



Developments in security policy: European and US considerations regarding the war in Ukraine

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SWEDISH DEFENCE UNIVERSITY 2016

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1. Introduction

This report is one of the reports for the project ‘Issues in contemporary transatlantic security policy’ that is funded by the Swedish Ministry of Defence. This part of the project aims at analyzing European and American considerations with regard to the wars in Ukraine, Iraq and Syria. The analysis is undertaken in three different reports, one for each of these wars. This report covers the war in Ukraine. When studying these considerations we have paid particular attention to the national discourses, the goals and solutions presented, as well as the actions taken by France, Germany, the UK and the US. In this report we have also studied Poland, due to its proximity to Ukraine. The analysis has primarily been undertaken from a national perspective: for each war, we study the countries separately, but the analyses also cover consequences for relations in security policy and the role of NATO and other organizations. The analyses in all three reports cover the years 2014–2015 with slightly different emphases depending on political developments. However, a common factor in all three crises is that significant events affecting European and American responses had already occurred in 2014.

In a report written for the Swedish Ministry of Defence in 2013, a number of trends in contemporary security and defence policy were identified. The analysis in this report will be discussed in relation to some of these trends. The first trend to be discussed again is insecurity about the change in US foreign and security policy after the so-called pivot towards Asia. However, this was before the war in Ukraine and before international engagement in the war in Syria. The second trend that will be discussed again here is the diverging pictures we found with regard to Russia, where Northern and Eastern Europe showed much more concern about actions taken by Russia than France and the UK. The third trend to be discussed again is the trend of increased bilateral cooperation, which was partially a consequence of another trend: that of the increased influence of the economy in defence policy. Increased bi-lateral cooperation was discussed in the 2013 report as a functional trend aimed at increasing efficiency in defence cooperation that mainly had cost reduction as its driving force. The fourth trend was the diversified role of NATO, which in addition to its traditional role as regional security organization with territorial defence as its main function, has developed into a global security organization with international military operations as an additional function. The fifth trend that will be discussed again in this report is the role of EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which was shown to be unclear in the previous report. In addition, the previous report also discussed the fact that these trends challenge political leadership in several ways. Domestically, because when aspects other than security and defence, such as the economy, become important for policy development, more actors are involved in policy making.

Internationally, one reason for lack of leadership in international organizations could be that the cost of leadership has increased at the same time as trends have been to increase bilateral cooperations.

This report first analyzes the different countries' political discourse, goals and solutions, and actions taken in regard to the war in Ukraine. A short summary for each country can be found on the last page of the respective chapter. In the concluding chapter a summary of the responses is presented. In this chapter the results are also discussed in relation to the trends presented above. The time frame for the study of the Ukraine war is from the Crimea status change until the Russian decision to use military force in Syria: 27 February 2014 to 30 September 2015.

Russian actions and the consequent change of the territorial and political status of the Crimean peninsula on 27 February was a turning point in the Ukrainian crisis. The Ukrainian crisis itself started in late 2013 with the Maidan protests. The events in Crimea are of substantial importance because they contributed to further internationalization of the conflict with a de facto border change on the European continent, something that was against the overall European commitment to permanence of the borders embodied in documents such as the CSCE Helsinki Final Act from 1975 (CSCE 1975), or in the case of Ukraine particularly, the Budapest memorandum of security assistance from 1994 which was designed to guarantee the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of Ukraine and signed by the United States, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ukraine (Budapest Memorandums on Security Assurances, 1994). In this way, the events in Ukraine reshaped both short-term and long-term security prospects for the European continent, challenging the absence of conflicts in Europe after the end of the war in former Yugoslavia.

2. France

The Russian annexation of Crimea and the escalation of violence in Eastern Ukraine were strongly denounced by the French government because of Russia's flagrant breach of international law, the security threat it posed to France given Ukraine's geographical proximity to France, and because of the implications of the crisis for the security architecture in Europe in general. Therefore, France was actively engaged in the conflict resolution process in Ukraine. It perceived itself to be a key actor that should act on the new threats and challenges to international law posed by Russia.

Political discourse

From the beginning of the Ukraine crisis, France issued official statements on a continuous basis. This was a politico-diplomatic move to show how important the crisis was to France, and also aimed to show that France was ready to take an active role in managing the conflicts, and to design plans for their resolution. According to the French President, Francois Hollande, the Ukraine crisis was one of the most serious crises in Europe since the end of the Cold War, and had wide peace and security implications for Eastern Europe (President Hollande, 2014).

The position of France throughout the whole crisis was that borders in Europe should not be overturned, that the referendum was illegal and that the change of status of Crimea was against international law. France refused to recognize the referendum and emphasized that Ukraine must be seen as a sovereign country with an absolute right to shape its own future (Foreign Minister Fabius 2014). In a joint statement made on February 28, 2014, France, Poland and Germany gave their support to the sovereignty and integrity of Ukraine. They described the situation in Crimea as 'troubling' and expressed 'deep concerns' regarding the tensions in the eastern region (France Diplomatie, 2014a).

During the development of the conflict, France supported initiatives for diplomatic measures and negotiations, and repeatedly called on Russia to recognize and respect the integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. It stated that Russia should take immediate steps to prevent a dangerous escalation of the conflict (Foreign Minister Fabius 2014) and welcomed discussions at the highest levels between the Russian Federation and Ukraine (France Diplomatie, 2014b). Another important issue for France was the holding of democratic elections in Ukraine. France described the October 2014 Parliamentary elections along with the May 2014 Presidential elections as 'another step forward in the political stabilization process' in Ukraine. In this regard France stated that it would support the majority that would be formed in the Ukrainian Parliament (France Diplomatie, 2014c). France was also active within NATO

and expressed both solidarity with the allies regarding the crisis and a readiness to take reassurance measures (France Diplomatie, 2014d) in relation to the NATO countries that felt most threatened by the Russia's aggressive behaviour.

Goals and solutions

The goals and interests of France concerning developments in the Ukraine crisis were disseminated through official statements, bilateral and multilateral meetings and through joint statements together with other European countries. French interests in and objectives for solving the crisis have been relatively constant from the beginning. It has sought to achieve:

- A solution to the crisis in Ukraine and to prevent the situation on the ground from deteriorating (Présidence de la République française 2014);
- Decreased tensions in the eastern region;
- Transitional government;
- Political stability and reforms in Ukraine;
- Peaceful discussions among relevant parties (France Diplomatie, 2014a);
- The upholding of democratic values in Ukraine (France Diplomatie, 2014e);
- Lasting cease fire (France Diplomatie, 2014f);
- Constitutional reform that will respect the rights of minorities (France Diplomatie, 2014g).

In line with these goals, France has actively promoted what it has seen as the most suitable measures for the resolution of the crisis: multilateral dialogue (carrot) and economic sanctions (stick). France participated in the promotion of multilateral dialogue and diplomatic solutions that resulted in the creation of the Minsk II agreement (Georgi 2015), and the so-called Normandy format (France Diplomatie, 2015a). The latter came about following a summit in connection with the World War II commemoration on June 6 2014 to which the French president had invited President Putin along with Chancellor Merkel and President Poroshenko. Together they established a semi-formal contact group (Fischerund and Meyer, 2014) named the Normandy format. In a televised interview Foreign Minister Fabius was quoted as saying that 'France's position from the very beginning has been to say that, when it comes to Russia, we have to show, at the same time, our firmness and [willingness to engage in] dialogue' (Foreign Minister Fabius in FRANCE24 interview Aug 2014) One of the restrictive measures most strongly promoted was targeted sanctions against Russia with a 'whole series of elements that may affect people and their assets, the international economic relations we have with the various players, the prospects for the G8, and relations between the European Union and Russia'

(Foreign Minister Fabius, 2014a). This involved, according to the Foreign minister, a ‘whole range of sanctions against Crimean and Russian leaders’ (Foreign Minister Fabius, 2014b). However, the sanctions also had considerable consequences for the French government since it had to decide on whether or not to follow through with the delivery of two warships (Mistral helicopter carriers) worth 1.6 billion dollars.

In addition, France proposed the deployment of an OSCE mission in Ukraine (Foreign Minister Fabius, 2014b) with full access to all affected areas (France Diplomatie, 2015a). France also – through the European Union – recognized the importance of the Geneva meetings (Foreign Minister Fabius 2014b) and their implementation as a key factor in the peace process (Présidence de la République française 2014).

In a joint statement with German Chancellor Merkel, French President Hollande outlined five important processes that were crucial in order to end the crisis in Ukraine:

- Free and fair presidential elections;
- De-escalation of the violence;
- National dialogue between representatives of the Ukrainian government and representatives of all regions of Ukraine;
- Constitutional process with a short timeframe;
- Economic cooperation to minimize damage to the Ukrainian economy (President Hollande and Chancellor Merkel 2014).

Finally, France was especially active within the Normandy format. At the ministerial meeting on February 24, 2015 France asked for complete implementation of the Minsk agreement starting with a ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons (France Diplomatie, 2015a). Four months later, still within the Normandy format, France, Ukraine, Russia and Germany expressed their support of the work of the Trilateral contact group and the implementation of the de-escalation plan for Chyrokyn. They also emphasized the importance of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission gaining unconditional access to carry out its mission (France Diplomatie, 2015b).

Actions

In order to contribute to the resolution of the Ukraine crisis, France undertook several diplomatic actions, all of which underlined its engagement in the crisis and its resolution. First and foremost France cancelled the \$2 billion contract with Russia for building and delivering two Mistral helicopter carriers, a move that was intended to put pressure on Russia and show that its actions were not tolerated (France 24, 2015). Secondly, the French Foreign Minister and his German and Polish counterparts went to Ukraine in order to ease the tensions. Thirdly,

France initiated and participated in meetings at the highest level, discussing the crisis in Ukraine (France Diplomatie, 2014h). For example, France was involved in the negotiations that led to the Minsk II agreement, was active in ensuring its implementation and observed the follow-up period unilaterally (France Diplomatie 2015) and multilaterally within the European Union (France Diplomatie, 2015c).

These intense, diplomatic activities involved meetings and telephone conversations with representatives from Russia, including President Vladimir Putin, the Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and from the US President Barrack Obama, and US State Secretary John Kerry. Talks were also held with France's European partners – the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, the British Prime Minister David Cameron – and with the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon (Foreign Minister Fabius, 2014; France Diplomatie, 2014i; Présidence de la République française 2014; France Diplomatie, 2014e, p. 3). Thus, during 2014 there were intense bi- and multilateral negotiations going on between Russia, the US, EU leaders, and Ukraine.

Finally, France acted within the framework of international institutions. The French President met with the NATO Secretary General at the time, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, and discussed the situation in Ukraine (France Diplomatie, 2014d). France also took part in observing the elections organized by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), contributing 18 observers (France Diplomatie, 2014h). France actively contributed emergency humanitarian and medical assistance and assistance for displaced persons. It gave support to the organization of the 2014 presidential election, and assisted in the development of reforms (Ibid). Through the mechanisms of the EU, France contributed to the overall package of over €242 million of humanitarian aid and early recovery assistance to Ukraine (European Commission 2015). Within the framework of the EU, the French Foreign Ministry, together with the International Development Crisis and Support Center, contributed to humanitarian efforts by the Ukrainian government with equipment, food, blankets, generators and other basic necessities needed to deal with the humanitarian crisis (France Diplomatie, 2015d).

Summary

With regard to **political discourse**, a main French argument was that the borders of Europe should not be overturned and that Russian actions challenged international law. In this sense

France both called attention to the maintenance of international order and respect for national sovereignty and reacted in support of international law and an international security system based on principles of right. Out of the countries studied here, France's **goals and solutions** with regard to the crisis remained steady and clear throughout. These goals included the return to peace through ceasefire and an end to hostilities in eastern Ukraine, demands which called for talks between the parties involved. Another set of goals were related to developing the state by means of a transitional government, constitutional reform, and the upholding of democratic values (free and fair elections). France (together with Germany) also emphasized economic cooperation. In terms of diplomatic action, France made efforts to push ahead with a peace process both through negotiations and sanctions. It delivered humanitarian aid and administrative assistance in the form of state-building efforts. French diplomatic efforts gave prominence to the significant role of smaller groups (minilateralism). These came to the fore especially within the confines of the Normandy format.

3. Germany

Political discourse

Because of the Maidan protests, Ukraine was already being followed closely on an international level, and so reactions to developments in Crimea came without delay. Germany immediately condemned the events and strongly criticized Russia for breaking a range of agreements. On the very day of these events, Chancellor Merkel and Prime Minister Cameron asserted that all states must respect the territorial integrity of Crimea, and that Ukraine as a sovereign state had the freedom to choose its international partners. Both saw a strong role for the EU, and stated that ‘we all together want to support a democratic Ukraine, and want to ensure that Ukraine enjoys real democracy, that the people enjoy a parliamentary democracy free from corruption and oppression’ (Bundesregierung, 2014a). The following day, the foreign ministers of the Weimar Triangle countries expressed their full support for Ukraine’s sovereignty, and stressed the need for domestic reforms agreed upon by all relevant stakeholders. Ukraine ‘will have to face immense challenges in order to improve the standards of living of the citizens of Ukraine which can be only achieved through the implementation of transition and modernization reforms, including fighting against corruption, and respect for democratic values’ (Weimar Triangle Foreign Ministers, 2014).

Early on, the tone against Russia was harsh. On the day of the Crimea event, Defence Minister von der Leyen accused Russia of ‘flexing its muscles’ along Ukraine’s eastern border. Further, she referenced NATO–Ukraine cooperation and said that the NATO defence ministers agreed to support Ukraine and stressed that there was agreement in NATO to defend common values, namely that ‘the military does not interfere with politics, and stability and democracy remain the main objectives’ (von der Leyen, 2014a). In a phone call with President Putin on March 3, Merkel condemned the ‘unacceptable intervention in Crimea’ and accused Russia of breaching international law, especially the 1994 Budapest Memorandum and the 1997 Black Sea Fleet Agreement (Bundesregierung, 2014b). On March 16, Merkel again talked to Putin and stated that the planned referendum in Crimea was illegal (Bundesregierung, 2014b). Addressing the parliament in mid-March, Merkel argued that Russian actions in Ukraine proved that Russia was not a partner for stability anymore (Merkel, 2014a).

Germany stressed the importance of taking united action and standing up for common values when addressing the Ukraine conflict. Merkel and President Obama agreed that the

international community needed to stay united since Russia's action was a breach of international law (Bundesregierung, 2014c). Meeting again in May, they agreed on introducing sanctions and Merkel stated that sanctions were not an end in themselves, but a necessary measure to make clear that 'we are serious. We're serious about our core principles' (Bundesregierung, 2014d). Speaking at the Brookings Institution on February 28, Steinmeier committed himself 'to a foreign policy that will expand and leverage the toolbox of diplomacy', and argued that 'Europe, the US and Russia should work to provide Ukraine with stability – political as well as economic – rather than pulling it further apart. Ukraine is one example in a larger picture: neither the US nor Europe can take on its global responsibility alone' (Steinmeier, 2014a). Addressing parliament in mid-March, Merkel voiced her support for an OSCE monitoring mission that could enable international control in Ukraine's southern and eastern parts, as well as 'providing concrete support to Ukraine', such as signing the political part of the Association Agreement as 'we thereby explicitly give a political signal of solidarity and support for Ukraine' (Merkel, 2014b).

While the position on Russian action in Ukraine was clear, German relations with Russia became a contested issue domestically. A range of prominent politicians got engaged, as this issue touched upon the direction and future of German 'Ostpolitik'. Former Chancellor Schröder tried to foster understanding for Putin's actions by pointing out that Putin felt encircled by NATO (Bannas, 2014). Former Chancellor Schmidt agreed, and further opposed the imposed sanctions and the measures to exclude Russia from international forums, since sanctions hit the West as hard as Russia and cooperation was desperately needed: 'it would be ideal to come together now. At least, that would serve peace better than the current threatening with sanctions' (Zeit Online, 2014). Former Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor Fischer urged caution when imposing sanctions on Russia, since his assessment was that Russia was already acting from a position of weakness (Gathmann, 2014). Although the seeming lack of understanding of Russia was criticized, there was widespread satisfaction with Merkel's leadership in the conflict.

Along with the domestic debate on relations with Russia, the Ukraine conflict also sparked a debate on NATO and Germany's role within the alliance, largely initiated and promoted by von der Leyen. In March, the minister suggested NATO should react to the Ukraine conflict and supported an increased NATO presence in Eastern Europe as 'the current situation clearly shows that NATO is not only a military, but also a political alliance' (Spiegel, 2014). In April, von der Leyen stated that 'Germany is a reliable partner in NATO and the EU' which takes its international responsibility seriously as 'our partners within the alliance expect an economically

strong democracy like Germany to contribute to the containment of crises' (Bild, 2014). However, Germany stayed committed to a diplomatic solution to the crisis and the minister stressed that 'we, as a Western community of values, which is democratically and economically strong, must not fall into the Russian logic of escalation and power politics', and that the strength of the West lies in it abiding by the rule of law (FOCUS, 2014).

NATO stayed on the agenda throughout the spring, and in June the debate touched upon transatlantic relations and relations to Russia. According to von der Leyen 'NATO is the strongest alliance in the world and has proven for decades that it can adjust to new threat scenarios. Its philosophy is to engage in a dialogue out of a position of strength. The reaching out to Russia must come from this position' (von der Leyen, 2014b). The minister called for the transatlantic community to stand up for a transatlantic approach, since 'our greatest strength is our transatlantic values. And as a political alliance our unity is our true strength' (von der Leyen, 2014b).

This debate took place against the backdrop of growing anti-American sentiment among the general public. Although transatlantic ties were promoted by the government, it had a challenge tackling the growing discontent in society. In May, Merkel said that she took note of these voices, but did not consider them representative of Germany, and stressed that relations with the US were marked by friendship and partnership dating back decades. Although much of the negative feeling could be traced to the NSA affair, it also was to be explained by ambivalence to NATO and the militarization of the Ukraine conflict. Steinmeier, however, aimed to separate the NATO enlargement debate from the Ukraine conflict, arguing that Ukrainian decision makers had no intention of politicizing NATO membership at the moment (Naß and Thumann, 2014).

Along with the transatlantic argument, support for Ukraine was put in the context of European history. In an interview given in May, Merkel reminded the readers/listeners of Europe's bellicose 20th century and the help Germany was offered, as 'we Germans were given a helping hand after World War II. We accepted the help and made our contribution to the project of Europe. Especially we should appreciate the peace project of Europe.' This peace rests on the principle of the rule of law, and so the violations of the territorial integrity of Ukraine thus threatened the fundamental principles of peaceful coexistence in Europe (Korte and Kläsener, 2014). Steinmeier also said that 'Europe's peace order is the biggest achievement', and there was no going back to any realist order, but only the prospect of cooperation (Steinmeier, 2014b). Steinmeier also spoke of Russia staying an inevitable part of

this peace order, since ‘whether a partner or adversary, Russia will still remain our biggest neighbour after the crisis’ (Steinmeier, 2014b).

Against the backdrop of European history, German leadership in addressing the conflict became an issue. Countering the critics, Steinmeier stressed that ‘it is a misconception that Germany seeks more political weight, since Germany has more of that than before due to its economy, political stability and position in the middle of Europe. 25 years after German unification, there is no “special case role” anymore to hide behind. We are partners in Europe with the same rights and duties. We are expected to take up responsibility. And we are trying to do so: at the moment in tackling the Ukraine crisis, but also in issues beyond that’ (Siebert, 2014). A year later, in August 2015, Steinmeier reiterated this stance, arguing that German responsibility was ‘not a question of choice or will, but a description of reality’. This responsibility was described to be ‘in and for Europe’, and was the only solution to ‘the German question’ concerning containing power. Simultaneously, Steinmeier highlighted that embeddedness in the European framework was ‘the only realistic (one) for German foreign policy’, since it was the only format where Germany could have a real impact in shaping the international order (Steinmeier, 2015a). On Ukraine, he said, ‘we have to take up part of the leadership responsibility. Therefore, it is wise to cooperate with France. It would be even better if Great Britain would join’ (Bannas and Frankenberger, 2015). A central aspect of German leadership was the approach to solving the conflict. Steinmeier stressed throughout the conflict that the situation was complex, he defended the German double approach of diplomacy accompanied by sanctions, saying that Iraq and Libya had proven other strategies to be suboptimal (Steinmeier, 2014b).

Later on, the role of the US was emphasized less, and at the end of 2014 the US was mentioned merely in terms of economics, while the EU’s role in the conflict, and especially in trying to maintain communication channels with Russia, was highlighted (Merkel, 2014c). This became even more evident in 2015. At the Munich Security Conference in February 2015, von der Leyen still highlighted the importance of working within NATO, the EU and the OSCE, but only weeks later, she pointed out that the conflict in Ukraine, a ‘European topic’ was about ‘the political weight of the US and the Europeans’. Within this context, and that of the geopolitical implications for US–Russia relations, von der Leyen stressed the importance of French–German cooperation as being the ‘expression of the relevance of Europe’ (von der Leyen, 2015a). By the autumn of 2014, the distinction between the European and the transatlantic approach became evident. In their speeches, German policy makers made sure to highlight the importance of both, while keeping the two approaches separate. In September,

Merkel pointed out the importance of reaching common European, as well as transatlantic agreement. She made the case for a common European defence policy, although she stressed that ‘we should be careful not to develop the capabilities of NATO in a way that creates too big a distance to the US’ (Meyer and Schwennicke, 2014).

This distancing from the US was accompanied by ever-harsher German criticism of Russia. Transatlantic action had aimed to show that neither the change of borders through violent means, nor the breach of international law was acceptable in Europe. Worries about European security had, however, been present, and had justified the increase in NATO engagement. Merkel stressed that all transatlantic actions thus aimed at securing the European peace order, and that ‘we want to create security in Europe with Russia, not against it’ (Merkel, 2015a). As the situation on the ground in Ukraine changed, the tone became more conciliatory. Towards the end of the summer, Steinmeier pointed out that a de-escalation was not only in Germany’s interest because of the Ukrainians, but also because ‘of our interest in our relations with Russia, since sanctions cannot be the final answer. We have to stay interested in introducing a new perspective to German–Russian relations again’ (Steinmeier, 2015b).

Germany actively promoted European solutions to the conflict. When meeting with Prime Minister Yatsenyuk in January 2015, Merkel stressed that Germany wanted to help Ukraine become a transparent and democratic country, and therefore stayed committed to implementing all parts of the Minsk Agreement from September (Bundesregierung, 2015a). In February, Germany, as one of the co-signatories of the Minsk II Agreement, stated that there was no alternative to a peaceful solution in Ukraine (Bundesregierung, 2015b). The same month, Merkel vowed to strengthen OSCE instruments of cooperative security in Europe in order to enable a return to an order where ‘security and cooperation in Europe are possible only through dialogue, trust-building and cooperation’. Steinmeier reiterated support for the OSCE as a platform for dialogue when he addressed the OSCE Permanent Council in July: ‘without a political solution to the Ukraine conflict we will barely succeed in finding a path of return to a common understanding on our future and our principles of coexistence’ (Steinmeier, 2015c). Merkel also highlighted the unity of France and Germany on international issues, among other things through the Normandy format. However, in April she conceded that although the Normandy format was manifested as a forum, this didn’t rule out informal cooperation with the countries participating in the format (Bundesregierung, 2015c).

Starting from the summer of 2015, the tone towards the US became milder. In June, Merkel said that although there was disagreement, the US stayed Germany’s indispensable partner since ‘our societies rest on the principles of freedom and democracy’ (Gösmann and Dunz,

2015). In August, Steinmeier stated that although Germany had ‘addressed almost all joint diplomatic issues together in the past 12 months’, the US remained its most important partner because of good personal relations, mutual need and the US’s role as a guarantor of German security (Steinmeier, 2015a).

Goals and solutions

From the onset of the conflict, Germany’s goal was to enable Ukraine to maintain its sovereignty and democracy. In a joint press conference on the day of the Crimea events, Merkel and Cameron expressed their support for a democratic Ukraine with parliamentary democracy, and stressed the need to maintain the territorial integrity of Crimea (Bundesregierung, 2014a). This was reiterated the next day by the foreign ministers of the Weimar triangle, who said in a joint statement that ‘everything must be done to decrease the tension in the eastern region and promote peaceful discussions among relevant parties. We restate our support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. We appeal to all parties in Ukraine to refrain from actions that could challenge this’ (Weimar Triangle Foreign Ministers, 2014). There was also transatlantic agreement on the solution of the conflict, as Merkel and Obama shared the view that there could only be a political solution to the conflict (Bundesregierung, 2014c).

However, there was disagreement early on as to how to deal with the conflict. Speaking at the Brookings Institution in February, Steinmeier said that the US, Russia and Europe should work together on Ukraine. Particularly, the transatlantic community should cooperate, although ‘in some cases, Europe will take the diplomatic lead, as we are doing in Ukraine. In other cases, the US will take the diplomatic lead’ (Steinmeier, 2014a). This reflected country-specific differences in their approaches.

From the onset of the conflict, von der Leyen actively participated in the debate and highlighted the security aspect. On the eve of the events in Crimea, she voiced support for the political process in Ukraine and stated that ‘stability and democracy are the main objectives’, and advocated help from NATO for Ukraine (von der Leyen, 2014a). In March, the minister suggested a stronger role for NATO, saying that ‘it is now important for our allies at the external borders that NATO shows its presence’ (Spiegel, 2014). This, however, was met with heavy criticism, including that NATO was not the right actor for solving the conflict and accusations of promoting an escalation of the conflict. It also didn’t find any resonance within government (Decker, 2014).

However, from early on, Germany made use of the diplomatic toolbox and the EU and OSCE frameworks, which came to characterize the German approach throughout the conflict.

Within the EU framework, Germany aimed to support the liberal democratic camp in Ukraine and de-escalate the situation. As part of this, Germany promoted the signing of a range of EU–Ukraine agreements on easing trade and mobility restrictions, and also supported the establishment of an OSCE mission to Eastern Ukraine. Simultaneously, Germany stayed a staunch supporter of avoiding military escalation with Russia, and favoured exerting pressure on the country by implementing an EU three-step plan on constrained relations, aiming to change the Russian course of action (Merkel, 2014d).

After the first turmoil settled, Germany’s policy was clarified. Addressing the Bundestag in April, Steinmeier outlined five central objectives for Germany’s foreign policy which were based on the Geneva statement. First, he called for another Geneva meeting between Ukraine, Russia, the EU and the US; second, there needed to be agreement with Russia that the May 25 elections take place; third, a national dialogue facilitated by the OSCE; fourth, constitutional reform; and fifth, a plan for the disarmament of illegal groups and all public spaces (Steinmeier, 2014c). This policy was manifested in the German–French Stralsund statement in May with a few alterations. The five goals were stated to be free and fair presidential elections in Ukraine, monitored by the OSCE; de-escalation, and collection of weapons led by the OSCE; a national dialogue; constitutional reform; as well as economic cooperation, including energy supply (Bundesregierung, 2014e).

As the conflict dragged on, de-escalation as well as Russia’s role in the conflict became central in the German foreign policy debate. Steinmeier highlighted that Germany aimed to keep negotiation channels open, and in July he stated that the long-term goal remained de-escalation, while the short-term goals were to establish a lasting, OSCE-monitored truce and to secure the Russian-Ukrainian border (Buchsteiner, 2014). Together with its transatlantic partners, Germany agreed to increase pressure on Russia through sanctions and aim for a diplomatic solution to the conflict (Bundesregierung, 2015d).

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference in February 2015, Merkel called for a strengthening of the instruments of cooperative security in Europe in order to assert that ‘security and cooperation in Europe is possible only through dialogue, cooperation, and trust building measures’ (Merkel, 2015a). This was a theme that had already started to develop in 2014 when the broader security situation in Eastern Europe was addressed. Speaking at the Atlantic Council in June, von der Leyen presented a dual approach based on transatlantic coordination, where the transatlantic community needed to actively coordinate economic, diplomatic and military means, as well as action by international players (von der Leyen, 2014b). In addition, in September 2014, Merkel called for ‘a better EU-wide defence policy’ in

line with NATO capabilities (Meyer and Schwennicke, 2014). In February 2015, von der Leyen introduced the concept of Germany 'leading from the middle' where pooling resources and optimizing their use was central to meeting new security challenges (von der Leyen, 2015b).

When the Minsk Memorandum and the Minsk Protocol were signed in September 2014, Germany's policy was aligned with the solutions laid out in the agreements. This included withdrawal of Russian weapons, an OSCE-led mission to monitor the border, and local elections under Ukrainian law (Merkel, 2014a). In January 2015, during a press conference with Prime Minister Yatsenyuk, Merkel reiterated her support for restoring the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the full implementation of the Minsk agreement (Bundesregierung, 2015a). In February, Merkel together with the French, Russian and Ukrainian heads of state signed the Minsk II agreement in which they expressed their support for the implementation of the September Minsk agreements. Further, they committed themselves to continue the trilateral contact group discussions between the EU, Ukraine, and Russia on energy issues as well as on finding practical solutions to Russia's concerns regarding the EU–Ukraine free trade agreement (Bundesregierung, 2015b). In March, Germany tied the duration of sanctions to the successful implementation of the Minsk agreement (Merkel, 2015b).

In the spring of 2015, Germany became even more active within NATO. In March, Merkel stated that Germany would support increased NATO readiness and action capabilities and said that 'our main focus remains to preserve the collective defence of the alliance' (Merkel, 2015c). Speaking on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Germany's NATO membership, von der Leyen recognized that European countries needed to engage more in NATO, and that defence spending needed to meet the 2% of GDP mark (von der Leyen, 2015c). At the same event, Steinmeier welcomed European cooperation in the security and defence sector and said 'it remains to be seen when this develops into a European security and defence union. Therefore, it's all the more important to fully make use of NATO' (Steinmeier, 2015d).

Simultaneously, however, German policy makers started to emphasize relations with Russia again and highlighted the importance of restoring relations as a way to normalize the situation. In May, Merkel stated that 'in the long run, it's about gradually converging the economic areas of Russia and the European Union' (Merkel, 2015d). Germany's goal, however, went beyond just restoring Euro–Russian relations, and Steinmeier stressed that 'we need to look beyond the immediate crisis management and ask ourselves how Russia in the long run is to be integrated in the international order' (Steinmeier, 2015a).

Along with this security engagement, Germany stressed the implementation of the Minsk agreement and the central role of the OSCE in that endeavour. In May, Merkel together with

leaders from the US, France, Italy and the European Council stressed that the OSCE mission to Ukraine was of utmost importance and needed to be continued: ‘It is important that the truce is stabilized, the pullback of heavy weaponry is conducted, thereby enabling the political process to start.’ They further reiterated their support for lifting sanctions only when the Minsk agreement was successfully implemented (Bundesregierung, 2015e). In August, Merkel, Hollande and Poroshenko reiterated the goals of establishing a truce successfully monitored by the OSCE. Later the same month, Merkel, Hollande and Putin agreed in a phone conversation to continue working through the trilateral contact group format, and again emphasized the role of the OSCE (Bundesregierung, 2015f). Merkel also stressed that constitutional reform and especially election law had to be phrased in a way that it was accepted by the separatists as well (Merkel, 2015e).

Actions

Apart from unilateral condemnation of the development in Crimea, Germany also took action together with the US, and Merkel and Obama agreed to establish a ‘fact finding mission’, as well as a contact group for political dialogue between Kiev and Moscow under the auspices of the OSCE. From the onset of the conflict, Merkel stayed in close touch with both Putin and the Ukrainian leadership (Bundesregierung, 2014c).

In March, Germany continued to support Ukraine through regional organizations, most notably the OSCE and the EU. The OSCE framework was central in Germany’s response to the conflict, and Germany was one of the main contributors to the OSCE Monitoring Mission. Germany also sent military observers to Ukraine as part of an OSCE mission which aimed at objectively assessing the situation in the country. At the request of the Ukrainian government, Germany provided those injured at the Maidan protests with medical treatment in Germany (BMVG, 2014a).

Within the EU framework, in early March Germany supported the provision of financial assistance to Ukraine amounting to EUR 11bn. The country further supported enhancement of visa liberalization, removal of customs duties on Ukrainian products exported to the EU, and agreed to work towards and enhance European energy security and diversification (Merkel, 2014a). On March 21, the political provision of the Association Agreement was signed, followed by the EU–Ukraine Association Agreement on June 27 (Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine, 2015).

This support was accompanied by the implementation of the EU three-step plan aiming to change Russian policy. On March 6, the talks on visa liberalization and an economic partnership

with Russia were put on ice. Following the Crimea referendum, on March 17, the EU agreed on entry bans for 21 Ukrainian and Russian officials who were held responsible for the referendum. The list was later expanded to include asset bans and visa freezes for 149 persons, and asset freezes for 37 entities. Further, the June G8 summit planned for Sochi was replaced by a G7 summit in Brussels, Russian OECD and International Energy Agency negotiations were suspended, and the EU–Russia summit was cancelled (European Union, 2015; Wirtschaftswoche, 2015). On July 29, the EU introduced economic sanctions against Russia (European Council, 2014).

Germany also reacted to the conflict by reassuring its allies and increasing its military commitments. In September, von der Leyen presented Germany's contributions to the NATO Readiness Action Plan adopted at the Wales Summit: first, Germany together with Norway and the Netherlands contributed to NATO's rapid response Spearhead Force; secondly, Germany committed itself to continue a permanent, strong presence in the Baltic states; and thirdly, to establish the Multinational Corps Northeast together with Denmark and Poland (von der Leyen, 2014c). Within the NATO framework, Germany committed itself in April 2015 to protect the Baltic states and announced joint exercises with Lithuanian ground forces, with whom they participated in the NATO 'Sabre Strike 2015' in June (BMVG, 2015).

There was also deepening military cooperation on a bilateral level. In October 2014, Germany and Poland signed a memorandum of understanding on closer cooperation between their land forces, including education, training, officer exchange, and interoperability (BMVG, 2014b). In March 2015, this was further deepened when von der Leyen announced that they would put one battalion each under the command of the other (von der Leyen, 2015d).

Despite its commitment to working through institutional frameworks, Germany also engaged in close multinational, non-military cooperation. Meeting at a World War II commemoration on June 6, Merkel along with Presidents Hollande, Putin and Poroshenko established the semi-formal Normandy contact group (Fischer and Meyer, 2014). On February 12 2015, the Normandy contact group (Merkel, Hollande, Putin and Poroshenko) agreed on the Minsk II agreement, aiming at implementing the Minsk Protocol and Minsk Memorandum signed in September 2014. As part of the agreement, a control mechanism was established to ensure regular follow-ups of the process. Germany further committed itself to provide Ukraine with technical expertise for the banking sector in the conflict areas (Bundesregierung, 2015b). Within the Weimar triangle format, Germany co-wrote a letter in March to the EU High Representative Mogherini, initiating a reform of the EU CSDP (Ministry of National Defence of Poland, 2015a). Throughout the spring, Germany also took an active

role in assuring Ukraine financial support: as part of a bilateral agreement, Germany granted Ukraine a loan of EUR500 million, and it coordinated international financial support for Ukraine, mainly through the IMF. Germany also pushed for EU humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and in April, together with Poland, sent a humanitarian aid convoy to Ukraine (Bundesregierung, 2015c; Merkel, 2015).

Summary

German **political discourse** showed strong opposition to Russian actions and initially played NATO card, reminding Russia of NATO–Ukraine cooperation. However, domestically there was less agreement on how the situation should be handled and on the importance of transatlantic relations – the relationship to the US. As the crisis evolved it also became clear that Germany and the US disagreed on a number of issues including the role of NATO in Ukraine. The Ukraine crisis more or less forced Germany to take on a leadership role in European security policy, something that had been asked for earlier but had not been realized so far. In doing so it first distanced itself from the US, but in 2015 the two countries seem to have come closer again. From the German point of view the roles of NATO and the EU in handling the conflict do not seem to be that clear. However, the OSCE was given a role as soon as Germany knew its priorities. This role was further emphasized in 2015. With regard to German **goals and solutions** the democracy and sovereignty of Ukraine was an early and clear goal. This was to be reached through negotiations, Russia accepting elections in Ukraine monitored by the OSCE, constitutional reform, national dialogue between the different parties, disarmament of illegal groups and collections of weapons, and economic cooperation including energy supply. Germany undertook several actions in order to deal with the crisis. One of the first was participation in a fact-finding mission that took place together with the US under the auspices of the OSCE, and it was also an important contributor to the same organization's Monitory Mission. It sent military observers, and provided financial support. It was also active in EU measures and NATO measures. It was also active in different minilateral formats such as the Weimar triangle format and the Normandy format.

4. Poland

Political discourse

Poland's reaction to the Crimea status change was fast. On February 27, the day of the event, Prime Minister Tusk stated that the positioning of Russia would be key for Ukrainian integrity,

and highlighted that this would show Russia's real intentions in relation to Ukraine (The Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2014a). Poland also reacted within a European context, when the next day the foreign ministers of the Weimar Triangle issued a statement on the situation in Ukraine. It was described as a domestic concern for the Ukraine: 'The situation facing Ukraine can only be addressed in a sustainable fashion, if all major political forces unite and pursue a common agenda', including wide-ranging reforms (MFA Press Office, 2014a).

In the following days, issues of Polish domestic security and international security were also mentioned. Tusk expressed solidarity with Ukraine, saying that 'Poland must not allow the world to turn its back on Ukraine; it's to be or not to be for Poland'. He also stated that although there was no direct threat to Poland's security, a lasting destabilization might turn out to be dangerous. Therefore, Poland needed to actively look for safety guarantees that involved other countries (The Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2014b). Poland also warned about consequences in the international arena, as 'any decisions that will be taken in the coming days, including of military nature, could have irreparable consequences for the international order' (MFA Press Office, 2014b).

Poland also took a clear stance against Russia and condemned Russian actions as breaches of international law. Foreign Minister Sikorski stated that 'Russia's actions in Crimea cannot be tolerated,' and 'neither Poland nor the world can tolerate this. We know that predators' appetite comes with eating; the world should counter this logic' (MFA Press Office, 2014c). Tusk was less harsh, but reminded his audience that although Poland benefited from good relations with its neighbours, its policy towards Russia needed to be rational and reasonable.

In the days following the events in Crimea, Poland also emphasized European solidarity. According to Tusk, 'it is in the interest of Poland to secure the best possible Polish–Russian and European–Russian relations; it is also in Poland's interest that the policy towards Russia is Community-based to the largest extent possible' (The Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2014c). Tusk also took pride in Poland's position as being one of the key countries in handling the situation, as Poland reacted quickly to the situation and initiated European-level responses (The Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2014d).

In March, a transatlantic dimension was added to the policy statements, and the situation was increasingly presented as a conflict between 'the West' and Russia. Foreign Minister Sikorski emphasized that all policy should be coordinated with both European and transatlantic partners (MFA Press Office, 2014d). According to him, Putin was claiming the right to draw new boundaries throughout Europe, which was unacceptable because 'Europe is based on the principle of overcoming borders rather than redrawing them' (Odone, 2014), the annexation of

Crimea was a ‘rejection of our entire legal system and international norms and treaties that we have regarded as the foundation of peace’ (Weymouth, 2014). The situation in Ukraine was thus seen as a security issue not only for Ukraine, but for all of the Euro-Atlantic space (MFA Press Office, 2014e).

This was accompanied by calls for NATO engagement. Speaking on the occasion marking Poland’s 15 years in NATO, President Komorowski said that ‘recent experience suggests that only those can feel secure who have force behind them’ (The official website of the President of the Republic of Poland, 2014). When commenting on the security of Europe, ambassadors of the Visegrad countries said that there were still unstable regions whose security was not sufficiently assured, and that ‘NATO is the only effective military pact, able to stand against these threats’ (MFA Press Office, 2014f). NATO’s position and reactions to the Ukraine conflict were thus considered crucial for the security architecture of the Euro-Atlantic area.

In his May address to the Sejm on Polish foreign policy in 2014, Sikorski manifested a Polish position on the Ukraine conflict in which Poland’s security, Russian aggression, and Ukraine’s victimization were central. In this context, Ukraine fell victim both to Russian action and to the EU’s inability to respond to crisis situations. The increased NATO presence was seen as a long-term security policy goal that happened to be realized in the midst of the Ukraine conflict. However, it quashed ‘the hopes of others that Poland will become a second-class member of NATO’, and was considered a given component of Poland’s security (Sikorski, 2014).

After this speech, tensions between Russia and the West, as well as Poland’s and Ukraine’s strong ties became dominant. Speaking to the Sejm, Tusk said that those wishing to weaken the EU supported Putin in his aims (The Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2014e). Komorowski argued along the same lines, and stated that Ukraine wanted to follow the path of Poland in terms of democracy and freedom (The White House, 2014a).

In July, after the downing of the Malaysia Airlines flight, the tone became harsher towards Ukraine. Simultaneously, Europe was criticized for not taking the situation seriously, although it was portrayed as endangering European security. Sikorski called the Ukraine conflict an escalating, low-intensity war, which threatened the whole of Europe. Further, ‘the Western world’s reaction has always been insufficient to affect Russia’s conduct. This has to change’ (MFA Press Office, 2014g). In an August interview, Siemoniak (the Polish Minister of Defence) argued along the same lines, saying that the situation in Ukraine ‘poses a direct challenge to the European Union and NATO as it has hit directly at our common security’, meaning the whole transatlantic community. Siemoniak further said that ‘in spite of the progress

we have made, thus far the EU as a whole has been unable to conduct an independent policy vis-à-vis Russia'. Poland thus depended on the US for regional and global stability (Michta, 2014). In September, Sikorski followed the same logic in criticizing the EU for always underachieving in its sanctions against Russia and thus not gaining any credibility from Russia (MFA Press Office, 2014h).

After Tusk took on his new position with the European Council and Ewa Kopacz assumed office as prime minister in October, Poland stayed wary of Russia, but was clearly more embedded within the EU. Poland regarded itself as embedded in the West and considered itself having had a central role in addressing the situation (MFA Press Office, 2014i). Its policy was forward-looking, and according to Secretary of State Trzaskowski, 'Poland's role is to support the unity of the EU's and the entire democratic world's policy in the face of Russia's aggressive conduct'. Foreign Minister Schetyna went even further, saying that in future talks with Russia on the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood Policy, 'there can be no productive dialogue about the future of Ukraine and the future of such relations without Poland's active role' (MFA Press Office, 2014j). In January 2015 Kopacz declared that 'we want to be a good ambassador for Ukraine in the EU, and encourage our partners to support Ukraine' (The Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2015a).

In early 2015, security again became an issue of concern in Poland's policy. European unity was again stressed as crucial as a way to support Ukraine and the Eastern neighbourhood, and to keep Russia at arms length. Poland was concerned it would lose its impact on the peace process. Ahead of a February Normandy format meeting, Siemoniak said that he wished the mission well, but concluded that 'this is not happening in the EU dimension. It is not taking place in the formula Poland participates in' (Ministry of National Defence of Poland, 2015b). At the same time, the deteriorating situation in Ukraine was frequently addressed, and in March, Schetyna went as far as describing progress on the Ukraine conflict as frozen and criticized the negotiation format for its lack of success (MFA Press Office, 2015a). When addressing the priorities of Polish diplomacy, in April Schetyna described Europe's immediate neighbourhood as 'a great belt of instability' where conflicts result in 'the destruction of a political order that ensured peace and stability in Eastern Europe', and the perpetrators 'have one thing in common – their hatred for the West and the values it embodies in relations between nations' (Schetyna, 2015a). This framing continued throughout the year, and in September, Schetyna pointed out the need to integrate Ukraine in European structures as the situation in Ukraine posed a threat not only to regional stability, but also to the order and security in Europe (MFA Press Office, 2015b).

Kopacz argued along the same lines and said that ‘today Poland speaks with a very strong voice. The Ukrainian nation has the right to freedom, has the right to security, and has the right to live within stable borders. Finally, the Ukrainian nation has the right to be part of the European community’ (The Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2015b). Further, Poland vowed to ‘help Ukraine in the transformation of its economy, political system, army and politics’ (Kopacz, 2014).

Goals and solutions

Immediately after the events in Crimea in February, Poland aligned itself with the EU. The day after the events, Poland, together with the other Weimar triangle members, called for a decrease in the tensions in eastern Ukraine and promoted peaceful discussion between the actors (MFA Press Office, 2014a). In a separate statement, Poland only days later appealed for ‘respecting Ukraine’s territorial integrity, and observing international law, including the fundamental principles of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’ (MFA Press Office, 2014b). After Crimea and Sevastopol were incorporated into Russia in mid-March, Poland reiterated its stance and gave assurances that it would ‘work in international forums to restore the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine’ (MFA Press Office, 2014k).

During French–Polish meetings, there was agreement on the need for the EU to support Ukraine, and seek support from the international community. Further, Poland supported increased cooperation between the EU and Ukraine, and Sikorski called for ‘signing the association agreement and establishing a deep and comprehensive free trade area between the EU and Ukraine’ (MFA Press Office, 2014d), and later remade this commitment together with the Weimar Triangle countries. The foreign minister also expressed Poland’s wish for a stronger European foreign and security policy and more intense cooperation (MFA Press Office, 2014l).

Besides the calls for European unity, Poland also called for a greater NATO presence in the country. In early April, Sikorski stated that ‘Poland has always been seeking to increase NATO’s permanent military presence,’ and ‘we would like a larger, permanent Allied presence on our territory, to fulfil what has been our aspiration for a long time: that all NATO members have the same sense of security and the same level of safety’ (MFA Press Office, 2014m). In its new National Security Strategy adopted in October, Poland would ‘support NATO’s consolidation around the defence function, including strategic strengthening of its eastern flank’. Further, US security guarantees and military presence were supported (Ministry of National Defence of Poland, 2014a)

As Poland's influence in the European response to the Ukraine crisis waned, the country's focus clearly shifted towards issues of national concern. The European Energy Union became Poland's main project, and Tusk stated that 'we will propose such support for Ukraine which, at the same time, will support Polish companies and the Polish economy' (The Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2014f). This lower level of ambition was clear when Sikorski outlined Poland's foreign policy goals in May 2014: Poland's main objective was to defend the respect for international principles and thereby peace in Europe.

On its security goals, Poland was outspoken on its aim to strengthen Europe's security architecture. Poland wanted reassurances from NATO and an increased US and NATO presence in Europe, especially in Poland, along with a revived and more strategic European Common Security and Defence Policy (Michta, 2014).

In 2015, Poland's policy goals for Ukraine became more deeply embedded in international frameworks. In his April address on Polish foreign policy, Schetyna said that Poland's goals for Ukraine were 'stabilization of the political situation, the reform process and creating conditions for the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (AA/DCFTA) starting in January 2016'. Further, foreign policy goals would be to increase cooperation with the neighbourhood through the Energy Union (Schetyna, 2015a). In June, Schetyna stated that security, against the backdrop of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, could be addressed by through the OSCE, NATO, and the EU, which all would need to be strengthened (Schetyna, 2015b).

Actions

When reacting to the crisis, Poland was among the driving forces within the EU. On a European level, Poland aligned itself with the EU and also was active within the Weimar Triangle format, as well as in the framework of the Nordic-Baltic cooperation and the Visegrad group (MFA Press Office, 2014a, 2014n). On a domestic level, the situation was dealt with as a serious security matter, and then-Prime Minister Tusk assessed the situation with high level government officials and later announced that Poland had called for NATO to convene (The Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2014g).

Poland quickly went from words to actions. In an extraordinary session of the Sejm in early March, Tusk announced several actions to increase security. Domestically, measures had been undertaken to strengthen the eastern border, as well as changes to the sequence of arms provision to the Army. On a European level, Tusk stressed the need for energy independence, and later initiated a European Energy Union. At an international level, consultations were held

with the US on strengthening military cooperation, including cooperation between the air forces (The Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2014h, 2014i).

Throughout March, Poland took action to strengthen its military security. Within the Visegrad format, Poland agreed on establishing a common battlegroup, deepening the Visegrad countries' defence planning, and enhancing defence cooperation (Ministry of National Defence of Poland, 2014b). In September, the LITPOLUKRBRIG agreement was signed, creating a joint brigade between Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine (Ministry of National Defence of Poland, 2014c). In early March, following Poland's request, the US announced its increased engagement in an Aviation Detachment (Ministry of National Defence of Poland, 2014d). When visiting Warsaw, US Vice President Biden announced stronger US–Polish defence cooperation (The Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2014j). In June, the US–Polish cooperation was further deepened as a Program for Solidarity and Partnership was launched within the field of military and security cooperation, including 'Special Operations Forces, exercises and training, our joint aviation detachment, air and missile defense, and defense industry cooperation'. Following the signing of the program, Poland announced its aim to increase defence spending to meet NATO criteria (The White House, 2014b).

The increased security cooperation also involved deepening ties with Ukraine. When visiting Ukraine, then-Defence Minister Siemoniak declared Polish military schools' readiness to accept Ukrainian students, and invited Ukraine to join the Visegrad battlegroup (Ministry of National Defence of Poland, 2014e). At a meeting in May, Poland extended this offer to also include training of Ukrainian diplomats at the Polish Institute of Diplomacy (MFA Press Office, 2014o).

After the change of government in October, Kopacz's government continued to support Ukraine and promoted security issues. Prior to the Crimea annexation Poland had already assisted Ukraine bilaterally, including providing treatment for Maidan victims, and assisting in government reforms. This bilateral cooperation was further intensified, including sending convoys of humanitarian aid and in January providing a loan of PLN 100 million for a student grant programme (The Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2015a, 2014k).

Poland also worked towards increasing transatlantic and European security. The country continued to promote the strengthening of NATO structures and implementation of agreements. The close cooperation with the US continued, and in November 2014 high level consultations were held on, among other things, NATO and the EU's Eastern neighbourhood. With its European partners, Poland signed a German–Polish agreement to increase cooperation between land forces in October (Ministry of National Defence of Poland, 2014f). In December, the

Visegrad Group countries signed the Bratislava declaration to increase defence cooperation (The Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2014l). The European engagement continued throughout 2015: in March, the Weimar Triangle countries signed a letter to the High Representative of EU, Mogherini, presenting a project reforming the European Common Defence and Security Policy (Ministry of National Defence of Poland, 2015a).

Summary

From the beginning, Polish **political discourse** depicted the Russian annexation of Crimea not only as a threat to the international order or to the European security structure, but also as a threat to national security. One aspect of this national security concern was the subject of energy independence. Also, early on in the crisis, Polish politicians worried about the weak role of the EU and stated that the relationship between Ukraine and the EU should be strengthened. The bilateral relationship between Ukraine and Poland was also strengthened, with Poland wanting to help strengthen the Ukrainian state. The importance of national security concerns caused by Russians actions in Ukraine in addition to the weak role played by the EU, also increased the role of the US from a Polish perspective. Poland was also one of the countries emphasizing the role of NATO and pushing for it to increase its permanent military presence.

Therefore, important **goals and solutions** from a Polish point of view were not only a strengthened relationship with Ukraine and a closer relationship between Ukraine and the EU, but also a stronger European security architecture including a stronger EU Common Security and Defence Policy. In addition it stated that the OSCE should be strengthened.

With regard to diplomatic **actions** Poland was not only active in the EU and in its bilateral relations with Ukraine, it was also active in smaller, minilateral groups, such as the Weimar triangle and the Visegrad group. In addition, it supported the activities in the Normandy format but at the same time expressed disappointment that the negotiations undertaken in that context did not take place in an EU format (thus excluding both Poland and the UK, for example). Several actions were also undertaken to strengthen military security, for example through the establishment of a battlegroup within the Visegrad format, a joint brigade between Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine, a German–Polish agreement on increased cooperation between land forces, and increased bilateral defence cooperation with the US.

5. The UK

Political discourse

From the very start, the UK was critical about Russian actions in the conflict. At a press conference with Merkel, Cameron stated that ‘if the population of Ukraine wants closer relations with Europe, including economic and political ties, then it is up to her and not for Russia to decide’. (Bundesregierung, 2014a). The conflict in Ukraine was immediately presented as a concern for the international community. In a conversation with Russian President Putin, Cameron warned that ‘everyone must think carefully about their actions and work to lower, not escalate tensions. The world is watching’ (Prime Minister’s Office, 2014a). And in the UN the UK accused Russia of interfering in Ukraine’s internal affairs and called for Russia to live up to the international order and considered its actions to be ‘a blatant disregard of international law’ as they broke the UN charter, its OSCE commitments, and the Budapest memorandum (Lyll Grant, 2014a). Cameron also emphasized the international dimensions of the crisis, saying that ‘a stable Ukraine is in the interests of everyone – including the UK. Ukraine is one of the largest countries in Europe and a neighbour of the European Union. Its economic prosperity, security and stability matter. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine has been violated and this cannot be the way to conduct international affairs’ (Prime Minister’s Office, 2014b). Foreign Secretary Hague also argued along these lines and stated that ‘the crisis in Ukraine is the most serious test of European security in the 21st century so far’ (Hague, 2014a).

The harsh stand against Russia was also present in the domestic debate, where the Tories and Labour were more or less united in their stance on Russia. Labour leader Ed Miliband called for action by the international community, especially NATO and the EU, as well as for maximum economic and diplomatic pressure to be put on the Russian government (Mason, 2014). The only person expressing a diverging view was Nigel Farage, head of UKIP, who was critical about the EU and claimed its ‘militarist and expansionist’ foreign policy had provoked the conflict in Ukraine, and that the EU thus had ‘blood on its hands’. Farage claimed he did not ‘support what Putin has done – of course I don't. ... but the approach of David Cameron, William Hague, Nick Clegg and other EU leaders has been disastrous’ (BBC, 2014). In September, Farage argued along the same lines, arguing that the Western countries would benefit from cooperating with Russia in fighting ISIS, and therefore should join forces with Putin. (Graham, 2014).

Towards the end of March, the tone towards Ukraine became even more supportive while rhetoric towards Russia became harsher as Russian actions in Ukraine continued. The UK stressed that it supported the Ukrainian people and government as ‘the Ukrainian people want the freedom to be able to choose their own future and strengthen their ties with Europe, and they want a future free from the awful corruption that they have endured for far too long’(Cameron, 2014a). Simultaneously, Russia’s actions were condemned as was its inability to live up to the international order.

During the spring, however, focus increased on UK domestic politics, and policy on Ukraine was voiced merely through international organizations. Defence Minister Hammond emphasized the transatlantic community: ‘In times of crisis, when our opponents seek to sow division, the United States and the United Kingdom remain shoulder to shoulder; united in purpose ... We will remain the most capable and most interoperable ally of the United States of America.’ This commitment also included European allies, and referring to British contributions to the increased NATO presence in Eastern Europe, Hammond stated that ‘it is important that we reassure our allies in deeds as well as words’.

The minister also called for a bigger role for NATO in Europe despite the trend of lower defence spending. Hammond called for increased commitment to NATO within Europe and argued that the European allies had too long relied on US commitment as a guarantor of European security. According to him, the crisis in Ukraine along with the US pivot to Asia made clear that ‘European NATO countries must take on greater responsibility for providing security in our own backyard’. Lidington, the British Minister of State for Europe also pointed out that the Ukraine conflict marked an opportunity for Europe to broaden its debate on security issues, such as energy and cyber security (Lidington, 2014a).

In the NATO–Ukraine Commission, the UK actively worked to tie Ukraine to NATO. In September, the commission promoted the development of the Distinctive Partnership between NATO and Ukraine, since it would ‘contribute to building a stable, peaceful and undivided Europe,’ and further, ‘an independent, sovereign and stable Ukraine, firmly committed to democracy and the rule of law, is key to Euro-Atlantic security’ (Prime Minister’s Office et al., 2014). The commission continued to support Ukraine in reaching the goal of Ukraine ‘better providing for its own security’, and in December reiterated that the alliance stood firm behind the implementation of the Minsk Agreement, as well as the elections, since they were ‘a testimony to the Ukrainian people’s commitment to freedom and democracy, and a future firmly anchored among European democracies, free to decide their own future and foreign policy course’(UK Joint Delegation to NATO, 2014).

Within the UN, in April the UK accused Russia of deliberately escalating tensions in Ukraine, and ‘this is a claim that takes Russia’s distortion of international law to a new level’ (Lyall Grant, 2014b). After the downing of the Malaysia Airlines flight in July, the UK stated that ‘the context for this tragedy is Russia’s attempt to destabilize a sovereign state and violate its territorial integrity. The events of the past four days should serve as a wake-up call in Moscow and prompt a profound re-examination of Russia’s policy of supporting, training and arming violent separatists in eastern Ukraine’ (Lyall Grant, 2014c).

During the autumn of 2014 the UK stepped back and gave Germany and France a more visible role, but continued emphasizing the need for a political solution. In September 2015, Lidington stressed that the Minsk Agreement needed to be implemented as ‘the Minsk agreements are not just a ceasefire. They are designed to allow Ukraine to regain control of its territory and border. They provide the path to a political resolution of the current crisis.’ Further, elections ‘must be held in line with Ukrainian legislation and in line with OSCE standards and with OSCE/ODIHR observation, as set out in the Minsk Agreement. Any elections that do not meet these standards will be illegitimate, and likely to cause further instability’ (Lidington, 2015a). Although the tone in the UN stayed harsh against Russia, there was also the sense of a need for reconciliation. In June 2015, the UK called for Russia to demonstrate its commitment in Ukraine, however recognizing that ‘our relationships with Russia extend far beyond the borders of Ukraine. But in order to foster cooperation and trust, as we want, those relationships must be based on honesty, mutual respect, on dialogue’ (Rycroft, 2015).

Goals and solutions

Talking about Crimea, Cameron stressed that the territorial integrity of Crimea had to be respected, also by Russia (Bundesregierung, 2014a). When talking to Putin days later, they both agreed that the whole international community should support Ukraine, and also that ‘the free and fair elections that the interim government has pledged to hold are the best way to secure a positive future for Ukraine in which all Ukrainian people are represented’ (Prime Minister’s Office, 2014a).

In early March, the UK presented its objectives in dealing with the conflict. The overarching aim was to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict within an international framework, as well as to support Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. The objectives were ‘first, to avoid any further military escalation, and instead to see Russia return its forces to their bases and respect Ukrainian sovereignty; second, for any concerns about Russian-speaking

minorities in Ukraine to be addressed by means of negotiations, not force'. As part of this, the UK urged for direct consultations between Russia and Ukraine, and also promoted the deployment of OSCE or UN monitors to Eastern Ukraine. The third objective was 'for the international community to provide Ukraine, provided they are ready to carry out vital reforms, with urgent economic assistance'. In addition, the UK promoted a central role for international institutions such as the IMF for international financial and technical assistance. Further, the UK aimed to work closely with NATO and the EU, and also uphold open communication channels with Russia (Hague, 2014b).

This positioning against Russia was evident also in the increase in calls for military action. When giving a speech at The Heritage Foundation in late March, Hammond stated that the two main common objectives remained 'to deter President Putin from any further military action and to provide reassurance to our allies in Eastern Europe'. Hammond reiterated the UK's commitment to its NATO allies, and stated that the UK was looking for more opportunities to increase its presence in Eastern Europe. However, he argued that 'European NATO countries must take on greater responsibility for providing security in our own backyard' and in the long run have political commitment to NATO and to meeting the defence spending target (Hammond, 2014a). Further, Hammond stated that 'NATO needs to grasp these challenges, and with the current events in Ukraine as a backdrop, reassert the pivotal role of NATO in our collective security'. Further, he affirmed that the UK stayed a close US ally, and would 'continue to be able to project and sustain military power around the world' (Ministry of Defence, 2014).

However, with the downing of the Malaysia Airlines flight in July, the tone underlying the UK policy statements developed a sense of urgency. It also marked the first time that Russia's re-inclusion in international organizations was mentioned. Speaking to parliament, Cameron outlined the main objectives: 'First, those with influence on the separatists must ensure that they allow the bodies of the victims to be repatriated and provide uninhibited access to the crash site to enable a proper international investigation of what happened to flight MH17. Second, President Putin must use his influence to end the conflict in Ukraine by halting supplies and training for the separatists. Third, we must establish proper long-term relationships between Ukraine and Russia, between Ukraine and the European Union; and above all between Russia and the European Union, NATO and the wider West' (Cameron, 2014b).

From the summer of 2014 onwards, the UK remained active merely within international forums. The country took a clear position, especially in the UN, and called for Russia to act. With the introduction of the Normandy format in the autumn of 2014, the UK took a step back

on Ukraine, although it remained active in coordinating action. When addressing parliament in February, Hammond stated that the overarching goal remained a peaceful solution, and that ‘Britain’s focus has been, and will continue to be, ensuring that the EU remains robust, resolved and united on the maintenance of economic sanctions, and closely aligned with the US’. Hammond reiterated the importance of a united EU position on the treatment of Russia, including sanctions and not recognizing Crimea as part of Russia. Further, he stated that the UK remained committed to work within the NATO and OSCE framework (Hammond, 2015).

Also outlining UK policy in February, Minister for Europe, Lidington, stated that the UK approach was based on diplomacy, pressure on Russia, support for Ukraine, and communication. For diplomacy, he stated that the UK continued taking part in the diplomatic process despite the big efforts undertaken by France and Germany, and stayed in close contact with the central players involved. With regard to pressuring Russia, Lidington stressed the importance of upholding pressure in multilateral institutions, in diplomacy, and within the economic sphere. With regard to Ukraine, Lidington recognized that the EU and the UK needed to help the country reach its goals, namely to be part of the EU and uphold its territorial integrity. Finally, Lidington pointed out the importance of keeping the Ukraine conflict on the international agenda, while simultaneously countering Russian disinformation on the situation (Lidington, 2015b).

Apart from this, the UK kept a rather low profile and stayed committed to demanding action from Russia and supporting the implementation of the Minsk Agreement. In July, the UK UN ambassador called for Russia to ‘immediately withdraw its military forces from Ukraine, stop its flow of weapons to the separatists, and make every effort to secure a political solution to this crisis’ and also to ‘use its considerable influence on the separatists to cease their provocative behaviour and live up to their commitment to implement fully the Minsk Agreements’ (Rycroft, 2015).

Actions

In reacting to the conflict, the UK was initially highly engaged on international and national levels by initiating action and coordinating closely with partners and key institutions. The government was ‘in constant contact with the government of Ukraine, with the United States, with our partners in the European Union and our allies in NATO and the G7, and indeed with the Russian government itself’ (Hague, 2014b). On March 1, the UK called an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council, and also called for urgent consultations under

the Budapest Memorandum, or the creation of a Contact Group – including Russia and Ukraine (Hague, 2014b; Prime Minister’s Office, 2014a). The government ‘sought an immediate and full explanation’ from President Putin, and also expressed its support for Ukraine (Lyall Grant, 2014d). The day after, the government took action on a national level and cancelled its participation in the G8 preparatory meetings in Russia planned for the same week, and also announced no government officials nor members of the royal family would attend the Sochi Paralympics (Prime Minister’s Office, 2014b). Further, all military cooperation was put under review, including licences for arms exports to Russia (Cameron, 2014a).

On an EU level, the UK initiated measures against Russia and coordinated action closely especially with France, Germany, and Poland. The UK supported the suspension of work on a comprehensive new agreement on relations between the EU and Russia and the suspension of work on a liberal visa regime. and further supported EU measures against Russia by deploying a team from the National Crime Agency to assist Ukraine in its anti-corruption work (Cameron, 2014c). The UK further played a central role within the European Council, and initiated a meeting between Germany, France, Poland and Italy that led to a European Council agreement to prepare measures against Russia unless it ceased its action in Ukraine. Cameron also initiated a European Council call for the European Commission to start working on concrete measures to be taken against Russia (Cameron, 2014a). British activity continued throughout March, and at a European Council meeting the UK agreed to cancel bilateral summits, exclude Russia from the OECD and the International Energy Agency. Within the EU framework, the UK also worked on economic measures, including imposing economic, trade, and financial sanctions on Crimea, as well as initiating the removal of customs duties on Ukrainian exports. The UK also worked for an IMF assistance package for Ukraine, and asked the Commission to produce a plan on how to reduce European energy dependency (Cameron, 2014d).

The EU and G7 remained another important framework for UK action as sanctions were continued. Lidington argued that ‘sanctions are a critical part of the EU’s response. Not from choice, but because we believe that they are necessary, effective’: necessary since ‘Russia’s actions in Ukraine are unacceptable’ and successful since they were having a clear impact on Russian economy by the autumn. (Lidington, 2014b).

The UK’s non-lethal military aid and humanitarian assistance were presented as supporting the people of Ukraine. When giving military vehicles in November, Foreign Secretary Hammond stated that ‘the UK stands squarely behind the Ukrainian people and government as they defend their nation’s independence and work to make the political, economic and governance reforms that are vital to rebuilding the country’ (Hammond, 2014b). Similarly, the

humanitarian assistance package was presented as help for the Ukrainian people, as ‘the UK, along with our international partners, stands shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine and is determined to help its millions of displaced, hungry and suffering citizens, wherever they live’ (Prime Minister’s Office, 2015a). When sending non-lethal equipment in March 2015, Defence Secretary Fallon announced that this was done in light of further Russian aggression, and that ‘the UK is committed to supporting Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity in the face of Russia’s aggression’ (Fallon, 2015).

In March, the UK government had already committed itself to provide expert assistance in the field of elections and finances and in April the UK’s active engagement for Ukraine continued within institutional frameworks with a heavy focus on finance. The UK worked with the World Bank to strengthen governance in Ukraine, supported IMF plans for a two- year programme for Ukraine to reform its economy, and was a driving force in securing increased EU assistance for economic projects in Ukraine. Further, the UK sent experts to Ukraine to help improve public financial management, called for EU assistance on strengthening the rule of law in Ukraine, and together with the US and Ukraine co-hosted an anti-corruption Forum on Asset Recovery in London. After the April 16 decision by NATO to provide assistance to the allies, the UK contributed four Typhoon aircraft to the Baltic Air Policing Mission, and contributed to AWACS reconnaissance flights over Romania and Poland (Hague, 2014c). Within the OSCE, the UK provided £1m to support the deployment of up to 400 observers in the OSCE monitoring mission. This continued in May, when the UK sent 100 observers to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Election Observation Mission, and contributed £429,000 to the first round of the Ukraine elections. Throughout the spring, UK government officials coordinated international action and met frequently with the main actors. The UK helped uphold dialogue with all stakeholders in the conflict, including the Eastern Neighbourhood partners, NATO and the Baltic states, as well as Ukraine and Russia (Hague, 2014c).

The assistance also covered the societal and humanitarian area. In August, the UK launched a UK–Ukraine reform assistance programme for the period of 2014–2016 to help Ukraine with implementing political and economic reforms and promoting civil society projects (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2014). In February 2015, the UK announced a £15m emergency assistance package to relieve the humanitarian situation (Prime Minister’s Office, 2015a). In April 2015, the government turned its attention to capacity building, and established a ‘Conflict Stability and Security Fund in Ukraine’ aimed at supporting ‘efforts to strengthen the capacity

of citizens and government to address conflict-generating issues in order to halt the downward spiral of conflict' (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2015).

As the conflict continued, the UK focus shifted to military assistance, and the UK stepped up its support to Ukraine and the Eastern European allies within the framework of NATO. In July, a US/Canada/UK/Ukraine Joint Commission for Cooperation and Defence Reform was established (Mills, 2015). The central forum for cooperation was, however, the NATO–Ukraine commission. Following an early September NATO–Ukraine Commission foreign ministerial-level meeting, NATO members vowed to 'further strengthen our cooperation in the framework of the Annual National Programme in the defence and security sector through capability development and sustainable capacity building programmes for Ukraine. In this context, Allies will launch substantial new programmes with a focus on command, control and communications, logistics and standardization, cyber defence, military career transition, and strategic communications.' Further, greater NATO and Ukraine interoperability between forces was agreed upon, including through 'continued regular Ukrainian participation in NATO exercises' (Prime Minister's Office et al., 2014). At the NATO summit in September, the UK pledged to contribute 3500 personnel to NATO exercises in Eastern Europe until the end of 2015. The UK also supported the establishment of a NATO multinational spearhead force, and further contributed by providing a battlegroup and a brigade headquarters (Cameron, 2014e). The assistance continued throughout the term' In December, it was announced at the Wales Summit that 'Trust Funds and projects on command, control, communications and computers, logistics and standardization, cyber defence, military career transition, and medical rehabilitation' were operational (UK Joint Delegation to NATO, 2014).

Military assistance was also seen outside of the NATO framework. In October, the UK gifted non-lethal military equipment to the Ukraine Armed Forces. The gift consisted of a package of £840,300 of equipment, including 1000 sets of body armour and helmets, 80 medical kits for vehicles, 500 sets of winterization equipment, 500 ponchos and equipment for transport and clearance (Lidington, 2014c). The following month, the UK sent ten armoured vehicles including communication equipment worth £1.2m to the OSCE Ukraine Monitoring Mission (Hammond, 2014b). In addition, the UK assisted the Ukraine Armed Forces with 'support on crisis management, anti-corruption, defence reform and strategic communications'.

In early 2015, the UK stepped up this non-lethal military assistance and provided military training to Ukraine in response to a Ukraine government request. Towards the end of February, the government announced the deployment of advisory and short-term training teams in the fields of medical, logistics, infantry and intelligence capacity building training. The number of

personnel was estimated to amount to 75 (Ministry of Defence, 2015). In March, a £850,000 non-lethal military equipment package was presented, including 2000 helmets, 150 night vision goggles, 200 GPS devices, 220 hardened laptops and 1,000 first aid kits (Fallon, 2015). The close cooperation continued, and in July, the UK participated in the US- and Ukraine-led exercise Rapid Trident 2015 in Ukraine (Prime Minister's Office, 2015b).

Summary

The UK's **political discourse** was clear from the start of the crisis: the UK positioned itself against Russia, and worked in international forums (NATO, UN, EU, OSCE) to address the situation. Russian actions were seen as threats to international security because they challenged Ukraine's stability and sovereignty. The UK therefore emphasized Russian breaches of international law and the need to uphold the rights of Ukraine according to international agreements. However, the Ukraine conflict was never so much a security threat to the UK itself as it seemingly was to Germany, and especially to Poland. The urgency with which the Ukraine conflict was dealt with in these two other countries was thus not seen in the UK response. Also, the major political parties agreed on the position against Russia, it was only UKIP leader Farage who had a differing opinion.

When it came to **goals and solutions** to the crisis, the UK initially strongly emphasized the return of Ukraine state sovereignty and territorial integrity and help from the international community to undertake political and economic reforms. It also stated that it was important to keep the conflict on the international agenda. It also advocated for a stronger role for NATO for collective security.

With regard to the **actions** that the UK undertook, they were initially very active in the UN and in NATO. Even though the OSCE was not mentioned in the political discourse, they also actively participated in the OSCE debate, especially during the first months of the conflict. At a later stage in the crisis the UK stepped back from more prominent diplomacy but continued to co-ordinate action. However, it did not only engage in diplomatic practices but also participated in sanctions, delivered humanitarian aid and military aid in the form of equipment, training and participation in exercises. For the UK, giving military aid to Ukraine was not a politically difficult issue domestically.

6. The USA

Political discourse

At the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, before the Russian annexation of Crimea, the United States described the crisis as a ‘direct consequence of the government failing to acknowledge the legitimate grievances of its people’ (NSC Spokesperson Hayden 2014). In a more general sense, the United States stood behind what it saw as the normative and legal right for the Ukrainians to choose the path of their country and the overall design of society. For example, addressing the crisis in February 2014, the US President emphasized that the Ukraine is a sovereign country and that the people of Ukraine ‘deserve the opportunity to determine their own future’ (President Obama, 2014a).

On March 6, 2014 just after the events in Crimea, The President of the United States signed an Executive Order in which the events in Ukraine and particularly in Crimea were described as a threat to Ukrainian peace, security, stability and sovereignty and as ‘constitut[ing] an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States’ (President Obama, 2014b).

In general, the US condemned all the actions and events that it perceived as incompatible with the basic postulates of a sovereign Ukrainian state. In the earliest stages of the conflict, the US President expressed deep concern regarding the current situation, referring to reports on military movements taken by the Russian Federation in Ukraine. He also reminded his audience of the destabilizing consequences of any violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity (Ibid). President Obama also addressed calls by the international community and international organizations such as the UN, NATO, OSCE and other organizations that Russian concerns should be dealt with according to the regular procedures of those organizations (The White House, 2014c). After the controversial referendum, which was immediately rejected by the US (The White House, 2014d), Obama immediately stepped in to support the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, building on the notion that no decision about Ukraine should be conducted without the direct involvement of the Ukrainian government. In a statement, the US dismissed the referendum results along with an explicit description of the Russian actions as ‘dangerous’ and ‘destabilizing’, actions that did not belong in the 21st century and that would result in high costs for Russia (The White House, 2014c).

Even though Obama recognized Russia’s deep historic and cultural ties with Ukraine and the need to protect the ethnic Russians in Ukraine, he described the Russian actions as a ‘clear

violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity’ and stated that the actions were against international law, with specific reference to:

- Russian obligations under the UN charter;
- The 1994 Budapest Memorandum;
- The Russian military basing agreement with Ukraine from 1997 (Partition Treaty on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet);
- The Helsinki Final Act (The White House, 2014e).

Obama also stated that Russia had direct influence over the separatists and supported them in almost every aspect including the provision of training and weaponry (President Obama, 2014c). Such actions combined with the sanctions imposed on Russia led to further isolation of the country from the international community (President Obama, 2014d).

Regarding the regional and continental implications of the Ukrainian crisis, the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland stated that the Ukrainian crisis served as a reminder of the commitment for collective defence between the US and its European partners and the need for a defence budget increase (Nuland, 2014). In addition, the crisis was put into the context of transatlantic security cooperation and NATO collective defence commitments, assuring the Baltic states (The White House, 2014f) and the states in the immediate neighbourhood of Russia that NATO would increase its presence and dedication to the region in order to prevent any further Russian actions that were hostile to their security (The White House, 2014g). In this context, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence, Evelyn Farkas condemned the Russian Federation and described the its actions not only as challenges to European security, but also as threats to the ‘international order’ in general (Farkas 2014). The United States (together with the traditional European partners such as Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Italy) emphasized Russian responsibility for the Ukraine crisis on several occasions, but the US also emphasized the negative role of Russia with the countries immediately surrounding Ukraine, as well as the newly elected Ukraine authorities (The White House, 2014f).

On March 3, 2015, The US President signed a continuation of the Executive Order from March 6, 2014 with the Ukrainian crisis still described as a threat to the ‘national security and foreign policy of the United States’ (President Obama 2015). The United States was focused on implementing the agreements in Geneva and later in Minsk, and therefore on several occasions expressed regret that Russia failed to commit to the implementation process both of the Geneva Statements (Office of the Press Secretary, 2014a; Office of the Press Secretary

2014c; Embassy, 2014a) and Minsk Agreements (Office of the Press Secretary, 2015a; Embassy, 2015a), and that quite contrarily Russia undertook further actions to escalate the conflict (Office of the Press Secretary, 2014c).

At the same time, the United States continuously supported the actions taken by the Ukrainian governing structures such as the organization of democratic presidential elections (President Obama 2014b), the formation of the new government in December 2014 (Office of the Vice President, 2014a), the promotion of inclusive dialogue and cooperation with the international organizations (Office of the Press Secretary, 2014c) as well as Ukraine's ratification of its Association Agreement with the European Union (Office of the Vice President 2014c). Additionally, the United States supported President Poroshenko for his 'leadership in achieving a halt of the hostilities' (Office of the Vice President 2014a), and praised the role of Germany and France in their efforts to 'achieve a sustainable, peaceful resolution to the conflict' (Office of the Press Secretary 2015) and their tireless efforts in reaching the February 2015 Minsk Agreement ('G-7 Leaders Statement on Ukraine, 13.2.15' 2015). The United States supported the decentralization efforts of the Ukrainian government and commended the measures undertaken for implementing the September 2014 and February 2015 Minsk Agreements in terms of giving a special status to certain areas in Eastern Ukraine (Office of the Vice President, 2015a; Office of the Vice President, 2015b), and providing opportunities for the OSCE to observe the ceasefire and the implementation of the agreements (The White House 2015).

Goals and solutions

The goals of the United States with regard to the war in Ukraine were constant throughout the whole period of the conflict and can be conceptually separated into three sets of goals:

First, it was important for the United States to counter Russian actions in Ukraine (McKeon, 2015), to ease tensions in Eastern Europe and to reassure the allies regarding their security in order to make sure that Russian actions would not undermine security in Europe and the security of the United States' transatlantic partners (McKeon, 2015, Farkas 2014). A special emphasis was put on providing security assistance to Ukraine (Chollet, 2014) as well as assuring and protecting the Baltic region (Office of the Vice President, 2014d) due to the high level of vulnerability of this region to potential Russian actions.

Second, promoting a democratic process in Ukraine (McKeon, 2015) while ensuring its territorial integrity and sovereignty (Office of the Vice President 2014e) with the freedom for Ukraine to determine its own future (President Obama 2014f). In addition, the United States set

a goal of helping Ukraine to become a more prosperous country, and one free of corruption which would be capable of greater integration within Europe (Office of the Vice President, 2014e).

Finally, the United States aimed for a lasting diplomatic and peaceful solution to the conflict with respect to the Geneva and Minsk agreements (President Obama 2014f) that would create circumstances for economic growth and stability in Ukraine and in the region, including Russia (President Obama, 2014g).

From the very beginning of the Ukraine armed conflict, the United States was aiming at a diplomatic and negotiated solution, and it was constantly active in the conflict resolution process using diplomatic measures. The solutions that were offered by the United States included involvement by all the relevant actors and established international institutions, such as the OSCE in Europe and the United Nations, with Russia being actively engaged in the process (The White House 2014a). A common element of the solutions offered by the United States is that they were arrived at in consultation with European partners (President Obama 2014e; The White House, 2014h), the Ukrainian authorities (The White House, 2015a) and the Russian political leadership (Office of the Press Secretary 2014c). For example, the President of the United States stated that he and the leaders of the UK, France, Germany and Italy had a united view that the situation in Ukraine had to be managed by diplomatic means, while ensuring the sovereignty of Ukraine (President Obama 2014e).

The United States advocated several sets of solutions:

First, a negotiation process which would include direct talks between the governments of Ukraine and Russia, facilitated by the international community (The White House, 2014i). The United States was involved in the Geneva talks, supported the Normandy Format and the Minsk negotiations, and recognized the OSCE Trilateral Contact Group and the work of Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini and later Ambassador Martin Sajdik (Embassy, 2015a).

Second, Russia should fully withdraw its forces from Crimea (President Obama, 2014h), withdraw the arms and foreign fighters from Ukraine (The White House, 2014h; The White House, 2015b), stop the flow of Russian weapons and fighters across the border (Office of the Press Secretary, 2014d), end the support to the separatists (Office of the Press Secretary, 2015b) and refrain from any interference elsewhere in Ukraine (The White House 2014a).

Third, deployment of international observers ‘under the auspices of the OSCE or the UN’ (The White House, 2014e) and later, according to the September 5 Minsk Agreement (The White House 2014g), closure of the border (The White House, 2014h) and establishment of a

monitoring mission to the Russian–Ukrainian border by the OSCE (Office of the Vice President, 2014f; The White House 2014g).

Fourth, ‘full and prompt’ implementation of the Minsk Agreements (The White House, 2015c) with specific implementation of the cease-fire and the protocol agreement reached in Minsk in September, 2014 and reaffirmed in February, 2015 with the Minsk Implementation Plan (Office of the Press Secretary 2015).

Fifth, a process of constitutional reform (The White House, 2014k) and decentralization which would make Ukrainian society more inclusive while ensuring the rights of all citizens (The White House, 2014l), culminating with free and fair local and presidential elections.

Finally, a bilateral and multilateral package of financial assistance to the key Ukrainian economic sectors that would allow urgently needed economic reforms to take place (The White House, 2014m).

Actions

Alongside the official statements and the encouragement of negotiations between the actors involved in the conflict, the United States was engaged with its own actions designed to shape the dynamics and the outcome of the Ukrainian conflict and ultimately meet the US goals and interests.

First, the United States took concrete actions to support Ukraine diplomatically and materially, ensure the security of the transatlantic partners, counter aggressive Russian behaviour and create conditions for Russia to realize the consequences of its actions. The United States was active in communicating with Russia bilaterally, but also through the UN and the OSCE in terms of implementation of the April 2014 Geneva Statement (Embassy, 2014b; Embassy, 2014c; Embassy, 2014a) and the September 2014 and February 2015 Minsk Agreements (Embassy, 2015b; Embassy, 2015a) while emphasizing their importance for the peace process in Ukraine and putting pressure on Russia to follow its commitments under these agreements.

The United States was also actively engaged in providing diplomatic support to Ukraine within international organizations such as the UN Security Council, the OSCE, NATO and other formal and informal platforms for international communication, emphasizing its support for Ukrainian sovereignty, territorial integrity and freedom of choice in international affairs (President Obama, 2014i). Additionally, the United States and the countries from the G7 suspended their activities regarding preparations for the G8 summit in Sochi in June, 2014 as a way to show condemnation of Russia’s actions (The White House, 2014q).

In order to impose costs on Russia and deter further aggressive behaviour (The White House 2015c, p. 25 ‘National Security Strategy’), the United States acted very quickly together with the European allies in first announcing, and then constantly increasing, sanctions against entities and individuals including Russian government officials and former Ukrainian government officials. These were people that were regarded as directly responsible for the situation in Ukraine (The White House, 2014p) or for ‘violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, or for stealing the assets of the Ukrainian people’ (President Obama, 2014i). Later on, these sanctions were expanded and deepened, again in concert with the European Union, to additionally affect the financial, defence and energy sectors in Russia (President Obama, 2014f).

Second, the United States invested in increasing Ukraine’s capabilities for self-defence, providing non-lethal military hardware and training (Chollet, 2014). In the period from March 2014 until September 2015, the United States provided \$260 million (Office of the Vice President, 2015c) for this purpose. The help provided consisted of non-lethal military equipment, support for the Ukrainian State Border Guard Service, defence consultation and military-to-military cooperation (The White House, 2014n).

Third, the United States acted to improve the prospects of Ukraine in its transition to democratic society. Most of the measures included financial support to the Ukrainian government for post-conflict reconstruction, conducting of the necessary economic and political reforms and support for holding free and democratic elections.

Since Ukraine’s change of government in 2014, the United States pledged more than \$300 million (Office of the Vice President, 2015c) in several sectors:

- Economic development and stabilization (\$1 billion sovereign bond guaranteed by the United States, financial advisors and help in carrying out the reforms);
- Humanitarian assistance (through contributions to the work in Ukraine of international agencies, facilitating internally displaced persons and immediate support for economic recovery);
- Democracy, human rights and government (through contributing funding and personnel to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, assisting the work of election observers, assisting in providing constitutional reform, assisting civil society organizations and boosting the capacity of the independent media);

- Energy security (helping with teams of experts, working with international donors and enhancing Ukraine’s capacity to increase its own energy production (The White House, 2014r; Foreign Assistance 2015).

Assistance was also provided in the sectors of environment, multi-sector assistance, education and social services and program management (Foreign Assistance 2015).

Fourth, in terms of reassuring US partners and allies, a series of concrete measures were undertaken by the United States:

- Land Force deployments in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland;
- Maritime deployments in the Black Sea;
- Air deployments in Poland and Romania including an observation mission over Ukraine as part of the Open Skies Treaty;
- Exercises (The White House, 2014o) such as the six-month exercise ‘Fearless Guardian 2015’ jointly undertaken by the US and the Ukrainian army that started in April, 2015 (Pivariu, 2015), Sea Breeze 2015 (Price, 2015) and exercises under the Rapid Trident program between Ukraine, the United States, NATO and the Partnership for Peace member nations (US Army Europe 2015).

A significant step towards the process of assuring the NATO allies was the implementation of the European Reassurance Initiative in February 2015, an initiative designed to ‘reassure allies of the US commitment to their security and territorial integrity as members of the NATO Alliance, provide near-term flexibility and responsiveness to the evolving concerns of our allies and partners in Europe, especially Central and Eastern Europe, and help increase the capability and readiness of US allies and partners’ (Department of Defense 2015, 2).

For the implementation of this initiative, \$985 million in the fiscal year 2015 was allocated for:

Category	Amount allocated (Dollars in Millions)
Increased Presence	423.1
Additional Bilateral and Multilateral Exercises	40.6
Improved Infrastructure	196.5
Enhanced Prepositioning	136.1
Building Partner Capacity	13.7

ERI Transfer Fund	175
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Source: Ibid, 1

Summary

In relation first to the political crisis in Ukraine and then to the Russian annexation of Crimea US **political discourse** initially emphasised the right of the Ukrainian people to determine their own future. These events were stated to be a threat not only to the stability and sovereignty of Ukraine, but also to the national security and foreign policy of the US. The US also agreed with calls for the issue to be dealt with through international organizations, emphasizing the role of the Ukrainian government in deciding the future for Ukraine and its borders. It suspended its activities with regard to the G8 summit in 2014.

The US **goals and solutions** to the crisis have been fairly clear. The goals have been to counter Russia by easing tensions in Eastern Europe and reassure worried allies, to promote the democratic process in Ukraine, and to create stability in Ukraine and the region through respect for international agreements. A number of solutions have also been proposed: negotiations (including both Ukraine and Russia), Russian withdrawal of armed forces and foreign fighters from Ukraine, deployment of international observers, implementation of the Minsk Agreements, Ukrainian constitutional reform, and financial assistance. The US also co-operated with the EU in deciding upon sanctions against Russia.

In order to achieve all of the above, US **actions** were comprehensive. It engaged in diplomatic support within the UN, OSCE, and NATO as well as through other formal and informal diplomatic channels. It also provided Ukraine with non-lethal military equipment and training, and support for border control. The US also gave financial support to the Ukrainian state to increase democracy, engage in post-conflict reconstruction, and other state-building activities. In addition, it gave humanitarian assistance and contributed to other actions of a stabilizing and democracy-boosting nature, such as the OSCE monitoring mission and assistance to civil society and independent media. Another area where the US gave support was that of energy security. The measures to reassure US partners and allies were also comprehensive with land force deployments in the Baltic states and Poland, maritime presence in the Black Sea, air deployment and the organization of, and participation in exercises.

7. Conclusions

In order to summarize the responses to the war in Ukraine and the actions taken with regard to the crisis, we have seen that political discourse was fairly similar in the countries studied. All countries saw the annexation of Crimea as a destabilization both of Ukraine and of European security, and as a threat to the established international order. In addition, Poland and the US, and to a smaller extent Germany, considered Russian actions as a direct threat towards their national security, although that was not the case for France and the UK. Therefore both Poland and Germany treated the crisis with more of an urgency than the UK. However, the UK was much quicker in determining its position towards Russia. This was more difficult for Germany, where the domestic debate about how to handle the situation was more diverse.

The UK's quick response to the crisis and its perception of a threat to the international order meant that it soon became very active in the UN and NATO, whereas Germany, Poland and France had a more prominent role working within the EU framework and co-ordinating other member states. In addition, the OSCE was revived as a diplomatic tool, especially by Germany, the US and Poland. The role of international organizations and other frameworks are further discussed below where the results presented in this report are discussed in relation to the trends mentioned in the introduction.

All of the countries also seem to have agreed that not only would diplomatic measures to decrease the tensions between different parties be necessary, but also measures to strengthen the democratic aspects of the Ukrainian state through constitutional reform, and state-building efforts to increase the competence of the armed forces. However, not all countries agreed on the role of NATO and military support for Ukraine. The US and the UK were most engaged in military support, but Poland was also active and participated in different defence cooperations. It is clear that even though each of the European countries gave support of varying kinds – diplomatic, humanitarian, state-building and non-lethal military support – the US provided the most comprehensive support to Ukraine in all areas. It also provided a whole package of measures described as reassurance measures in order to calm worried alliance members such as the Baltic states and Poland.

The first trend from our study of European security in 2013 was insecurity about the change in US foreign and security policy. One effect of the war in Ukraine was that the US had to increase its presence in the Baltic states and in Poland, as well as its military support to Ukraine. In this way the war in Ukraine prevented the US from decreasing its European presence in the way it had foreseen. The trend of diverging threat perceptions, with Northern and Eastern

Europe showing much more concern about Russia's actions than France and the UK, could be traced, for example, in the differences in how long it took the UK and Germany to determine their official political stand on Russia and its role in the war. For the UK it was not a sensitive issue domestically and therefore it could respond quickly, whereas for Germany more domestic debate meant that its response was slightly slower. We can also see that Poland saw Russian actions as a threat to national security in a way that the other European states did not. France seems to be the country that changed its attitude the most as a consequence of the war, quickly acting to become an important part of European negotiations even though Russia had not previously been seen as a major threat.

The third trend of increased bilateral cooperation (partially a consequence of the increased importance of economy for security and defence policy) has not been a dominant trend in the reactions to the crisis even though bilateral cooperation between Ukraine and the US, and Ukraine and Poland have taken place. Instead, what can be called minilateralism seems to have played a bigger role in the efforts to handle the crisis. This has meant that small groups of states in different groupings – the Normandy format, the Weimar triangle, and the Visegrad countries – have acted together. Some of these build on previous cooperations, but the Normandy format was a new development. The importance of these different minilateral groups is connected to two other trends mentioned in the introduction. First, the diversified role of NATO, which in addition to its traditional role as regional security organization with territorial defence as its main function, has developed into a global security organization with international military operations as an additional function. Second, there is the unclear role of the EU's CFSP. NATO's role in the crisis has primarily been to organize some of the reassurance measures. Even though Germany initially played the NATO card, this was quite quickly toned down and NATO primarily engaged in strengthening its member states' security. This could be seen as a 'back to basics' strategy where NATO's role for international operations was downplayed and its role as a regional security organization was strengthened. The EU's role in the crisis has been relatively toned down as well. Poland initially called for the EU to respond, but when it came to major diplomatic efforts these were undertaken in other, often smaller, forums as discussed above. The military tools of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy were not considered either. Obviously, there has been great concern not to escalate the conflict and as can be seen in the differences between actions taken (where the US, Poland and the UK have given military support to Ukraine whereas Germany and France have not), there has not been any agreement on the role that military support could and should play. However, the EU has a civilian operation in Ukraine of a state-building nature, emphasizing the EU's role as a

normative power. This also brings us to another finding from the 2013 study, that political leadership was challenged and difficult to identify. The Ukrainian crisis meant that Germany was more or less forced to take on a leadership role in the efforts to handle the crisis. German leadership in issues of security and defence is indeed something new and something that might change the dynamics of the European security structure in general and maybe EU security and defence in particular.

8. References

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