



Speaking with one voice

The European Union's path of changed actorness in the Eastern Partnership despite long term differences in foreign policy views of its Member States

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Abstract

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This paper explores the actorness of the European Union (EU), and how it has developed within the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in the aftermath of Russia's war in Ukraine. Through the theoretical lens derived from The Multiple Streams Framework, understanding is brought regarding intra-EU dynamics in relation to the union's outer international context and geopolitical positioning. It is shown how the union's relation to its soft- and hard power deployment has shifted, and how the inherent dualism within the union affects this shifted dynamic- where on one hand there has historically been fundamental discrepancies between the Member States regarding ideas on what kind of actor the union should be, but on the other hand the Member States convergence in collective policy output, despite the political equilibrium of the union being permeated by differing standpoints. This is analysed specifically in the nations of Moldova and Georgia, since the initiation of the EaP until late 2022.

The research question is posed accordingly; *How has the security policy actorness of the European Union within the Eastern Partnership countries Moldova and Georgia changed since 2009?*

The study concludes that greater risk infers greater value acceptability, and therefore that in times of crisis, despite the otherwise differences between the EU camps, cohesion is reached in various areas of the security field; when value acceptability of common security policies outweighs that of their own self interests. This convergence enables a geopolitical awareness within the EU, where the power dimension shifts from mainly soft power mechanisms, to incorporating hard power elements. It is thus shown how EUs undertakings within the EaP assert the union as an actor with geopolitical influence in the security field, and its aim to take ground and strengthen its role as a security policy actor in the area between Russia and Europe.

Keywords: EU, EaP, security policy, MSF, value acceptability, geopolitics, soft power, hard power

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1. Introduction

1.1 The dualism of the EU machinery

Having risen out of the context of the 20th century, the modern political phenomenon of the European Union (EU) stands proudly as the longest and most advanced international and transnational cooperation amongst independent nations. The main goal with the union was to consolidate sovereignty and implement shared policies as a way of avoiding new wars in Europe. The EU remains unique in its character, *sui generis*, and currently stands with twenty-seven member states and a history spanning through six decades (McKay, 2005:29).

Originating as a small organisation in 1957, consisting of six war-torn nations, it has ever since been characterised by expansion of competences and members. Commonly associated with shared values and interests the EU is often referred to as a unitary actor in its outer context and within the international society (Strange, 2015).

However, its intra-dynamics tell a different story.

Within the union, given the Member States' different historical backgrounds, ideological contexts and geographic positioning, there is scarcity in converging priorities and standpoints regarding such matters as, amongst others, strategic autonomy. The question of what kind of actor the EU should be, and what sort of agency it should have, would be answered differently depending on where it is directed. This is especially relevant in times of comeback of geopolitical importance and great power rivalry.

This intra-EU dynamic, comprising fundamentally contrasting views on topics of great virtue, is seen as divided into different camps of the EU; the Atlanticists, the Europeanists, and the Euro-Atlanticists. In spite of the camps disunity, their power of action anchored in EU unity has repeatedly been shown, most recently with the rapid and efficient processes behind the historical sanction packages directed towards Russia in the light of the war in Ukraine. This points to an inherent dualism of the EU machinery, where on one hand vastly different national actors obtain contrasting inclinations and ideals, but on the other hand succeed in asserting collective change through policies and initiatives. The dualism of discrepancies in views on national priorities, solidarity and strategic autonomy, while still “speak[ing] with one voice” (Natorski & Pomorska, 2016:57).

One such collective initiative is the Eastern Partnership (EaP), a bilateral dimension within the framework of the EU's neighbourhood policy (ENP). The EaP was initiated in the EU in 2008 by Sweden and Poland and includes six countries: Armenia, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine and Belarus. This paper has delimited the study to only include the nations of Moldova and Georgia, therefore the elaboration of the EaP will mainly concern these nation's security contexts.

In line with the changing context of international politics, within which the EU resides, the union's adaptation to changing realities has altered its relation with the nations in the EaP, reflecting a gradual increase of hard power use in relation to its traditional soft power deployment. Russia's war in Ukraine has not only reminded Europe about its borders, but it has also shed light on the importance of safeguarding European values. This has shown to be especially important in European border nations such as Moldova and Georgia, where the EU acts within a Russian sphere of influence. This is given the protracted conflicts within these nations involving separatist states, as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

It may be argued that the formation of the EaP initially and knowingly circumvented what is now seen as one of the main problems of the region; "the profound security challenges stemming from protracted conflicts, hybrid threats and weaknesses in national security sectors" (Zweers & van Loon, 2021:14). The risk of spillovers from these conflicts to the EU is being articulated as a rising threat, whereas "[b]oth EaP countries themselves and several analysts increasingly argue that this approach is becoming untenable and that this security deficit needs to be addressed within the EaP in one way or another." (Ibid.).

Furthermore, the Russian aggression against Ukraine highlights ideas regarding territorial integrity, where there is a belief that Russia's actions in Ukraine can easily be replicated on other parts of European soil- such as Estonia, Lithuania or Latvia. This poses the question regarding whether American nuclear deterrence will be sufficiently reliable to protect Europe? Will an American president put Chicago or Washington or New York at risk, to defend Vilnius or Riga or Tallinn? The war in Ukraine is therefore directly tied with the debate on the EU's strategic autonomy and actorness, how to address a security deficit in its territory, and its behaviour in the Russian sphere of influence.

1.2 Aim and research question

The aim of this paper is to contribute to EU literature by bringing understanding to the unions abilities to use soft and hard power. Therefore this paper analyses how the inherent dualism within the union affects the dynamic where on one hand there has historically been fundamental discrepancies between the Member States regarding ideas on what kind of actor the union should be, but on the other hand the priorities and ideas of the union converge in policy output.

This is studied in the regional context of the Eastern Partnership nations Moldova and Georgia, where the assumption is that the role of the EU as a geopolitical security actor has shifted in light of Russia's war in Ukraine. This shift is anchored in the view on the EUs strategic autonomy, where this paper aims to research a development in its soft and hard power deployment in Moldova and Georgia, and what implications this may have for the EU as an actor.

Therefore, studying the EUs driving forces within these nations, and the shift in the unions policy goals within the region following the war, will provide answers on what type of policy agenda the EU drives and how its agency has changed; on one hand given the context of the international society changing, and on the other hand given its intra-dynamic changing.

The research problem is therefore to seek understanding of the shift in EU politics and actorness despite its inherent dualism, and how these are mirrored in security policy implementation within the EaP countries Moldova and Georgia. Going from Member States introspectiveness where national integrity and a domestic policy agenda is prioritised, to a heightening and interlacing of the nation's collective soft and hard power utilisation in the region.

The research question is thus posed as follows;

How has the security policy actorness of the European Union within the Eastern Partnership countries Moldova and Georgia changed since 2009?

1.3 Scope of the study

The delimitations that have been made in regards to time period of study, are justified and stem from the punctuated equilibrium theory. The theory is not applied to a full extent but used rather as a heuristic device. This is deemed suitable due to the focus on moments of abrupt change in policy, interrupting long periods of stability¹.

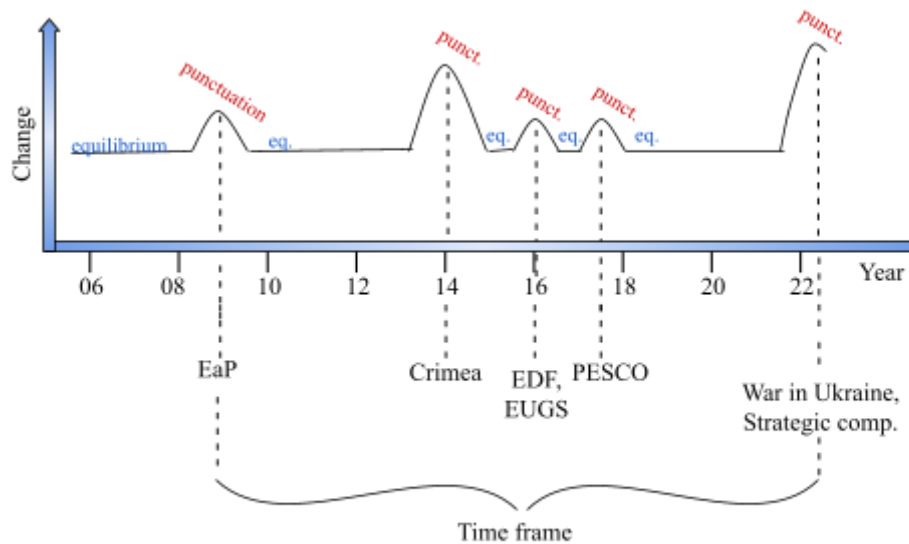


Figure I. Punctuated equilibrium operationalized to delimit time frame

Originally developed by Baumgartner & Jones, the theory asserts that political and policy processes usually are characterised by stability and incrementalism- an absence of noteworthy change from the status quo; but on rare occasions produce dramatic shifts away from this status quo (Knill & Tosun, 2012:111). This shift is therefore a “punctuation” in the otherwise equilibrium, or stability, of the political sphere. In this paper, in order to justify the time frame the theory is operationalized as follows;

The *focusing events* that are identified, or *punctuations* of the otherwise equilibrium of the political processes, are;

¹ It is noteworthy that while ‘figure I’ may be interpreted as illustrating periods of equilibrium as returning to the same state as previous equilibrium, this paper acknowledges that the true state of politics and policy is ever changing, and therefore an equilibrium does not represent a completely static status quo- but rather merely illustrate the focusing events as *noteworthy* change from the status quo.

- 2009 Initiation of the Eastern Partnership
- 2014 Russia's annexation of Crimea
- 2016 Initiation of the European Defence Fund
- 2016 Adoption of the European Union Global Strategy
- 2017 Initiation of the Permanent Structured Cooperation
- 2022 Russia's war in Ukraine
- 2022 Adoption of the Strategic Compass

These are identified as events having influenced public discourse and therefore the outcome of the EU security policy in the context of the EaP. Notably, the nature of these are different compared to one another; some being economic initiations, some being aggressions, some being cooperation deals et cetera. However, in spite of their contrasting nature this paper considers these events to be articulated as focusing events. This is possible partially due to the interpretivist nature of both the MSF and the punctuated equilibrium theory, where events shift the macro-political agenda through focusing events that change the policy image (Baumgartner, 2006:24).

Delimitation has been made within the EaP to include only the nations of Moldova and Georgia. This depends on several factors; First, the identification of these as representative for the shifting driving forces of EU security policy in its neighbouring region in general, and the EaP in particular. Second, their recent rapprochements to the EU through initiatives such as the membership applications in 2022, and political will to take part in the Permanent Structured Cooperation project (PESCO) through the European Defence Agency (EDA) (Bond et al., 2021). Lastly, formulations of the EU through the Strategic Compass, which “provides a shared assessment of the strategic environment in which the EU is operating and of the threats and challenges the Union faces.” (The European Union, 2022), which underlines their priority for the EU;

The challenges faced by Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, including hostile interference by Russia and the extensive use of military instruments and hybrid tactics, compromise their stability and their democratic processes and have direct implications for our own security. We will therefore continue to closely cooperate with those countries and reiterate our unwavering support for, and commitment to, their sovereignty and territorial integrity. (Ibid.)

1.4 Disposition

The section for introduction begins with the study's background description and problem formulation. Based on this, the purpose of the study and research question are presented, followed by the delimitations of the study laid out.

The following section- theoretical framework and previous research- begins with an introduction of foreign policy analysis, the broader spectrum within which the framework for this paper is placed. Previous research is then presented- first regarding EU presence within the EaP followed by the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) on an EU context. The MSF is then outlined, where a brief background as well as the factors that make up the *basic concepts* of the general theory are presented. This is followed by a critical reflection with the aim of clarifying the shortcomings of the theory and the implications this may have for this paper. Finally, a motivation for the choice of theory and how this can conceivably facilitate the answering of the research question and research problem.

The section for methodology begins with a description of an interpretive research design and the paper in relation to methodological criteria. Secondly a review of the study's design, where the Multiple Streams Framework is *operationalized* and adapted to the context of this paper, in contrast to its general outline in the previous section. Thirdly, a critical reflection. A justification around the choice of cases will then be presented, and finally, a source-critical discussion of the material basis for the analysis.

The analysis section accounts for the conducted literature analysis and interviews, and is shaped in a way that follows the logic of the framework; the context of the research is outlined and within it the analysis of the politics- problem- and policy streams are placed. Lastly, the policy output following the opening of a window of opportunity is presented.

The ending section of this paper- discussion- accounts for conclusions following the research, the limitations of this paper and suggestions of further research within the field.

2. Theoretical framework and previous research

2.1 Soft and hard power in relation to the actorness of the EU

Stemming from Joseph Nye's *Soft Power – The Means To Success In World Politics*, hard and soft power are seen as related to one another, as their common starting point is the act of influencing another party to act according to your will. What sets them apart is the nature of how one goes about, and the differing view on relevant resources to achieve goals (Nye, 2004:30). Whereas hard power implies that the act and resources to affect someone's course of action is based on coercion and encouragement, soft power means achieving a change in someone else's course of action according to your will without coercion or financial pressure. The spread of culture, norms and political ideas enables an actor to gain ground, where the soft power dimension is strengthened when the policy is considered legitimate with admirable ideals, which subsequently leads to others striving to implement similar ideas (Nye, 2004:31; Keohane & Nye, 1998:86). On the other hand, within the hard power dimension the politics carried out are coercive diplomacy through financial aid or sanctions, war, and alliance building (Nye 2004:31). The actions of the military power can be described as coercive, deterrent and protective (Ibid.), with the aim to secure national interests (Campbell & O'Hanlon 2006:7).

Traditionally, when referring to 'hard or soft power' parallels are drawn to the realist and liberalist school of thought, where these power dimensions are put against each other. Liberalists aim critique towards hard power concepts stating that extensive use of hard power in the form of military and economic pressure from one nation leads to neighbouring nations establishing alliances and coalitions to balance the power and uncertainty that facilitates (Nye 2011:27-28), which in turn is seen as a driving factor of the power struggle creating conflict within international politics. This paper however, studies the development of these power dimensions in relation to an agent's, the EUs, actorness.

When referring to the actorness of the EU this paper stems from Stjöstedt and Rhinard's (2019) definition of the EUs actor capacity. This implies autonomy, value coherence within the union, policy preference cohesion, and capabilities- concerning the ability of the EU to translate intent into action (2019:14). Their definition is anchored in the broader geo-political context in which the EU attempts to act, and is thus deemed as suitable for this paper.

The EUs “soft power derives from its readiness to offer a seat at the decision making table” (Cooper, 2004:179-180), pointing to an actorness that aims to focus on the spread of culture, norms and political ideas. However, Smith-Windsor argues that the borders between hard and soft power may blur (2000:53), which is depicted in this paper through the actions of the EU within the EaP in the aftermath of Russia’s war in Ukraine- where the gradual shift in actorness is tied to this power dimension shifting, conceivably in relation to its existence in a once again multipolar world system.

2.2 Foreign policy analysis

Policy is seen as “a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organisation or individual”. As a field, policy processes were “initially developed with an ambition to increase the understanding of policy formulations and implementation to promote ethical purposes in politics, but also to bring together the separate spheres of politics, policy, and government into a common research field” (Weible, 2017:7).

This paper stems from a Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) perspective, and conducts the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF). The multilevel nature of FPA enables it to incorporate elements across various disciplines. The paper utilises the relation to the cross-sectional approach of FPA by relating it to the MSF, consisting of a clearly articulated set of theoretical assumptions. It is argued that FPA and MSF both benefit from this multidisciplinary approach, as it enables a wider range of understanding and uncovering of answers (Hudson, V.M. 2005:2).

2.3 Previous research

The actorness of the EU is a topic that has been analysed and debated extensively during the last decades. Scholars such as Fawcett state that international institutions are gaining importance in international politics as they take on more purposes and expand, not least regarding defence and security policy (2013:356-358). This is seen as a response to the prevailing security order, where multipolarity particularly promotes and makes regional institutions such as the EU more useful (Ibid.).

Despite the EUs growing agency within security and policy, it is argued that there has been a lack on a supra-national organizational level where Member States still are responsible themselves for their security policy. This is a part of the dualism that this paper attains to, where the states in the union have a relatively weak collective feeling (Bremberg, 2012:21-22). This is further underlined by Wedin, stating that the union can be defined as a

military strategic actor regarding crisis management operations, but however lacks a distinct unity and comprehensive strategy to guide the CSDP long term (2008:54-55).

In similarity to this, Britz & Eriksson (2008:67-70) contend that the strategic actorness of the EU can be divided into multiple levels, where events that occur at a state level affects what happens at a supranational level and vice versa. These levels share common policy and organisation, but due to the large number of actors involved the formation of a common strategy becomes complex, which infers that the EUs external strategy should therefore be seen rather as shared than common. On the same subject, Bremberg & Britz argue that another obstacle in the prevailing dualism is the fact that in the creation of common guidelines at EU level, certain concepts mean very different things to various states in the Union (Bremberg & Britz, 2009:301-302).

This problematic condition was one of the main purposes with the Strategic Compass; namely to consolidate EU viewpoints to a common view on the international society. During the early formulations of the Strategic Compass a threat analysis was conducted which highlighted that several member states believe that the current formulations of the EU on Russia are too vague or ambiguous (Engström & Thorburn, 2022:2). The ambition was to further develop the strategic actorness introduced through the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), which was interpreted by some scholars (Altafin et al., 2017; Wagner and Anholt, 2016; Biscop, 2016) as a “paradigm shift in EU foreign policy” aiming towards resilience. However, others (Juncos, 2017; Smith, 2016) stated the opposite and saw the EUGS as “wishful thinking”.

This paradigm shift and dualism that has been brought forth is what lay the basis for the problem formulation of this paper, and is studied in the arena of the EaP. Previous research, such as brought forth by Cadier, states that the geopoliticisation of the EaP has been anchored in EUs will to counter Russian influence within the region where the EU and Russia are in a geopolitical standoff (2019:71-99). This is shown during 2014 in the light of the Russian annexation of Crimea, where EUs approach towards the EaP became more geopolitical in a contest of influence with Russia over their common neighbourhood. It is seen as “common sense” that “the EaP is Brussels instrument in this contest” (Ibid.). Further development of the relationship between the EU and the EaP is laid out in section 4.1, see page 21.

Regarding previous research on the Multiple Streams Framework, the starting point for the MSF can be located in Cohen et al. (1972). By looking at organised anarchies the concept of organisational choice was studied, given that the context had problematic references, unclear

technology and fluid participation (Cohen et al. 1972: 2-3). Four streams were identified which laid the basis for the MSF as we know it today- problems; solutions; participants; and choice opportunities (ibid.: 16).

Following this logic, Kingdon developed the framework, and since its initial publication in 1984, the MSF has endured critique from scholars as being a ‘heuristic device’ (Bendor et al. 2001; Mucciaroni 2013). The different elements of MSF have been seen as an artificial construct to assist in the exploration of social phenomena, an addition to other already existing theories. This paper however argues that the framework in a whole is more than merely a heuristic device, which is intended to be shown by empirical demonstration. The assumption is that the MSF formulates necessary conditions for agenda change given the acknowledging of ambiguity within politics and policy.

The trend of utilising the MSF as a heuristic device is continued in an EU-context, which implies that the separate elements of the framework are seen as having relevance for policy analysis in various degrees compared to each other. Of course, this is correct, because a disengagement of the different streams from each other, or an isolation of the policy window, will in different research not only be used for various different aims- such as the integration of the problem stream in framing theory, or the politics stream in discourse analysis, but it will also provide different answers of differing qualities. This paper argues that only a full application of the framework can provide a full assessment. Examples of this disengagement include referencing to windows of opportunity (Cram, 2001:777), or the referring to policy entrepreneurs by Ringe (2005), with an emphasis on ambiguity of the policy process, as derived from Kingdon, and shares similarities with the research of Corbett, both being applied to the European Parliament (2005:153). Some scholars such as Princen (2007) include the element of the agenda setting being contextual, and thereby refer to Kingdon.

As the notion of ambiguity is fundamental for the understanding of the MSF, it is often treated in the analyses. Early contributions, such as Krause (2003), followed by Corbett (2005), conclude that ambiguity is seen as a product of the institutional structure of the EU. Other early contributions include the work of Pollack (1997); Nugent and Saurugger (2002); and Jordan et al. (2003), all of them applying the framework more extensively than has been done before, where the element of window of opportunity is researched and altered to not only be open or not, but have levels of openness which in turn affect how little or much chance there is of policy implementation. On the latter, studies conducting the MSF include Radaelli’s

work together with Eberlein (2010) and with Borra's (2011), where the researchers combine the framework with other schools of study such as historical and discursive institutionalism².

2.4 Multiple Streams Framework

Originally, the framework focused on agenda setting, but after expansion and development now includes implementation and decision-making processes as well (Herweg et al., 2017:16). Herweg et al. state that what is most important to grasp regarding the framework is “[that] the MSF’s basic assumptions deal with ambiguity, [...] problematic preferences, unclear technology, fluid participation, and stream independence.” (2017:16-17).

Initially, it is of importance not to confuse ‘ambiguity’ with ‘uncertainty’. It is not uncertainty because one is not uncertain on what the outcome is, but rather what outcome it is that you want, meaning that uncertainty is the inability to accurately predict an event (Zaharidis, 2007:66). The political world is permeated by ambiguity, a state that will remain, regardless of the amount of information actors gain (Feldman, 1989:5).

The politics stream.

Operating at a political level, the actors main goals are to fulfil various political goals within their own political agenda, as well as maintaining power balance within the political system (Herweg et al., 2017:21-22). The politics stream consists of three elements;

1. The national mood.

The national mood refers to the assumption that “a fairly large number of individuals in a given country tend to think along common lines and that the mood swings from time to time” (Zahariadis, 2007:73).

2. Pressure group campaigns.

The national mood is utilised by pressure groups in campaigns, in order to promote certain issues on their agenda, or in some cases to tone down the relevancy of others. Thereto, “politicians often view the support or opposition of interest groups as indicators of consensus or dissent in the broader political arena” (Ibid.)

² see also Ackrill and Kay (2011) for the same combination of disciplines, however applying historical and discursive institutionalism implicitly rather than explicitly.

3. Legislative or administrative turnover.

The assumption of fluid participation is also expressed through turnover in official bodies and governments, where ideological shifts following the ascension of new politicians may lead to some issues getting more attention, and some getting less (Ibid.).

The problem stream.

Characterised by a combination of different issues, conditions and problems that different actors advocate for (Zahariadis, 2007:70). Because of the large number of problems, actors have to compete against one another in order to gain actor attention (Herweg et al. 2017:18-19). The ones that do not gain attention may in the end not even be viewed as issues (Zahariadis, 2007:71).

According to Kingdon (1995:110), problems “contain a perceptual, interpretive element”. This can be interpreted as follows; a range of values are connected with a certain issue, and when the conditions surrounding that issue shifts, it may violate the values connected to it, which generates attention to that problem (Zahariadis 2007:71). The problem stream consists of three elements;

1. Indicators.

The indicators can be uncovered through special studies, for example through statistics, or by being monitored on a routinely basis. These indicators may then be used politically to advocate for a certain agenda, in hope of getting public attention (Stone, 1988).

2. Focusing events.

The focusing events are what draw attention to the above mentioned problematic conditions or problems. The attention in itself is fixed by media or policy entrepreneurs (Jones, 1994). In relation to this study, a focusing event is the war in Ukraine.

3. Feedback.

Previous implementation or feedback from other or similar problems or programs guide the actions or actors to a high extent, partially due to the time constraint of the political sphere but also due to the bounded rationality and in that seeking to suffice. It enables actors to assess what might work and what might not based on previous experiences, where “successfully implementing a solution in one area may spill over to another, facilitating the adoption of the same solution in a seemingly unrelated area” (Zahariadis, 2007:72).

The policy stream.

In the policy stream, which consists of “interest groups, academics, civil servants [et cetera]” (Herweg et al., 2017: 17-18), the aim is to advocate for different policy options (Ibid., 19-21). These policy ideas are at this state merely ideas and compete in order to gain attention and acceptance by policy networks (Zahariadis, 2007:72). The policy stream consists of two elements;

1. Value acceptability.

If a policy idea gets consideration depends partially on the value acceptability of the idea, that is whether or not the idea has support given the context of the problem, and whether or not it is ‘worth it’ enough for the policy entrepreneurs and policy makers.

2. Technical feasibility.

Another element regarding whether or not a policy idea is considered lies within the technical feasibility of the idea, meaning to what extent it is possible to implement given the restraints of the context of the given problem and policy area (Zahariadis, 2007:72).

The process.

The following presents how the three streams are coupled and produce policy output. As the framework does not see problems as given, but rather as articulated and based on social construction they are not “fixed”. This in combination with the assumption on stream independence means that in order for a problem to be articulated as a problem, and put on the policy agenda, it is necessary for the problem to be linked to a solution, which can be provided by a policy proposal. The policy proposal in turn must be supported by the actors within the politics stream- the policy makers- that assume a level of agency and action in constructing problems and carrying out solutions.

In order to achieve agenda change- the three streams need to be coupled. When the streams are ready for coupling a “window of opportunity” is presented, creating an opportunity for policy entrepreneurs to advocate for their goals within that context (Herweg et al. 2017, 22-23). The elements of interest are therefore on one hand the policy entrepreneurs and on the other hand the window of opportunity, as elaborated in the following.

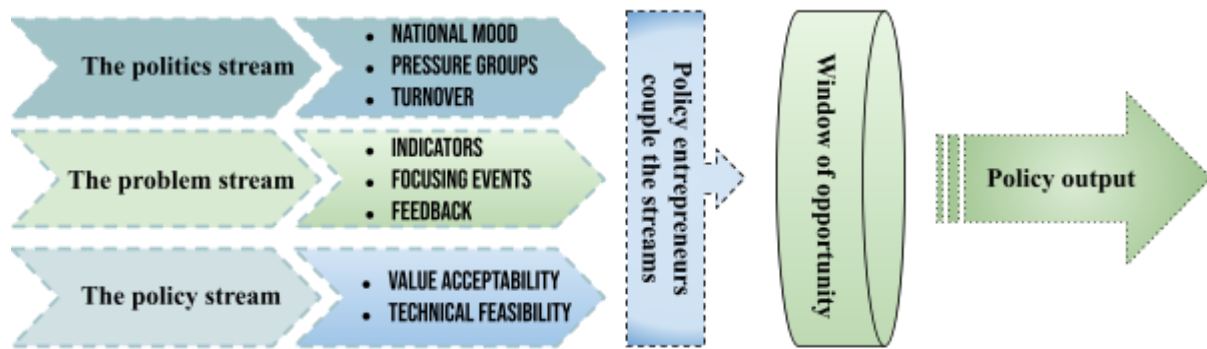


Figure II. The MSF illustrated.

Policy entrepreneurs.

These actors are defined as “[...] advocates who are willing to invest their resources- time, energy, reputation, money- to promote a position in return for anticipated future gain in the form of material, purposive, or solidary benefits” (Kingdon 2011:179, quoted in Herweg et al. 2017:23). This statement does not limit the label ‘policy entrepreneur’ to any given context or field, rather all actors within policy processes with the aim of changing or implementing policy can be seen as policy entrepreneurs (Herweg et al. 2017:23-24).

The window of opportunity.

The window of opportunity may be opened by focusing events and is then in need of policy entrepreneurs to couple the streams through the window, and thereby produce policy output. Kingdon states that these brief moments when the streams are coupled are important “opportunit[ies] for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions, or to push attention to their special problems.” (Herweg et al. 2017, 23-24).

Against this backdrop, the MSF is seen as a tool for creating understanding of agenda setting and policy development as a result of when “[...] (a) a policy window opens, (b) the streams are ready for coupling, and (c) a policy entrepreneur promotes the agenda change” (Ibid., 23-24).

2.4.1 Motivation of the theory

As stated by Ackrill, Kay and Zahariadis “We do not argue that a singular, universal, multiple streams lens can be developed for use in all EU circumstances; adaptation of the lens may be required [...] Clarification of the lens’s internal causal drivers and their adaptation to the EU context hold considerable promise for future research.” (2013:884).

The common view on the framework's ambitions when applied to EU-policy is one of the motivating factors behind the choice of theory. Initiated by Zahariadis (2008), with his

theoretical contribution to the MSF's applicability to the EU, the contributions to this endeavour thereafter are rare. There is however a strong consensus that the scope of the framework can be further developed, and that "[...] analysis may inquire into the applicability of MS as a lens for explaining policy formation in areas other than educational organisations or whole national governments" (Zahariadis, 2007:86), which is one of the elements of the academic contribution of this paper.

The significance of the MSF in understanding the actorness of the EU lies in the framework enabling the capturing of the dualism of the union. This is undertaken through following the operationalization brought forth by the framework, which facilitates analysis of the obstacles of EUs actorness. These obstacles are the differences within the EU camps, that is the *dualism* of the union. The MSF as a framework therefore furthers understanding of formulation of EU-policy, and enables understanding of the role of the EU and its change in actorness.

Lastly, previous work on the policy processes within the EU (see Peters 1994:20; Richardson 2001), underline the prevailing ambiguity of the EU, which combined with the MSF that assumes ambiguity and explicitly aims at explaining changes of agenda, makes up the aim of this paper. The assumption of bounded rationality and strive for satisficing, in an ambiguous system with imperfect information and manipulation, where "policy-makers appear to be comfortable with an extraordinary array of [conflicting preferences and] unreconciled sources of legitimate wants" (March 1978:599), implies the randomness of the EU policy making machine.

2.4.2 Critical reflection

In being a theory that has gained momentum and is subject for refutation and corroboration, the MSF has withstood some critique. Initially, the framework was inductively derived from analysing agenda setting at the federal level of the USA. As the theory therefore was inductively constructed, stemming from observation of a phenomena, there are questions raised regarding how appropriate and suitable the theory is on other empiricism, and whether the patterns that Kingdon revealed in that agenda-setting environment will be able to be applicable in other contexts. This paper argues that the framework is suitable to apply to contexts other than the original one and that earlier contributions have contributed to the development of the theory. An example of such a development that is relevant for this paper is the view on policy entrepreneurs, where Kingdon originally stated that policy entrepreneurs are individuals at the federal level of the USA. However, following furthering of the theory it is now seen as institutions and corporate actors as well.

3. Methodology

3.1 Implications following interpretivist studies

This paper stems from an interpretivist research tradition, meaning that the theoretical starting point is based on viewing reality as shaped by social action (Weldes, 2014:230). Social phenomena are always changing and knowledge surrounding the actors and the phenomena can therefore never be terminated, due to its socially constructed nature (Bevir & Rhodes, 2015:9).

The inference is therefore derived from an abductive tradition, anchored in the context (Schwartz-Shea et al. 2012:27). The contextuality is central for the research, where the aim is to provide understanding rather than definitive answers. Furthermore, the epistemology following an interpretivist research is descriptive in contrast to being prescriptive, meaning that the aim is to describe reality as it is- rather than how it should be (Ibid.). The ontology of this paper is constructivist, the meaning of social action is subjective, and one important assumption is that we cannot separate ourselves from the world we study. An abductive inference is deemed suitable for this paper due to the context driven ambitions, as the current context of the international society is what justifies the research question.

3.1.1 Methodological criteria

In a world that is socially constructed, where methodology regards structuralism which in turn means hidden discourses, a challenge that researchers encounter is ‘choosing’ the ‘right’ interpretation. What is relevant here is the principle of reflexivity; the issue of being biased by the construction of the self, as an effect of never being able to fully separate oneself from the ‘produced truth’ of the research (Schwartz-Shea et al. 2012:81). This results in ‘pure objectivity’ being impossible to reach. The solution to this is to be transparent regarding the researcher’s positionality in the research process through reflexivity (Ibid:271). This has been especially important within this research in the process of conducting interviews.

In order to reserve the study against inconsistency or misinterpretation, the theoretical and empirical mapping of the relevant importance and appropriateness of the MSF applied to the context of the study has been delimited to the security policy arena of the given actors, rather than providing a full-scale assessment of alternative explanations of the phenomena. The

sections in this paper regarding analysis and conclusions are thereby sculpted within the realm of the MSF (Eliasson et al. 2013:16).

3.2 Designing the study

As the ontological and epistemological basis of this paper lies on a descriptive approach, the focus on the study is on the context; which entails an abductive study. Conducting a qualitative textual analysis derived from the MSF.

3.2.1 Case selection and generalizability

The definition of a case study that this research follows is stated as “[...] a research approach in which one or a few instances of a phenomena are studied in-depth” (Blatter, 2008:68). The aim of a case study follows George's definition as “lessons in a systematic and differentiated from a broader range of experience that deliberately draws upon a variety of historical cases” (1979:43).

This paper is based on an abductive typical case approach, which implies that it “/.../ focuses on one [or a few] instances of a particular phenomenon with the intention of providing an in-depth account of events, conditions, experiences or processes occurring in these special cases” (Denscombe, 2009:59). A multiple case study is chosen in order to provide cross-national understanding, with the ambition not to point to shifting EU security policy within one nation, but rather within a joint initiative framework striving to provide generalizable results and uncover a broader trend in the actorness behaviour of the EU (Bennett, 2010:29–30).

In this case, the choice of Moldova and Georgia is representative for the shifting of the driving forces of EU security policy in its neighbouring region in general, and the EaP in particular. There are six countries in the EaP, and these are traditionally divided into two categories; Three of them (Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus) are located west in relation to Russia, and share borders with the EU. The three other countries (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) in South Caucasus, are south in relation to Russia, and do not share any borders with the EU. Thus, Moldova has been chosen as a typical case to represent the EaP countries in the west part of the partnership, and Georgia has been chosen to represent the countries in the south part of the partnership (Goertz, 2006:34). Furthermore, it is of interest to research converging policy output outside of the union rather than inside, due to the lack of the otherwise bureaucratic structures that dictate the behaviour and policy.

This goes hand in hand with the descriptive nature of the study, which aims to map explanatory factors linked to the bounded rationality of the actors. A typical case study design facilitates this undertaking, with emphasis specifically on the context of the study (George & Bennett, 2005:18).

3.2.2 Adapting the MSF to the EU security policy context

Initially, before justifiably adjusting the framework to an EU context two matters should be addressed. First, how to define and operationalize equal counterparts of the elements of the framework to this given context, and secondly, how to relate these counterparts to the causal mechanisms brought forth by the framework. What the causal mechanisms do is provide information on the relationship between the core elements of the MSF, and therefore some might argue that they are unbounded by the context and thus do not need to be adjusted to the EU. However, this paper argues that adjusting the core concepts will circumvent some of the difficulties brought forth in the previous research by earlier attempts of applying and developing the MSF around EU policy.

Theoretical assumptions.

Regarding the assumption on *ambiguity* in political practice; amongst others, Krause (2003) together with Corbett (2005) deem the ambiguity of the political process within the EU to be a product of the institutional structure of the union. Given the extensive amount of previous research stating this phenomenon, this paper also assumes that the EU is a political system that is permeated with ambiguity.

As this paper aims to further elaborate the inner tensions within the EU where the nations of Poland, France and Germany are chosen as typical cases representing these inner tensions and ‘camps’ (the Atlanticist camp, the Europeanist camp, and the Euro-Atlanticist camp) of the union, the standpoints of these camps will permeate the streams of the framework representative of the national mood of the union.

The politics stream.

This stream deals with the political level, where the actor’s main goals are to fulfil various political goals within their own political agenda, as well as maintaining power balance within the political system (Herweg et al., 2017:21-22).

There is a body of work that applies the MSF to an EU context that argues that a delimitation to the national mood is necessary, as there is no coherent empirical examination on an EU

public sphere that mediates a ‘European mood’ (see Princen and Rhinard 2006). However, this paper asserts that there is a national mood that can be interpreted and influential for policy shaping, and follows the principles of Zahariadis and Kingdon, stating;

The European mood refers to the ‘climate of the times’; the idea that important policy-makers, opinion leaders, and other politicians think along similar lines (Kingdon 1995: 148). Although public mobilisation plays a lesser role in EU decisions (Princen 2007), there exists a European climate of the times that has an impact. (Zahariadis, 2008:518).

In short, this paper will take into account the shift of a national mood. The context here refers to the shift of opinion on how to relate to Russia and the EU as an actor within security policy.

The EU ‘camps’ are what will be seen as policy actors within the politics stream, as they deal with the political level of EU security policy. They may serve as policy makers on the national as well as European and transnational level, that advocate for policy options relying on the opinions of lobby groups, the national mood, and their domestic policy agendas to be brought forth and implemented on a supra-national level.



Figure III. The MSF operationalized.

The problem stream.

The mechanisms of the problem stream remain consistent, namely indicators, focusing events and feedback. In this case, the indicators do not bear as much relevance as the focusing events and feedback concerning previous policy programs, given the magnitude of the focusing event- the war in Ukraine. However, indicators will be interpreted as how the camps perceive and prioritise threats within and outside of the EU.

Disregarding which mechanism bears greater explanatory value in this case, what remains clear within the framework is that the policy entrepreneur need to be successful in framing this mechanism as an issue. Given the context of the international society and the research of this paper, anchored in the prevailing war, it is understandable why there lies no greater difficulty or challenge in framing the focusing event as problematic, further enabling the view of Germany, Poland and France as policy entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, feedback is operationalized as the usage of previous security policy programs and guidelines within the EaP from the EU, such as the Strategic Compass from 2016.

The policy stream.

The policy community in the policy stream consists of members of the national, the European, and transnational level (Bache 2013). The actors of the policy stream are seen as “interest groups, academics, civil servants [et cetera]” (Herweg et al., 2017: 17-18), where aim is to advocate for different policy options preferred by different actors (Ibid., 19-21). The executive power of the EU is seen as the Council, the European Council and the Commission, and given that the ENP and EaP are subsided within the policy making of the Commission (EC), the EC is what will be seen as the main agent within the policy stream, in affiliation with the Council and the European Council, though delimiting these as essential actors within the policy stream.

The elements of value acceptability and technical feasibility will thus be operationalized as follows: value acceptability; the interpretation of to what extent it has become, or not become, more or less ‘worth it’ for the EU to shift actor focus in the region of the EaP.

Technical feasibility; the interpretation of how much importance the EU and the policy entrepreneurs have attached to the policies being *plausible* to utilise, and how much is merely sending a political signal, and whether this principle has shifted given the shift in the context of the international society.

Policy entrepreneurs.

As previously mentioned, earlier research often refers to the EC as being the policy entrepreneurs of the EU. While this paper acknowledges the contributions that such research has made to the framework, such as Pollack (1997) and Jordan et al. (2003), the amendment in this paper instead sees the EU camps as operationalized to be representative of the politics stream and entrepreneurial activity.

According to Kingdon (2010), “more than one policy-entrepreneur can be involved in advocacy and brokerage”. However, Kingdon’s view on the framework only includes individuals as policy entrepreneurs. As shown in the previous research, in the realm of applying the MSF today it is widespread practice to consider institutions, lobby groups and corporate actors as policy entrepreneurs as well. This paper stems from this development of the framework reaching beyond the individual level of policy entrepreneurship, and sees the Member States of the union as the policy entrepreneurs in the given context for this research. This is possible due to the input of the member states being important and agenda setting for the union’s policy output (see Mazey and Richardson 1992).

Given that these actors are defined as “[...] advocates who are willing to invest their resources- time, energy, reputation, money- to promote a position in return for anticipated future gain in the form of material, purposive, or solidary benefits” (Kingdon 2011:179, quoted in Herweg et al. 2017:23), it is regarded as an applicable concept to the member states.

The operationalization of the EU member states of Germany, France and Poland as typical cases for the EU camps and therefore policy entrepreneurs will stem from the principle of bounded rationality, as introduced by Herbert Simon. Bounded rationality takes human cognition into account, where actors are goal-oriented and aim for rational decision-making, but are limited and affected by cognitive and emotional aspects (Jones, 2002:272).

The choice of France, Poland and Germany lays within their contrasting views of European strategic security- and defence autonomy, depicted in the different camps within this debate; the Atlanticist camp (Poland) underlining the primacy of NATO, the Europeanist camp (France) pushing for sovereignty and European autonomy, and the Euro-Atlanticist camp (Germany) positioning itself in between the two previous. This is further elaborated in section 4.2, see page 22. This is of relevance for the operationalization of the framework as it represents the inner dynamic of the EU, and justifies the use of Member States as policy entrepreneurs, an undertaking within the MSF which is previously untested.

3.3 Material

Based on a source-critical ambition, the research is based on material in accordance with methodological literature’s criteria for good source-critical selection, namely: authenticity, independence, simultaneity and tendency (Esaiasson et al., 2017:288). The choice of sources is deliberate to answer the question posed, and the size of the selection of material is not in focus, but rather the empirical basis itself (Ibid.,130). The data collection and course of action

is based on theoretical interpretation of official EU security policy documents. In order to establish the policy stream, official policy documents under the framework of the ENP will be analysed. Here, the material is separated into three sources due to a development within the framework;

European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
(ENPI, 2009-2014)

European Neighbourhood Instrument
(ENI, 2014-2020)

Development and International Cooperation Instrument
(NDICI, 2021-2027)

The policy shaping between the EU and Moldova respectively Georgia mainly takes form through the ‘Country Action Programmes’, previously labelled ‘Country Strategy Papers’ under the ENI umbrella.

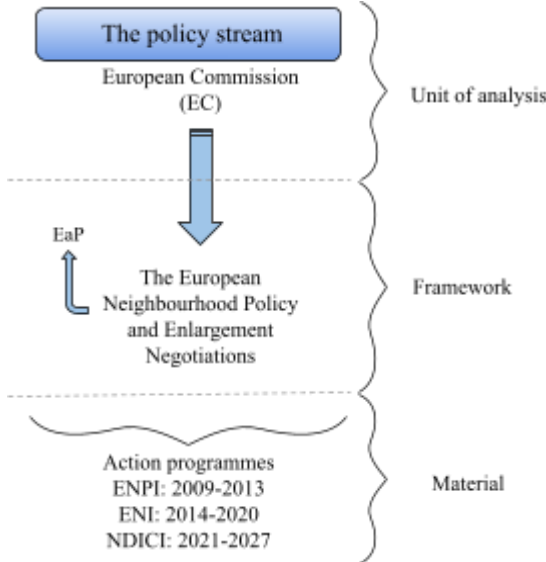


Figure IV. The policy stream operationalized in material

These are conducted with the aim of planning and undertaking external assistance by the EU, and works as one of the general instruments providing direct support for the EU’s external policies. In the section for analysis, in figure V, a thematic overview of the analysed documents is portrayed depicting the prioritised areas of development in Georgia respectively Moldova, as conveyed through the Action Programmes for respective nations during given years.

In line with Fairclough and Fairclough (2015:198), in order to contribute substantially to political analysis, the chosen material and discourse ought to be relevant to the study by being congruent with the political analysis and events of the study. The material one chooses to study is therefore motivated by the level of relevance it has for the study, in line with previously outlined reasoning regarding validity. As this paper aims to study security policy the country action papers are justified, given that they are concrete material used by the EU to specify objects pursued within the field of security policy in Moldova and Georgia.

By conducting the MSF to these documents, the study will be able to provide a comprehensive understanding of the EUs actorness within the EaP, and the foreign policy

action in the region. To limit the scope of the paper the selected material is limited to the years of 2009-2022. All of the analysed documents are listed in Appendix A1.

To account for the politics stream and the policy entrepreneurial activity, with the aim of obtaining a more nuanced research regarding the actorness and security policy agenda of the EU, the collected data from the text analysis will be corroborated by conducting semi-structured elite interviews. As the EU camps are operationalized by typical case selection anchored in Germany, France and Poland, these are what will lay the basis for the unit of analysis. Therefore, the respondents are from research institutes and think tanks within these nations. Two institutions from each capital have been chosen and high-ranking experts from these have been interviewed, as well as experts within EU and EaP security policy. See Appendix A3 for a complete list of respondents.

In conducting semi-structured interviews, the posed questions are of a descriptive nature with an open-ended character, which stem from the theme that is relevant for analysis and serve as a starting point for the interview (Leech, 2002). In order to get as overarching and precise answers, and thereby data, as possible, the questions are articulated in such a manner where alternate answers or ideas are not impeded from the respondent, being flexible and open for the answers to take form in the context. However, in order to reserve the study for reflexivity, continuity will be of importance even though flexibility will be taken into account. A questionnaire has been constructed consisting of nine questions. These questions are derived and operationalized from the MSF and strive to represent the politics stream and the policy entrepreneurial activity, see Appendix A2.

The interviews will serve as a complement to official policy documents and aim to corroborate the analysis. Their empirical use is therefore motivated in spite of the small selection of respondents, as the data will contribute to the triangulation of the analysis of the action programmes within the policy stream. Overall, the estimation is that the interviews strengthen the validity of the study. Regarding the reliability, by following the questionnaire replicability is made possible by the systematic and transparent method of interviewing.

4. Analysis

4.1 Context of the case: The Eastern Partnership

The EU's relations with the countries of the Eastern Partnership are largely driven within the framework of the EU's neighbourhood policy (ENP), within which the Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a bilateral dimension.

The EaP aims to counteract sharp lines between EU Member States and non-member countries in the EU's direct and indirect neighbourhood. This has been a long going goal of the EU- namely to tie previous Soviet states in Eastern Europe to the EU by deepened cooperation. The region thus enables the ambition of the EU to become a geopolitical actor between Russia and Europe.

Since its launching, the framework has remained an important tool for the EU to “provide incentives for reform and stability in non-member states through the dissemination of its norms and rules [...] Initially, joint commitments to values such as democracy, human rights, the principles of the rule of law and good governance were emphasised with an ultimate goal of expansion.” (Anderlini, 2020:155). However, given that the context of the international society has shifted and with institutional changes of the EU;

[...] the focus has instead shifted towards strengthening the partner countries resilience and improving security conditions, and thus the emphasis has been rather on traditional foreign and security policy, through which the EU supports the partner countries both economically and politically to achieve security and stability beyond its borders, and not necessarily to integrate these more closely with the EU (Ibid.:156).

This shift towards traditional foreign policy did not include measures of hard security, but rather support through economic and political means, an approach that this paper argues has changed after the focusing event- leaning more towards hard security. This takes place through bilateral policies for, amongst other things, political and economic cooperation.

Since its founding summit in Prague, the EaP has evolved whereas the substance of the policy has broadened, deepened and been adapted to changing realities. However, the balance between gaining ground in EU's Eastern neighbourhood is countered with tensions between

the EU and Russia, as well as between Russia and the countries covered by the partnership. An especially sensitive centre of gravity are the states within the framework with Russian minority groups, such as Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine. This tension can be depicted through actions such as during 2012, when initiative was taken to sign an Association Agreement with Georgia and Moldova during the upcoming summit in Vilnius the following year. This sparked an informal yet intensive ‘tug of war’ between the EU and Russia, and the mutual suspicion passed more and more into an atmosphere of deep mistrust (Hedenskog, 2015:18).

The Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, increased the levels of cooperation and integration with Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine by strengthening the political association and economic integration. The main aim was to bring the nations closer to the EU by aligning their domestic legislation and standards to EU standards. In practice this might infer deepened cooperation with the EU for these states by a greater access to the EU's internal market and visa-free travel, but at the same time the cooperation requires a higher adaptation to EU norms, rules and frameworks. Therefore, given that the EU has not focused on hard security in the region, but rather on economic and political cooperation, the shift to also include security policy is of interest in order to uncover the contemporary policy agendas of the EU within the EaP countries.

4.2 The politics stream: Interdynamic of the EU

The EU's agenda broadened during the late 1990s through initiatives such as the St. Malo Declaration, where France and the United Kingdom agreed to move European integration forward and establish a European Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). This led to initiating crisis management efforts outside the union's borders, and with the agreement on the objective of developing military capabilities and management resources (Biscop, 2019:98). This early articulation of a security and defence aspect of the union was followed by the European Security Strategy in 2003 aiming to improve the effectiveness of the CSDP, with a renewal in 2016 through the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), and lastly through EU's Strategic Compass for security and defence- shaping the CSDP as we know it today.

The shifting nature of EU's surroundings has led to a need for the union to adapt to circumstances in international politics. A development and adaptation that has been prominent in these doctrines, for example by introducing the concept of ‘strategic autonomy’ in the EUGS. This has through times shifted the nature of what kind of actor the EU is, and has led to discussions regarding the EU's positioning within the defence sphere.

These discussions tend to take form by dividing the European Member States into three ‘camps’, depicting differing opinions regarding the EU as a security actor. While the EU camps do share various ideas and values, the debate regarding discourses surrounding European strategic autonomy is an aspect that has historically been differentiated within them (Koenig, 2021:56). Recurring questions within the debate are autonomy ‘from whom, for what, and to do what?’ (Ibid.). Koenig argues that the debate surrounding autonomy stems from Europe’s failure to respond adequately to the Yugoslav wars, which implies that it is primarily autonomy from the US and NATO, with the main goal to stabilise the union and its direct neighbourhood.

This lays the basis for the divergence between Member States positioning within this debate. As shown by Howorth (2002) and Meyer (2005), this can be represented by European ‘camps’. While these camps do not only differ in their view on autonomy, this paper argues that their positioning within this specific debate is relevant for the context of this study, and representative of ideas that permeate the camp’s policy interests in the sphere of security and defence.

Initially, the ‘*Atlanticist camp*’ which used to be led by EU’s former member the United Kingdom (UK), and included Central and Eastern European members of the Union as well as Denmark, Portugal, and the Netherlands, amongst others (Koenig, 2021:59). After Brexit, Poland has informally been the one to most vocally promote this camp, which is why Poland is given as one of the chosen policy entrepreneurs in this paper. From this point of view, strategic autonomy is seen with scepticism, underlining the primacy of NATO (Ibid.)

Furthermore, the ‘*Europeanist camp*’, traditionally led by France (Ibid.). This camp includes Belgium, Spain and Luxembourg, and advocates for European sovereignty, where Macron is a driving force for this perspective within the EU. The Europeanist camp advocated for extended capacities of PESCO, and an informal European ‘coalition of the willing’ -approach.

Lastly, somewhat in between the Europeanist and Atlanticist camp there is the ‘*Euro-Atlanticist camp*’, traditionally led by Germany. What is characteristic for this camp, also including Italy, is the ambition of balancing the risk of undermining the US and NATO with European strategic autonomy. This is further depicted given that the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, was previously the defence minister of

Germany, where her ambitions were to increase the capacities in the defence area of the Union, while avoiding impairment towards the US and NATO.

The interdynamic between the EU camps has through time been affected and changed due to internal and external changes and happenings. In combination with the failure of the ratification of the EU constitutional treaty in the Netherlands and France (2005), the Eurozone economic crisis (2009), the Syrian refugee crisis (2011), the Brexit referendum (2016), and the election of Donald Trump (2017), the weakening of the transatlantic link pushed the centre of gravity and national mood shifting towards the Europeanization camp. This led to introspectiveness amongst the Member States, meaning that the domestic sphere of politics was prioritised over the union's collective sphere.

This approach was furthered in the EUGS, which underlined the importance of an “appropriate level of ambition and strategic autonomy for Europe's ability to promote peace and security within and beyond its borders” (2016). The definition of an ‘appropriate level’ was not clearly determined, resulting in diverging opinions on how to integrate the guidelines from the EUGS within the camps. The Euro-Atlanticist camp leaned against the reinforcements of deepening EU defence cooperation, where the Atlanticist camp was particularly weakened by the UK leaving the union (Koenig, 2021:59). The agency of the EU was thus strengthened during this period, with initiatives such as through the European Defence Fund (EDF) and PESCO, in an attempt to bridge the disintegration and introspectiveness and strengthen the union in itself.

Prior to the strengthening of the Europeanist camp, the discussions mainly concerned crisis management and transnational threats. However, with the Europeanist camp gaining momentum, the discussions have shifted into placing a greater focus on deterrence and defence in Europe, and how to conduct it without overlapping NATO's commitments (Simón, 2019). Given the rise of China and Russia's annexation of Crimea, discussions on ‘the return of great power rivalry’ become relevant. In order to counter the geo-political threats that these nations pose, the discussions of informal integration, or flexible integration, of previous Soviet-states nations into the EU become of interest.

With the adoption of the Strategic Compass, one of the ambitions was to make the EDF and PESCO more efficient. The prevailing introspective approach was somewhat disassembled, creating incentives for the EU to come together as a security- and defence actor (Engström & Thorburn, 2022:2). However, several central discrepancies may remain anchored in previous

contradictions between the members regarding threat perception, institutional preference and national sovereignty. This is possibly a result of their differing geographical positions and historical anchoring, which in turn influences their perceptions of threat and risks (Ibid.)

This is further shown where the Strategic Compass differs from the EUGS regarding emphasis put on security, threats, resilience and what is important for the union to prioritise. An example of this is the suggestion of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC), where the main purpose of this military unit is to be operational outside of the union's border rather than within (Ibid.:3), positioning the EU as an international security actor, mainly dealing with crisis management and evacuations. Even though the RDC does not deal with actual interventions, its deployment may be seen as an attempt of the EU to deal with the fact that previously there was a lack of political will to deploy EU battlegroups, and through that strengthen the EU ability to act with hard security outside the EU, potentially finding ways to cooperate with NATO within Europe and the EaP.

4.3 The problem stream: A 'ring of friends' or an 'arc of instability'?

Since the launching of the EaP, rather than work as a tool to facilitate stability within the EaP countries, at times EU presence and engagement within the countries has enabled further tensions in EU's Eastern neighbourhood; such as tensions between the EU and Russia, as well as between Russia and the countries covered by the partnership. An example of this tension is the Euromaidan crisis in 2013, eventually leading to the conflict in Ukraine in 2014, where Ukraine's desire for closer ties with the EU laid the basis for, or enabled, the conflict (Tyushka & German, 2021:3).

In late 2022, all but one of the EaP countries struggle with protracted conflicts in their territories, all of which involve Russia. Moldova and Georgia contend with Transnistria respectively Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the Tskhinvali region, as separatist regions within their nations. In both Moldova and Georgia, these conflicts are remains from the collapse and disintegration of the USSR in 1991 following the end of the cold war. These disputes are referred to as "frozen conflicts", a misleading description given that the conflicts are in no way stagnant, as seen in the five-day war between Georgia and Russia in 2008 (Ibid.:4).

How these conditions are most evidently constructed as problematic within the problem stream may be most clearly depicted in the foreword of the EUGS (2016:9), where Mogherini states; "[...] today terrorism, hybrid threats, economic volatility, climate change and energy insecurity endanger our people and territory. An appropriate level of ambition and strategic

autonomy is important for Europe's ability to promote peace and security within and beyond its borders.". In relation to the EUGS, the Commission also called on "the EU to be more active in addressing protracted conflicts in its neighbourhood as they threaten to produce major spillovers for the EU, such as illegal immigration, unreliable energy supplies and terrorism" (Tyushka & German, 2021:5). The 'appropriate level of ambition' -approach however inferred that the EaP avoided the security challenges that came out of the disputes in Moldova and Georgia, as stated by Zweers & van Loon;

From its very formation, the EaP pointedly sidestepped one of the region's main problems: the profound security challenges stemming from protracted conflicts, hybrid threats and weaknesses in national security sectors, all of which have a negative impact on the domestic reforms foreseen by the EaP. Both EaP countries themselves and several analysts increasingly argue that this approach is becoming untenable and that this security deficit needs to be addressed within the EaP in one way or another (2021:14).

Furthermore, in light of Russia's war in Ukraine the security deficit within the EaP has been highlighted and the importance of cooperation, especially within the security dimension, has been underlined. This has led to a 'comeback' of the EaP within EU discourse, where hard security measures and defence industrial collaboration is central³.

This 'comeback' is particularly relevant where Russia still provides economic, political and military aid for the separatist territories "acting as a mediator or providing peacekeepers" (Tyushka & German, 2021:5). The ongoing disputes with separatist ambitions are being used as key instruments for Russian influence in the areas in both Moldova and Georgia, which provides Moscow with hard and soft power tools to be able to exert coercion and to deter the states from being closer integrated with the EU⁴. Russia's ability to influence and control developments in the EaP countries has thus limited the presence and agency that the EU holds within the region, as well as undermining the sovereignty of the EaP nations and "their ability to pursue an autonomous foreign policy: Russia effectively seeks to 'gatekeep' the EaP area to ensure its own primacy and strengthen its exclusive influence in the region" (Tyushka & German, 2021:5).

The protracted conflicts further pose a threat towards the EU as they disrupt "sustainable political and economic development of the states and societies involved", which in turn creates "security vacuums that facilitate the proliferation of transnational threats such as

³ Interview with respondent 7.

⁴ Interview with respondent 7.

organised crime, illegal trafficking and migration” (Tyushka & German, 2021:5). An unstable Transnistria or Abkhazia therefore poses a threat by potentially leading to spillovers of negative consequences that directly affect the EU.

These conflicts, together with the annexation of Crimea in 2014, lay the basis and have led up to the focusing event; Russia’s war in Ukraine in 2022. These indicators enable the focusing event to be formulated as a problem, and therefore constitutes ‘the problem stream’ of the MSF and this paper. This problem stream shows how Russia employs ongoing conflicts and crisis conditions to undermine Western influence and sovereignty of EU neighbouring countries.

In short, the focusing events are what draw attention to the above-mentioned problematic conditions or problems, which is what motivates the war in Ukraine to be seen as a focusing event for the shift of EUs agency in the region of the EaP (Jones, 1994). Prior to the focusing event leading to the window of opportunity to open, the policy entrepreneurs- that is the different EU camps- were permeated by diverging security policy aims (Natorski & Pomorska, 2017:58). The internal tensions within the EU are in this case depicted by the Atlanticist, Europeanist and Euro-Atlanticist camps having differing outlooks on their relations with Russia. An example of this is Germany’s favourable relation with Russia through North Stream 1 & 2, which was strongly opposed by Poland who instead advocated for ‘solidarity within the EU in regards to energy’ (Natorski & Pomorska, 2017:59; Roth, 2011).

Furthermore, the camps or (policy entrepreneurs) different historical anchoring in the relation to Russia might explain the intra-tensions and diverging policy aims prior to the focusing event. Similar to Russia’s reasoning with the protracted conflicts within the EaP, using it as an indirect tool for undermining Western capabilities, there is a body of literature arguing that “Russia purposefully generated conflicts with some Member States to undermine intra-EU solidarity and common positions” (Schmidt- Felzmann, 2014; Natorski & Pomorska, 2017:59). This would refer to the Atlanticist camp versus the Europeanist and Euro-Atlanticist camp; that is on one hand trade sanctions against Poland and diplomatic disputes with the UK, and on the other hand co-operative bilateral relations with Germany and France. This strengthened the narrative of mistrust between states within the EU, and therefore constrained the policy achievements of the EU within, amongst other frameworks, the EaP, which in the long turn “facilitated Russian divide-and-rule tactics” (Ibid.).

In the case of the creation of the EaP, as previously mentioned it was met with growing suspicion from Russia's side against the EU. In turn the EU countered these suspicions by trying to circumvent problematic relations with Russia through inviting Russia to participate in the Eastern Partnership Information and Coordination Group. This was clear "even in the context of the Russia–Georgia war in August 2008" (Ibid.). This accommodating approach has however shown to be unsustainable through the focusing event and the interpretation of it. The assumption that the accommodating approach infers avoiding any conflicts with Russia, has through the focusing event been shown to be faulty, a standpoint in which EU camps have consensus. Popescu and Gressel state;

Improved relations with Russia are a worthy strategic goal. But this quest for rapprochement relies on the false premise that various balances of power throughout history have been based on promises and assurances of mutual respect, as well as "gentlemen's agreements" among great statesmen. This is a fantasy. International behaviour has rarely been gentlemanly. And balances of power have tended to last only when geopolitical rivals were willing to use economic and even military power to sustain such arrangements. No regional power – and certainly not Russia [...] has made any effort to respect the EU's security interests and sensitivities in its neighbourhood just because the bloc has been reluctant to engage in security cooperation with its neighbours. European self-restraint has not led to Russian self-restraint. Quite the contrary – as events in recent decades show. (2020:11).

This shows how an avoiding approach by the EU is usually countered by an initiating approach by Russia; from Georgia in 2008 to Belarus in 2020, Russia's interventions have increased. Moscow's consistency, eventually leading up to the war in Ukraine, is what creates the problematic conditions leading up to the focusing event.

Lastly, in the light of the war, the security deficits of Moldova and Georgia have increased. The threat of the world surrounding them has accordingly increased, and the demographic impact of the war has been immense.

4.4 The policy stream: The EU within the EaP

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and with it the commencing of Georgia and Moldova's independence, Georgia has been a nation with European aspirations. It is expressed through their constitution and supported by the public whereas 83% of Georgians are for joining the EU⁵. For Moldova, however, the European path has not been on the agenda until recently through alignment of the presidential, executive and legislative powers striving for pro-reform

⁵ IP/22/3790

and closeness with the union following the 2020 presidential and 2021 parliamentary elections⁶.

Georgia’s early European ambitions have been a driving force in shaping the standards, values and infrastructure of Georgia with an initial goal of submitting a membership application with the EU in 2024. However, due to the war being a focusing event and thus opening a window of opportunity with the help of the policy entrepreneurs who coupled the streams, in March 2022 the application for Georgian membership was presented, together with Moldova’s application.

This is no underlying agenda of neither Georgia, Moldova nor the EU, as the Commission clearly states in their opinion on the applications for EU membership, “The application was tabled in the context of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine” (European Commission, 2022a). This underlines the great impact of the focusing event, particularly in comparison with previous events in the neighbourhood of the EU and how these have led to developments within the EaP-EU relations, that have until recently been of a more restrained nature.

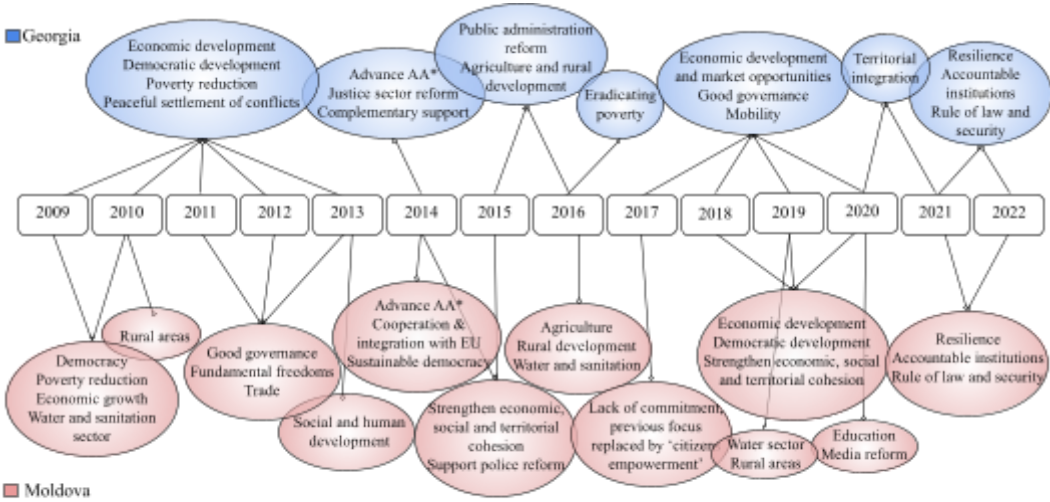


Figure V. Prioritized areas of development in Georgia respectively Moldova, as conveyed through the Action Programmes for respective nation during given years.

In figure V, which accounts for the analysed Country Action Programmes through a thematic overview of the analysed documents, the prioritised areas of development in Georgia respectively Moldova is portrayed. Within the ENPI, the early days (2009-2013) of the EaP reflect a focus on economic and democratic development as well as poverty reduction. In

⁶ IP/22/3790

Georgia's case, in background of the conflict in 2008 emphasis was put on Peaceful settlement of conflict, whereas Moldova's focus has been more infrastructural aiming to improve the sanitation sector and rural areas. It is important here to note, that the EUs 'involvement' in peaceful settlement of conflict in Georgia was of economic nature through soft power. Donations were made to the Georgian government in order to cope with internally displaced persons and support through dialogue between the Georgian government and the "Abkhaz authorities"^{7, 8}.

This goes to underline that even though conflicts are securitized issues, the nature of the EU as an agent in the EaP and Georgia at the time was not through importing security policies in itself, but through soft power measures packaged in economic allocations- that is, rather an economic actor. On the other side of the partnership, Georgia is seeking an agreement with the EDA with the hopes of participating in PESCO projects after 2026 (Scazzieri et al., 2021:8). The employment of soft power further permeates the Association Agreements (AAs) signed with the nations in 2014. This may be seen as a response to Russia's annexation of Crimea, which occurred in February and March, whereas the AAs followed in May. As reflected in graph I below, during this time the ENI reflects an increase in the economic allocations for both Georgia and Moldova, which reaches an all-time high. A further response was the inflation of the use of the concept 'building resilience' in the region⁹.

The AAs included a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), and together these are stated to be "[...] the key bilateral legal instrument serving as the basis for deepening political ties, stronger economic linkages, the promotion of common values and enhanced cooperation in areas of mutual interest."¹⁰. This reflects how during this crisis, which laid basis for the later full scale invasion in 2022, the EU further employed soft power and articulated that deeper cooperation is achieved through common values concerning "democracy, human rights and good governance; freedom, security and justice; and economic, trade and sectoral cooperation"¹¹.

What these Action Programmes do not reflect however are the internal dynamics within the EU and how these tensions between the EU camps reflect the policy output, eventually

⁷ The term "Abkhazia" refers to the territory that is under control of the Sokhumi, it is in this paper in line with EU views seen as a separatist region and the use of the term does not serve as any form of recognition of independence.

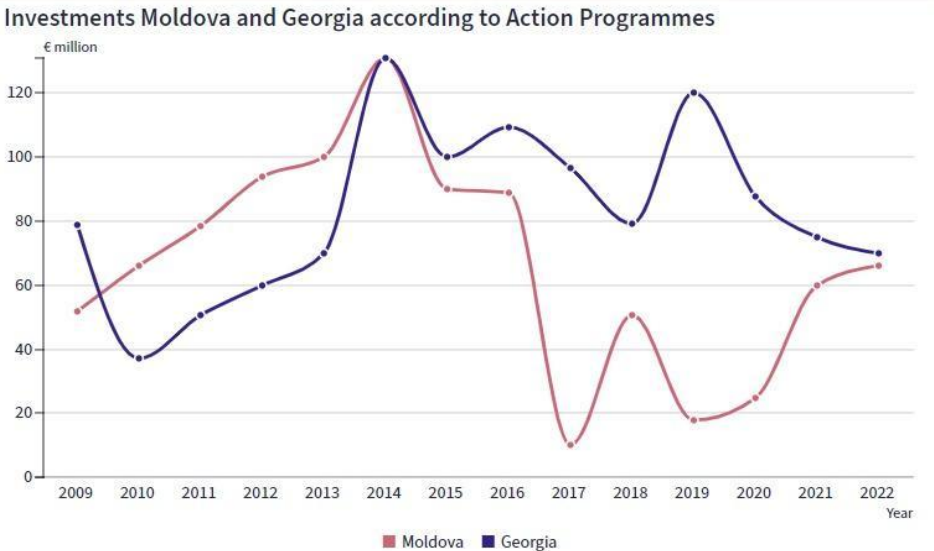
⁸ C(2011)4966

⁹ Interview with respondent 8.

¹⁰ C(2014)2988

¹¹ C(2014)2988

leading to the AAs, the DCFTA and the spike in Graph 1. The common assumption regarding intra-EU decision making is that decades of cooperation has led to little discrepancy in the EU machinery (Natorski & Pomorska, 2016:54). However, as this paper has previously shown, the camps have differing opinions regarding strategic autonomy and the CSDP.



Graph I. Annual budgetary grants from the EU to Georgia and Moldova, as conveyed through the Action Programmes for respective nations during given years.

The degree of consensus within the camps regarding EU policies towards Russia are anchored in the differing bilateral relations that Member States have had with Russia, leading to divergent views on how to act regarding the annexation of Crimea in regards to the strategic autonomy of the EU (Koenig, 2021:59). The Europeanist and Euro-Atlanticist camp could from the lens of the Atlanticist camp be seen as advocating in contrary regards to the Atlanticist camp interests. For example, Germany’s cooperation with Russia in the energy field was countered by Poland’s advocating for European solidarity in the energy field aiming to limit bilateral relations (Roth, 2011).

However, in spite of the tension between unity and disunity regarding how to respond to the annexation of Crimea, what enables the union to reach consensus in the end is the prevailing condition of crisis in their regional context¹². It could thus be argued that the political equilibrium of the EU is characterised by disunity. However, in times of crisis when the equilibrium is punctuated, unity is reached as the value of survival becomes superior to national values and interests. The processes following Crimea are comparable with the

¹² Interview with respondent 3.

aftermath of Georgia in 2008, which was initially permeated by disunity and eventually led to coherence¹³.

Following the years of the implementation of the Action Programmes through the ENI (2014-2020) and in the aftermath of Crimea, the soft power measures continued, as shown in Figure V. The focus was on advancing the AAs through building resilience, sustainable democracy, the strengthening of economic, social and territorial cohesion and agricultural development. As articulated in the EUGS;

In view of the threat to the sovereignty, stability, territorial integrity and governance of our Eastern partners, we will boost our cooperation in the area of security and defence with a view to strengthening their resilience [...] The challenges faced by Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, including hostile interference by Russia and the extensive use of military instruments and hybrid tactics, compromise their stability and their democratic processes and have direct implications for our own security. We will therefore continue to closely cooperate with those countries and reiterate our unwavering support for, and commitment to, their sovereignty and territorial integrity (2016:42).

Further soft power implementation took form during 2014-2015 when ‘strengthening police reform’ was on the agenda as a prioritised undertaking within Moldova, which was placed under justice sector reform. The goal was “enhancement of public order and security and protection of human rights through development of an accessible, accountable, efficient, transparent and professional police force”¹⁴. The EU supported this through budget and a technical assistance project. What is of interest here is that despite the background of the countries differing opinions regarding strategic autonomy, the implementation of the EuroEast Police Programme was driven by Poland and supported by some EU Member States institutions in the field of security- amongst others France and Germany. The project aimed at “[...] establishing [partnerships] between police authorities of each EaP country with EU Member States police agencies, focussing among others on operational meetings for joint investigations [and] regional seminars to combat specific type of crossborder crime or to provide assistance in police management issues.”¹⁵.

This is a comparable approach to the soft power tools employed by the EU within Georgia 2009-2013, where EUs ‘involvement’ in peaceful settlement of conflict in Georgia were of

¹³ Interview with respondent 3.

¹⁴ ENI 2015/038144

¹⁵ ENI 2015/038144

economic and diplomatic nature, through soft power. Until the EuroEast Police Programme, articulation of security issues has not been prominent and even though the initiative lifts security issues to the agenda it employs mainly soft power by primarily economic means.

Just like in the case of the initiation of the AA's following the annexation of Crimea, this programme shows the convergence in the camps undertakings within the EaP, in spite of the contrasting views regarding strategic autonomy. It is of interest to understand how this dualism operates, where on one hand the Member States of the EU entail contrasting views on priorities, solidarity and strategic autonomy, but on the other hand "speak with one voice and to support diplomatic measures with coercive instruments." (Natorski & Pomorska, 2016:57).

This paper argues, in line with the MSF, that this is explained by the value acceptability of the suggested measures. That is whether or not the idea has support given the context of the problem, and whether or not it is 'worth it' enough for the policy entrepreneurs and policy makers to implement and strive for. For example, the value acceptability following Crimea in 2014 and expressed in the EUGS in 2016, goes as far as the EU using soft power through Action Programmes within the EaP to ensure its own safety in relation to the region and its previously mentioned protracted conflicts.

However, the Actions Programmes do not explicitly state that the ambitions are that of a security actor, but rather an economic one. This implies that value acceptability could be seen as a spectrum rather than dichotomous, meaning that a situation may inherit *more or less* value acceptability rather than either a presence or absence of it. This is demonstrated within the EU security policy output through the fluctuating levels of hard or soft power measures undertaken in the period of the existence of the EaP, where the measures have been *more or less* vigorous rather than dichotomous, as shown in figure V and graph I.

In the case of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, European political leaders- Macron amongst others- have stated that "Russia must not win this war, because such a victory would only bring their countries, and ultimately the EU itself, into the line of fire of Russian imperialism" (Gressel, 2022:2). This further demonstrates the emerging convergence of the camps, where states that were not as vocal about the invasion; Germany and France, have not only articulated viewpoints such as the statement made from Macron, but also contributed to the war effort with hard power. This accounts for the shift in EU security agency, as well as shifting viewpoints within the camps.

The contributions to the war effort from Poland and other nations within the Atlanticist camp predated the ones from the Europeanist and Euro-Atlanticist camps, which is further interesting in background of this camp being somewhat ‘Euro-sceptic’ and advocating for hard power measures to be primarily undertaken by NATO or the US (Koenig, 2021:59). This commitment, especially interesting from Germany’s side breaking its long going reluctance to use military means because of WWII, was accompanied by other hard power measures in the region of the EaP, such as budget contributions from the EaP. From the lens of the MSF the shift in value acceptability may be detected through scholars of the EU stating;

If Russia wins [...] it will not only bring tremendous suffering to the Ukrainian people. The war itself has greatly accelerated totalitarian, militarist, and imperialist aspirations in Moscow, which [...] have now moved into the centre of Russia’s foreign policy. In a victorious Russia, imperialism and militarism would provide a unifying narrative bonding the Russian elites and society. Such a state would be an even more dangerous neighbour than its current incarnation. Ensuring Russia suffers defeat is therefore the best investment in the continent’s future. (Gressel, 2022:2).

The assumption is thus that greater risk infers greater value acceptability, and therefore that in times of crisis despite the discrepancies between the EU camps cohesion is reached in various areas of the security field. The dualism points to the bounded rationality of the actors, where the goal is to suffice rather than maximise. The Member States are considered to be goal-oriented and utilise rational decision-making, but cognitive and emotional aspects influence these decisions (Zahariadis, 2007:68).

In the MSF, information is not seen as value neutral, and the manipulation of information from the point of view of the policy entrepreneur involves pursuing self-interest. In the case of Crimea in 2014 pursuing self-interest took form in the initiations of the AAs and soft power measures. The stakes were not ‘high enough’ to be seen as a threat posed to the survival of the EU, and therefore the value acceptability was not viable enough to take any further measures in the context of the EaP. The value acceptability in this case went to the degree of “the EU [assuming] the accommodating approach, [which] would avoid confrontation with Russia in the shared neighbourhood” (Natorski & Pomorska, 2016:59).

However, in 2022 it is articulated that the European security order is being decided in Ukraine for years to come (Gressel, 2022:2). For Moldova and Georgia in particular, the war represents an existential threat, where a victorious Russia sets aim at these nations thereafter. This endeavour would imply the Russian strategic use of the previously mentioned protracted

conflicts, which have been a focus area of EU resolutions where territorial integration respectively cohesion has been articulated from 2014 and forth, as shown in figure V.

However, the focusing event in 2022 has led to this focus area as well going from soft to hard power, for example where the separatist regions of Transnistria in Moldova and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia have been assigned strengthened support from Frontex with standing corps officers (Frontex, 2022), as shown in figure VI.

Furthermore, the Action Programmes until 2022 convey that the standpoint towards the protracted conflicts is through soft power and diplomatic measures. However, with the emergence of the focusing event the Kremlin has resorted to adhering to the separatist regions in order to “compensate for the deficit of manpower in Ukraine” (Secieru, 2022:6). Likewise, campaigns in order to recruit manpower from Transnistria have been undertaken in Moldova (Ibid.). The deployment of Frontex is thereby a direct response to the Russian footprint in the region, as they are sent to be operational at the Moldovan border towards Ukraine.

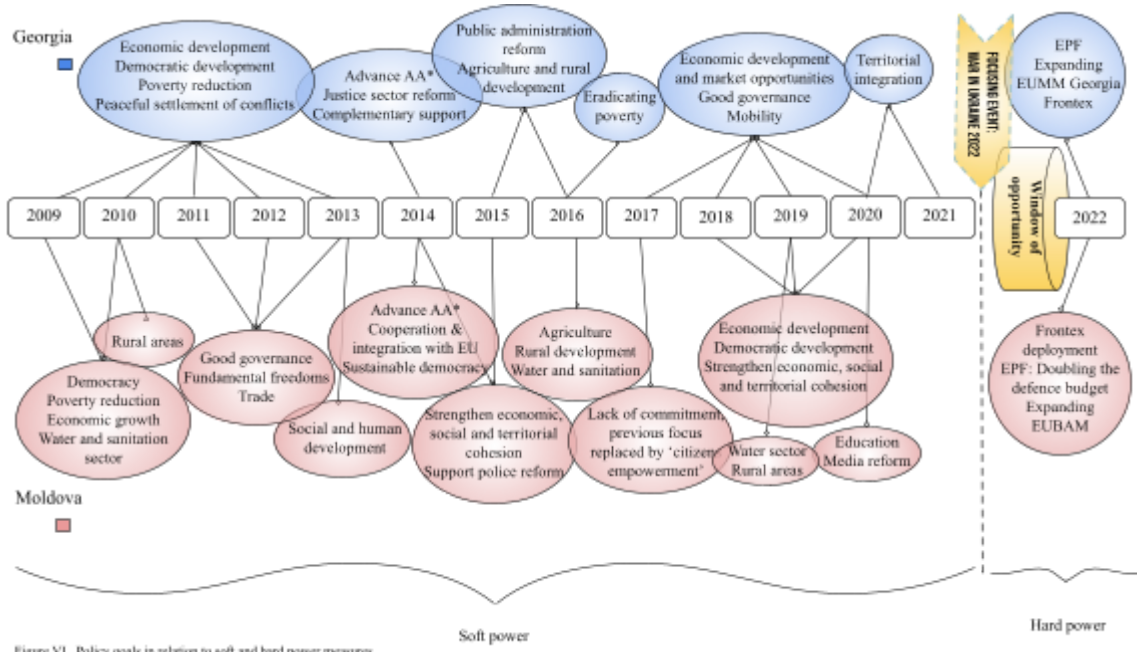


Figure VI. Policy goals in relation to soft and hard power measures

In spite of the camp’s previous differing opinions on expansion, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, said: “[...] Moldova and Georgia share the strong and legitimate aspiration of joining the European Union. Today, we are sending them a clear signal of support in their aspirations, even as they face challenging circumstances [...] Indeed, this is a historic day for the people of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. We are confirming that they belong, in due time, in the European Union” (European Commission, 2022a).

This is interesting in the context of the focusing event of this paper, as the constitution of Moldova states its neutrality, which means that cooperation and rapprochement with outside partners in hard security fields allows for a reaction from national pro-Russian voices, as well as Russia itself. This points to the return of great power politics, where neutrality of nations may inevitably be placed under the umbrella of one geo-political power over the other, in case on the side of the EU rather than Russia. This choice has led to Moldova's national defence sector highly increasing, as the EU has granted contributions twice during 2022 which has inflated the defence budget by 18.3% (Secieru, 2022:5), and where the European Peace Facility (EPF) almost doubled the budget.

The EPF has gone from initially having been a tool to mainly support peace efforts and capacity building in Africa and financial support for third-party procurement of protective equipment, to being utilised to enable Member States to provide Ukraine with arms (Hagström Frisell & Sjökvist, 2021:10). This is possible as the instrument was already in place prior to the war, and its areas of use were merely expanded.

The relabelled EPF enables financing solutions for costs with military implications that lie outside EUs regular budget. Some scholars argue that this is “tied to the EU's desire to enhance its standing as a global security actor” (Ibid.:11), and has by entering the military capacity building sphere initiated a paradigm shift where the EU promotes its hard power. In this discussion, this paradigm shift is put in reference to the question on whether the EU is striving for advocating institutional reform and rule of law in partner countries, or to assert itself as an actor with geopolitical influence in the security field.

Contributing to Moldova and Georgia's defence budgets, and therefore defence sectors, further sheds light on EUs positioning as a security actor within the EaP in particular relation to the US. The camps differing opinions on how to relate to the US and NATO are relevant in this discussion, as some scholars argue;

Europeans have fallen back on US leadership and US military strength to take care of security affairs on their own continent. This is particularly true for Western Europe, and France and Germany in particular, where “strategic sovereignty” had become a fashionable catchphrase in foreign policy circles. (Gressel, 2022:24).

This is interesting seen from the point of view of the camps, where the Europeanist camp above all, sometimes together with the Euro-Atlanticist camp, advocate for a strong Europe with high autonomy to the EU as a security actor. Nevertheless, countries that have been seen as almost Eurosceptic in the Atlanticist camp- Poland above all- have come to be important players in the region of the EaP and European security as a whole. The intra-dynamic of the EU may thus be on the verge of new coalitions, which reshape the power dynamics of the union.

4.5 The window of opportunity

The policy output, moulded by the policy entrepreneurs because of the window of opportunity opening, is anchored in the union's relation to strategic autonomy. The problematic condition within the problem stream has to do with not only Russia's war in Ukraine, but also its presence in the European neighbourhood, and what this heightened presence infers. The focusing event has thus enabled the streams to couple, partially through the comeback of the discourse surrounding the importance of the EaP for the EU¹⁶. This points to the comeback of great power rivalry, where the geopolitical importance of the EaP region is highlighted. Russia's actions therefore capacitated a window of opportunity, which amongst other measures led to the membership applications of Moldova and Georgia in 2022.

As the intra-dynamic of the EU is dependent on the context of the international society, and vice versa, such a fundamental happening in its direct surroundings naturally affects processes and relations within the union. The war in Ukraine has reminded the EU camps that it has a border and of its own geopolitical importance with a rival at the doorstep- that does not agree with EU values¹⁷.

Concentrating primarily on the Atlanticist camp, the war has developed a belief within the camp stating that what has been done in Ukraine can be replicated in the Eastern Neighbourhood of the EU, which poses the question whether nuclear American deterrence is sufficiently reliable to protect Europe¹⁸. The debate on EU's strategic sovereignty that once was at the centre of differences between the camps is once again a topic of discussion, but now in a different light with different opinions.

Though the transatlantic link has not per sé been weakened, Atlanticists have instead developed a will to review possibilities of European domestic defence, and a "realisation" of

¹⁶ Interview with respondent 7.

¹⁷ Interview with respondent 7.

¹⁸ Interview with respondent 3.

EUs geopolitical actorness¹⁹. The reasoning is that an American protectorate may not last forever, which is interpreted by indications such as by US congressional Democrats urging president Biden to pursue direct engagement with Russia²⁰ (The Times, 2022). The idea of the EU being able to react and act within security and defence in its own borders is what gave birth to the St. Malo Declaration in the first place, a trail of thought that is once again visited by the Atlanticists in the light of the Russian aggression²¹.

The Euro-Atlanticist camp shows a similar trend. An example of their earlier reluctance to act within the EaP, which has now shifted, is the mission that intends to train 50,000 Ukrainian soldiers. This was discussed prior to the war where the Member States rejected the idea, mainly because of the Europeanist and Euro-Atlanticist camps careful approach towards Moscow within the security domain²². However, after the war in recent discussions about setting up the mission, the heightening of the value acceptability and political will to advance within security and defence instead resulted in an argument about where in the union the headquarters should be, where several Member States were advocate for wanting to host the headquarters²³. The discussions resulted in the decision on Germany and Poland, a rather interesting approach given their previous contrasting positions regarding the debate on strategic autonomy and defence. This further underlines the notion where the intra-dynamic of the EU may be on the verge of new coalitions, which reshape the power dynamics of the union, as well as the change within the Atlanticist camp.

Further policy output in terms of concrete measures is the deployment and strengthened support from Frontex with standing corps officers in Moldova, as a response to the Russian presence in the region²⁴. This is similar to the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM), where prior to the war there were discussions mainly wanting to reduce the mission, whereas after the war it took a contrary direction and adjusted the EUBAM mandate and initiated expansion²⁵. The adjustment mainly allowed EUBAM to recruit additional staff, and provide equipment as well as training to newly hired Moldovan border guards, to manage the big influx of Ukrainian refugees.

¹⁹ Interview with respondent 4.

²⁰ Interview with respondent 5.

²¹ Interview with respondent 5.

²² Interview with respondent 6.

²³ Interview with respondent 6.

²⁴ Interview with respondent 4.

²⁵ Interview with respondent 6.

This approach of the EU expanding their missions within the EaP has led to EU presence in geographical areas where the union was previously excluded by Russia, such as the mission on the border with Armenia and Azerbaijan. What is interesting in this case is the clear depiction of how the war has pushed the EU into a direction expanding its security agency, as this mission is an outcome of war and result of weakening Russian military presence, where EU saw the opportunity to gain ground²⁶. The idea of this initiative was brought up in the Prague Summit in early October, and the decision was made merely one week after, which shows an increase in value acceptability and political will to act within the EaP. The enabling of this mission is due to the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM Georgia) from 2008, where EU uses its presence in Georgia logistically as a base²⁷. The shift here shows an EU acting, rather than merely reacting.

The reason as to why this mission has not been deployed until now has been mainly French reluctance to mediate and act within a Russian sphere of influence. However, with Russia's diplomatic reputation in South Caucasus deteriorating- mostly due to Armenia's disappointment of Russia not stepping in and protecting them against Azerbaijan during the latest escalation in September- the value acceptability regarding EU's agency in the EaP has increased and France took a big initiating role for the mission.

Turning to the Europeanist camp, an initiative pushed for by France on the other side of the window of opportunity is the instrument to reinforce the European defence industry, namely; European Defence Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act (EDIRPA). According to Executive Vice-President of the European Commission Margrethe Vestager, the EDIRPA proposal "is a historical milestone in establishing the EU Defence Union, enhancing the security of EU citizens, and strengthening the EU as a partner for our allies." (ref). The €500m fund will be available for two years (2023-2024) and the aim is to encourage Member States! to cooperate, as the fund will support joint acquisition projects by a minimum of three countries (ref). Further, EDIRPA aims to discourage Member States from addressing their short-term capability gaps with equipment purchased from outside the EU. This underlines the collective approach sought for by the Europeanist camp²⁸.

Against this backdrop, the intra-dynamic of the EU seems to have reached a greater unity and convergence than prior to the war, where the standpoint today regarding strategic autonomy brings the centre of gravity to Europe, wanting to strengthen the EU's capacities and abilities

²⁶ Interview with respondent 5.

²⁷ Interview with respondent 6.

²⁸ Interview with respondent 3.

to act within security and defence. However, one might argue that bringing the debate on strategic autonomy closer to home does not provide more answers, merely other questions.

These other questions result in other tensions within the union, where Germany and Poland's notable procurements since the Russian invasion through deals struck with nations outside of the union- such as Israel and South Korea- has created discrepancies with France's will for collective advancing, as shown through initiatives such as EDIRPA²⁹.

This could potentially lead to further tensions as the EDIRPA entails;

that any products containing technologies that are subject to third country export controls are likely to be excluded. Given the transnational nature of defence supply chains, particularly the preponderance of technologies originating from the US, this rule is likely to affect a broad swathe of existing products, many of which are predominantly EU in origin (Lawrenson, 2022)

It is therefore not unlikely that Germany and Poland will push back against France, as their industries are the ones that will be most heavily influenced by the instrument.

Moreover, the strengthening of EU agency affects the intra-EU dynamics as it indirectly creates a competition for primacy in the EU, where the contenders are on one side France, and on the other Germany³⁰. This has led to some believing that the relation between France and Germany is worse today than ever³¹. A shift in the traditional French-German axis affects the camps of the EU as well and therefore the power constellation within the EU³².

²⁹ Interview with respondent 7.

³⁰ Interview with respondent 1.

³¹ Interview with respondent 3.

³² Interview with respondent 5.

5. Concluding discussion

5.1 The path to converging policy output

This paper stems from the research question regarding; How has the security policy actorness of the European Union within the Eastern Partnership countries Moldova and Georgia changed since 2009? The findings point to a shift in power dimension deployed by the union, going from soft power implementation as a mainly economic actor- to hard power dimensions with ambitions to assert itself as a geopolitical and security actor.

Through the MSF this paper has further shown the inherent dualism within the EU and how this relates to its actorness- where on one hand there has historically been a fundamental discrepancy between the camps regarding what kind of actor the EU should be, but on the other hand, how the priorities and ideas of the camps converge in times of crisis.

This convergence is enabled through fluctuating value acceptability and the bounded rationality of the actors. The conclusion is that the Europeanist, Atlanticist, and Euro-Atlanticist camps through the EU machinery consolidate means when the value acceptability of common security policies outweighs that of their own self-interests.

In the light of the war, the intra-dynamic in the EU has shifted, which has induced a shift in the agency of the EU as a security actor in the EaP. This has been highlighted in the analysis section of this paper, whereas figure VI shows the early priority areas which aim for economic and democratic development through soft power measures. In the aftermath of the focusing event, the EU through its policy entrepreneurs has moved in a direction of promoting and employing its hard power, pointing to the EU taking on a bigger role as a security actor within and outside of its union borders, employing hard power means to reach its goals. A clear development from its initial soft power and economic ambitions.

Regarding whether the EU is striving for advocating institutional reform and rule of law in partner countries *or* to assert itself as an actor with geopolitical influence in the security field, this paper argues the latter; there is a growing value acceptability within the EU to deepen security and defence policy through utilising a broader toolbox. These tools consist of, amongst others, the RDC, EDF, EPF and PESCO.

In the case of the EaP, and Moldova and Georgia in particular, there is much that points to the changing relationship between the countries and the EU. Where previously the US have been dominant in initiatives to strengthen Moldova and Georgia's resilience in security and defence matters, the EU aims to take ground and strengthen its role as a security policy actor in the area between Russia and Europe. This paper argues that this is a generalizable finding outside of the borders of Moldova and Georgia, given the nature of the cases being typical which are intended to be representative of the 'larger population' of the same instances, or represent a larger trend (Bennett, 2010:29–30). It has further been of interest to research converging policy output outside of the union rather than inside, due to the lack of the otherwise bureaucratic structures that dictate the behaviour and policy processes.

The horizon not only holds a new security actor role for the EU in its external context, but also new coalitions within its internal context. This paper has shown how the power dynamics within the union have transformed, where pro-European states find common ground with previously highly Atlanticist, somewhat Eurosceptic, Poland. The Visegrad group consisting of Poland, Slovakia, The Czech Republic and Hungary has been "paralyzed due to Victor Orbán's proximity to the Kremlin" (Kauffmann, 2022:3), which has led to the Nordic states rapprochement to the Baltic states and Poland, which puts "Paris and Berlin on the offensive" (Ibid.). Furthermore, previously 'pacifistic Germany' now advocates for their leading role in a joint European security effort to deal with an imperialist and revisionist Russia, their earlier trade partner in the energy field (Gressel, 2022:24). In short: in the aftermath of the focusing event, the EU camps have steered away from their traditional views on strategic autonomy and what kind of actor the EU is and should be.

This recently shifted intra-dynamic within the union poses questions regarding the union's future in the EaP. The recent undertakings, investments and missions, and not least membership applications, lead to thoughts regarding a capacity-expectations-gap, where the policy output "promises much but guarantees nothing"³³. This infers several opportunities and challenges within the EaP for the EU;

On one hand, the timing and value acceptability of the cooperation from both sides form opportunities for the union to advance in the region. Thereto, the pro-European stances of the

³³ Interview respondent 8.

populations of Moldova and Georgia could bridge the unions ability to share policies and norms³⁴.

However, EUs strength is simultaneously its weakness; the soft power aspect of membership. The value acceptability regarding investing resources and broadening agency within the EaP has been heightened and the union's relationship with the nation's has been normalised. However, it has not been heightened to a degree where Moldova and Georgia will be accepted as fullworthy members in the near future. The assumption is thus that they lack credible membership prospects, which enables already established frustration with the EU to deepen. This frustration is anchored in the membership process, as it is seen as lengthy and complicated where the rate of reforms gradually decreases due to the absence of early success; leading to reform fatigue.

The capacity-expectations-gap is problematic in two main ways. On one hand, the relations with the prospect nations and the EU may be obstructed due to the frustration anchored in the expected reform that the nations have to achieve to get closer to the EU. In times of comeback of great power rivalry, where Moldova and Georgia find themselves geopolitically in between the EU and Russia, the frustration with the EU may create incentives of choosing to side with the rival- as the rival will take on these nations as they are, in contrast to demanding reform³⁵. The membership applications of Moldova and Georgia in 2022 may thus be seen as a direct response to the focusing event by asserting the geopolitical domain as part of the EU, and further away from a Russian political sphere.

This rapprochement of Moldova and Georgia poses another problem: grey-zone difficulties within The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The initial main goal of the ENP, within which the EaP is a bilateral dimension, was to be an *alternative* for membership. However, the ENPs current intra-diversification regarding nations relations to the EU, where some nations (such as Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Albania) have come closer to the union, whereas others have taken further distance (such as Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan), has led to questions regarding the future of the ENP, and how the EU can orient oneself within it.

The nature of the security policy of the EU and its Member States can thus be seen as adapting to the new reality of world politics. However, this evolution should not be over-emphasized. While the focusing event of Russia's war in Ukraine led to remarkable

³⁴ Interview respondent 8.

³⁵ Interview with respondent 8.

intra-EU unity, for example with unprecedented sanction packages constructed with significant rapidness³⁶, there is still progress to be made in unification. This regards specifically re-steering focus from defence being anchored in the national dimension, to having solidarity in building the capacities of the union as a whole³⁷. As stated by Seneca: ‘There is no favourable wind for the sailor who doesn't know where to go’.

Conclusions reached by this paper concerning the MSF determine that the Multiple Streams Framework provides relevant explanatory insight on the security policy of the European Union in the realm of the Eastern Partnership security context. This paper has applied the MSF as a whole, moving away from the traditional use of the framework as a heuristic device. This is argued to be a basis for the academic contribution in regards to the framework, in background of the research voids put forth in the previous research. However, this paper also argues that the MSF would benefit from the factor of value acceptability being asserted greater importance, and therefore suggests modification and development within the framework in this specific factor. Through empirical demonstration in the section for analysis this research has shown that value acceptability could be seen as a spectrum rather than dichotomous, meaning that a situation may inherit more or less value acceptability rather than either a presence or absence of it.

In conclusion, Russia’s war in Ukraine has driven the EU to become a geopolitical actor in its neighbourhood, an endeavour that has been of historically contradictory interest. The paper contributes to the literature of the shift in EUs geopolitical actorness, and the consequences this development may have on multilateral contexts within a multipolar world order.

5.2 Limitations

The generalizable ambitions of this paper, where the actions of the EU within Moldova and Georgia are seen as representable for the actorness of the union within the EaP as a whole, would profit and be strengthened by cross-examination by similar cases within the same framework.

The new role of the EU that this paper asserts implies abilities for the EU to resolve security policy tensions. However, when in international competition for normative influence it may be of importance to take into account the EU's ability to create security policy tensions itself through this competition. This is a limitation that this paper has not taken into account, as the

³⁶ Interview with respondent 8.

³⁷ Interview with respondent 4.

focus has been rather the shift in the actorness of the EU, excluding how the development in itself and results of it may influence the future of the union and the context within which it will reside.

There to, a limitation within this paper is its limited scope of analysing policy formation, rather than policy outcome. This is due to choice of method and material, as well as the time frame of study- where the outcome of the changed policy actorness and formation lies in the yet unknown future.

5.3 Further research

Suggestions for further research tied to the empirical aspect of this paper is to further explore the previously mentioned grey-zone difficulties as a result of certain nation's rapprochements with the EU. These considerations are twofold, on one hand policy consequences;

As the initial goal of the ENP, and therefore the EaP, was to be an alternative for membership it would be of interest to analyse the policy implications the changed dynamics of the EaP may have on the future of the partnerships; anchored in the intra-diversification regarding EaP-nations relations to the EU, where some nations have come closer to the union, whereas others have taken further distance.

And on the other hand theoretical consequences; the changed actorness of the EU, that has been brought forth in this paper, shows the EU as a geopolitical security actor with hard power deployment. The consequences this has for understanding the actorness in multilateral contexts, such as with the USA, within a multipolar world order is of interest for further research.

Lastly, as this study has been limited to the security policy aspect of the actorness of the union within this region, a study of security policy tensions as a result of competition for normative influence is an area of research that EU scholars may increasingly need to focus on. This is given EUs normative expansion and expanded external capabilities.

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Appendix

Table A1: Analyzed documents

| |
|---|
| ENPI 2009/C(2009)7814/Annual Action Programme for Georgia |
| ENPI2009/C(2009)4287/Annual Action Plan for Moldova |
| ENPI 2010/C(2010)3330/Annual Action Programme for Georgia |
| ENPI 2010/C(2010)3334/Annual Action Programme for Moldova |
| ENPI 2011/C(2011)4966/Annual Action Programme for Georgia |
| ENPI 2011/C(2011)4969/Annual Action Programme for Moldova |
| ENPI 2012/C(2012)5939/Annual Action Programme for Georgia |
| ENPI 2012/C(2012)5518/Annual Action Programme for Moldova |
| ENPI 2013/C(2013)5181/Annual Action Programme for Georgia |
| ENPI 2013/C(2013)5199/Annual Action Programme for Moldova |
| ENI 2014/C(2014)5020/Annual Action Program for Georgia |
| ENI 2014/C(2014)2988/Special Measure for Georgia and Moldova |
| ENI 2014/C(2014)5140/Annual Action Program for Moldova |
| ENI 2015/C(2015)7148/Annual Action Program for Georgia |
| ENI 2015/C(2015)7150/Annual Action Program for Moldova |
| ENI 2015/038144/Police Reform |
| ENI 2016/C(2016)7556/Annual Action Programme for Georgia |
| ENI 2016/C(2016)7752/Annual Action Programme for Moldova |
| ENI 2017/C(2017)8575/Annual Action Programme for Georgia |
| ENI 2017/C(2017)7533/Annual Action Programme for Moldova |
| ENI 2018/C(2018)8292/revised Annual Action Programme 2017 for Moldova |
| ENI 2018/C(2018)8064/Annual Action Programme for Georgia |
| ENI 2018/C(2018)8213/Annual Action Programme 2018 in favour of the Republic of Moldova |
| ENI 2019/C(2019)8383/Annual Action Programme for Georgia |
| ENI 2019/C/7455/Annual Action Programme 2019 in favour of the Republic of Moldova |
| ENI 2020/C(2020)4959/Annual Action Programme for Georgia |
| COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION of 9.7.2020 on the annual action programme in favour of the Republic of Moldova for 2020 |
| COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION of 15.12.2020 on the annual action programme part 2 for 2020 in favour of the Republic of Moldova |
| COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION on the financing of the individual measure in favour of Georgia for 2021 |
| ENI 2022 - C(2022) 2850 - COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION of 27.4.2022 on the financing of the second Individual Measure in favour of the Republic of Moldova for 2021 |
| COM(2022) 405 (Commission Opinion on Georgia's application for membership of the European Union) |
| COM(2022) 406 (Commission Opinion on the Republic of Moldova's application for membership of the European Union) |

Table A2: Operationalized interview questions

| Question | Dimension |
|--|---|
| How do you perceive [The EUs/Poland's/France/Germany's] overarching policy goals with the EaP within security and defense policy? | Regarding the goals that the EU has with the EaP, what the EUs driving forces behind the partnership are and how they may have changed. |
| Do you recognize any concrete measures to reach these goals? | |
| Can you give examples of how these goals may have changed since the war in Ukraine? What have been the concrete policy proposals? | |
| How has [The EU/Poland/France/Germany] <i>argued</i> for these policy proposals (more or less hard power measures) within the EaP after the war in Ukraine? What have been their driving forces? | |
| How do you perceive the EaP-countries of Moldova and Georgia overarching policy goals with the partnership? | Regarding the view that Moldova and Georgia have on the EU as an actor within the region. |
| Has there been a change in perception of the role of the EU within the region of the EaP since the war in Ukraine? | |
| What would you say are the challenges and opportunities for the EU as an actor within the EaP, specifically Georgia and Moldova? | |
| Given that there has been an established shift, do you believe that the role and actorness of the EU within security and defense has changed? How? | Regarding how the shift in EUs actorness may influence its future positioning in international politics. |
| Has the war in Ukraine induced changes within the intra-EU dynamic between member states? | |

Table A3: Respondents

Germany:

Respondent 1:

██████████. Senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations and head of its Berlin office (ECFR)

Respondent 2:

██████████. Associate research fellow at The Alfred von Oppenheim Centre for European Policy Studies: German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP)

France:

Respondent 3:

Mauro, Frédéric. Associate research fellow at The French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs (IFRI/IRIS)

Respondent 4:

Santopinto, Federico. Research Director at the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs (IRIS)

Poland:

Respondent 5:

██████████ Senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR)

Respondent 6:

██████████ Senior Analyst at The European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)

EU:

Respondent 7:

Håkansson, Calle. Associate employee at UI's Europe program and a doctoral student in Global Politics at Malmö University

Respondent 8:

Anderlini, Michel. Doctoral student in Global Politics at Malmö University, political expert in the EU Parliament in Brussels