The War Against Ukraine and the EU

Facing New Realities

Edited by
Claudia Wiesner · Michèle Knodt

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Introduction. The War Against Ukraine: The EU Facing New Realities

Michèle Knodt and Claudia Wiesner

The Russian attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022 and the ensuing war has challenged a number of established narratives and convictions, not only for the global order, but also for the European Union (EU) and its Member States (Knodt and Wiesner 2023b; Chaban et al. 2019; Miskimmon et al. 2017). The new era ('*Zeitenwende*') that German Chancellor Scholz claimed for the EU means the facing of a new reality.

The following section continues a discussion that we have opened in Knodt/ Wiesner (2023a and 2023b).

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There is war in Europe—for the first time since World War II, excluding the Balkan War in the 1990s. Thus, the war has questioned the idea of living in peace without much need to fund a military, which had been largely common wisdom since World War II, as Western Europe had, over decades, been protected by US and NATO nuclear arms forces. Today, the EU has to face that both the ideas of 'building peace without weapons' and 'change through trade' have failed. The war will change the European Union and its position in the global order. Finding responses to this new setting is difficult.

As the war forces everyone to acknowledge, the world order now is a multipolar one—politically, geographically, economically, ideologically and legally. For the EU, this means that it has to position itself in a setting in which the United States, China, Europe, Russia and various developing powers fill different positions and alliances. China is currently cooperating with Russia. Chinese investment strategies, such as the Silk Road Initiative, aim at gaining not only economic, but also (geo)political power and influence around the world and also in the EU itself. What is more, the Western countries also have to face opposition to their Russian policy, as is underlined by the UN General Assembly vote on the resolution that condemned the Russian invasion in 2022, in which a number of influential states, such as India and South Africa, abstained. Last but not least, there is an upcoming presidential election in the United States. Should Donald Trump or a falcon Republican be re-elected, the West and its allies would be weakened. In short, the EU has to become a geopolitical player in this changing and challenging international environment, even if this has not necessarily been its goal. For decades, the EU used only to be a 'normative power' and its geopolitical initiatives being based on peaceful interventions, democracy promotion, and 'change through trade' (see the chapters by Smith, Wiesner and Zarembo, in this volume). Hence, the EU had been an economic but not a political or military world power, existing in a useful symbiosis with NATO.

All in all, the EU needs to deal with manifold internal and external challenges. Internally, it needs to ensure its unity and its capacity to act, despite internal conflicts of interests and rule-of-law issues with Member States such as Poland, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. These conflicts influence the EU's inner cohesion, which is especially problematic when unanimous decisions are required. With regard to the EU's policies and the external dimension, it needs to tackle a lack of energy supplies and the need to become more sustainable at a time when the war challenges

the worldwide energy supply. Applications from Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova (in addition to the accession requests of Western Balkan states) require a new approach to enlargement. This is especially true as the EU wants to offer a European future for these countries at a time when it is doubtful whether it can bear more fragile or incomplete democracies as members. The accession procedure once more requires the EU to play out its normative power, but its authority is not uncontested. Both European values and the Western view of the war are contested around the globe, as is reflected in the varying perceptions of the war, and of the positions that Europe and the Western countries have in it. These developments also raise a number of challenges for EU Studies and International Relations, both on the theoretical and conceptual level as well as on the level of analysis.

The volume brings together chapters discussing the manifold consequences the war bears for the European Union and EU Studies. It covers three broad themes and is structured as follows:

1. **Theories, Approaches and Concepts in EU Studies and IR:** How do the changes and challenges brought about by the war against Ukraine affect EU Studies? How have they been received in IR? Which consequences should be drawn regarding theories, approaches and concepts of, and in, EU studies, and in IR? The question of how to theorise the changes in International Relations is discussed in the following chapter by Costa and Martinez Blanc. The next chapter by Jørgensen discusses how they should be theorised in EU Studies.
2. **The EU as a Polity and Its Policies:** The war and the EU's reorientation does affect the EU, both externally and internally. The question of how the war affects the EU as a polity in general is taken up by Smith. It is discussed further with regard to the various new challenges and, in particular, the conflict of democracy versus autocracy, which touches the core of the EU's liberal values, in the chapter by Wiesner. In their chapter, Müller and Slominski analyse the EU's capacity to act in the new setting and examine how its effective foreign policy is impacted via the necessity of unanimity and a coupling with the rule-of-law conflict. The nexus of energy security and sustainability and its governance, as well as the legitimacy problems which emergency governance brings, is discussed in the chapter by Knodt, Ringel and Bruch.

3. **Ukraine: EU Accession, Narratives and Perceptions.** The questions of whether and when Ukraine can access the EU is another core issue raised by the war. The perspectives of Ukraine's EU accession are taken up first in the chapter by Gawrich and Wydra who discuss how much the EU can, de facto, work as normative power in Ukraine in face of contestation of the EU's accession conditionalities. Zarembo follows up on this in her chapter, highlighting how the perception of the EU in Ukraine has changed and discussing the extent to which the EU is still perceived as a 'normative power'. The book's final chapter by Chaban and Zhabotynska closes the circle by returning to the changing world order, studying how Ukraine and the war are perceived in the world and which narratives are created in this respect.

The topics covered in this book also raise a number of broader questions that concern the EU and its future in a very general way. First, the changes brought about by the war, and the new settings in the world, emphasise all the more that the EU lacks a joint narrative and overall political goal. In a new world order, the EU should be more positioned in this respect. What, then, are elements of the EU's overarching narrative? How should the EU approach defining and enacting it? Is it the task of EU Studies to contribute to this debate? Second, the debate on the EU's new narrative and reorientation entails a number of concrete, more policy-oriented questions, regarding (Geo)politics, Policy and External Relations: how should the EU position itself in the new world order, why, and with which means and goals? How should the world outside Europe be taken into account? Will the EU emerge stronger in terms of foreign policy as a result of the new era? What is the effect of the war of aggression on the interconnectedness of the EU's internal and external positions? What effect does the war of aggression against Ukraine have on the institutional constitution of the EU? Can the EU gain the capacity to act through its emergency legislation? Finally, what effect have the war of aggression and the applications for membership submitted since then had on the EU's enlargement policy?

Theorising the EU in the New Setting

The first two chapters tackle the question of how to grasp the new developments analytically, conceptually and theoretically in IR and EU Studies. The Russian aggression against Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, represented a culmination of the changed realities in which the EU must assert itself both internally and externally. From that date on, the new realities were no longer deniable. Which consequences should be drawn regarding theories, approaches and concepts of, and in, EU studies, and in IR?

As the chapters by Knud-Erik Jørgensen, Oriol Costa and Carme Martinez Blanc indicate, there is some theory-related work in International Relations, but EU Studies so far have been reluctant to theorise the war. This would mean that the '*Zeitenwende*' has been taking place thus far only in EU practice, but not in EU Studies—and hence that there is a research gap. Both chapters also underline that the war against Ukraine can, on the one hand, be seen in strongly normative and moral terms, and on the other hand, from a more analytical perspective. This indicates that theories in IR and EU Studies also represent certain worldviews.

In their contribution, *Oriol Costa and Carme Martínez Blanc* ask whether theories in International Relations will return to their roots. In the wake of the end of the Cold War, grand theoretical debates had faded from scholarly debates, and a more eclectic attitude had taken hold of the discipline—a celebration of mid-level theories that hybridised themes and variables from different theoretical traditions, to shed light on specific phenomena. When the Cold War ended and the Liberal International Order had seemingly won the historical systems' competition between East and West, it also seemed that the contradictions between different theories had lost both their importance and explanatory value. The chapter asks whether Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which has done so much to dismantle the last remains of the post-Cold War environment, is fostering a return of grand theoretical approaches in IR, and to what extent European scholars differ from other Western colleagues in this regard. More specifically, Costa and Martinez Blanc strive to understand whether authors consistently realign themselves along paradigmatic fault lines, and what patterns of collision and coalition emerge between grand theories.

Knud-Eric Jørgensen examines the potential impact of the war against Ukraine on EU Studies. Although the war is the most destructive war

in Europe since the end of the World War II, Jørgensen argues that it is unlikely to have a major impact on the field of research, as, in general, EU Studies are uncomfortable with war. All the wars that influenced European Politics in the last decades—the Cold War, the Vietnam war, colonial wars in general and the Algerian war in particular (which was led by the European Community Member State France), as well as the Falklands War (which was led by European Community Member State Great Britain), and the wars in Yugoslavia, are largely absent from reflections on the dynamics of European integration. Jørgensen outlines four reasons why it is unlikely that the war in Ukraine will lead to a change of era in EU Studies: (i) Even during the wars in Yugoslavia there was not much reflection about EU Studies and war and (ii) academic path-dependencies are too strong. EU Studies focus traditionally on Economics and Law which themselves tend never to consider the role of war; (iii) EU Studies are predominantly characterised by a liberal worldview which has not much in common with the worldview of the so-called Cold War Liberals; iv) War Studies and EU Studies do not match well.

Impact of the War on the EU as a Polity and its Policies

In his introduction to a special issue on the impact of the war against Ukraine on the EU, Mitchell A. Orenstein argues that the shock of the war ushered in a new era of rapid and efficient European cooperation in the EU and of the development of a geopolitical Europe (Orenstein 2023). This thesis is backed by a perspective that strongly emphasises the external dimension of the EU, focuses on the joint action of the first months of the war and tends to leave aside the link between external and internal dimensions. Moreover, the geopolitical focus obscures the nuances of internal changes (Knodt and Wiesner 2023b). In contrast to such a perspective, the contributions to this book focus both on the external and on the many internal challenges that the war poses for the EU, and the ways in which internal challenges are linked to external ones.

Michael Smith in his chapter interrogates the changing nature of European order, and the EU's role within it. He begins by exploring the idea put forward by Josep Borrell—that the EU is a 'garden' of peace and order, and that the world outside is often a 'jungle' that needs to be subjected to the EU's civilising influences. He goes on to assess a number of key junctures in the search for European order since the end

of the Cold War, and the extent to which these have led to any form of new order and stability. Smith then argues that one of the EU's key roles in the (re)ordering of Europe has been the construction and maintenance of boundaries—geopolitical, transactional, legal/institutional and cultural—and evaluates the extent to which those boundaries have either contributed to the 'ordering' of Europe in the recent periods of change, conflict and crisis or created new challenges for EU policy-making. Finally, Smith focuses on the current 'omni-crisis' in Europe and on the EU's role(s) in it and assesses the extent to which concepts of boundaries assist the study of EU policy and its impact.

Claudia Wiesner discusses the linkages of the EU's internal and external challenges. Externally, the EU and its Member States are having to position themselves in a changing world order that is most probably no longer liberal, but at least multipolar. The EU has to face new political realities not only in political and economic, but also in ideational terms. In the context of the new global setting and the challenges it brings for the EU, the war is often discussed as a conflict between an autocratic regime and the liberal democracies of Europe and the EU, to which Ukraine aspires. However, liberal democracy is under threat within the EU itself, not just from outside. Authoritarian tendencies and right-wing populist parties are on the rise in several EU states; there is visible democratic deconsolidation, i.e., citizens are losing trust in representative democracy, and democratic backsliding is taking place. Moreover, the weakly developed democracies of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova are seeking to become EU members at a time when the EU already faces rule-of-law issues with Poland, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. This means that defending the EU's values and liberal democracy is a challenge not only externally, but also internally. The war only exacerbates these multiple tensions.

The discussion in the chapter by Wiesner turns to the broader question of what the rule-of-law conflicts mean for the EU and its capacity to act. These conflicts are a symptom and a culmination of ideational conflicts and interest dynamics within the EU. They touch crucially upon the question of which EU values are being defended in the war, and ultimately on the question of how important democracy and the rule-of-law are, and whether they can be weighed against other interests, namely economic and (geo)political ones.

Hungary uses this strategic tension in its hostage-taking politics, as *Patrick Müller and Peter Slominski* argue in their chapter. The EU has

always been characterised by negotiation strategies, such as issue linkages and package deals. The strategy of linking negotiation items that often are even factually unrelated is used to achieve compromises and bargaining successes in cases where interests are opposing. Most often, these tie-in deals are achieved by linking internal EU policies. The war of aggression against Ukraine, however, opened up possibilities for linking foreign and domestic policies that constituted a coupling of its own kind. Müller and Slominski show how the Hungarian veto threats in the negotiations on sanctions against Russia can be interpreted as political hostage-taking of foreign policy decisions. The authors analyse how Hungary, by linking the rule-of-law conflict to other EU policies or to Sweden's and Finland's NATO accession process, is trying to obtain concessions from the EU regarding the Article 7 TEU procedure and the disbursement of EU money from the Corona Reconstruction Fund, respectively. This hostage-taking is particularly special for two reasons. Firstly, it links the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) to the fundamental values of the EU as laid down in Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty on European Union and given special protection by Article 7. The particular explosiveness currently lies in the fact that Hungary is using its veto in the case of sanctions against an authoritarian Russia, which attacks liberal values, to mitigate or avert EU action against its illiberal tendencies. Secondly, this hostage-taking is also special because it also involves NATO across the EU.

The chapter by Müller and Slominski adds a new aspect to the literature on 'overlapping institutions': the export and import of principles, norms and regulations from one organisation to another (Knodt and Jachtenfuchs 2002). Authors such as Weiler and Gehring have seen converging norms emerging in the international system through mutual influence and exports, as well as imports (Gehring 2002; Weiler 2000). In contrast, the Hungarian hostage-taking shows that by linking European foreign policy in the war against Ukraine with internal conflicts, divergences are deepened. It is not a strengthening of the convergence of norms and values within the EU, but exactly the contrary. If this instrumental and strategic usage of veto positions held by EU Member States in foreign policy would become standard practice, both the decision-making capacity of central foreign policy institutions, as well as the EU's ability to enforce EU norms and values, would be weakened. Not least for this reason, Müller and Slominski point out that an extension of EU majority decisions into the area of CFSP—which has been repeatedly called for—would be necessary.

An increase of majority decisions in CFSP would simplify foreign policy decision-making and also prevent the instrumentalisation of veto positions within the CFSP for the assertion of interests in other EU policy areas by individual Member States (Knodt and Wiesner 2023b).

The war also has implications for EU policy-making and policy objectives. As the chapter by *Michèle Knodt, Marc Ringel and Nils Bruch* highlights, crisis governance since the beginning of the war has led to intergovernmental-executive dominance, as it had in previous crises. The chapter provides a preliminary assessment of the EU reactions to the war over the first eighteen months but also discusses the long-term transformative effect on EU energy policy. In contrast to many of the publications on the impact of the war that are now appearing, which focus too much on the fundamental institutional changes, the authors show that the institutional changes are much more fine-grained. Orenstein, for example, assumes, and implicitly criticises, the lack of a shift in competence as a reaction to the war. This concentration on competence-gains at the European level obscures the detailed institutional dynamics caused by the war of aggression. Thus, in the process, the European Council was able to expand its position within the EU system through its guideline function, as were both the Council and the European Commission through the increased use of *emergency Article* 122 TFEU. On the one hand, this brought the EU the ability to act, but on the other hand it was bought with legitimacy deficits. The basis of the emergency measures on Art. 122 TFEU provides for the Council being a decision-maker but not having parliamentary participation. The use of Article 122 TFEU has both direct and indirect effects. Directly, such emergency legislation affects the input and throughput legitimacy of the EU due to its sole adoption by the Council of the European Union without any involvement of the European Parliament. As an indirect effect of the use of the emergency article in the Lisbon Treaty, the Council is given more room for manoeuver in the ordinary legislative procedure. By anticipating regulations through emergency measures, the Council can expand its scope for action in the ordinary legislative procedure. It is precisely through the use of the emergency article that the deficits of European energy policy, which do not allow the EU to intervene in national energy sovereignty, can be remedied to some extent. Regulations can, thus, achieve a hardening of the otherwise soft governance of energy policy. Furthermore, Knodt, Ringel and Bruch show that in a first reaction, the Russian war of aggression

against Ukraine has brought EU energy security to the forefront of the agenda, leading to a potential shift away from its climate objectives.

Ukraine: EU Accession and Perceptions

The internal and strategic conflicts in the EU reappear in the enlargement debate, as was said above. The tension between the need for efficient policies and democratic principles and values has been intensified by the war against Ukraine. The rule-of-law conflicts can be seen as a symptom and culmination of ideational conflicts and interest dynamics within the EU. The strategic and political tension raised by the new accession candidates can be seen as opposing the EU's (geo)political interests and its values as expressed by the Copenhagen criteria. While its geographical, economic and strategic interests incite the EU to push for speedy accession of its Eastern neighbours, the need to ensure the candidate countries´ conformity to the rule-of-law criteria, as expressed by the Copenhagen Criteria, speaks against this. The challenges of enlargement hence need to be discussed against the backdrop of the interplay between foreign and domestic policy in the EU. There are many more facets to this interplay than simply translating domestic values into foreign policy action. Rather, there is a close link between foreign policy challenges and domestic policy reforms.

Thus, the EU's enlargement policy is not only driven by extra-political, geopolitical and geostrategic considerations but has set in motion an internal debate on the reformation of the accession procedure that goes far beyond the acceptance of Ukraine and Republic of Moldova as new accession candidates in June 2022. The current discussions will be particularly important for the states in the Western Balkans as well as Turkey, which remain at different stages in their efforts to join the EU. As much as the Member States were willing to strengthen both countries by granting them candidate status, there are also fears of constitutional problems caused by a rapid accession (Wunsch and Olszewska 2022). For this reason, and fearing Russia's reaction to a membership perspective, the EU had for years supported the states of the Eastern Partnership (Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) in their development and in some cases linked them more closely to the Union through association agreements, but rejected an accession perspective. However, the conditionality instruments used in the Eastern Partnership have proved less effective in promoting democracy in the countries

than has accession conditionality in comparable cases (Knodt and Wiesner 2023b; Freyburg et al. 2009; Kotzian et al. 2011). The Russian war against Ukraine has now changed the EU's geostrategic calculations. This has put the question of the accession of Eastern Partnership countries and the reform of the accession procedure on the agenda.

In their chapter, *Doris Wydra and Andrea Gawrich* discuss how Russia's attack on Ukraine in February 2022 not only brought war back to the European continent, but also brought new urgency to the European Union to allow new members find economic and strategic protection within its confines. While no accession procedure has been successfully concluded since 2013, the list of candidates is growing. In June 2022, the European Council decided to grant the status of candidate country to both Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova and has promised the same to Georgia, once it fulfils further conditions as specified by the Commission. While this was greeted with great enthusiasm, in particular in Ukraine—which now expects a swift accession in reward for the enormous price it has had to pay for its European choice—the question remains as to how the EU can live up to this promise while still upholding the standards which countries have to fulfil in order to qualify for membership. This chapter asks which dynamics have evolved in this early accession process under the conditions of war, where the EU strives to defend the rule-of-law and democracy internally and externally simultaneously (in particular because of past experiences of how vulnerable democratic achievements are to recession), while at the same time trying to prove its geopolitical capacities by providing credible accession perspectives. The literature on EU conditionality provides helpful insights into factors conducive to the transformation of a candidate country under EU conditions (e.g., clarity, tangibility of rewards, and absence of veto-players). In this light, Ukraine seems an ideal candidate for successful transformation. The current emphasis of the goal of a 'geopolitical' EU and its linkages to enlargement underlines the credibility of the promise. A renewed enlargement methodology will both contribute to clarity and increase (tangible) rewards along the way. Additionally, an active Ukrainian civil society is putting pressure on political elites to continue on their European path. The close linkage of EU accession with reconstruction plans for Ukraine also makes successful EU integration an effective remedy for domestic challenges. However, in order to comprehensively understand 'membership politics' and the politicisation of EU conditions, it is essential to address the contextual interpretation of the norms posed by the EU as

part of its accession conditionality. To study this, Gawrich and Wydra combine the concept of conditionality with approaches to norm contestation from International Relations (IR) Research. This induces a shift of perspective from a unidirectional norm-giver/norm-taker perspective, closely assigned to conditionality approaches, towards a focus on the web of interactions between actors on both the EU and the Ukrainian side as they engage with, interpret and enact norms based on their social context. As illustrated by the reform of the Ukrainian judiciary (and here in particular the Constitutional Court of Ukraine) this has resulted in a 'sovereignty argument' being put forward to challenge the 'West's right to evaluate'. Furthermore, the contestation of time frames is of high salience, not only because Ukraine demands a 'fast track accession' against the will of some EU Member States, but also because it raises the stakes as to how 'sufficient progress' for gaining promised rewards is assessed.

This discussion again links back to the broader context of EU research dealing with the internal–external relationship. Ian Manners' concept of Normative Power Europe (NPE) (Manners 2002) was conceived in the early 2000s in the context of the EU's 'big bang' enlargement after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In order to be accepted into the EU, the candidate countries of the 2000s (many of which belonged to Europe's 'communist camp' during the Cold War) transformed and adapted to the NPE's characteristic set of norms and values: democracy, human rights, rule-of-law, peace, freedom, social solidarity, good governance, anti-discrimination and sustainable governance. This canon of norms is not accidental, as Manners underlines. For him, these particular normative values are the result of common historical events (two devastating and degrading world wars in Europe), a common political space (the creation of a supranational EU) and a common legal foundation driven by elites (the treaty-based EU). NPE has proven to be a popular and long-lasting analytical tool that has explanatory power for understanding the EU's capacity to act in a changing, globalised and multipolar world, but it has also been heavily criticised and complemented by concepts such as 'Market Power Europe' by Chad Damro (Diez 2013). Empirically, this work has contributed significantly to our understanding of European external democracy promotion, the EU's enlargement and neighbourhood policy, as well as the EU's role in international regimes and multilateral institutions (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2009; Jorgensen 2009). The concept of normative power is the conceptual focus of the

chapter by *Kateryna Zarembo*. She analyses interviews with representatives of Ukrainian civil society in order to find the extent to which the EU is still seen as a normative power in Ukraine currently.

Despite this emphasis of 'normative power', the work on democracy promotion in particular showed that the promotion of European values has always found its limits when strong economic or military interests of the EU and its Member States were at stake (Knodt and Wiesner 2023b, Knodt et al. 2018). Gradually, the asynchronous development of the EU's traditional commitment to liberal values and the new reality of its international environment became visible (Smith 2011). In particular, the crisis of liberal ideas in global politics was diagnosed and the EU's handling of the return of geopolitics and realist power politics in its international environment was criticised (Niblett 2017; Mead 2014; Mearsheimer 2014). More recently, this development has been widely discussed under the term 'contestation' (Biedenkopf et al. 2021; Petri et al. 2020; Costa 2019; Joansson- Noguès 2020). Contestation of EU norms is discussed both in the chapters by *Gawrich and Wydra* and by *Katharina Zarembo*. As said above, Zarembo discusses whether the EU is still perceived in Ukraine as a working normative power. While the EU seems to possess considerable normative power, i.e., the power to define what is normal and to set certain standards in various domains, the Russian aggression in the Crimea and in Ukraine's East in 2014, as well as the full-scale invasion of 2022, challenged the way the EU is perceived in Ukraine. Based on interviews with Ukrainian policy-makers and think tankers, Zarembo embraces the constructivist worldview and deconstructs the 'normative power' concept from a diachronic perspective, tracing its evolution from before the Revolution of the Dignity (also named the Euromaidan) to the present. It becomes apparent that the EU's normative power is questioned at least by parts of the Ukrainian civil society.

This finding links a recurrent theme throughout most of the book's chapters, i.e., the question of the EU's new narrative. The war raises the perception of an opposition of 'the West', a sensed opponent to democracy and European/Western values. The war against Ukraine can be interpreted as a war against Western values. But what is 'the West'? And who are the 'others'? Russia? China? The chapters underline that Ukraine and its defence is broadly perceived as a symbol of Western values, both inside Ukraine and in large parts of the EU and the liberal Western democracies (Zarembo, Chaban and Zhabotynska). There are, however, some relativisations to this. First, there is some contestation

of the EU's overseeing of accession conditionalities in Ukraine. They are seen as symptoms of EU dominance by parts of the Ukrainian civil society and hence contested (Gawrich and Wydra, Zarembo). That rule-of-law conditions are seen as a sign of EU dominance is a narrative that links back to Hungarian narratives of contestation of the EU's rule-of-law procedures against Hungary. Here, sovereignty is portrayed as opposing the rule-of-law, because rule-of-law claims are portrayed as being claims of EU dominance. Hence, the related conflicts between Hungary and the EU are painted as being conflicts over dominance and hegemony in Hungary. This means that while the defence of Ukraine is taken as a symbol of the defence of Western values, at least in Europe (Chaban and Zhabotynska, Zarembo), the EU and its values no longer represent a clear orientation marker in, and for, Ukraine itself (Gawrich and Wydra, Zarembo). This discussion underlines that the 'Western values' of liberal democracy, which are at stake in the war, are contested in many respects, firstly with regard to accession, but—as discussed in the chapters by Müller and Slominski and Wiesner—secondly also inside the EU itself. The ideational conflict dimension of democracy versus autocracy directly influences EU policy-making.

The perceptions of Ukraine and the war against Ukraine show clear signs of being split, both inside the EU and in the wider world. The multipolar world is thus reflected in the ways which Ukraine, and the war against Ukraine, is perceived. Contributing to the debate of how narratives organise and serve information to exert influence beyond national borders, *Natalia Chaban and Svitlana Zhabotynska* explore the changing global narratives on Ukraine. They address two perspectives of the new realities the EU faces at this time of war in Ukraine. First, they take account of the fact that the Russian attack on Ukraine and the ensuing war have challenged established narratives and convictions in the global order as well as in the European Union and its Member States and try to tackle the narratives and perceptions this challenge brings with it. Second, they aim at grasping the reality of the multipolar world and the increasing competition of norms and values. They interpret this competition as a battle of narratives and aim at providing an insight into it, comparing the narratives of Ukraine circulating in the EU and wider Europe vis-à-vis self-narratives of Ukraine elsewhere in the world. They engage with commentators who argue about Ukraine in the West vis-à-vis non-Western world, but also examine how Western narratives on Ukraine/war against Ukraine are also divided. Empirically, they study

media narratives of projection (framing Ukraine in 2022–2023 in selected countries of Europe, in the global south, and in China), narratives of reception (results of representative public surveys in these locations), and the concept of 'antagonistic narrative strategies', and also dissect pro-Russian narratives directed towards diverse receivers around the world. In sum, the chapter shows that the EU/Western view on the war is not dominant in the world, thus highlighting the challenges for the EU from an ideational perspective.

From Old to New Challenges

The challenges the war brought for the EU add to others that were apparent before February 2022. The war can be seen as a kind of cumulative point of several developments. The global context had already been characterised by realignments of power, growing divisions and challenges to the liberal world order (Costa and Barbè 2023). The political and economic weight of Western countries had been shrinking compared to the growing political and economic power of countries like China. Moreover, the EU was already facing an increasingly volatile neighbourhood to the south, a shared neighbourhood with an assertive Russia to the east, and increasingly complicated relations with the UK and the United States to the west. Unlike today's new situation, EU foreign policy had been based on the premise that transnational challenges could best be addressed through multilateral cooperation and the strengthening of a rules-based, liberal world order, shifting the focus of international relations from zero-sum to win–win situations.

A change in thinking first became evident with the new 2019 Commission. The newly elected Commission President Ursula von der Leyen spoke of establishing a 'geopolitical commission' (EUReporter 2019) and High Representative and Commission Vice-President Josep Borrell insisted at his pre-election hearing that the EU must learn the language of power (European Parliament 2019). With the beginning of the war, analysts heralded the end of a view that saw international economic relations as being essentially cooperative win–win partnerships. The EU was called upon to take account of the new balance of power (Knodt and Wiesner 2023b; Lehne 2020). However, as Costa and Barbé argue, the EU is still far from being a geopolitical Europe, at least in its efforts to achieve strategic autonomy, which they argue is necessary for the EU in precisely those policy fields in which it has no coherent preferences, few

competences and underdeveloped capabilities (Costa and Barbé 2023). The argument points out that the EU still lacks a clear external strategy, although it did react to the war at first with astonishing strength and cohesion. The EU defence strategy, adopted one month after the start of the invasion, on 21 March 2022, and the 'Strategic Compass on Security and Defence', which sets out clear security and defence policy goals for the next five to ten years, are not sufficient. Since then, the discussion on strategic autonomy and the strategic sovereignty of the EU, which was driven forward in particular by Macron, has not yet produced any more concrete results.

Much of the debate on the EU's role in a changing world in the last few years had remained focused on questions of EU external strategy (Tocci 2016; Howorth 2010; Biscop and Coelmont 2010). Only slowly did the interplay of the external and internal dimensions of the EU's role in the world become visible (Knodt and Wiesner 2023b).[1] The EU 'Global Strategy' considers the simultaneous emergence of major challenges inside and outside the EU to be a threat to the European project (EU High Representative 2016). The main challenges facing European societies in today's interconnected world—including security, migration, environmental challenges, climate change, a stable energy supply and the stability of financial markets—are closely related to, and interact with, international developments. This is also true for severe internal conflicts and challenges that test the core achievements and values of the European integration process, such as austerity, Brexit, growing nationalism, populism, new protectionism and rule-of-law conflicts. Accordingly, the chapters in this volume indicate that the junction of external and internal factors is decisive in order to fully understand and analyse the new realities the EU is facing. This concerns the junction of the EU's internal and external policies, as well as the EU's values, and the way it defends or exports them, and concerns, moreover, external challenges to the EU's inner constitution.

In addition, the war hit at a time when the EU was already internally strained by a number of critical developments. The financial crisis was more or less directly followed by the pandemic. This 'poly- '(Zeitlin et al. 2019) or even 'permacrisis' (Zuleeg et al. 2021) has already changed the

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[1] See the diverse publications of the COST Action "EU Foreign Policy Facing New Realities" (17,119), https://foreignpolicynewrealities.eu/, led by Michèle Knodt and Patrick Müller.

institutional structure of the EU (Wiesner 2021). An emergency mode of decision-making has been developing (see Knodt, Ringel and Bruch). These tendencies affect the legitimacy of the EU's decision-making, even if, at times, they might enable quick decision-making. It is therefore no surprise that the war of aggression against Ukraine and the associated turn of events have opened up a discussion of institutional reforms within the EU, although a fundamental transformation of EU institutions has not yet been tackled. The revision of the treaties, which was supposed to be heralded by the conference on the future of Europe, was by no means accelerated by the war of aggression against Ukraine (Knodt and Wiesner 2023b). The discussion in this volume has underlined that adapting its institutional structure to these new realities is a challenge for the EU.

All in all, the chapters of the book underline a necessity for reorientation, not only for the EU, but also for EU Studies. EU Studies need to take war into account as a reality, and to conceptualise and analyse the EU as a geopolitical power. The orientations, values and means of this European reorientation also need to be rethought. The chapters have shown that the 'normative power' concept is of only limited validity in the current situation. Furthermore, a narrative in which Ukraine appears as the site of the defence of European values against the rest of the world is too simple in many respects. One key finding of the contributions in this book is that both the EU's values and the EU's perceptions are contested both externally and internally—and that the internal and external facets of contestation are linked. In sum, EU Studies would do well to open up and broaden its analytical perspectives and research foci. The chapters in this book highlight paths to proceed further along this direction.

As regards the EU and its Member States, they face a number of challenges. Externally, they have to deal with the new conditions and the changing global environment. This entails defining goals and means of becoming a geopolitical actor and developing comprehensive strategies for a decidedly multipolar world order that enable the enactment of new goals, powers and means—knowing that a multi-ideology world order is coming. The EU will, moreover, have to fix conditions and limits to enlargement while taking on responsibility in the region(s) that neighbour the EU, especially the East, while defending democratic values and institutions in its area of influence. With regard to the war, the EU needs to be involved with shaping the post-war order. The EU will also have to deal with external challenges to its domestic policies and politics, such as disinformation attacks. Internally, the EU is in need of more efficient

policy-making instruments and approaches to tackle the new challenges. These challenges are, on the one hand, policy-oriented when it comes to dealing with energy transition and climate change. On the other hand, some concern institutional changes, especially at the low-threshold level out of range of a major reform and beyond the area of CFSP, e.g., in energy policy. In sum, the EU faces a need to reorient and adapt to challenges, both externally and internally, and to weave the two together concisely.

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Back to the Roots? The War in Ukraine and Grand Theories in International Relations

Oriol Costa and Carme Martínez Blanc

Introduction

For years, if not decades, grand theoretical debates on International Relations have been reduced to a handy hermeneutic tool, apt only for teaching purposes when first exposing undergraduate students to IR theory. Other than that, they have lost their capacity to capture our theoretical imaginations. According to the old canonical view, theories in IR amounted to entire worldviews—broad explanations about the nature of international relations. These *isms* engaged in a virtually endless debate with other worldviews. The *dramatis personae* of such acts included realists and liberals of different sorts, as well as constructivists and other reflective and sociological approaches. The plot was

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built around "paradigm wars" (Jackson and Nexon 2013), i.e. theoretical trench and manoeuvre operations designed to demonstrate the alleged theoretical superiority of one worldview over the others.

This was always a grossly simplified picture of course, but increasingly it has been seen as an unfaithful and dysfunctional representation of what IR theories are and what they are for. To be sure, grand theoretical fault lines are semi-institutionalized by the existence of relatively autonomous research networks and outlets. However, scholarly practices have long evolved into something else, with scholars conceiving of a theory as being a much narrower and more hybrid product. Researchers have quite freely embraced a post-foundational (Bohman 2009) understanding of their work, in which hypotheses affiliated to different *isms* are combined in middle-range theories (Jackson and Nexon 2013) to account for specific empirical phenomena. This process has consisted of at least three inter-twined trends: the virtual end of *debates* between *isms*; an emphasis on middle-range explanations of empirically bounded phenomena; and an openness to consider hypotheses associated with diverse grand theoretical traditions.

In this chapter, we explore whether the war in Ukraine has changed this. Given the immensity of both the war and its implications for the international order, have scholars (and think tankers) gone back to the roots? Have they reverted back to the conceptual and normative consistency of grand theories to make sense of events? Furthermore, have they been more prone to compare or defend the analytical performance of their own school of thought relative to others? There are reasons to think *isms* and debates among them are back. The Russian invasion (and the vast programme of Western assistance to Ukraine) is an event of world-historical scale that seemingly is putting the great gears of history back into motion. They never stopped of course, but the war in Ukraine has surely focused scholars' attention on the basic driving forces of history, on its alleged cyclical nature (according to realists), and on the possibility of progress—all old acquaintances of grand theoretical debates in IR. From a narrower point of view, the return of full-fledged inter-state war, and the possibility of a great-power war, returns IR to its post-World War I roots, and to the sort of issues that grand theories were designed to address: the nature of international relations and of the international order. Finally, grand theories might provide scholars with useful rules of thumb when evaluating the war from a normative and explanatory point of view.

There are also reasons to think that the war should lead to a major debate on its impact upon the EU (see the chapters by Jørgensen and Smith, in this volume)—and vice versa on the role of the EU in shaping the war and the context in which this would take place. As argued in the introductory chapter to this volume, "the war […] has questioned the idea to live in perpetual peace without any need to fund a military" and has forced the EU to consider the possibility that the ideas of 'building peace without weapons' and 'change through trade' have failed (Wiesner and Knodt, this volume). Also the fact that the war "underlines we are living a multipolar world order –geopolitically, economically, ideologically and legally" (Íbid.) should have led to a reflection on the implications for the EU and on the role of the EU in multipolarity.

One and a half years (barely) into the war, we conduct a systematic review of publications about the war in IR scholarly journals, including policy-oriented outlets whenever scholars or think tankers have published in them. In order to grasp the extent to which the war in Ukraine has brought grand theoretical divides into IR scholarship, we assess two variables in published works by scholars. First, we assess whether authors keep grand theoretical discipline, understood here as the consistent use of arguments associated with one tradition of thought (as opposed to juggling with arguments coming from several of them). Second, we also check for references to other grand theories in ways that suggest the existence of an active debate between them.

A secondary aim of this chapter is to grasp the place of the EU and of European authors in this debate. We build here on Knud Erik Jørgensen's chapter in this volume—or rather look at the reverse of his argument. If "European Studies has in general been eminent in excluding research on war as such" (Jørgensen, in this volume), is at least scholarly production on the war in Ukraine addressing its implications for the EU, or the role of the EU in it? Have EU scholars taken part in this debate?

The text proceeds as follows: Sect. "Grand Theoretical Debates" briefly addresses the role of grand theoretical debates in IR and its recent status; Sect. "Methods" presents the sample of publications and other methodological considerations; Sect. "Mapping the Debate" overviews and discusses the empirical material; and the last section draws some conclusions and reflects upon the limits of this exercise.

Grand Theoretical Debates

Grand theories, or *isms*, and particularly debates between them, were once the most usual way in which IR scholars made sense of theorization in International Relations. Theoretical development was "largely […] understood through the prism of the great debates", a feature that coexisted with the identification of their mystifications, misrepresentations or outright invention (Dunne et al. 2013).

However, the traction of those debates has declined very significantly. A decade ago, the then editors of the theoretically inclined European Journal of International Relations argued that during their tenure "we saw less and less inter-theoretic debate across paradigms (or isms)" (Dunne et al. 2013). Actually grand theories themselves as organizers of analytical apparatuses in research (not only debates among *isms*) were in decline. According to one account, "the percentage of non-paradigmatic research [had] steadily increased from 30% in 1980 to 50% in 2006" (Maliniak et al. 2011). Only in the field of teaching did they maintain their status as arrangers of arguments into neatly delineated, easy to convey theoretical propositions.

What has taken their place has been variously qualified as middle-range theorization (of a non-paradigmatic sort, i.e. combining variables drawn from different worldviews), or as theory or hypothesis testing. These are different things: middle-range theorization includes theory development, not only testing. However, the overall trajectory is clear: theories (and associated hypotheses) here refer to explanations or interpretations of sets of phenomena that are narrower than those addressed by omni-comprehensive *isms*. Scholars are also much less interested in foundational consistence—i.e. in consistently deriving their propositions from such *isms*. In their sweeping evaluation of the state of theorization in the 2010s, Dunne, Hansen and Wight argued as much: "the paradigm wars, if that is the correct term, are now over, and the discipline seems to have settled into a period of 'theoretical peace'" in which "various forms of pluralism" are embraced by authors, opening "a period of theory testing" (Dunne et al. 2013).

This has been both called for, celebrated, and decried. Famously, David Lake used his 2010 Presidential address at the ISA Conference to castigate *isms*. In his view, they had led to "professional practices that produce five linked pathologies". IR scholars had (i) reified "research traditions"; (ii) "reward[ed] extremism" within them; (iii) mistaken them "for actual

theories"; (iv) "narrow[ed] the permitted subject matter" of research "to those topics, periods, and observations that tend to confirm the particular strengths of [one's] tradition"; and (v) "aspire[d] for their approach to be *the* scientific paradigm" (Lake 2011, our emphasis). The combined result had been the transformation of grand theories "into insular sects that eschew explanation in favor of theology" (Lake 2011). Hence, his call was for IR scholarship to focus on "contingent, mid-level theories of specific phenomena" in which the "basic and common concepts of interests, inter-actions, and institutions" would act as a shared language that allowed for "analytic eclecticism" (Lake 2011). Mearsheimer and Walt were much less sanguine on the wisdom of abandoning paradigms altogether, which was leading to "simplistic hypothesis testing" in the search for "well-verified empirical evidence" (Mearsheimer and Walt 2013). This was not mid-level theorization, but the mere testing of incoherent sets of variables with the help of effort-intensive, but poor-quality, data (Mearsheimer and Walt 2013).

With the risk of enacting exactly this latter possibility, this chapter considers the hypothesis that grand theories and debates among them might have made a comeback with the Russian full-fledged invasion of Ukraine. We raise three reasons that would justify interrogating this expectation. First, the return of inter-state wars of annexation might have rekindled interest in paradigms whose origin (real or mythical) was precisely associated with different interpretations of such wars. Second, and more broadly, the feeling that the end of history is over, i.e. that great-power competition and possibly great-power war is again at the centre of international relations, might have also had this same effect. Big questions about history, progress, war and order might lead scholars to revisit paradigms as handy catalogues of well-articulated arguments. Finally, *isms* contain normative, interpretative, explanatory and even implicitly predictive ingredients that, far from the view that sees theories as detached from reality (and hard empirical evidence as closer to policy relevance), might in fact provide useful rules of thumb when trying to make sense of events of world-historical scale.

Methods

To assess this hypothesis, we have conducted a systematic analysis of articles written by IR scholars and think tankers and published both in scholarly and policy journals in the field. The selection of articles has not

been straightforward. First, we have excluded articles dealing exclusively with the pre-2022 phase of the war (the 2014 occupation of Crimea and the war in Donetsk and Lugansk). Perhaps more importantly, we have excluded a significant number of articles, particularly among those published more recently, which do not focus on the war and its implications, but use it, among other things, to illustrate much longer-lasting arguments. We will come back to this below. Table 2.1 portrays the sample of journals and articles.

Given the (currently) relatively small size of the sample, we restrict ourselves to identifying three broad *isms* only—while keeping an eye on the possibility of other theoretical traditions being present as well. Hence, we differentiate between realists, liberals and scholars adhered to sociological approaches—in full knowledge of the fact that there is great internal

Table 2.1 Sample of journals and number of articles

Journal	Last issue included	Articles on the war
International Organization	Spring 2022	0
International Studies Quarterly	June 2023	0
International Security	Spring 2023	1
Foreign Affairs	April 2023 (including online series of Feb 2023)	9
APSR	May 2023	0
World Politics	April 2023	0
EJIR	March 2022	0
Journal of Conflict Resolution	April 2023	0
Foreign Policy	Spring 2023	8
British Journal of Politics & International Affairs	May 2023	1
Review of International Studies	April 2023	0
Millennium: Journal of International Studies	July 2022	0
AJPS	April 2023	0
International Affairs	May 2023	5
Security Studies	May 2022	1
Review of International Political Economy	Volume 2, 2023	0
Journal of Peace Research	May 2023	0
International Studies Review	March 2023	0
Journal of International Studies	Volume 2023	1

Source own elaboration

diversity within all three categories. The term "sociological approaches" might need more of an explanation. With it we refer to theories, such as Constructivism or the English School, that understand international politics as taking place within a society—the international society—composed of norms and institutions with which states engage, either in terms of socialization, compliance, contestation, or violation. Such norms and institutions are key when making sense of states' evaluations of each other's preferences and actions.

These three grand theoretical traditions hold different positions on three aspects of the war, to which we turn to grasp the explanatory, interpretative and perspective elements of *isms* in IR: (a) the causes of the war; (b) the stakes it raises; and (c) what should be done about it—particularly in the West, inasmuch as the sampled journals are Western ones. Hence, in our review of the literature about the Russian war in Ukraine, we establish the grand theoretical affiliation of each article for each of these three aspects. Table 2.2 presents the expected arguments for each of the three worldviews in each of those aspects.

Our coding of articles allows us to assess two different variables. First, we are interested in grasping to which extent scholars and think tankers maintain *paradigmatic discipline*, namely the consistent use of arguments derived from one single worldview about the causes of the war, its stakes, and associated prescriptions. Eclectically mixing propositions that belong to different *isms* would point to a disregard of paradigms as being fundamental to reflection about the war; adhering to consistently realist, liberal or sociological tenets would signal an appreciation of their analytical fruitfulness. We also want to understand whether paradigmatic discipline leads to explicit *competition with other grand theories* for theoretical superiority. Hence, we look for references to other grand theories and more particularly to references of a comparative or competitive sort. In addition, we also pay attention to the question of whether the EU is the focus of any of the sampled publications, as well as to the extent to which EU and more broadly European-affiliated authors participate in the debate on the war in ways that are distinguishable from the overall pattern, in terms of paradigmatic discipline and engagement with other isms.

Table 2.2 Worldviews on the war

	Realism	*Liberalism*	*Sociological approaches*
Main cause of war	Western overstretching, NATO enlargement as threat for Russian security interests, Russia as revisionist state emboldened by a declining West	Westernization of Ukrainian society becomes a problem for Russian authocracy: fear of colour revolutions; ever deeper ties with NATO- and EU-Member States	Putin/Russia does not share post-1945 understanding of sovereignty (as including respect for that of others). Imperialistic outlook
Stakes	Stability of the international system, peace between great powers, the capacity of the US to focus on China	Democratic values, self-determination of Ukraine. These are also identified as key components of the international order	International norms (especially outlawry of wars of aggression), identified as key component of the international order
Key prescription for the West/US	Avoid escalation and over-commitment with Ukraine. Avoid humiliating or destabilizing Russia. Focus on China. Avoid pushing Russia into its arms. Abandon strategy of engagement	Help Ukraine keep its sovereignty and regain control of its territory. Democracy first, peace next, and Ukrainians are fighting for democracy. Regime change in Russia as ultimate security guarantee for Ukraine	Defend the key norms of the international society. Help Ukraine defend itself from illegal war of annexation. The risk of setting a precedent if aggression is not resisted

Source own elaboration

Mapping the Debate

General Features

As shown in Table 2.1, the total number of articles is modest, perhaps because the debate is still in its infancy. This could be attributed to the slow speed of scholarly writing and publishing, and the fact that policy journals (Foreign Affairs and Foreign Policy) have been more responsive than academic ones does point in this direction. However, it does seem that more is happening here.

On many occasions, particularly in scholarly journals, articles on the war do not convey much in the way of a sense of novelty or shock (neither is there any indication about its flip side: denying that there is anything fundamentally new or shocking about the war). This is especially true when compared with previous recent waves of publications about other order-shattering events. COVID-19 or the election of Donald Trump in 2016 were broadly seen as phenomena that revealed new information about the international system or pushed it in new directions. Although not completely absent, this response seems to be much less the case in our sample of articles on the war. February 2022 marked a departure from the post-1945 international order, but wars of annexation are hardly alien to IR as an intellectual endeavour. Hence, the war in Ukraine is seen as pertaining to well-trodden categories such as inter-state war, organized violence, great-power competition, or the making, or unmaking, of international orders, for which different grand theoretical traditions already have well-articulated research agendas. The invasion of February 2022 is then variously seen as a test, a refutation of, or a way to fine-tune, off-the-shelf hypotheses. In their piece for International Affairs, for instance, Boaz Atzili and Min Jung Kim look at Ukraine as a case of buffer zone, a term that they demarcate, organize and apply to a broad range of examples (Atzili and Kim 2023). Pål Røren looks at the effects of the war on the status of Russia in different "social clubs" (Røren 2023). This seems to portray the negative image of the insight by Knud Erik Jørgensen (this issue) on the irrelevance of war for European Studies. In our case, it is not irrelevance but familiarity that seems to drive the relative nonchalance of scholarly contributions. Appreciation of its novelty probably falls into the gap between both attitudes.

On other occasions, this familiarity of IR with war explains the fact that articles ostensibly devoted to the war in Ukraine (and obviously relevant to its understanding) rely on analytical apparatuses, and sometimes even empirical materials, that are clearly independent of the war or even possibly predate February 2022. This is the case of Míla O'Sullivan and Kateřina Krulišová (2023) on the issue of Women, Peace and Security in the "non-region" of Central and Eastern Europe, for instance. We would also claim that the well-established role of war in the literature stands behind the fact that many articles look at the Russian war in Ukraine in narrow, specific terms, instead of posing broad, generalistic questions about it and its implications. Examples abound, but three might suffice here. Melnychenko et al. (2022) explore the consequences of the war

for Polish-Ukrainian trade relations; Juliet Kaarbo et al. (2023) interrogate the counterfactual of how Donald Trump would have reacted to the invasion; and Dara Massicot (2023) explores Russian mistakes at the beginning of the war.

Arguments do tend to fit the expectations presented in Table 2.2, even if each article focuses on developing a specific case. Admittedly, our expectations were not independent of our own active following of the debate as it unfolded during these months, but they are well in line with the theoretical positions developed by their respective schools of thought. However, there are two issues we would like to raise on the ways in which arguments seem to play out in the sampled articles.

First, of the three worldviews, liberalism and sociological approaches are the most difficult to disentangle in practice. To be sure, they differ in their ontologies (based on atomistic or social actors, respectively), which leads them to different interpretations of change, motives, institutions and order. In practice, however, we do not see this divide transcend into neatly differentiated assessments of the war. They can share arguments about its causes and stakes, and about what the West and the US should do. In other words, rightly or wrongly, defending (Ukrainian) democracy because it makes the international order safer for other democracies is on occasions combined with an urge to help defend the (Ukrainian) victim of a war of aggression because of the need to protect the idea of the outlawry of war, the linchpin of the international order. The former argument leans towards the liberal, the latter is of a sociological kind, but they are obviously close to each other. Similarly, one can think simultaneously that Russia's invasion was the act of an autocrat (a liberal explanation based on domestic regime type), and also that of an old-school imperialist with no respect for the understanding of sovereignty that underpins the order built after 1945 (a sociological explanation based on clashing views over constitutive norms).

Second, it is rather striking how little has been published about the war in Ukraine beyond the three mainstream worldviews. O'Sullivan and Krulišovás' decolonial feminist piece is the only unambiguous exception we have spotted. This might be due to our choice of outlets (although they are diverse in their own ways too), but it also reflects the preponderance of publications from policy journals and the fact that contributions in scholarly journals are still few and far between. One might be forgiven for concluding that under these circumstances, at least during the initial

stages of a crisis like this, some journals tend to seek contributions by well-known (mainstream) scholars.

We turn now to a brief exploration of the arguments found in our sample of articles, over the main cause of the war, the stakes it raises, and what the West or the US should do about it.

Main Cause of the War

Sampled articles contain the three broad causes of war as presented above, along, respectively, realist, liberal and sociological lines. The quintessential realist take is presented by Stephen Walt, when he argues that "the final lesson –and arguably the most important- is that this war would have been far less likely if the United States had adopted a strategy of foreign-policy restraint", as in that case "Russia's incentive to invade would have been greatly reduced" (Walt 2023a). Ashford has made a similar case, although cloaked in a less assertive language, by arguing that the war in Ukraine is "at least a clear failure of US policy decisions over the last few decades to maintain peace in Europe", and that it would be unreasonable to say that US policies in Eastern Europe "played no role at all in the run-up to the war". According to her, such policies "contributed to a toxic stew of political disputes, security fears, and imperialist ambition that ultimately brought the region to the brink of war" (Ashford 2023).

The liberal argument on the cause of the war revolves around societal and political features both in Russia and Ukraine. Hence Fukuyama's association of the war with the fact that "Putin claimed that Ukraine did not have an identity separate from that of Russia [while Ukraine's] citizens are loyal to the idea of an independent, liberal democratic Ukraine and do not want to live in a corrupt dictatorship imposed from without" (Fukuyama 2022). Regime type plays a critical role in this logic. Autocratic regimes, Dylan, Gioe and Grossfeld argue, have "a persistent wartime mindset, manifest in zero-sum thinking, an almost conspirational understanding of Western power and intentions, and a tendency to act and accept high levels of risk" (Dylan et al. 2022). According to this line of thought, then, only a democratic Russia could offer enduring, credible security guarantees to its neighbours.

Finally, authors of a sociological strand focus their analysis of the causes of war on the factors that can explain Russia's disregard of the outlawry of war and annexation. That can come in a number of forms, normally pertaining to imperialist conceptions of sovereignty and identity. Hence,

Kendall-Taylor and Kofman describe the war as "an imperialist endeavor rooted in the still unfolding collapse of the Soviet Union" and see Russia's behaviour as being "far more interested in imperialist revanchism than in strategic stability" (Kendall-Taylor and Kofman 2022). For their part, Hill and Stent (2022) have located the root of the invasion in Putin's belief that "it is Russia's divine right to rule Ukraine".

Stakes

According to realists, at stake are stability and peace among great powers, as the war in Ukraine "marks the return of contestation over spheres of influence in world politics" (Ashford 2023). From this point of view, recognizing Russia's sphere of influence, or at least avoiding an armed clash over whether (parts of) Ukraine should be included in it, is of utmost importance. The risk of escalation and great-power war is too high, realists claim. Also at stake is the capacity of the US to focus on China, its main strategic rival. As argued by Walt, "the future course of the twenty-first century is not going to be determined by whether Kyiv or Moscow ends up controlling the territories they are currently fighting over, but rather by which countries control key technologies" (Walt 2023b), i.e. the technologies that are more likely to trigger the next revolution in military affairs.

For liberals, it is democracy and freedom that are at stake. "At this juncture in world history", argues Cohen (2023), "a great deal of prosperity and freedom depend on Ukrainian victory and –equally important- Russian defeat". Also Peabody claims that "Russia has reinvigorated the cause of liberal democracy", as the invasion has presented a "clear choice between liberalism and autocracy" (Peabody 2023). Fukuyama expands the values at stake to include an open, liberal understanding of national identity that is not based on "fixed characteristics such as race, ethnicity, or religious heritage" (Fukuyama 2022).

Finally, for scholars and think tankers of a sociological orientation, the war will decide the fate of the post-1945 international order, understood as a collection of international norms and institutions, the linchpin of which is the prohibition of war. On a few occasions, this is actively distinguished from liberal arguments. Hill and Stent feel that Western debates on the war have been "muddied" by considerations over "whether democracies should line up against autocracies". Instead, the message

should have focused on the fact that "Russia has violated the territorial integrity of an independent state that has been recognized by the entire international community" (Hill and Stent 2023). Were Russia to succeed, "the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states […] will be imperiled" (Hill and Stent 2023). Given how deep this threat is for the international order, sociologically oriented authors have seen it as compelling action by third parties: "the nature of Russia's violation of the European security order has made the absence of a collective EU policy response unthinkable" (Maurer et al. 2023).

Key Prescriptions for the US/West

Finally, we address the prescriptions advanced by each of these authors for the US or the West more broadly—since these are Western scholars and publications. Again, the standard-bearer realist Stephen Walt poses the problem in its starkest version. There is an asymmetry of interests and motivation between the backers of Russia and Ukraine in the West, and this has shaped the behaviours of both sides and might determine the outcome of the war. Hence, even if "peace or a cease-fire may still be a long way off, […] thinking about how to shut [the war] down is in everyone's interests, and especially Ukraine's" (Walt 2023a). In any case, realists do not expect Russia to "become dramatically less threatening" even after the war (Kendall-Taylor and Kofman 2022). In that scenario, the West needs to notice the failure of engagement as a security strategy and opt for deterrence as a tool for stability, in a way that is compatible with the US focusing on China.

Liberals appear much more bellicose in defence of democracy against autocracy. The case for the former against the latter needs to be made explicitly and in terms of values. Hence the argument that Biden "will have to talk not about treaty obligations and NATO's Article 5 but about America's role in protecting free people from tyranny" (Traub 2022). Emphasis on the defence of democracy as a key value in foreign policy has perhaps paradoxically brought together liberals and neoconservatives, although the latter come to this conclusion from different initial assumptions. Kagan has argued that "great-power conflict and dictatorship have been the norm throughout human history, the liberal peace a brief aberration" (Kagan 2023). Hence, the US must use its power to "keep the natural forces of history at bay" (Kagan 2023).

Sociological approaches have focused on the need to defend the rules-based international order. Responding to the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a necessity to "reinforce the principle that an attack on another country cannot go unpunished" (Fix and Kimmage 2023). Since allowing norm violation to go unanswered would be just as deleterious for the norm as the violation itself, Western countries have a duty to help Ukraine defend itself from the aggressor and impose costs on the latter. Involving the United Nations system in doing so is also critical for order maintenance (Hill and Stent 2023).

Interestingly, there is little discussion of the EU in the sampled articles (see Table 2.3). Only five of the 25 articles address the issue, or even make non-passing references to the EU. Of those five, two deal with the EU as a market—and hence do not imply any departure from the traditional role of the EU as a civilian power; and still another consists of an analysis of the whole West as a block (Traub 2022). In other words, the sampled publications show preciously little interest in the impact of the war on the EU *qua* EU, or about the ways in which the EU takes part in the conflict. Actually, the clearest example of such arguments, and the only truly EU-focused piece under review, presents a message that emphasizes continuity, not change; namely that the reaction of the EU to the war is "the result of the regularized interactions of member states in an evolving collective foreign policy-making system over the past 50 years", which has brought about the "key shared norm" of the "collective European responsibility to act" (Maurer et al. 2023).

Worldviews and Great Debates

Now we explore to what extent the arguments presented above are used with paradigm discipline, i.e. to what extent those that apply liberal arguments to causes, also apply them to stakes, or prescriptions. A large degree of alignment around the core tenets of worldviews would indicate that the war has reinvigorated them as organizers of the reflections of scholars and think tankers. We are also interested in whether authors present their arguments in contradistinction to those of other isms, or engage in comparisons, rebuttals, or rejoinders with other paradigms. Our starting point is Table 2.3, which summarizes our findings. Each contribution to the debate is listed chronologically, to allow for the identification of trends over time. For each article, we also assess its main line of thought on the causes, stakes and prescriptions of the war, whether

Table 2.3 Mapping contributions

	Causes	Stakes	Prescriptions	Discipline	Debate	EU
Mar 22	Realism	Realism	Realism	Yes	Yes	No
Mar 22	Sociological approaches	Undetermined	Liberalism	No	No	Yes
Jun 22	Liberalism	Liberalism	Liberalism	Yes	No	Yes
Jun 22	No mention	Undetermined	Undetermined	Not relevant	No	Yes
Oct 22	Sociological approaches	Sociological approaches	Sociological approaches	Yes	No	No
Nov 22	On realism			Yes	Yes	No
Nov 22	Sociological approaches	Undetermined	Liberalism	No	No	No
Dec 22	Liberalism/ sociologic	Realism	Realism	No	No	No
Dec 22	No mention	Realism	Realism	No	No	No
Dec 22	Liberalism	No mention	No mention	Not relevant	No	No
Dec 22	Sociological approaches	No mention	Liberalism	Not relevant	No	Yes
Jan 23	Sociological approaches	Sociological approaches	Sociological approaches	Yes	Constr/ LibInterg	Yes
Jan 23	Consistently sociological, no references over causes, stakes or prescriptions			Yes	No	No
Feb 23	Sociological approaches	Liberalism	Liberalism	No	Yes	No
Feb 23	Sociological approaches	Sociological approaches	Sociological approaches	Yes	No	No
Feb 23	Liberalism/ sociologic	Liberalism	Liberalism	yes	no	no
Feb 23	Realism	Realism	Realism	Yes	No	No
Feb 23	Sociological approaches	Sociological approaches	Sociological approaches	Yes	No	Mixed
Feb 23	Realism	Realism	Realism	Yes	No	No
Feb 23	Realism	Realism	Realism	Yes	No	No
Feb 23	Liberalism/ sociologic	Liberalism	Liberalism	Yes	No	Mixed

Table 2.3   (continued)

	Causes	Stakes	Prescriptions	Discipline	Debate	EU
Feb 23	Sociological approaches	Realism	Realism	No	No	Yes
Mar 23	Consistently feminist, no mention of causes, stakes or prescriptions			Yes	No	No
Mar 23	Undetermined	Undetermined	Undetermined	Not relevant	No	No
Mar 23	Undetermined	Undetermined	Undetermined	Not relevant	No	No

Source own elaboration

they are aligned around the expectations for one single worldview and whether they engage with others.

We raise four arguments on the findings as reflected in the table.

First, there seems to be quite a lot of paradigm discipline right across the board. Realists, liberals and sociologically oriented authors tend to operate within the logic of their own worldviews, aligning their assessments of causes, stakes and prescriptions. Out of 26 sampled articles, 21 use arguments that can be classified along the lines described in Table 2.2 (the others appear as *undetermined* in Table 2.3). Of those, 14 observe paradigm discipline. Five of them are realists, five are sociological, three are aligned with liberalism and one is feminist (decolonial feminism). The perception of consistency is particularly strong if we tweak the definition of discipline to allow for some flexibility in combining liberal and sociological arguments over the causes of the Russian war in Ukraine.

Second, as mentioned above, realism appears to be more distinct than the other two key worldviews (in the sense that it is less prone to intermingle with the liberal and sociological approaches than these two are among themselves). We claim that this could be seen as puzzling, as realism has been presented as the *common sense* of International Relations, as the hegemonic worldview. Its status as the *lingua franca* of IR could have led to the expectation that it infiltrates other worldviews. It does not play out this role here; if anything, the opposite is true.

Third, while *isms* are indeed operating, there is little in the way of a debate among them. Sampled articles were not written to compare the explanatory value of different worldviews, rank them, or to engage in any other way with other paradigms. Exceptions are very limited and of

two kinds. First, the few articles that do engage with other worldviews do so with arguments that revolve around realism. In other words, this is either something realists do, or something geared towards assessing realism's understanding of the war. While realism does not seem to be the default paradigm, it is still the one that accounts for the (admittedly low level of) paradigm debate that exists. The second exception points at European integration, with one additional article casually engaging with the divide between liberal intergovernmentalism and constructivism in European Studies.

Finally, European-affiliated authors (both those affiliated to EU and UK institutions) make up just below a third of the total, reflecting the presence of US scholars and think tankers in policy journals. They do not differ much from US-affiliated ones anyway. They are just as likely to follow paradigmatic discipline, and just as unlikely to engage with other *isms*. Given how small the sample is, perhaps one should not overstate the relevance of there being no consistently realist contributions penned by European-affiliated authors, a relatively higher share of scholars having a sociological approach, or lay great meaning on the fact that the only decolonial feminist article is authored by Europeans.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the scholarly commentary on the full-fledged Russian invasion of Ukraine as published in academic and policy journals. More specifically, it has interrogated the hypothesis of a return to grand theories and great debates in International Relations. Our premise was that war of annexation, clashes between spheres of influence, the acceleration of great-power competition, and the spectre of great-power war are all ingredients that could push scholars and think tankers into articulating their thoughts on the war around the key tenets of long-lasting, well-articulated worldviews.

Our findings are mostly supportive of this hypothesis, with important qualifications. We do see most of the articles deploying paradigmatically-aligned arguments about the war as regards its causes, its stakes and prescriptions for the West and the US. Furthermore, we see this taking place among realists, liberals and authors of a sociological inclination. Should this last, it could be a harbinger of a less eclectic understanding of theory in International Relations. At the same time, perhaps the most

interesting aspects of the story remain in the hints that we get from our sampled articles.

First, the literature does not appear to be under any great shock because of the war, particularly in academic journals. The Russian invasion of Ukraine seems to sit rather naturally within the academic practices of authors, who take it as part of broader, pre-existing categories. The sense of novelty associated with the election of Donald Trump or the COVID-19 pandemic is absent with the Ukraine war. This also explains the extent to which articles tending to address the war in partial ways align with the previous research agendas of academics and think tankers.

Second, part of the role played by realism seems to be a legacy of its former hegemony in the field. While it does not constitute the majority of sampled articles, nor seem to permeate the contributions of other world-views, it still organizes the low level inter-paradigm debate that exists. Its public salience, as well as its role in the history of IR as an intellectual endeavour, provides realism with the capacity to engage others and be engaged by others.

EU-affiliated authors take part in the sampled publications in ways that do not depart from these contours. In addition, articles only rarely include arguments focusing on the EU (as opposed to passing references made to the EU). When they do, they do not tend to convey a sense of fundamental novelty for the EU. In a way, this resonates with Knud Erik Jørgensen's argument on the disinterest of European Studies over war as a political phenomenon relevant for the EU. The lack of interest, however, might be reciprocated by students of war and of the changes triggered by this one in particular.

To be sure, the exercise conducted in this chapter is far from complete. There are many journals we have not surveyed, and the next months might still deliver more publications that would lead us to different conclusions. A lengthier longitudinal analysis starting well before the war broke out, but focused on categories such as great-power competition or spheres of influence, might also yield results that question our premise about the state of research before 2022 as being basically eclectic and non-paradigmatic. Nevertheless, there is still value, we think, in painting with big brush strokes a preliminary and interim picture of the ways in which the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has impacted the work of academics and think tankers in International Relations.

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War and Peace in European Studies: *a Zeitenwende?*

Knud Erik Jørgensen

Introduction

This chapter was originally prepared for a roundtable in Fulda, Germany. For a roundtable on war and European Studies, Fulda is a most suitable choice of venue. Suitable because of a well-known concept in military history examined by historians: the significance of the 'Fulda Gap' or, if they speak German, of the 'Fulda Lücke'. This notion refers to an East–West passage in the landscape of Hessen that has played a continuous role in the context of war. The Fulda Gap was used in 1813 by Napoleon when he retreated from defeats in the East. In 1945, General George S. Patton used the passage to move towards the East. During the Cold War, it was assumed among NATO planners that Soviet military forces would use the passage to reach Frankfurt and subsequently the Rhine. NATO's response included plans to employ tanks and helicopters as well as exploiting the beneficial features of the landscape, in much the same fashion as reports describe on an almost daily basis for the war in Ukraine.

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European Studies has been around for as long as European integration; by now 60+ years. However, the significance of the Fulda Gap has never been considered and that might well be unproblematic. However, European Studies has, in general, been eminent in excluding research on war as such. It is a field of research that is most uncomfortable with war. This chapter aims at challenging this comfort zone yet argues that the research taboo will, most likely, prevail.

In the following sections, the chapter first examines how linkages between war and European Studies morphed into the sphere of mythology, in both theory and practice. Subsequently, the chapter outlines the four main reasons why it is unlikely that the war in Ukraine will prompt a *Zeitenwende* in European Studies: (i) previous wars did not cause much reflection about EU Studies and war. This general pattern includes the wars in Yugoslavia, which instead of research on war were accompanied by the introduction of Comparative Politics (Sbragia 1992; Hix 1994), a sub-discipline which became an increasingly strong dimension of European Studies; (ii) a *Zeitenwende* is unlikely because academic path-dependencies are simply too strong. Most academics in the root-disciplines—Economics, Law and Political Science—of the interdisciplinary field of study never consider the role of war; (iii) European Studies is predominantly characterized by a distinct liberal worldview, a version of liberalism that does not acknowledge the use of force and thus has little in common with the worldview of the so-called Cold War Liberals; (iv) War Studies and European Studies exist in separate worlds and simply do not match well.

European Studies and War, or, How War Morphed into a Role in Mythology

Whereas peace and war traditionally belonged to the heartland of the discipline of International Relations (see the chapter by Costa and Martinez Blanc in this volume), European Studies tends to shy away from research on war, power politics and even the employment of coercive means in the conduct of foreign policy. It follows that the Algerian War, colonial wars in general, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, the Falklands War, The Kuwait War and the wars in Yugoslavia are largely not considered in reflections on the dynamics of European integration.

In countless speeches from the 1950s and 1960s, the topic of war was not absent. War was presented as the main reason for European integration. Subsequently, war morphed from being the prime reason for European integration to being the anti-thesis to the achieved European zone of peace; quite opposing views. War became a key aspect of the mythology or the narrative concerning the genesis of the construction of Europe. War and the use of force were relegated to being part of a past that was unwarranted in the present and the future. Due to the outsourcing of military alliance politics, to first the Brussels Treaty and subsequently to NATO, the European Community could be presented as completely civilian in nature and thus as an enterprise whose nature was in stark contrast to the dirty power politics of the superpowers and of NATO (see the chapters by Smith and Wiesner, in this volume). The European Community was also presented as entirely unrelated to the colonial wars fought by key founding members of the European Community, specifically France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Finally, the European Community was presented as a project distinctly unrelated to the creation of France's nuclear Force de Frappe.

If such excises in carving the European Community out-of-context were prevalent in discourses of political and diplomatic practices, they were mirrored in scholarly reflections, including the emerging theoretical perspectives and schools of thought. In scholarly studies, political mythology was rationalized. Just as *engrenage* became neofunctionalism, interdependence became transnationalism. Theoretical debates were about where to put the emphasis: on the supranational political community or on the governments of Member States. Excluded from the analytical equations was power politics par excellence, the Cold War, and also the dynamics of war as an institution in international society. The theoretical tradition that is supposed to be able to handle power politics—realism—was profoundly tainted by its prescription of appeasement and the total failure, during the 1930s, to balance power politics (Bull 1972). By contrast, the idea of war as an institution of international society could have been an option, were it not for the almost total neglect of European integration by the founders of the English School.

In European Studies, the traditional set-up is a focus on EU-domestic factors and actors (neofunctionalism, intergovernmentalism, Europeanization, normative power Europe, indeed most varieties of 'power Europe'). All share the feature of excluding international variables from the analytical frameworks. Admittedly, exceptions do exist,

including literature on the external federator (Zimmerling 1991), literature on the second image reversed (Costa and Jørgensen 2012) and, to a degree, aspects of the civilian power Europe literature that highlight the emerging international environment of increasing interdependence.

WHY A *ZEITENWENDE* IS A NO-GO

Outside the orthodox confines of poststructuralist axioms, it is common to make a distinction between politics and science. With such a distinction, it is possible to make a derived distinction between discourses of practice and discourses of theory and analysis. This is not to reject the possibility of certain overlaps between the two spheres of discourse but, without the distinction, we would be unable to identify both the overlaps and the separate spheres. Actually, the overlaps are highly relevant for European Studies as it is a field of study in which scholars appear eager to adopt the discourses of practice and to avoid the scientific discourses of theory. What else can explain why research on the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is done as if the CFSP is a policy and not an institutional design (procedures, rules and norms) that shapes processes of decision-making? Moreover, European Studies reflects to a high degree the old official narrative, specifically that the EU is a peace project. The EU's self-image was seemingly validated by the European Union winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012. But war? War is presented as the antithesis to the peace project; war is relegated to be an atavistic form of social interaction that belongs to history; not even as a fundamental institution in international society was war accepted as an option within European Studies (Bull 1977).

Despite these overlaps and, thus, the immature development of the field, it seems reasonable in the present context to make a distinction between a *Zeitenwende* in the practices of politics and in European Studies. While an analysis of a European *Zeitenwende* in politics is outside the scope of this chapter, preliminary research suggests that it is occurring (Jørgensen 2022). The following sections examine whether something similar is happening in European Studies. In other words, will the war in Ukraine cause a Zeitenwende? In the following, four reasons explain why a Zeitenwende in European Studies is unlikely.

Previous Wars and EU Studies

The first reason an impact seems unlikely is that previous wars did not cause much reflection, in theory or analysis. EU Studies was born under the conditions of the Cold War, yet, as described below, that condition was neatly parked in the corner of neglect. During the first decades of European integration, the prime theoretical perspectives included neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism, each characterized by a limited interest in the explanatory role of international factors. Similarly, the colonial wars of the 1950s and 1960s were seen in European Studies as irrelevant for the construction of Europe. Hence, there were no references to the French defeats at Dien Bien Phu (1954) or Suez (1956), and no references to the significant change of the boundaries of the European Community that was caused by the French defeat in Algeria (1962).

The end of the Cold War and the wars in Yugoslavia also did not cause much reflection within European Studies about the linkages between European integration and war. Indeed, the opposite happened; as we witnessed how Comparative Politics (Sbragia 1992; Hix 1994) became an increasingly strong analytical perspective within EU Studies. In this context, it is not the states-make-war-and-war-makes-states literature (Tilly 1975; Kaspersen et al. 2017). I have in mind but literatures on party politics, parliaments, electoral politics and political attitudes; that is, more or less all political phenomena that are analysed in ways that systematically neglect potential foreign or international dimensions. It follows that studies of possible linkages between the end of the Cold War and the emergence of a new institutional framework (CFSP) are in short supply. It was left to news media headlines—for instance claiming that the CFSP was born in Kuwait—to suggest a connection. Academic studies could have focused on how the end of the Cold War functioned as an enabling variable that contributed to explaining why the CFSP was not launched before but shortly after the end of the Cold War and the accompanying reunification of Germany.

Paradoxically, as European Studies gained speed and recognition, the field became so compartmentalized and focused on micro-studies that the tiny compartment of strategic European Studies was able to develop without disturbing the prime assumption of all other compartments: the international environment, including war, is a variable that distorts our analytical frameworks, hence, let us assume it does not exist.

Against this background, it is difficult to imagine that the war in Ukraine, no matter its significant regional and global dimensions, will be able to influence the trajectory of EU Studies. The war in Georgia did not cause much attention. Moreover, as documented by the programmes of all the major EU-focused conferences, the Russian invasion in 2014 caused little attention and even less critical self-reflection. At best, the invasion was seen as a challenge to some of the administrative programme projects under the auspices of the EU's eastern neighbourhood policy.

The Enduring Consequences of Path-dependencies

Second, a *Zeitenwende* is unlikely because academic path-dependencies are too strong. Academics do not play in the league of free thinking but are obliged to build on existing knowledge and carefully explain in which way they add new knowledge. Hence, scholars tend to take a position and then entrench themselves in it, sometimes throughout an entire career and sometimes it even amounts to building part of a personal identity. One of the unintended consequences is the rejection of learning and the subscribing to path-dependencies that have lost traction. Indeed, the absence of learning is among the main mistakes of the past. While the EU faces new realities, segments within the scholarly community insist on rejecting the idea that anything has changed.

In political and diplomatic practice, most EU Member States (and thus also the EU) did not make much of Russia's occupation of parts of Moldova or Georgia, the annexation of Crimea and occupation of parts of the Donbass region. The occupation prompted EU-leaders to adopt (limited) soft sanctions and a handful of principles for their lifting. After a few years, the policy was even challenged by several leaders in the EU, who pointed out that sanctions are costly, that the principles (in the view of then German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sigmar Gabriel), could be bent and that policy towards Russia, according to President Macron, should be reset. Karin Kneissl, the Austrian Foreign Minister, found it appropriate to invite President Putin to her wedding in 2018; and subsequently joined oil giant Rosneft's board of directors (Connolly 2021). There were many Italian "friends of Russia" even during Russia's war in Ukraine (Roberts 2022). Corporate Europe has always had its own preferences concerning the EU's foreign relations, subscribing to the 'change through trade' axiom, possibly better known in its German version "*Wandel durch Handel*". Germany Inc. might also be

the best-known part of corporate Europe and thus is fairly representative (Karnitschnig, Matthew and Nette Nöstlinger 2022; Herzinger 2022).

Concerning academic practices within European Studies, they tend to reflect political and diplomatic practices. Hence, war and the use of force are relegated to a small corner and have no significant impact on the acquis of theoretical development or empirical studies. Most academics in Economics, Law and Political Science never consider the social role of war. Some engage in legitimizing the concepts *Putinversteher* or *Putinversteherin*, neologisms invented to characterize those who understand Putin in an apologetic fashion. John Mearsheimer is probably the best-known scholar who understands Putin and blames the West for the war in Ukraine. While Mearsheimer can hardly be placed within European Studies, he has repeatedly and persistently defended his take on the war. On the European side of the Atlantic, Asle Toje (2022) and several Italian academics feature among those who, in the case of Toje, argue that we should leave Ukraine to its own fate, "It is not our war". As a self-declared political realist, Toje continues the realist tradition of being critical of major wars, as seen for instance by Morgenthau's critique of the Vietnam War, and Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer's (2003) critique of the Iraq War. It is more of a challenge to explicitly acknowledge the realist tradition of appeasement, inaugurated by E.H. Carr (1939), and de-legitimize realism in post-World War II Europe (Bull 1972). In the case of Italian academics, some argue that the concept Putinversteher is misunderstood. Its meaning is not about apologetic politicians or scholars but simply those in, for instance, Russian Studies who aim at building scientific knowledge about Russia.

A Distinctly Liberal Outlook

In an eminent and frequently cited article—Goodbye to Bismarck? The Foreign Policy of Contemporary Germany—Gunther Hellman (1996) reviews the foreign policy discourse of the then recently reunited Germany. He observes how the discourse predominantly focuses on multilateral strategies and, how scholars are multilateralists by heart, that is, they take a normative position in favour of multilateral strategies.[1] This

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[1] In an article, Two Cheers for Multilateralism, Keohane and Nye (1985) also demonstrate how analytical and normative discourse can be intertwined.

identified linkage between analytical outlook and normative preference leads me to the third reason for the likely limited impact.

If the EU represents liberal power Europe (Wagner 2017), EU Studies largely equals a liberal outlook on research on Europe. The discourses of practice and theory are closely intertwined, yet intertwined in a distinct fashion. Research within EU Studies is predominantly characterized not by liberal worldviews in general but by a distinct liberal worldview, a worldview that has very little in common with the worldview of the so-called Cold War Liberals or other liberal orientations that do not depend on a principled exclusion of the use of force. The significant difference between the two orientations becomes visible in scholarly assessments of the EU's general overarching policy paradigm.

On the one hand, we have studies concluding that the EU has left liberal internationalism behind and that the EU is retreating from liberal internationalism (Youngs 2010). Richard Youngs detects a trend towards "a more defensive and illiberal approach to global challenges" (Youngs 2010), contends that "the EU's policies are increasingly illiberal" and concludes that the EU's role in the world is a retreat from liberal internationalism. However, Youngs' diagnosis is not particularly precise and the conclusion not particularly compelling. Thus, we can mine Youngs' book for the observation that the EU's foreign policies were adapted and became more defensive of, and possibly also more detached from, the reigning policy paradigm(s) (on the notion of policy paradigm, see Hall 1993; Schumaker 2008). Other scholars argue the opposite of Youngs, claiming that EU foreign policy is as liberal as it gets. Among them, Alex Prichard (2013) suggests that liberalism equals imperialism, for which reason Kant possibly is the worst intellectual Godfather the EU could find for its foreign policy. Still other scholars highlight, similarly to Youngs, the trend of the EU becoming more defensive, arguing that the EU's international influence could be past its peak (Bretherton and Vogler 2013). The war in Ukraine might even strengthen the already strong liberal traits of European Studies. While scholars of a realist or geopolitical orientation try to find cracks in the liberal wall, they seem unable to change the existing configuration within European Studies of theoretical orientations or within the vast landscape of more or less a-theoretical empirical studies. The incapacity for realism-oriented scholars to change the analytical outlook also applies to scholars of a critical orientation. The recycling of Brexiteer slogans, for instance of colonial or imperial power Europe,

has so far not left much impact on research, at least not beyond a relatively small clique.

On the other hand, if a change away from a liberal orientation seems unlikely, changes within the liberal tradition seem not only likely but indeed already underway. If we apply Ole R. Holsti and James N Rosenau's (1990) vocabulary, the ongoing change is a move from accommodationist to internationalist, two positions in favour of international cooperation (multilateralism) but having contesting attitudes towards the use of force. Within European political and diplomatic practices, accommodationists used to dominate but no longer. Russia's war in Ukraine has made the accommodationist orientation increasingly weak. From this perspective, the EU might be on a journey that is similar to the one the United States underwent during the twentieth century, travelling from a liberal internationalism that excluded the use of force to a version where international cooperation and the use of force is perfectly possible. Within European Studies, it is more difficult to detect a similar change.

War Studies and European Studies

War Studies and European Studies do not match well. It is as if they are from Mars and Venus, respectively. During the early processes of European identity-formation, war as a social phenomenon was relegated to an imagined atavistic past, a temporal 'Other' of the European enterprise. In European mythology, war became the prime reason for political initiatives that aimed at cooperative solutions, which in turn were considered the conditions for peace. In parallel to these processes of identity-formation, war fighting capabilities were conveniently delegated to NATO and could thus be left out of the equation, at least in the narratives designed to legitimize European integration.

Although the overlap of the Western European Union (WEU) and European Community membership respectively was very significant, the cognitive compartmentalization of EU Studies implied that the WEU, at best, was a niche area of research interest. The post-World War II European military alliance, the Western European Union, was, for 30 years, a more or less empty organizational shell, based on the foundations of the Brussels Treaty. If any successes can be claimed, the prime success would be that the creation of the WEU enabled West Germany's membership of NATO. The reactivation of the WEU during the 1980s was caused, not by threat perceptions about the East, but West European fears of

being de-coupled from global security dynamics and was related to severe doubts about the US commitment to the defence of Europe. Despite the reactivation of the WEU during the 1980s, EU studies typically make the St. Malo Declaration the kick-off moment for European defence endeavours. This resulted in a limited attention to the endeavour to keep sea lanes open, and it would take a Barry Posen to examine whether policies within the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)-umbrella represent efforts at balancing the hegemon of the unipolar international order.

After the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the problems in the Western Balkans brought war back to the European continent but these were considered outlier cases that represented atavistic politics, a temporary black swan. During the 1990s, social leaning among EU policymakers prompted them to cautiously bring back the military dimension but only for military missions that could be categorized as optional in nature and thus not existential. Even NATO, whose reason d'être is territorial defence, engaged in cases of optional crisis management and those increasingly situated out-of-area. In most EU-member states, the three-decade long temptation to cash in on the peace dividend was fully embraced.

If War Studies and European Studies are not a match, the same can be said about European Studies and Strategic Studies. While endeavours at bringing the two together exist (Fiott 2021; Järvenpää et al. 2019; Dupre 2020) there are considerably more examples of studies that inadvertently demonstrate a fair amount of lack of mutual understanding. In this, scholars are not alone. As clearly demonstrated by the EU announcing in 2007 that the EU's strategy towards Russia had *expired*. This is the language of a *fonctionaire*, not a strategist.

Given the predominant political and diplomatic reluctance about military means and the compartmentalization of scholarly research, it is easy to understand how War Studies and European Studies could be kept separate. What is more difficult to understand is how military intelligence and Russian Studies could, for 15 years, miss the gradual changes in Russian identity, interests and policies.

It is also difficult to understand why the gradual changes in EU worldviews and policy paradigms, represented by concepts such as Global Strategy, strategic autonomy, strategic compass (2022), global gateways and the like, have been given such a negative reception by a branch of scholars within European Studies. While critiques of Eurocentrism can

be seen as interventions of ideological identity politics in academia, it is considerably more difficult to understand the fierce critiques of concepts such as resilience, civilization and strategic autonomy (Bargués-Pedreny 2020; Balfour 2021; Youngs 2021; Tallis 2021). Given the complexity and diversity of the issue, one should not expect simple answers. However, five tentative answers stand out. First, scholars' approach might be shaped by a sort of 'principles first' orientation. This implies that principles are precious and should not be bent, no matter the circumstances or consequences. It follows that the principled pragmatism of the Global Strategy is too much pragmatism and not enough etched-in-stone principle. It also follows that scholars seldom reflect on the dilemmas facing policymakers, that is, dilemmas of equally valuable yet contending principles. Second, if research is based on a negative attitude to the use of force, then the CSDP is bound to be evaluated in a negative fashion. The same applies to strategic autonomy in the field of defence and security. The use of the European Peace Facility to finance deliveries of weapons to Ukraine is by default a no-go. Third, if belief in interdependence is strong, then the objective of strategic autonomy is bound to be evaluated in Fortress Europe terms and, differentiation between strategic infrastructure and production of, for instance, chocolate is defined as unwarranted. Fourth, the odd estrangement towards European civilization has its own unintended, or intended, consequences. While the shadows of Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* (1992) have turned out to be long and enduring, Peter Katzenstein's contributions (2010) did not get the reception they deserve. Hence, instead of critical appraisals of European civilization, default critiques of even employing the term are trending. Fifth, the critical imperative can be traced back to Max Horkheimer's essay Traditional and Critical Theory (1937). While the essay has its qualities, subsequent readings tend to turn 'critical' into an empty signifier, perhaps most pronounced in studies with postmodern or post-structural underpinnings. Actually, Horkheimer paved the way with his gloomy *Dialectics of the Enlightenment* (1947), a devastating critique of the European enterprise, published a decade before the Rome Treaty. Here, we have both the implosion of liberalism (in a book) and its revival in social and political action (the Rome Treaty). For both forms, war played a role as a triggering factor, yet was then transformed into a thing of the past. What applies to war also applies to an interest in power politics and not even realists in Europe perform well in the European heartland

of their theoretical tradition: hence the studies of poor performance of realists in Europe (Jorgensen and Jørgensen 2021).

Conclusion and Wider Perspectives

The main conclusion is that it is unlikely that the war in Ukraine will prompt a *Zeitenwende* in EU Studies. Previous wars, including the wars in Yugoslavia, did not cause much reflection about EU Studies and war. Instead, Comparative Politics became an increasingly strong sub-field. Moreover, a *Zeitenwende* is unlikely because academic path-dependencies are too strong. Most academics in Economics and Law never consider the role of war. Furthermore, EU Studies is predominantly characterized by a distinct liberal worldview and this worldview has not much in common with other liberal worldviews. Finally, War Studies and EU Studies do not match well and the same applies to EU Studies and research on power politics. Not even realists in Europe perform well in the heartland of their theoretical tradition.

However, the conclusion about an absence of impact should prompt a serious conversation about scenarios for a potential and desirable impact. In other words, if the hour of reckoning is when one confronts past mistakes and decides what to do next, then we have witnessed such an hour in the world of policy-makers. By contrast, most scholars within EU Studies largely soldier on as if nothing has happened. This chapter argues that EU Studies would be wise to confront past mistakes, engage in social learning and take prudent decisions about what to do next. Russia's war in Ukraine has the potential to unravel some of the most important milestones in the construction of Europe. The future research agenda and paradigms are closely connected to, if not dependent on, the degree to which past mistakes are acknowledged. I will therefore briefly revisit the foundations of Liberal Peace Theory and focus on three themes that stand out as being particularly worthwhile to address (Doyle 2005).

The first theme concerns how a union of liberal democratic states conducts relations with non-liberal states, including authoritarian regimes, autocracies, dictatorships and theocracies. According to Liberal Peace Theory, for liberal states (and presumably also a union of liberal states) such relations are bound to be conflictual. However, in political discourse, terminology such as 'strategic partners' is commonplace and in academic discourse economic interdependence and globalization are assumed to singlehandedly reduce, if not erase, political conflict. Neither policymakers

nor scholarly studies have fleshed-out principles for dealing with the non-liberal world. Given that membership of this part of the world is currently on the increase, the task of adopting principles is urgent.

The second theme concerns issues related to trade, globalization and strategic autonomy. The challenge is to develop ideas about a continuous harvest of the benefits of interdependence and globalization while making sure that interdependence does not morph into patterns of existential dependence (Marjory et al. 2022). Moreover, where exactly should the balance be between strategic autonomy and global Europe? What are the pros and cons of nearshoring production? (Tocci 2021; Lagarde 2022; Ondarza and Overhaus 2022).

The third theme concerns the configuration and transformation of cosmopolitan norms, for instance concerning migration. How many times are critical academics prepared to risk the kingdom to save the constitution? What should principled pragmatism mean in a range of policy fields?

Given the political and academic magnitude, significance and complexity of the three themes, it will take a long, yet necessary, conversation to answer these questions.

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Re-ordering the EU and Europe: Old Boundaries and New Challenges

Michael Smith

Introduction

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has been seen by many Western commentators as marking an abrupt shift in the foundations of European order, with implications for the nature of world order more generally (for reviews of the debates see Lehne 2023; Lo 2023). A brutal reassertion of geopolitical realities is one of the key elements in this shift, implying also a new primacy for the use of 'hard power' and military means. Alongside this has gone a new focus on geo-economic processes, focused on the weaponisation of energy supplies and a renewed salience for economic sanctions. The other side of the coin is a subversion or rejection of the notion of a rules-based international order, and an attack on central institutions associated with it. There has been a tendency for commentators to argue that everything has changed, and that international politics is now practised in a new (or for some, very old) world of power politics. This raises important questions about the place in such

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a world of the European Union: a highly institutionalised 'community of law' which has been seen both as representing and as depending upon rule-based political and economic processes (see also the discussion of war and the study of the EU by Jörgenson, in this volume). To what extent and in what ways can the EU be seen as a central player in the new European order, and how can it play an effective role in the restoration of some kind of stability?

In addressing this question, this chapter interrogates the changing nature of European order, and the EU's role within it, in light of the war against Ukraine. It begins by exploring the ideas put forward by EU policy-makers that the EU is a 'garden' of peace and order, and that the world outside is often a 'jungle' that needs to be subjected to the EU's civilising influences. It goes on to assess a number of key junctures in the search for European order since the end of the Cold War, and the extent to which these have led to any form of new order and stability. It then argues that one of the EU's key roles in the (re)ordering of Europe has been the construction and maintenance of boundaries—geopolitical, transactional, legal/institutional and cultural—drawing upon work by Smith (1996) and evaluates the extent to which those boundaries have either contributed to the 'ordering' of Europe in the recent periods of change, conflict and crisis or created new challenges for EU policy-making. By doing so, the chapter links to a number of conceptual arguments examined by Oriol Costa in this volume, relating to the role of International Relations theory. Finally, it focuses on the current 'omni-crisis' in Europe and on the EU's role in it and assesses the extent to which concepts of boundaries assist the study of EU policy and its impact.

The EU, Europe and the World: A Garden Meets a Jungle?

In reflecting on the EU's role in the establishment and maintenance of European and world order, policy-makers have in many instances drawn upon notions of EU exceptionalism. This kind of thinking has its roots in the perception that the EU is a *sui generis* international actor, and that external action should in principle reflect the exceptional nature of the EU's internal make-up and policy-making processes. It also reflects in more or less direct ways the fact that the EU has been an incomplete international actor, without the capacity to wield 'hard power' but

with significant reserves of 'soft' and 'normative' power (see Knodt and Wiesner, in this volume, and Wiesner, in this volume). The argument that the EU is and should be a 'force for good' in the world arena has deep roots and is not simply a reflection of the Union's weakness.

One striking representation of this orientation can be found in the pronouncements of the EU's foreign policy leadership. Most strikingly, Josep Borrell, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy appointed in 2019, has compared the Union to a 'garden' surrounded by uncultivated ground—or more tellingly, by a 'jungle'. In a now notorious speech at the opening of the European Diplomatic Academy in Bruges (Borrell, 2022), he argued as follows:

> Europe is a garden. We have built a garden. It is the best combination of political freedom, economic prosperity and social cohesion that humankind has been able to build […] The rest of the world is not exactly a garden. Most of the rest of the world is a jungle, and the jungle could invade the garden […] A nice small garden surrounded by high walls in order to prevent the jungle from coming in is not going to be a solution. Because the jungle has a strong growth capacity, and the wall can never be high enough in order to protect the garden…

What Borrell was implying relates very strongly to the argument in this chapter. First, he stated explicitly that the EU is internally well-ordered and regulated. Second, he portrayed the external world as the opposite—a source of disorder and unpredictability, which could pose a threat to the EU internal order as well as more broadly to the quest for European and world order. Third, he presented the EU internal order as the basis on which action towards the outside world can be constructed—and the generation of order in the outside world as a key part of EU diplomacy. In addition, Borrell was implying a key role for what might be described as boundary maintenance: in other words, the need to consolidate and manage the boundary between the EU order and external disorder. This taps into a theme on which I and others have worked for at least thirty years, since the end of the Cold War: the construction and reconstruction of European order, and the role of the EU in creating, maintaining and adjusting the order in the face of a changing (and often disorderly) continent (see, e.g., Carlsnaes and Smith 1994; Keohane et al. 1993; Smith 1996, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2014; Christiansen et al. 2000; Niblett and

Wallace 2001; Elgström and Smith 2000; Lavenex 2004; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005; Carlsnaes et al. 2004; Duke 2018; Biscop 2019).

From the 1990s to the 2020s: Key Junctures in the (Re)Ordering of Europe

The preceding discussion uncovers a key analytical dimension of the study of European order in the post-Cold War world, if that order is conceptualised as an amalgam of material power, institutional arrangements and reigning ideas (Cox 1983; see also Smith 1994) Although there has been much attention to the ways in which the Russian invasion of Ukraine marks an abrupt shift in the nature of European order, it is in fact the latest stage in a process that began in 1989—a long-term shift in the material foundations, the implicit and explicit rules and the key institutional and normative manifestations of that order. This having been stated, it is important to trace the genealogy of current (re)ordering by drawing attention to the several key junctures by which the post-Cold War period can be characterised. Each of these junctures has implications for (dis)order, and for the capacity of the EU to generate or contribute to the ordering of Europe; none of them is discrete from the others, since these junctures have led to successive overlays in the ordering of post-Cold War Europe. Each of them in turn has exposed the interaction between the internal EU order and broader European order, and the significance of boundary drawing and boundary maintenance in the establishment and maintenance of order. These are given added significance by the emergence of what Giovanni Grevi (2009) identified as an 'interpolar' world, in which the growth of several poles of power and influence goes alongside the persistence of high levels of economic, environmental and cultural interdependence. Whilst the central concern of this chapter is with European order, this broader context must not be neglected or forgotten.

The first key juncture was the period 1990–2004. For the EU, this was a period in which consolidation of the post-Maastricht internal order overlapped with the extension of that order through a process of large-scale enlargement. This manifestation of the close linkage between internal order and the EU's engagement with broader European order was not untroubled, since the process of enlargement was in many respects in tension with the need to develop and deepen the foundations established at Maastricht, not only in politics and security but also in political

economy. The parallel challenges of economic and monetary union, security and defence policy and turbulence in wider Europe placed heavy demands on the Union's adjustment capacity. At the same time, the outbreak of conflict in former Yugoslavia drew in not only the EU but also the USA and Russia, the former Cold War adversaries, whilst the enlargement of NATO created a dynamic which was to shape future lines of tension and then open conflict in Europe. This was a period of strong challenges for the EU, but also one during which there were opportunities for a new self-assertion.

From 2005 onwards, a second layer of events and forces contributed to the increasingly complex relationship between the EU and European order. The enlargements of 2004 and 2007 created a new balance within the EU itself, between the fifteen pre-existing member states and the twelve new members, predominantly from eastern Europe, affecting institutional arrangements and the development of EU policies across the board. Although the new members had been implicated in EU policy-making through structured dialogues and other devices before formal accession, their presence as member states gave new point to EU policies towards Russia in particular, but also (due to the accession of Cyprus and Malta) towards the eastern Mediterranean. A key EU response to this newly-configured set of relationships was to establish a framework, through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), that attempted to order the contacts between insiders and outsiders and stabilise the Union's 'near abroad' (Weber et al. 2007). But at the same time, the expansion of the EU's membership along with the evolution of the CFSP and the CSDP created a new security and defence perimeter in two increasingly turbulent regions—the eastern and southern neighbourhoods (Smith 2006). The first indications of this new set of challenges were to be found in the Caucasus, with the EU's diplomatic engagement in the conflict between Russia and Georgia in 2008. At the same time as these challenges of external order demanded attention, the internal order of the Union came under question, with the continuing tensions around the Constitutional Treaty and the eventual implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, and the pressures created by the global financial crisis from 2008 to 2009.

The net result of these internal and external turbulences was increasing contestation both of the internal EU order and of the broader European order. In both contexts, the EU's role was open to question, from member states as well as outsiders. The new phase of EU engagement

that effectively began in 2008–2009 was characterised on the one hand by the consolidation of the EU's system of diplomacy, given new form and impetus by the Lisbon Treaty, and a growing recognition of the EU as a consequential diplomatic actor. The establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the office of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who was also a Vice-President of the European Commission (HRVP), created new possibilities for the Union both at the level of diplomatic strategy and in the day to day practice of diplomacy (Smith et al. 2016). This new diplomatic capacity did not translate directly into an increase in the 'hard power' capacity of the Union, but did encourage discussion of the ways in which new forms of security and defence cooperation could be initiated. The continuing economic crisis and the need to address growing internal contestation arising from the development of new nationalisms in a number of EU member states dictated a strong emphasis on the internal EU order, but increasingly this could not be divorced from the broader question of order in the 'neighbourhood', particularly in the case of the 'Arab Spring' after 2011 and the 'colour revolutions' in central and eastern Europe. It was apparent that whilst the emphasis was on 'soft power' and diplomacy, the EU had a role in such conflicts; but it was also evident that as soon as they moved into the use of violence and 'hard power', the EU became marginalised. Whilst this led some to demand the 'hardening' of EU security and defence policy as a matter of urgency, the barriers to such a development, both from within member states and within the Brussels institutions, remained formidable.

The contradictions inherent in this position, and their implications for EU effectiveness in 'ordering' Europe, became even more apparent in the next period, whose beginning was marked by the crisis over Ukraine in 2013–2014. Both the eastern and the southern 'neighbourhoods' were in crisis, whilst the Union was challenged as before by economic turbulence and the growing salience of nationalist movements, especially in Hungary and Poland. Whilst the 'hardening' of EU security and defence policy gained momentum, especially in areas related to defence industrial policy and (after the exit of the UK) the development of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the contradiction between growing diplomatic presence and qualified material power remained. Diplomacy (and the EU's role as a 'market power') could construct new forms of association agreements and partnerships with countries bordering the EU, the collision between such processes and the growing predominance of geopolitics

was sharpened by events in the Ukraine in particular. The negotiation of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with Ukraine plunged the EU into the domestic turmoil created by Russian intervention and the reaction of EuroMaidan revolutionary forces. Russian intervention in turn confronted the Union with a compelling need for the restoration of stability, but at the same time with a sharp demonstration of the limits of diplomacy without 'hard power' (Haukkala 2015, 2016; Averre 2016). Alongside this set of contradictions went others, arising from the EU's engagement with its southern neighbourhood, of which the most intransigent was the spill-over of regional conflict into mass movements of refugees. This created a direct and at times unmanageable linkage between the internal order of the EU and the 'security perimeter' along which new conflicts and crises were erupting, especially in Libya, Syria and more broadly in the 'greater Middle East', creating conditions in which the EU would be confronted by an even more compelling set of crises and tensions after 2020.

When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, it was not a sudden, spontaneous or unexpected challenge to European order, or to the EU's role in establishing and maintaining that order. It was the culmination of a process that had been established in the 1990s, had intensified in the first decade of the new century and had exploded in the middle of its second decade. Shifts in material power, pressures on governing institutions and challenges to received ideas about the nature of European order had created a conjuncture in which the EU and its member states would be tested as never before; the response both from the Union and from its member states was uncertain and often faltering, infused as it was with contradictions in national and European political processes, and with the resurgence of geopolitics more generally (Cliffe 2022; Rachman 2022). Whilst the EU had published its Global Strategy (European Union 2016) as a marker for a new and more assertive approach to external action, and was developing a Strategic Compass (European Union 2022) as a means of operationalising its key strategic commitments, it was far from clear that the Union had the capacity to assert itself in the midst of an 'omni-crisis' (see for a range of views Boone 2022 [Boone was the French minister of state for Europe], Chassany 2022; Whitney 2022). The often-stated aim of 'strategic autonomy', coupled with a commitment to a 'comprehensive approach' and 'joined-up policy-making', was presented with what seemed to be a potentially existential set of challenges. In order to assess both the nature of these challenges and the EU's responses, and to relate

these to the pursuit of European order, we can focus on a key element in both EU policy-making and European order: the nature and importance of boundaries.

The Nature and Importance of Boundaries

In exploring the implications of boundaries, it is important to have a sense of history. It is now thirty years since the initial post-Cold War period, in which as noted earlier there were major demands on the EU's capacity to contribute to European order but also significant opportunities to extend the EU's influence (Smith 2000). In 1996, I identified four types of boundaries, the development and interaction of which shaped the EU's capacity and willingness to order its European environment: geopolitical, transactional, institutional/legal and cultural (Smith 1996). The geopolitical boundary was intimately linked to the EU's search for stability and security in a turbulent continent and created the need to define and consolidate the EU's position and role in relation to major partners or rivals. In this respect, the securing of the EU's geopolitical status could be seen as a key contribution to the continued evolution of the internal EU order, as well as a stabilising factor in the broader European setting. As noted earlier, this assumption has been tested in a variety of ways during the last thirty years, from the break-up of former Yugoslavia through the crises and tensions of the eastern and southern 'neighbourhoods' to the explicit threats posed by the resurgence of Vladimir Putin's Russia. As the EU itself has expanded, there has also been evidence of a form of geopolitics within the EU itself, with the emergence of internal contestation among the new constellation of member states. The tensions created by the growth of 'illiberal democracy' in Hungary, by the internal contestation centred on the rule of law in Poland and by the differential impact of energy security concerns in the broader EU membership were linked at least in part to the geopolitical 'pull' of Russia and the varying desires on the part of members of the Union to counter it.

The second type of boundary identified in my 1996 article was transactional: in other words, the boundary constructed by the intensification of economic development within the EU and its linkages with economic processes in the broader European order. The combination of the EU's internal regulatory structures with its external economic defences including the customs union and the common external tariff has been a potent source of influence for the Union not only within

Europe but also on the broader global stage, enabling it to shape not only specific partnerships and agreements but also to contribute to the development of the rules-based international order. In the European context, and that of the post-Cold War period, the capacity of the EU to erect transactional boundaries between itself and its 'near abroad' has been a constant source of challenge. One part of the challenge, identified at a very early stage, was the demand of post-Soviet countries in central and eastern Europe to be included within the EU economy, first by association and then by accession. The tensions this created between the EU's pursuit of its single market programme and the major shift in overall patterns of trade in Europe precipitated by the collapse of the Soviet bloc was particularly evident in the 1990s, but as noted above there were continuing tensions and ambiguities throughout the first two decades of the twenty-first century. One of the most obvious of these was the tension between the desire to counter the geopolitical influence of Putin's Russia and the increasing dependence of key EU member states on supplies of oil and particularly gas from Russian sources. This raised in a very direct form the question of boundaries: to what extent could the EU construct and defend a transactional boundary between itself and other major European powers in a period where the politicisation of economic activity was becoming a predominant feature of European and world order?

Both the geopolitical and the transactional boundaries associated with the EU are strongly related to the third type of boundary: institutional and legal. Successive treaties have contributed to the (self)image of the Union as a 'community of law', and the increasing density and scope of the EU's institutional frameworks have created a clear legal separation between the EU and the outside world. This sense of separation and thus of the need to defend the Union's institutional essence has persisted despite the pressures of globalisation and of geopolitical challenges. As a result, the 'investment' in institutional and legal frameworks that characterise the Union has become something to be defended, but also a source of influence, especially on those outsiders who wish to be inside the boundary. A variety of partial modifications of this boundary has emerged—for example, relating to association arrangements with countries such as Norway and Iceland—but the investment has in general been jealously safeguarded, not least in negotiations about accession or (in the case of Brexit) de-accession. Notable among the 'defensive' arrangements in relation to the broader European order, as noted earlier, has been the development of the European Neighbourhood Policy and its successors,

the eastern and southern partnerships. At least initially, the key character-
istic of these partnerships was that they did not constitute a conveyor-belt
to accession; rather, they were designed precisely to address the conse-
quences of the expanding EU membership and the associated 'defence
perimeter', with the aim of stabilising the 'near abroad'. In the terms used
by Josep Borell and quoted earlier, they were a way of maintaining the
'garden' of the EU's internal order. They did entail institutional interven-
tions in a number of the partner countries, with the aim of encouraging
'resilience' among the EU's near neighbours, but this was largely in order
to create conditions in which the Union would not be confronted with
short-term demands for more ambitious forms of association and even
accession.

Alongside the geopolitical, transactional and institutional/legal bound-
aries, the EU has also nurtured what can be described as a cultural
boundary: one that is inherent in the distinction between the 'garden'
and the 'jungle' made by Josep Borell and the normative differences that
underpin it. In addition to being a 'community of law', the Union has
a powerful self-image as a community of values. On the one hand, this
has given rise to a view of the EU as a 'normative power', extending
the application of its values to its external action through its diplomatic
activities. On the other hand, as noted earlier, it has contributed to a
form of 'EUropean exceptionalism', in which the Union is presented as a
unique kind of international actor. But there is another face to the idea of
a cultural boundary: one that emphasises the need for outsiders to adjust
their cultural assumptions and values in their dealings with the Union,
especially if they are pursuing accession. The process of accession demon-
strates most clearly the ways in which political, judicial and other aspects
of national cultures require adjustment, and recent internal conflicts over
the rule of law, involving Hungary and Poland, illustrate the fact that this
adjustment does not end at the moment of accession. It is at this point
that one becomes aware of the ways in which the geopolitical, transac-
tional, institutional/legal and cultural boundaries erected by the EU can
and do come into conflict: what is desirable from a geopolitical perspective
might not be so from the others; and what seems natural from a cultural
perspective might not sit comfortably with geopolitical, transactional or
institutional/legal perspectives. As noted in the chapters by Müller and
Slominski and by Zarembo in this volume, these contradictions can have
important implications for negotiation and for perceptions in the wake of

the war in Ukraine, as well as in the context of the EU's internal policy processes.

An exploration of the ways in which the EU has constructed, maintained and modified a series of boundaries between itself and the broader European order thus provokes a number of important questions. Some of these relate to the ways in which the boundaries have been erected, maintained and modified: were these processes the result of conscious collective action by the EU and its member states, or were they an artefact of certain conditions in the broader European order that made such boundaries (and boundary policies) feasible? It is clear that over the period since 1990, there have been substantial modifications to each of the boundaries, but also that there has been a persistent commitment by the EU and most if not all of its member states to their perpetuation. Another set of questions relates to the ways in which the boundaries intersect and interact: are these intersections and interactions positive and the boundaries thus mutually reinforcing, or are they negative, in which case the boundaries can be self-defeating? Most intersections and interactions are likely to be mixed, giving rise to further ambiguities about the EU's capacity and commitment to maintain one or more of the boundaries.

From this set of evaluations arises another set of important questions about the EU, boundaries and European order. First, what are the scope conditions for a continued and substantial EU role in European order, in the face of turbulence and challenge? In other words, are there limits to the EU's effectiveness in managing boundaries and adjusting them to change? Second, and related, what is the shifting balance between a 'politics of exclusion' and a 'politics of inclusion' in the face of challenges to the European order? It might be argued that the EU's capacity to construct, manage and adjust the boundaries between the EU order and the broader European order has been fluid and variable: at each of the key junctures set out earlier in the chapter, the Union has been faced with a specific set of intersections and interactions between the four types of boundary, and a specific set of opportunities and constraints affecting its capacity to manage and adjust them. It may be that in the early post-Cold War years, the space for effective EU action was greater than it was in the period 2008–2014, for example, and that the opening and closing of the international and European opportunity structures affects both the salience and the meaning of the boundaries between the EU and its near neighbours. The next part of the chapter assesses the extent to which the 'omni-crisis' of 2018 onwards, and particularly the war on

Ukraine, have challenged and potentially subverted the EU's capacity to contribute to European order through the construction and maintenance of boundaries.

The EU and the Boundaries of Order in a Changing and Challenging World

From at least 2018 onwards, the EU has been confronted with the implications of a series of linked and often mutually reinforcing crises (Smith 2023a, 2023b). Within the EU order, there have been further tensions and often open conflicts over the rule of law, striking at one of the key foundations of the Union. In the outside world, the Union has been confronted with continuing conflicts in its southern and eastern neighbourhoods, which in 2022 gave rise to the most extensive use of military force on the European continent since the end of World War II. As already noted, one of the consequences of this and of the resulting flows of refugees has been an intense linkage between local, national, EU-level and broader European-level security challenges. At the same time, the incidence of global pandemic and environmental crises has further challenged the capacity of the Union to order its broader global environment, as well as creating challenges in the EU's political economy. In this way, the successive layers of European order and disorder have come together to constitute a 'poly-crisis' or an 'omni-crisis', as noted by many commentators (e.g., Smith 2023a, 2023b). In the context of this chapter, the implications of this crisis can be explored through its impact on the boundaries established and maintained by the Union, and the capacity of the EU to maintain or adjust them.

The events of 2018 and beyond, and especially those of 2022–2023, have posed a major challenge to the geopolitical boundary surrounding the EU. The widespread resurgence of geopolitics, associated with the new multipolarity of the global order, is not simply a European phenomenon, but it is in Europe that some of its most direct effects have been felt. In 2019, the newly installed President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, asserted that the new Commission would be 'geopolitical' rather than purely functional, and this reflected a widespread perception that such an orientation was inevitable in the newly fragmenting world. As noted earlier, this statement of intent was associated with key elements of the Global Strategy, and especially the quest for 'strategic autonomy'. Such strategic autonomy would reinforce the

EU's capacity to draw a geopolitical boundary around its internal order and enable it in principle to make its geopolitical presence felt in Europe and beyond. The Russian attack on Ukraine in February 2022 subjected this proposition to a direct and violent test; whilst the Union was able to innovate in a number of ways to support Ukraine, for example, by financing the provision of weaponry via member states, and was able to maintain broad diplomatic unity for at least the first year of the conflict, it was apparent that many of the key 'hard power' decisions were being made elsewhere—by the USA, by NATO, by individual member states and by those outside the ambit of the EU itself (e.g., the UK). Did this mean that the ability of the EU to construct, maintain and adjust a geopolitical boundary in times of crisis was found wanting? There were those who argued that the EU was following an established path, in which as violence escalated and 'hard power' predominated, the Union was effectively marginalised (e.g., Streeck 2022, who also argued that renewed subordination to the USA would follow). In this context, the capacity to offer a membership perspective to Ukraine and others such as Moldova who were threatened by the spill-over of conflict remained a potent weapon, but not one that could affect the day-to-day geopolitics of the conflict. In the same way, the proposal by President Macron of France for a European Political Community not limited to EU member states provided an avenue for geopolitical debate, and a form of dialogue with potential candidates for accession, but it could actually act as a channel for demands for rapid accession not only to the EU but also to NATO; how might this affect the EU's ability to construct and maintain its geopolitical boundary (Mallet and Fleming 2022, Lynch et al. 2023)?

There were further and linked challenges in respect of the transactional boundary. Most obviously, the dependence of key EU member states, especially Germany, on supplies of gas from Russia constituted a potentially disabling challenge to the EU's ability to manage transactions that penetrated the boundary. Whilst the Union could impose successive rounds of economic and diplomatic sanctions on Russia, in concert with the USA and other key actors, the differential vulnerability of its member states to Russian retaliation became a preoccupation for EU and national policy-makers. By mid-2023, it was apparent that in effect the transactional boundary had been 'hardened' through measures taken by member states and sponsored by the Commission that had drastically reduced their dependence on Russian gas supplies. There had been substantial costs

to this process, particularly in terms of macro-economic effects on inflation and consumption across the Union, but the boundary had been sustained if not strengthened. The linked challenge of migration and refugees arising from the Ukraine conflict gave rise to further innovations, in which coordination between those member states most immediately affected and those more distant from the conflict was enhanced despite the inevitable contestation accompanying the dispersal of refugees across the Union (a process linked to what might be seen as the internal geopolitics of the Union, as noted earlier). In short, it appears that at least in the first year of the conflict, the EU's capacity to construct, maintain and adjust its transactional boundary had been enhanced, along with its ability to use the boundary as a form of geopolitical defence or weapon. As with the geopolitical boundary, the evolution of the conflict into a long-term attritional process would pose further tests, but the immediate evidence attests to the Union's capacity to innovate and bear significant costs in the cause of upholding its transactional boundary.

The institutional and legal boundary between the EU and the wider European order also came under strain as a result of the 'omni-crisis', and particularly the attack on Ukraine. The internal order of the EU as a 'community of law' had been under strain for a decade, and the effect of geopolitical challenge in the Union's immediate neighbourhood had significant centrifugal effects. The close association between Russia and Hungary in particular underlined the potential for contestation and potential defection in key areas of EU policy, whilst the demands of Ukraine, Moldova and others to be acknowledged as candidates for membership in a situation of actual or potential conflict subjected the institutions to the kind of strain they did not experience in the 1990s. The clash between a membership perspective and geopolitical risk is not new to the EU: the Balkan wars of the 1990s had created similar pressures, but in a context where a more deliberative and procedural approach could in the main be adopted. In 2022, the capacity to award candidate status to countries under open attack posed a new set of challenges. The decision to cross this line and to offer the prospect of accession to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia constituted a major step in the potential EU contribution to stabilising the conflict, but the element of risk—political, diplomatic and economic—persisted (see the chapter by Gawrich and Wydra in this volume).

The interaction of the geopolitical, transactional and institutional/legal boundaries in the EU's response to the attack on Ukraine seems clear. In

the case of the cultural boundary, there is further significant evidence. The invasion of Ukraine and the indiscriminate use of military force in the course of the conflict cemented a perception that on the one hand, Ukraine shared 'western' values of democracy and human rights, and on the other hand, Russia did not. The conflict was painted by many policy-makers in primary colours, and in terms of a shared cultural heritage. But as already noted, there were areas of contestation within the EU that eroded this image of 'western' solidarity. These areas of contestation linked with a set of challenges to the rule-based or liberal international order that had been evident for at least a decade, not least through the rise of 'illiberal democracy' in Hungary and elsewhere, but also through the policies of the Trump Administration in the USA. In these circumstances, it was sometimes difficult to see how 'western values' and the values of the EU as frequently expressed reflected the reality even within the Union. When this was combined with the temptation by some EU member states to engage in bilateral diplomacy or other contacts with Russia, it seems clear that the geopolitics and geo-economics of the conflict might predominate over the cultural solidarity that would sustain an effective boundary between the EU and the broader European order.

Conclusions

This chapter has argued for the importance of a longer term perspective on the ways in which the EU has related to the broader European order, and for the importance of a focus on boundaries as a part of such a perspective. The capacity of the EU to construct, maintain and adjust the boundaries between its own internal order and broader European order is a key element in analysis of the EU as a European 'power' and as a shaper of the continent. This capacity has been subjected to an extraordinary test as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine—a test that has thrown into sharp relief the ways in which boundary-creation and maintenance express the strengths and the limitations of the EU, but which also occurred in a broader context of contestation and politicisation. At the same time, as noted at many points in this chapter, the changing context of global order shapes and responds to the attempts by the EU to establish, maintain and adapt the boundaries that at least in part define its international status.

What are the key conclusions to be drawn from this exploration? The first is that it is important to understand the ways in which successive layers of order and disorder have been laid down in Europe since the

end of the Cold War. Only if this is understood can we hope to achieve a realistic assessment of the ways in which the 'omni-crisis' of 2018 and after was rooted in the rise of a post-Cold War order and then its degeneration in the period after 2008. A second conclusion is that a focus on boundaries enables us to understand important ways in which the EU has entered into this process of the establishment and degeneration of order. It is not a complete explanation of what has taken place in the past three decades, but it provides us with an important set of questions to ask about the ways in which the EU has constructed boundaries between its internal order and the broader European order. There have been times at which the EU has been able to take a leading role in defining and shaping the constituents of European order, by contributing to the interplay of power, institutions and ideas, but there have also been times at which this role has been contested and constrained, both within and around the Union. A third conclusion is that the co-existence and interaction of different types of boundaries between the EU and the broader European order provides us with a means of understanding this fluctuation of role and thus the impact of the EU on European order. In terms of the 'omni-crisis', it seems clear that each of the types of boundaries identified here has had influence, that there have been major fluctuations in the prominence of different types, and that the intersection and interaction of boundaries has contributed to their positive or negative impact on European order.

At the time of writing, it appears that the conflict in Ukraine may be entering a long-term attritional phase. If that happens, it will constitute a standing challenge to the EU's construction, maintenance and adjustment of boundaries between its internal order and broader European order. Should the EU put (even) more emphasis on its geopolitical boundaries and thus perhaps contribute to a sharper division of Europe itself? Should it recognise the fact that its transactional boundary is over the longer term likely to become more porous and 'leaky'? Should it use its institutional boundary to re-shape European order, most obviously by admitting Ukraine, Moldova and other east European candidates? Should it continue to assert a strong boundary between 'European' values and those of outsiders? In the broader context of an 'interpolar' world (Grevi 2009) characterised by emerging multipolarity but also by continuing interdependence, how do the boundary-constructing and maintaining activities of the EU shape its capacities as a contributor to world order and global conflict management? In a way these are still the questions I asked in 1996, about the capacity of the EU to construct and maintain

boundaries in a turbulent Europe, and about its ability to manage the 'politics of inclusion' and the 'politics of exclusion' in a way that enhances European order within a turbulent world.

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The War Against Ukraine, the Changing World Order and the Conflict Between Democracy and Autocracy

Claudia Wiesner

INTRODUCTION

On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. Although the Russian government spoke only of a 'special military operation', the invasion was, and is, not only an attack in violation of international law, but a war. Russia's war against Ukraine has not only challenged some European convictions and habits, it has also meant that the European Union (EU) and its Member States must reposition themselves in a world order that has changed in several respects (see also Wiesner 2022a; Knodt and Wiesner 2023b, 2023c). The war illustrates and perpetuates the development of recent years and decades towards a multipolar world order—even a world in which several political orders confront each other, i.e. a multi-order world (Flockhart 2018). A world structured around a maximum of two hegemonic great powers has been successively replaced by a world order in which several poles of larger and smaller states confront and

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compete with each other—politically, territorially, economically, militarily and ideologically. For the EU, this means that its previous global political strategy, which focused strongly on 'change through trade' and its role as a 'normative power Europe' (Manners 2002), no longer looks promising. The EU and its Member States thus face new political realities, not only in political and economic, but also in ideational terms. The new setting means that they must position themselves within the increasingly tough confrontation between different blocs and adapt policies and strategies—also in (geo)political, economic, military and ideological terms.

In (geo)political, military and economic terms, the EU and its existing Member States face the need to reposition themselves with regard to all aspects of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Defence policy to date has been a national policy field, but now there is a necessity to coordinate appropriate investments and also to decide on participation in armed conflicts and arms supplies—both now and in the future. The EU must also reorient itself in its enlargement policy. All these decisions are connected to a range of internal challenges for the EU. These concern, on the one hand, a lack of capacity for action and control in policy fields such as the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). On the other hand, the EU is internally challenged by the controversies surrounding the rule-of-law, which in turn affect the collective decision-making capacity and structures of the EU.

The ideational component of the war is often framed as a conflict between autocracy/autocracies and (liberal) democracy/democracies, since the authoritarian state Russia attacked Ukraine, a would-be member of the liberal-democratic West. However, there are several signs that liberal democracy is under threat, not only from outside the EU, but from within the EU itself. First, the EU faces the internal challenge of the rule-of-law conflicts, i.e. it has to tackle authoritarian tendencies and attacks on democratic standards, above all by the Hungarian, but also the Polish government. Second, authoritarian tendencies and right-wing populist parties are also on the rise in several other EU states. Third, there is a visible democratic deconsolidation throughout the EU and its Member States, i.e. citizens are losing trust in representative democracy. Inflation and the energy crisis, which are also being felt in the EU as a result of the war, fuel this. These tendencies highlight the fact that liberal democracy is not unquestioned within the EU itself. Hence, the ideational component of the conflict around the new world order, the

conflict of democracy versus autocracy, affects the EU and its Member States both externally and internally. In consequence, defending its values and its liberal democracy is a challenge for the EU not only externally, but also internally. The war only amplifies these multiple tensions.

This chapter will discuss the EU's challenges in detail, starting with an account of the shake-up of certainties, the *Zeitenwende*, and the EU's reaction. This will be followed by a section that discusses the challenges for the EU in enhancing its democratic values externally. In the third section, I line out how democracy is challenged internally in the EU and its Member States.[1]

The EU and the *Zeitenwende*

Zeitenwende, this term coined by German chancellor Scholz in his speech in the German Bundestag's extraordinary plenary session after the Russian Attack on Ukraine on 27 February 2022 (Deutscher Bundestag 2022), has become widely used. The concept describes a decisive shake-up of German and European certainties. For the first time since the wars in Yugoslavia (1991–2001), a war is currently taking place in Ukraine that directly affects the EU, the European states and their citizens. Now the EU and also Germany are confronted with the fact that in and with the war in Ukraine, fundamental values of the EU are being called into question: freedom, democracy, the rule-of-law and modern international law. This shakes up long-held ideas, as well as patterns of order and security throughout Europe—both among political actors and citizens.

The Zeitenwende as a Shake-Up of Certainties

For more than 70 years after the end of the Second World War, and more than 30 years after the end of the Cold War, there was no real awareness that there could be serious military threats in Europe, until February 2022. During the Cold War, a threat from nuclear weapons had been present and quite commonplace in Western Europe, but it was rather abstract, as there were never any acts of war. War had therefore been unthinkable for most Europeans for a long time; it was at most a theoretical option for decision-makers in politics and business as well as

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[1] For earlier versions of parts of the following, see (Wiesner 2022a; Knodt and Wiesner 2023b).

for citizens and civil society. The idea of creating peace without weapons had become common sense. Hardly anyone could imagine that Russia or any other authoritarian state would do outwardly what it does inwardly, namely openly and actively disregard the principles of freedom, the rule-of-law and the liberal international order—not only through statements or declarations, but also through acts of war. With the war, these European certainties, established for at least 30, if not almost 70 years, are now being overturned. There is uncertainty instead of the familiar and everyday peace that has existed since 1990, and in place of the idea that bloc confrontations are history, a concrete military threat has emerged.

The new political situation in the world and the *Zeitenwende* thus come with painful realities. Firstly, the EU Member States (and especially Germany as a NATO member) must realise that they benefited for decades from the nuclear umbrella of the USA. Secondly, it becomes clear that this protection made it possible to spend comparatively small sums on defence and to concentrate primarily on economic relations in foreign policy. Thirdly, the idea of 'change through trade' has obviously failed. Fourthly, all this means that a specifically European rationality towards Russia did not bear fruit, namely the orientation towards democracy, peace and global economic relations. This strategy only worked if, and only as long as, there was no aggression that ignored international law or European perspectives and rationalities.

These considerations underline how challenging it is from the perspective of the EU and its Member States to respond to the new situation. The situation's explosive nature is particularly well illustrated in Germany, which undertook a paradigm shift in defence policy within days of the start of the war. In the last decades, German defence spending was kept as low as possible and the funds that the German army, the *Bundeswehr*, received, were sometimes even insufficient to keep existing weapon systems operational. On 27 February 2022, the German government not only stressed that Germany must be able to defend itself—the Bundestag also decided in its special session, the occasion of the famous '*Zeitenwende*' speech, to create a special fund of 100 million euros for defence (Deutscher Bundestag 2022). This special fund marks a painful break with the peace-oriented German tradition of the past decades. Germany—like the EU—has defined itself as a peace power since the Second World War and must now find its role anew.

The European Union and the Changing World Order

The war, as has been said above, underlines the development towards a multipolar world order. In sum, there are many new political challenges that the EU has to deal with—whether it wants to or not. Above all, it must position itself within the multipolar world order and with regard to the geopolitical expansion strategies of the other poles. In addition to Russia and its search for support among the emerging countries, which has already been described, this concerns above all China, whose geopolitical and economic activities in the EU also recognisably serve to expand (geo)political spheres of influence and should not be underestimated. Since 2013, China has been visibly pursuing an economic expansion strategy that aims at critical infrastructure with the 'Belt and Road Initiative', the so-called new Silk Road. Chinese investors were able to buy the port of Piraeus—a strategically important, central port in southern Europe for thousands of years—in the course of privatisation after the financial crisis in 2016 (tagesschau 2016). The next critical infrastructure that was sold to Chinese buyers is located in Germany itself: a share in the huge and strategically important port of Hamburg was sold to Chinese investor COSCO. While German authorities first granted the deal, in spring 2023, after the deal had been concluded, they later had doubts about it (NDR 2023).

The need for the EU and its Member States to reorient is further highlighted by the voting results in the UN General Assembly on the resolution that condemned the war against Ukraine on 2 March 2022. It is true that 141 states voted in favour of the resolution, and with Russia, Syria, North Korea, Belarus and Eritrea, only five voted against. However, it is decisively important to note which states abstained in the UN General Assembly vote on the resolution condemning the war and Russia. A total of 35 states did so—among them the usual suspects such as China and Cuba, but also numerous important emerging powers such as India, Pakistan, South Africa and Bangladesh, as well as most of the Central Asian states, i.e. Russia's immediate neighbours (tagesschau 2022d). Although in the end a clear majority of states condemned the Russian attack and only a few openly sided with Russia, this outcome means that a significant number of large, populous, economically influential states refused to clearly criticise the war, and hence to take sides with the EU and the Northern and Western powers.

This once again highlights a questioning of the liberal international order and the shift towards a multipolar world order. For the EU, this means that the states that abstained are not direct or natural allies of the EU and its Member States, but, at best, are undecided which their camp should be. These states are currently courted as allies by various poles of the new world order, as the trips to Africa by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on the one hand and French President Macron on the other in the summer of 2022 showed (tagesschau 2022a; Bröll and Wiegel, July 27, 2022). It is unclear which side they will end up taking.

In the new world's political and geopolitical constellation, another decisive question is thus which states will align and why. Russia is clearly orienting itself towards the East. Only a few days before the Russian attack, Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping had signed a joint declaration (President of Russia 2022). China's reaction to the war was noticeably reserved, however, and it gave signs of distancing itself from Russia to some extent. If, however, the alliance between Russia and China were to hold, and if it were to be strengthened by India or Pakistan, for example, this would put the 'West' under strong pressure.

In addition, there is uncertainty about how the USA will continue to behave in global politics. Under the administration of Joe Biden, an Atlantic alliance policy will certainly be continued—so from a European perspective, it is a fortunate circumstance that it is Biden (and no longer Donald Trump) who is currently the president of the USA. However, the danger that Trump will be elected again is real. Whether the Atlantic alliance policy will continue in its current form after the next presidential elections is uncertain.

Tackling the New Order: The EU's Reaction

Judging from the reactions and actions the EU has taken since the beginning of the war, the EU is indeed on its way to becoming a serious geopolitical and also military actor. This means a strategic reorientation is taking place against the background of the new (geo)political challenges posed by war. The EU is clearly trying to change from being a 'normative power Europe' to a power that is also capable of acting militarily when in doubt.

The institutions of the EU, above all the Commission, the Foreign Affairs Commissioner and the Council, initially reacted quickly and unitedly to the Russian attack (on the following see in detail Knodt and

Wiesner 2023b): the Council adopted several sanctions packages within a few days, which have since been followed by various others (European Council 2023; see also Knodt and Ringel, in this volume). In addition, there was an absolute novelty: it took only three days for the Council of the EU to decide to make 450 million euros available for arms deliveries to Ukraine (tagesschau 2022c; Knodt and Wiesner 2023a). This was the first time ever that the EU supplied arms to a country in a state of war—the EU, whose treaties contain clauses on the mutual defence of its Member States (Art. 42 Treaty on European Union), has so far however hardly taken an active military role. In order to formally and legally justify the arms deliveries, this turn was institutionally underpinned by the establishment of the 'European Peace Facility' (EFF), which is attached to the Council (European Council 2022b). Less than a month after the start of the invasion, the Council also adopted the EU's first official defence strategy. The 'Strategic Compass on Security and Defence' sets out clear security and defence policy goals for the next five to ten years (Council of the European Union 2022).

At first, the war seemed to strengthen EU unity in other policy areas as well. All Member States took in large numbers of refugees. This was also the case for Poland and Hungary, which had previously been fiercely critical of the EU's refugee and asylum policy and refused to accept refugees under the Dublin Agreement whenever possible.

After more than a year into the war, however, there is a danger that internal conflicts will intensify. Hungary is clearly going its own way when it comes to dealing with Russia (see below, see also Müller and Slominski in this volume). This constellation also complicates the necessary reorientation of the CFSP with the aim of strengthening the EU's military clout. The EU needs institutional reforms in this policy area in order to improve its ability to act, but such major structural changes would require a treaty amendment that all Member States would have to agree to. Moreover, the policy field of CFSP is organised intergovernmentally and is thus subject to the unanimity requirement in the Council even in simple decisions, before a Treaty change is even seen. Blockades by single Member States could therefore severely limit the ability to act (see the discussion by Müller and Slominski, in this volume)—but unanimity seems difficult to achieve, especially in view of the right-wing populist-oriented governments and the conflicts of interest in the EU. So even for simple decisions in the area of CFSP, the need for unanimity is, and remains, a high hurdle.

Enhancing Liberal Democracy Externally

The concept of a multipolar world order, as said above, concerns not only political, geographic, economic and military, but also ideational factors. It should thus be taken into account that many of the states that abstained or voted against the UN resolution condemning the war against Ukraine are autocracies. This underlines the fact that the war also has an ideational component of conflict between liberal democracies and autocracies or hybrid systems. The joint declaration of the Russian and Chinese presidents in February 2022 mentioned above underlines this: about five printed pages of the declaration discuss the concept of democracy, underlining that both Russia and China are perfectly democratic, and that it is only Western liberal countries that do not accept their way of doing democracy (President of Russia 2022). This means that alongside the material war, there is a conceptual struggle (on this see in detail Wiesner 2019b) on and with the interpretation of words and ideas, and in particular the concept of democracy. The conflict that is carried out is one of dominant and rightful definitions of democracy, with both China and Russia claiming that their interpretation is right, rather than the 'Western' one.

The Russian attack on Ukraine can hardly be understood from a European perspective. It not only contradicts the orientation towards economic exchange and free trade that dominated in the EU and also in most states in Europe. It is also a blatant breach of International Law. Last but not least, it also contradicts the fundamental values of the European Union as defined in Article 2 TEU: "respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, […] pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men" (European Union 2016).

However, the Russian war of aggression can very well be understood from a Russian geopolitical and ideological perspective—a perspective in which the values of the EU and most other European states are seen as decadent and a Greater Russian Empire is aspired to. The writings of the Russian publicist Alexander Dugin formulate the related body of thought (Dugin 2021, 2022). This is the ideational component of the conflict that has already been raised.

From a global ideational perspective, especially with regard to the core values of liberal democracy, namely freedom, democracy and the rule-of-law, the consequences of the War are currently as open as the question of political alliances. In the 'West' and among those who want to belong to the West, there was strong majority support for Ukraine and the defence of Western values, at least in the first six months after the war began (European Commission 2022). As outlined by Chaban and Zhabotynska (in this volume) this is not the case in several other parts of the world. Moreover, as said above, a considerable number of states do not subscribe to either the Western alliance against the war, nor these liberal values.

In this conflict around democracy and liberal values, the EU is clearly within the liberal Western camp that defends liberal democracy and the values that come with it. This entails a number of concrete policies and activities, among them enlargement policy. In order to do justice to the new world political constellation, the EU must also position its enlargement policy (see the contribution by Gawrich and Wydra, in this volume). In doing so, it must reconcile outwardly directed geopolitical and geostrategic goals with various internal challenges—including the different positions of the Member States in enlargement policy, especially vis-à-vis the states of the Western Balkans.

The war has brought new movement in the field of enlargement: after Ukraine's application, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova also applied for EU membership. In June 2022, Ukraine and Moldova were granted candidate status; Georgia was not. Among the states in the Western Balkans, this quick action led to resentment: Kosovo is still seeking official candidate status, and Bosnia-Herzegovina applied for accession in 2016. Northern Macedonia (2004) and Albania (2009) applied for membership earlier. However, the EU is not yet officially negotiating accession with these four states. Only Serbia (application for membership in 2009) and Montenegro (application for membership in 2008) have been negotiating with the EU to date (for detailed overviews of the status see European Union 2023). Why exactly the Western Balkan states have not been given a clear membership perspective so far is difficult to understand in detail—but there are obvious differences of opinion on this in the Council, which have prevented them from doing so to date (Tekin 2022).

One reason for this reservedness may be that the EU has too often admitted states that are weak in terms of the rule-of-law, and accessions could lead to further problems in this respect. The experience with the rule-of-law conflicts with Hungary and Poland thus should counteract

the tendency to make hasty decisions. Moreover, with regard to the new enlargements, the EU will also have to ask itself whether it wants to be involved in wars in the future. Since the EU is also a defence community—as discussed above, Article 42 TEU states explicitly that—, more members would mean an increased commitment to defence in case of attack.

The war therefore requires the optimisation of the accession procedure and the making of offers to states that cannot become members currently. More flexible accession models are being discussed. Against this backdrop, French President Emmanuel Macron's idea of a 'European Political Community' (EPC) with EU neighbouring states was implemented very quickly. On 6 October 2022, the founding meeting took place in Prague, attended by representatives of 44 states. These included the 27 EU Member States and 17 neighbouring states, namely the EU accession candidates (Albania, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine), the potential EU accession candidates (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo) as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (tagesschau 2022f). However, the idea is still rather vague; it is initially a discussion format. The German government's website states the following:

"The purpose of the European Political Community (EPC) is to promote political dialogue and collaboration in the interest of Europe as a whole, with a view to enhancing security, stability, and prosperity on the European continent". It is further described as "a forum for policy coordination", and it is particularly emphasised that "[…] the EPC does not replace existing organisations, structures, or processes, nor does it aim to function as a new one and in no way does it serve as a substitute for the EU accession process" (Die Bundesregierung 2022). This means that the EPC is simply a forum for dialogue in the moment, no more and no less.

Changing Patterns of Liberal Democracy

After several waves of democratisation, for a couple of years liberal representative democracy had seemed to be history's winner, alongside the liberal international order. Currently, however, a growing number of states are on a track towards illiberalism and authoritarianism, and the existing representative democracies are also being challenged all over the

world by democratic erosion and manifold changes. The challenges to liberal democracy, accordingly, do not only manifest within the ideational conflicts in the world order. They also manifest in the liberal Western countries and concretely in the EU, as various indicators show.

In recent years, crisis diagnoses for representative democracy have been abundant. Democratic theorists were the first to mark the signs of the time: J. Rancière in 1996 (Rancière 1996), and later Colin Crouch spoke of 'post-democracy' (Crouch 2004), Peter Mair described a 'hollowing out' of Western democracy (Mair 2013) and Nadia Urbinati discussed 'democracy disfigured' (Urbinati 2014)—to name only a few. Indeed, there are several empirical indicators that underline decisive changes affecting both the institutions and rights in representative democracy and its actors—citizens, politicians, civil society, parties and government representatives. Some changes are ambivalent in their effect on representative democracy, others openly put it in danger.

Democracy currently is challenged by nine fields of change (on the following see in detail Wiesner 2022b, 2023). Six of them describe changes to democracy and the way it works and manifests as such, namely: democratic deconsolidation, populism, democratic backsliding, technocracy, new movements and democratic innovations. Three other fields describe decisive changes of the societal context of democracy: the tendency towards a two-thirds society, digitalisation, and the globalisation trilemma. The challenges to modern liberal democracies result from an interaction of these nine problem fields which have been pertinent in the European Union since the beginning of the financial crisis in 2008. The following six fields describe changes in how democracy works and manifests as such:

1. Democratic Deconsolidation: There are sound empirical indicators for democratic deconsolidation, as pro-democratic attitudes are currently declining at least in a number of countries, including many EU Member States. Some authors conclude that support for democracy is declining in general (Foa and Mounk 2017b, 2018), while others highlight that researchers must not overstate this trend (Alexander and Welzel 2017; Norris 2017). However, several findings are unquieting. In the USA, less than one-third of millennials believe that it is important to live in a democracy (Mounk 2018). In the EU, citizen support of the EU and trust in its institutions have been declining, at least temporarily, during the financial crisis. The

debtor countries Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Portugal, Italy, Slovenia and Ireland have seen the largest growth in 'detached' citizens. This decrease can be linked to dissatisfaction with austerity (Armingeon and Guthmann 2014; Arpino and Obydenkova 2020).

2. Populism: Populist parties and politicians have been on the rise worldwide. Election results and support for populist parties have been increasing over recent years in most established democracies. Again, in the EU Member States, since 2008 populist election results have increased decisively (Essletzbichler et al. 2018). The electoral success of Giorgia Meloni in the EU founding Member State of Italy is the latest example. This rise of populism indicates a problem for representative democracy: the populist claim to incarnate the people in reality means replacing the whole of the people with a part of the people (populist supporters), so excluding minorities and eliminating pluralism (Urbinati 2019).

3. Democratic Backsliding: In some representative democratic states, right-wing populist politicians have accessed government. In most of these states, institutions and principles of representative democracy have been hollowed out. Comparative research underlines that this does not happen immediately after an election, but gradually, by governmental and political actors slowly, but decidedly, eroding democratic principles (Bermeo 2016; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018). Furthermore, democratic backsliding is enabled by permissive or even supportive attitudes of decisive parts of the population (Hochschild 2018, see classically Adorno et al. 1969). Once again, the post-financial-crisis EU, after 2008, has seen democratic backsliding in a number of cases. Hungary is the most prominent example, but Poland has to be mentioned as well (Nyyssönen 2018).

4. Technocracy: A number of current studies claim technocracy, i.e. decisions being shifted from democratically legitimised bodies to (more) intransparent expert bodies, undermines representative democracy (Urbinati 2014; Mounk 2018). The institutional handling of the EU's financial crisis gives strong empirical support to such criticism, as it led to huge democratic deficits, such as parliaments being bypassed, their competencies being cut down, decision-making in intransparent expert circles and an overall lack of legitimacy and accountability of the crisis governance structures (see in detail Wiesner 2021). Austerity governance, in short, has led to a hollowing out of national democratic institutions and to shrinking

EU support, as described above—even if one might judge it as being effective. This critical diagnosis holds despite the frequent statement that, in the Greek case especially, there was no alternative to austerity governance. First, there was an alternative: Greece leaving the Euro area. Second, even if this alternative is judged unattractive, austerity governance is not necessarily required to bypass representative institutions—it would have been possible, for instance, to set budget limits without intervening into national competencies or to follow the path described by national constitutions, that is, a temporary emergency regime in accordance with constitutional rules.

5. Democratic Innovations: A number of new tools and participatory mechanisms such as roundtables or citizen budgets are aimed at enhancing participation and stakeholder involvement, and hence triggering democratic activity. Many authorities and governments, especially on the local level, rely on such instruments (Geissel and Joas 2013). It is however questionable to which degree they do indeed enhance democracy, especially democratic equality, as mostly well-educated and well-situated social groups participate. This means so far they have only enhanced the participation of a limited group of citizens, instead of strengthening democracy overall (Wiesner 2017).

6. New Movements: Since the beginning of the EU's financial crisis, we also see a number of new social movements on both left and right, such as the Indignados in Spain, Pegida in Germany or the protest movements against climate change. These new movements are not necessarily supporting representative democracy. Some even act openly against it, and not only the right-wing ones (Volk 2013).

These changes of the actors and processes of representative democracy are accompanied by decisive changes within the societal context of democracy that can be summed up in three fields:

7. Two-thirds Society: The tendency towards a two-thirds society is visible in a number of developed countries and, as recent studies underline, has crucial effects on democratic participation. Lower social strata participate considerably less in elections, which means that policy output is legitimised to a much higher degree by higher social strata. On the other hand, citizens from lower social strata also

tend to see themselves as decoupled from the majority of society and from representative institutions (Hochschild 2018; Wiesner 2017). Once again, this tendency has been strengthened during the EU's financial crisis. Austerity policies have hit the lower social strata in the debtor countries far more seriously—which explains the feeling of lost trust in both the EU and democracy.

8. Digitalisation: Understood as the process of using digitalised information or data for business interests, digitalisation brings about a number of challenges to core democratic principles (Morozov 2013; Zuboff 2019). The new currency of the digital age is no longer workforce or capital, but data. Conceptions and practices of what an individual is and what an individual's unalienable democratic and human rights are have thus been hit by the effects of digitalisation, that is, by digital tools, for instance, preventive police raids against innocent citizens deemed susceptible by algorithms. In addition, due to digital social media, what was formerly a national public space has become split into partial publics. Direct communication via the Internet comes along with a promise of freedom, as everyone can participate in discussions. However, the Internet in general tends to reproduce and radicalise prejudicial and factional loyalties (Sunstein 2006). Internet communication hence reduces social mediation and the protection of minority positions. Not only have social media frequently been shown to be a battlefield for opinion wars, they also allow populist politicians to directly communicate with their followers, as the notorious Twitter feeds of Donald Trump underline, and thus are an enabling factor, if not a driver, of populism (Flew and Iosifidis 2019; Jungherr et al. 2019).

9. Globalisation Trilemma: Formulated by Dani Rodrik (Rodrik 2011), the globalisation trilemma states that out of three goals—namely democracy, high social standards and unlimited free trade—nation-states can only achieve two. If a state opts for participating in unrestricted free trade, this comes at the expense of either national democratic standards, or social standards. The trilemma explains both the increase in technocracy and social inequality in the EU in the crisis: the EU and its Member States have largely opted for participation in both worldwide and EU-wide free trade, which has limited their margin of manoeuvrability for keeping up democratic and social standards in times of the financial crisis (Wiesner 2019a).

These challenges to liberal democracy constitute both an external and an internal context of the manifold challenges the EU faces in times of war.

Liberal Democracy Challenged Internally

These nine fields describe interrelated processes of democratic change that are found in all established liberal democracies, and hence in the EU as well. This underlines the claim that democracy is challenged inside the EU, and not only from outside. Hence, the conflict between autocracy and democracy does not simply and not only take place between the EU, or 'the West', and Russia. There are also tensions between autocratic and democratic actors within the EU.

Financial Crisis EU

The EU during and after the financial crisis is a paradigmatic example of the interrelations of changes in democracy. Democracy and politics in the European Union's multilevel system have been subject to public and academic disputes since the early days of integration. However, since the financial crisis, they have been especially challenged. The year 2008 represents the beginning of change, as it marks the start of the financial crisis: Eurosceptic and populist parties have been on the rise in several of the Member States since then, even in the notorious pro-European Federal Republic of Germany. The institutional handling of the financial crisis has given rise to criticism of the related democratic deficits (see e.g. Crum 2013; Matthijs 2017; Menéndez 2015; White 2015).

The crisis has shown tensions between the different levels of political decision-making and different types of actors involved (legislatives, executives, judiciary, experts and agencies) in the EU multilevel system that closely relates to the discussion on technocracy and democracy sketched above. Governance of the crisis challenged established patterns of governance and checks and balances. At the EU level, decisive parts of the governance mechanisms in the financial crisis, i.e. the European Stability Mechanism ESM, are not subject to the EU Treaties and hence are organised outside the checks and balances of the Lisbon Treaty. This excludes, in particular, the European Parliament as the democratic locus of debate and decision-making. In the Member States, the role of national parliaments and governments has been weakened especially in debtor states,

as the Eurogroup and the Troika, as its agent took on decisive competencies (Lütz and Hilgers 2018; Maatsch 2017). Regarding the domestic systems and their balances of powers, in some Member States, such as Germany, the checks and balances were stabilised throughout the crisis, while in others this was not the case. Finally, the vertical balance of powers between the Member States has been under pressure, as donor state governments and parliaments intervened into the budgetary competencies of debtor state governments and parliaments via their decisions on the lending conditions. While such side-effects may be regarded as necessarily linked to the power divide between debtors and donors, they nevertheless were not intended by the Treaties and represent a decisive challenge to democracy in the multilevel system, as well as to the classical mechanisms of legitimacy in the Member States.

The fact that the financial crisis brought about numerous challenges for representative democracy within the EU multilevel system has been discussed in a number of books and articles in the last few years (Laffan 2016; Crum 2013). Some authors have strongly warned of increasing legitimacy deficits (Majone 2014), an intensification of technocracy (Sanchez-Cuenca 2017), a more or less permanent state of emergency (White 2015) or even an upcoming 'authoritarian liberalism' in the EU (Menéndez 2015). In particular, the EU's crisis reaction in fiscal policy—especially measures such as the European Stability Mechanism ESM, the Troika and the austerity conditions to debtor states—has been criticised as weakening representative democracy (Laffan 2016; Wiesner 2021) and being related to a general tension between democracy and market capitalism (Streeck 2015).

These damages to democracy seem to have been well noticed by the citizens. Citizen support of the EU and trust in its institutions have been declining, at least temporarily, during the crisis (Armingeon and Guthmann 2014; Arpino and Obydenkova 2020). In Europe, the debtor countries Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Portugal, Italy, Slovenia and Ireland have, at least temporarily, seen the largest growth of 'detached' citizens. Overall, satisfaction with democracy is lower in the Southern periphery than in the Northern core (Matthijs 2017). Unsurprisingly, populist parties have gathered strong support during the crisis (Macchiarelli et al. 2020).

It has been argued by some authors that this shrinking of support and trust in the EU is linked to a general crisis of representative democracy (Crouch 2004), or a 'hollowing out' of western democracy (Mair

2013). However, it is difficult to find a simple link between decreasing EU support and the other critical points discussed in the current academic debate regarding a possible crisis of representative democracy or democratic deconsolidation (Foa and Mounk 2017a, 2017b), such as an overall reduction of support of democratic systems and parties and notably an increase in populist votes. Moreover, as said above, while some studies indicate that support for democracy is declining in general and there are signs of democratic deconsolidation, others state that this is not the case (Norris 2017). This calls for more in-depth and qualitative and interpretative research on citizen's motivations behind democratic deconsolidation.

In any case, the financial crisis period indicates how the fields of democratic change are linked. For instance, the Hungarian example shows how the hollowing out of democratic institutions was fixed via a change of constitution, which at the same time instituted financial austerity as required by the technocratic governance mechanisms of the EU (Witte et al. 2017). Austerity has increased social inequality, and is linked to the general tensions named in the globalisation trilemma model (Wiesner 2019a). EU institutions, populist actors and citizens use the means offered by digitalisation and social media (Flew and Iosifidis 2019; Jungherr et al. 2019).

The financial crisis was only the first in a series. It was followed by the pandemic, and then by the war against Ukraine (see the introduction by Knodt and Wiesner, in this volume). In short, since 2010 the EU never really exited its crisis mode of governance and the related democratic dilemmata.

Current Challenges to Democracy in the EU

As stated above, autocratic tendencies of some governments and activities of right-wing populist parties are challenging the EU's values. This means that the ideological conflict between democracy and autocracy is also expressed within the EU. Up to the war, right-wing populists in almost all European states openly sympathised with Putin and the Russian regime. One might assume that the attack on Ukraine has delegitimised not only Putin and his regime, but also autocratic aspirations and right-wing populist parties in Europe. This, however, is not the case. It is merely the previous closeness to the Russian president that is no longer politically opportune, at least in some states, even among right-wing populist

forces. The Alternative for Germany (AfD), for example, nowadays mostly expresses reservations about both Putin as a person and Russia and its war of aggression. Representatives within the party who show support are criticised—in September 2022, three AfD deputies returned prematurely from a trip to the Donbass after strong criticism from within the party (tagesschau 2022b). In France, both the right-wing extremists Marine Le Pen and Éric Zemmour and the left-wing populist Jean-Luc Mélenchon distanced themselves from Putin in the presidential election campaign in spring 2022. Le Pen even had to withdraw a campaign brochure in which she was pictured together with Putin (N-tv, March 1, 2022).

Nevertheless, the outcome of the elections in Hungary and in France in the first half of 2022 shows that far-right parties and positions continue to enjoy electoral success, and that their previous support for and by Putin, or even current criticism of EU sanctions against Russia, as in Hungary, do not detract from this. Le Pen reached the second round of the French presidential election in April 2022. The result was relatively clear, with 41.45% for Le Pen and 58.55% for Macron (Ministère de l'Intérieur 2022). This result also means that 41% of the votes cast, i.e. more than two-fifths, went to a far-right critic of the EU who had cooperated closely with Putin for many years up to the election (Knodt and Wiesner 2023b).

While Le Pen does not have a mandate to govern so far, Orban does. He won the Hungarian parliamentary election again with a two-thirds majority (tagesschau 2022g). This was achieved because before the election, he successfully spread the narrative that he and his party Fidesz alone could keep Hungary out of war— due to his relative closeness to Putin. Orban had repeatedly criticised the EU sanctions and worked towards their alleviation. After his election victory, Orban made it clear that he would maintain his political course (Enyedi 2022). Since then, he has behaved accordingly.

Orban's right-wing populist and authoritarian government most notably drives democratic backsliding in Hungary. The EU has tried to counteract this with a number of rule-of-law measures and complaints. Concretely, this means that the conflict between democracy and autocracy takes shape within the EU in the existing conflicts over the rule-of-law. Viktor Orban also openly criticises the values of the EU. For example, on 22 July 2022, in a speech Orban gave in Romania to Hungarian ethnic groups, he criticised the West as being in decline (Oysmüller 2022). The

EU's values from Article 2 TFEU are being increasingly restricted in Hungary (Freedom House 2022).

Not only the Hungarian Orban government, but also the previous Polish PiS government challenged the rule-of-law in the EU. The reaction of the EU Commission to the continuous violations of the EU rule-of-law, especially by Hungary, was, however, hesitant. It was only after intense pressure from the European Parliament that legal proceedings were initiated against Hungary in April 2022 (tagesschau 2022e). As a result, the Commission threatened Hungary with the blocking of EU funds in September 2022—however, Hungary was again given a new deadline and the possibility of avoiding this blockade by making improvements. It took until December 2022 for a rule-of-law mechanism in the EU's budget procedures to be established and applied against Hungary (European Council 2022a). As a report commissioned by MEPs shows, the EU could and should react much more harshly and clearly towards Hungary (Scheppele et al. 2022).

Threats to the rule-of-law and democracy are also present in other EU states. Besides Poland, the founding state Italy needs to be mentioned. In autumn 2022, parliamentary elections were held in Italy. The right-wing populist Giorgia Meloni won the election, as predicted by most polls. Subsequently, not only is a founding state of the EU governed by right-wing populists, it is also already visible that Meloni champions illiberal tendencies. This underlines once more that the conflict between democracy and autocracy has both an internal and an external dimension in the EU.

Conclusion

To conclude, the war has raised or intensified manifold political, economic and ideational challenges for the EU. In a changing world order, the EU faces the necessities of reorientating itself, adapting its previous political, economic and normative strategies, becoming a (geo)political actor and developing its military and defence capacities.

In addition, the EU is also challenged by the ideational component of the changing world order—the conflict between democracy and autocracy. However, as the discussion above has shown, it is too simple to frame the conflict between democracy and autocracy in terms of dichotomies. There is, in other words, no simple opposition of a democratic liberal Western or EU camp on the one hand and an autocratic or Eastern camp

on the other. Not only is the emerging multipolar world order full of grey shades, the liberal camp also has to face internal autocratic threats. Threats and challenges to liberal democracy, first, are thus visible both outside of, and within, the EU. Moreover, there are also outside threats to the EU's inner democratic condition, such as fake news or bot attacks. Second, challenges to democracy are at times directly enhanced by the EU institutions themselves, as was the case in the financial crisis and as is the case in the emergency legislation now (see the chapter by Knodt, Ringel and Bruch). Third, the continuum between full-fledged liberal democracies and full-fledged autocracies or even dictatorships is broad. An in-between type is deficient democracy, several of which can also to be found in the EU, as discussed above.

For the EU, this means that the challenge of defending democracy is not only an external, but also an internal one. The symptoms of democratic change, the nine fields discussed above, are manifest in the EU itself. Problems such as increasing inequality provide fertile ground for populism, and so the EU faces the task of tackling social inequalities rather than fuelling them. Accordingly, with the COVID-19 pandemic and the Next Generation EU rescue package, austerity politics have lost their impact. The EU, however, still shows democratic deficits in its politics and policies. There is an increasing usage of emergency legislation (see the chapter by Knodt, Ringel and Bruch, in this volume), and the processes of governing the Economic and Monetary Union have not become more democratic or more transparent. Moreover, the EU's actions for defending the rule-of-law internally, as was said above, appear restrained when much more could be done.

Last but not least, enlargement policy, and in particular the question of the accession of Ukraine, highlights a strategic conflict brought about by the new world order. It would be both in the EU's economic, geographic and military interests and in its ideational interest to bind as many candidate countries to the EU as possible (see also the introduction by Knodt and Wiesner). However, if the EU wants to safeguard its democratic standards internally, enlargement can only be possible with strictly kept democratic standards. Otherwise the EU risks thinning out internally that which it claims to defend externally—liberal democracy.

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Hungary, the EU and Russia's War Against Ukraine: The Changing Dynamics of EU Foreign Policymaking

Patrick Müller and Peter Slominski

INTRODUCTION

The EU's ability to forge a common response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is frequently understood as a crucial 'test case' for its internal cohesion and effectiveness as a foreign policy actor (Zerka 2022). Notably, it marks an important turning point in the European security order, with several EU countries announcing plans to substantively increase their defence spending. Simultaneously, NATO has experienced a 'revival', strengthening its Eastern flank, showing determination to upgrade its defence and deterrence capabilities, and developing a new

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security concept that pays greater attention to key security threats and aims at building resilience, most notably with respect to Russia and China. Yet, Russia's invasion and annexation of parts of Ukraine not only are considered as a central threat to Europe's security architecture but also as a fundamental challenge to the post-World War II liberal international order the EU is built upon (Gould-Davies 2023). These principles include the respect of international law, sovereignty of states as well as the non-intervention, or annexation, of territory by force. In this respect, Russia's war on Ukraine has been described as a test for the post-national EU with its values of openness, freedom, solidarity and individual responsibility (Zerka 2023). This is even more the case if we bear in mind that the Ukraine war has increased geopolitical conflicts reinforcing pre-existing challenges for the EU's core tenets such as protectionism and the (re-) emergence of a more interventionist state in countries as diverse as China and the US (Gerstle 2022).

Besides the development of a more robust 'hard power'—which, if at all possible, can hardly be achieved in the short term, the most realistic paths the EU might pursue are sanctions against the Russian aggressor and the political, economic as well as military support of Ukraine (Wood 2023). As several of these measures require unanimity among the 27 Member States, the EU's capacity to act is anything but a given. Unsurprisingly, EU institutions like the European Commission are eager to emphasize that the EU and its Member States 'stand united in their unwavering support for Ukraine', while firmly condemning Russia's war of aggression (European Council 2023). In addition, the fact that the EU has so far successfully adopted eleven packages of far-reaching sanctions against Russia is frequently used as evidence to demonstrate its capacity for a decisive and unified response (see the chapter by Knodt and Ringel, in this volume).

At the same time, divergences and tensions among the EU and its Member States persist. As we will argue in this chapter, important internal challenges to the EU's unity as an international actor are not only related to differing views on foreign policy questions, or differing interests and vulnerabilities among Member States. This is the case when it comes to issues like national security, individual economic and energy relations with Russia or the management of dealing with more than eight million Ukraine refugees (UNHCR N/A). Rather, they also involve internal disagreement and increasing contestation of the core values and norms on which the EU is built, including the respect for democracy and the rule of

law, which the EU also seeks to promote externally (see also the chapter by Wiesner, in this volume). In the past two decades, these contestations have occurred in several EU Member States and are typically associated with the rise of populist radical right parties, notably (but not exclusively) in Central and Eastern Europe (Orenstein and Bugarič 2022).

In this chapter, we will explore what CFSP bargaining strategies Hungary has employed in its conflict with EU institutions over rule of law issues and how these strategies have affected decision-making processes within the CFSP. We will argue that to account for important developments in EU foreign policy it is important to take the growing relevance of the internal–external policy nexus into consideration. In a situation of growing internal polarization and politicization in the EU, we also witness a growing instrumentalization of foreign policy decisions for domestic gains (Müller and Gazsi 2023). We expect that Member States which have significant material relations with third countries that compete with the EU for influence and also deviate from the EU's normative consensus are more likely to pursue domestic objectives at the expense of the EU's foreign policy cohesion (see the chapters by Smith and by Zarembo, in this volume). We observe this hostage-taking strategy of foreign policy negotiations in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and in NATO, which overlaps with the CFSP in significant ways in the security domain. Hostage-taking has mainly been discussed in the context of EU-NATO relations, showing that states can use their membership in one institution to hold the other institution, in which they are not a member, hostage (Hofmann 2009). Building on and adapting this concept, this chapter shows that the EU *and* NATO member Hungary can hold both institutions hostage in the pursuit of its non-foreign policy objectives (see also Gehring and Oberthür 2009). Specifically, we show how Hungary's populist radical right government has relied on a tactic of blocking and delaying key decisions in the framework of the CFSP and NATO in order to enhance its negotiation leverage in its internal dispute with EU institutions.

Since the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán took office in 2010, Hungary has acquired a reputation for democratic backsliding, for letting financial corruption proliferate, and for the erosion of the rule of law (de la Baume 2022). This has brought Hungary into a growing conflict with EU institutions, especially with the European Parliament. In September 2018, the European Parliament arrived at the conclusion that there is a 'clear risk of a serious breach of the EU founding values

in Hungary' triggering the Article 7-procedure which might lead to the suspension of Hungary's voting rights in the council (European Parliament 2018). In 2022, the parliament was even more concerned, stating that 'Hungary has become an "electoral autocracy"' and that further EU inaction 'would amount to a rule of law breach by the council' (European Parliament 2022). In April 2022, the European Commission triggered the so-called conditionality mechanism against Hungary, allowing the EU to cut off a Member State from EU money to protect the EU's financial interests (Wahl 2022). As we will show in this chapter, the Orbán government has repeatedly responded to its growing conflict with EU institutions by blocking and delaying key foreign policy decisions in the framework of CFSP and NATO.

In terms of theory, our argument of hostage-taking in international institutions is based on the understanding of the EU as a multi-level governance system that allows for the linkage of different policy issues and arenas, including overlapping international institutions like NATO. The fact that key foreign policy decisions in the CFSP, as well as in NATO, require unanimity among the Member States provides for negotiation strategies that we call 'hostage-taking'. Here, the 'hostage-taker' uses its veto position within an international organization to increase its bargaining power within the same, or overlapping, institutions. The hostage-taker may link different institutional fields through conditionality to leverage its interest. Accordingly, common governance objectives, joint problem-solving and institutional norms will be subordinated to the promotion of an actor's self-interest. At the same time, the hostage-taker needs to be mindful that using a veto position in an international organization may be costly, not least given the consensus-oriented culture of institutions like CFSP and NATO. To minimise these costs, hostage-taking will often be backed by rhetorical strategies that seek to provide political legitimacy to obstructive behaviour. Among other things, a hostage-taker may produce 'constructed demands' that are framed to appear 'legitimate' but have the sole purpose of dragging out negotiations for as long as possible, thereby increasing the costs for the other side.

The chapter proceeds as follows. We first develop our theoretical argument about hostage-taking in international negotiation and related negotiation strategies. We conceive negotiation dynamics as an interactive process that unfolds between a hostage-taker, here Hungary, and the political target, here the EU institutions and the other Member States.

Subsequently, we examine the case of Hungary's conflict with EU institutions over rule of law issues, which have involved an increasing reliance on hostage-taking strategies in the framework of CFSP and NATO. The conclusion discusses our main findings.

The EU's Multi-level Governance System in a Changing International Environment

The EU has been described as a multi-level and multi-sector governance system, where national actors share important powers with a range of EU institutions, like the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice and EU agencies, with competence attribution differing across different policy areas. While national actors have lost some of their autonomy, they 'are not sub-ordinate' (Mayntz 1999) as they participate in EU-level decision-making. Among other things, this allows different actors in the multi-level EU governance system to link different arenas and issue areas across policy domains (Kardasheva 2013). In the context of the EU, issue linkage has often been studied as a strategy employed by actors like the Commission or the European Parliament that aim at resolving deadlock in negotiations and moving integration forward (Falkner 2011; Héritier 2015; Schmidt 2000). At the same time, the EU's multi-level governance system is itself embedded in an international system, marked by considerable regime complexity, which contributes to overlap between different international institutions (Knodt 2004; Alter and Meunier 2009; Müller et al. 2014). This opens up additional opportunities for linking arenas between international institutions with overlapping membership, mandates and resources (Hofmann 2011). For instance, building on classical work on two-level game theory, it has been argued that linking EU-level negotiations with negotiation processes in international institutions enabled the stalemate in the evolution of EU finance and agricultural policies to be overcome (Kudrna and Müller 2017; Putnam 1988). While issue linkage can be regarded as a familiar negotiation strategy in many EU policy areas, it is uncommon in the field of CFSP. Both constructivist and institutionalist scholars emphasize the importance of informal norms, such as diffuse reciprocity, trust, mutual responsiveness, and the consensus reflex. This 'culture of compromise' (Costa and Müller 2019) that has not eliminated national interests but instead has transformed nation states to Member States which are increasingly unwilling to use their veto-rights in CFSP negotiations or to link

CFSP negotiations to issues under negotiations in other policy domains (Lewis 2000; Bickerton 2012; Schimmelfennig and Thomas 2009).

Still, we can expect to see more competitive bargaining situations—including the use of veto positions—when EU-decision-making is highly politicized within the domestic arena; when the Member State which is willing to use—or threaten with—its veto shares few interests and/or norms with the other Member States; or when Member States have mutually exclusive policy preferences thereby making a compromise unlikely (Thomas 2021). While competitive bargaining appears well-suited to explaining Hungary's negotiation strategies within CFSP and NATO against the background of the Ukraine war, we argue that Hungary's issue-linkage strategy is not only a tool to block consensus but is—at the same time somehow paradoxically—also a source for possible compromise. Contrary to Thomas' argument, the current negotiation constellation cannot be characterized by a mutually exclusive policy preference. Instead, Hungary may be willing to compromise under the condition that it receives money from the Covid-recovery fund and/or concessions in the Article 7-procedure.

Hostage-Taking in CFSP and NATO Negotiations

From such a perspective, we suggest conceiving Hungary's Ukraine-related negotiation strategies as a form of hostage-taking. Hostage-taking constitutes a strategy in which the linking of different arenas or issue areas primarily serves to increase an actor's own clout. Here, the threat or use of the veto position in one negotiation-setting is used to inflict substantive, asymmetrical cost on other actors to realize political objectives in another negotiation-setting. These costs may be material in nature, or they may involve reputational costs. For instance, if a Member State blocks a common EU foreign policy decision, it not only limits the EU's capacity to promote important foreign policy objectives but also undermines its image as an international actor. The growing relevance of foreign policy decisions in times of augmented security risks, geopolitical change, growing competition and an increasingly fragmented international order makes foreign policy decisions particularly relevant to strategies of hostage-taking, as the incapacity for timely, effective and unified action can involve significant costs for the EU. This, in turn, increases the threat potential of individual Member States to impose substantive costs to an international institution by blocking or delaying

key foreign policy decisions (Higgott and Reich 2022). What is more, foreign policy decision in the CFSP and overlapping international institutions like NATO are particularly vulnerable to hostage-taking as they grant significant (veto) powers to individual Member States. Constituting a domain of 'core state powers', foreign policy cooperation is particularly sensitive for Member States, which seek to preserve their national capacity to act. Both within the CFSP, as well as within NATO (which since the accession of Finland has 22 Member States in common with the EU) important decisions, are still taken by consensus. By granting a veto position to their Member States, key foreign policy decisions in the framework of CFSP and NATO may be delayed or even blocked by individual Member States.

At the same time, it is important to note that relying on coercive negotiation strategies like hostage-taking marks a significant break with the consensus-oriented culture that prevails in the CFSP. In particular, works on normative institutionalism and research on the Europeanization of foreign policy have pointed to the importance of CFSP's "culture of cooperation", marked by procedural norms like information sharing, consensus-seeking, and the respect of previously agreed language and positions (Thomas 2011; Schimmelfennig and Thomas 2009). While Member States may still seek to protect important national interests on some sensitive issues in CFSP negotiations, national representatives in CFSP-bodies are generally expected to avoid unilateral actions and to play a constructive role in building consensus (de Flers and Müller 2012). What is more, research has generally assumed that negotiation dynamics in the CFSP framework are largely insulated from negotiations in settings dealing with internal EU policy areas. Employing veto-threats in CFSP negotiations as an instrument for gaining leverage in negotiations in other EU policy domains thus represents a significant departure from core procedural CFSP norms and established negation practices. Yet, taking foreign policy decisions hostage may not be limited to the CFSP-arena. A hostage-taker may also use a veto position in an overlapping institution like NATO to increase leverage in another institution. Interestingly, works on regime complexes and overlapping international institutions have thus far primarily focused on broader institutional relationships like competition, the division of labour, or coexistence (Hofmann 2019). Others have looked at the interaction of overlapping institutions in terms of the diffusion and transfer of standards and norms (Jachtenfuchs and Knodt 2002).

Conversely, the way members in overlapping institutions obstruct nego-tiations in one institutional setting to extract concessions in another has received little attention thus far.

For the hostage-taker, the instrumentalization of foreign policy as a strategy to enhance leverage in intra-EU negotiations requires the ability to impose substantive and asymmetrical costs on the negotiation part-ners. By blocking or delaying certain decisions, the hostage-taker may seek to progressively increase the costs for the other parties or may even decide to take further foreign policy decisions hostage to increase the stakes. At the same time, the use of veto-threats in foreign policy settings is not cost-free. On the one hand, using veto-threats involves reputa-tional costs, given the consensus-oriented policymaking culture prevailing in CFSP and in overlapping institutions like NATO. As such, a hostage-taker will often try to mitigate reputational costs by trying to make his demands appear legitimate. This may involve a recourse to 'constructed' arguments, where important positions put forward in the negotiations do not represent the real issues at stake but simply serve as a pretext for delaying, or even blocking, foreign policy decisions. This can involve the exaggeration of certain institutional, procedural or political constraints to buy more time and deflect pressure. Moreover, it may involve a hostage-taker making high opening demands in a foreign policy setting that clearly exceeds realistic expectations, e.g. by arguing that important foreign policy interests are at stake (Dür and Mateo 2008). Here, the rational is to avoid—at least publicly—the impression of instrumentalizing foreign policy decisions for other purposes. Overall, for a hostage-taker constructed negotiation positions serve the purpose of maintaining the appearance of adhering to act within the discursive bounds of the insti-tutional culture prevailing in a given foreign policy setting. Here, the intention is to limit the reputational damage and deflect the pressure that comes with such an aggressive negotiation strategy.

At the same time, the targets of hostage-taking strategies in foreign policy settings will seek to defend their interests by taking measures designed to overcome blockade and stalemate in foreign policy negoti-ations. Hence, we conceive of hostage-taking as an interactive process between a Member State (hostage- taker) and the remaining Member States and EU institutions which unfolds over time. In particular, the targets of hostage-taking can be expected to take countermeasures designed to increase the pressure on the hostage-taker. This may involve "tit-for-tat" strategies that inflict damage on areas important to the

hostage-taker in order to change the relative costs of hostage-taking behaviour in their favour (Axelrod and Dion 1988). Here, the multi-level and multi-sector EU governance system grants ample opportunities for EU institutions and other Member States to increase the pressure on a hostage-taker in other negotiation settings and to retaliate against veto-threats and blockades. Similarly, in situations where a hostage-taker is blocking negotiations in overlapping international institutions like NATO, other EU Member States may seek to motivate powerful countries like the United States into taking action against the hostage-taker. At the same time, this may involve strategies of blaming and shaming, which can inflict reputational damage on the hostage-taker. Moreover, the targets of hostage-taking can try to circumvent or out-lever the veto position of a Member State. For instance, in the framework of the CFSP, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs may resort to policy positions and declarations that are supported by a large majority, but not by all EU Member States in situations where a Member State blocks progress (von der Burchard and Herszenhorn 2021). In the following, we examine the hostage-taking strategies employed by Hungary in its conflict with EU institutions over rule of law issues, as well as the EU's response.

Hungary and the EU's Rule of Law Crisis

The gradual erosion of the rule of law and democratic institutions in Hungary under the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has led to increasing conflict with EU institutions. In September 2018, the European Parliament arrived at the conclusion that there is a 'clear risk of a serious breach of the EU founding values in Hungary' triggering the Article 7-procedure, which allows the Union to suspend the country's voting rights (European Parliament 2018). However, the decision as to whether such serious and persistent violations of core EU values exist requires unanimity in the council. Hungary, as the affected Member State, could not have blocked the vote but could have counted on the support of Poland, against which the EU has also initiated Article 7 proceedings. This meant that further steps in the procedure had little chance of success as long as both Member States politically supported each other. Against this backdrop, the EU has worked to strengthen its rule of law powers and eventually adopted the Conditionality Regulation (2020/2092) to protect the Union's budget (European Union 2020). Under this regime, the Commission, after consulting the Member State concerned, is entitled

to propose implementing measures to the council if 'breaches of the principles of the rule of law in a Member State affect or seriously risk affecting the sound financial management of the Union budget or the protection of the financial interests of the Union in a sufficiently direct way' (Article 4(1) of the Conditionality Regulation).

In April 2022, the European Commission finally triggered the conditionality mechanism against Hungary. This was followed by a process of assessment and information exchange with the Hungarian government, which led to a Commission proposal for a council decision in September of the same year. In particular, the Commission called for the suspension of funds under the Cohesion Policy of €7.5 billion (European Commission 2022b). However, the subsequent decision-making process revealed divergences among EU Member States. A group of twelve Member States led by France, Germany and Italy called on the Commission to reconsider its proposal, arguing that certain progress made by the Hungarian government on anti-corruption measures had not been sufficiently taken into account (Tamma 2022). Conversely, other Member States, including the Benelux countries, Denmark, Sweden and Latvia, supported the position of the Commission calling for the blocking of the 7.5 billion.

In December 2022, the EU Member States were able to forge a political compromise and agreed to reduce the blockage of funds from the Cohesion Policy from €7.5 to €6.3 billion (European Council 2022). At the same time, the freeze of a further €5.8 billion in Corona aid assigned to Hungary from the EU's so-called Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) was considered but a positive assessment of Hungary's spending plan was decided (European Commission 2023). This measure ensured that these funds, which are also being withheld by the EU, will not expire at the end of 2023. At the same time, however, the EU Member States made the actual disbursement of the RRF conditional on further reform efforts by Hungary in the fields of rule of law, judicial independence and anti-corruption, and on the protection the EU's budget. To specify these objectives, the Commission has drawn up 27 'milestones' that have to be fulfilled by Hungary before any disbursement can take place. Hungarian government representatives considered the agreement reached an important success, as it meant that not only would the disbursement of money from the RRF not simply expire but also that the withholding of EU funds was reduced by €1.2 billion. Hungary had thus at least gained time to be able to loosen the disbursement of further EU funds in the future after all. However, this agreement has not resolved the conflict

between the EU and Hungary. While signalling a will for compromise, the EU continued to block billions in funds earmarked for Hungary, whose disbursement is linked to a series of far-reaching reforms. In response, Hungary instrumentalized important foreign policy decisions within the framework of the CFSP, as well as within NATO, to exercise pressure on its European partners. As we will show below, Hungary's government used hostage-taking strategies to manage the conflict with EU institutions, also contributing to the compromise reached in December 2022 on the disbursement of part of the EU funds.

Taking Foreign Policy Decisions Hostage: Hungary in the CFSP and NATO

To forge a unified response of the EU and its Western allies towards Russia's war against Ukraine, CFSP and NATO have functioned as central settings for cooperation. Given the high salience of the Ukraine war, these foreign policy settings also provide important opportunities for countries like Hungary, whose right-wing populist government has developed close relations to Russia, to take foreign policy decisions hostage. As we will show, Hungary's government has sought to make use of these opportunities, blocking important foreign policy decisions related to the Ukraine war in both the CFSP and NATO and so increasing its leverage in its rule of law conflict with EU institutions.

Hungary in the CFSP: Instrumentalizing Decisions on the Ukraine War

Hungary not only maintains close political and economic ties with Russia but also has difficult relations with Ukraine, especially with respect to Hungarian minority communities (Nattrass 2022; see also the chapter by Knodt and Wiesner, in this volume). Mindful of the importance of its relations with Russia, Hungary has repeatedly insisted on watering down both joint sanctions against Russia and a common approach towards supporting Ukraine. Taking such decisions is not only crucial for the EU to be able to act decisively on the conflict. It is also important for the EU to demonstrate foreign policy unity and strength in the face of intensifying security threats and future crises. The decision-making process for the ten EU sanctions packages against Russia adopted to date within the framework of the CFSP requires unanimity among the Member

States. The various sanction measures against Russia must also be renewed every six months, again requiring the consent of all Member States. Similarly, important EU measures to support Ukraine also require unanimity (European Commission 2022a).

In December 2022, the Hungarian government refused to approve an EU aid package to Ukraine (der Spiegel 2022). The EU aid package included a loan of €18 billion to Kiev to support, among other things, the operation of hospitals, emergency shelters and the electricity supply. Against this background, the Czech presidency called for a reassessment of the European Commission's proposed freezing of EU funds for Hungary (see above). At the same time, the Czech government, in its function as EU presidency, sought ways to adopt the aid package without Hungary's consent. To this end, it was decided on 10 December that the loans should not be covered by the EU budget as originally planned, but should instead be taken over by individual EU Member States. A unanimous decision would then no longer be required to move forward with the aid package, effectively circumventing the Hungarian blockade. At the same time, the Hungarian government was given time to join the original plan for the aid package, which provided for the guarantees for the loans to run through the EU budget. This made a first compromise possible, whereby the Hungarian government finally abandoned its original veto position against the EU aid package for Ukraine on 12 December. At the same time, Hungary also gave up its opposition to a minimum tax directive planned by the EU, which, however, Poland continued to block, which meant that Hungary's decision in this regard had no particular urgency (Allenbach-Ammann 2022). It was also important for Hungary to ensure that there would be no loss of its entitlement to EU funds. The Hungarian government's concession promoted the compromise described above that involved more limited financial sanctions against Hungary, with the EU Member States deviating from the Commission's original demands.

However, even though Hungary had abandoned its initial veto positions in the EU negotiations on the EU aid package for Ukraine as well as on the EU minimum tax directive, it still had a considerable threat potential vis-à-vis the EU. The hostage-taking of EU negotiations by the Hungarian government merely shifted to other issues, in the context of the EU in particular to decisions relating to the extension of sanctions against Russia. Hungary had initially used its veto position in CFSP decisions on the imposition and extension of sanctions packages against

Russia, primarily to influence the design of specific sanctions measures. The Hungarian government insisted, for example, in February 2023, on the removal of certain individuals from the EU sanctions list. In addition, in February 2023, Hungary blocked a proposal by all other 26 EU Member States to reduce the regular renewal period of EU sanctions against Russia from six to twelve months, which would have had the effect of limiting Hungary's blocking options. The fact that Hungary has not yet used its veto position in the CFSP negotiations on EU sanctions against Russia more aggressively could also be due to the fact that Budapest is aware of the escalation potential of such a step. After all, Poland is a staunch supporter of EU sanctions measures and its support is of central importance for Hungary, especially in the course of the Article 7 proceedings. In particular, in the event of a far-reaching Hungarian blockade of EU sanctions, Poland could deviate from protecting Hungary from far-reaching consequences—up to and including loss of votes in the council—in the ongoing Article 7 proceedings (Hegedüs 2021).

Hungary and the NATO Accession of Finland and Sweden

While initially strategies of taking foreign policy negotiations hostage by Hungary's government were largely focused on the CFSP, there were also subsequent attempts to instrumentalize decisions within the framework of NATO. At the centre of these were the negotiations on the admission of the EU Member States Finland and Sweden into NATO. In the course of the Ukraine war, there was a far-reaching change of direction in the security and defence policies of Finland and Sweden, which applied for NATO membership in May 2022 after a long period of military neutrality. In the ensuing process for the admission of the two countries into NATO, the consent of all NATO countries was required. Moreover, all NATO Member States had to sign the accession protocols, which usually requires a national parliamentary decision. While this was done in less than ninety days in most NATO Member States, the process stalled due to the attitudes of Turkey and Hungary. Turkey's government emphasized early on that it attached certain political conditions to the ratification of the accession protocols of Sweden and Finland. The reservations about the accession of Sweden, which the Turkish government accuses of supporting the Kurdish terrorist organization PKK, were particularly serious.

Turkey's very explicit and confrontational position on Sweden's NATO accession allowed the Hungarian government to adopt a somewhat toned-down veto threat. Yet the Hungarian government under Orbán has maintained extremely close political relations with the Turkish government of Erdogan for many years (Verseck 2019). The Hungarian government mainly referred to procedural domestic reasons for non-ratification. This was also officially confirmed by Hungary to diplomatic representatives of both states. The NATO allies were thus confronted with a situation in which Hungary, unlike Turkey, at least officially did not associate any clear arguments and demands with its stance. At the same time, Hungary repeatedly postponed ratification, with its official justification changing over time. For example, it was increasingly emphasized that due to the implementation of the reforms demanded by Brussels with regard to the rule of law, the Hungarian Parliament was busy and could not devote sufficient time to the NATO accession process (Tamma 2023). In doing so, the government in Budapest sent a signal to its EU partners that the ratification of Finland's and Sweden's membership applications was linked to Hungary's conflict with the EU institutions on the rule of law. Subsequently, there was also increased criticism of Sweden's position by government representatives from Hungary. In particular, this criticism referred to critical statements made by Swedish representatives, including Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, with regard to issues of democracy and the rule of law in Hungary.

In March 2023, however, there was movement in the political ratification process with regard to Finland's application for NATO membership after it became clear that Turkey would abandon its blockade of Finland's membership. At the beginning of March, Hungarian Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjen demanded that a parliamentary session dealing with NATO enlargement to include the two Nordic countries, originally scheduled for 20 March, be postponed for a week. The reason given was the ongoing negotiations with the EU Commission on rule of law issues (Daily Sabah 2023). With Turkey's change of position, however, Hungary was in danger of becoming increasingly isolated on the question of Finnish accession, which also disproportionately increased the costs of the hostage-taking for Hungary. Without further addressing the alleged problem of a "heavy workload" or "the lack of time", the Hungarian Parliament finally voted in favour of Finland's NATO accession on 27 March, while the decision regarding Sweden was further postponed. Through this 'release of a hostage' move, Hungary, on the

one hand, signalled a willingness for compromise, but, on the other hand, still retained the possibility of exerting pressure on its European partners through the pending ratification of Sweden's NATO accession. The hostage-taking of the multilateral negotiations on Sweden's NATO accession must thus be understood as a process that will continue, not least because of Hungary's unresolved conflict with the EU institutions over the rule of law.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted how, as the conflict between Hungary and the EU over backsliding on democracy and the rule of law has intensified, a mode of contestation in EU foreign policymaking has gained prominence in which strategies of holding foreign policy decisions hostage play a crucial role. A recently published study by Ramses Wessel and Viktor Szép (2022) has identified thirty cases of vetoes, veto-threats and delays in the area of CFSP in the period between 2016 and 2022, 60% of which fell on Hungary. This shows that Hungarian attempts at hostage-taking in the context of the EU's response to the Ukraine war are not just isolated cases, but are part of a broader pattern of behaviour in CFSP negotiations. This also means that in order to understand "domestic" negotiation results at the EU level, such as the compromise reached in December 2022 on the disbursement of part of the EU funds, it is increasingly necessary to also illuminate their relationship to key foreign policy decisions. Simultaneously, it is increasingly important for the understanding of negotiation dynamics in the CFSP domain to pay attention to the fact that individual Member States can instrumentalize important foreign policy decisions for the assertion of their interests within other EU policy domains. This also applies to institutions that overlap with the EU, such as NATO.

Overall, it has become clear that the Orbán government's attempts to hold foreign policy negotiations hostage to increase its leverage vis-à-vis its European partners thus far have had only limited success, especially with regard to the loosening of EU funds intended for Hungary. At the same time, however, it is becoming apparent that the determining mode of negotiation with Hungary is a mutual trial of strength, whereby threats of blockade by Hungary are answered by the other EU partners with strategies of circumventing Hungary's veto position, isolating Hungary in the NATO negotiations, and building up counter-pressure. This also

raises the question of the effects of strategies of hostage-taking—and associated countermeasures by the other EU Member States—on the existing culture of cooperation within the framework of foreign policy institutions such as the CFSP but also within NATO. In both institutions, informal norms based on cooperation, voluntary consensus-seeking and active information exchange traditionally play an important role.

If the instrumentalization of the veto position held by EU Member States in central foreign policy institutions becomes common practice, this will further weaken the decision-making capacity of central foreign policy institutions. Recently, for example, the government in Bucharest threatened to block Austria in the framework of the OSCE and the NATO Partnership for Peace if the government in Vienna did not give up its blockade against Romania's accession to the Schengen area. This also shows that long demanded institutional reforms—such as the extension of EU majority decisions into the area of CFSP—would not only have the advantage of simplifying decision-making in the foreign policy domain. It would also ensure that strategies of instrumentalizing veto positions within the CFSP for the assertion of interests in other EU policy areas by individual Member States are no longer possible. In times of increased polarization and politicization in the EU, it is essential that foreign policy does not increasingly become the plaything of hostage-takers.

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Secure and Sustainable? Unveiling the Impact of the Russian War on EU Energy Governance

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Initially, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine raised fears in many European countries of supply shortages due to the European Union's (EU) heavy dependence on Russian oil, gas and coal. Dependence on Russian gas, in particular, was one of the biggest threats to the EU's energy security because of its pipeline-bound nature and the difficulty

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of substituting it. In consequence, the issue of security of supply was put high on the agenda. Overall, EU energy policy pursues the triangle of competitiveness, sustainability and (security of) supply. In the history of European integration, these objectives have had different weightings: from a strong focus on competition in the 1950s, to a focus on security of supply in response to external shocks such as the oil crises in the 1970s, to the sustainability objective of the European Green Deal (EGD) in recent years. The aggression against Ukraine and the strong focus on energy security led some to speculate whether energy transformation and climate policy was being marginalised or if, on the contrary, it would promote a higher degree of coherence of goals and instruments between energy security and climate goals (Osička and Černoch 2022; Giuli and Oberthür 2023). Our main research question therefore asks what the impact of the war of aggression against Ukraine will be on energy and climate policy, particularly in terms of a possible downgrading of the sustainability target.

Many of the short-term responses of the European Member States point to a downgrading of the energy- and climate policy on the path to climate neutrality in 2050, at least in an initial period, and appear to be following a "security first" policy, as we will show in Sect. "The Security-Sustainability Nexus: REPowerEU for Secure and Sustainable EU Energy Policy". For example, coal-fired power have been brought back into operation and Member States have focused on replacing Russian gas with liquefied natural gas (LNG) delivered by sea. This in turn hit European countries hard, leading to a price increase in global energy markets. Many suppliers exploited the weak negotiating positions of individual EU countries and their failure to coordinate among each other by setting their prices strategically. The unilateral focus on finding alternative suppliers and diversifying supply furthermore seems to run the risk of missing climate targets and marginalising action on the climate crisis. However, it has also quickly become clear that the energy crisis that the EU is facing is a crisis of fossil fuels, of their prices and of their availability. This demonstrates that energy security and sustainability are not mutually exclusive. Our paper will show that, on the contrary, the war has promoted a greater degree of coherence between goals and instruments, and thus the linkage between energy security and climate goals (Sect. "The Security-Sustainability Nexus: REPowerEU for Secure and Sustainable EU Energy Policy"). The war could even lead to a frontloading and strengthening of the Green Deal and thus become a catalyst for

Europe's energy transition (as is looking likely with respect to the REPowerEU package). However, a closer look at the legislation shows that the devil lies sometimes in the detail—as we will show in Sect. "Hydrogen: Bringing Together Energy Security and Sustainability?" using hydrogen as an example. Structural changes in European energy policy have accompanied these developments. Especially in the first year, as we have seen only once before in the case of the pandemic, the EU made extensive use of the option of emergency legislation. This abridged procedure, which bypasses the European Parliament, is associated with a deficit of legitimacy that has to be weighed up (Sect. "EU Emergency Measures: Quick But Democratically Challenging"). Moreover, EU energy policy has always faced a key obstacle to its effectiveness: the Lisbon Treaty's sovereignty reservation regarding European intervention in national energy policies and measures. However, the Russian war of aggression has also had an impact on the hardening of this otherwise soft energy governance beyond what has been achieved in the last five years (Sect. "REPowerEU and Emergency Measures as Instruments for Hardening Soft Energy Governance"). We will conclude by attempting to make a preliminary overall assessment of these first eighteen months of war and the *Zeitenwende* in energy policy.

"Security First" in a Dependent EU?

The EU already, well before February 2022, faced a significant challenge regarding its energy dependency. EU Member States are highly reliant on external energy sources, which have substantial impacts on their economic stability and geopolitical position. Reasons for the EU's energy dependency are its limited domestic fossil energy resources such as coal, oil and gas. As a result, a significant portion of EU energy imports traditionally comes from countries outside the Union.

Since the end of the 1960s, and through the oil crisis of the 1970s, this dependence has become a cause for concern in Brussels and European capitals (Knodt 2018). The European Commission, in particular, has since been at the forefront of calls for a much greater diversification of European imports. It was supported by the Eastern European states, especially with regard to the ever-increasing dependence on Russian gas, in which Germany in particular stood out in a negative light.

The risks associated with these dependencies were always obvious. Firstly, price volatility is posing a high risk to EU energy policy. Energy

import prices can fluctuate significantly as we witnessed in autumn 2021, causing uncertainties for consumers and the economy, with a high impact on the competitiveness of the European industry. Secondly, geopolitical dependence has been a threat since the beginning of the EU's energy policy. The Commission, in particular, was aware of the danger of politically unstable suppliers and regional crises, and the associated risk of supply disruptions and coercive behaviour on the part of suppliers, even if the current development with the almost total cessation of energy trade with Russia seemed unimaginable to many Europeans. Thus, energy dependence has continued to increase since the 1970s.

After 24 February 2022, the EU dramatically reduced its dependence on Russian imports. Already on 24 February, the European Council condemned the war of aggression and invited the Commission to propose emergency energy measures. The EU has adopted a twin-track approach. On the one hand, it has adopted energy-related measures as part of its sanctions. On the other, it has adopted legislative measures in the form of emergency legislation, but also through its REPowerEU legislative package to decrease Russian fossil fuel imports and reduce supply dependency (see below for both) (Figs. 7.1 and 7.2).

Energy has been a crucial part of the sanctions since they began after 24 February, as Table. 7.1 shows. However, it was clear from the outset that it was not possible to impose sanctions on Russian energy imports to an extent that would have been very damaging to the Russian economy, as the European economy was too dependent on Russian energy (Boehm and Wilson 2023). Moreover, states with close political ties to Russia, most notably Hungary, torpedoed a strict EU sanctions policy, as Patrick Müller and Peter Slominski show in their contribution to this volume.

Thus, Russian coal exports to the EU were completely banned when the coal sanctions agreed in the fifth EU sanctions package (April 2022) came into force, in August 2022. The embargo on coal imports was part of the sixth sanctions package, which was agreed in June 2022. It applied to imported crude oil after 5 December 2022 and to imported refined petroleum products after 5 February 2023. The oil embargo covers around 90 per cent of Russia's oil imports to the EU. Temporary crude oil deliveries by tanker to Bulgaria and Croatia, as well as deliveries to the two countries supplied by the Druzhba pipeline—Slovakia and Hungary—are limited until the end of 2023. In addition, a price cap on Russian oil sold to countries outside the EU was introduced in the eighth sanctions package (agreed in October 2022). The EU agreed a
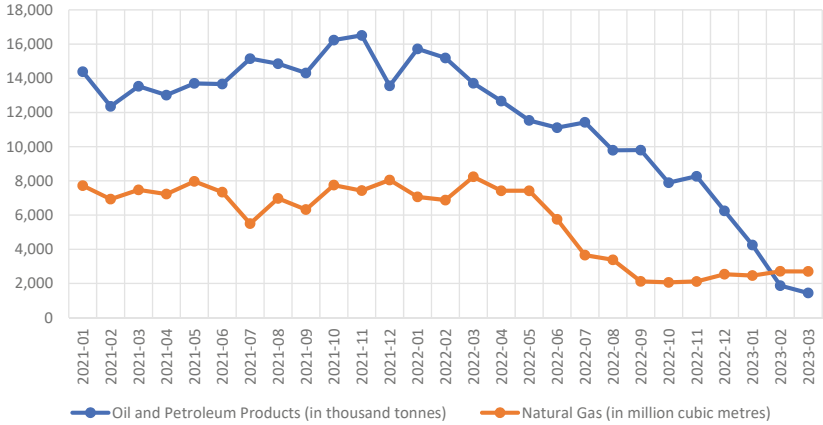
Fig. 7.1 Monthly Imports of Oil and Petroleum Products and Natural Gas from Russia to the European Union from January 2021 to March 2023. *Source* Data: Eurostat, NRG_TI_OILM, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databr owser/product/view/NRG_TI_OILM;NRG_TI_GASM, https://ec.europa.eu/ eurostat/databrowser/product/view/NRG_TI_GASM
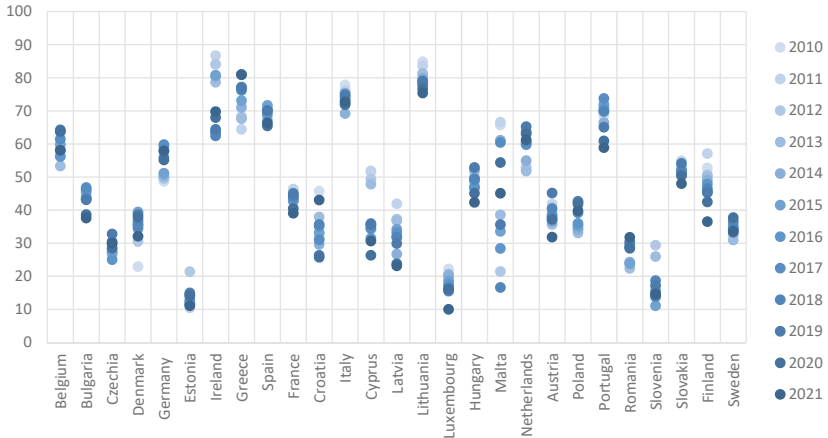
Fig. 7.2 Import Dependency on Third Countries from 2010 to 2020 in per cent. *Source* Data: Eurostat, NRG_IND_ID3CF, https://ec.europa.eu/eur ostat/databrowser/view/NRG_IND_ID3CF/default/table?lang=en

25 February (2nd package)	**Export ban** on specific goods and technologies in **oil refining and** restrictions on the provision of related services.
28 February (3rd package)	**Individual sanctions** on persons and entities in the Russian state oil and gas sector (continuing within the following sanction packages).
15 March (4th package)	**Prohibition of new investments in the Russian energy sector**, as well as the introduction of comprehensive **export restriction** on equipment, technology and services for the energy industry.
8 April (5th package)	Prohibition of the purchase, import or transfer of **coal and other solid fossil fuels** into the EU if they originate in Russia or are exported from Russia, as from August 2022.
3 June (6th package)	Prohibition of the purchase, import or transfer of crude oil and certain petroleum products from Russia into the EU. The phasing out of Russian oil will take from **6 months for crude oil** to **8 months for other refined petroleum products**. Temporary exception for imports of **crude oil by pipeline** into those EU Member States that, due to their geographic situation, suffer from a specific dependence on Russian supplies and have no viable alternative options. **Bulgaria** and **Croatia** will also benefit from temporary derogations concerning the import of Russian seaborne crude oil and vacuum gas oil respectively.
6 October (8th package)	The setting of a **price cap** related to the maritime transport of **Russian oil for third countries** and further restrictions on the **maritime transport of crude oil and petroleum products** to third countries.
16 December (9th package)	Prohibition targeting new investments in the Russian energy sector by additionally **prohibiting new investments in the Russian mining sector**, with the exception of mining and quarrying activities involving certain critical raw materials.
25th February (10th package)	**Prohibition of the provision of gas storage capacity** (with the exclusion of the part of LNG facilities) to Russian nationals, in order to protect the security of gas supply in the EU, and avoid Russia's weaponisation of its gas supply and risks of market manipulation.

Table 7.1   Energy related Sanctions against Russia after 24 February 2023
Source   https://finance.ec.europa.eu/eu-and-world/sanctions-restrictive-measures/sanctions-adopted-following-russias-military-aggression-against-ukraine_en#timeline-measures-adopted-in-2022-2023

similar cap on refined oil products from Russia sold on world markets, on 5 February 2023. There are still no sanctions on natural gas, because the dependence on gas was too great and the degree of rapid substitutability was too low. However, Russia has sharply reduced the volumes it exports to EU markets, and gas supplies on all pipeline routes from Russia (except Turk Stream) slowed dramatically in 2022. However, since the attack on the Nordstream I and II gas pipelines through the Baltic Sea on 26 September, the supply of Russian gas to Germany has come to a virtual standstill. The approval process for Nordstream II, which is not yet operational, was suspended until further notice anyway due to the war.

Recent developments include the EU's increased intervention in EU gas markets through a joint gas procurement mechanism, the facilitation and regulation of cross-border LNG deliveries and the development of a new EU gas pricing index, which will reduce the dependence on Russian pipeline gas. It also created a temporary market correction mechanism in December 2022, which acts as a price cap for natural gas when prices are exceptionally and unreasonably high (in response to high gas prices in the summer of 2022). Only imports of LNG from Russia have seen a slight increase and account for less than 15% of the EU's LNG imports. The latter can be explained by infrastructure constraints for EU LNG imports. LNG import terminals are unevenly distributed across the EU. The highest capacities are located in Spain, but it has weak interconnection capacity with France and thus with other EU countries. Against this backdrop, many EU countries increased their LNG capacity in 2022, quickly approving the construction of LNG terminals and smaller floating gas storage and regasification units. The most notable example is Germany, which had no LNG capacity until February 2022, but managed to instal one floating LNG terminal with unprecedented speed by December 2022, with several more planned to be completed by the end of 2023. In any case, the LNG solution comes with a lock-in effect on fossil energy, counteracting the goal of climate neutrality and at the same time leaving the EU vulnerable to market constraints, high prices and overall dependence on third country supplies. To mitigate the latter, the EU has developed its relations with LNG exporting countries such as the US, Norway and Qatar, negotiating medium-term supply commitments. However, this focus on the search for alternative suppliers and the diversification of supply (Lambert et al. 2022) has resulted in a further increase in prices on world energy markets, with a significant impact on European countries as well (IEA 2022a). Many supplier countries took

advantage of the weak negotiating position of the individual EU states and their lack of coordination through strategic pricing (Boehm and Wilson 2023).

The example of LNG shows that part of the management of the crisis also involved restructuring the supply of fossil fuels (Saul 2022). This was also accompanied by coal-fired plants starting up again to replace missing gas supplies, and an extension of the lifetime of coal-fired power plants. These measures go hand in hand with the risk of missing climate targets and marginalising action on the climate crisis. However, it soon became clear that the crisis facing Europe was a fossil fuel crisis, characterised by limited fossil fuel resources and a projected continued growth in global demand. As this situation of increased competition for resources is leading to increased uncertainty in the market and the resulting fluctuations in prices, the EU has a strong interest in not being caught unprepared. Combined with the costs of climate change (IPCC 2021), there is a clear case for moving forward rapidly on EGD, along with the security of energy supply.

The Security-Sustainability Nexus: REPowerEU for Secure and Sustainable EU Energy Policy

In 2019, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced the European Green Deal, a plan to achieve a carbon–neutral European economy and society by 2050 (European Commission 2019; Elkerbout et al. 2020). To this end, the "European Climate Law" (Regulation (EU) 2021/1119) has set the target of achieving climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest and a net reduction of at least 55 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. In July and December 2021, measures to implement the EGD were bundled into a legislative package called "Fit for 55" (FF55) (European Commission 2021), covering many areas such as the European Emissions Trading System (ETS), renewable energy and energy efficiency. The aim of the package is to adapt all relevant EU legislation to these increased climate ambitions. While most of the legislation in the FF55 package was under negotiation, the Russian war against Ukraine began. It was clear to the Commission that, in addition to the mitigation of the negative effects of the war on the energy sector, the energy transition in particular would have to be advanced more rapidly than had been envisaged in the FF55. Against this background, the European Commission presented the

REPowerEU plan in May 2022, a strategy detailing medium to long-term measures which further raised the ambition of transformation and made structural adjustments in order to become independent of Russian energy by 2030. The REPowerEU package thus combined the sustainability and the security of supply aim, above all by adding security of energy supply, but also affordability as policy goals to the FF55 approach (Schlacke et al. 2022). Interestingly, it is strongly oriented towards the more general proposals of the International Energy Agency to ensure energy security in Europe (IEA 2022b) and specifically proposes the following (Schlacke et al. 2022; Widuto 2022):

- An increase of the target for the use of renewable energies from 40 to 45% by 2035;
- An increase of the target for energy savings from 9 to 13% by 2030;
- The application of short-term energy saving measures, as set out in a separate "EU SaveEnergy" Communication (European Commission 2022d);
- The alignment of governance in the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) with the Renewable Energy Directive (RED III) and the further development RED III to support the higher level of ambition in both policy areas;
- The channelling of funding into these areas and an increase of funding for European research and development programmes such as Horizon Europe or LIFE;
- The acceleration of technologies and partnerships to develop green hydrogen as a new resource for Europe, both in terms of domestic production and import partnerships.

First and foremost, these proposals increase the ambition in key areas that are necessary to reach climate neutrality and thus advance the planned implementation of the EGD. Concerns remain about achieving ever more ambitious policy targets (Table. 7.2).

As seen in the case of the EU 2020 targets, there were already a number of obstacles to achieving these comparatively "low" targets (Ringel and Knodt 2018). Even the previously valid 2030 targets for the increase of both renewable energy and energy efficiency were achieved only for the renewable energy targets by the target of the sum of the Member States ambitions within the European Energy and Climate Plans

	Reduction in CO$_2$ emissions	Share of renewable energies	Increase in energy efficiency
2020 targets (2008)	20%	20%	20%
2030 targets (2014)	40%	27%	27%
2030 targets (2018)	40%	32%	32.5%
2030 targets (2021) "Fit for 55" proposal	61%	40%	36/39%*
2030 targets (2022) „REPowerEU" proposal	61%	45% (NECPs 2021 EU=33%)	40/43%* (NECPs 2021 EU=just under 30%)

*expressed in final/primary energy reduction

Table 7.2 Development of the EU climate and energy targets

(NECPs) after the recommendations of the Commission (33 per cent / demanded 32 per cent). In the case of the efficiency targets, these were still not met (30 per cent/ demanded 32.5 per cent). The increase of the targets by approx. 10 percentage points for 2030, proposed in the REPowerEU, will alone greatly exceed the previous ambitions of the Member States, even excluding the actual implementation, because of the soft governance approach of the EU energy policy (Knodt et al. 2021, see Fig. 7.4 and Sect. "REPowerEU and Emergency Measures as Instruments for Hardening Soft Energy Governance").

In any case, the REPowerEU package shows that the measures of the EU in reaction towards the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine cannot been interpreted as a sole reorientation towards security of supply at the expense of energy transformation. Rather, the measures should be seen as a strengthening of the security and sustainability nexus.

Hydrogen: Bringing Together Energy Security and Sustainability?

In the context of the energy security-sustainability nexus, hydrogen is another element with the potential to decrease import dependency on fossil fuels, while contributing to the climate neutrality objective of the European Union (European Commission 2022e). Hydrogen can be used in hard to abate sectors, like the chemical industry, steelmaking, shipping and aviation which have a lack of options for direct electrification and a high dependence on fossil fuels (Gibb et al. 2022). Depending on the production method, it can be differentiated between conventional hydrogen from fossil fuels, renewable hydrogen and low-carbon hydrogen. Renewable hydrogen is produced by an electrolyser that splits water into hydrogen and oxygen, using electricity generated by renewable energy installations, therefore producing hydrogen almost emission-free. In low-carbon hydrogen production, fossil fuels with subsequent carbon capture, utilisation and storage are used to significantly decrease emissions and are therefore considered as useful for decarbonisation. Furthermore, low-carbon hydrogen can also be produced using nuclear energy, providing another method causing less emissions than conventional fossil-based hydrogen. As the development of the market is in its infancy, the production costs are still high in comparison with fossil-based hydrogen and it will take time until renewable and low-carbon hydrogen will become cost-competitive (IEA 2022c; Janssen et al. 2022).

In 2020, the European Commission published the EU Hydrogen Strategy (European Commission 2020) to address the barriers of the hydrogen uptake, and proposed a target of 40 GW electrolyser capacity by 2030, accompanied by measures to enable the development of a hydrogen market. Following the strategy, the Commission integrated hydrogen in the regulatory framework, notably the REDIII with renewable hydrogen targets in the transport sector and delegated acts setting requirements for the production, and greenhouse gas emission reductions, of renewable hydrogen (European Commission 2021). Additionally, the Gas and Hydrogen Markets Package defines low-carbon hydrogen and sets up the foundations of the hydrogen market ramp-up (European Commission 2021a; Barnes 2023).

The development of a hydrogen policy framework was already ongoing when the Russian invasion of Ukraine began in 2022 and caused the energy crisis in Europe. As hydrogen was already considered a major

element of the energy transition with the potential to substitute natural gas, hydrogen experienced another push through REPowerEU that integrated the energy carrier throughout the plan. With the hydrogen market still in its infancy, the use of hydrogen was approached as a mid to long-term solution, rather than a short-term measure to counter supply shortages. REPowerEU is intended to set additional foundations for the uptake of renewable hydrogen and to introduce new instruments and objectives. Under the so-called hydrogen accelerator, 20 million tonnes of hydrogen should be available by 2030 in the European Union, split into 10 million tonnes of domestic production and 10 million tonnes of imports, which could replace approximately 27 bcm of natural gas by 2030 (European Commission 2022f, 27). These new objectives represent a significant increase of hydrogen volumes, as the EU Hydrogen Strategy target of 40 GW electrolyser capacity would only account for 5.6 million tonnes of renewable hydrogen (Bonciu 2022). In the REPowerEU plan, the Commission also proposed new sub-targets in the industry and transport sector for Renewable fuels of non-biological origin (RFNBOs) in the REDIII to the European Parliament and Council, and urged for a rapid conclusion of the legislative process of the Gas and Hydrogen Markets Package. Additionally, it declared the publication of revised delegated acts for the production and definition of renewable hydrogen. Furthermore, efforts to accelerate the development of the hydrogen infrastructure and mobilise additional funding and research is part of the plan. The EU Energy Platform, established to facilitate joint gas purchases of Member States, also includes hydrogen and is another instrument to enable the uptake of hydrogen in Europe. Moreover, an additional instrument to the measures of REPowerEU was proposed by the European Commission in 2023: the European Hydrogen Bank (European Commission 2023). This initiative aims to facilitate investments and establish a renewable hydrogen market by launching auctions for domestic producers who can receive fixed premiums for renewable hydrogen. Plans for double-sided auctions have also been put forward for renewably hydrogen producers in third-countries.

The development of European hydrogen policy since 2020 shows that hydrogen is acknowledged as a mid to long-term solution to improve energy security, as domestically produced hydrogen can substitute imported fossil fuels, while simultaneously advancing decarbonisation. While the EU Hydrogen Strategy mentions the advantages of hydrogen for the security of supply, REPowerEU integrates hydrogen as a

central component to strengthen energy security and so significantly raises the level of ambition for renewable hydrogen. Throughout the documents, the focus is on renewable hydrogen, while fewer details are given about the role low-carbon hydrogen should play. The EU Hydrogen Strategy states that during a transitional phase towards a renewable hydrogen economy, support for low-carbon hydrogen is needed, but should not lead to stranded assets. This is not followed up in REPowerEU, with its focus on renewable hydrogen and the leaving aside of low-carbon hydrogen. This can be explained by the changed circumstances, as the REPowerEU plan was developed as a measure against an acute energy crisis, in particular a natural gas crisis. In this context, it is not surprising that natural gas-based low-carbon hydrogen is not included as a solution to the shortage of gas supply. Yet low-carbon hydrogen is not abandoned in the European Union and is addressed outside of the REPowerEU plan.

Agreements in the field of energy between the EU and third countries include sections about provisions for hydrogen imports. The agreements between the EU and Egypt/Israel in 2022 (European Commission 2022g), Japan in 2022 (European Commission 2022h), Ukraine in 2023 (European Commission 2023a) and the EU-Norway Green Alliance formed in 2023 (European Commission 2023b) integrate renewable hydrogen, as well as low-carbon hydrogen. Furthermore, low-carbon hydrogen is integrated into the EU regulatory framework through the Gas and Hydrogen Markets Directive (European Commission 2021b), that defines low-carbon hydrogen, and should be followed by delegated acts with detailed requirements for production.

Additionally, the debate over the role of nuclear power in the energy transition is drawn into the development of European hydrogen policy. The energy security-sustainability nexus is approached by some Member States with a focus on nuclear energy that should ensure a reduction of fossil fuel import dependency in combination with low-carbon emissions. The establishment of a nuclear alliance of European governments planning to extend their fleet of nuclear power plants, or to phase-in nuclear energy, showcases the renewed interest and relevance of nuclear energy (Messad 2023). Other Member States refrain from the use or phasing-out of nuclear energy, and have a critical position on the inclusion of nuclear power in European energy and climate policy (Messad 2023a). This controversy was particularly evident during the legislative process of the revision of the Renewable Energy Directive. The adoption of REDIII

was put on hold after an interinstitutional agreement between Council and Parliament had already been reached in the trilogues. The cause of the delay can be ascribed to a group of Member States led by France, pushing for both the recognition of nuclear power for reaching climate neutrality and reducing GHG emissions, as well as exemptions from renewable hydrogen industry targets in the REDIII, which ultimately were added as recitals in the Directive (Messad 2023b).

While the strategic approach of the European hydrogen policy is focused on renewable hydrogen to merge energy security and sustainability objectives, the international agreements and the development of the regulatory framework gives evidence that low-carbon hydrogen is integrated with the intention of strengthening the security of supply. Yet, there are potential risks for both energy security and sustainability associated with low-carbon hydrogen production and use. First, the construction of new capacities for production can lead to carbon lock-ins and new path dependencies on fossil technologies, even if carbon capture technologies are used. This can lead to a delay in decarbonisation and in independence from fossil energy. Second, regarding energy security, low-carbon hydrogen can be used to augment supply, as renewable hydrogen production capacities might not be sufficient to satisfy potential demand. However, there is a risk that new import dependencies with countries supplying low-carbon hydrogen arise. To mitigate this risk, the European Union should extend their strategic approach to hydrogen and formulate an import strategy that highlights the importance of import diversification in the field of hydrogen, in line with sustainability standards and a long-term perspective to phase out fossil-based hydrogen.

EU Emergency Measures: Quick But Democratically Challenging

In response to the war of aggression, the EU has taken short-term measures focused on the nexus between security of supply and sustainability. In doing so, it makes partial use of the provisions for emergency measures for such crises and is thus incurring a legitimacy deficit.

In the course of March 2022, these short-term proposals were fleshed out by the Commission in the form of regulations, mainly based on the emergency Article 122 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the Union (TFEU), on gas storage, joint fuel procurement, reducing dependence on Russia and measures to cushion citizens from high energy prices.

A first regulation on gas storage could be adopted swiftly in June with Regulation (EU) 2022/1032, as it was based on the European Regulation on measures to safeguard security of gas supply (EU) 2017/1938 (SoS Regulation) from 2010, which was amended in 2017. Due to the low level of gas storage in the EU, it was decided that underground gas storage facilities on the territory of Member States had to be at least 80% full before the start of the 2022/2023 winter and must be 90% full before the start of the following winters. The Regulation also provides for the national implementation of a three-level escalation system (early warning, alert and emergency) in the event of a supply crisis.

The EU used the emergency Article 122 TFEU in areas where it was not possible to rely on existing secondary legislation. Thus, in response to the threat of a short-term disruption of Russian gas supplies, it proposed the Gas Emergency Plan (European Commission 2022b, Council of the European Union 2022a) on 22 July 2022 as a short-term measure. It was adopted by the Council on 4 August 2022 as Council Regulation (EU) 2022/1369 on coordinated "gas demand reduction measures" and came into force on 9.8.2022 for one year. It commits Member States to reducing gas consumption by 15% from 1 August 2022 to 31 March 2023 compared to their average consumption over the last five years. In case of the non-realisation of the savings targets, the EU could have triggered the alert level. Thus, the savings targets, which had been voluntary until then, would have become binding if at least 15 EU countries, which together accounted for at least 65% of the total population of the Union, had agreed. Regulation 2022/1369 is based on Article 122, paragraph 1 TFEU.

Council Regulation (EU) 2022/1854 of 6 October 2022 on emergency measures in response to high energy prices, which among other things introduced the excess profits tax for energy companies announced by the Commission, is also based on Article 122 TFEU. As early as 14 September 2022, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had announced a draft regulation for the introduction of an excess profits tax for energy companies in the European Parliament. The background to this was the high electricity price that had set in, due to the high gas price and the merit order principle,[1] on which the European electricity

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[1] Under the merit order principle, the electricity price is set by the most expensive producer clearing the market.

market is based. The regulations also apply to excess profits of oil and gas companies and certain others.

Also based on Article 122 TFEU are further temporary emergency measures by Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2576 to curb high energy prices and improve security of supply (within the framework of the Council Regulation on greater solidarity through better coordination of gas procurement, reliable price reference values and cross-border exchanges of gas as of 19 December 2022). It is based on the EU Commission's proposal for a regulation in October 2022, which provided for joint gas procurement at EU level and for the introduction of a dynamic price cap for gas imports into the EU (European Commission 2022c). The new rules are intended to allow Member States and energy companies to jointly purchase gas on the world market. This is to ensure that EU Member States gain greater leverage in procuring gas on world markets and do not outbid each other in the process.

Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2578 of 22 December 2022 aims to protect Union citizens and the economy from excessive prices. It is again based on Article 122 TFEU and introduces a price brake at EU level in the Title Transfer Facility (TTF) area.[2] Specifically, it sets a price limit for the TTF monthly month-ahead derivatives.

Also, in December, the Council adopted Regulation (EU 2022/2577) establishing a framework for the accelerated development of the use of renewable energy as another emergency measure based on Art. 122 TFEU. It is primarily intended to help speed up the lengthy authorisation procedures for the expansion of renewable energies in the Member States. This emergency measure is also limited to a period of eighteen months.

The concentrated use of emergency measures, based on Article 122 TFEU, is accompanied by a deficit in democratic legitimacy, as already stated by von Ondarza for the COVID-19 crisis (von Ondarza 2023). This shows a high number of Council decisions in the relatively short period of nine months, which intervene in an area in which the EU has no competences according to Article 194 (2) TFEU. Article 122 (1) TFEU mandates the Council to decide "in a spirit of solidarity between Member

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[2] Founded in 2003 and based in the Netherlands, the TTF gained importance with the liberalisation of the energy sector and is now considered a reference point for monitoring and understanding the European gas market.

States on the measures appropriate to the economic situation". It explicitly goes on to say: "in particular if serious difficulties arise in the supply of certain goods, especially in the field of energy". However, there was no reference here to implementing provisions yet to be adopted, so that the actual implementation in the case of supply bottlenecks remained unclear (Villagrasa, and Scheuer 2011, 77). Initially, only the improvement of strategic oil stockpiling was regulated in detail. A legal basis for securing gas supply in the event of a crisis is provided by the SoS Regulation, which was amended in 2017. The diversification of energy sources and transport routes did not materialise, and no further crisis mechanisms were agreed (Knodt and Tews 2014, 224).

Intensive use of Article 122 (TFEU) in crisis situations has only been observed recently. Both in the financial crisis of 2010/11 (for aid programmes and the establishment of the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism (EFSM)) and for support in the situation of the sudden increase in refugee flows in 2016 (Emergency Aid Regulation), the emergency article was rarely accessed. Only in the COVID-19 crisis did a more frequent use of Article 122 TFEU become apparent. Three key measures, the joint vaccine procurement, the short-time working allowance programme and the Next-Generation EU reconstruction fund, were based on the emergency article (von Ondarza 2023). We now see similar heavy use in response to the 2022 energy crisis.

According to Article 122 TFEU, paragraph 1—on which all Regulations 2022 based on Article 122 are founded—the Council shall act on a proposal from the Commission "without prejudice to the other procedures provided for in the Treaties". The European Parliament is not involved in the decision-making process, and has no rights of co-determination or control. Since the possible financial assistance provided for in Article 122, paragraph 2, was not affected here, there was also no information to the Parliament. Moreover, the Council can decide by qualified majority. Thus, among other things, the decision on Regulation (EU) 2022/1854 on the introduction of an excess profits tax for energy companies in response to high energy prices was taken against Hungary's vote. Moreover, this was despite the fact that, in parts with this special levy, it interferes with the fiscal sovereignty of the Member States, for which there are no European competences (Giegold 2022, quoted in von Ondarza 2023, 35). In addition, the secondary legitimisation, through the involvement of the parliaments of the Member States and the elimination of a veto option, is also omitted.

In order to assess the legitimacy of this crisis governance, we can refer to the mechanisms of legitimation of government activities from EU research. Scharpf distinguishes between input and output legitimacy (Scharpf 1999). Vivien Schmidt added a third dimension to Scharpf's dichotomy: output legitimacy (policy performance), input legitimacy (political responsiveness) and throughput legitimacy (procedural quality) (Schmidt 2013). There is a deficit in input legitimacy, as the European Parliament was not involved in any of the regulations based on Art. 122. In addition, throughput legitimacy is also deficient, as the transparency of decision-making is also difficult due to the concentration on the Council and its sometimes non-transparent discussions on legal acts. Now, emergency legislation in times of crisis per se tends to impair above all input and throughput legitimacy, and relies rather on output legitimacy. Moreover, due to the temporary nature of the measures, temporary legitimacy deficits are usually considered less serious. As the implementation of the measures is still in its infancy, output legitimacy cannot be assessed at this stage. However, special features of emergency measures not only have a direct effect on legitimacy, but also show indirect effects. This can be shown with the example of the Renewable Energy Regulation 2022/2577 and its relationship to the REPowerEU plan.

REPowerEU and Emergency Measures as Instruments for Hardening Soft Energy Governance

A look at the table of rising targets and the sobering sum of national ambitions set out so far in the national energy and climate plans (Economidou et al. 2022) reveals the main problem with European energy policy—the limited competence of the EU level in energy policies. The reservation of sovereignty in Article 194(2) TFEU ties the hands of the Commission and prevents it from intervening with sanctions in national strategies and their implementation. The Commission is left with only soft governance mechanisms. In the face of national reluctance to relinquish control over the national energy mix, the EU's only recourse is to try to "harden" its soft governance mechanisms in order to enhance its ability to effect policy change at the national level. The concept of "harder soft governance" in energy policy introduced by Knodt and Ringel points to the possibility of greater EU influence on the Member States in questions

of energy transition, as was already laid out in the Governance Regulation, at least in the area of renewable energies (Knodt and Ringel 2019; Knodt et al. 2020). Such attempts to harden soft governance can be observed, most importantly, in the Governance Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2018/1999), which entered into force at the end of 2018, and was part of the EU's "Clean Energy for All Europeans" initiative package, setting the legal framework for achieving the Union's 2030 climate and energy targets (Knodt et al. 2020). In addition to the "soft governance" of requiring each Member State to take due account of the Commission's recommendations on the draft NECPs, a "justification requirement" was introduced, whereby each Member State has to state and publish its reasons when it fails to do so. In the event of an "ambition gap" in the renewable energy sector, Annex II of the Governance Regulation provides for an algorithm to allocate the missing percentage points to Member States. This formula compensates for the lack of a binding national target for renewable energy. For the energy efficiency target, however, the algorithm did originally not apply. In addition, an "indicative trajectory" for increasing the share of renewable energy needs to be added to the national contributions. For energy efficiency, there is also no such provision. Moreover, compared to the monitoring system for the 2020 objectives, the governance system provides greater opportunities to "blame and shame", as it requires the submission of the State of the Energy Union to the Parliament and the Council. However, sanction mechanisms are still missing from the Governance Regulation. As a result, soft monitoring and control mechanisms have only been strengthened to a limited extent. This is particularly the case for renewables and, to a lesser extent, for energy efficiency (Knodt et al. 2023, 385f.).

Under FF55 and REPowerEU, these approaches are now applicable to the area of energy efficiency, for example in the area of the stronger binding nature of target paths or the formula for calculating national targets. These changes are anchored in the sectoral directive proposals, but have not changed governance regulation so far, which is likely to lead to inconsistencies (Schlacke et al. 2022). Overall, the measures to harden soft governance are probably not yet sufficient to achieve the targets that have been raised, again with the REPowerEU plan in particular. Together with calls for better applicability of infringement procedures through reference values in the sectoral directives (which sanction across policy fields through conditionality and standardisation through Governance Regulation reform), the Emergency Regulation 2022/2577, establishing

a framework for accelerated expansion of renewable energy use, could now also contribute to hardening.

Regulation 2022/2577 anticipates parts of the acceleration from the REPowerEU, specifically the draft Renewable Energy Directive (European Commission 2022h). The regulation declares an overriding public interest in renewable energies over any environmental, nature conservation and species protection interests and shortens the maximum permissible duration of authorisation procedures to up to one year. In doing so, the regulation expands the obligations of the Member States. However, the Council of the EU watered down the regulation and conceded the possibility of limiting the scope of the regulation to certain areas and also exempting buildings. The Regulation, which has now already entered into force during the RED III negotiations in the trilogue and has been partially implemented in the Member States, can have a significant precedent-setting influence on the discussions in the trilogue. Thus, the Commission and the Council can instrumentalise the emergency measures to influence the regulations in RED III at an early stage.

This indirect effect of the use of the emergency article in the Lisbon Treaty thus gives the Council more room for manoeuvre in the trilogue negotiations, as it can now refer to measures already implemented. This gives the Council, as an executive body, prerogatives over Parliament not only in the area of direct emergency legislation, but also has the option of pre-empting measures in the ordinary legislative procedure. It is now in a position to use this to shape the content of the legislation in the sense of the majority of its members. This can lead to greater interference in national sovereignty in the energy sector, as shown by examples from Regulation 2022/2577, but this does not necessarily have to be the case. Thus, using emergency legislation does not guarantee a hardening of soft governance, as the exceptions regulated in Regulation 2022/2577 have also shown.

Conclusion

Clearly, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has catapulted the EU's energy security to the top of the agenda. This initial focus on energy security as one of the three objectives of the energy triangle—along with sustainability and competitiveness—should not, however, obscure the fact that the way in which the war in European energy policy is being handled

is above all to be understood in terms of the close link between energy security and sustainability in the sense of the fight against climate change.

The example of hydrogen could exemplify the driving forces of the security-sustainability nexus in times of war. The market ramp-up and development of a regulatory framework for hydrogen as a solution for the decarbonisation of hard to abate sectors was already ongoing, when the Russian invasion of Ukraine led to increasing ambitions for renewable hydrogen production and use through REPowerEU and its hydrogen accelerator. While hydrogen from renewable sources has a lot of potential to benefit energy security and sustainability, low-carbon hydrogen has its pitfalls regarding both dimensions, and yet is integrated within European measures to satisfy demand during a transitional phase. To prevent negative impacts on energy security and sustainability, low-carbon hydrogen needs to be integrated further into the strategic approach of the European hydrogen policy.

All in all, the EU responded to the supply challenges of missing or interrupted fossil energy supplies from Russia caused by the war with a strategy mix based on emergency measures. This included energy aspects of sanctions and intensified efforts in both climate and, above all, energy policy in the area of renewable energies and energy efficiency.

Neither of these two approaches is free of difficulties. Emergency legislation suffers from a legitimacy problem because it bypasses Parliament for reasons of efficiency and the Council alone decides on a proposal from the Commission. Similarly problematic, EU legislation in the energy sector as a whole—unlike climate policy—lacks the competences to influence national energy policies. Therefore, the ambitious increase in the renewable energy and energy efficiency targets in the FF55 was already very challenging given the present ambitions in the NECPs. The REPowerEU package, combined with FF55, shows that attempts are still being made at the European level to overcome the handicap of soft governance by adding further hard elements—especially in energy efficiency legislation. This will become even more necessary as the targets are raised again in the REPowerEU legislation. Until now, the iterative process of strategic energy and climate policy planning through the NECPs has been overarched by the Governance Regulation. The need for harder governance due to the ever-increasing level of ambition was not taken into account in the adaptation of the Governance Regulation. It was only in the wake of the war in Ukraine that the Commission decided that a review and

possible revision of the Regulation was imperative and announced it for the beginning of 2024.

For EU research, it will be extremely exciting to see how the use of emergency measures can impact future legislation. The analysis of the trilogue negotiations and the implementation of RED III will show how emergency measures such as Regulation 2022/2577 can be used to allow deeper intervention in areas outside the EU's competence, such as the influence of EU energy policy on national strategies. In the face of increasingly complex crises and challenges to the EU's resilience, the use of emergency legislation in its many facets is certain to be at the centre of EU studies in the coming years.

LITERATURE

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Conditions and Contestation: Ukraine on Its Way to EU-Membership

Andrea Gawrich and Doris Wydra

Introduction: The Challenges of Reviving Enlargement Policy

The European Council's decision on June 23, 2022 to designate Ukraine as an EU candidate country was regarded as a powerful display of solidarity, recognising Ukraine's persistent 'Western' orientation, despite Russian aggression (see the "conflict between democracy and autocracy" by Wiesner in this volume). As the Ukrainian President Zelenskyy framed the war as the fight against the "*most anti-European force*" (Deutsche Welle 2023), the 'rhetorical entrapment' of uniting Europe along liberal values was revived (Schimmelfennig 2001).

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However, this unification along liberal values poses its own challenges.[1] Since Croatia's accession in 2013, the number of candidates has been growing, prompting the EU to recognise that democratic developments are vulnerable to recession (Castillo-Ortiz 2019; Hanley and Vachudova 2018; Scheppele 2013). Consequently, the EU has introduced additional, politically sensitive conditions for candidacy for aspirant countries in the Western Balkans (WB) (Kmezić 2015). The emphasis is on 'fundamentals', which constitute the rule of law, human rights and anti-corruption (Čepo 2020), together with more tangible rewards, such as financial support, but also stricter sanctions for backsliding, such as the freezing of resources and suspension of negotiations. However, this has, to date, provided only limited tangible results.

Amidst protracted accession procedures in the WB, the issue of providing 'realistic' accession prospects for former Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries such as Ukraine and Moldova has forcefully resurfaced with the war in Ukraine. As these countries struggle with major reform necessities predominantly in the fundamentals sector, they seem like typical long-term candidates. However, in the face of Russian aggression and stronger geopolitical competition, the EU has to revive its enlargement policy to remain a credible actor in the region. New models for 'staged accession' have been proposed (Emerson and Blockmans 2022; Emerson et al. 2022) to accommodate both the demands of candidates for visible progress and Member States' concerns over potential negligence of the 'rule of law'. The key question this chapter addresses is not simply how the Russian war against Ukraine has revived the enlargement process, but which dynamics this entails in a situation where the EU strives to defend the rule of law and democracy internally and externally simultaneously, while at the same time having to prove its geopolitical capacities by providing credible accession perspectives.

In the case of Ukraine we hold that in order to understand this early phase of an accession process under the conditions of war, it is necessary to find an approach which is able to capture the tremendous politicisation not only of issue areas (and here in particular the rule of law), but also of time frames for accession and of the scope of support by the EU. We therefore suggest combining the concept of **conditionality from**

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[1] The contestation of the EU as a liberal external actor is analysed in detail by the CONLIB-project: Contesting (Il)liberalism: The European Union as a Contested Liberal Actor in the Neighbourhood, FWF Elise Richter Project V892.

EU studies with conceptualisations of **contestation** from International Relations (IR) research. By combining these two analytical perspectives, we aim, on the one hand, to gain more clarity of the procedural side of the accession process (conditionality) and, on the other hand, of the dynamics of this early accession phase (contestation) under the specific circumstances of the ongoing war.

While selecting the Rule of Law as a field of study, we draw on an understanding of norms as being inherently contested and dependent on the contexts of enactment (Wiener and Puetter 2009). This allows us to carve out expectation and perception gaps between EU actors, Ukrainian authorities and Ukrainian society with regard not only to the speed and pathways of the accession process, but also to the depth of integration.

Our empirical focus is on the so-called 'fundamentals'. The transformation of applicant countries into functioning liberal democracies is crucial for defending EU democracy internally. But can this goal of the defence of 'democracy and rule of law' be upheld when geopolitical pressures demand the securing of the EU's influence in its neighbourhood—and thus meaningful accession perspectives? The European Commission's opinion on Ukraine's membership application in June 2022 (European Commission 2022) was predicated on the understanding that further reforms in the area of fundamentals were implemented and it is this point that currently dictates the overall pace of negotiations. One of the remaining concerns is the reform of the judiciary, specifically, the procedures for selecting judges for the Constitutional Court of Ukraine 2023 (European Commission 2023b), which is crucial for the overall consolidation of the rule of law, but as we will see, highly politicised. It is thus an ideal test case for our analytical framework.

Conceptualising Conditionality and Contestation–An Integrated Analytical Framework

While approximation towards EU standards in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) sometimes allows for cooperative approaches and joint ownership, alongside a strictly hierarchical rule transfer (Fix et al. 2019; Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2013; Korosteleva 2012; Korosteleva 2011), candidate status comes with strict conditionality. The literature on EU conditionality provides us with a helpful

understanding of factors conducive to the transformation of a candidate country along EU conditions (e.g. clarity, tangibility of rewards, absence of veto-players). Within these lines of analysis (as we will show in the next section), Ukraine makes an ideal candidate country. However, to comprehensively understand 'membership politics', it is also essential to address the contextual interpretation of the norms posed by the EU as part of its accession conditionality. This requires a shift from a unidirectional norm-giver/norm-taker perspective closely assigned to conditionality approaches, to a broader perspective. Hence, combining conditionality with contestation also allows us to capture the impact of multiple actor-constellations and strategic alliances, as well as the variety of mutual demands. Furthermore, contestation adds a bottom-up perspective to the largely top-down oriented conditionality approach. It is therefore indispensable to conceptualise and address contestation in order to understand the key challenges of placing democratic values on the EU's accession agenda—under not only increased geopolitical pressure, but while a war is raging on the EU's doorstep.

Conditionality as a Still-Prevalent Mechanism of EU Enlargement[2]

The patterns of conditionality established by the EU for the Eastern enlargement in 2004 were the most comprehensive in history (Grabbe 2002). Concurrently, the effectiveness of this conditionality has been theorised, differentiating at the most basic level, between positive (carrots) and negative (sticks) conditionality by providing incentives for change (rewards) and threatening with sanctions (withholding benefits) (Gateva 2015; Schimmelfennig and Scholtz 2008). Theories trying to explain the impact of conditions on national contexts of applicant states put emphasis on either a) the strategic calculation logic of actors involved; b) the process of socialisation (internalisation) of EU rules; or c) the added-value of EU rules for the solution of domestic problems (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005; Zhelyazkova et al. 2019).

The External Incentives Model draws on the understanding of rationalist bargaining, "which is actor-centred and based on a logic of consequences" (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005, 2020). The outcome of bargaining processes depends on the relative bargaining power of the

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[2] We thank Per Christian Thomsen for his helpful support in this part.

actors involved. Applying this model to the context of the Europeanisation of Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs), Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005) hold that the effectiveness of EU conditionality considerably depends not only on the clarity, tangibility and credibility of rewards, but equally on either the absence of veto players in the national decision-making context or on the influence of third (intervening) actors. Target governments weigh domestic costs against the benefits of compliance with EU rules. Conditionality in the absence of an accession perspective (as in the case of the ENP) has thus only a limited effect (Kelley 2006), there being a substantial gap between the expectations of the EaP countries and the integration offers of the EU (Delcour and Wolczuk 2021; Sydoruk and Tyshchenko 2018; Wolczuk et al. 2017). The credibility of EU rewards is essential for "overcoming considerable domestic costs in the pre-accession periods" (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2020).

The constructivist Social Learning Model conceptualises actors as a community of norms and values. "[W]hether a non-member state adopts EU rules depends on the degree to which it regards EU rules and its demands for rule adoption as appropriate in terms of the collective identity, values and norms" (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005). The process itself becomes more relevant as conditionality shapes perceptions and interest (Hughes et al. 2004), so allowing opportunities and access for Civil Society Organisations (CSO) (Halpin and Fraussen 2017; Vidačak 2021).

The Lesson-Drawing Model puts emphasis on EU rules as being 'effective remedies' to domestic challenges. Hence, here it is less about the considerations of EU rewards for rule adoption and more about the responses to domestic dissatisfaction with the status quo (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005).

Despite their conceptual differences, these models address one key question: is it possible to establish conditions that are conducive to a profound transformation of candidate countries according to EU standards and prescriptions?

According to all three models, Ukraine seems like the perfect accession and transformation candidate. The renewed emphasis of the 'geopolitical' EU on enlargement strengthens the credibility of the promise, and the new methodology contributes to clarity and increases (tangible) rewards along the way. There seems to be a broad (elite and social) consensus in Ukraine, and an active civil society puts pressure on political elites

to continue on their European path. Thus, European values and norms resonate with a Ukrainian society, whose belief in democracy and demand for transparency has been considerably strengthened following the Revolution of Dignity and the presidential elections of 2019, which was proof of an ordered change of power (Onuch 2022). Additionally, the close linkage of EU accession with reconstruction plans (Becker et al. 2022) for Ukraine makes successful EU integration an effective remedy for domestic challenges.

However, in all models of conditionality, we discern a problem with the assumption of the EU as being a monolithic actor with an uncontested content of EU-wide rules, independent of context. Not only is enlargement highly contested among EU Member States, on whose unanimous support any accession progress depends (Kochenov 2008), but also the EU's self-perception of being entirely 'objective', treating all countries and issues equally, has been questioned. Mechanisms of compromise are integral parts of conditionality in assessing whether, and how, standards set by the EU have been fulfilled (Hughes et al. 2005; Sasse 2008; Schimmelfennig 2008). The war and the geopolitical pressures arising from it (on both Ukraine and the EU) adds additional highly politicised levers for strategic actors on both sides. Approaches to 'norm contestation' in IR research provide us with an innovative lens with which to study the contestation of EU conditionality.

Contestation as a Second Analytical Pillar

"All normative structures generate disputes" (Sandholtz 2008), emerging "from the fact that norm application and implementation is reviewed and discussed in the domestic context" (Wiener and Puetter 2009). This is true for EU norms as well. Contestation is defined as a "social practice [that] entails objection to specific issues that matter to people" (Wiener 2014). Norms can be contested at several levels. Wiener (2014, 2017) differentiates between the contestation of fundamental norms (e.g. rule of law), organisational principles (e.g. rule of law mechanisms) and standardised procedures or regulations (e.g. specific rule of law implementation). The latter (Type 3 norms in Wiener's conceptualisation) generate little moral objection but are likely 'to contravene individual interests at the implementation stage' (Wiener 2014) of an international treaty. The focus on norm contestation provides an opportunity to move beyond centring on the aptness of local conditions for norm adoption and towards an

understanding of how the meaning of norms is constituted in given contexts (Tholens and Groß 2015) as they resonate with local beliefs, norms and societal demands. Although a formal agreement has been concluded, norms remain to be 'validated' in domestic contexts (Wiener 2008; Niemann and Schillinger 2017). Ukraine's accession process to the EU is guided at the current stage by both the Conclusions of the European Council on Ukraine's membership on June 2 and 3, 2022 (including the conditions specified in the Commission's opinion on membership application of Ukraine), and by the DCFTA/Association Agreement. Although the 'rule of law' provisions touch upon fundamental norms, we do not expect much of contestation at this level, based on the public and mutual assurance of "Ukraine belonging to the European family" (Ursula von der Leyen, Twitter, 8.8.2022; Volodymyr Zelenskyy, 2023) and on previous studies on the Eastern Partnership (EaP) showing Ukraine's irreversible civilisational European decision (Vieira 2021). Nevertheless, conditionality transposes these common values into tangible demands for Ukraine to transform its political and legal system, leading us to observe applicatory contestation. Applicatory contestation does not question the moral core of a norm but emerges around the question of whether a norm is appropriate for a given situation, which actions are required for norm implementation and which norm is to be prioritised if several norms apply (Deitelhoff and Zimmermann 2020). Despite Ukraine's eagerness to join the Union, the EU has acknowledged the fulfilment of its conditionality as a prerequisite for becoming a member, while continually emphasising its unprecedented solidarity and support for Ukraine. Still, different interpretations are possible as to what comprises full compliance, and the time frames for accession might also turn out to be contentious. Hansen-Magnussen et al. (2020) point us to the Janus-faced quality of contestation: while being a virtue for clarifying the norm content (and thus an opportunity for rule acceptance), it seems to be a vice for achieving compliance (as compliance means overcoming contestation). Contestation is not necessarily always voiced, and indirect (behavioural) contestation often leads to ineffective implementation mechanisms (Stimmer and Wisken 2019). For the WB candidates, studies have shown different levels of 'implicit contestation' (Hasić et al. 2020). We may also encounter similar practices in Ukraine with regard to the implementation of the Association Agreement, but these practices are visible over a longer period, whereas our focus here is on the short term,

during the early candidate status phase. Therefore, we restrict our analysis to explicitly voiced contestation.

As summarised by Thevenin et al. (2020), the modes of contestation emerge from the variety of actors engaging in the contestation, the levels of contestation and the substance. This broadens the view to include the multiplicity of stakeholders and their potential to engage with and contest norms (Wiener 2022), thereby making these newer debates in IR also relevant for studying EU foreign policy. Neither the EU nor Ukraine is a monolithic actor. The internal contestation of European Foreign Policy—and in this vein, also accession—has grown because of increased politicisation of this policy area (Barbé and Morillas 2019). We also expect to find diverse approaches to EU demands within Ukraine. To analyse the contestation of conditionality in the Ukrainian accession process, we propose the concept of a field of contestation, where contestation is not to be understood as Ukrainian resistance to particular aspects of EU rules but as a web of interaction between different actors engaging with norms based on their social context. By approaching norm contestation as a constitutive feature of the accession process and by having a more context-sensitive approach to reforms (Webb 2018, 414), we speak to a broader literature on the 'contestedness' of the EU in its foreign relations (Johansson-Nogués et al. 2019; Müller et al. 2021; Del Sarto and Tholens 2020; Niemann and Hoffmann 2019).

Contesting Pathways of Enlargement Conditionality

Anghel and Jones understand the enlargement process as a series of imperfect solutions to problems along the way (Anghel and Jones 2022). This relates perfectly to our conjecture that despite the good faith and determination of both sides to move forward in the accession process, contestation arises and will probably require ad hoc solutions to keep the accession process on track. At this early stage, the focus is on 'democratic conditionality', "the *sine qua non* political condition of accession to the EU" (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2008). Compliance with the conditions set by the European Commission, and its opinion on membership application, requires a re-building of the political and legal system according to the EU's liberal-democratic values. Building on previous unfavourable experiences, the EU is keen to 'tie-down' a democratic transition which is fully committed to the rule of law. Hence, it provides very clear and detailed conditions (including sanctions for backsliding) and
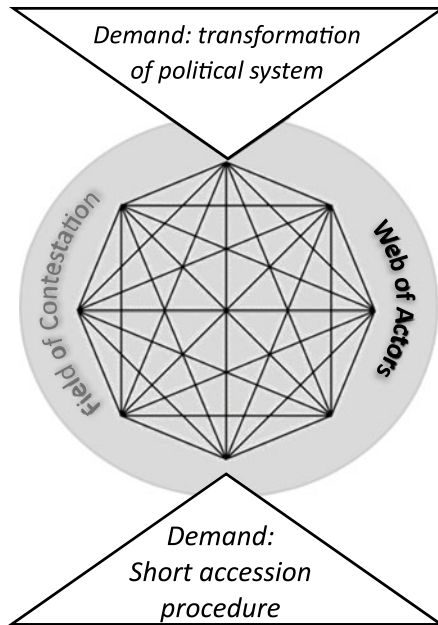
the fundamentals chapter determines the pace and success of the nego-tiation process. The EU, thus, has leverage, and its rewards and costs are relatively clear and credible. In accordance with the External Incen-tives Model—and considering there are hardly any relevant stakeholders opposing further EU integration—we could expect a quite uncontested transposition of EU demands (at least for the conditions set by the Commission in its opinion on the candidate status), with the only 'external' unknown being the further progress of the war.

However, Ukraine is not merely the recipient of European demands but itself asserts a swift accession process.[3] Against the argument of strict conditionality, Ukraine adamantly demands recognition for its perceived sacrifices for Europe. While this does not challenge the principles of conditionality, the full picture can only be understood, if we addition-ally consider the scope of contestation of the rules, norms and the EU's accession process. Contestation is likely to arise on two levels: first, concerning the EU's expectations towards Ukraine as to which trans-formation achievements are sufficient for further progress and, second, between the European Commission and the EU's Member States, espe-cially as the latter tend to 'apply the brakes' on the accession. Focusing on contestation allows us to capture the politicisation of EU conditions, and in particular the mobilisation of different understandings of norm content and norm application in a field of contestation.

Graphic 8.1 illustrates our model of analysis:

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[3] To overcome the dichotomous thinking of the EU as demanding/offering institu-tions and Ukraine (as well as other EaP and ENP countries) as being recipients of the EU's democracy promotion strategies, the EU's practices and respective contestation in conjunction with democracy support is reconceptualised in the Horizon Europe project *SHAPEDEM-EU Rethinking and Reshaping the EU's Democracy Supporting Its Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods,* https://shapedem-eu.eu/.

European Union: Political Conditionality

*Demand: transformation
of political system*

Field of Contestation

Web of Actors

*Demand:
Short accession
procedure*

Ukraine: limits of transformation

Graph 8.1   Analytical framework

In our research, we employ the qualitative method of document analysis. The chosen documents are textual devices of different kinds and quality, and target different potential audiences. These include official EU and Council of Europe (CoE) documents, Ukrainian and international printed media documents, publications from international, European and Ukrainian think tanks and positions from CSOs within Ukraine. We presuppose that all documents are "artefacts that are created for a particular purpose, crafted according to social convention to serve a function of sorts" (Coffey 2014). Within our selection of documents for qualitative analysis, we reflect upon their original purpose and audience while being aware that their narrative structure is closely linked to contexts of production and intended audiences.

Issues of Sovereignty and Timing: Sketching the Field of Contestation

Due to the latent danger of democratic 'backsliding', the enlargement process in recent years has been characterised by a "principle of mistrust" (Kochenov and Janse 2022). In turn, this has led to a steadily increasing emphasis on '**fundamentals**' in order to make sure that new members become stable liberal democracies and do not succumb to backsliding. All current reform proposals focus on better incentives (but also stricter sanctions) to induce a true 'value' transformation. Fulfilling all political conditions is regarded as essential for a successful alignment with the acquis in all other policy areas. The European Commission has assessed the progress of Ukraine in the 'Fundamentals Chapters' section (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, Justice, Freedom and Security, Public Procurement, Statistics and Financial Control) stating its opinion on Ukraine's application for EU membership in June 2022 (European Commission 2022) and in a follow-up analytical report in February 2023 (European Commission 2023b). Candidate status was granted to Ukraine by the European Council under the condition that several conditions were swiftly completed. For most aspects covered by this cluster, the Commission certified Ukraine in February 2023 as having "some level of preparation" and at least partial alignment with the acquis. In many instances, the problem is not with legislation or strategic planning but with implementation, resulting from insufficient funding, lack of sufficiently trained staff and low accountability. The Council's Conclusion (February 9) thus also acknowledges "the considerable efforts that Ukraine has demonstrated in recent months towards meeting the objectives underpinning its candidate status for EU membership" (European Council 2023). But is this progress sufficient to guarantee quick progress on the opening of accession negotiations?

In our analysis of this early accession process under the condition of war, we move away from a static understanding of EU norms and conditions as a 'simple given', we address their inherent contestedness already at this early stage of transposition and we focus on actor-constellations and possible strategic alliances in this field of contestation. We show this by addressing first, the 'rule of law' conditionality, in particular the reform of the judiciary, and second, the politicisation of time in this process.

Contesting the Sovereignty to Regulate

Ukraine's own report on compliance with the Association Agreement (Ukrainian Government 2023) concluded that its implementation progressed considerably in 2022. A separate chapter on the candidate status of Ukraine ascertains the implementation of an already significant part of the required conditions. This serves to show that Ukraine is doing its part for a speedy start of accession negotiations. A CEPS analysis of these new mechanisms, which have been introduced in response to the conditions set by the EU, concludes that while the conditions concerning the media environment and human rights have been mainly implemented, further efforts are required in the remaining areas, particularly with regard to the amended law on the selection procedure for judges of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine.

The judiciary is still one of the least trusted branches in Ukraine: an opinion poll in 2019 found that more than 70% of Ukrainians did not trust the judicial system; and distrust in the Constitutional Court was slightly above 60% (Council of Europe and Razumkov Centre 2023; Maasikas 2021). The judiciary acquis of the EU stresses the independence, professionalism/integrity, impartiality and efficiency of the judiciary. Ukraine joining the Council of Europe in 1995 was based on the understanding that Ukraine was to reform its legal and judicial system and to ensure the independence of the judiciary in conformity with the Council of Europe standards (notably a reform of the appointment and tenure of judges) (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 1995). A major reform of the Constitutional Court in 2016 was commended by the Venice Commission, particularly the introduction of a competitive selection of judges. However, gateways for undue political influence persisted (European Commission for Democracy Through Law/Venice Commission 2016). In its urgent opinion on the reform of the Constitutional Court in 2020, the Venice Commission restated the problem of "politically motivated appointments" and the need to ensure not only professional qualities but also a "high moral character". The Commission suggested a reform of the appointment system, particularly the establishment of a screening body including highly reputed international experts (European Commission for Democracy Through Law/Venice Commission 2020).

After receiving candidate status, Ukraine pushed forward with the reform of the selection procedure of judges with a draft law, on which

it requested an opinion from the Venice Commission in October 2022. The Venice Commission, as a consequence, issued an urgent opinion on the draft law on November 23, 2022. It commented on the aim of the legislative amendment to set up an Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) with the task of assisting the existing three appointing bodies "in assessing the moral qualities and legal competences of candidate judges of the Constitutional Court", consisting of three national and three international experts, thus following up the recommendation of the previous opinions. One key recommendation was "to provide in the law for a solution in cases where the AGE cannot reach a decision" (European Commission for Democracy Through Law/Venice Commission 2022a, 2022b). The final opinion of December 19, 2022, dealt with this in more detail and added that "for as long as the AGE will be operating with international members, the number of AGE members should be increased to seven. The seventh member should be on the international quota" (European Commission for Democracy Through Law/Venice Commission 2022b). In the meantime, Ukraine had already passed the law six days before this opinion was published—without including these recommendations. The European Commission consequently urged Ukraine to follow up on the new recommendations in order to "advance in its EU membership process" (Statement by the Spokesperson, 13.1.2023).

On May 5, 2023, President Zelenskyy met with a delegation of the Venice Commission to confirm Ukraine's readiness to continue with the reform of the Constitutional Court (President of Ukraine 2023), pointing to a case of 'applicatory contestation in good faith'. Contestation, however, goes deeper and evolves around the issue of 'limited sovereignty' of accession countries. In the field of 'fundamentals', the European Commission draws on the Council of Europe's (CoE) Venice Commission to demand very specific and detailed judicial reforms, putting the selection procedure of judges at the Constitutional Court under international supervision—a demand hardly any of the current EU Member States would accept. The Venice Commission has acknowledged the existence of various judicial systems in Europe but has turned to innovative and less politically controllable selection procedures for new democracies, procedures it does not deem as being necessary for older democracies because of their legal and democratic cultures (Damjanovski et al. 2020, 8). Ruslan Stefanchuk, the speaker of the Ukrainian Parliament, considers the conclusion of the Venice Commission as "recommendatory in nature" and "sometimes … detached from reality". In his opinion, Ukraine

cannot give up on its sovereignty and "cannot have someone elect judges to the Constitution Court" for it (Sudovo-juridična publikacija 2023) (referring to the higher quorum of international members in the AGE). Hence, we observe **sovereignty contestation** as political actors (who can become veto players, e.g. members of the parliament) question the EU's legitimacy to encroach on Ukraine's sovereignty so deeply. This resistance against European interference has already been described for other Eastern European countries. The "West's right to evaluate" (Krastev and Holmes 2018) has been increasingly perceived as a loss of sovereignty and is regarded as one source of illiberal resurgence. Likewise, it also connects to a more general notion that claims to sovereignty are increasingly politicised (also within the EU) in multidimensional conflicts. In particular, CEE countries have challenged the EU's legitimacy to promote reforms in areas central to state sovereignty, notably judicial reform (Brack et al. 2019; Coman and Leconte 2019).

However, the web of actors is more diverse: CSOs actively build on the transformative pressure on national institutions from outside in this accession procedure. By issuing a joint statement, they urge "international partners not to participate in the fake reform of the Constitutional Court" and demand that the Venice Commission's and the EU's positions "are taken into account by Parliament through amending the law" (Zmina 2023). Their concern is that the current version of the selection procedure allows undue political influence and endangers the independence of the constitutional court, as politically appointed members of the AGE will have decisive influence on the selection of future judges of the Constitutional Court. A civil society with the ultimate goals of guaranteeing standards of rule of law and transparency and fighting de-oligarchisation and state capture (goals it has defended in two revolutions) significantly raises the costs for 'non-alignment' and constantly challenges Ukrainian decision-makers to put their European commitments into action as a shared community of values. They regard the 'sovereignty argument' as a pretext to hedge not only the judicial system from undue external control but the whole political system from sincere reform in order to protect vested interests. By demanding stricter democratic conditionality implementation, they aim to keep a high level of pressure on Ukrainian authorities. Hence, CSOs support external interventions as they perceive the EU's democratic conditionality as being a means to achieve their own goal of increased democratisation.

Time-Frame Contestation

Time matters for accession—for both sides. For Ukraine, only a permanent entrenchment in European institutions and programmes can provide the scope of security they are pursuing. Four central arguments of the Ukrainian government for 'fast-track' accession can be discerned: (1) EU membership increases Ukraine's commitment to continue fighting against Russia for self-defence and for the benefit of the EU, (2) Ukraine has earned the prospect of membership through its dedicated struggle and enormous sacrifices in a war triggered by the country's western course, (3) Membership is an essential building block for a victorious outcome of the war, (4) A positive impact can only be exerted if accession takes place expeditiously (summary of several twitter messages by Volodymyr Zelenskyy between February and June 2022).

Among the Ukrainian population, the approval of EU accession is about 90% (Radio Svoboda 2022); almost 70% hope to join within a few years; and about a third would like to join within 1–2 years, depending on the course of the war (Rating Group 2022). Additionally, Ukrainian CSOs have demanded candidate status (Cedos 2022; Civil Society Manifesto 2022) and see the accession process as a chance to find support for their own demands for transparency and democracy within European institutions. Considering our web of actors, Ukrainian political elites, civil society and population unite around the demand for swift accession. A clear objective of Ukraine's 2022 report on the implementation of the Association Agreement, with a special chapter on the fulfilment of the conditions for candidate status, is to signal the country's rapid progress in fulfilling all pending requirements to begin accession negotiations.

Time is also critical for the EU: in an increasingly competitive world order and under the impression of war in Ukraine, (waged in order to abolish the liberal "Western" world order), the EU must prove that it has the ability to attract, transform and stabilise its immediate neighbourhood—and to live up to the given accession promises (see for the "distinctive liberal outlook" of liberal power EU Joergensen in this volume). Since the last successful accession in 2013, time has become a more contentious issue. The WB countries have increasingly lost hope in the successful conclusion of accession procedures, leading to a "deep disappointment" that fuels nationalist rhetoric and democratic backsliding (Brzozowski and Makszimov 2021). This growing Euroscepticism is a result of "the actual methods, timing and impact" of the accession

process (Belloni 2016), which reflects the dissatisfaction with the pace of accession (Bieber 2020). This is also the result of a more 'politicised' accession process, managed in an intergovernmental way based on "more uncompromising nationalist Member State demands" (O'Brennan 2014) (for a detailed analysis of the "hostage-taking of foreign policy decision making" Müller and Slominski in this volume). "Enlargement resistance" (Economides 2020), due to the increasing heterogeneity of interests and resulting difficulties in building consensus within the EU institutions, as well as problems with rule of law mechanisms (Bélanger and Schimmelfennig 2021), have dimmed the accession perspective of the WB states. This is likely to remain an issue with Ukraine, despite all the expressed solidarity. Contestation of the speed of integration has been prevalent since the Ukraine's announcement, in February 2022, of membership application of the EU (Gawrich and Wydra 2023 *forthcoming*). Previous publications on the Western Balkans have already stressed that accession puts the pro-accession European Commission against accession-sceptical Member States (Belloni 2016; Ker-Lindsay et al. 2020). This conflict is already discernible with regard to Ukraine. While Poland's Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, believes that an "accelerated path" to the EU is possible for Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova (Reuters 2023), Portugal's Prime Minister, António Costa, warns against dampening unrealistic expectations (República Portuguesa 2022). Others, out of fairness to the WB countries, oppose both preferential treatment of Ukraine and Moldova (e.g. Netherlands and Austria) (Stuart Leeson 2022 and Tweets by Austrian chancellor Nehammer) and giving preference to alternative policy models, such as the European Political Community (EPC) (Politico 2022). The attitude towards enlargement is also ambivalent among the EU's populations. According to the Winter Eurobarometer 2022/23, 52% of the EU population is in favour of enlargement in the next few years, without specifying the accession countries or the specific period. The variance can be illustrated by the figures for France (33% in favour, 54% against) and Lithuania (73% in favour, 13% against). In Germany and Austria, rejection predominates with over 50% in each (European Commission 2023a).

This 'time-frame' contestation is likely to have two effects: first, not only are different assessments of progress likely (already at this stage, Ukrainian authorities measure progress by 'enactment of laws', while the European Commission stresses capacity building and implementation), but we also expect increasing contestation of rewards, as every

step towards membership is dependent on the unanimous support of Member States. While the Commission might press forward (at least rhetorically), it is likely that Member States will continue on the path to enlargement with 'their brakes on'. Second, and as a consequence, this might lead to similar frustrations in Ukraine, as are discernible in the Western Balkans, and will dampen the EU's attractiveness and thus its 'transformative power'.

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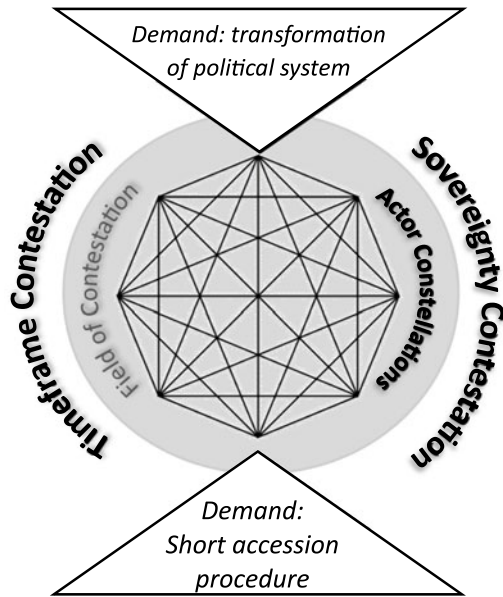
Ukraine: limits of transformation

Graph 8.2   Contesting   conditionality—time frame and sovereignty

Concluding Remarks

On the one hand, Ukraine's EU accession process represents the current culmination of a long-learning curve for the EU regarding past mistakes in enlargement processes. The lessons learned are particularly evident in the increased relevance of norms and values in the accession process, which is why the fundamentals and their role in the accession process were chosen for this paper. However, the particular relevance of democratic norms and values in the accession process also increases the importance of the social responsiveness of accession because democratic norms cannot be decreed, but lived. This justifies the combination of conditionality and contestation used in this case study, as the contestation approach allows for a better understanding of the bottom-up perspective.

On the other hand, an accession process with a country that has been exposed to a brutal war is an exceptional new challenge for the EU. This increases the moral-ethical commitment of all involved because accession is perceived as being more existential than before. The overall uncertainty about the war's outcome and the Ukrainian authorities' management capacities is enormous. We therefore observe a particular caution on the EU side and a lot of empathy on the Ukrainian side. The increased importance of the fundamentals in the accession process can lead to challenges for Ukraine, in that the overall stress of survival, the general exceptional situation, can hardly favour the growth of a democratic culture.

Against this background, we attempted to link previous, traditional understandings of conditionality with concepts of contestation from general international relations in an innovative and constructive way, in order to grasp the politicisation of the accession process and to put emphasis on the challenges for the EU—amplified by the war in Ukraine—of defending democratic values while remaining (or becoming) a credible geopolitical actor, able to promote its accession procedures.

An accession process in the context of a brutal war can give rise to a particularly high number of hopes and fears. The analytical facet of contestation, according to Wiener, inherent in all international interactions, has been relatively overlooked in enlargement studies. This, we assume, is a helpful broadening of perspectives on EU accession processes because by linking conditionality and contestation, we are able to look at a total of four levels: the EU institutions and their Member States; and Ukrainian authorities and society.

We consider our analysis as an exploratory test of the application of our contesting conditionality concept. An EU accession process has never been as politicised from the outset as Ukraine's ongoing accession process. Additionally, unlike in previous accessions, the pace of accession is also a contested issue among all stakeholders involved. We address this conceptually through the 'Time-frame Contestation'. This contestation exists among EU Member States, between the European Commission and the Council, and between Ukraine and the EU.

The EU's focus on fundamentals entails completely different modes of interaction in the area of democratic conditionality since there is more pressure from the European side to secure democratic and rule of law principles. This impinges on traditional understandings of contestation, especially given the Venice Commission's recommendations, which have prioritised international 'supervisors'. This 'intrusion' has been met with resistance by political actors but also with calls for more support by CSOs.

On both issues, we observe that the field of contestation is not characterised by an opposition between the EU and Ukraine but rather within a web of actors engaging in this contestation, building alliances and strategies to fix their respective interpretations of conditionality. We assume that our analytical design is also suitable for studying other accession processes of EaP and WB countries. This could also be linked to qualitative and discursive network analysis (Ahrens 2018; Leifeld 2020) to gain deeper insight into the dynamics between actors and should be related to current literature on the increasing politicisation of sovereignty (Crespy et al. 2021).

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Still Normative Power Europe? The Perception of the EU in Ukraine Amidst the Russian War of Aggression

Kateryna Zarembo

Introduction

The period after the full-scale Russian invasion of February 24, 2022, marked a new chapter in EU-Ukraine relations. On February 28, 2022, Ukraine applied for membership of the EU and obtained the status of a candidate country on June 23, 2022. According to the latest opinion polls (Rating 2023), as many as 87% of Ukrainians support Ukraine's accession to the EU. Ukraine has also become the first country in EU history, for which the Union bought and delivered weapons (Knodt and Wiesner, this volume), together with comprehensive financial support and eleven sanction packages against Russia applied as of the time of writing (July 2023).

Once one zooms in, away from the general picture, things are, as usual, more complicated. While Ukraine received its candidate status through a

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fast track procedure, the European Commission put forward seven reform conditions before the accession negotiations could be started and declared that even the candidate status itself is conditional based on the fulfilment of those requirements. This was an unprecedented step of "accession negotiations suspension" in EU practice (Sydorenko 2022). While the EU was united in solidarity with Ukraine, the degree of the solidarity varied, for example in arms supply (of which Germany's consent to provide Leopard-tanks as late as January 2023 is one of the most prominent cases) and readiness to isolate Russia (in this case Hungary's policy is the most outstanding, with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán espousing cooperation with Russia and watering down or blocking the EU sanctions packages against it (Knodt and Wiesner, this volume; Müller and Slominski, this volume).

Appreciating these nuances leads to the posing of various questions in both practical and theoretical realms. On the practical side, what does this *Zeitenwende* mean for the perception of the EU in Ukraine? Did the EU reaction towards the Russian war against Ukraine live up to the expectations of the Ukrainian elites and general public? More importantly, how did this affect the EU normative power in Ukraine, i.e. the power to define what is normal and set standards in various domains? From a theoretical perspective, one may wonder if the concept of Normative Power Europe is still relevant at all or whether need new concepts are needed to describe the extent of the EU transformative power in its neighbourhood. After all, if normative power stands for "shaping conceptions of "normal" in international relations" (Manners 2002), then is the drastic change in the EU's external policy not rather a reaction to new (ab)normality, than to its proactive shaping?

This chapter aims to explore the extent to which the EU normative power concept remains valid for Ukraine after the full-scale Russian invasion of February 2022. In order to do this the perceptions of Ukraine's civil society are studied—the opinion leaders who are also experts in EU-Ukraine relations. In this chapter, "perceptions" are defined as the "result of the subjective and psychological cognition of the observer rather than the objective reflection of the object that is being observed" (Shiming 2010, cited in Axyonova and Zubko 2017).

The chapter unfolds as follows. Firstly, I briefly explain the relation between Normative Power Studies and perception literature. Secondly, I provide a brief overview of the existing research on the perception of the EU in Ukraine. Thirdly, I describe the research method and present the

data sample. I then present the collected data in "Findings" and relate it to the existing theoretical debates in "Discussion". Finally, I provide concluding remarks and suggest avenues for further research.

Normative Power Europe and Perception Literature: Theoretical Overview

Ian Manners, the father of the 'Normative Power Europe' concept defines it quite simply: "the ability to shape conceptions of 'normal' in international relations" (Manners 2002). According to Manners, the EU normative basis is composed of nine norms: five core norms (peace, liberty, democracy, rule-of-law and human rights) and four minor norms (social solidarity, antidiscrimination, sustainable development and good governance). This list prompts that the EU normative power is value-based, since six out of nine norms (freedom, democracy, the rule-of-law, human rights, non-discrimination and solidarity) derive directly from Article 2 of the Treaty of European Union, which defines its values.

In later years the concept "has been redefined by adding the notion of "ethical power", i.e. "a force for good" (Larsen 2014; Manners 2008). Zielonka (2023) ties EU normative power with "the right moral choices". Haukkala (2008) is probably right in saying that normative power is a normative device, meaning that it is prescriptive in nature: it tells us not only what the EU *is*, but rather what the EU *should be, or do.*

While the concept of Normative Power has been criticized for a lack of analytical clarity, I would argue that the concept's analytical potential is defined by the choice of method. Indeed, the profound difference of the normative power over other types of power, e.g. military or economic, is that it is subjective. It cannot only be measured in available countable resources, like weapons or assets. Even if certain qualities should be present, e.g. the above mentioned norms, in the case of normative power it takes two to tango: a norm-setter only can be acknowledged as such if the norm-receiver perceives it to be so. Manners himself acknowledges this by stating that "the EU's normative power is sustainable only if it is felt to be legitimate by those who practice and experience it" (Manners 2008). Manners himself refers to Nicolaïdis and Nicolaïdis who formulated the following principle: "Fundamentally, normative power can only be applied credibly under a key condition: consistency between internal policies and external prescriptions and actions" (2006).

Evidence for this point has also been found in research: Larsen (2014) bridged studies on normative power Europe and EU perception studies, finding that the perception of the EU as normative power is far from universal. Rather, there is an apparent correlation between the Eurointegration ambitions of the aspirant countries in Eastern Europe and the strength of the EU Normative Power in these countries. This does not hold true for the rest of the world.

The EU's normative power in Eastern Europe has mostly been viewed through the mechanisms and tools of EU democracy support (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004; Börzel and Risse 2012; Zhyznomirska 2019) and their effects on the political regimes in the region at the macro institutional level (Vachudova 2008; Börzel and Schimmelfennig 2017). Since 2014, a new strand of literature has appeared, focusing on the EU normative power in the wake of Russian aggression (Veebel 2019; Veebel and Markus 2018). However, these works tend to focus on the norm-setter (the EU) rather than the norm-receivers. It was only recently that normative power studies started orienting themselves towards the norm-receivers perspective (see, e.g., Králiková, 2022). This chapter aims at filling this gap by looking into the perception of the EU as a Normative Power in Ukraine in the wake of the full-scale Russian invasion.

Perceptions of the EU in Ukraine: What Do We Know?

EU Perception Studies as a field, and more specifically EU Perception Studies vis-à-vis Ukraine, are championed by Natalia Chaban and her coauthors (Chaban et al. 2018a; Chaban and Elgström 2021; Chaban and Knodt 2020, to name just a few). Chaban et al. make a number of important theoretical contributions to the field. Firstly, they engage with the EU-centrism of the NPE concept, shifting the focus from the norm-setter (the EU) to norm-receiver (the third countries to which the EU exports its norms). Chaban et al. (2015) underline that they treat the term "norm-receivers" as neutral, acknowledging "the potential for different outcomes in the norm-reception process". In their seminal book (2021), Chaban and Elgström underline the agency of the perceiver, highlighting that "it is not a passive receiver of information from the EU but an active and complete agent with its own self-vision" (p. 33). They thus link the perception literature to Manners' notion of a "cultural filter", i.e. the local context which affects the adoption or contestation of EU norms (Manners

2002). Chaban et al. conclude that a cultural filter is "the key aspect of the productive dialogue between the sender and receiver of norms and values" (Chaban et al. 2015).

The perceptions of the EU in Ukraine have been tracked since approximately the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, based on media analysis (Orlova 2013; Horbyk 2014), public opinion polls (Chaban and Chaban 2018), think tank publications (Axyonova and Zubko 2017) and elite interviews (Chaban and Elgström 2021; Chaban and Knodt 2020; Sabatovych et al. 2019, etc.). The recurrent trend in the studies before Euromaidan, i.e. before 2014, was twofold: firstly, the EU was perceived as a norm-setter, with its values and norms sustainably seen positively; secondly, that Ukraine was "deficiently European" (Horbyk 2014), "fitting Europe" only in historical and geographical but not in cultural, political, social or economic terms (Chaban and Chaban 2018) (a cognitive "blend" between the EU and Europe was also common). The EU was perceived as an ideal, a dream to strive to, as well as the ultimate authority: "the dominant Ukrainian view of Europe are the categories of a successful and advanced society, a symbolic Europe of values Ih imposes "attaining Europe" as both a task of, and a path, to modernization. [….] These values constitute the symbolic Europe and thus empower those who can associate with them to speak from a position of authority" (Horbyk 2014, see also Chaban and Chaban 2018 and Eumagine).

The second wave of the perception of the EU studies in Ukraine, which starts with Euromaidan and, tentatively concludes with the full-scale Russian invasion, offers more nuances in perception. The EU in the post-Maidan period still carried a very positive image in general (Axyonova and Zubko 2017), with the persisting asymmetry in relations, "where the EU is an agenda setter and Ukraine is a weaker partner with little (if any) ability to change its position" (Sabatovych et al. 2019, also author's interviews in 2020). Axyonova and Zubko (2017) tracked "the transformative power" and "the model to follow" among the EU perceived images in Ukraine. The positive image was also not shattered by the Brexit referendum of 2016 (Chaban and Knodt 2020).

That said, the EU was not uncriticized in Ukraine. The EU first came under serious public criticism during Euromaidan in winter 2013–2014. The EU's hesitant stance and inaction were commented on by Getmanchuk and Solodkyy (2014): "Instead of a club of rich and fair we're having a club of disoriented and perpetually concerned". Another observer went as far as to say that "Europe is responsible for violence in

Kyiv because of its inaction and silent observation" (Sokolenko 2014, quoted in Horbyk 2014). "Neither government nor Europe hear us, people are forced to resort to uprising as the last option. So, we urge Europe to intervene and impose sanctions. If Europe just stands by watching, we can repeat Munich 1938". As Russia annexed Crimea and started an unproclaimed war in Ukraine's East, studies on the EU mediation effectiveness appeared, reflecting the expectations towards the EU regarding guaranteeing Ukraine security. Theoretically, these were tied less with the normative power literature and rather aimed at measuring effectiveness, be that at mediation (Elgström et al. 2018; Chaban et al. 2019a) or its CSDP missions in Ukraine (Zarembo 2017). These studies concluded that the EU was a (favourably) biased (towards Ukraine) mediator with inconsistent and weak policies. However, neither these deficiencies nor the perceived oversights in dialogue and cooperation (Chaban and Knodt 2020) seemed to significantly affect the perception of the EU as a "normative hegemon", with the EU's (favourably perceived) normative agenda-setting role and the EU's (more critically perceived) security role existing in parallel. The student–teacher metaphor remained in use, e.g. "The EU was compared to a demanding teacher, while Ukraine was a diligent student who accomplished all assignments, eager to learn and to implement market norms and values" (Chaban and Chaban 2018).

Methodology

This chapter thus poses the following question: How did the perception of the EU change in Ukraine after the full-scale Russian invasion?

The present study is based on elite interviews with civil society representatives, i.e. in-depth interviews with Ukrainian think tankers, opinion leaders and activists. While the definitions of who the "elites" are and whether they really stand up to the role to which they are attributed are various, one can assume that there is a consensus that these are "people who are chosen because of who they are or what position they occupy" (Hochschild 2009). In the case of the present chapter this stands for Ukrainian "EU professionals"—the individuals who have been dealing with the topic of EU-Ukraine relations and Ukraine's European integration as experts, think tankers, public intellectuals, journalists, etc.

Civil society representatives, rather than diplomats, government officials or members of the parliament, were chosen on purpose. In contrast

to the latter groups, bound by state agenda and/or "party lines", civil society representatives tend to be more outspoken and less prone to talk "diplomatically". Furthermore, the study unearths "expert perceptions", rather than perceptions of not necessarily well-informed "elites at large" or the general public. This allows us to gain insights and nuances of perceptions, which may not be visible to an outside observer but which may affect relations behind closed doors.

The sample was chosen based on the following criteria:

(1) Professional engagement with the topic of the EU and Ukraine's European integration for at least 10 years at the time of the study. This extensive expertise allows for reflection and comparison of perceptions of the EU throughout its holders' active career; additionally, it allows the perceptions of the EU to be put into perspective, especially against the backdrop of such seminal events in Ukraine's history as the Revolution of the Dignity in winter 2013–2014, the start of the Russian war in 2014 and especially the full-scale Russian invasion of 2022.

(2) Active public profile: a long-term reputation as a public analyst/ activist/journalist/etc., therefore "deliberately seeking to impact the policy choices of their government" (Chaban et al. 2018b).

(3) While the chosen respondents are, by virtue of their chosen professional path, likely to be positively biased towards the EU, it is specifically the change in the "pro-European core" that is being tested in this study.

The sample was first drafted based on knowledge and networks in the field and then expanded and/or validated by the "snow ball" technique in the course of the interviews. Some potential interviewees refused to participate due to their declared lack of knowledge about the EU. Altogether 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom in May–June 2023. The interviewees comprised of three think tankers, two local representatives of the donor community, two independent experts, one journalist, one activist, one human rights defender and one mid-level public official with long-term past engagement with civil society and speaking in their own capacity. The respondents' affiliations are summarized in Table 9.1.

The interviews lasted from 40 to 80 minutes. The language of the interviews was Ukrainian.

Table 9.1 Interview sample

	Start of professional engagement with the EU-Ukraine relations	Years of experience in the topic of the EU-Ukraine relations as of 2023	Occupation
1	2012	11	Activist
2	2010	13	Think tanker
3	2002	21	Representative of a donor organization
4	1999	24	Representative of a donor organization
5	2008	15	Journalist
6	2011	12	Human rights activist
7	2013	10	Public official
8	1999	24	Independent analyst
9	2013	10	Independent analyst
10	2000	23	Think tanker
11	2011	12	Think tanker

The respondents were asked to reflect on their perceptions of the EU throughout their active careers and asked very specifically whether and how their perception of the EU changed after the Revolution of the Dignity, the start of the Russian war and the Russian full-scale invasion, respectively (the interview guide is provided in Annex I). The assumption is that EU normative power could decrease in Ukraine if the respondents found the EU's response to the war inconsistent with its proclaimed values. The perception of EU normative power was operationalized through three categories: *affinity* (i.e. the extent to which the European choice is still attractive) (Chaban and Knodt 2020); *authority* (the extent to which Ukraine is ready to implement what the EU tells it to do); and *legitimacy* (the extent to which the EU policy is perceived as consistent with its declared values (Nicolaïdis and Nicolaïdis 2006). It should be noted that these three categories are interdependent and could partially overlap.

Several limitations of the paper should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample is admittedly rather limited, due to the limitedness of the "general population". Secondly, while the paper aims at mid and long-term perception reappraisal, the study itself is not longitudinal and relies on the respondents' memories, rather than a recorded perception of the past. While memory can be imprecise, I rely on the remembered instances

being "key events" (Moore 2014, p. 125, cited in Horbyk 2022), which makes them especially significant when tracing the dynamics of the perceptions.

Findings

Affinity

The respondents demonstrated an absolute and unequivocal consensus about Ukraine's European choice and European future. All the respondents stated that throughout their professional paths their perception of the EU was consistent and positive. Many of them also observed that with their gaining of more professional expertise their understanding of the EU became more nuanced and mature: the positive perception was constant. When asked what the EU represents for Ukraine, the responses were typically "a roadmap/driver for change", "a aspirational beacon", "civilization choice" or simply "future". Other responses employed the normative power vocabulary, calling the EU "a norm-setter" and "a source of standards" for Ukraine as well as "uncompromisable space for development". This was rather consistent with the previous findings.

Several important changes have been detected, however. Several respondents remarked that the psychological distance between Ukraine and the EU drastically receded after 2022 due to Ukraine's acceptance as a candidate country. As one respondent observed, "from a very amorphous concept the EU transformed into specific personalities, politicians, programmes […], a concrete negotiation partner". In other words, "the EU dream" suddenly became a reality to deal with on a daily basis.

An even more striking finding was the recurrent perception that the EU finally recognized Ukraine as a future member:

> The overcoming of the barrier from a neighbourhood – a third country, a neighbour, a partner – to a member of the family happened within months of 2022. […] Ukraine now *belongs to their map* (highlighted by K.Z.) (Interview D)

> The reaction to Ukraine's application [for the EU membership – K.Z.] confirmed that the statement that we are a part of the European family is not just an internal Ukrainian thing but that in the EU they also think that *they are like us* (italics K.Z.) (Interview G)

> I wrote before that for me the indication of the fact that the EU sees its future with Ukraine would be when the motto "Ukraine is Europe" sounds not only in Kyiv but also in other European capitals. I remembered this when Zelenskyi visited Berlin in May and Olaf Scholz said in Ukrainian "Ukraine is Europe" (Interview J)

The metaphor of a family, as a synonym of recognition, reception and vicinity, was generally recurrent in many interviews. It is also noteworthy that the "us vs them" dichotomy which was observed in the previous studies, mentioned in this chapter, was substituted by a non-dichotomic "we".

Authority

The increased perception of affinity is also linked to the perceptions of authority. Many respondents directly or indirectly mentioned the principle of equality and/or equal partnership, upon which the EU-Ukraine relations are now being realized, in contrast to the asymmetry of the past. Not only Ukraine is perceived as shaping the EU policy towards itself but also even as shaping the EU's internal policies. As one Brussels-based respondent commented, "Ukraine is not only a recipient of all the decisions but also their contributor. We offer our vision and no one asks "Hey, why are you commenting on the EU agenda at all?" (Interview I).

While the EU norms and rules which Ukraine has to adopt in order to join the club were not contested by any respondent, many of them remarked that the EU is no longer "the ultimate judge" on what is right and what is wrong or "the golden standard". Several experts remarked on the shortcomings within the EU—of expertise, personnel or contextual background: "Let's take the reform of the Constitutional court, for example. Not all Member States which give Ukraine advice have a Constitutional court. So they don't know how it works. Or anti-oligarchic reform. They don't have oligarchs, they don't have such experience" (Interview J). Another respondent formulated it as follows: "The picture has changed. It is not so simple any more as twenty years ago, when there were teachers, better students, worse students and the preparation group. Now the teachers are not the carriers of the absolute truth any more. It also turned out that the best students are not the best after all. Or maybe they were the best at some point but then the history showed that completing one's studies fast doesn't necessarily translate into good

results in the end. Hungary is a case in point". (Interview D) Overall, many respondents shared the view that EU norm adaptation should take place in negotiations with the EU in view of Ukraine's interests, rather than being uncritically accepted.

Several respondents also remarked on the downside of such parity—that Ukrainian authorities have repeatedly tried to contest the EU norms in order to make them less painful for the domestic stakeholders and/or vested interests. According to them, this could lead to grave consequences if Ukraine's further integration process is more politically than achievement motivated. One of the experts shared their surprise at the unexpectedly positive evaluation of Ukraine's reform progress by the EU at the end of 2022, which did not match the perception of Ukraine's civil society. They suspected that the EU did this as a political support gesture for Ukraine but, if continued, could bring negative consequences once Ukraine is in the club.

Legitimacy

Since the respondents often mentioned the EU's values in the interviews (calling the EU a community of values, recalling that Ukraine is fighting for European values, etc.[1]), it was important to find out whether, in their view, the EU adhered to its own values.

The respondents mentioned multiple instances of disappointment with the EU's policies towards Ukraine. Several interviewees mentioned the process of the introduction of the visa-free regime for Ukraine, when Ukraine had to wait many months after implementing all the requirements while the EU was developing a suspension mechanism. To them it looked like the EU was not keeping its word. The human rights activist opined that the EU did not prioritize human rights in its reform leverage with Ukraine. As an example she mentioned the Rome statute which Ukraine signed in 2000 but still has not ratified. She perceived that the EU chose not to push human rights related reforms in contrast to, for example, anticorruption agenda, nor did the EU tie its financial conditionality to progress in this sphere.

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[1] It was ironic how one interviewee noted, "I am a cynic. However, with all my skeptical and cynical attitudes towards the EU, I still believe that with reservations, with asterisks, etc. the EU is a community of values".

However, the case most mentioned by every interviewee was the reaction of the European Union to the Russian annexation of the Crimea and hybrid war in the East, which, according to them, was too weak and too late. Several respondents shared the perception that fragmented sanctions towards Russia and continued trade with it, as well the construction of the Nord Stream II which the EU did nothing to prevent, could have sent the signal to the Kremlin that the costs of a full-scale invasion would not be too high.

Nevertheless, the equally widely shared perception was that, in 2022, the EU started "correcting its mistakes". Many respondents said that they were "impressed" by the EU and its unity in support towards Ukraine, from opening the borders for the Ukrainian refugees to granting Ukraine the candidate status while sacrificing some bureaucratic steps in the process ("not acting by the book") to stronger sanctions against Russia. If the dominant perception of EU policy in 2014 was disappointment, then the EU reaction in 2022 was evaluated by the experts as exceeding their expectations. It is important to note that the disappointment of 2014 did not undermine the perception of the EU as a norm-setter among the respondents—rather, the EU confirmed itself as a "toothless benevolent actor".

Discussion

The presented data allows the following observations.

Firstly, the initial assumption has been disproved. The EU continues to be perceived by the Ukrainian expert elites as a legitimate norm-setter. Moreover, in comparison with the perception of the EU policy in 2014, one can say that the EU reinstated itself in the eyes of Ukraine's civil society, exceeding their expectations. No euroscepticism of any kind was found among the respondents—vice versa, the EU is still reviewed as a roadmap for positive change. However, what has changed is the perception of the quality of this roadmap. The EU's requirements are no longer perceived uncritically. Hence, one can rather talk about *euromaturity* in Ukraine. After Ukraine became a candidate country, EU-Ukraine relations were perceived as being more equal and less as hierarchical, according to the sample. Interestingly, the "teacher-student" comparison gave way to a "family" metaphor, in which "family" stands for "equality" and "vicinity".

Moreover, Ukraine's affinity towards the EU has actually grown through the perception that the EU finally accepts Ukraine as being equal and, to continue the family metaphor, "native". This may mark the end of "self-orientalism" in Ukraine (drawing on the "orientalism" term introduced by Edward Said to denote the representation of "progressive" Europe with the "backward" Orient (East)), a kind of geopolitical inferiority complex, which characterized Ukraine's perception of the EU for decades.

Thirdly, even if some refer to the EU as a "regional normative hegemon" (Haukkala 2008), for Ukraine the EU is a decolonization tool to be used both against its Soviet legacy and, even more so, the Russian war, which negates Ukraine's right of sovereignty (Noutcheva and Zarembo, forthcoming). As one respondent remarked, the EU allows Ukraine "to exit several centuries of anticolonial struggle".

Finally, one cannot dismiss the securitization of EU normative power—meaning that the EU's consistency with its values and principles is evaluated in Ukraine, inter alia, based on how the EU responds to security challenges. Again, in the words of one respondent, in Ukraine's case "Eurointegration [i.e. the candidate status – K.Z.] has become a side effect of the war". On the one hand, this outcome is not surprising, since the primary objective of the Union is to promote peace. On the other hand, currently the studies of the EU as a mediator/peacemaker/conflict preventer and its normative power have, so far, run in parallel, which signals another possible avenue for further academic pursuit.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed at reappraising the perception of EU normative power in Ukraine after the full-scale Russian invasion of February 2022. Based on elite semi-structured interviews with the civil society representatives, the study found that EU normative power has remained intact and to some extent has even been bolstered by the unexpected unity of the Member States and the strong response of the EU to the Russian war. It also found important shifts of Ukraine's perception of the EU as an equal partner, rather than a superior. This will affect the cultural filter of Ukraine as being a norm-receiver.

Thus, from a theoretical angle within European studies, the validity of EU normative power has been confirmed. It can be perceived as a normative power "in a new capacity", as the balance of power between

the norm-setter (the EU) and the norm-perceiver (Ukraine) has shifted towards a more balanced partnership, at least from Ukraine's perspective. However, its strength, relevance and potency have not been called into question by the interviewed sample.

The present findings open many avenues for further research. Primarily, further endeavours could collect new data samples, e.g. the perspectives of other stakeholders in Ukraine and/or mapping the perceptions of the EU elites for comparative analysis. Theoretically numerous approaches are also promising. As a starting point, bridging the literature on the EU as a security actor and the EU as a normative power could yield interesting results. Further into perception studies, the theoretical approach of geopolitical othering (Diez 2004) could be employed to further explore the "us vs them" dichotomy in the Ukraine's perception of the EU.

Annex I. List of Interviews

 1. Interview A, 31 May 2023
 2. Interview B, 1 June 2023
 3. Interview C, 2 June 2023
 4. Interview D, 6 June 2023
 5. Interview E, 6 June 2023
 6. Interview F, 7 June 2023
 7. Interview G, 9 June 2023
 8. Interview H, 11 June 2023
 9. Interview I, 13 June 2023
10. Interview J, 14 June 2023
11. Interview K, 23 June 2023

Annex II. Interview Guide

1. Could you please tell me a little about your professional engagement with the topic of the EU and European integration?
2. What is the EU to Ukraine?
3. Could you reflect on your perceptions of the EU throughout your active career?
4. How did the Revolution of the Dignity affect your perception of the EU?

5. How did the start of the Russian war in 2014 affect your perception of the EU?
6. How did the full-scale Russian invasion of 2022 affect your perception of the EU? How would you evaluate the EU's response to the full-scale invasion?
7. Throughout your professional path, do you see any change in Ukraine's attitude to the EU?
8. Throughout your professional path, do you see any change in the EU's attitude to Ukraine?
9. Has the EU approach to Ukraine always lived up to your expectations? Why/Why not?
10. Can Ukraine teach the EU anything? Does Ukraine shape any of the EU's norms? If yes, which ones and how?
11. Does the EU have moral responsibility for Ukraine? Does it live up to it?

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Narratives of Ukraine on the Information Battlefields of Global Media

Natalia Chaban and Svitlana Zhabotynska

Introduction

Our chapter addresses two perspectives that inform this volume's quest to explore new realities facing the EU during the escalation of the war against Ukraine. First, the introductory chapter reminds us that the "Russian attack on Ukraine and the ensuing war has challenged a number of established narratives and convictions, not only in the global order, but also for the European Union and its member states" (see the contributions by Knodt and Wiesner, Smith, and Wiesner, in this volume). Second, the war also "underlines that we are living in a multipolar world order—geopolitically, economically, ideologically and legally, and the EU has to position itself in this setting" (see Wiesner, in this volume). Finally, the introductory chapter is clear about the reaction to the new realities triggered by the war: "the EU has to position itself in the new geopolitical

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and ideological world order and become a geopolitical player" (Knodt and Wiesner, in this volume).

This chapter builds on the above arguments. The reality of the multi-polar world with the proliferation of state and non-state actors on the world stage, the existential crises and the fight for resources means that there is an increasing competition in international relations, and with that, an increasing competition of norms and values. Relevant literature talks about the 'battle of narratives'. This chapter provides an insight into this 'battle', comparing the narratives of Ukraine circulating in the EU and wider Europe vis-à-vis narratives of Ukraine elsewhere in the world.

Ukraine, fighting for its sovereignty, identity and survival, is on the frontline of the battle of narratives. An EU candidate as of June 2022, Ukraine witnesses its self-narrative evolving into the narrative of a proactive agent in charge of its own destiny (Chaban and Elgström 2023) and an actor in the epicentre of European integration (Zhabotynska et al. 2023). This chapter demonstrates that Ukraine's new self-narratives may differ from the narratives outside of Ukraine. The latter are often divided, if not split. Relevant literature observes such divisions in the West (including the EU) vs. the non-Western world (Garton Ash et al. 2023), as well as within Western outlooks. Our comparative focus is on the narratives of Ukraine and the war against Ukraine projected by media from Europe, China and the Global South. Engaging with the findings of several large-scale comparative studies, we offset media findings with insights into representative public opinion surveys and contextualize our observations against two backgrounds. The first is particular framings of Ukraine and the war in Western knowledge-producing discourses (texts created by academics and think tank communities). The second is Russian antagonistic narratives disseminated through the communication channels globally.

To feature the 'battle of narratives', this chapter's design is intentionally interdisciplinary. It weaves in perspectives from the studies of the EU, media and communication, sociology, as well as narratives in International Relations, and cognitive linguistics. Its interdisciplinary settings and methods add value to this volume, contributing innovatively not only to the studies of the EU facing major geopolitical upheavals, but also to the arsenal of interdisciplinary didactic tools in EU studies. In the latter case, the chapter underlines that in the ensuing 'battle of narratives'—leading to human sacrifices in the case of Ukraine—narratives must be explored

with robust empirical tools. This chapter proposes a novel analytical algorithm, instrumental for tracking fine-grain details which are critical for the valid reconstruction and interpretation of political narratives.

We start this chapter with a review of global public opinion on Ukraine. We then argue two inputs that may explain narrative divisions and map a range of global media narratives. The first section overviews existing research on divided narratives of Ukraine among knowledge-producers. This cohort is argued to influence the imagination of more educated audiences around the world. The next section features our original take on the analysis of media narratives in Europe (post-Communist European states), the Global South and China—the geopolitical areas that have been exposed to the USSR/Russian information projection historically. In this section, we dissect the notion of the antagonistic narrative strategies in global information flows and track if, and how, local media narratives of Ukraine/the war against Ukraine may resonate with pro-Kremlin narratives, and warn of a wider public appeal of such narratives. In our concluding discussion, we ask what this growing misalignment of narratives globally means to the EU and Ukraine, as an EU candidate state that continues its fight for survival. We conclude it is paramount for EU officials, media and the public to keep track of the evolving narratives in the public sphere, not only to navigate a rapidly changing geopolitical environment effectively, but also to defend its community against narratives dividing the societal fabric of the EU and undermining its values.

Split of Global Public Opinion on Ukraine in the Context of the Russia-Ukraine War

Global Trends

Ukraine's tenacious resistance and the courage of its people rebuffing the escalation of the Russian aggression have influenced the imagination of the world. Perceptions of Ukraine had risen globally. Global Soft Power Index 2022 (Brand Finance 2022) found that following Russia's full-scale invasion, global perceptions of Ukraine are changing: "with familiarity increasing by an extraordinary 44%, influence by 24%, and reputation by 12%". The same survey registered that "the unprecedented media spotlight on the conflict and a global rally of support for Ukraine in the face of aggression have had a positive knock-on effect on the nation's perceptions

across most other Global Soft Power Index metrics, even those unrelated to the war effort" (Brand Finance 2022).

Yet, most recent studies observe that public opinion around the world is not homogeneous. Recognizing the Russian war against Ukraine as being undoubtedly a "turning point in world history", some commentators note a growing split between public opinion on the war in Ukraine in Western countries (the "united West") vs. "the rest" (Garton Ash et al. 2023). Analysing a poll undertaken in December 2022–January 2023 in nine EU countries (Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain), the UK, the US, China, India, Turkey and Russia, Garton Ash et al. (2023) observe strong resonances between European and US respondents when it comes to outlooks on the key issues in the world. Reflecting on Russia's war unleashed against Ukraine, Europeans and Americans share a common systemic narrative— they "agree they should help Ukraine to win, that Russia is their avowed adversary" (Garton Ash et al. 2023). At the same time, respondents from China, India and Turkey have a different perception: they "prefer a quick end to the war even if Ukraine has to concede territory": 42% in China, 48% in Turkey and 54% in India (Garton Ash et al. 2023).

Europe-Specific Trends

The polls in the nine EU member states (France, Finland, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden) and the UK demonstrate that European public opinion on the situation around Ukraine is not as consolidated as it seems at first sight. Indeed, in some instances, it follows the outlooks expressed in the non-Western countries discussed in the previous section. Kelmendi and Piaskowska (2022) find that in response to questions about Ukraine's accession into the EU in the context of the Russia's war against Ukraine, the level of support varied between different European countries. Polish citizens were the most supportive (70%), while German, French and Italian citizens were both the least supportive and the most opposing (Fig. 10.1). Romanian respondents were also among the least supportive (48%) yet also the most undecided (34%).

Kelmendi and Piaskowska, focusing their analysis on supporters of Ukraine's accession, point out that this group of the EU (and the UK) citizens tends to share a common narrative on the evolution of Europe. Firstly, they perceive major security threats emanating from Russia, and specifically from the use of nuclear (69%) or chemical weapons (53%).

In response to the situation involving Russia and Ukraine, would you support or oppose Ukraine's accession into the EU? In per cent
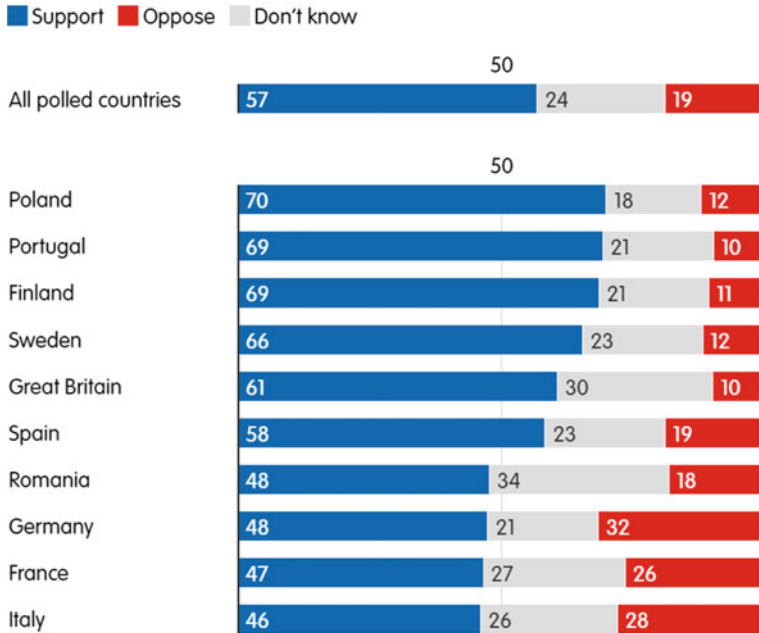
Fig. 10.1 In response to the situation involving Russia and Ukraine, would you support or oppose Ukraine's accession into the EU? In per cent (Kelemendi and Piaskowska 2022, citing source: Datapraxis and YouGov, May 2022)

At the same time, the perceived threat of economic losses is much less prevalent. Supporters attach great importance to their countries breaking away from dependency on Russian oil and gas, and with urgency (71%). Moreover, "80 per cent of EU citizens who support Ukraine's accession are strongly in favour of cutting all economic, diplomatic, and cultural ties with Russia", while "90 per cent of them agree that the EU should

accept more Ukrainian refugees". This is vis-à-vis 59% in the opponent camp (Kelmendi and Piaskowska 2022).

A positive attitude towards Ukraine's accession correlates with specific narratives around the Russian war against Ukraine: "More than 70 per cent of supporters want to increase EU sanctions on Russia, provide greater economic and military assistance to Ukraine, halt imports of Russian fossil fuels, back Ukraine's admission to NATO, and deploy troops to eastern Europe". The authors also note that supporters are "slightly less enthusiastic about enforcing a no-fly zone and deploying EU member states' troops in Ukraine—but, still, a plurality back both measures" (Kelmendi and Piaskowska 2022).

The opponents to Ukraine's accession to the EU echo the opinions expressed by the non-Western countries discussed above—they want a swift end to the war (60%). They also tend to perceive economic losses as a result of the war (views most pronounced in Germany and France); e.g., rising energy prices and the increased cost of living. The opposition to Ukraine's membership of the EU is thus linked to fear of the negative economic and political consequences. There is also a difference between supporters' narratives of how Europe should build its relations with Russia: while 43% blame Russia for the war and 53% see Russia as the main obstruction to peace, most opponents to Ukraine's accession to the EU do not want to cut all ties with Russia. European opponents of Ukraine's accessions to the EU parallel the non-Western opinion (discussed above) when it comes to military help to Ukraine: "a resounding 79 per cent and 80 per cent of opponents are against the deployment of EU member states' troops to Ukraine and Ukraine's accession to NATO respectively. Sixty-one per cent of opponents are against further arms shipments to Ukraine, while 63 per cent do not want to deploy more troops to NATO's eastern flank" (Kelmendi and Piaskowska 2022).

US-Specific Trends

The split in the perception of Ukraine in Europe resonates with that in the US. In his series of lectures, Snyder (Снайдер 2022) explains it historically as a result of inconsistency between the 'old' and 'new' narratives of Ukraine. For Snyder, the old, partially alive narratives tell a peculiar story of Kyiv and Moscow being always together historically. In these narratives, Russia is not questioned, while Ukraine is perceived as being

suspicious, marginal, provincial, if not doubtful. As such, for some Americans it is difficult to imagine that Russia may actually lose the war to Ukraine. However, for Snyder, the war may be the facilitator of change in the narratives.

Where do such diverging, if not split, narratives originate? Koval et al. (2022), who studied the reflections on the war in Western (US and EU) academia and think tank communities, argue how these elite knowledge-producing discourses may shape the opinions of a significant part of the more educated population in a particular, divided manner. Another answer comes from our consideration of the political tool of Russian information warfare, and specifically their mastery of projecting antagonistic narratives worldwide. Below, we consider these two inputs in brief.

Divided Narratives: European and US Knowledge-Producers

Koval et al. (2022) observed academia and think tanks' discourse on its narration of the war against Ukraine in the EU's states France, Germany, Italy, Greece and Poland, as well as in the US and the UK. Their research demonstrated that on the level of the nation-states in the EU, the narratives formulated by academia and think tankers range from "unprovoked aggression by Russia, which needs to be deterred" (in Poland) to "acknowledgment of Russian blame paired with a soft approach toward the aggressor" (in Germany) to "the 'Gaullist–Mitterandist' maxima of the need to cooperate with Russia in order to weaken US influence and increase France's political weight in Europe" (in France) or in "justifying the Russian aggression by historical legitimacy" narrating Ukraine as an "obstacle/circumstance in relations between the West and Russia" (in Italy) (Koval et al. 2022). The findings illustrate how the split in narratives about Ukraine formulated by academia and think tanks may 'splinter' the image of Ukraine in the eyes of more educated citizens and elites across the EU member states, the UK and the US, as well as around the world among international readers.

Koval et al. identified "major pitfalls of (mis)perceptions and (mis)representations of the 'Ukraine crisis'" (Koval et al. 2022, 176). The authors found that the key narratives of the Russian-Ukrainian war produced by influential Western knowledge-shapers convey a "realist pressure for seeking a quick, even if unjust, solution, … encouraging scholars and analysts to advocate compromises and concessions" (Koval

et al. 2022, 175). Another major characteristic of these narratives is the "symmetrization of responsibility and a tendency to blur the difference between the victim and the perpetrator". On the one hand, such opinion originates in response to a "normative pressure for seeking exclusively peaceful resolutions to every conflict" (Koval et al. 2022, 175). On the other hand, it is facilitated by the "dominant principle of academic neutrality, which accounts for the symmetrization of responsibility and a search for politically neutral and academically correct ways to describe conflicts, even those including invasion of one country by the other" (Koval et al. 2022, 175). Koval et al. argue there is an in-built bias within Western academia traditionally to focus on Russian history, politics, culture and language in much more intense manner than on those of any other Slavic or post-Soviet country. In contrast, for Koval et al., "(pro) Ukrainian points are often rejected outright as inherently biased, as there is more suspicion of discourses that undermine the conventional wisdom" (Koval et al. 2022, 175). In their final conclusion, Koval et al. argue that the "war of narratives, propaganda, and disinformation via social and ordinary media has become one of the most important weapons in this conflict" (Koval et al. 2022, 175).

DIVIDED NARRATIVES: INTERNATIONAL WORKINGS OF THE RUSSIAN ANTAGONISTIC NARRATIVES

A substantial body of literature examines Russia's use of information as a political tool applied domestically and globally. Reviewing this large and rapidly growing body of work is beyond the scope of this chapter. Here, we limit ourselves to engaging with a concise overview of this extensive field by Deverell et al. (2020). The authors point to Russia's efforts to create an "uncertain and conflict-ridden communication environment" through the "projection of information as part of an endeavour to harm and undermine others" (Deverell et al. 2020 quoting Yablokov (2015); Watanabe (2017); Ramsay and Robertshaw (2019); Szostek (2020)). The authors remind us that the information—as a policy area—gets a rather specific interpretation in the Russian policy-making, namely as a national security tool (Deverell et al. 2020 quoting Russian Government 2015). They cite Szostek who compares this interpretation of media reporting in Russia to a 'zero-sum' game in which Russia "must fight their hostile Western rivals for supremacy, including by projecting disinformation and aggressively criticising other states" (Szostek 2020, 2729, 2740). This

argument echoes Pynnöniemi (2018) who suggests that the leading cause behind such adverse narratives is the perceptions of Western threat to Russia.

Deverell et al. (2020) examine different areas targeted by the Russian media's information flow, arguing that the first target has been "states within Russia's sphere of influence, as defined by the Kremlin". However, they also cite multiple works that observe wider "destabilising effects" (Szostek 2018) directed, for example, at the Nordic countries (e.g., Sweden (Wagnsson and Barzanje 2021; Wagnsson and Lundström 2022; Hoyle et al. 2023), Norway, Denmark, Finland (Deverell et al. 2020) and the Netherlands (Hoyle et al. 2023)). These studies ask how adverse narratives are constructed in their pursued strategy of division.

Addressing the call for "more analysis of how narratives are *constructed* to be able to assess their harmful capacity" (Deverell et al. 2020, 16), we turn to the notion of the antagonistic narrative strategies in IR proposed by Wagnsson and Barzanje (2021) after having analysed Russian state media projections towards Sweden. For the authors, these are the narratives endowed with a harmful discursive capacity, demonstrated through three major communicative strategies—those of suppression, destruction and direction. *Suppression* intends to accomplish a status shift of a country in the international arena. Status loss for the narrated means status gain for the narrator. Whereas *suppression* is about altering the status of a country, *destruction* is about rendering it weak via damaging, denigrating or undermining its capabilities. *Direction* intends "to steer the narrative towards a preferred behaviour by way of implicit inducement" (Wagnsson and Barzanje 2021, 241). It is about "leading the other away from 'bad' towards 'good' behaviour" (Wagnsson and Barzanje 2021, 251), and guiding the other away from an undesired posture, policy or behaviour, towards a preferred one.

Exploring the impact of the antagonistic narrative strategies by the Russian state media, Wagnsson and Lundström, in their experimental work, found that: "Russian strategic narratives, published by the state-controlled online platform Sputnik, resonated with Swedish readers, despite the fact that they did not reflect the readers' previous experiences, and were perceived as unstructured". The latest findings suggest that "information influence projected through strategic narratives can be effective regardless of the form of the message and even when introducing unfamiliar ideas to the audience" (Wagnsson and Lundström 2022, 13). Such evidence indicates a need to explore other factors that

may influence a narrative's persuasiveness: for example, "how narratives link to cultural factors and national myths" and "how different groups respond to informational influences" (Svensson 2023). The former position echoes Miskimmon and O'Loughlin who contextualize the Russian narration "against the background of strife to reinstate Russia as a global force, a project interlinked with historical views of past and present" (Miskimmon and O'Loughlin 2017 as cited by Deverell et al. 2020, 17). Such research would widen the agenda of the emerging study on narrative effectiveness that argues, among its key inputs, the "recognition and emotional connection to the characters in a narrative", as well as "the clarity and engaging power of narratives" (Svensson 2023).

In our previous research, we also attempted an answer to the question 'What makes a strategic narrative efficient?' (Chaban et al. 2023). We analysed Russia's online news media narratives about Ukraine, addressed to both its own citizens, as well as Russian-speaking readers around the world. We suggest that the impact of the constructed image in the narrative can be reinforced by the interplay of at least three projection properties: (1) content accentuation and priming, through iterations; (2) content contextualization, through historical and cultural resonance with the consumers' memories; and (3) content verbalization, through narrative tactics that evoke a range of the consumer's involved attitudes to the framed image. These properties, being intrinsic ingredients of the projected content, tend to enhance emotions. Russia's narrative, created in reaction to a milestone event in EU-Ukraine relations (granting the no-visa entry to the Schengen area to Ukrainian citizens), was revealed as antagonistic, with the three strategies of suppression, destruction and direction employed.

In summary, we argue that research on the diverging global narratives of Ukraine will benefit from a comparative investigation and a systematic engagement with the notion of the antagonistic narrative strategies in global information flows. Our contribution to this comparative research is the study of pro-Russian narratives of the Russia-Ukraine war that are spreading worldwide and causing the split of public opinion on Ukraine and its European course.

Comparative Analysis of Pro-Russia Media Narratives of Ukraine disseminated Worldwide

Data and Methodology

In our study, the data comprise three sets of media messages (discrete narrative topics) that fit into the global 'Russia-Ukraine war' narrative with a pro-Russia bias. The latter means that the messages, created outside Russia, resonate with those manufactured and disseminated by the Russian mainstream and social media antagonistic to Ukraine and its international partners. The 136 analysed messages rendered by 3,370 instances (or empirical textual descriptions featured in the message) have been borrowed from research papers focused on tracking the pro-Russia narratives of the war in Ukraine. These messages emerged in the mainstream and social media throughout the world at particular time spans, starting with the beginning of Russia's escalation of aggression against Ukraine in February 2022. In total, the data's time frame covers a period from March 1, 2022, to February 22, 2023.

The first dataset—the narratives addressing the European audience (69 messages featured by 1,332 instances)—is informed by one of the *Detector Media* projects conducted by the team of researchers from 11 countries who analysed social media posts (on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Telegram) to identify common and distinct narratives of Russian propaganda (Ryabosthtan et al. 2022). The posts, written by social media users from the post-Communist states—Bulgaria, Hungary, North Macedonia, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia, Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine—were tracked by this project in July 2022.

The second dataset—the narratives addressing audiences in the countries in the Global South (27 messages exposed in 1,160 instances)—is informed by another *Detector Media* research of the key narrative topics related to Russia's aggression in Ukraine extracted from the media outlets in 11 countries of the Global South (Pivtorak et al. 2023). The media in these countries were observed between December 19, 2022, and February 22, 2023. The *Detector Media* research team summarized reports about Ukraine released by 2,700 of the most popular media outlets. The ones from Asia are located in India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Turkey. The African media are from Ghana, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, and the South American media are from Brazil and Argentina.

The third dataset—the narratives crafted by China for the global audience (68 messages delivered in 878 narrative instances)—comes from the study concerned with portrayal of Ukraine and the West in the English-language edition of *The Global Times* Chinese daily in March–May 2022 (Zhabotynska and Ryzhova 2022). *The Global Times* is a satellite of the Chinese Communist Party's flagship newspaper *The People's Daily*. Through its English edition, *The Global Times* is "bringing its unvarnished opinions around the globe"—to the US, Europe and South Africa (Huang 2016). With over 8 million daily page views, *The Global Times'* website has a strong presence in the English-language media and thus has become a potentially powerful resource for delivering strategic narratives intended for shaping public opinion around the world (Zhabotynska and Ryzhova 2022).

In each of the above data sources, the narrative messages represented by multiple samples were grouped in accordance with the specific goals pursued by the researchers. In our study, the thematic grouping of narrative messages enables the comparison of the three datasets. Such comparison intends to expose the topics which are shared by the 'stories about Ukraine' told to different audiences, as well as the topics targeted at particular addressees. The methodology used for the thematic arrangement of our data is taken from the studies of narrative concepts structured with a cognitive ontology (Zhabotynska and Velivchenko 2019; Chaban et al. 2023). The latter presents the information in the narrative concept (which occurs in multiple thematically homogeneous media texts) as structurally arranged, with such arrangement being governed by a particular algorithm.

The algorithm employed in our analysis is used to structure information about an event with regard to its invariable referents (participants, or 'actors') that are constitutive for the ontology's domains. The Russia-Ukraine war is an event evolving in the international context. Respectively, the invariable referents exposed in the media narratives are: (1) RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR, (2) UKRAINE, (3) RUSSIA, (4) WEST/US, (5) US, (6) EUROPE, (7) NATO/US, (8) NON-WESTERN WORLD (GLOBAL SOUTH) and (9) WORLD. First, the narrative messages in each of the three sets of our data are distributed between these referential domains. Second, each domain and the messages of each domain are analysed with regard to their salience, or prominence, demonstrated by the number of narrative instances in which they are exposed. The degree of salience demonstrates the 'visibility' of the messages and their domains,

which is important for their entrenchment in the public opinion. Third, the narrative content available in different datasets, when similarly structured, can be compared, so as, on the one hand, to expose the overlaps of the messages and, on the other hand, to demonstrate what makes them distinct. These differences may be accounted for by the specificity of the targeted audience. The proposed comparative analysis enables a specification of the 'European' narrative perspectives: (a) the narrative addressed to Europe depicts it as a 'viewer' of the international stage; (b) the narrative targeted at the other parts of the world feature Europe as an 'actor' on the international stage.

Applying the above methodology to process the overall information about the Russia-Ukraine war, portrayed in the three datasets of our study, facilitates the accomplishment of its other research objectives. These are exposure of the antagonistic narrative strategies of *suppression*, or the shifting down of the international status of an actor; *destruction*, or damaging the image of an actor; and *direction*, or steering an actor to a preferred behaviour (Wagnsson and Barzanje 2021). Another objective is the matching of the research findings to the criteria of efficiency demonstrated by the strategic narrative (Chaban et al. 2023). The criteria relevant for this study are *content accentuation* and priming through iterations, and *content contextualization,* or historical and cultural resonance with the audience's memories.

Analysis

The total scope of the narrative instances from all three sets of data (3370) shows obvious salience of UKRAINE (799, or 23.7%), RUSSIA (687, or 20.4%), and WEST/US (941, or 27.9%), with the domain NATO/US being also prominent (404, or 12.0%) (Table 10.1).

The domain which retains its high salience throughout the three datasets is WEST/US. The domains UKRAINE and RUSSIA are highly prominent in the European and Global South research segments, while the domains US and EUROPE are accentuated in the Chinese segment. The domain NATO demonstrates substantial relevance in the Global South and Chinese segments.

Each domain subsumes the narrative messages which differ in number. The most thematically 'diverse' stories are those about UKRAINE (37 messages) and the WEST/US (31 messages). Nearly half as diverse are the 'stories' about RUSSIA (19 messages) and NATO/US (16 messages).

Narrative domains	Targeted audience						Total	
	for Europe		for the Global South		China for the world			
	Number of narrative instances	%	Number of narrative samples	%	Number of narrative instances	%	Number of narrative instances	%
RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR	16	1.2	77	6.6	-	-	93	2.8
UKRAINE	557	41.8	173	14.9	69	7.9	799	23.7
RUSSIA	363	27.2	278	24.0	46	5.2	687	20.4
WEST / US	272	20.4	338	29.1	331	37.7	941	27.9
THE US	15	1.1	-	-	94	10.7	109	3.2
EUROPE	103	7.7	-	-	91	10.4	194	5.8
NATO / US	4	0.4	271	23.4	129	14.7	404	12.0
NON-WESTERN WORLD (GLOBAL SOUTH)	-	-	9	0.8	76	8.6	85	2.5
WORLD	2	0.2	14	1.2	42	4.8	58	1.7
Total	1332	100.0	1160	100.0	878	100.0	3370	100.0

Table 10.1 Salience of thematic domains in the pro-Russia world media narratives of the Russia-Ukraine war

Still less varied are the narratives of EUROPE (10 messages), the US (7 messages), and the WORLD (7 messages). The least thematically varied are the narratives of the NON-WESTERN WORLD (GLOBAL SOUTH) (5 messages), and the RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR (4 messages). Within the domains, the messages may differ in salience and, therefore, their relevance for a dataset. Below, are highly salient messages (with the number of instances approaching and exceeding 25) that get traction in all three data segments, in two of them, or in one segment only—European (E), Global South (GS) or Chinese(C). The messages of excessive salience (with the number of instances approaching and exceeding 70) are given in italics.

Europe, Global South, China: UKRAINE: *Ukraine is a Nazi country. It is ruled by Nazis who slaughter the innocent citizens of Donbas* (86: E-40, GS-35, C-4). RUSSIA: *Sanctions against Russia are ineffective; Russia has adapted to them* (113: E-55, GS-55, C-3). WEST/US: *The West /US benefits from the war* (191: E-14, GS-145, C-32).

Europe, Global South: UKRAINE: *Ukrainian military are targeting civilians and committing other war crimes* (83: E-77, GS-6). RUSSIA: *The reports on Russia's war crimes are fake* (102: E-27, GS-75). *Russia succeeds on the battlefield, and it will win the war* (83: E-28, GS-55). NATO: *NATO is weak; NATO cannot stop Russia* (137: E-2, GS-135).

Europe, China: <u>RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR</u>: This is not a war between Russia and Ukraine, but a conflict between NATO/US and Russia (43: GS-39, E-4). <u>UKRAINE</u>: The Western military support is misused or stolen. Ukraine may illegally sell Western weapons (31: 29-E, 2-C). Ukraine and the West have tensions; Ukraine is dissatisfied with and suspicious of its European partners (49: 40-E, 9-C). <u>WEST/US</u>: *The West and the US use Ukraine as a tool in their proxy war against Russia* (77: E-52, C-25). *The US, the West and NATO are responsible for the war in Ukraine* (71: E-33, C-38). The US and the West supply Ukraine with weapons, and thus aggravate the military crisis (46: E-25, C-46). <u>US</u>: To pursue its own geopolitical interests, the US controls and manipulates European and other countries (32: E-15, C-17). <u>EUROPE</u>: For Europe, the Russia-Ukraine conflict is the foremost security threat because of the humanitarian crisis and supplying Ukraine with arms (21: E-3, C-18).

Global South, China: <u>UKRAINE</u>: Ukraine has a pro-western regime which is a puppet of the West (43: 34-GS, 9-C). <u>NATO/US</u>: *NATO provoked Russian aggression against Ukraine; the US and NATO ignored Russia's need for security; NATO, led by the USA, moved eastward and threatened Russia, which was beneficial for the US* (105: E-77, C-28). <u>NON-WESTERN WORLD (GLOBAL SOUTH)</u>: Global South supports Russia; non-Western countries disapprove of the sanctions against Russia (30: GS-9, C-21).

Europe: <u>UKRAINE</u>: *Ukraine is losing the war.* (E-124). The Ukrainian leaders are corrupt and/or incompetent (E-60). Ukrainian refugees are prioritized over the host countries' citizens (E-30). Ukrainian refugees threaten the host countries' stability (E-30). <u>RUSSIA</u>: *Sanctions hurt the West more than they hurt Russia* (E-183). <u>WEST/US</u>: The West and the US are weak and will collapse (E-42). Military support to Ukraine exhausts the West (E-34).

Global South: <u>RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR</u>: The conflict risks to spread beyond Ukraine (GS-38). <u>UKRAINE</u>: Ukraine's demands are too high (GS-55). Ukraine is a corrupt state (GS-22). <u>RUSSIA</u>: Western media spread lies about Russia (GS-38). Ukrainian media spread lies about Russia (GS-28). <u>WEST/US</u>: *The West has Ukraine fatigue* (GS-104). The West provokes Putin into starting a nuclear war (GS-44). The West does not consider the opinion and interests of other countries (GS-28). <u>NATO/US</u>: NATO is directly and indirectly involved in the war (GS-59).

China: <u>WEST/US</u>: The West's attitude to Ukraine, Ukrainian refugees in particular, is a blatant demonstration of white supremacy (C-49). The

US and the West want to prolong the war and damage Russia (C-35). The US and the West smear China in Russia-Ukraine conflict (C-24). US: In the search of global dominance, the US creates security troubles which pose a threat to the world (C-53). EUROPE: Russia-Ukraine conflict causes contradictions and divisions within Europe (C-30). Europe has unsolved ethnic problems caused by European integration. It wants to reinforce its identity, and to defend its own civilization from Russia (C-22). NATO/US: Expansion of NATO undermines Europe's security, as Russia may severely respond (C-34). NON-WESTERN WORLD (GLOBAL SOUTH): China is not a party to the Russia-Ukraine crisis; China and other eastern and southern major powers adhere to peace and talks (C-26). WORLD: The Russia-Ukraine crisis has accelerated the decline of US hegemony in the world; now, the world witnesses a global geopolitical shift from the Western to Eastern dominance (C-24).

Among the messages with excessive salience, the leaders are: *The West/ US benefits from the war* (191: E-14, GS-145, C-32). *Sanctions hurt the West more than they hurt Russia* (E-183). *NATO is weak, it cannot stop Russia* (137: E-2, GS-135). *Ukraine is losing the war* (E-124). *Sanctions against Russia are ineffective; Russia has adapted to them* (113: E-55, GS-55, C-3). *NATO provoked Russian aggression against Ukraine; the US and NATO ignored Russia's need for security; NATO, led by the USA, moved eastward and threatened Russia, which was beneficial for the US* (105: E-77, C-28). *The West has Ukraine fatigue* (GS-104). *The reports on Russia's war crimes are fake* (102: E-27, GS-75). *Ukraine is a Nazi country. It is ruled by Nazis who slaughter the innocent citizens of Donbas* (86: E-40, GS-35, C-4). *Ukrainian military are targeting civilians and committing other war crimes* (83: E-77, GS-6). *Russia succeeds on the battlefield, and it will win the war* (83: E-28, GS-55). *The West and the US use Ukraine as a tool in their proxy war against Russia* (77: E-52, C-25). *The US, the West and NATO are responsible for the war in Ukraine* (71: E-33, C-38).

Our findings demonstrate the workings of the narrative strategy of *suppression* (deterioration of the referent's status) in the 'portraits' of the Russia-Ukraine war per se, and of Ukraine, the West, the US, Europe and NATO. The narrative strategy of *destruction* (damaging the referent's image) dominates in depicting Ukraine. The narrative strategy of *direction* (steering the referent to the required behaviour) gets traction in the images of Ukraine, Europe and the Global South, who are expected to be 'reasonable' and reconcile with Russia's political and military ambitions.

Concluding Discussion

The image of Ukraine, which has won recognition in the world for its stoic fight against Russia's military assault on its sovereignty, turns out to be divided, or split, in the global imagination, including within the EU. This split, much less obvious (though present) in Ukraine, is typical of world public opinion which has become a 'battlefield of the narratives'. One side defends and promotes Ukraine's positive image as a worthy member of the European democratic community, while the other side advances narratives which doubt Ukraine's political and military potentials, or do their best to overtly or covertly downgrade the country's role as an international actor. Therefore, as the public opinion surveys show, the world—and the EU within it—has two major contrastive 'stories' about Ukraine. We argue that the existence of these 'storylines' is caused by differences in the opinions of knowledge-producers (societal elites), and by the workings of Russian and pro-Russian propaganda, spreading its media narratives worldwide and targeting external opinion-formers and the general public in different geographical regions. The large-scale studies discussed above provided empirical evidence of the conflict of narratives and, specifically, how both Western (including the EU) and non-Western audiences may be susceptible to pro-Kremlin narratives.

There are several 'takeaways' for the EU. The first one follows from our insights into global public opinion on Ukraine and the war against Ukraine. They seem to highlight a shared attitude in the cross-Atlantic public sphere. This suggests the EU should continue investing into the like-minded, people-to-people dialogue between the EU and the US, building on common outlooks. This is particularly important in the face of an emerging and deepening 'narrative split' with the non-Western public which is prominently highlighted by the war against Ukraine.

The second 'takeaway' for the EU is the emerging divergence in narratives across different member states, as demonstrated by both their knowledge-producers and general public. Plural, democratic Europe will always have a range of narratives and opinions on any important local, regional or geopolitical issue. Yet, in our case, the narratives are not benign stories, but powerful devices in a critical situation where the stakes are high. On the one hand, the existence of the member state-specific 'information bubbles' of how to interpret the war undermines the effectiveness of the pan-EU public sphere in the deliberation of the war in general. On the other hand, disunity—or an open clash—in narratives

justifying the action/inaction of the EU as a *sui generis* body in the context of the largest continental war since World War II may arguably lead to major policy- and decision-making gridlocks in the Union. It is in this context that we formulated our own empirical study objective, to examine the workings of pro-Kremlin narratives of the Russia-Ukraine war in their antagonistic intent.

The comparative design of our study was helpful to achieve our objective: to reveal the similarities and differences in the media narratives in the post-Communist European countries (including the EU member states), in the countries of the Global South, and in China—geopolitical locations historically targeted by Soviet/Russian information flows—and to assess their projection potentials, thus going beyond 'what' is said and looking at 'how' and 'why' it is said (see the works by Wagnsson and her colleagues for the formulation of these questions: Deverell et al. 2020; Wagnsson and Lundström 2022; Hoyle et al. 2023). In this chapter, we offer a novel algorithm to assess these strategic communication facets. We measure the 'how' aspect of the narrative's efficiency by assessing the multiple iterations of its key messages. We assess the 'why' aspect through the narrative's contextualization, so 'anchoring' it in the economic, political, social, cultural and historical settings inherent for the targeted audience. Of special importance are "historical distances" (in the classification by Braudel (1958)), which can be short-, mid- and long-term, and which facilitate appropriation of the narrative by the audience.

As our research demonstrates, some of European media narratives parallel the Global South and Chinese data segments, by communicating the West (or the West and the US) as being the invariably prominent political 'actor' of the Russia-Ukraine war. The immediate participants of the war—Ukraine and Russia—are the focus of the European and the Global South data, but are only shadows in the Chinese data. For China, as well as for the Global South, the information pivot is NATO headed by the US. The other highlights for China are the US and Europe. The salience of political 'actors' points to the narrators' political priorities. The latter are also evident in the 'stories' about these actors.

The third 'takeaway' for the EU is the discovery of pro-Kremlin antagonistic narratives already in circulation in the EU member states' media. This 'story', projected through the media, remains the same *worldwide,* featuring: the Ukrainian Nazis who wage war with their own citizens; the West and the US who benefit from this war; and Russia that has not been injured by Western sanctions. The narratives spread in Europe and the

Global South foreground the topics of the fake reports about Russia's war crimes, and the reality of such crimes committed by the Ukrainian military. The other foregrounded messages are those of NATO's weakness and Russia's invincibility. In the narratives shared by the post-Communist Europe and China, the major messages place the responsibility for the war on NATO/the US/the West, who, in pursuit of their geopolitical goals, have unleashed and are waging the war against Russia, endangering Europe and using Ukraine as a tool. The Global South and China narratives accentuate the vicious role of NATO, which moved eastward and threatened Russia, and which employs Ukraine's pro-Western regime as a puppet. Therefore, this story argues, the non-Western world should support Russia.

The fifth 'takeaway' for the EU is the accents that define the contiguous media narratives of Ukraine and the war against Ukraine and the resulting antagonistic narrative strategies projected onto public spheres in individual EU member states. In the European data segment, the narrative destructs Ukraine's image: Ukraine, with its corrupt and incompetent leaders, is losing the war; Ukraine's refugees pose a threat for Europe and the West; the West may collapse, being exhausted by the military support of Ukraine. In comparison, the narratives of the Global South underscore the idea that the West has Ukraine fatigue, since Ukraine, a corrupt state, has very high demands. As to Russia, it is slandered by Ukrainian and Western media. In this narrative, the conflict may spread beyond Ukraine and end in a nuclear disaster provoked by NATO and the West as being the war participants who neglect the opinion of other countries. Chinese narratives shift the focus of attention to the Western world and the US, accusing them of white supremacy and world hegemony, which cause contradictions in Europe and entail military conflicts that threaten the world. The conflict in Ukraine, caused by the eastward expansion of NATO, intends to damage Russia, a Chinese partner, and to maintain the West's hegemony in the world. In this narrative, the West's hegemony is in decline, and the world is waiting for a geopolitical shift to the dominance of the Global South.

The sixth, and final 'takeaway' for the EU, is the strong historical 'pedigree' which is typical of the narratives informed by the antagonistic strategies that ultimately shape an anti-Western (with the EU as a part of the 'West') message. These 'storylines', that are to be entrenched in the audiences' minds through their multiple iterations, are amplified emotionally (the threat of Ukrainian refugees for Europe, and the threat

of military escalation beyond Ukraine for the Global South) and contextualized historically (with references to the short-, mid- and long history of the world). The *short history* associates the former Soviet Union, of which Ukraine was a part, as being a 'protector' of the 'socialist states' (among them were the countries considered in our research), which 'helped the developing countries' (the countries of the Global South at present). The *short history* also brings to the surface the bi-polar world with the Cold War confrontation between NATO (headed by the US), and the Warsaw Pact (headed by the Soviet Union). *The mid history* sends us back to the years of World War II, when the 'invincible Soviet army' (with the Russian army being its successor) stood up for what is right, and 'saved the world from Nazis'. The *long history* is that of colonialism, with the ideas of 'white supremacy' and 'global hegemony' of its survivors. History may have buried the events, but the memory of them remains alive and resonates with the present-day narratives, making them inviting for the public. We echo Pivtorak et al. (2023) in their conclusions that this mix of narratives from different historical distances arguably creates a "favourable environment for pro-Russian messages to spread in local media" while accusing Ukraine of "being unwilling to negotiate with Putin and agree to his demands". Russia's messaging about its "anti-NATO" and "anti-American" stance "successfully build upon existing narratives and resonate within local media environments" (Pivtorak et al. 2023). The main takeaway from such narratives is the following assumption: "By this logic, providing military assistance to Ukraine would only escalate the conflict rather than bring about a peaceful resolution" (Pivtorak et al. 2023). Relevant literature argues that the narratives do not only help to map understanding and diagnose the difficult political situation, but also serve as a guide to future actions in similar situations. Pivtorak et al. (2023) report that Latin American countries, when asked to supply Kyiv with weapons previously purchased from Russia, "categorically refused" to do it, even though they were offered the latest, more advanced weapons.

The anti-Western theme that frames global media narratives in the Global South and China, from the short-, middle- and long-term historical perspectives, seems to lead to the creation of a specific, reductionist vision of the war in Ukraine as a battle-ground of the two superpowers of the twenty-first century—the US and Russia. This narrative came at the expense of an alternative narrative—Ukraine as an actor and agent fighting for its freedom, values and sovereignty; opposing its former colonizer; and becoming a candidate state to enter the EU. For Ukraine, this

means that it has to successfully counter Russia in the 'narrative battle' for the minds of the world's public. This implies that Ukraine's strategic communications sector and diplomats will need to make significant efforts to shift perspectives on Ukraine (Pivtorak et al. 2023). The six 'take-aways' we list here for the EU also imply that if the EU (and its member states) is committed to "becoming a geopolitical actor, taking on the enactment of the new goals, powers and means" (Knodt and Wiesner, in this volume), the EU's strategic communicators must continue with regular and comprehensive monitoring and assessment of the flows of antagonistic narratives. This should be followed by counter-measures developed together with experts, knowledge-producers, civil society and the general public in the EU states. We consider our study to be a modest contribution to this effort.

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