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## Geostrategic Interests of the EU and Their Implementation on the Example of the Ukrainian Crisis

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### 1 Introduction

The European Union (EU) is facing increasing instability on its eastern and Mediterranean borders. The security situation in recent years has been significantly affected by the Ukrainian crisis, as well as the Russian disrespect towards international law, the migration crisis and the terrorist issue. Europe has not been forced to face a singular specific threat or enemy since the Cold War. This is the reason why this chapter focuses on a case study dealing with the EU approach to the development in Ukraine: the formation of the EU foreign policy through the EU member states' interests and attitudes towards the Ukrainian crisis. The objective of the text is the partial contribution to the intragovernmental issue of EU foreign policy.

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The first objective is the theoretical summary of the current institutional structure of EU foreign policy, while identifying the processes taking place in foreign policy formation. The institutional framework of foreign policy integration groupings has been founded on specific processes. Theories examining integration groupings as such are not suitable for a specific category such as foreign policy. The increasing activity of member states, as well as the EU institutions, make the formation process much clearer. At present, there are two theoretical approaches dealing with this category—the process of Europeanization and the new inter-governmental approach.

The second objective is the identification of national and European interests in the context of the current conflict in Ukraine. By examining and subsequently comparing the attitudes of individual member states and the attitudes of the EU, the authors of the study have attempted to identify the models of member states' behaviour within the EU common foreign policy. There are several questions stated within the second objective scope: what were the attitudes of the individual member states during the 2014–2015 period in terms of the ongoing Ukrainian crisis? What shared attitudes were formed in this period in context of the crisis in Ukraine? In which areas were these common positions formed and in which areas was a consensus impossible? Which member states participated in the active formation of foreign policy?

## **2 Cooperation as the Precondition for the Rise in EU Importance**

The EU is a force based on its economic potential and legislative coordination in terms of supranational structures. Transferring a part of the autonomy to the supranational institutions, that is, supranational concept in practice, is the most significant particularity of the European integration process.

The real development of the integration process has not confirmed the assumptions of a dynamic process respecting linear development. These facts have encouraged theorists to explore the integration process more

broadly. It became gradually clearer that the integration process does not bring only positive aspects to relations between states, but it can also be a source of tension. One of the reasons for the tension is the continuous transfer of competences from national states to the supranational centre. Transfer of competences leads to discussions and disputes, both within and between the states.

The EU initiates, supports and implements various modifications of strategic cooperation with and towards neighbouring countries, without any short-term or even mid-term objective of proposing full EU membership, although it may be officially pro-integrational in nature. In some cases, membership is not mentioned at all. Sometimes, however, it may already concern a lower-level integration compared to that which exists among member states of the already existing integration group. These forms of international economic integration, which aim for cooperation with the higher-level integration group, can be referred to as flexible exogenous integration modes (they seek to establish at least a free trade area). This may be the case when discrepancies in the economic, legislative and social fields of partners make the full participation in the integration process impossible.

The “Wider Europe” programme was contracted (similar to strategic relations with Russia) on the basis of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements signed in 1997–1999 (Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia). A new form of strategic cooperation—the Common European Economic Space with Russia project—was introduced in 2003. The occupation of Crimea<sup>1</sup> and military support for the separatist forces in eastern Ukraine by Russia in 2014 led to the introduction of economic sanctions against Russia and the weakening of the level of cooperation thus far achieved. The primary sanctions introduced after the outbreak of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict concerned specific companies as well as individuals, their foreign assets and restrictions on business activities. The next round of sanctions was oriented to the Russian banking, energy and military sectors. Russia reacted by introducing restrictions on selected commodities from the EU and other countries (the US, Canada, Australia, Norway). The way in which the Russian Federation pursues its

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<sup>1</sup> Considered illegal by a large part of the international community.

opportunistic foreign policy will determine the potential of mutually beneficial reciprocal trade. In 2014, Russia was the third most important trading partner for the EU, in terms of import (after China and the US) and the fourth (after the US, China and Switzerland) for export (Šikulová 2014).

In the context of closer external cooperation of the EU, there is an initiative to strengthen the cooperation and enhance the multilateral platform for countries east of the new EU borders after the enlargements in 2004 and 2007, named the Eastern Partnership (EaP). New forms of multilateral cooperation should be complementary to existing EU bilateral relations with individual countries, respecting the principles of conditionality. The initiative has created a space for exogenous integration with the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) signature as part of the new trade liberalization association agreements. Stronger ties between countries together with implementing political and economic reforms that encourage a more intensive application of the experience of transforming the new EU member states provides the necessary perspective for the individual countries of the Eastern Partnership. The Association Agreements/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AA/DCFTA) signature of Georgia and Moldova demonstrates their pro-European tendencies. Due to the Russian initiative to integrate a wider post-Soviet area in the form of a customs union (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan), some countries have to decide on their orientation, as they cannot be involved in both projects at the same time due to the incompatibility of their regulatory frameworks. The EU faces intense action by the Russian Federation in the wider region, causing internal instability and geopolitical tension (Terem 2016).

This is most prominent in the dramatic development of events in Ukraine. Enhancing the Eastern Partnership potential can bring a stronger focus on the EU's identification of individual interactions in the region. Following the EaP Summit in Riga, in May 2015, the AA/DCFTA concept remains the main element of the development of cooperation in relation to the EU combined with the "more-for-more" principle and the strengthened communication strategy (Čiderová 2015).

### 3 Strategic and Institutional Challenges in the EU's External Action

The processes of globalization and integration affect the transformation of existing power centres, including the EU, and this will have specific impact on member states as well. If we are unable to analyse and understand these processes in order to create a broad social and political consensus, the discussions and defence of EU interests will be sorely limited in the individual world regions, as well as on a global scale. The dynamic nature of changes generates the necessary relevant responses in those actors responsible. The increased dynamics of change also shows us that we have left the linear evolutionary trajectory and that we are witnessing a growing non-linearity with an increasingly smaller and more precarious predictability of future developments. This implies the need to better understand the specifics of the environment in which the very process of creating and shaping the EU's geostrategic interests is taking place.

Changes in two key areas are required in order to ensure greater responsibility for managing regional global threats. Strategic perspectives represent the first problem area. European politics is often defined only in relation to the activities of the US without any definition of external geographic boundaries and so on. The second problem is the institutional area represented by, for example, Europe's hard-to-start foreign policy, particularly because of the sharp increase in diversity (Ahtisaari et al. 2007).

The enlargement to 28 member states and the deepening of integration have intensified internal tensions regarding border issues, membership costs, supranational structure competences and national sovereignty. Political disagreements are intensifying, particularly in the areas of economic strategies, energy, refugee influx and the policy towards Russia. Debates on the stability of the euro area in relation to solving financial and economic problems in Greece have deeply divided European countries in terms of the future of the EU. At the same time, an increasing disagreement in the UK with the EU's current development has led the country to a referendum in which the British have expressed their willingness to leave the EU.

The EU is facing a continuous loss of self-confidence, especially in terms of its role and potential. The Eurozone recession as well as the developments in Ukraine and the refugee crisis reveal weaknesses in the EU. There are no medium- and long-term strategies, plans or objectives set in any of these problems. In spite of the positive efforts associated with the creation of the President's position and the position of the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, the factual integration of foreign security and defence policy is severely limited. It is related to the structure of the EU's foreign policy agenda, the individual layers of which represent the foreign policies of the individual member states, the joint activities of the member states within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as well as the external relations of the EU institutions.

Establishing the post of EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy and his designation as Vice-President of the European Commission (EC), in order to improve coordination between the institutions, has not always proved successful. The result is insufficient coordination of European External Action Service (EEAS) and EC policies. The EEAS works for the High Representative serving the Union in external relations. This role also belongs to the President of the EC, the permanent President of the EU Council and to the Prime Minister of the member state holding the Council presidency.

It is within the competence of the EC to promote the EU's external interests in the fields of common market, neighbourhood policy, development aid and enlargement agenda. The EU Council is responsible for CFSP decisions. The Presidency of the Council can also represent the EU externally in relation to third countries and international organizations. Member states' foreign policies are another significant part of the structure mentioned. These facts give rise to a number of questions and concern not only representations but also the formulation of interests, sovereignty and the diminishing of differences between domestic and foreign policies. Conceptualizing the EU as an international actor is thus facing major problems and collisions with existing approaches (e.g. state-centric ontology). Despite the organizational and structural establishment of the CFSP, the real challenge remained its actual execution in the external environment. One of the biggest challenges which the EU had to face was the conflict in Ukraine in 2013–2015. The crisis threatened core values of the EU right at its external border, forcing member states to try and put aside national interest.

## 4 The Influence of the European Union on the Conflict in Ukraine in 2013–2015

The troubled situation in the country in terms of politics and economy has raised a sentiment of dissatisfaction among the people of Ukraine. The failure to sign the Association Agreement subsequently became a turning point and triggered a wave of demonstrations. President V. Yanukovich misjudged the situation; he awarded no importance to the protest and thought that the underdeveloped civil society could not produce protests over a longer term. Later, he used special units of the interior ministry—Berkut—against the protestors. An increase in protesters' activity was the response to the violent suppression—more than half a million protesters appeared in Kiev square on the second day. Parliament subsequently responded with even greater repression and restrictions on basic human rights and freedoms. It passed a law that restricted freedom of speech, of the press and the right to gather. The persecution of the nongovernmental sector was approved. The crisis subsequently escalated in February when more than a hundred people died after a street battle between protesters and the security forces (Therr 2016).

Foreign ministers of Germany, Poland and France entered into the political riots between the protesters and the opposition as mediators and helped to reach consensus<sup>2</sup> between the opposition officials and President Yanukovich. The compromise was not accepted by the public; however, with the protestors still demanding that the president be punished. President Yanukovich left the country and fled to Russia. Subsequently, the Parliament suspended Yanukovich from his position. Oleksandr Turchynov was designated the Acting President and Arseniy Yatsenyuk became the Prime Minister. The situation escalated during this period because of the poor economic situation and the armed conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine. The overall political and economic instability not

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<sup>2</sup>The agreement between opposition parties and President Yanukovich included the request for restitution of the 2004 Constitution, creation of a new government coalition within ten days, holding of new presidential elections, reforming the constitution with a focus on balancing the powers of the various constituencies and investigating the violence carried out in protests.

only prompted protests in the west of Ukraine but also activated pro-Russian separatists in the Crimea<sup>3</sup> and eastern parts of the country (Szepticky 2014; Therr 2016).

The situation escalated mainly on the Crimean Peninsula, where pro-Russian demonstrations took place. The biggest protest took place in Sevastopol with more than 50,000 demonstrators (Lauren and Ludenius 2016). A few days later, a referendum was held on 16 March 2014, which offered two possibilities: the annexation of Crimea to Russia or the possibility of a draft to the 1992 constitution<sup>4</sup>. According to the President of the Referendum Commission, 83.1% of eligible voters took part, of which 96.77% expressed a positive response to the first question. The Crimean Peninsula thus became *de facto* a part of Russia, but *de jure* remained the territory of Ukraine (Useinov 2014).

Russia has become more active in promoting its interests in the eastern part of Ukraine, where protests have moved after the referendum in Crimea. The pro-Russian separatists financially and materially supported by Russia demanded independence from Ukraine in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The Ukrainian government's official response was to launch an anti-terrorist operation. During this period, according to Ukrainian Interior Minister, Anton Herashchenko, there were more than 4000 volunteers from Russia (Beskid 2014; Marzalik 2015).

The EU entered this situation since the protests in Ukraine after the refusal to sign the Association Agreement started. Since the start of the protests in Ukraine, the EU has used mainly diplomatic tools to have a say in the situation. The Commissioner for Enlargement Štefan Füle, in his first official position, welcomed protests as a space where residents can freely collect and express their views on issues that will be very important to the country's future (Euronews 2013). Subsequently, on 26 November 2013, Members of the Parliament warned representatives of the Ukrainian government against the use of violence against European protesters (European Parliament 2013). As mentioned earlier, the Ukrainian government has used violent means against protesters at the Maidan Square in Kiev. Štefan Füle and a High Representative of the European Union

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<sup>3</sup>The Russian Unity party leader Sergey Aksyonov (Useinov 2014) led pro-Russian activities.

<sup>4</sup>The Crimean Peninsula would gain the status of an independent area that way.



for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, issued a joint opinion condemning the use of force against demonstrators (European Union External Action 2013).

The situation in Ukraine escalated further, especially in the Crimean Peninsula. On 1 March 2014, the High Representative criticized Russia's decision to use armed forces in Ukraine, talking about unjustified tension escalation. Her stance also expressed the need to reduce tensions between actors through a dialogue based on respect for international law (European External Action Service 2014a). The following day after the referendum on the future of Crimea, the High Representative strongly condemned the referendum and stated the EU's options to stabilize the situation in Ukraine. The EU was ready to mediate dialogue between the parties to the conflict; to support the rapid deployment of the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; to sign the political provisions of the Association Agreement with Ukraine; and to strongly support the stabilization of the country (European External Action Service 2014a). In the middle of April, the High Representative for the first time issued an opinion expressing concern about the separatist movement in eastern Ukraine and calling for the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission. However, on 29 April 2014, she addressed the deterioration of the security situation and condemned the escalating violence, specifically concerning the detention of military observers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The High Representative also talked about extending the list of sanctioned individuals (European External Action Service 2014b).

On the 70th anniversary of the Normandy landing, French President Francois Hollande met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the Ukrainian President Peter Poroshenko and the Russian President Vladimir Putin at an informal meeting on 6 June 2014. Representatives of these countries have subsequently created the Normandy Four, whose main objective was to mediate the dialogue between Ukraine and Russia in resolving the conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine (Škvrnda 2016).

One of the complex EU approaches to this conflict was to support long-term transformation. An essential example of this approach was the signing of an ambitious Association Agreement on 27 June 2014; by

temporarily applying Articles III, V, VI and VII to the extent that entities/matters are covered by the competence of the European Union; transitional application of Article IV (1 January 2016). The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union on 1 July 2016 also entered into force (Rabinovych 2017).

Before the Group of 7 (G7) meeting, the EU promoted the “Support to conflict-affected areas”<sup>5</sup> initiative which sponsored 17 projects targeting people who had to leave their homes due to the conflict (EuroAid 2018).

Another round of negotiations took place at the beginning of September, linking in with the negotiations at the end of August. This meeting resulted in the signing of the Minsk Protocol, also called Minsk I. The participants agreed on the following: to ensure a ceasefire, monitored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; to accept the special status of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and decentralize power at regional and local levels; to monitor the border between Ukraine and Russia under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; the release of hostages; to draw up and adopt a law preventing the prosecution and punishment of persons in connection with the events that have taken place in some areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions; free and democratic elections in these regions; and economic and humanitarian reconstruction of affected regions in eastern Ukraine (OSCE 2014a).

The Minsk Protocol was also welcomed by the G7<sup>6</sup> Foreign Ministers’ statement: “... as an important step towards a sustainable, mutual, and welcome ceasefire.” A memorandum in which the parties agreed to create a buffer zone subsequently supplemented the Minsk Protocol<sup>7</sup>. *The Memorandum also included an extension of the OSCE competence, an absolute ban on offensive actions and overflights of military aircraft or drones in the safety zone*<sup>8</sup>, and the obligation to remove mines and other obstacles in the buffer zone (OSCE 2014b).

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<sup>5</sup>The budget allocated was €17 million (Rabinovych 2017).

<sup>6</sup>Office of the Spokesman, US Department of State (2014). Group of 7 (G7) Foreign Ministers Joint Statement on Ukraine. US Department of State.

<sup>7</sup>The buffer zone should be 30 kilometres wide.

<sup>8</sup>The aircraft monitoring the situation on behalf of the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) was the only exception within the overflight ban.

An important step in reaching a ceasefire was the French-German plan, initiated by French President Francois Holland as the so-called last chance to resolve the conflict—the possibility of discussing a new agreement, with Russia being invited as one of the actors (BBC News 2015). Representatives of Ukraine, Russia, France, Germany and the self-proclaimed republics—the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republic—adopted a new international agreement known as “Minsk II” on 12 February 2015. The deal was very ambitious as it spoke of an immediate and full ceasefire and the removal of all heavy weapons on both sides. President Francois Hollande and Chancellor Angela Merkel were very careful because they feared its possible violation. The Minsk II Agreement also included a number of Ukraine’s commitments to internal structural reforms and the related steps needed to ensure peace and democracy in the country. One of them was to be the constitutional reform aimed at decentralizing power and organizing democratic local elections in October 2015, European External Action Service (2014c). The implementation of these measures has been promoted by the EU through the structural capacity building of peace and has become part of many of the EU’s official approaches to the Minsk II (European External Action Service 2014d, e).

## 5 Sanctions as an Instrument of EU Foreign Policy

The international arena, in the absence of central government, has developed a system of sanctions that were used. The general prohibition on the use of force in international relations influenced the tools used for peaceful conflict resolution. One of the tools used in foreign policy are sanctions—a decision taken by a state to ensure national security interest. There are different types of sanctions including the economic sanction—ban on trade which can be targeted on certain sectors, products or persons (Klucka 2011).

The adoption of restrictive measures was the most striking step in European foreign policy towards the current conflict in Ukraine. The

extraordinary meeting of Heads of State and Prime Ministers of the EU member states with the Government of Ukraine led to individual restrictive measures (asset freezes and visa bans) against those engaged in activities threatening the territorial integrity of the EU. On 17 March 2014, the EU adopted the first restrictive measures for 21 leaders, delimiting their travel to the EU and freezing their assets (Foreign Affairs Council 2014). Following the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to Russia, another 12 names of Russian and Crimean officials were added to the existing list, and the list kept expanding in the following period (Council of the European Union 2014).

The sanctions were aimed at sectoral cooperation and exchange with Russia. EU citizens and companies could not buy or sell new liabilities, equities or similar financial instruments with a maturity of more than 30 days issued by five major state-owned Russian banks, three major Russian energy companies, three major Russian defence companies and all their branches abroad. Any assistance in this area was also prohibited, and no loans with a maturity over 30 days could be provided to these entities. Another measure was the embargo on the import and export of arms and similar material and military technology to/from Russia. The restrictions also concerned the energy sector when the export of some tools and technologies to Russia had to be subject to authorization by the competent authorities of the member state (European Union Newsroom 2018).

In January 2015, the Council extended the duration of the sanction until September 2015 (Council of the European Union 2015a). Unsuccessful efforts to close the ceasefire via the Minsk Protocol have not changed the EU's policy, which continued to strengthen sanctions. On 19 March 2015, EU officials decided to harmonize the sanctions with the Minsk Protocol. In practice, this meant that sanctions would remain in effect until the end of 2015, when the last point of the peace plan was to be implemented<sup>9</sup>. The meeting also highlighted the need to intervene in the Russian disinformation campaign on the conflict in Ukraine. The European Council called on the High Representative to prepare a Strategic Communication Action Plan (Council of the European Union

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<sup>9</sup>Ukraine was to regain control of the eastern border of the country.

2015b). In September 2015, the Council extended sanctions until 15 March 2016, which already included 149 persons and 37 entities (Council of the European Union 2015c). In December 2015, the sanctions were extended until 31 July 2016 (Council of the European Union 2015c). Sanctions are in force until now and the list of persons was extended during 2016–2018 to include further entities subject to sanctions.

We can assert that the EU is mainly using diplomatic instruments. In this case, however, it has also used economic constraint (prohibition to travel to the EU, freezing of business assets for 149 persons and 38 entities). Furthermore, it uses restrictions on economic exchange with the Crimea and Sevastopol territories and specific sectoral economic cooperation with Russia.

## 6 Identifying the Foreign Policy Approaches of EU Member States

Due to the uniqueness of European integration, it is difficult to define the key processes that influence foreign policy formation. The question remains whether there is one European interest, which serves as a common interest of the integration group of member states. The fact that the EU's foreign policy exists through designated instruments is an irrefutable fact. The intergovernmental principle, on which it is based, greatly limits its effectiveness. For this reason, we have chosen a case study of the current conflict in Ukraine. It is an armed conflict in a state in the direct neighbourhood of the EU. Although this conflict is the result of a long-term political, economic and social crisis in Ukraine, the EU, through diplomatic and economic instruments, is trying to be an actor in its solution. Among other things, this conflict has, after a long time, brought the EU's common position in the form of sanctions imposed on separatists in Ukraine and targeted sanctions on Russia.

Using dependent and independent variables, we examine the interest of individual states. The interests of the member states of the EU represent a dependent variable. In the context of the current conflict in

Ukraine, we look at the positions of the EU member states regarding the sanctions adopted in 2014. These are based on the official positions presented by the leaders of the member states. As positions can evolve over time, due to various internal and external factors, the focus is on the member states' positions after the adoption of economic sanctions. Although the consensus of all member states was needed to adopt sanctions, in practice, this meant that not all member states had to explicitly agree to adopt sanctions, but they simply joined the common position. The role of the categorization of member countries also plays a role, as different authors use different factors. Member states are categorized into three groups: countries that agree to sanctions; countries that advocate their abolition; and the third group is made up of countries that would welcome a dialogue rather than a more specific position.

The largest group is formed by the member states that support sanctions. This group includes Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Sweden and the UK. For example, France and Germany played an important role in addressing the current conflict in Ukraine. Both countries support sanctions imposed on Russia. France agrees with the sanctions, and it was the first to support the creation of the Normandy Four when addressing the conflict. Additionally, Germany was the strongest supporter of the imposition of sanctions on Russia, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel considered them irreversible (Kafsack 2014). Similarly, the UK has supported sanctions: *In terms of sanctions, I'm very clear, having spoken to Angela Merkel and François Hollande, that the EU will be ready for further steps in terms of other areas ... Russia needs to know that action will follow if there isn't a radical change in the way they behave* (The Guardian 2014, July 21).

Croatia has also supported sanctions and has generally supported the EU's policy towards Russia. The Croatian Embassy in Moscow has declared that Croatia shares the same principles as the EU and does not recognize the Crimea annexation: *Until the European Union holds a position on the Crimea, Croatia will share it as a Member State* (Šabič et al. 2018). All Baltic countries have also supported the imposition of economic sanctions on Russia. This is mainly due to the complicated relationship with this country. Lithuania is one of the states that very actively

supports closer relations between the EU and Ukraine. This Baltic country is strategically located between Russia and the Kaliningrad region, so Lithuania's concerns have only increased after the Crimea annexation (The Baltic Times 2017). It can be concluded that there are several factors affecting the countries in agreement on sanctions. In most cases, these are already deteriorating relations with the country, resulting from historical, economic or political aspects. Indeed, most countries consider the benevolent behaviour of Russia a threat to international order.

Countries that disagree with sanctions against Russia are mainly member states that have strong economic/energy ties or a positive view of the country. This category of countries includes Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and Italy. The intensity of negative attitudes varies, with some states in this group refusing to adopt sanctions, but still supporting the EU's common position. The biggest opponents of sanctions against Russia include Cyprus, Greece and Hungary. The reasons for rejecting sanctions vary in these countries. Hungary is almost 80% dependent on gas supplies from Russia. At the same time as the EU wanting to impose sanctions, Hungary concluded an agreement with Moscow worth €10 billion for Rosatom to expand the Hungarian nuclear power plant. Russia is Hungary's largest trading partner outside the EU—export being at €2.55 billion in 2013. The Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said *Economic sanctions are already in the third round and it would be appropriate for us not to use them anymore because it is not in the interest of Europe nor Hungary* (BBC News 2014). The same rhetoric is witnessed by representatives from Greece and Cyprus.

Italy also has strong economic ties similar to those of Cyprus, Greece and Hungary. Italy's negative attitude towards sanctions can be monitored at different levels of the political system. Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni did not see sanctions as a solution to the current situation and preferred dialogue at different levels. Likewise, Italian politician Franco Frattini, a former Minister of Commerce, claimed that sanctions affect the EU's economic growth and its capacity to create jobs (Frolova 2015).

The Czech and Slovak political scene is not unanimous in terms of sanctions. If we look at the official positions of senior officials, these

countries are against sanctions being in place. The main motivation is strong economic ties and energy dependence from Russia. Both countries have a high share of dependence on gas supplies from this country—Slovakia 63% and Czech Republic 80% (Dempsey 2014). Bulgaria and Slovenia also have the same reasons, especially economic and energy dependence. The Bulgarian Prime Minister noted that their economy would be heavily affected by sanctions, as 2.7% of Bulgarian exports in 2013 were directed to Russia (Croft 2014).

The largest group of states entails the member states of the EU, which are not unambiguous supporters of sanctions. Countries have relatively strong economic ties and energy dependence on Russia, but at the same time, supporting the EU's common position is their prerogative. Their pragmatic approach leads them to seek alternative solutions to this situation. These include Finland, the Netherlands, Austria and Spain and others (Table 8.1).

A completely unambiguous categorization of the EU member states would require much deeper research that takes into account other factors at different levels. Even in the group which supports sanctions against Russia, categorization is not absolute. Some member state officials have

**Table 8.1** Position of member state towards sanctions on Russia

Member states of the European Union that support sanctions	Member states of the European Union with a negative attitude towards sanctions	Member states of the European Union that would welcome dialogue or do not have a clear opinion
Belgium	Bulgaria	Finland
Croatia	Cyprus	The Netherlands
Denmark	Czech Republic	Ireland
Estonia	Greece	Malta
France	Hungary	Portuguese
Germany	Slovakia	Austria
Lithuania	Slovenia	Spain
Latvia	Italy	
Luxembourg		
Poland		
Romania		
Sweden		
United Kingdom		

Source: Authors' representation



promoted economic sanctions at the level of European integration. However, the domestic debate pointed to not entirely unambiguous support. In some cases, the rhetoric of top officials varied at national and supranational levels. Common factors that created this situation were the economic ties and the energy dependence of the member states. Many member states realized that Russia had violated international law by annexing Crimea, but its own economic interests made the decision not entirely clear. Ultimately, however, economic sanctions were adopted by consensus.

Development of foreign policy is also analysed through an independent variable of political compliance. The analysis takes into account the 69th session of the UN General Assembly, which took place from September 2014 to September 2015. It is important to note that most resolutions are adopted without voting taking place in the General Assembly. In the event of a vote, there are two options for documenting votes: (1) documented voting where the voting of each state can be monitored; (2) a summary vote where only the result of the vote is published (General Assembly Voting 2018). During this period, 327 resolutions were adopted, of which 236 concerned foreign policy issues. In view of the above-mentioned ways of adopting resolutions, only 77 cases can be monitored.<sup>10</sup> There is a high degree of coordination between member states of the EU in the UN, with as many as 71.19% of the resolutions adopted unanimously by countries. This was mostly the adoption of resolutions on the issue of stability in the Middle East, human rights, protection of democracy, international order and peace, as well as disarmament and arms control issues.

Cases where member states have not voted uniformly provide us with a look at national state's behaviour. In the UN General Assembly vote, there are member states that have participated in all resolutions and have always joined the majority view. This group includes Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Romania and Slovakia. The second most numerous group is countries that voted differently than the majority in only one case—Finland, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Hungary, Lithuania, Italy and Sweden. Belgium, Malta and the UK disagreed with the largest

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<sup>10</sup> On 2 December 2014, the vote was recorded only in the summary vote.

number of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly during this period (Table 8.2).

Based on the results of the vote in the UN General Assembly, the coordination of the positions of the member states of the EU can be monitored. Since König-Archibugi's research, the percentage has increased by almost 10%. It is important to note that at the time of this research, the EU had only 15 members. The coordination of the current positions of the 28 member states is therefore much more difficult. Member states are therefore more willing to hold a common European interest in the international organization on foreign policy issues. By comparing member states' voting in the General Assembly and the results of examining the dependent variable of interests, it is noted that the member states voted very similarly. However, we find the difference to be especially in those countries with strong economic and energy links to Russia (e.g. Slovakia

**Table 8.2** Voting of member states in the General Assembly of the UN during the 69th session

Member states of the European Union who have agreed to all resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly in the period under review	Member states of the European Union who have agreed to all but 1–3 resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly in the period under review	Member states of the European Union who have disagreed with several resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly in the period under review
Bulgaria	Czech Republic	Belgium
Denmark	Finland	Cyprus
Estonia	Croatia	France
Latvia	Greece	Ireland
Romania	The Netherlands	Malta
Slovakia	Lithuania	Austria
	Luxembourg	United Kingdom
	Hungary	
	Germany	
	Poland	
	Portuguese	
	Slovenia	
	Italy	
	Spain	
	Sweden	

Source: Authors' representation

and Bulgaria). It is therefore clear that national interests of member states still play a very important role in shaping EU's foreign policy. The same is true for the UK, which, by contrast, has the largest share of divergent votes compared to other member states.

European values are another independent variable that play an important role in shaping the EU's foreign policy. This independent variable is closely related to political consistency. The fifth part of the Treaty of Lisbon focuses on external action: *The European Union's activities on the international stage will be dominated by [...] democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, principles of equality and solidarity and respect for the principles of the UN Charter and international law* (2009, p. 29). This article confirms that the above-mentioned values are close to all member states and seeks to actively promote them in relation to the international environment. For example, economic sanctions in Russia have been the response to the violation of international law by the annexation of Crimea. Political compliance can also be pursued in those areas—especially in the protection of human rights and respect for democracy and international law. Another factor that enters into the formation of foreign policy is the independent variable of Europeanized values. We assume that in a democratic society, public opinion also corresponds to the composition of political elites. Decisions taken at national level and the views expressed by local politicians should be in line with public opinion in the country.

The 2014 Eurobarometer can be used to analyse this independent variable, with the specific question of when respondents should express, agree or oppose EU's common foreign policy. On a theoretical level, member states whose citizens are supportive of a common foreign policy should have greater political coherence and participate in promoting sanctions against Russia. Denmark, the UK and Sweden were in a group of countries that supported sanctions (Radio Sweden 2014, July 17), even though its citizens do not agree on a common foreign policy. Likewise, the states that have the strongest support for the common foreign policy did not agree with sanctions. Greece is one of the countries where the refusal of sanctions was most pronounced. The independent political compliance variable also does not completely copy the results of the barometer. Malta

and the UK are among the countries with the lowest political consistency and the lowest support for a common foreign policy among citizens. This group also includes Belgium, which already has higher support for the common foreign policy among citizens (68%). Although we do not always see the logic of Europeanized identities in some member states, in most cases, the interests of member states in applying economic sanctions correspond to that of the citizens of the EU. However, it is clear that another factor has played a key role in member states' attitudes to economic sanctions and therefore the results are not entirely clear.

The security situation in the EU since 2016 has shown that this is an area where member states are more willing to integrate than in foreign policy. According to the result of Eurobarometer, the individual member states' positive score on strengthening defence and security policy integration is much higher than that of foreign policy issues. The European average on the issue is also higher (72%) than on the issue of strengthening foreign policy integration (62%). However, the argument remains very similar to that of foreign policy. Obviously, not all states whose citizens support defence and security policy integration have automatically backed sanctions against Russia.

## 7 Conclusions

The EU supports, initiates and implements various modifications to strategic cooperation. Such cooperation may not be based on a presumption of membership in the short or medium term. Sometimes there is no mention of membership. However, sometimes it may also involve lower-level integration than the existing integration cluster. In particular, such situations may arise in cases where major differences in the economic level, legislation and social standards of partner countries prevent full participation in the integration process.

The main objective of the European Neighbourhood Policy is to avoid creating new dividing lines between the enlarged Union and its neighbours; to establish special relations in order to spread political and economic stability. The EU offers its neighbours privileged trade relations as well as higher forms of integration, including access to the EU internal

market, provided that the country commits itself to democracy and reform. Conditionality is a key element that allows the benefits of cooperation with the EU to be reduced in the event of violations of the values that the EU professes. The Union offers Free Trade Agreements, bilateral energy agreements and is interested in introducing privileged visa procedures for its neighbours, thus strengthening legal immigration at the expense of illegal and providing financial assistance for governance reforms.

In 2003, a new form of strategic cooperation was presented—the project of the Common European Economic Area with Russia. Today, the EU faces intense offensive operations by the Russian Federation in the wider region, which threatens internal stability in the EU member states and triggers geopolitical tensions. The most striking is the dramatic development of events in Ukraine. Russia's annexation of Crimea and military support for separatist forces in eastern Ukraine in 2014 led to the introduction of economic sanctions against Russia and a weakening of the level of cooperation achieved. The way in which the Russian Federation pursues its foreign policy will influence the potential of reciprocally beneficial mutual trade.

As mentioned earlier, the Ukrainian crisis has proved to be challenging to the foreign policy of the EU, bringing an armed conflict to its border. Adopting sanctions against Russia, in spite of member state's national interests provided a baseline for further cooperation. To support this argument, on the basis of critical analysis of the information available, we can say that the national interest of the member states does not play a single and key role in shaping the EU's foreign policy positions. Although, since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the adoption of common positions remains in the hands of member states, and it is possible to follow the rise of supranational institutions that influence the formation of the EU's foreign policy positions. In particular, it is the more specific defining and strengthening of the position of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the creation of an institution of the European External Action Service. Member states show much higher political coherence in the process of Europeanization and efforts to strengthen the EU's position. Member states' national interest does not play a single role in shaping the

EU's foreign policy stance, as the process of Europeanization and strengthening supranational institutions are entering the process.

Over the past two decades, the political consistency of EU member states has increased by 10% over the reporting period. Member states are able to reach consensus on foreign policy issues. But the need for coordination has increased due to the increase from 15 member states to 28. Based on the analysis of resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly during the 69th session, a high degree of coordination between the member states of the EU is apparent, with up to 71.19% of all resolutions adopted with the consent of all the countries of the EU. The political coherence of member states is reflected in common foreign policy positions in areas related to fundamental European values, the threat to the European security environment and the current conflict in Ukraine.

If the EU is interested in strengthening its position in the international system in the future, it will have to expand and deepen integration. Economic strength only can guarantee its weight, strength and attractiveness. The current intergovernmental foreign policy model will always depend on the member states' willingness to participate in a common position. Deepening integration in this area and shifting competences to a supranational level will be a way to achieve genuine common EU attitudes towards the external environment. If integration progresses as it is today and the process of Europeanization continues to have an active influence at both levels, a genuine common policy can also be achieved in the foreign policy area.

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