among others, resonates with audiences across the Balkans.

There are some striking examples. A Gallup survey from 2014, funded by the European Commission, showed that Serbian citizens saw Russia as a leading donor, several notches ahead of the EU (TNS Medium Gallup 2014). The reality could not be more different. Taken together, the EU and its member states have spent €3.5 billion in Serbia alone since 2000. Russia's contribution is hardly a tenth as much—mostly loans rather than grants—and lags behind that of the United States and even Japan. Surveys looking specifically at foreign policy tell a similar story. A poll by *Nova Srpska Politička Misao* (New Serbian Political Thought), a conservative pro-Russian journal, found in October 2013 that 67.5 percent of Serbians support an alliance with Russia, as against 53.7 percent for EU membership (Tomić 2015).⁹

In Bulgaria and Greece, too, positive views of Russia prevail. A survey from March 2015 found that 61 percent held a positive view of Russia and 30 percent a negative view. At the same time, nearly two-thirds of respon-

dents stated they would vote for the EU and NATO in a putative referendum and only one-third for alignment with Russia and other post-Soviet states (Alpha Research 2015). The situation in Greece is somewhat comparable. According to a poll from October 2015, citizens see the EU as their main ally, with Russia much lower down the list (44 percent against 12 percent). However, when asked about individual countries, respondents rank Russia second in popularity after France, and well ahead of Germany and the United States. Overall, 58 percent are favorable toward Russia and 34 percent unfavorable (Györi et al. 2015).

In countries like Serbia, the love for Russia taps into grudges against the West. Engagement with and appreciation of Russian culture, society, and domestic institutions comes second (Bondarev 2016). Sociological data from Serbia indicates that young people are supportive of an alliance with Moscow but are much more likely to travel, work, or study in Western Europe (European Commission). Second, Russia's alignment with Serbian, and to a lesser extent Macedonian, nationalism makes it unpopular among Muslim-majority communities, including the Bosniaks and the Kosovar Albanians. Montenegro is a special case because the attitude to Russia correlates with the pro- and anti-NATO cleavage as well as the polarized views of the identity of the Montenegrins—as an extension of the greater Serb nation or as a historically separate ethnic community (Dzankić 2014).

What matters is that Russia is able to turn its popularity into political leverage. It has at its disposal a vast network of allies and fellow travelers that includes political parties, the Serbian Orthodox Church, civic groups, media, prominent public figures, and opinion makers. United Russia, the party of power in Moscow, has cooperation arrangements with a number of interlocutors across ex-Yugoslavia. Attending United Russia's congress in 2016, a group of nationalist and ultraconservative groups such as the Democratic Party of Serbia, the Dveri movement, Montenegro's New Serbian Democracy, the Democratic People's Party, the Socialist People's Party, and Milorad Dodik's Alliance of Independent Social Democrats from Republika Srpska adopted a joint declaration opposing NATO's expansion. They chose to do so on June 28, St. Vitus' Day (Vidovdan), the date of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo and the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914.

Those allies can be easily stirred into action. In the spring of 2016, Serbia saw a wave of anti-NATO demonstrations calling for a referendum on membership. The organizers came from a murky civic group called Oathkeepers (Zavetnici), but were also endorsed by political actors such as the

Serbian Radical Party of Vojislav Šešelj and the Democratic Party of Serbia. The rallies represented an indirect attack against Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić when the country was heading for general elections. Vučić's position was, and still is, that Serbia had settled the issue once and for all with a parliamentary declaration on neutrality in 2007. While Vučić won a resolute victory and a new term in power, the message was that Russia was in a position to enter Serbian politics through the backdoor and pressure the government. United Macedonia, a small nationalist and anti-Western party claiming to be aligned with United Russia, was at the forefront of the demonstrations against the Prespa Agreement signed with Greece, as well as in the campaign to boycott a consultative referendum on the deal paving the way for Skopje to join NATO. In the run-up to the plebiscite in September 2018 senior leaders from Europe and the United States, including US secretary of defense James Mattis and German chancellor Angela Merkel, made their way to the North Macedonian capital and warned of a Russian influence campaign aimed at blocking the country's integration into the West. The referendum failed due to low turnout, but parliament implemented the Prespa Agreement nonetheless, changing the country's name in January 2019, and securing a NATO accession protocol soon thereafter.

To understand why Russia has become more prominent, one needs to take into account the broader trends in the region. The Balkans have seen the rise of a new generation of demagogues and nationalist leaders who differ from those presiding over Yugoslavia's bloody demise in the 1990s (Günay and Džihic 2016; Kmezić and Bieber 2017). Today's strongmen (no women of note among their ranks) gladly wage symbolic violence to rally their constituencies behind the flag, but they lack the financial and military resources to launch and sustain full-scale wars. The political costs of using military force are high (e.g., being ostracized by the West), while the payoff is uncertain. Overall, hate speech is a less risky strategy than bullets. The presence of NATO and EU in the region is also a deterring factor, even if the West's "soft power" might be in relative decline. Yet Balkan leaders have an interest in keeping tensions high as that translates into electoral gains domestically as well as an international spotlight. Manipulating nationalist grudges and passions also shifts attention away from more mundane concerns such as corruption, the misuse of office, and state capture.

This environment provides an endless number of opportunities for Russia to assert itself. On the whole, Balkan power holders prefer to accommodate rather than push back against Russia. Serbia's Vučić pro-

vides the best example. Though coming under pressure from Russia's radical proxies, he has tried to stay on good terms with both Russia and the EU and extract strategic and commercial benefits from each of the parties. To him, Serbia's interest lies in cooperating with both the West and the East, just like socialist Yugoslavia in the days of Josip Broz Tito. That seems to be in tune with mainstream view in Serbian society too. The same was true of Montenegro until the crisis in Ukraine. Thereafter, the strategy moved in the opposite direction: using the threat of Russia to deflect legitimate criticism about corruption and state capture. In Macedonia, the center-right VMRO-DPMNE switched from a staunchly pro-EU and NATO position to a Russia-friendly one, also cheering for the likes of Hungary's Viktor Orbán¹⁰ and President Donald Trump. In any event, Balkan elites have been playing the Russia card domestically and internationally just like Russia plays the region in its tug-of-war with the West, which shows no sign of abating.

Conclusion

Russian influence in Southeast Europe is usually treated as a matter of supply. Moscow, according to this version, is seeking to challenge and roll back the Western presence established in the region since the 1990s. Putin is repaying the US and Europe for the humiliation during the Kosovo War in 1999. Russia is rallying Slavs and Orthodox Christians in the Balkans and harnessing historic and cultural links to stake a claim on the region that goes back centuries.

This story is not entirely wholly divorced from reality. Yet one should note that, as a rule, Russia is playing in tandem with local players—individual leaders, parties, and business interests. They are pursuing their own political and economic agendas, which may or may not overlap with those of Moscow. As a rule, radical actors, arguing for a complete break with the West and full alignment with Russia, have marginal impact. In other words, Southeast Europe is likely to remain in the orbit of the EU and NATO.

There is no doubt that Russia's centralized mode of decision-making and ability to mobilize diverse if scarce resources puts it at an advantage. By contrast, the EU, which possesses enormous economic and political clout, is moving slowly and is often hampered by disagreements between its member states. The nonrecognition of Kosovo by five of them is a classic example. However, what the EU has, unlike Russia, are solutions to the

developmental and institutional challenges facing Southeast Europe. While Moscow acts as a spoiler, the Union's chief strength is having a long-term strategy.

Despite the alarm about the Western withdrawal from the region and the arrival of new powers eager to fill the gap, empirical evidence suggests that Europe and the US still have an upper hand and continue to shoulder a commitment to stability. The Trump presidency posed a clear challenge in that respect. In theory, the transatlantic disputes Trump stirred up and the widening gap between Europe and the United States opens opportunities for Russia to assert its influence. However, in Southeast Europe, developments have moved in the opposite direction. The US continues to push for NATO expansion, first to Montenegro and later to North Macedonia, and against Russia. This policy is in line with the EU's preferences too. While it would be naïve to declare the Western expansion a shining success, it is more than certain that Moscow's vision of an internally divided EU and a disengaged United States is not materializing in the Balkans either.

NOTES

1. Kerry in response to a question by Sen. Christopher Murphy (D-Connecticut). See "Sen. Thad Cochran Holds a Hearing on the State Department Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2016," Congressional Quarterly Transcriptions, February 24, 2015.

2. See also the report on Russian interference in Europe prepared by the Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations Democrats, which contains sections on Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro (Committee on Foreign Relations 2018: Chapter 5).

3. The US State Department has also nominated Matthew Palmer, a diplomat with long experience in the Balkans, as an envoy to the region.

4. "Russia aims to develop comprehensive pragmatic and equitable cooperation with Southeast European countries. The Balkan region is of great strategic importance to Russia, including its role as a major transportation and infrastructure hub used for supplying gas and oil to European countries."

5. Serbia is a partial exception. It is a Collective Security Treaty Organization observer and has a free trade agreement with the EEU yet holds membership in neither of these bodies.

6. The center coordinated assistance to Serbia during the devastating floods in the spring of 2014.

7. The remark was occasioned by a Russian-donated train painted in the Serbian colors and Christian Orthodox symbols, which was carrying the writing "Kosovo is Serbia" in 20 languages. The Kosovo authorities stopped the train at the border, having previously opposed the opening of a regular line between Belgrade and Kosovska Mitrovica.

8. On Bulgaria's case, see Georgiev et al. 2016.

9. Further sociological data in Bechev 2019b.
10. In November 2018, VMRO-DPMNE's former leader Nikola Gruevski, sentenced to jail on corruption charges, escaped to Hungary and was granted asylum.

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9 | Russia's Regionalism Projects in Eurasia

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The political crisis in relations between Russia and the West is often analyzed as the breaking of the post–Cold War status quo in Eurasia initiated by Russian more aggressive (or more assertive, in the Russian interpretation) behavior. Since 2014, the EU has regretted that its attitudes toward Russia prior to the Ukrainian crisis were not tough enough to contain Russia. The US under President Donald Trump also seemed to be realist and concentrated on the balance-of-power approach as compared to President Barack Obama's (failed) attempts to “reset” bilateral relations with Russia. Is it true that the West was too accommodating and too reactionary before 2014? Probably, not,¹ but still this view has prevailed in recent years in the Western capitals.

This chapter claims that it is a competition of economic integration projects that caused the present political crisis, while security cooperation in Eurasia² in the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has not created any serious concerns for the Euro-Atlantic community since the collapse of the USSR. A potentially peaceful positive-sum game competition of regional models of integration in Eurasia was transformed into a geopolitical rivalry, and both sides deny their responsibility for this transformation. The key claim of this chapter is that the official political discourses and expert analyses often disregard the specificities of this competition, which are related to the following factors: (1) the incomparability of the domains where Russia and the EU compete; (2) the incomparability of actors (a state versus an integration institution); and (3) interpretive bias in explaining the behavior of the other side. To overcome these methodological obstacles, I introduce the idea that the competition should be analyzed in terms of com-

munities of practices to avoid the problem of incomparability of the actors and factors in question. The practical solution of the current political crisis would be to develop macroregional metapractices to incorporate both the EU's and Eurasian models of regional integration.

Non-Western Regionalism: A Viable Explanation for Eurasia?

This chapter is an attempt to present an explanation of the Russian approaches to regionalism in Eurasia and to the EU's and, more generally, Western policies in Eurasia. Although that regional security remains at the center of attention of this chapter, the research is, to a large extent, devoted to economic integration, because although non-Western regionalism has become an important research topic in the 2000s, regionalism in Eurasia has not been an attractive research topic for Western scholars until recently. For example, one of the important volumes with regional case studies, *Crafting Cooperation: Regional International Institutions in Comparative Perspective*, edited by A. Acharya and Alastair Iain Johnston and published in 2007, does not include a chapter on Eurasia.³ The 2016 Oxford *Handbook of Comparative Regionalism* does have a chapter on Eurasia, which is quite a recent trend.⁴ Of course, the idea about the difference between the Western and non-Western integration is not new.⁵ What is new is the post-Cold War environment and regional integration projects by post-Soviet and post-Socialist countries. However, access to new Eurasian cases of regional integration did not attract attention for quite some time; the analysis of regional trends in Eurasia concentrated on regional security or energy security.

In the 2000s, the idea of a “vacuum of power” in Eurasia⁶ was very popular in Russian and post-Soviet academic and expert communities. Russian and Eurasian experts feared that the US, NATO, or individual nonregional great powers would use this situation to extend their influence to the post-Soviet space. This was mostly discussed in terms of geopolitical rivalry,⁷ sometimes with a neoimperial tint.⁸ Another very popular idea was that centripetal and centrifugal trends coexist in the post-Soviet region,⁹ because some of the former Soviet republics chose a pro-Western orientation, while others continue to rely on Russian financial assistance and low prices for Russian energy resources sold to these countries in exchange of their political loyalty. What is more, for the Russian academic community, in terms of analysis of regional security in Eurasia in the 1990s or 2000s, the EU was not a usual suspect: NATO and the

OSCE attracted more attention from Russian experts.¹⁰ The EU was mostly analyzed in terms of its energy and economic interests in Eurasia.¹¹

The lack of research on regional integration in Eurasia might be explained by the low performance of regional institutions¹² and lack of contacts with Western regional structures. The situation changed after the Ukraine crisis, when the Customs Union and later the Eurasian Economic Union became somewhat involved in political debates about the fates of the so-called in-between countries, meaning the former Soviet republics territorially situated between the areas of interest of Russia and the European Union: Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. Another factor, which drew additional attention to Eurasian integration, is the Chinese Belt and Road project, a trade route from China through Eurasia to the EU. Thus, it is not the nature of the Eurasian integration, which attracted scholarly attention per se, but more the geopolitical rivalry between great powers as a context for regionalism in Eurasia. The latest wave of studies of Eurasian regionalism uses the nature of the political regimes of the Eurasian countries to explain the specificities of the regional institutions.¹³ The explanations include such characteristics as the redistribution of resources to support friendly authoritarian regimes or the implementation of economic commitments only in case of intermediate economic dependence. Generally, these studies see authoritarian regionalism as a challenge to the West and to democracy promotion.¹⁴

Eurasian regional integration became visible in international political discourses only in 2010s, but, formally speaking, the European Union and the first regional organization in Eurasia—the Commonwealth of Independent States—were created almost simultaneously: the Maastricht Treaty was signed in February 1992 and entered into force in November 1993; the creation of the CIS was proclaimed in December 1991 simultaneously with the collapse of the USSR, and the CIS Charter was adopted in January 1993. Of course, European integration has more than 40 years of history before Maastricht, and the EU merged existing organizations of European integration. However, the existence of the USSR may also be analyzed as the prehistory of the integration of CIS states, just going in the opposite direction: from high integration within one state toward a more disintegrated cooperation within an intergovernmental organization. Without the common Soviet past the integration in Eurasia would not have been so comprehensive and rather advanced (e.g., visa-free regimes). Both the EU and the CIS had 12 member states in early 1990s (the EU enlarged to three more members in 1995). Even NATO with its 16 members until 1999 was more or less comparable to the CIS by the number of

members (but, of course, outbalanced the CIS by its military potential). The enlargement of the EU and NATO since the 2000s broke this seeming power balance.

Does this break of the balance between regional blocs since the 2000s matter? It does not, if these blocs see each other not as competitors, but as partners. If the Cold War with its competition between ideologies ended, and post-Soviet countries proclaimed themselves to be pursuing a democratic path, the regional competition should be only a peaceful economic competition for markets. If the competition is not peaceful, and becomes political and even military, the question is what the nature of this competition is in reality. Western experts and politicians interpret this regional competition as a clash between a democratic camp led by the normative power EU and an authoritarian camp led by the regional hegemon Russia. My claim in this chapter is that the nature of the competition is more complex than that.

Regional Competition about What?

Conceptually, the major research question of this volume is about the European Union's power in relation to Russia and the reactive nature of this power. Despite a mostly constructivist agenda of the volume, the official discourses of Russia and the EU are mainly based either on the real-politik vision or liberal institutionalist arguments about economic integration. If we have to analyze political disputes between European and Eurasian integration projects, which theoretical school would better explain the rivalry? The EU positions itself as a liberal actor with normative power, while presenting Russia as a regional hegemon with a realist logic of foreign policy. At the same time, Russia views the EU's actions during the Ukraine crisis as falling within the realist logic, based on a division of spheres of influence. The EU and the West in general denounce the concept of "spheres of influence" as being obsolete and politically incorrect. The so-called Five Principles of Russian foreign policy proclaimed by President Dmitry Medvedev in 2008 after the war with Georgia included an idea about the "privileged interests" of Russia in the neighboring countries based on traditionally friendly, good-hearted, and very special relations.¹⁵ This concept of privileged interests was heavily criticized by Western and, especially, US scholars.¹⁶

Generally, the competition for the loyalty of the "in-between" states can be analyzed in terms of either power projection (or geopolitical

rivalry) or competition of models for national and regional development. The EU's self-perception is that the organization spreads values, political standards, and a model for socioeconomic development. Since, in the European view, Russia does not present any attractive model for regional or national development for its neighbors, Russian attempts of region-building are seen by Europeans as power-projection moves.¹⁷ The overall understanding of the European authors of the EU's reactive power is mirrored in the Russian understanding of the current political crisis: Russian political elites view their own actions as being mostly reactive to the EU's and NATO's enlargement strategies during the last decades. Generally, this mirrored perception is an example of an interpretive bias.

The model of EU-Russia relations before 2014 is described in the report of the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies, a conservative government-sponsored think tank, as follows:¹⁸ Russia had to support the economic development of some Eastern Partnership countries with cheap energy resources and access of their goods and labor to the Russian market, while the EU was expanding its political and ideological influence to these states without paying the economic price. After 2014 this model failed.

The competition between Russia and the EU in the common neighborhood is presented in the Russian official discourse as “competitive regionalisms,” while the EU still believes in the “common Europe” paradigm.¹⁹ What is the nature of this competition? For Russian political elites, the competition is military (NATO expansion) and economic (DCFTA). The EU tends to believe that the competition is more normative about the best practices based on the EU's own experience. With such diverging approaches, it becomes very difficult to determine the nature and the outcome of the competition between Russia and the EU, since they compete in different dimensions. The major question is: If the two parties possess different dimensions of power (normative power Europe versus material capabilities of Russia), how would we define the balance of power situation? When is the balance broken? Symmetrical competition in the same dimensions of power during the Cold War created tangible parameters for comparison. However, how do you measure ideational power in comparison with material power? Is it possible to find a common denominator for this regional power competition in Eurasia? As demonstrated earlier, in order to find this common denominator and proclaim its own preponderance, each side tries to reframe the approaches of the other side to present its own policies as more cooperative. Russian political elites present the EU's policies related to the Association Agreements and the DCFTA as a power game and a desire to spread its influence to Eurasia, while Russia

itself is willing to cooperate in the framework of the “Lisbon-to-Vladivostok” cooperation concept, or a later idea of “integration of integrations” and the Greater Eurasia project. The European Union and Western scholars in general present Eurasian integration blocs as authoritarian initiatives aimed at maximization of power, and condemn nondemocratic efforts of preserving dictatorial political regimes instead of giving up sovereignty to supranational institutions and becoming more transparent.

Regional Competition between Which Actors?

Apart from the problem of comparison of different dimensions of power, another conceptual problem is the comparability of actors. Russia-EU competition for the in-between countries is a competition between a country and a regional organization. Is it methodologically correct to compare different types of actors: a sovereign state and an international organization? Again, during the Cold war, the comparison was more accurate: two blocs led by two superpowers. It is, of course, important to distinguish between comparability of the actors and their interaction. We can study the interactions of different types of actors, but the methodological question would be how to compare their agency and power and determine which actor has more influence if we apply the concept of balance of power.

Before the end of the Cold War the classical balance of power theory described quite accurately the co-existence of two blocs in Europe: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization versus the Warsaw Pact Organization, and the European Economic Community versus the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. After the dissolution of the two Socialist regional organizations, the balance of power approach was applied by experts only to NATO and Russia plus former Soviet republics in terms of a flank agreement within the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, associated with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The attempt to rethink the balance of power approach to the post-Soviet realities with only one remaining Euro-Atlantic bloc failed: Russia suspended its participation in the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty in 2007 and completely withdrew in 2015, referring to the fact that most NATO countries did not ratify this treaty.²⁰ However, NATO-Russia relations are still an important topic for analysis despite the incomparability of the actors. The explanation is that the comparison in terms of balance of power in NATO-Russia relations concerns only one

dimension of power: a military one. Thus, security studies in this case disregard the difference in types of actors.

It is easier to compare Russian and US strategies than Russian competition with the EU. Since Russian economic ties with the US are not that developed, and Russia is not a competitive center of economic influence at the global level, the major line of competition is related to the strategic issues: for example, the US and Russian withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019 broke the strategic balance in Europe, which had been in place for 30 years, since late 1980s. It is debatable whether Russia provoked the US to withdraw, or the US wanted to shift the balance under this pretext, but, nevertheless, we witnessed political and expert debates that reproduce the arguments of Cold War times related to the security dilemma concept.

In case of the EU, the comparative analysis is more complicated. What is interesting is that this volume also compares EU strategies to Russian strategies, and not to the regional organizations in Eurasia (the CIS, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization), since all of the mentioned organizations are perceived by Western experts as weak and ineffective. However, formally, the reason for the crisis in the EU-Russian relations is the competition for mutually exclusive cooperation with regional economic organizations: the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union, or EAEU (previously, the Customs Union). So why is Russia at the center of the analysis instead of the EAEU? The answer is that the EU views regional organizations in Eurasia as functioning according to the logic of realism: no separate agency of organizations, just the interests of a regional hegemon.

The EU is blamed by Russian experts of its conscious "blindness" toward Eurasian integration projects: the EU negotiates and signs agreements with individual countries, but does not want to participate in any interorganizational activities or to sign any official agreements with any Eurasian regional organizations (some technical consultations without any official agreements started between the EU and the EAEU in summer 2019). The same is true for NATO: individual Partnership for Peace agreements with CIS countries, in NATO's view, make irrelevant any interorganizational contacts with the CSTO or the SCO, which are anyway dominated by Russia.

At the same time, for all Eurasian regional institutions, it is essential to establish official cooperation with Euro-Atlantic regional structures by signing a special interorganizational agreement.²¹ However, so far both the EU and NATO have not demonstrated any interest in interorganiza-

tional ties. The arguments at the level of the Euro-Atlantic expert and policy community are that Eurasian regional institutions are ineffective and do not demonstrate any viable outputs in their activities. Despite this, the CSTO undertook another attempt to establish official relations with NATO in May 2019, by passing this suggestion to NATO through Kyrgyzstan, which was presiding at the CSTO that year.

Eurasian institutions seek external official recognition not so much to start practical cooperation, but in order to get proof of their agency as a group. For Western states, organizational agency depends on institutional effectiveness and shared identity, thus they do not seek external recognition, but more an internal recognition of the agency by the societies of the member states (e.g., the referendum in the UK about Brexit questions the cohesion of the EU). This is a very important difference, which might have different explanations. The Western explanation would be that authoritarian regimes do not seek domestic legitimacy from its own populations, thus, they do not care about the efficacy of regional organizations. Russian explanations might be related to the concept of status in international relations developed by Thomas Volgy and his collaborators.²² Apart from material capabilities, status implies external recognition by either members of the same group (e.g., a regional organization) or the international community in general. Self-attribution of status also works. Status adds legitimacy to the actions of major or regional powers, and the most legitimacy can be gained through the recognition by the entire international community. The authors of the volume on status also introduce two categories of overachievers and underachievers depending on the correlation between status and capabilities. In its own eyes, Russia and the EAEU are underachievers (have less status than they deserve), while the West perceives Russia and the EAEU as overachievers (more ambitions than real achievements).

Thus, if Western and Eurasian (non-Western) institutions differ in their approaches to agency, efficacy, and shared identity, is there any common denominator in this field as well?

Community of Practice as a Common Denominator

Russia blames its Western counterparts for sticking to Cold War thinking, while the West views Russian regional behavior as hegemonic and neoimperial. Both accusations can be analyzed through the concepts of practices and of communities of practice, developed, inter alia, by Emanuel Adler.²³

This concept allows empirical comparison of different types of actors possessing different types of power.

Practices can be defined as “socially meaningful patterns of action which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, act out and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world.”²⁴

Adler views Europe as a civilizational community of practice,²⁵ which, with a reference to Randall Collins, can be taken as “zones of prestige” or “networks of attraction.”²⁶ The power of attraction, according to Adler, lies in “the material, organizational, and discursive advantages embodied in novel political, economic, security and social practices.”²⁷ Practice diffusion is what promotes the expansion of a civilization. Political entities, of which civilizations consist, may clash if they do not practice self-restraint. Self-restraint is a key concept for security community theory: without such self-restraint, no security community can be formed.

Clash of civilizations (different communities of practice) occur when Europe as a postmodern community and a normative power tries to expand its practices to the rest of the international community, which is based on a different concept of power, a modern one, entrenched in survival and material power. The EU's intent is to “change the international system's structure—its rules and practices—toward intercivilizational politics based on security communities.”²⁸ Adler adds that “Europe's capacity to attract will also depend on laying to rest pressures arising from inside Europe to move ‘forward to the past’—to become a great power in the modernist power-politics tradition.”²⁹

Transmission of practices to the European neighborhood, among other aims, can be an instrument of bringing peace and security to the adjoining regions. According to Thomas Diez and Michelle Pace,³⁰ in conflict transformation the EU represents itself as a “force for good”: through international socialization the EU tries to bring conflicting parties to peace by inducing them to internalize international (European) norms. Future EU membership is an obvious carrot for such internalization.³¹ In the absence of membership perspective, the EU uses an association or partnership option. Association or partnership agreements make the countries in conflict emulate the EU integration model (a security community, according to Adler), but without integration proper, just by creating specific discursive frameworks. This has twofold consequences for conflict transformation. First, national political elites can use the association or partnership agreement with the EU to legitimize domestic discourses aimed at conflict settlement. Second, national

civil society can use the same reference to the agreements with the EU to put pressure on national political elites to end the conflict by following EU values and norms.

To make one conceptual step forward in the analysis of Eurasian institutions, we need to expand the idea of community of practice to the concept of region. Following Emanuel Adler with his idea about Europe being a civilizational community of practice,³² Vincent Pouliot suggests looking at regions starting not with interdependence or identities, but with practices—“a set of specific ways of doing things,” which constitute regionness and create “a coherent space and narrative of regional interaction.”³³ Thus, recurring (centuries-long) patterns of mutually recognizable actions (such as governance, diplomacy, ways of waging wars, and trading) are more important for regionness than interdependence or identity.

Thus, a realist perspective would make all Eurasian institutions noncoherent and ineffective objects of Russian hegemonic influence, while the concept of practices as being constitutive of regionness may add agency to Eurasian organizations when assessing the coherence of Eurasian organizations. Without additional explanations for the necessity of regional cooperation, Russian regional hegemonism becomes the leading explanatory model. But if we use the concept of community of practices, it explains why post-Soviet Eurasian countries cooperate in regional groups.

Clash of Practices?

Russian negative reaction to the Association Agreements with the Eastern Partnership countries in summer 2013 came as a surprise to the EU, because the Union had been using the same practices of cooperation with neighboring countries, including Russia itself, since the early 1990s. The EU's Neighborhood Policy and, later, the Eastern Partnership program are based on the idea of spreading EU practices to the countries at the borders of the EU.

We should remember that the EU in its current format after the Maastricht Treaty is almost the same age not only of the CIS but also of the Russian Federation: although the Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991, independent Russia adopted its first constitution only in December 1993 after the parliamentary crisis in October 1993 and just one month after the Maastricht Treaty came into force. The EU and Russia signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement just half a year later, in June 1994.

The objective of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was “to support Russian efforts to consolidate its democracy and to develop its economy and to complete the transition into a market economy,” while in the preamble it was stated that the parties are “convinced of the paramount importance of the rule of law and respect for human rights, particularly those of minorities, the establishment of a multi-party system with free and democratic elections and economic liberalization aimed at setting up a market economy.”³⁴ These clauses are nowadays perceived by Russian political elites as “mentoring” Russia, introduced to make bilateral cooperation conditional on Russian development as a “civilized” country corresponding to a number of standards.³⁵ The EU posture toward Russia was perceived as indulgent.

Since 2014, Russian politics toward Ukraine and Eurasia in general is seen in the West as a “newly aggressive posturing,” caused by Russian neo-imperial aspirations. However, before the Ukraine crisis, Western attitudes toward Russian regional strategies in Eurasia were quite negative as well: academic and expert overviews of EU-Russia relations quite pessimistically assessed the willingness of the European Union to establish pragmatic cooperative relations with Russia. Moreover, even the launch of the Customs Union in 2012 is presented by some Russian experts as a response to the Eastern Partnership program.³⁶

As it was put by Vincent Pouliot in his chapter about regional security practices and Russian-Atlantic relations, after the end of the Cold War “a mutual willingness to move beyond realpolitik practices was ultimately insufficient for bringing about significant regional change. As one side tries to gesture into being a new pattern of security politics, the other encountered those practices as reminiscent of the past.”³⁷ Thus, any EU moves to spread its practices are seen as a Cold War type desire to enlarge its sphere of influence.

Decades-long practice of diplomacy in the context of the Cold War adds coherence to the European sense of pan-European interactions. It seems that from the European perspective, there is an inertia of practices: a self-proclaimed democratic Russia is still seen as acting with Soviet-style and imperial-style methods. If the idea about the inertia of practices even after a regime change works, then why do we expect the EU or NATO, which did not experience any regime change, to apply any new practices toward Russia? The Euro-Atlantic institutions should also use the previous practices that they are used to.

The launch of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975 might be presented as an attempt to create political metapractices

in a divided Europe but actually it was an institutionalization of political and ideological conflict (creation of a platform for the debates) with hopes from the West that the Socialist bloc will finally collapse and the Eastern European states will have a chance to choose their fate (political regime). The same diplomatic practice persists in relations with the former Soviet republics, which are seen as victims of Russian neoimperial ambitions. What is more, recent Russian region-building and institution-building projects also seem to revive the previous Cold War diplomatic practice of bloc-to-bloc dialogue: Russian political elites believe that the West will not talk to Russia alone as an equal partner, but might talk to a group of countries forming a bloc with a common political agenda, because blocs have more legitimacy in international relations than a single country.

Yet Western scholars often present Russian attempts of region-building in balance of power logic: “Instead of creating a single wider Europe that transcends Cold War-era divisions, the post-2011 Putin approach seeks to restore components of Cold War-style bipolarity, with Russia at the head of a bloc comprised of Soviet successor states capable of interacting on an equal basis with the institutional Europe of the EU and NATO.”³⁸

What is the nature of political practices that survived after the collapse of the USSR? What currently unites the political elites of post-Soviet countries are exactly these common inherited practices of governance and political communication, often described in the everyday language as common Soviet mentality or within the concept of *Homo Sovieticus*³⁹ (e.g., Soviet practices of concentrating power within a small elite group, but covering it up with an ideology of “rule of the people”). These practices are easily recognizable around the post-Soviet space. Some new practices arise, like in Central Asia, but they are not strong enough to give birth to a separate Central Asian community of practice rooted in a sub-regional organization. The absolute majority of the post-Soviet political and economic elites have a Soviet past, when they were indoctrinated into these practices. When Mikhail Saakashvili came to power after the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, he made a major shift in the national elites of Georgia by bringing to power a younger generation of civil servants, with senior positions given to ethnic Georgians who used to live abroad and had received a Western education. Such new political elites were free of the experience of the practices of the previous generations of politicians. Ukraine experienced two revolutionary waves, while Kyrgyzstan experienced even three waves, because after the first revolutions the same generation of politicians (used to the previous practices) came to power. The presidential elections in Ukraine in 2019 demonstrate that the new

generation of politicians surrounding Vladimir Zelensky tried to break up with the practices of the previous political regime, but the bureaucratic institutions formed under previous administrations strike back.

The CIS may be ineffective as an organization, but it is effective as a community of post-Soviet practice, where members share approaches toward governance, diplomacy, rules of regional trade, and so forth. The same is true for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In terms of activities and results, the organization does not have a tremendous record since its launch in 2001. Most of the academic debates about the SCO were devoted to its enlargement, which finally happened in 2017, and India and Pakistan joined the club. The SCO might be ineffective as a security organization, but it is a very effective structure for regional socialization and creation of new common practices of interaction. The organization is proud of its “Shanghai spirit” (an idea similar to the “ASEAN Way”) based on mutual trust, mutual respect, equality, respect for diverse civilizations, and pursuit of shared development. The SCO consists of countries very different in size of population, territory, in religion, and even belonging to different civilizations. Thus, the Shanghai spirit is a formulation of what brings such diverging countries together and of what the principles of their relations should be. However, some Western experts interpret the Shanghai spirit as a way to curb democratization in Central Asia and sustain autocratic regimes.⁴⁰ The same criticism arises in relation to the Collective Security Treaty Organization: very often, it is accused of having the sole aim of protecting the authoritarian regimes of member states. However, as mentioned earlier, such a characterization is given to all non-Western regional institutions because of the nature of the political regimes of the member states.

The Eurasian Economic Union has persevered to learn from the EU's community of practice and even become part of it, first, by copying EU's institutional and legal practices during its institutional and legal development. This strategy of the EAEU implies that the European Union's practices are taken as a model, but the EU itself does not recognize the EAEU imitation strategies as genuine and noteworthy. The EU recognizes only “licensed” imitations under its own auspices like the AA or DCFTA within the Eastern Partnership program. The EAEU's integration seems to be viewed by the EU as a “pirated copy” of European practices, which inevitably suffers from a low quality and, thus, is a “fake” integration. What follows from this attitude is the already mentioned lack of desire to establish relations with “fake” institutions until they become “real,” meaning corresponding to the European standards.

The prevailing Western perception is that Russia is the source for the flawed practices spread among the Eurasian countries. Without Russian pressure, the in-between countries would undoubtedly choose the EU as the source for new practices. However, this approach denies agency for the in-between countries: they are not viewed as being able to create their own national or regional practices. The EU views them as objects for socialization either by the EU itself, or, alternatively, by Russia. China is not yet viewed as a viable source for practices or a country able to initiate a community of practice. And that might be a great mistake not to take China into consideration as a source for transferrable practices. The Belt and Road Project, to be realized in the coming years, might finally lead to the popularization of Chinese approaches to business and trade and Chinese technical standards, which might gradually change post-Soviet practices, especially in Central Asia.

Russia presents its regional integration projects exactly as a chance for all member states to participate in the formation of new practices of interaction, because Eurasian regional institutions are still under construction. Contrary to the still developing Eurasian community of practice, the EU's community is already formed and invites new members only to uncritically join the existing community of practice with its *acquis communautaire*. From the perspective of Russian political elites, it equals the loss of sovereignty for in-between states: this argument was repeatedly used in Russian official and semiofficial discourse in the summer and autumn of 2013 to dissuade Ukraine from signing the Association Agreement.⁴¹ The EU's counterargument is that any cooperation of post-Soviet countries with Russia by definition implies loss of sovereignty.

Metapractices?

From the European perspective, since at least the summer of 2013, Russia opted for a zero-sum game scenario of competition for the loyalty of the in-between countries. Russia has the same interpretation of the European desire to promote such projects as the Association Agreements or the DCFTAs. However, at least, in 2000s, at the level of rhetoric and of diplomatic practices Russia has more than once tried to launch a liberal scenario of interaction with the EU and Euro-Atlantic community in general, but these attempts failed because of the negative approach of the Western institutions, which existed well before 2014.

The first attempt to suggest a positive-sum game scenario was the so-

called Draft European Security Treaty, promoted by Russian president Dmitry Medvedev since 2008. A year later, in 2009, after a number of diplomatic consultations with Western colleagues, the Russian side published the text of the treaty.⁴² The major idea of the treaty was to create a legally binding document, where the principle of indivisibility of continental security would be guaranteed by signatories. All regional security organizations (NATO, the EU, the OSCE, the CSTO, the CIS, and the SCO), according to the Russian draft, had to sign a legally binding agreement on nonaggression against each other. Even though the Russian proposal was very vague and lacked details, the West still feared some “hidden agenda” behind it.⁴³ Western, especially American, experts believed that such a treaty would “undermine European security” by constraining NATO’s ability to enlarge.⁴⁴ Or the experts commented that the idea was “fundamentally flawed”;⁴⁵ or, at least “disappointing” because “it would open up the possibility for any Party to the Treaty to enter into endless discussions in the name of the principle of the indivisibility of security.”⁴⁶ The major Western political counterargument to signing any new agreement was that the OSCE already had the necessary legal basis and the widest possible membership for a regional organization in Europe. However, in the early 1990s when Russian diplomacy really wanted to make CSCE/OSCE the core regional security institution (instead of NATO and the EU), the West demonstrated little appetite for it.⁴⁷ Until now, Moscow continues to promote an idea that the charter of the OSCE should be signed in order to make all OSCE decision not only politically but also legally binding. Since there is no interest from the Western states to sign such a charter, Russia suggested an alternative in a format of the draft European Security Treaty, which also failed.

Another attempt of positive-sum game approach is the idea of pan-continental free-trade area on the basis of indivisibility of security, which lately has ended up in the Russian Greater Eurasia project.

In September 2015, Vladimir Putin presented an idea of the “integration of integrations” at the UN General Assembly session: “Contrary to the policy of exclusion, Russia advocates harmonizing regional economic projects. I am referring to the so-called ‘integration of integrations’ based on the universal and transparent rules of international trade.”⁴⁸ The chosen venue for promotion of the concept suggests that this idea has a global reach rather than only a regional scope. In 2015, the criticism was directed at the US-led Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and Trans-Pacific Partnership projects. The concept of an “integration of integra-

tions” is a new edition of ideas promoted in the Draft European Security Treaty, put forward by Russia in 2008.

The Greater Eurasia project, developed and presented by the Russian president in 2016 and many times again in his speeches, should be based on the cooperation among the EAEU, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Silk Road Economic Belt project. The basis for this future cooperation should be open regionalism based on World Trade Organization principles with a long-term goal of creating free-trade areas among the mentioned organizations and projects. The idea of such a cooperation was preapproved by ASEAN states at the summit in Sochi in May 2016, where the meeting of the representatives of the secretariats of the EAEU, SCO, and ASEAN took place. In April 2017, during the visit of Federica Mogherini, Sergey Lavrov confirmed that, despite the political crisis, Russia wants to create a common economic and humanitarian space on the basis of equal and indivisible security from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, so the direct contacts of the EU and the EAEU would contribute to such a cooperation. Thus, the participation of the EU in the future Greater Eurasia project might be an option.⁴⁹ Due to the current political crisis in relations between Russia and the EU, the Greater Eurasia project is not much discussed even in Russian official discourse. However, it might get a new impetus with the French president Emmanuel Macron suggesting in August 2019 that “we need partnership with Russia to build a new architecture of trust and security in Europe.”⁵⁰

For Russian political elites, European and Euro-Atlantic security include Eurasia, because Russia considers itself to be a European country. As Russian minister of foreign affairs Sergey Lavrov writes in his 2016 article about the historical background of Russian foreign policy, “We are not seeking confrontation with the United States, or the European Union, or NATO. On the contrary, Russia is open to the widest possible cooperation with its Western partners. We continue to believe that the best way to ensure the interests of the peoples living in Europe is to form a common economic and humanitarian space from the Atlantic to the Pacific, so that the newly formed Eurasian Economic Union could be an integrating link between Europe and Asia Pacific.”⁵¹

In its draft European Security Treaty and the Greater Eurasia project, Russia tries to introduce some metapractices connecting different communities of practices. This idea about metapractices explains one of the much criticized clauses of the Russian draft European Security Treaty: the clause that the treaty “would place itself above the existing treaties whose

members would have to place their allegiance to the European Security Treaty above their duties to other organizations and treaties.”⁵²

The Helsinki process and the CSCE were the previous historical attempts at such metapRACTICES of creating ways of interaction among representatives of different communities of practices. Unfortunately, metapRACTICES very often fail: they look good as principles codified on paper, but differences in their implementation occur exactly because different communities of practice have their own interpretation of those principles.

Conclusions

Currently, European experts try to assess the EU's reaction to the Ukraine crisis and come to the conclusion that the EU could have reacted more promptly, more assertively, and much more harshly to the Russian behavior in order to prevent Russia from its aggressive actions. Hence, the EU is criticized for lack of assertiveness toward Russia. It is one of the possible ways of assessing the EU's responsibility in this crisis. From the perspective of Russian political elites, EU's responsibility for the crisis lies elsewhere. Namely, Russian elites believe that by denying the agency of the Eurasian regional institutions, the EU and NATO created a regional competition (or geopolitical rivalry), which could have been avoided by signing interorganizational agreements on metapRACTICES to create grounds for communication between different communities of practice.

The concept of communities of practice as developed by Emanuel Adler suggests that the EU as a postmodern community of practice by expanding its practices meets with modernity of the neighboring regions, which leads to the clash of civilizations (understood as communities of practice).

Is there a way to overcome this clash? The EU and NATO do not believe in the agency of Eurasian institutions and do not want to establish interorganizational relations. Even if the Euro-Atlantic institutions persist with this nonrecognition, still there is a way of establishing relations based on a common denominator, if we assume that post-Soviet countries are united by common post-Soviet practices (not Eurasian, but the ones emanating from the old Soviet practices), which are not imposed by Russia, but are shared by all former Soviet republics due to a certain inertia of practices and a common past. Creation of some metapRACTICES for communication between the EU's and the Eurasian community of practices can be a way to overcome the current political impasse.

NOTES

1. Mearsheimer 2014.
2. In this chapter, Eurasia is defined as 12 out of 15 former Soviet republics, excluding the Baltic states.
3. Acharya and Johnston 2007.
4. Borzel and Risse 2016.
5. Nye 1968.
6. Omarov 2007.
7. Kazantsev 2008.
8. Dugin 2014.
9. Pivovarov 2008; Glinkina and Orlik 2012; Chufrin 2011.
10. Baranovsky 1995; Antonenko 1999; Arbatov 2006; Entin and Zagorsky 2008.
11. Malgin et al. 2005; Kanygin 2007; Potyomkina, and Kaveshnikov 2007; Kaveshnikov 2009.
12. Wirminghaus 2012.
13. Libman and Obydenkova 2018; Russo and Stoddard 2018.
14. Cohen 2013.
15. President of Russia 2008.
16. Mankoff 2009; Berryman 2011.
17. Dragneva and Wolczuk 2017.
18. RISS 2015.
19. DeBardeleben 2017.
20. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia 2008.
21. Vinokurov et al. 2016.
22. Volgy et al. 2014.
23. Adler 2008.
24. Adler 2011, 4.
25. Adler 2010.
26. Collins 2001.
27. Adler 2010, 71.
28. Adler 2010, 77.
29. Adler 2010, 77–78.
30. Diez and Pace 2007.
31. Gavrilis 2014.
32. Adler 2010.
33. Pouliot 2012, 217.
34. European Commission 1994.
35. Nikitina, Utkin 2014.
36. RISS 2015.
37. Pouliot 2012, 228.
38. Mankoff 2016.
39. Zinoviev 1991; Geller 1994; Levada 1999.
40. Ambrosio 2008.
41. RIA Novosti 2011.
42. President of Russia 2009.
43. Zagorsky 2010.

44. McNamara 2016.
45. Weitz 2012.
46. Nopens 2010.
47. Kortunov 2016.
48. President of Russia 2015.
49. President of Russia 2016.
50. TASS 2019.
51. Lavrov 2016.
52. Nopens 2010, 4.

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10 | Power, Identity, and Circumstances

Three Factors in the Ukrainian Crisis

Vsevolod Samokhvalov

Many interpretations argue that the Russian-European crisis has been part of deteriorating Russian-Western relations. According to such interpretations Russia grew frustrated about NATO's eastward expansion, the West's intervention in Kosovo, and the color revolutions in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005). As a result, it became more assertive and pursued more aggressive policies in the region. The Russian-Georgian War in 2008 was the first response to this "Western encroachment." In 2009, when the EU adopted a new framework policy for the region—the Eastern Partnership—Russia grew even more resentful. It exerted pressure on Ukraine when the country decided to sign the Association Agreement (AA) with the EU and when the Revolution of Dignity erupted in Kyiv, Moscow moved in to annex Crimea and started the war in the east of Ukraine.¹ Despite rich factual descriptions, these approaches often tend to reduce Russia's policy to knee-jerk reaction against the West and do not account for all the complexity of Russian-European relations in the shared neighborhood, and even in the case of Ukraine.

This chapter sets out to problematize these interpretations. It will argue that the case of Ukraine is an anomaly. Never before in history have Russian-European relations suffered a serious blow because a country in their shared periphery decided to sign a trade deal with a third country or

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bloc. The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement is largely a long, detailed document about a Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area. It has always been explicitly stated by the European Union that the Association Agreement and DCFTA have nothing to do with potential membership of Ukraine in the EU. Moreover, what is often omitted in the analyses of the Russian-Ukrainian-European crisis is that geoeconomic interpretations do not universally apply to the entire post-Soviet space. In particular, besides Ukraine, there were two other post-Soviet republics that were on a fast track to integration with the EU. Moldova and Georgia signed similar Association Agreements and a Visa Liberalization Agreement with the EU even earlier. However, unlike the case of Ukraine, Moscow has not engaged in serious aggressive policies against these two neighbours, even though it had better conditions for a disruptive action. There were already pro-Russian separatist regions in Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) and Moldova (Transnistria). Both countries were considerably smaller and weaker in military terms. And yet—despite their active integration with Europe—Russia limited itself to sporadic economic pressure and decided not to reignite conflicts in these republics.

Another, important argument against geoeconomic interpretations is that fact that Russia disregards evident geoeconomic disintegration of other parts of the post-Soviet space. Russia has not engaged in disruptive action against Chinese economic expansion into Central Asia and its Belt and Road Initiative.² Nor did it oppose various agreements signed by Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan with the EU.³ Moscow largely tolerated Turkish involvement into Azerbaijan's re-conquest of pro-Russian self-proclaimed republic of Nagorno Karabakh. Therefore, it can be argued that there is something special about the case of Ukraine that prompted Russia to engage in a full-scale military operation in Crimea and the low-intensity conflict in Ukraine. In this chapter, the case of Ukraine will be analyzed in the broader context of Russian-European relations. The chapter presents an alternative story of Russian-European relations, points to less visible, but more important, moments of Russia's gradual disenchantment with specific European actors and its reflection in the idea of Europe. It seeks to identify correlations between the changes in the balance of soft/hard power and major ruptures in Russian-European relations.

Crises That Did Not Happen

Conventional explanations often hold that Russia considered NATO enlargement and Western intervention in Kosovo as turning points in

Russian-Western relations. These explanations often cannot account for numerous examples of Russia's cooperative behavior in the 21st century. After and despite Western intervention in Kosovo, Russia agreed to participate in the International Force in Kosovo and two years later supported the US war against terror in 2001. Moreover, President Putin even alluded that Russia might seek membership in NATO in 2002. Had the Kosovo crisis of 1999 been such a turning point in Russian-Western relations, Moscow never would have committed itself to cooperate with the West in Kosovo, Afghanistan, or in global security issues. When it comes to Russian-European relations per se, the new millennium and rise of Vladimir Putin has featured his strong dream of building a new "European" Russia. Even though Moscow was very disappointed in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which "became too dominated by Western agenda," Putin still sought opportunities to engage with the EU. The Russian president attached serious importance and allocated resources to EU-Russia summits. From 1999 till 2003, Moscow clearly sought opportunities for deeper cooperation with the EU and was willing to enhance the EU's emerging Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Additionally, Russia sought to emulate European ways of development. In particular, President Putin sought to redefine Russia's discourse of greatness by introducing economic elements into the discourse of Russia's greatness and its foreign policy program. Arguing for a new idea of greatness, Putin said that Russia needs to be competent, moral, and strong. And the emphasis on the economy was more pronounced.⁴ A year later, while introducing his liberal measures, Putin made similar historic references to the Russian Empire to argue that, historically, Russia's status as a great power was buttressed by the values of the gold imperial ruble.⁵ But what remained from the Soviet discourse in Putin's political program was that he and his associates still constructed this prosperity, well-being, and modernization as something that should be achieved in a new battle. Importantly, even at the discursive level Russian officials spoke not about *competition* in the world economy, but about a *tough competitive fight*.⁶ One of his associates, Leonid Poliakov, a member of the Public Council of the Presidium of the General Council of "United Russia," made this pursuit of prosperity even more urgent by arguing that "only major, significant world powers can have good food. All the rest are sitting on the margins."⁷ The liberal economic policies pursued by Putin in his first presidential term, which were praised by a number of Western observers, demonstrate a genuine belief in this discourse. This approach conditioned Russia's collaborative attitude toward Europe, despite the fact that the situation looked very similar to the crisis of 2013–14.

In 2001–03, Russia sought to re-create its own form of regional integration. President Putin launched his first post-Soviet integration project—the Single Economic Space. The two closest post-Soviet countries—Kazakhstan and Belarus—joined the project. Ukraine—under highly unpopular President Leonid Kuchma—reluctantly followed. However, the Orange Revolution of 2004 put an end on this move. At the same time, the EU adopted its first regional approach, European Neighbourhood Policy, which sought to create a “ring of friends” in Europe’s periphery. Even though the EU invited Russia to extend the policy to Russia, Moscow politely declined because the EU refused to consult Russia when preparing the ENP.⁸ This disagreement and the launch of diverging regional projects in the shared neighbourhood, however, did not bring any conflict at that time. One of the reasons for such a fortunate outcome was the fact that Moscow still treated the EU as a partner in shaping European security architecture. At the 2002 summit, the Russian Federation tabled the joint Action Plan in the Field of European Security and Defence Policy and a Joint Declaration on Further Practical Steps in Developing Political Dialogue and Cooperation on Crisis Management and Security Matters was issued, pledging to “deepen significantly our political dialogue and cooperation.”⁹ Moscow outlined numerous areas for potential interaction between Russia and the EU, which included conflict prevention, emergency rescue operations, intelligence exchange, airlift capabilities, and the EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project failed for the same reason as the lack of Russian involvement with developing the ENP. One of the conditions in Russia’s proposal was its deeper involvement in EU decision-making in the CSDP sphere, something that Europe was not prepared to offer to a third country, even such an important and close one as Russia.¹⁰

Nevertheless, Moscow did not give up on working with the EU. In 2003, Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov wrote a long article for a leading Russian newspaper, *Izvestia*, in which he directly pointed to those areas where Russians and Europeans practically spoke the same language given their mutual interests on issues such as Iraq, the Middle East, Afghanistan, and the Balkans. Discussing the special hopes Moscow had for EU-Russia interaction in the context of the CFSP and ESDP, Ivanov stressed that “all the more prospects were opening in the fields of joint EU-Russia participation in preventing and resolving local conflicts, peace-keeping operations in conformity with the fundamental principles of international law.”¹¹ That might have been one of the reasons why Moscow did not respond aggressively to the Revolution of Roses in Georgia and

the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Contrary to the general narrative about Moscow's promotion of antidemocratic regimes, Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov facilitated the peaceful transition of power from the long-standing, compromised leader Eduard Shevardnadze to the then young revolutionary Mikheil Saakashvili. Several months later Moscow effectively helped Saakashvili to get rid of one of the serious threats to the official government in Tbilisi, the informal strongman in the potential breakaway region of Adjara, Aslan Abashidze. This move finalized the Revolution of Roses in Georgia and contributed to the final legitimization of Saakashvili as president of the country.

All the above suggests that at least in his early term President Putin sought Russia's engagement with and recognition by Europe. This pursuit of recognition conditioned Russia's mostly cooperative attitude toward Europe in the post-Soviet space. At the same time, it seems that the fact that the EU was not prepared to evolve in a way Russia wanted it to was one of the reasons for Russia's disenchantment with the EU. The EU did not evolve into an independent security actor that could balance against US unilateral hegemony. In 2004, Russian ministers openly expressed certain disappointment in that the EU had failed to create something tangible out of its CFSP/ESDP efforts.¹² Moscow started to seek alternatives in the framework of bilateral relations with European great powers. One of the first noticeable gestures was French-Russian rapprochement in 2004 and growing political and military interaction of the two countries in Africa.¹³ At this stage, however, Moscow still hoped to encourage the EU's evolution through bilateral collaboration. The Russian Defence and Foreign Ministries exchanged high-level delegations and expressed hope that Russian-French interaction could be a model for the EU.¹⁴

The period of Russian-European interaction in Putin's first term reveals an important and understudied dynamics in Russian-European relations. In 2000–2004, Moscow still believed that the European Union was an institutional expression of the idea of modern, progressive Europe, a model for emulation. Russia sought to reinvent itself and EU as such an ideal type of Europe. The fact that the EU disregarded Putin's project of a Single Economic Space and that one of the major potential members of the Single Economic Space, Ukraine, was “drawn away from Russia” through the pro-European Orange Revolution did not result in the serious deterioration of relations between Moscow and Brussels. Russia still believed that the EU could become an important partner in shaping European security architecture and was prepared to discard these frictions as a problem of growth. Subsequent events, however, dispersed this Russian hope.

Small, but Tectonic Shifts: Changing Balance of Hard and Soft Power

There were two important, but less noticeable changes that further undermined Russian-European relations and turned them in a new direction. First, the less visible and dramatic, but important, change was the growing prosperity of Russia, which seriously undermined the soft power of the European Union. Even though a significant part of the attractiveness of the European project rests on the concepts of values and standards, in reality, for many countries outside and even inside the EU, Europe was an attractive destination because it was a potential source of improving prosperity for these countries. A prominent analyst of Eastern Europe argues that when Poland, Hungary, and Romania achieved a certain level of prosperity, postmodern liberal values were seriously challenged in favor of local tradition.¹⁵ Similarly, in the case of Russia, a certain commitment to liberal values was part of the package, but when these levels of prosperity were achieved the commitment to these values and the soft power of Europe has noticeable decreased. After Russia had successfully positioned itself as an energy superpower, President Putin himself mentioned several times that Europe was merely a source of good and fancy consumption goods,¹⁶ but Russia produced a more important economic potential—energy. This far less noticeable change nevertheless played a major role in the way Russia perceived the European Union and the way it responded to the new EU policies in the region. Europe was no longer perceived as the embodiment of selfless and progressive values, but more as another international actor with its own interests and somehow even dependent on Russia.

The second important change in Russian-European relations was the EU's refusal to engage in security interaction with Russia, an interaction that would appeal to Russia's great power identity. For Moscow, it was a bitter disappointment that the EU blocked Putin's effort to resolve the Transnistrian conflict in 2003. After several months of efforts made by Putin's close associate Dmitry Kozak, Russia prepared a reconciliation plan for Moldova and Transnistria. Russia attached great importance to the "Kozak memorandum." In many regards, the document was drawn on the basis of the Ohrid Agreement that had been hammered out by the EU, the US, and NATO to put an end to the interethnic standoff in Northern Macedonia two years before. However, Western experts believed that if the "Kozak memorandum" had been accepted, it would have turned Moldova into a dysfunctional state. Moreover, given that Russia promoted the document without consultation resulted in a situation where the EU, the OSCE, and the US found it difficult to engage in conversation and decided

to block it.¹⁷ Moldovan president Vladimir Voronin refused to sign it hours before President Putin was to arrive to Chisinau for a special visit. Putin cancelled the visit and launched a series of trade wars against Moldova. But apart from serious alienation in Russian-Moldovan relations, this episode did not lead to a serious international confrontation and was discussed only in expert circles. And yet this led to serious reflections in the Kremlin. The fact that the EU had blocked Moscow's plan, which simply replicated the EU approach to the Western Balkans, prompted the Kremlin to believe that the EU sought simply to undermine any Russian independent—even benevolent—action in the post-Soviet space.

A similar mistake was made by the West several years later when Kosovo announced its independence and the EU recognized it. Within months, Russia made the decision to withdraw from the international forces in Kosovo and condemned the recognition. However, this happened not because Russia was against Kosovo independence per se. In fact, in informal discussions Moscow signaled EU negotiator Ahtisaari that it would be prepared to recognize Kosovo.¹⁸ The Kremlin was more frustrated by the fact that the West recognized Kosovo without even trying to synchronize its moves with Russia, even when Moscow was prepared to adhere to the West-led effort. These two episodes prompted Russia to reconsider the role of the EU. From a benevolent and maybe slightly naïve security debutant, Russia now came to perceive the EU as a snobbish political actor that disregards Russia's sensitivities and is not interested in engaging with Russia about the Balkans. As a result, by 2008, the EU had even lost its ability to exercise soft power over Russia, as Moscow lost any interest in discussing its further integration with the EU.¹⁹

This disappointment, however, should not be equated with the decline of the idea of Europe in Russia's mind-set. As an expert in Russian identity has put it, Europe—in the broader sense—still remained the only political subject on the Russian cognitive horizon.²⁰ In terms of specific policies, even though Russia was disenchanted with the EU as an international actor, it still believed that Europe remained an important element of the international system. New policy toward Europe was formulated in the Review of Russian Foreign Policy, which stated: "Due to both the strengthened positions of Russia and the fact that the EU, CoE, OSCE and NATO are going through a period of transformation . . . the fulcrum of Russian policy on the European continent is its bilateral relations."²¹ Russia in particular intensified its interaction with European great powers. This cognitive shift, however, meant serious policy-relevant change. Russia moved to

a more traditional power politics paradigm when analyzing EU policies in the shared neighbourhood.

The change is obvious if one compares Russia's response to the policies that the EU adopted to the countries in the shared neighborhood in 2003 and 2009, respectively. In 2003, when the EU adopted the European Neighbourhood Policy for its broader periphery (including Ukraine) Moscow politely declined to participate in the ENP, and mostly referred to the ENP with benevolent indifference and skepticism, especially when its scope was expanded to cover a huge space from North Africa to the Middle East and the shared neighborhood. The launch of a more targeted Eastern Partnership policy focusing on the countries of the post-Soviet space was described by Russian foreign minister Lavrov as a new instrument of geoeconomic expansion of a nondemocratic nature. Importantly, reading EU policies through the lenses of bilateral relations, Russian diplomats and policymakers picked the most controversial statements coming from some EU member states and construed them as EU policy. For example, Lavrov commented on the statement by Czech foreign minister Karel Schwarzenberg by stating:

We are accused of trying to have spheres of influence. What is Eastern Partnership? Is it a sphere of influence, including Belarus, which you care so much about? We would like to understand. And when K. Schwarzenberg publicly says that if Belarus recognises Ossetia it could forget about the Eastern Partnership. Is it threatening, is it blackmail or is it democracy at work . . . ? So we were told originally that the Eastern Partnership is about cooperation with Russian participation at some point. And then after those type of statements we have questions—is it about forcing countries to make decisions which they are supposed to take freely?²²

At the same time, Russia still pursued a more active policy of regional integration in the post-Soviet space in order to claim its own partnership over the post-Soviet space. In 2009–10, Moscow and President Putin personally intensified efforts at reviving regional integration in the post-Soviet space. Putin's closest associates were appointed to negotiate with Kazakhstan and Belarus an ambitious post-Soviet integration project, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Even though Russia's policies in the region were sometimes driven by a geoeconomic rationale,²³ Moscow's activities around the EAEU show that it was more of an identitarian project.²⁴ It is only identity (and not economic reasoning) that can explain

why Moscow made significant economic and political concessions to the other founding members, Belarus and Kazakhstan, in terms of parity of voting rights and division of common customs revenues,²⁵ as well as to countries whose economies were only a fraction of that of Russia, such as Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. It is only the quest for recognition by Europe that can explain Russia's strenuous effort to start negotiations about close integration and interaction between the EU and the EAEU. The fact that at that point the EU declined to negotiate with the EAEU led to further Russian frustration. This disappointment strengthened the logic of geo-economic competition in Moscow.

The fact that Europe effectively undermined Russia's attempt to redefine its own identity as a "normal economic great power" pushed Russia to regain its greatness through more assertive if not aggressive forms. For the first time in two decades of Russian-European relations, Putin's associates started to speak about the Brussels bureaucracy as "puppets of Washington." Economic competition was further reframed into an economic war.²⁶ This changing attitude definitely undermined the EU's main asset—soft power over Russia. Overall, the end of the first decade of the 21st century flagged the era when relations between Russia and the EU entered the phase of mutual disregard and distrust. This was not the reason for a conflict per se, but the situation on the ground would trigger deterioration and the conflict.

Sleepwalking into the Russian-Ukrainian Crisis: Waking Up Russia's Great Power Identity

An in-depth research of Russia's fundamental texts has shown that historically the concept of "great power" politics for Moscow was intimately linked with its leading role in "deciding fates of entire nations" (*reshati sudby tselykh narodov*).²⁷ Importantly, this role of "deciding the fates of nations" was not about the geopolitical alignment of countries. It was rather associated with the traditional great power concerts/consultations in the cases of violent war, revolutions, or other forms of rupture in the existing institutional arrangements. Geographically, most of references to greatness invoke Russia's role in deciding the fates of nations in the Black Sea region.²⁸ This is why one can easily explain why Russia did not oppose NATO enlargement to the Baltic states or Chinese penetration into Central Asia,²⁹ while the Black Sea region has always been a sore spot in Russian-Western relations. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that, after

unilateral decision by the Euro-Atlantic community to recognize the independence of Kosovo, President Putin openly stated his intention to recognize the independence of Georgia's two breakaway regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. At the same time, Putin highlighted that this recognition would have nothing to do with Russian-Georgian relations, but were conducted as a response to Western policies.³⁰ In 2008, the Russian-Georgian War and recognition of the two regions followed swiftly after the recognition of Kosovo.

What many geopolitical explanations cannot show was that Russia in fact welcomed French mediation and even welcomed the EU Monitoring Mission on the administrative boundary line between Georgia and the breakaway republics. Even though President Nicolas Sarkozy's mediation and US pressure was crucial to stop the war, the subsequent events have shown that Russia used all opportunities to cast on Europe the role of junior partner or even apprentice. Despite the fact that Russia recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Europe had to negotiate postwar arrangements with Russia. In the framework of the Geneva International Discussions on Georgia, European policymakers had to talk to the leaders of the self-proclaimed entities. The European Monitoring Mission had to interact with local separatist forces on an everyday basis. After several incidents on the administrative boundary line Europe had to acknowledge the fact that Russia's policy of "borderization" (replacing the local militia with Russian border guards, setting up hard-border infrastructure and the relevant regime) played an important stabilizing role and prevented cases of escalation. When Abkhaz and Ossetian representatives several times interrupted the Geneva International Discussions or the work of the Incident Prevention Mechanism on the ground demonstrates Europe's limited capacity to "socialize" Russia and local separatist into the peace process. A similar process unfolded in Moldova-Transnistria negotiations. Moscow used conflict-resolution negotiations to "socialize" Europe, by showing that democracy promotion will most likely result in the rise of instability and violence in the region. In each case, it left Europe to seek ways to normalize and reengage with Russia, which would strengthen Europe's position as a weaker partner.

All these events created a script for similar Russian policies in the case of the Ukrainian crisis. This is not to say that the military confrontation between Moscow and Kyiv was predetermined. However, all three sides made all possible mistakes that led to the crisis. First, EU policymakers miscalculated local dynamics in the region. After the failures of the post-

Orange Revolution democratic elites, newly elected President Yanukovych had a certain degree of democratic legitimacy and the EU decided to implement ambitious negotiations for an Association Agreement with Ukraine. Enhanced political dialogue, access to various EU support programs, and a Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area were major elements of the agreement. The major miscalculation of the EU in dealing with Yanukovych was the fact that it chose to continue working with this controversial Ukrainian leader even when his government resorted to numerous repressive measures against the opposition (e.g., incarceration of the leader of the opposition, former Prime-Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, among others) and business and allowed Russia to take over Ukraine's state apparatus.³¹ From the EU's standpoint, it might make sense that the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement would produce long-term structural change in Ukraine.

This logic, however, missed Russia's potential reaction to this policy—the second factor that led to the crisis. As mentioned above, from 2010–13 Moscow made two important (albeit erroneous) conclusions about EU-Russia relations in the “shared neighbourhood.” The fact that the EU continued to collaborate with a corrupt and nondemocratic President Yanukovych enhanced Russia's belief that that EU is not a value-based system, but a creeping geoeconomic project. Russia's response was to expedite penetration into the Ukrainian political sphere and takeover of the Ukrainian economy by economic expansion and special credits to President Yanukovych. By 2013, Ukraine's economic dependence on Russia and Moscow's control over the Yanukovych regime made President Putin believe that “Ukraine was a ripe fruit ready to fall into Russia's embrace.”³² As a second erroneous conclusion, President Putin even spoke openly of Ukraine as an artificial construct and unsustainable country that was not worth the attention of serious policymakers.³³ No other country in the world—including tiny and heavily dependent on Russian security guarantees Armenia or Tajikistan—has ever been subjected to such a disregarding comment by the Russian president. No other countries of the post-Soviet space would ever have let this go unnoticed. However, President Yanukovych preferred not to respond to such denigrating rhetoric by Moscow. As a result, in July–August 2014, President Putin decided that he could force the Ukrainian leadership into withdrawing from talks with the EU and accepting Russia's offer to join the Eurasian Economic Union.

The third factor, which was miscalculated by both the EU and Russia, was the dynamics of Ukrainian society. Putin miscalculated the readiness

of Ukraine to fall into Russia's embrace. When President Yanukovych tried to deploy the Russian political model and rhetoric in Ukraine, his popularity plummeted. His exuberant spending and abuse of power created resistance from the broader public and oligarchs. His decision to withdraw from the EU-Ukraine talks and, even more importantly, his order to disperse the last of the peaceful pro-European rallies in late November 2013 led to mass protests and violent resistance to police. Nor had Europe been prepared and looked forward to such violent protests. Contrary to widespread stereotypes about Europe's support for the Ukrainian Euro-Maidan, the efforts of the European mediators were against what the Kyiv revolutionaries wanted to see, that is, the end of the Yanukovych regime. Ironically, EU mediators had to threaten the Ukrainian opposition to elicit their signature on the memorandum of reconciliation between President Yanukovych and the leaders of the Revolution of Dignity. The compromise achieved under the EU mediation envisaged an extension of President Yanukovych's power and foresaw early presidential elections. The fact that the document—when presented to Maidan—was booed by crowds of protestors shows that the EU, even its most experienced specialists in Ukraine, could not properly relate to the societal trends in Ukraine.

The resonance between the three factors resulted in the Ukrainian crisis. Violent events in Kyiv, driven partly, but not exclusively, by some far-right groups, pushed Russia's perception of Europe further out of common sense. While before the Revolution of Dignity Moscow considered the EU creeping geoeconomic project, violent protests in Kyiv, and the presence of some of the "hawkish" personalities of Euro-Atlantic community, including controversial Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland,³⁴ pushed Russia to frame the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement as a part of Europe-Atlantic geopolitical expansion, which also sought to turn Ukraine into a fundamentally ethnonationalist anti-Russian project. Moscow's response was to save the Crimea, which has been traditional place for Russia's identity, and to recover southeastern Ukraine.³⁵ Something that Russian analysts did not expect was Ukraine's ability to mount a fierce resistance to Russia's hybrid warfare. The new Ukrainian government and society managed to restore the state apparatus and mobilize the country to regain control over the captured administrative buildings in the cities in eastern Ukraine. This resulted in a dramatic standoff when Russia used its regular forces to secure the survival of separatist enclaves in the east between July/August 2014 and February 2015. Clearly, Europe's and Russia's miscalculations brought the two actors to the situation when both had to make difficult decisions.

Crisis in the Triangle: Losers and Losers . . .

After the annexation of the Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine, all three actors suffered a series of reality bites. For Ukraine it became clear that neutrality and good neighbourly relations with Russia do not make it immune to twists in Russia's foreign policy; and that at this point of history, Ukrainians would have to live with a great power that was looking to weaken Ukrainian statehood in order to secure its great power status. This led Kyiv to maintain a certain level of tension on the frontline in eastern Ukraine and not to support any substantive reconciliation with Moscow. At the same time, it became clear that while Brussels had made a significant effort to exert pressure on Russia and had provided Ukraine with economic support, neither Old nor New Europe was prepared to send its soldiers to die for Ukrainian territorial integrity.

For Russia it became clear that even the presence of a Russian-speaking population is in no way a guarantee that Moscow can promote its own geopolitical projects through this minority. Surprisingly, the significant part of the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine was prepared to renounce their Russian identity/language or, at least, to cohabitate with Ukrainian ethnonationalists in order to defend their new homeland. In their case, ethnic nationalism lost the battle to civic nationalism. Currently, even less militant Russian-speaking President Zelenskiy faces serious domestic opposition in his pacifist overtures to Russia.

When it comes to Europe, clearly its miscalculation placed the bloc in a position of a reactive power in this crisis. In some cases, it seriously undermined Europe's ability to shape outcomes, but it also had a serious transformative effect on Europe, and this consequently increased its power in Russian-European relations. In terms of weakened EU power, the fact that the EU has to deal with a war—a war waged by a nuclear power in its neighborhood—undermines the EU's capacity to shape the outcome. On the diplomatic front, EU actorness has been clearly diminished due to the fact that negotiations about a cease-fire in eastern Ukraine were conducted mostly by Russia and by European great powers. The European External Action Service was often excluded from the diplomatic process.³⁶ Moreover, there are a good number of EU member states that have a traditional affinity with Russia and tend to promote interpretations that exonerate Russia and blame Europe or Ukraine, or both, for the crisis. This clearly undermines the cohesion of the European Union and weakens its capacity to bring change to the neighbourhood or to deal with Moscow. At the same time, Europe had to draw

several lessons and undertook some actions that helped it turn this challenge into an opportunity for transformation.

One of major conclusions, albeit one belatedly shared currently by EU policymakers, is that perceptions matter, and sometimes they matter more than reality. This thesis, which has now triumphantly made its way from constructivism to other IR schools, was sadly disregarded by European policymakers and even scholars of European studies, who have been traditionally more focused on EU institutions. In the course of the crisis, it became clear that even though the EU might genuinely and strongly be resolved not to have any geopolitical ambitions in the shared neighborhood, this did not matter if the other side (Russia) believed otherwise.

Second, even the seemingly quiet Brussels landscape was shaken by a clear failure of the formal leadership to anticipate and to prevent the crisis. Senior members of the European External Action Service acknowledged that the EU leadership failed to manage the relationship with Russia.³⁷ The fuzziness of the EU decision-making process and technocratic approach, which used to be Europe's strengths in internal affairs, turned into Europe's liability in external relations as it projected an image with 50 shades of gray where Europe's opponents could paint their own image of Europe. The fact that Russia and pro-Russian forces in the neighborhood were driven by such a distorted image led to the realization that Europe had to come up with a clear message and standing as regard to its policies, interests, and values.

Europe for the first time renounced its traditional consensus-seeking approach with Russia. Swift signature of EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and the early entry into force of provisions of the EU-Ukraine Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area sent a signal to Moscow that its hybrid operation against Ukraine would not stop the EU-Ukraine rapprochement. Even though reacting to Russia's assertiveness, and after the EU agreed to conduct trilateral talks about the compatibility of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and the Eurasian Economic Union, the least militant people from the EU bureaucracy (Directorate-General Trade experts) challenged Moscow's tactics. After numerous rounds of conversations, where the Russian side presented and re-presented the same claims without any meaningful arguments, EU representatives simply walked out of the room, leaving the Russian side puzzled by this unusual toughness. Furthermore, while dealing with Russia, the EU managed to adopt and extend a series of sanctions against Russian organizations and individuals responsible for the annexation of the Crimea and war in the Donbass. Moreover, probably for the first time in the history of Russian-

European relations, EU negotiators openly warned Russia that further advances of Russian troops in eastern Ukraine would constitute a red line where the EU would not hesitate to adopt much tougher sanctions against Russia.³⁸ Remarkably, all these tough measures played an important stabilizing role. Russia refrained from further expansion, even though it had controlled only small parts of Russian-speaking areas in the east. Despite the wave of sanctions and despite the fact that German chancellor Angela Merkel and French president Emmanuel Macron repeatedly spoke harshly about Putin, Russia still accepted mediation and sought for opportunities to normalize relations with Europe. Apparently, tough EU policies produced a noticeable pacifying effect on Moscow, which can suggest the situations when Europe can wield significant power over Russia.

Furthermore, the implosion of Ukrainian government institutions during the Russian hybrid operations made the EU acknowledge an urgent need to prioritize its commitment to strengthen the statehood of Eastern Partnership countries. This failure prompted the EU to almost reinvent itself as a foreign policy actor in the shared neighborhood. Ironically, the EU achieved such a level of transformation and mobilization it hardly would have reached had it not faced the threat of the European order being dismantled, states failing, and war flaring up in a country next to its borders. As a result of the Ukrainian crisis, Europe has clearly increased some of its capabilities. The outdated EU-centered Comprehensive Approach to Crisis had been replaced by the Integrated Approach to Crises, which focused on early warning and analysis of the situation on the ground. The Communication on Hybrid Threats and Action Plan against Disinformation was adopted. Interaction within EU institutions has been significantly improved, and procedures for crisis response were streamlined. The newly appointed High Representative of the EU for Foreign and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, represented a younger generation of a more active Euro-Atlantic elite. Mogherini made efforts to better the relationship with the EU's main policy partner, the European Commission, especially the Directorate General for the Eastern Neighbourhood (DG NEAR). Her successor, top Spanish diplomat Joseph Borrel, took an even tougher stance.³⁹ Once-cumbersome democracy support procedures were streamlined and optimized. A larger number of small grants are now distributed through more flexible grant-making procedures. The Special Division for Strategic Communications in the East was created in 2016 to fight Russian disinformation and expanded in 2018.

Another substantive change in EU policies in the Eastern neighbourhood was acknowledgment of the geopolitical nature of Russian-European

relations in the shared neighborhood. As was mentioned in a recent detailed analysis,⁴⁰ after the Eastern crisis Europe emerged as a hybrid geopolitical actor. Some of its instruments were now tailored specially to strengthen Ukrainian statehood. The EU Special Advisory Mission to Ukraine was deployed and its mandate was expanded to implement projects to reform the Ukrainian civilian security sector. Moreover, the fact that the very survival of the Ukrainian state heavily depends on EU macroeconomic and political support provided the EU with a higher level of conditionality over Ukraine, even in the absence of membership prospects for Ukraine in the EU. This is not to say that the EU managed to fully transform Ukrainian elites. Elite corruption and serious structural deficiencies persisted in Ukraine. At the same time, the EU managed to support significant positive change in Ukraine. It is precisely this combination of success and challenge that has made Ukraine a still serious, but not hopeless, case. It is precisely Ukraine's balancing between progress and setback that provides the EU with incentives to act and optimism to believe in success. Somehow, Russia's presence in the region, the annexation of the Crimea, its warfare against Ukraine, and some attempts to redefine the European project made the case of Ukraine far bigger than the fate of one specific country. In the framework of crisis, Russian policies came to represent the antipode of fundamental European values, that is, human dignity, antiwar sentiment, and law-based international order. In this regard, the dramatic challenge to Ukrainian statehood provided Europe with a stronger ability to act.

Conclusions

The Ukrainian crisis took place because of several unfortunate combinations of power, ideas, and circumstances. Europe too long remained complacent about its own ability to project norms and a value-based international order in relations with Russia. Unfortunately, the EU has not understood the tectonic shift in Russia's perception of Europe. Russia's growing prosperity significantly undermined Europe's soft power over Russia. Russia no longer sought to integrate with Europe, but rather to create its own project and claim Europe's attention as an equal. However, in 2002–04, Putin's efforts to reinvent Russia as a normal European economic great power failed. Furthermore, Europe's reluctance to reciprocate Russia's ambitions to engage with Europe, and lack of attention to Moscow's sensitivity in conflict resolution in the Balkans and the Black Sea

region, pushed Moscow away from Europe. From being an emulation model, the EU gradually turned into a competing geoeconomic actor. The crisis in Ukraine—which was in no way inevitable—put Europe in a situation where it had to make decisions about the issues that it had not been prepared to make. Indeed, in 2014, Europe failed to prevent the war and annexation. Neither could it restore Ukraine's territorial integrity.

However, it was exactly this display of brutal force that prompted the EU to mobilize its capacity to act. Probably for the first time in the history of its relations with Russia, Europe has adopted a strongly normative attitude (though maybe at the expense of strategic rationale). Despite the war and occupation, the EU proceeded with the finalizing and implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. Under German leadership, the EU adopted three waves of sanctions that prevented Moscow from escalating hybrid warfare into conventional war. It effectively reinvented itself by swiftly adopting a series of policies that sometimes went against budgeting procedures and the protracted consensus-building modus operandi of the Union. Massive support to Ukraine prevented state collapse. Tough measures demonstrated to Russia that Europe maintains a certain value-laden core and prompted Moscow to scale down its offensive against Ukraine and to seek reengagement with Europe. The EU's capacity to act has been seriously increased and Moscow has had to reconsider its attitude toward Brussels.

This is not to say that the crisis has been resolved and that Europe's normative superiority has been fixed. Two exogenous factors seem to be undermining the EU's capacity to maintain this rules- and value-based internal and international order. First, the Ukrainian patriotic movement—often represented by President Petro Poroshenko—seriously discredited itself in a series of corruption scandals and painful reforms. This resulted in victory for a nonconventional politician—the owner of the entertainment empire, Volodymyr Zelenskiy. Zelenskiy campaigned on reconciliatory slogans and effectively accepted Russia's narrative about the nature of the war in the East. Cease-fire and the withdrawal of troops played into a narrative that reframes Russia's intervention as an internal Ukrainian conflict. Second, there is the problematic relationship that President Trump has with Ukraine. President Trump's attempts to engage with Ukraine—even though in his peculiar way—resulted in a series of political and diplomatic incidents, which may result in his reluctance for any further engagement with Ukraine that could encourage Moscow to increase tensions and its stake in Ukraine.

Overall, the pacifist approach of the new Ukrainian government, a

strong political standoff within Ukraine, and the absence of a strong US position accompanied with growing isolationism in European capitals might allow Moscow to sustain its skeptical perception of Europe and encourage Moscow to carry on with its *realpolitik* approach. This trend would equalize the power balance in Russia-EU relations and might result in a long-term standoff where Europe and Russia will stand on their positions. While the EU might have more resources to sustain a long-term alienation from Russia, the further rise of Euro-skepticism and instability in Ukraine could undermine EU leverage over Russia and create a new constellation on the European continent.

NOTES

The title for this chapter is a paraphrase of George Kennan's thesis about the nature of Soviet power produced in his seminal article "Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947; see <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/1987-03-01/containment-40-years-later-sources-soviet-conduct>

1. Menon and Rumer 2016; Sakwa 2015.
2. Samokhvalov 2018.
3. Samokhvalov 2016.
4. Vladimir Putin, Annual Address, 2003. Interestingly enough the English translation of the speech at the presidential website has no reference to great powerhood.
5. Putin, Annual Address, 2003.
6. Putin 2013.
7. Poliakov, interview, 2011.
8. Samokhvalov 2007.
9. Joint Declaration 2002.
10. Giegerich et al. 2006.
11. Ivanov, interview, 2003.
12. Grigorieva 2004.
13. Samokhvalov 2017.
14. Grigorieva 2004.
15. Krastev and Holmes 2018.
16. Importantly, President Putin spoke about "underwear, wristwatches and ties," which even further reduced Europe to a producer of nice and fancy accessories rather than an economic giant.
17. Hill 2012.
18. Samokhvalov 2018.
19. White and Feklyunina 2014.
20. Morozov 2016.
21. "Survey of Russian Federation Foreign Policy" 2008.
22. Lavrov 2009.
23. Wigell and Vihma 2016.
24. Kazharski 2013.

25. Dragneva and Wolczuk 2013.
26. Glaziev 2009.
27. Samokhvalov 2017.
28. Samokhvalov 2017.
29. Samokhvalov 2018.
30. Illariononov 2009.
31. In 2011–13, a number of people with Russian citizenship and background in Russian intelligence services were appointed to the key positions in the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence, Security Service, and even the personal bodyguards of President Yanukovich.
32. Wilson 2014.
33. Baer 2018: <https://inosmi.ru/politic/20180720/242784453.html>
34. Ukraine Crisis 2014, 1, 2.
35. Samokhvalov 2017.
36. Youngs 2018.
37. Unfortunately, in 2013, EU policymakers still found it hard to believe that Russia might be seriously playing the game of geopolitical spheres of influence. Catherine Ashton preferred to speak to Russia via her bylines in the leading Russia newspapers. Even though some analysts tried to alert EU leadership to the growing resentment in the Kremlin, the EU still remained committed to its traditional technocratic paradigm.
38. Interview 2018.
39. Retmann 2019.
40. Youngs 2018. For a critique, see Samokhvalov 2019.

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Conclusions

II | Europe-Russia Relations in the Shadow of the Transatlantic Divide

Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski and Mai'a K. Davis Cross

The relationship between Russia and Europe started to change around 2008 following the Russo-Georgian conflict.¹ The change came about mainly on the Russian part, whereas Europe has followed conciliatory policies toward Russia. Until 2008, Russian foreign policy under Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin, and Dmitry Medvedev was largely collaborative when it came to the EU and NATO. Even though critical of NATO's bombing of Serbia and events surrounding Kosovo's declaration of independence, Russia remained cooperative with NATO, not least through the NATO-Russia Council created in 2002. In the 1990s, Russia agreed to the withdrawal of its troops from Eastern Europe, and went along with NATO's eastern enlargement to include the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and afterward further countries of the region. Afterwards, Vladimir Putin even accepted NATO's 2004 enlargement to include the former Soviet states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Collaboration between Russia and the West became even closer after 9/11, when Russia intensified intelligence exchange with NATO, supported NATO military transports to Afghanistan, and even helped the US to stabilize world markets.² However, the rise of "militocracy" in Russia, as well as the Kremlin's conviction that the EU's and NATO's *real* goal was to challenge Russia's influence in its neighborhood (see Samokhvalov, this vol., chap. 10), indicated that dramatic change was under way. In the Russo-Georgian War of 2008, Moscow used its regular troops against a third country for the first time since the very inception of the Russian Federation. This marked a turning point in Russia's growing assertiveness and aggressiveness against other countries, which to some observers became only visible in the Russian

military takeover of Crimea and the destabilization of eastern Ukraine in 2014. After years of progressively closer ties between Russia and Europe, Russo-European relations took a turn for the worst, initiating the darkest period in European security since the end of the Cold War.

We have argued in this book that the Russia-EU relationship is one of the central sources behind the emergence of a less stable international system in the 21st century. For the EU, the increasing aggressiveness of Russia, its violations of international law, and its encroachment on Ukraine's sovereignty turned out to be only the beginning of a range of particular concerns with Moscow. What followed was the systematic employment of nonlinear warfare, disinformation campaigns, repeated meddling in the domestic politics of European and non-European countries, and targeted killings of Russian citizens abroad (e.g., the Skripal affair), all of which appear to have become the cornerstones of the Kremlin's new foreign policy. Moreover, the unexpected rise of US President Donald Trump to power has created an additional period of instability and insecurity, pushing the European Union to reconsider its approach to dealing with its once reliable partner across the Atlantic and further pursue its agenda of strategic autonomy and sovereignty.

Major Issues in the EU-Russia-US Triangle

The contributors to this book have dealt with a number of questions surrounding the new turbulent period in Europe-Russia relations that is accompanied by a growing transatlantic divide. First, the contributors have grappled with the question of what caused this turning point in the relationship. The answers ranged from structural conditions (e.g., competition of regional integration projects, as suggested in Nikitina's chapter), to failed learning processes (e.g., the inability of the EU to adequately react to the domestic politics of some countries, which is often used by Russia to spoil EU foreign policy, as Bechev's chapter pointed out) to actor-orientated explanations (e.g., challenges to Russia's ontological security, as Krasnodębska's chapter argued). Second, the book has dealt with the issue of how this new conflictive relationship changed the foreign policy of the EU (e.g., by prompting the process of revision of the EU's European External Action Service, as Nitoiu's chapter argued). Third, the contributors have explored the role that the Trump administration played in the Russo-European nexus, as Trump questioned the viability of NATO while at the same time supporting Putin in

his foreign policy in the Middle East (e.g., the lack of a credible US push-back against Russia's cyber warfare emboldened Russia to intervene in various domestic and international conflicts including Ukraine and Syria, as Maness's chapter pointed out).

Against the backdrop of these questions, this book has offered analyses of challenges to Europe's foreign policy, particularly in view of the new uncertainty and instability in US foreign policy. Our point of departure is the assessment that this dark period in the EU-Russia relations results primarily from Russia's aggressive behavior that is heavily affecting the relational dynamics, as defined in the introduction to this book. While these dynamics can have different causes, such as geopolitical competition (Nikitina's chapter), Russia's quest for a certain self-identity through its foreign policy (Krasnodębska's chapter) or mutual misconceptions about the foreign policy goals by Russia and the EU alike (Samokhvalov's chapter), these relational dynamics cannot be reduced to a simple action-reaction model, in which Russia and the EU compete for similar goods.³ A case in point is the relational power exercised by both the EU and Russia in the Balkans. As Dimitar Bechev has shown in his chapter, the countries of the Balkans lean toward the EU and NATO in economic and geopolitical terms. For instance, Serbia and Montenegro want to become EU members, and Montenegro has recently joined NATO. At the same time, Russia has been able to effectively exploit the political volatilities of the Balkan countries to create or increase the conflicts at both the domestic and interstate level, including unresolved sovereignty clashes and flourishing ethnonationalism. In this sense, both the EU and Russia can exercise power but to different degrees and in different policy fields.

Against this background, we have argued that understanding power as a relational category is valuable in analyzing the intricacies of the new EU-Russia relationship. In this sense, we reemphasize that power should be understood as relational, rather than merely about resources or material forms of power. Especially given that nonlinear forms of warfare—such as cyber warfare and disinformation campaigns—have given Russia (and other authoritarian states like China, North Korea, or Saudi Arabia, for that matter) a comparative advantage against the West, the question of material resources has become secondary to some extent, and can neither explain nor predict a country's influence in the world. While material resources still matter, they must be viewed in a relational context to understand their outcomes in international relations.

Russia, the EU, and the US as Actors in the New Dark Era

The book has been divided into two parts dealing with the EU and Russia separately, but also contextualizing the relational aspect of both foreign policy actors. We have argued that the EU and Russia present two different types of foreign policy actors. The EU is an aggregated actor consisting of 27 sovereign states, but with supranational institutions that initiate and coordinate common positions in foreign policy. In contrast, Russia is a highly centralized state with an authoritarian leader who often acts unilaterally, violates international norms, and does not hesitate to use military force. This affects their exercise of power considerably. As Bechev has argued, Russia's centralized mode of decision-making and its ability to mobilize scarce resources increases the efficiency of Moscow's action in foreign policy. Moscow can act more swiftly and coordinate various measures in foreign policy (such as traditional diplomacy, military action, and disinformation campaigns) because its leadership structure is centralized. In contrast, the EU possesses much larger economic and political clout compared to Russia—for instance, it can open its market to foreign goods or gain political favor through the mere offer of future membership—but it is often overburdened in its decision-making process by disagreements among member states. And while the EU offers solutions to the developmental and institutional challenges facing other countries, Russia exploits institutional deficiencies and development difficulties. Moscow often acts as a spoiler and manipulator, but without the ability to offer more attractive political and economic resources to the countries. The EU relies more often on long-term strategies.

In addition, the contributors to this book have shown how the EU and Russia rely on different tools for power in influencing each other and others in the international system. Recent changes in Russian behavior have prompted the employment of a wider range of tools, in particular reviving so-called hybrid warfare, which has been incorporated into the Russian military doctrine after 2012. As Ryan Maness has explained, the tools of spreading disinformation and propaganda both in one's enemy's government and in its larger population was once a key part of the Soviet strategy that has become a cornerstone of Russia's foreign policy outlook in 21st century, mainly connected to rise of General Valery Gerasimov to chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia. Maness has argued that Russia's further decline with regard to its economic and military power brought the cyber domain and nonlinear warfare to the fore, since Russia has an advantage in use of its disinformation capabilities, in particular considering the strange friendliness of Trump vis-à-vis Russia.

Furthermore, we have acknowledged that the power of the EU and Russia can change in the context of international crises. In particular, international crises seem to offer openings and opportunities that can constrain and enable actors in international relations. Crises can generate uncertainty, since they enable a much larger range of possible actions than during noncrisis periods. However, crises can also be created or exacerbated by external actors through, for instance, information campaigns. Russia was able to so deeply infiltrate political parties, the news media narratives, and social media platforms that it was successful in stirring up a sense of crisis in the UK (e.g., through Brexit) and the US (resulting in the election of Trump). This can be viewed as a defensive failure on the part of technologically advanced countries such as the US and the UK. The new social media has allowed for an explosion in politically biased news and information outlets as well as those that report false stories and fake news, which Russia (and other authoritarian countries) has used to exercise power in the domestic politics of other countries. Russia's disinformation and manipulation have gained a new momentum with the passive foreign policy of the Trump administration, and it is also likely that Russia even worked with Trump's campaign team to get him elected.

Part I of the book assesses the ways in which EU foreign policy has changed in light of the Russia threat, and part II shows how and why Russia's actions toward the West have changed over time—with regard to both the domestic and international causes. Putting these two major pieces together, we have concluded that EU power has been largely reactive, which serves as a source of weakness during these complex and challenging times. Still, there is clearly potential for the EU to develop a more autonomous kind of power, and it seems to be in the process of doing so. Thus, this rather dark era in Russia-EU relations actually has long-term consequences for the EU as an actor in the international system.

The EU's Foreign Policy vis-à-vis Russia

Despite certain weaknesses, we have shown that recent developments in EU foreign policy indicate that we may be turning the corner toward a more proactive EU, which could be a significant source of strength as the liberal world order continues to be challenged. Just like other states and nonstate actors, the EU uses different forms of power in different situations. The EU can at times be highly successful at exerting influence, such as using access to its single market as leverage, persuading others to abide

by stricter environmental standards or supporting Ukraine's energy security against Russia's pressure by applying reverse gas flows. The EU is not a monolithic actor, even when it "speaks with one voice," but neither are other state actors.⁴ Thus, we contend that at this stage in its development, the EU is just as coherent as others in the international constellation of actors, despite its more often being subject to scrutiny and criticism, given its status as a relatively new foreign policy actor.⁵

The chapter by Rosella Cappella Zielinski and Kaija Schilde shows the relevance of formal institutions in security and defense policy as a prerequisite for the EU to be able to react to international crises involving security issues. The authors argue that European politicians have tended to respond in a timid manner to international security crises because EU has had a limited institutional capacity in this field historically. Many of the EU's past failures in defense cooperation occurred when there was insufficient "institutional layering" (expansion of preexisting informal institutions or the creation of additional institutions, or both, that relate to each other or overlap). Some informal cooperation took place after the war in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, in the post 9/11 era, and in the 2011 Libya crisis, as European politicians wanted to respond to these challenges, but were unable to do so. The authors argue that despite the failures these events produced changes in the international environment that favored "institutional layering," in which the EU has developed expectations, norms, shared goals, and differentiated roles leading to more connections among bureaucrats and related institutions. These connections could result in a latent capacity that paves the way for more formal institutions. In other words, previous security crises in Europe might offer a capacity that in the current phase of post-2014 defense cooperation—characterized by Brexit, Russian threats, and US domestic politics—could lead to more stable and formal institutionalization. In this sense, current and ongoing security challenges could be a chance for the EU to develop more formal security institutions.

Helene Sjursen and Guri Rosen have shown in their chapter how EU member states managed to agree on a comprehensive sanctions regime against Russia in response to the crisis in Ukraine. The authors have found that member states accepted the political and economic costs of sanctioning Russia due to a sense of collective commitment to the principles of sovereignty and self-determination. This suggests that an agreement on sanctions was due to normative convergence within the EU. Even though there were heated disagreements within the EU over the cost of sanctions and divergent political assessments of the crisis, agree-

ment was possible due to the repeated references made to the specific norms of sovereignty and self-determination, which might point to the processes of normative socialization within EU institutions. Nevertheless, the authors maintain that this successful handling of the sanction regime might not be easily replicable in other crises, as the decision-making process in the Ukraine crisis was characterized by ad hoc solutions. This flexibility on the part of the EU might be useful in time of crisis but it can also point to unpredictability in the EU foreign policy in the future, including its policy toward Russia.

Marianne Riddervold's chapter has shown that Russian aggression in Ukraine prompted increased integration in maritime security, which developed in parallel to the foreign and security crisis in Ukraine. Riddervold argues that the member states and EU institutions with an interest in strengthening the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU (CFSP) were able to organize support for a policy that would probably not have been adopted—the EU Maritime Security Strategy, which takes the CFSP a substantial step forward. The EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) was adopted in June 2014 despite initial opposition from several member states, including the United Kingdom and Germany. Nevertheless, the EUMSS is still in line with the goals of a humanitarian or normative power with a focus on global regulation of the maritime global commons. Even though the EU is not a superpower in security affairs, the bloc seems to be on a course to be more autonomous and a more powerful security policy player.

Cristian Nitoiu's chapter has shown that the Ukraine crisis (but also other recent crises such as the Arab Spring or the migrant crisis) prompted the EU to recognize that the EU's normative leadership might not be attractive anymore, thus leading to a process of revision and renewal of the European External Action Service (EEAS) vis-à-vis the EU's neighborhood. Nitoiu has shown that the Ukraine crisis has specifically caused the revision of the EU's policy toward the neighborhood (the ENP), which on one hand can be viewed as learning process within the EU.⁶ On the other hand, the very fact that the revision of the European Neighborhood Policy has recently been one of the central priorities for the EEAS (rather than questions of additional resources and institutional build-up) appears to be disappointing, since it makes an impression that the EEAS is "punching below its weight." Nitoiu argues that the EU's inability to deal effectively with various crises in its proximity including the Arabellion, the refugee crisis, and the Ukraine crisis, damaged its reputation. While the EU used to be regarded as a strong international actor (also by Russia), the bloc

came to be seen as being on the retreat in international affairs. Nitoiu suggests that the 2015 revision of the ENP was an exercise in deflecting attention from the EU's foreign policy failures through reframing its goals and its approach toward the neighborhood, thus providing an alternative narrative for the EU. Still, the very efforts of the EEAS to carry out this revision by, for instance, organizing consultations with a large body of stakeholders in the neighborhood point to the EU's awareness of its own weaknesses. With regard to Russia, the revision of the ENP clearly shows policy contradictions within the EU. While the EU has managed to maintain unity with regard to the sanctions regime, the revised ENP hardly mentions Russia's actions as a threat and risk, thus deflecting from more EU activity in the region.

Thus, in the first part of the book, the authors point to the ways in which the EU is in the process of developing a stronger, autonomous capacity to act in several key ways, but also how it falls short of taking on a more forceful role in the international system. In order to accomplish this, they find that the EU would need to accelerate its formation of more formal institutions, agree upon a more predictable and less ad-hoc policy approach, continue to convey a strong willingness to stand by its core principles, and gain a better capacity to face its strategic weaknesses head on. Without this, Russia, despite its myriad of weaknesses both internally and externally, will be emboldened to punch above its own weight and to manipulate the West for its own ends.

Russia's Foreign Policy: The Domestic and International Context

The second part of the book has dealt with the underlying causes of Russia's new aggressive foreign policy. The chapters focusing on Russia's approach have provided fresh insights into the outward strategy of Putin's regime, while also looking within the country at the role of propaganda and identity. Together the chapters have shown that the power dynamics underpinning Europe-Russian relations are complex and multilayered.

Molly Krasnodębska sees Russia's reaction to the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement in the context of ontological security. While there was no serious threat to Russia in the conventional security sense, her chapter has argued that the Association Agreement with Ukraine challenged Russia's ontological security, since the political elites in Moscow defined the country's identity through its ability to project power in its close neighborhood, especially Ukraine. Krasnodębska maintains that Russia pursued cooper-

ation with the West and simultaneously followed a revisionist agenda in its neighborhood. This should not be seen as a contradiction because Russia framed the West as an important “significant other,” and cooperation with the West actually affirmed Russia’s role as a global power. As a result, Moscow assumed that relevant political actors in the West accepted and recognized Russia’s role in the region and would always include Moscow in matters regarding the former Soviet Union. Krasnodębska argues that this constituted a “routine,” which became essential for Russia’s ontological security. Russia has sought to strengthen this routine by exploiting divisions in the West, thus making itself indispensable. Even after the conflicts and tensions over NATO’s enlargement, the color revolutions, and the Russo-Georgian War, the routines were restored, as in the eyes of Moscow the West had affirmed Russia’s great power status. However, this changed with Ukraine, whose importance for Russia’s great power status was much larger. In this sense, the Association Agreement with Ukraine undermined Russian ontological security. Should Ukraine drift toward the EU, Russia would lose its status in the region. An autonomous EU-Ukraine relationship without the mediation of Russia meant an ontological security threat, which Moscow has been at pains to prevent.

Ryan Maness has argued that after the Ukraine crisis Russia has put emphasis on various tools of information manipulation for the purposes of promoting the Russian worldview and displaying its power in the cyber realm. In this sense, the Russian perspective is broader than the perspective of many Western media analysts who have focused on cyber conflict as a short-term tactic, that is, the use of computational technologies to disrupt diplomatic and military interactions between entities during a military conflict. Maness has shown that Russia has been highly successful at influencing Western media outlets over the medium term. These media have often reported in tune with the discourse set forth by Russian state media, social media outlets, and pro-Russian professional “trolls.” This influence campaign has contributed to divisions in Western societies as well as electoral outcomes that are favorable to the Russian national interest. Maness has concluded that Russia’s turn toward cyber warfare is closely connected with the waning status of Russia as a major power. Nowadays, Russia cannot maintain the same kind of military and economic power as the Soviet Union did. At the same time, Russia wants to be perceived as a great power with global influence, as this seems to be central to Russian national identity. While using coercive tactics against countries dependent on Russian gas and oil, or through limited-scale military operations, has proven costly for Russia, the cyber domain is an inexpensive

and much more effective way to project power and pursue national interests, according to Maness. He has argued that Russia used the nature of Western liberal societies and their dependence on the internet to its advantage. As a result, Russia has been able to effectively infiltrate the public space of liberal democracies and interfere with various political narratives, possibly even impacting recent electoral outcomes.

Dimitar Bechev has shown the extent to which Russia has been successful at manipulating domestic politics in Southeast Europe. For instance, the Russian embassy in Sarajevo has regularly provided support to Republika Srpska's president Milorad Dodik who has been threatening to hold a secession referendum and thus destroy the subtle political balance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2016, Russian security services were accused of a coup attempt in Montenegro, which was supposed to stop the country from entering NATO. Moreover, Russia has intensified security and defense cooperation with Serbia, which officially wants to become a member of the EU. Also, leading politicians in Athens and Sofia have repeatedly criticized sanctions against the Kremlin as counterproductive. Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece show interest in joining Russia-initiated and controlled gas pipeline projects.⁷ Other EU member states, such as Croatia and Slovenia, have been exploring deepened economic cooperation with Russia. As Bechev has argued, most countries in the region, with the exception of Romania, view Russia as a source of opportunity, rather than as a threat. As a result, Moscow has been using such attitudes as a way to generate and increase dissensus within the EU and NATO. The goal is not only to undercut the sanctions regime against the Kremlin but also to cripple the decision-making ability of the EU and the NATO. In general, Russia tries to support Slavs, especially Orthodox Christians in the Balkans. It also seeks to revive historic and cultural links to justify its cultural claims to the region. At the same time, it also gets involved with the opportunistic interests of local players including individual leaders, parties, and business interests. However, these local interests do not always overlap with the political goals of Moscow, and it's really only the local actors with marginal impact that call for a full alignment with Russia. For that reason, Southeast Europe is likely to remain on track with the EU and NATO but also under the influence of Russia.

Yulia Nikitina has argued that the conflicts between the EU and Russia are mainly due to a competition of economic integration projects, which lay claims to the same territories and states. While the security cooperation in Eurasia, for instance, in the context of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

has not generated any serious concerns for the Euro-Atlantic community, a potentially peaceful competition (with the potential of a positive-sum game) of economic integration (the European Union versus the Eurasian Economic Union) could be transformed into a geopolitical rivalry. Nikitina posits that these structural conditions are often ignored in the political and expert discourses as a result of mutual misconceptions about the very goals of the competing integration projects, among other reasons. While Russia defines the EU's Association Agreements and the DCFTA with countries in Russia's neighborhood as a power game of the West to thwart Russian influence in Eurasia, Moscow shows a willingness to collaborate within larger integration schemes such as the "Lisbon-to-Vladivostok" cooperation concept or the idea of "integration of integrations," which would include both the Russian and the EU's economic integration projects. In turn, the European Union and the West depict the Eurasian integration initiatives of Russia as an authoritarian project aimed at the maximization of Russian power, embedded in efforts of preserving authoritarian regimes. Nikitina point out that these misconceptions could be overcome by introducing the notion of "communities of practice." A practical solution to the current crisis between Russia and the West would be to develop macroregional metapractices to incorporate both the EU's and Eurasian models of regional integration.⁸

Vsevolod Samokhvalov points to a specific power constellation, ideas, and circumstances that led up to the Ukraine crisis and generated the current standoff between Russia and Europe. For Samokhvalov, Europe became overtly self-satisfied with its own ability to project norms and value-based international order in its relations with Russia. At the same time, the EU failed to realize that the perception of Europe as a normative power changed drastically in Russian political elites. This became visible in Ukraine where the EU continued to collaborate with corrupt and non-democratic President Yanukovich, thus confirming Russia's belief that the EU is not a value-based system, but rather a geoeconomic project aimed at thwarting Russia's influence in the region. Additionally, the increasing prosperity in Russian society challenged the EU's soft power over Russia. The economic integration with Europe was not seen as the necessary vehicle to boost economic growth anymore, and Russia was able to create its own alternative integration platform combined with the claim to be Europe's equal. However, Putin had failed to reinvent Russia as "normal European economic great power" and the EU was reluctant to recognize Russia as an equal partner. As a consequence, Russia shifted into being a competing geoeconomic actor. Samokhvalov points out that the EU mis-

read Russia's great power identity and missed the opportunity to engage Russia in a more constructive way. Thus, Europe puts itself in a situation it was not prepared to tackle.

In sum, the underlying causes of Russia's new aggressive posturing include a perception that the country's ontological security was being threatened, a need to be seen as a global power, a desire to emphasize historical and cultural claims to the region of the former Soviet Union, an effort to surpass the EU in economic integration initiatives, and, indeed, a quest to compete with the EU directly as an important actor on the world stage. To do all of this, Russia used framing, information manipulation, stoking division among member states, and outright military intervention, among other tactics. Over the past few years, this has impacted the EU and its foreign policy in fundamental ways.

EU Foreign Policy: Enabled or Constrained?

In addition to the insights into the political dynamics in the EU and Russia in the context of the Ukraine crisis and afterward, the book has discussed the extent to which the EU's power had been enabled or constrained in light of Russia's actions as well as the risks entailed in Europe's reactive power—that is, the tendency to act after the fact instead of proactively toward Russia.⁹ The various contributions to this book have provided a range of perspectives on this issue, which also points to its complexity. On balance, the EU's foreign policy has been more enabled than constrained, according to the contributions to this book.

Marianne Riddervold has shown that the strengthening of the maritime security field by the EU as a response to the Ukraine crisis has larger implications for the EU. Her analysis suggests that EU foreign and security policies have been enabled by external factors and events. She also maintains that the EU was rather reactive in the foreign and security policy domain, since new geopolitical factors forced EU member states to negotiate common EU policies. Still, the power of the EU was not *only* reactive, as external security threats can interact with other integrative factors in the development of EU security policy. External events such as Russia's actions in Ukraine can function as critical junctures that allow actors with particular interests to propose and garner support within the EU for new or different policies. However, external crisis or a strong security threat might not be a necessary condition for EU foreign and security policy integration. Once institutional innovation occurs, further integration

steps might ensue, as follow-up initiatives are gradually taken up by actors such as the EEAS and the European Commission.

Similarly, Vsevolod Samokhvalov suggests that despite the EU's inability to prevent the Ukraine crisis, the latter also enabled Europe. He argues that Russia's display of brutal force in Ukraine mobilized the EU to act in the crisis. The EU was actually successful at preventing state collapse in Ukraine by its various actions, including economic, financial, and energy support. Samokhvalov points out that it was probably the first time in the history of its relations with Russia that the EU refused to compromise its values. Despite Russia's war and occupation of Ukraine's territory, the EU proceeded with finalizing and implementing the Association Agreement with Ukraine. Moreover, the EU adopted three waves of sanctions that prevented Moscow from transforming its hybrid warfare into conventional war against Ukraine. There were also institutional consequences as the EU adopted new policies, effectively reinventing itself, even if it meant occasionally violating budgeting procedures and circumventing political divisions.

In contrast, Cristian Nitoiu argues that the Ukraine crisis took its toll in the EU's foreign policy with regard to its eastern neighborhood. The inclusion of Russia in talks on the implementation of the DCFTA with Ukraine, alongside decreased engagement with Moldova, might suggest that the EU is less willing to treat the eastern neighborhood as one of its main priorities anymore. On the one hand, this could have been caused by the necessity to refocus its resources on the multiple crises that the EU is facing internally (such as Brexit or the refugee crisis). On the other hand, the EU has suffered a loss of reputation in the region. In countries like Moldova or Ukraine the populations have become increasingly disillusioned by the EU's inability and unwillingness to fulfil the expectations that they had from Brussels. These trends can be clearly seen in Moldova where Russia has been successful in promoting its own integration project, responsible to some extent for the election of the pro-Russian president Igor Dodon in 2016.

For Helene Sijrsen and Guri Rosén, the EU was able to attain unity in the decision-making process on sanctions against the Kremlin. However, this does not mean that the member states will be able to maintain such cohesion in future crises. This poses the question of the sustainability of the EU's cohesion with regard to different crises, as the EU's security policy can be described as an unsettled political system. There are two aspects that could increase the risk of future instability. First, there is an ongoing risk of great power dominance, which was visible in the Normandy format

during and after the Ukraine crisis. This tendency could undermine the legitimacy of certain solutions made in the name of the EU, but actually derived from the interests of only some countries. Second, the decision-making process was prone to produce ad hoc solutions that deviated significantly from the prescribed procedures of the CFSP. The gradual process of institutionalizing the CFSP is at stake.

The argument that the EU's foreign policy capability could be enabled or constrained in response to crisis could apply to Russia too. For example, Yulia Nikitina points out that Russia found itself in a weakened position. Behind the scenes, it understood that it could not offer to its neighbors an attractive model for regional or national development. At the same time, it viewed the EU as encroaching into its neighborhood, including through enlargement of its membership. For many Russians the country's actions in Ukraine (and beforehand in Georgia) were justified as a reaction to the EU's and NATO's enlargement strategies in recent decades. Thus, in the case of Russia, painting a picture of itself as enabled because it is merely "reactive" can be of strategic benefit.

Perspectives on the Transatlantic Divide

The chapters in this volume have also addressed the issue of the transatlantic divide under Trump. Indeed, this is the important context in which the increasingly turbulent EU-Russia relationship has played out. We have argued that the international system today is transforming as we speak. The liberal world order is coming under attack with the rise of nondemocratic states, the growth in support for illiberal populist actors in consolidated democracies, the presence of more powerful criminal nonstate actors, the development of asymmetric conflict, and the advance of cyber warfare. This environment of uncertainty and insecurity moves many states to revert to uncooperative forms of interaction in the international system, oftentimes exacerbating various crises. While the Russia-EU relationship is one of the central elements behind the emergence of this less stable system, the rise to power of the Trump administration has created a fundamental rift in the transatlantic security community. The isolationist policies of the Trump administration add even more to this fracture. Contributors differ in their assessments of the longer-term consequences to this. Some argue that the transatlantic divide is presenting Europe with opportunities to become stronger, while others are more pessimistic.

Cristian Nitiou posits that Trump's presidency seems to have marked a

rift between the US and the EU in world politics, and thus adds to the number of serious crises affecting Brussels. This is not only relevant in the case of Iran but also with regard to Syria and Russia where European and the US approaches seem to diverge considerably. Shifts in the EU's foreign policy doctrine (as embodied by the new pragmatism of the EEAS and the Global Strategy) toward an emphasis on interests and principled pragmatism have sought to prepare the EU for the decline of the liberal world order. However, this pragmatic turn was undertaken mainly with Russia and China in mind, and less so with regard to the US. But with Trump also seeking to revise the terms of the liberal world order, the EU might have to move toward a more interest-based foreign policy itself (if not a straight-out recognition of *realpolitik*). It will become increasingly difficult for the EU to promote liberal values around the world, as it will inevitably come up against the efforts and policies of the US under populist and isolationist leadership. However, Nitoiu points out that the US shift in foreign policy might affect the EU's neighborhood only marginally, as the US has largely withdrawn from playing a key role in North Africa or the post-Soviet space. As a result, the value of the neighborhood for the EU's foreign policy should be regarded very highly, since the bloc might now have more chances to promote its liberal values in the region, even if less so on the global scale. This presents an opportunity, although limited in scope.

By contrast, Dimitar Bechev maintains that despite the alarm about the Western withdrawal from Southeast Europe and the arrival of Russia as the power keen to fill the gap, evidence suggests that both Europe and the US continue their commitment to stability in the region. While the Trump presidency posed a great challenge in that respect by stirring and widening gap the between Europe and the United States, thus opening opportunities for Russia to assert its influence, Southeast Europe seems to be different in this regard. Despite Russia's growing influence there, the US continues to push for NATO expansion, first to Montenegro and later to Macedonia, clearly against Russia's preferences. In this respect, the EU shares the US position and supports both NATO and EU expansion in the region. Despite sometimes rocky progress on this issue, Bechev argues that it is more than certain that Moscow's vision of an internally divided EU and disengaged America will not materialize in the Balkans. Thus, Bechev sees more continuity in the transatlantic relationship than what one might initially notice.

Marianne Riddervold posits that the change in US foreign and security policies, especially under Trump, has further exacerbated the new uncertainty in many European states. There is evidence to suggest that the EU is

on its way to developing a stronger foreign and security policy that is not only reactive but more autonomous. This has resulted from the gradual realization that the EU must take more responsibility for its own security in view of Russia's behavior and a changing US foreign policy. While the EU will not become a superpower in security affairs, the EU is more autonomous today than ever before and there is clearly a conviction on the part of the European elites that the EU must strengthen its strategic autonomy. This will have consequences for the European project even after a future change in the US administration. Riddervold points out that once decisive steps are taken to further EU integration in a particular domain, these steps are seldom reversed. As a result, the EU is likely to become a stronger and more independent power.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Yulia Nikitina maintains that developments in Russia, the EU, and the US might cause a return to Cold War thinking for all parties involved. While many analysts in the West see Russia's aggressive behavior and its purposeful violation of the post-Cold war status quo as causes of the political crisis between Russia and the West, tougher policies toward Russia are suggested as a solution to the crisis. The new containment policy promises, however, a return to a new Cold War. Since the US under Trump also seemed to be concentrated on the balance-of-power approach as compared to Obama's (failed) attempts of a "reset" with regard to the bilateral relations with Russia, we might be facing new tensions in the EU-Russia-US triangle. Still, it is important to acknowledge that the situation is very different from the Cold War: Russia cannot compete for economic influence at the global level like the Soviet Union could. For that reason, the major line of competition will be related to the strategic security questions. For instance, the US withdrawal from the INF Treaty announced by Trump in 2018 will violate the strategic balance in Europe, which has existed since the late 1980s. It is debatable whether Russia provoked the US to withdraw from the treaty or whether the US wanted to shift the balance under this pretext, but we might be witnessing debates reproducing the arguments of the Cold War era with regard to security, which are likely to affect Europe-Russia relations.

For Ryan Maness, Russia's disinformation campaigns in Europe and the US overlapped with the negative impact of the Trump administration. Trump has contributed to the polarization of US society and post-truth politics, which as a consequence empowered Russia. The former US president has been critical of NATO, labeled the EU as "the enemy" in US trade policy, thus promoting a divided transatlantic alliance, which gives Russia more leeway in world affairs. For that reason, Moscow benefited from

Trump's approach to foreign policy. In this sense, growing populist movements on both sides of the Atlantic and widening divisions among the countries of the EU and the NATO with regard to Russia (e.g., the sanctions against Moscow) weaken considerably the EU's power and favor Russia.

Depending on the lens one uses to examine the effects of the transatlantic divide, there is still reason to be hopeful. While some opportunities close, others open, and it is up to the EU to take advantage of them. The threats and divisions stemming from Russia and the US mean that the EU has great incentive to stand on its own two feet, especially in its own neighborhood and when it comes to pressing security issues. If the EU continues to avoid any provocations to define its relationship with Russia as a new Cold War—which realistically, it is not—the EU can better maintain its new, more pragmatic approach. Given that in some key ways Trump's foreign policy has bolstered Russia during this turbulent time, the EU will only be able to weather the storm if it continues to find new ways of reaffirming its own norms, values, and worldview, and strengthens both its internal and external identity.

The EU is at the nexus of a troubling triangle, with the US on the one side and Russia on the other. Not so long ago, both of these other powers were Europe's clear allies. The dramatic and relatively sudden shift into a dark era in these relationships was something entirely out of the EU's control. However, these circumstances clearly demonstrate the EU's capacity, both latent and active, to control its own destiny. Despite much uncertainty and many challenges, the EU has empowered itself, from sanctions to norms to new areas of foreign policy. While it is clear that the EU is not strong enough to define and maintain the liberal world order on its own, this has never been the job for one actor alone. Nonetheless, the EU does stand as a beacon for what is still possible in a weakened world order. In this sense, alongside its pragmatic turn, it remains the idealistic actor it has been since its inception. The EU still represents a steadfast loyalty to democracy, the rule of law, multilateralism, and diplomacy. As many contributors note, how the EU grapples with current challenges will likely have lasting consequences. If and when Russia and the US start to take a different course, they may encounter a stronger, and more proactive EU.

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NOTES

1. Cf. Haukkala 2015.
2. Cf. Piet and Simão 2016.
3. Hoffmann and Andrey 2018.
4. See Aggestam and Federica 2019.
5. Cottey 2019.
6. See also Rieker and Gjerde 2016.
7. See also Talseth 2017.
8. See also Dragneva and Wolczuk 2015.
9. Karolewski and Cross 2017.

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